

**TEXAS SOUTHEASTERN RAILROAD REUNION**

**Charles Foster, Gary Mike Smith, Don Harrison, George Honea, and Carroll Dover  
Interview 222a**

**August 16, 2000, at T.L.L. Temple Memorial Library, Diboll, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

**Patsy Colbert and Jonathan Gerland, Transcribers**

**ABSTRACT:** In this informal interview with Jonathan Gerland, longtime Texas Southeastern Railroad employees and retirees Charles Foster, Gary Mike Smith, Don Harrison, George Honea, and Carroll Dover share memories of working for the shortline railroad in Diboll on the occasion of the railroad turning one hundred years old. Fond memories of working experiences and various personalities are recalled. Some of the people remembered are C.A. Jordan, R.A. “Boots” Jackson, W.J. “Professor” Jackson, Odair Womack, Willard Conner, and Jimmie Beth Durham.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today is August 16<sup>th</sup> [2000] and I’m Jonathan Gerland. I’ll just sit right here and y’all can just say your name.

**Charles Foster (hereafter Foster):** Charles Foster.

**Mike Smith (hereafter Smith):** Mike Smith.

**Don Harrison (hereafter Harrison):** Don Harrison.

**George Honea (hereafter Honea):** George Honea.

**Carroll Dover (hereafter Dover):** Carroll Dover.

**JG:** Okay and we are just reminiscing old times at the TSE Railroad.

**Smith:** George was telling about the day he had to plant the shrubs out in front of the building.

**JG:** Okay, tell us about that George. Who wanted the shrubs planted?

**Honea:** Where is this going, in the archives?

**JG:** Yes.

**Honea:** Well this would be the time to get straight on legends, and then you can ask questions. We have our own set of legends. And I’m going to give you three, and they may want to add to it. One is right here, is Carroll Dover, Willard Conner and Odair Womack. The so-called old legends they couldn’t even be a fireman for these guys, running steam with the locomotive, the engineer and the fireman. But, they thought they

were pretty good and most of them were their own PR person so, if you set your mind to it you can become a legend. It ain't no big deal. Now, I'll quit right there. Somebody else might want to add one.

**Harrison:** One thing I remember about the legend of Odair Womack, that was back during the days of steam engines, and all the engineers had their own way of blowing the whistle, and they had their own sound. Odair Womack could make you want to cry or he could make you want to laugh. He could blow it anyway you wanted. He had his own set [unintelligible], and you knew when he was coming into Diboll.

**JG:** Tell me, Gary Mike, about Ed Steed or one of the Steeds that would throw out an apple or pear or peach seed.

**Smith:** A peach seed, yes we would get on the caboose and ride to Lufkin in the afternoon, and that is when we started to work at five o'clock and Ed would always have him some peaches and he would have a peach peeled and half eat before we would get to the four mile board and he would throw them seeds out the window. He would always tell me, he said "if a peach tree ever grows out here you know who planted that thing." But, the thing I got in trouble with, George rode the train with us to Lufkin out there one day and I was sitting on a box and I took a drink of water, and I don't know why I done it, I threw the cup out the window and that was a no-no. You didn't litter the right of way and he looked at me and I said "I'm feeding the baby armadillos." I said "they got to have that paper." I don't think he believed it but, he didn't say nothing to me. (laughter)

**JG:** Tell us about your wife making all those cakes, birthday cakes, for Professor Jackson. Charlie Foster, I'm sorry.

**Foster:** My wife was a real good cook back in those days. My wife has got Parkinson's disease now. She wouldn't want to remember much of this. The only thing she remembers is what I do wrong. (laughter) But, she would bake these cakes every birthday and bring it down and we would give it to Professor Jackson. And, what I remember about it, he would haul it around over in the quarters and everywhere else for about two weeks and then he would bring it back and say "okay we are going to eat this cake." (laughter)

**JG:** And George would always be missing at that time wouldn't he?

**Foster:** Yes, George would have to go somewhere about that time, and I wanted to go.

**Honea:** I was the only one that had a back door to my office and when he would come in with that cake I went out the back door. (laughter)

**JG:** Who was it you were telling me one time, that Boots Jackson told you to get back in there and eat that cake?

**Honea:** He called us all and said Professor was ready to cut his cake, and I never did go in there. I guess if that is insubordination, I'm guilty. I went to the truck shop.

**Foster:** Mary always had a train or something on there she would fix for him.

**JG:** Yes, we've got a lot of newspaper clippings on that. Old Paul [Durham], I guess, would come over and take pictures of it, I guess for many, many years.

**Dover:** I have got an old trunk of Paul Durham's. I'm going to bring it to you. It was give to me to throw away.

**JG:** Oh no, well we are the place to "throw it away."

**Dover:** Paul Durham started it when he got the newspaper business I guess. I got an old trunk that Beth give me to throw in the garbage and I just kept it. It's got a lot of stuff in there where he taken notes on different things for the paper.

**JG:** Mr. Dover, here, was telling me about the Rusk and Palestine runs in '68 and '69, and you were talking about the track and road conditions and bridges and everything then.

**Dover:** Well, the track was good, the road was good. I think we violated a few rules, the men over there did.

**JG:** You said you made a few runs in forty five minutes.

**Dover:** We made a few quick runs to get off at four on Friday. (laughter)

**JG:** Did y'all have speed limits then?

**Dover:** Supposed to have been. (laughter) It was supposed to have been speed limits.

**Honea:** Look who is bragging now.

**Dover:** Like I said, Odell has done gone home, and you can't run me off [now].

**Honea:** I don't blame you.

**Smith:** Well, TSE has been known for breaking a few rules, and not on purpose I guess, but, we knew if George caught us we were condemned. I was a Sunday conductor one Sunday up in Lufkin and we had a rule we didn't roll cars by, and what that means is you bleed the air off the brakes and you get the engine up above and you just roll it by, hoping the hand brake would roll up. And he would always come out there and get our list to take into the yard office. I was cheating where I shouldn't have been, and I rolled by, and I remembered what he told me. He said "I sure hope one day I don't ever drive up here and there is a car rolling by." I never said nothing else. I knew I was caught. (laughter) I knew

I was going to get chewed on but, he never did say nothing to me. I never will forget one night my wife went in labor with one of my kids and George was going to pick me up. He told the engineer, who was Sammy Tucker, he said "Sammy, Mike's wife is in labor bring it on into Diboll." And, then we could almost hear him hesitate because he didn't believe in speeding out there. He said "ya'll don't get to going too fast, ya'll just come on in." And, on the way to the hospital he gave me an option of going through Hoshall or around 59 and he told me he said "now if that train is on that track and we get blocked, it's going to be your fault. You have an option which way to go." And, we chose Hoshall but needless to say she didn't deliver until the next morning and everything. He was with me on both my kids when they were born.

**Foster:** That would have been the Southern Pacific train.

**Smith:** Yes sir, Southern Pacific then. I was so scared I was going to lose a day's pay with my daughter. I would call in about every thirty or forty minutes and my wife was in labor and I said "she hasn't had it yet" and she had it at 5:09 and we got off work at five o'clock and so...the nice thing to say is I really didn't lose a day's pay. But, they take care of you out there. If you were honest, TSE they took care of you and everything. But, George and Don and Charlie, I thank God for them because they have helped me in a lot of ways that back then in the seventies and the eighties I didn't know I would use some of their experience today. One of the best memories I can remember is when Don had just took over and we had a big derailment in Lufkin and George had just retired and Willard Conner had just retired and Charlie and, Don and I drove up there and that car was turned over nearly and I looked at Don and Don looked at me and before both of us could say anything I told Don, I said "I think we need to call George and Willard" and Don said "I was thinking the same thing." So, I can still use these guys for helping me out on this railroad and they will come and help me anytime I call. The friendship and the loyalty you just don't have that in today's business world. I think that is what a lot of companies now are lacking, is leadership like these guys had.

**Harrison:** We worked together in the office there, the three of us and I don't guess we ever had a cross word. At times we disagreed with one another but I don't suppose we ever had a cross word or a falling out.

**Harrison:** You had an advantage over us, you made our paycheck. (laughter)

**Foster:** He is the one that made our paychecks out.

**Harrison:** And Charles had it on the other because he had to sign them.

**Foster:** I remember one time after George retired we got a car on the ground at the Particleboard [plant], it was before you got to the road crossing, you know, and George happened to come down that day in his pickup and he was parked there and walked out there and didn't say a word. I said "well George what do you think about it?" "Charlie you got a problem." He went back and got in that pickup and left. (laughter)

**Smith:** I tell you one thing, I don't know how George done it when we had the Lufkin end in the day and.... I would get to work at eight o'clock or seven thirty and he would be at the office and we would work sometime until one or two or three o'clock in the morning at night and he would still be out there with us. And then you would come back to work he would be in his office. I don't see how the guy ever got any sleep and it just amazes me. We had three times as much business back then as we do now and I just don't see how he done it then. I tell you TSE, if it wasn't for George, Willard, Don, and Charlie, there wouldn't be no hundred year anniversary. I can tell you that!

**Foster:** We had it scattered from Diboll to Palestine. He was watching a pretty good distance. He was always within a phone distance.

**Smith:** And what was neat George had a safety rule, and this was one of the few times you could argue with a conductor. George had a rule you didn't put a car on the track that you didn't have to put it on there. And, if you had to make a switch with a conductor and you didn't agree all you had to say was hey we are breaking George Honea's rule and we are putting a car on the track that doesn't belong there and he doesn't believe in that. In other words you don't make a switch unless you have too and that is good advice today because if you don't have to do it, don't do it.

**JG:** In other words, don't drag a car around with a locomotive until you are ready to put it where it's going, pretty much?

**Smith:** One thing Don told me when I signed in, and he told me and I had Don for a little league coach but this was serious what he told me. He said "if you don't think it's safe for TSE you walk off from it because you will not get fired if you think something is unsafe to do, you just don't worry about that." And, George he brought that to our attention several times. If it was unsafe you didn't do it, you didn't do it.

**Dover:** I believe the worst thing I was ever got on to, but it was through a little bitty note from Diboll, depot agent at Rusk, "Carroll, how long do you plan on keeping them three boxcars over there at Calhoun Packing House? We don't want to buy them." (laughter) "Charlie Foster" [note signed by Charlie Foster]. I don't know how that happened.

**Foster:** I'll take the blame.

**Dover:** Old George just laughed about that note.

**Smith:** George was on vacation one time and Charlie was doing the general manager of the night job and everything and I came in and got the list and we had about forty cars. We were plugged up with cars and he gave me that list and I said "what am I going to do with all these cars?" He said "I'm not the conductor you are, you handle it." That is what he told me.

**Foster:** We had some good times.

**JG:** You got something to say George?

**Honea:** No.

**JG:** I'm trying to remember some of the things that George has told me and Gary Mike has told me when we haven't had the tape machine going.

**Smith:** Well, George I will say this, he may get mad at me but, I don't care. When we would catch a hobo in the box car, our philosophy was that we called George and he would tell them to go up to Temple Associates that they were hiring. He would take them up there and they hadn't had a bath or anything and he would tell them they were hiring them left and right.

**Honea:** See what I'm talking about, incriminating.

**Smith:** Brother-in-law Haywood. (laughter)

**JG:** Now, who was it, Mr. Shurley, that drove the car off in the pit?

**Smith:** Yes sir.

**JG:** You were telling me something about that.

**Smith:** Carroll can tell you about that.

**Dover:** I wasn't there that day, I was working nights.

**Smith:** Mr. Shurley was our shop foreman and we had a rule you didn't drive a car over the pit to change oil unless you had somebody spotting it. We came in from switching and the car was in the pit and Fred Barkley, you would just have to hear Fred laugh to understand what I'm talking about but, he asked Jim the first question, "was he okay." He said "yes I'm okay but I hit the gas instead of the brake." He said "I got to go tell George." He said "yes, and I'm not going with you." (laughter) They had to take two wreckers to get that car out of that pit but, we laughed about that and you know it could have been real serious but, it wasn't nothing but an old damaged car.

**Honea:** Don't even think about it Mike. (laughter)

**Foster:** I can't say nothing.

**Honea:** You not going to tell it.

**Foster:** I don't know what you talking about.

**Honea:** Turn that off and I'll tell it. R. C. Green was a section hand that was moving into the office and [he] did office clean up and yard work and he was bad about dragging the mower along beside the office and it was that lap gap type siding and he'd go like a kid with a stick on a picket fence. Well here he comes down there...burr-burr-burr...so Ed Steed, the conductor, was at his desk and I walked up behind Ed and R. C. comes by the window and I was going to tap the window...

**Foster:** I was standing in the door.

**Honea:** I was going to get his attention. Well, I didn't tap it I just ran my hand all the way through the glass window and broke it and right in R. C.'s face, nose to palm, needless to say he stopped. And, "R. C. don't do that" in a real polite manner, sure...anyway then you know the next thought is, am I going to bleed to death. But, it wasn't very bad and Charlie said...he was a witness. So I go back to my little office and I come back and I tell Jimmie Beth I said "I'm going over to the shop." I told Don, Charlie and Jimmie Beth, I said "I've got to go over to the shop and I don't want to hear no one laugh when I go out that back door."

**Foster:** I reminded George of that here about six or eight months ago sometimes.

**Honea:** My arm was not cut very bad.

**JG:** Y'all mentioned Jimmie Beth, now who is that?

**Honea:** Paul Durham's wife.

**JG:** Can y'all just name some of the employees that you worked with and what their jobs were?

**Honea:** At that time a T. Bourrous was a lady that worked in the office. There was some others Jonathan.

**JG:** T...like the initial T?

**GH:** When we all came to work it was a young lady named Clara Ferguson, well she got married after she came to work. She married Bill Ferguson here in Diboll. What was her first name?

**Harrison:** Her name was Clara, she was a Hampton and married a Ferguson.

**Honea:** And we had several others that worked short time but, they all worked a good long time.

**Harrison:** Deedee Groom worked for TSE for a while.

**JG:** G-r-o-o-m?

**Harrison:** Yes, she worked in the corporate office. It's not Groom anymore. I guess she married somebody else. Marguerite Rush used to work for TSE. That is Patsy's aunt, she worked for TSE.

**JG:** Now did Geraldine Poulard, she worked there a little bit didn't she?

**Foster:** Not after I came. She was over at the Fiberboard when I came.

**Harrison:** I don't think she worked for TSE, not to my knowledge. For awhile there was Melba Price worked for TSE for awhile too.

**Foster:** Lillie Grumbles, she married a Bounds.

**Smith:** She worked on the copy machine pretty regular.

**Foster:** Yes, one good one on that, she always kept the copier cleaned up and everything where it would work. She knew more about it than anybody so we...business started getting bad and George said you are going to have to lay her off. So, he had me to do it. I went in there and told her I said "Lillian we just don't have enough business" but, we did get her a job down at Temple, I think or recommended her. She got a job down there. Well, she wound up over there at that place...

**Smith:** Atlas Roofing.

**Foster:** Atlas, now it was still Temple then and, the copy machine went out one day. I called over there and I said "Lillian we need you to come over here and see what is wrong with this copy machine." She said, "Charles Foster you fired me!" (laughter)

**JG:** You said, no I didn't, George did! (laughter)

**Foster:** I believe I hung up. But, I got my enjoy over it. I didn't really expect her to come but, I just couldn't resist that.

**Smith:** Jimmie Beth Durham she taught me a lot of the accounting, her and Charlie. Jimmie Beth could have been a school teacher I think. She would teach you so simple and I still have the charts I use today that Jimmie Beth made me. I was so hard headed and I couldn't figure it out so she made a simple chart and I still have that chart and I use it every day to do car hire and its how you figure your hours on a car you got to pay per diem or money on. But, Jimmie Beth she was smart. She was really smart.

**Harrison:** She was smarter than most of us. She was good to have. We relied a lot on her. I think we all did.

**Smith:** We did.



**JG:** Tell me Don about some of the work that you did? Gary told me that you did quite a bit of insurance and payroll and a little bit of everything.

**Harrison:** I did the group insurance, payroll and the taxes.

**JG:** This was all when TSE was its own company.

**Harrison:** Yes, and the corporate accounting...

**Smith:** The stockholders papers.

**Harrison:** Yes, stockholder reports and just whatever needed to be done.

**JG:** When did y'all move into the building that you are in now?

**Harrison:** What was it '71 or something like that?

**JG:** Before that y'all were in the building built in the late forties, the one over here just inside the sawmill?

**Harrison:** Right.

**JG:** I was over there the other day. They are going to tear down that smokestack.

**Honea:** Is that right?

**JG:** Yes, it's going to be a long drawn out thing but, they were saying they were going to tear down the old office building, the TSE building. But, that is all in the works.

**Harrison:** We were talking in there a little bit ago about the long hours the men used to work. I remember when C. A. Jordan was in charge and the vice president when I went to work down there, and he was the type of person that never said anything to anybody. He would just "hum" and he never took his pipe out of his mouth and never took his hat off. The only time he took his hat off it had to be something special. So, the men, especially on the crew ever now and then they would bring in things to give C.A. from their garden and what have you. So one day, one Friday one of the men brought in that evening a squirrel and gave it to C. A. to take home and cook that thing. Well C. A. laid it on his desk, that dead squirrel already skinned and took his hat and laid it over that squirrel. When we got ready to leave that day everybody just jumped up and we left. We got off and C.A. never thought about his hat or anything till Monday morning. We got back down there and you couldn't walk in that place. (laughter) He barely could get in there and get that hat. I think he finally let that hat air out and he wore it but, you talk about stinking. It stunk, that squirrel in that hat. (laughter)

**JG:** That was in the old building.

**Harrison:** In the old building, right. Also one time, C.A. didn't say much to anybody and, Fate Patrick was the...back during the time when he was the conductor, and he said one day he went in there and Mr. Jordan walked in and he said "C.A." he said "we need more money." Mr. Jordan didn't say anything and walked out. After a while he came back and sat down and he said "all right, I'm going to give you more money." He said "we are going to go to work at four o'clock and we are going to get an hour extra." And, Mr. Patrick said "Hell, C.A. we want more money, we don't want more hours." But that is what they got.

**Smith:** Fate Patrick, he was a character.

**Harrison:** Yes, he was.

**Smith:** Mine and his birthdays are the same day, and he used to call me every year on my birthday and practically tell me where to go and just laugh, you know, and hang up. The first night I ever went to Lufkin at night I was head brakeman, and before we left Diboll he came over here and he put his finger right in my face and he said, "you better not go to sleep and you better let me know what's coming on them crossings. Do I make myself clear?" Fate didn't weigh a hundred pounds soaking wet and I was scared to death of that guy, man. I would stay awake the whole time when I was running with Mr. Fate Patrick.

**Harrison:** One thing I remember when I first went to work down there is when Clara Ferguson, she worked in the traffic office next to Mr. Jordan. They kept all the doors closed at that time. Nobody went into anybody else's office except Mr. Jordan and he would just walk in but he closed the doors. All the doors were closed. He would dump his pipe out and dump it over in the trash can and strike his match to light his pipe again and when he struck it he made one strike and then threw his match and sometimes it landed in the trash can also, and then fire...it would just [unintelligible] and he would holler...he would holler, "Jackson, the darned office is on fire!" (laughter)

**JG:** That was Boots?

**Harrison:** Yes, well [no, it was] Mr., what was his name that used to be in there and Mary would make the cake for?

**Smith:** Professor Jackson.

**Harrison:** Yes, Professor Jackson. Professor would run in there with a bucket of water or something and put it out you know. He would sometimes he...in fact he burned up a lot of car records that were good ones, you know, that had got down on the floor and caught on fire. But, invariably that thing would catch on fire. A lots of times he would throw that match, you know, when he lit it and it would go under somebody's door. I've come into my office and walked around and put a match out that was under the door. He never...it never phased him though, he just kept doing it. He never took that pipe out and that is where he struck it on that safe that we had...I guess it's still over there.

**Smith:** Still over there.

**Harrison:** On one side of that safe is where you will see, there is still big places where he struck that match, struck his matches.

**Smith:** Safe is still there in the vault. You need to look at that [to JG].

**Harrison:** He was a character.

**Smith:** George taught me how to get rid of the government men which is F.R.A. When they come in to check your records, just turn the air conditioner off. They won't stay long. Once you turn that off, and I learned that from George, when they come in I turn the air conditioners off where they will leave. You learn a little bit from each one of them but, Willard Conner he used to tickle me. When we would jump the track and it would be a bad one and he would look at it and he would sort of give you that little laugh and he said, he always said "Mike if you are going to have a railroad you are going to jump the track every now and then. I don't care, it's going to jump the track." And, Mr. Conner he was a good friend and he had one eye but I guarantee you one thing when he looked at a track it was level when he left the jacks off of it.

**JG:** When did y'all start ballasting the roads Mr. Honea? You were telling me one time about ballasting.

**Honea:** Mr. Jackson started getting ballast before he retired.

**Foster:** That was back in the sixties.

**Honea:** And we put it out but we never did get it under the ties and then after he retired we were given instructions to upgrade the railroad and we gradually...what about five years probably?

**Harrison:** About five years.

**Honea:** We ballasted the whole railroad and changed out most of the rails all up to seventy five pounds and put the ballast under the ties. Well it wasn't under the ties really it was just sitting there looking pretty but it wasn't doing anything.

**Harrison:** Up until then we just had mostly just had...well we had some seventy five but mostly sixty pound rail, sixty and seventy five.

**Honea:** Can I tell them about you going riding with Mr. Jackson in the Pontiac?

**Harrison:** You sure can. (laughter)

**Honea:** You were there longer than any of them.

**END OF SIDE ONE.**

**BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO.**

**JG:** George was telling us about Boots Jackson.

**Honea:** Mr. R. A. Boots Jackson was the general manager. Don and Charles and I worked for him and he had acquired himself an old model Pontiac automobile with rail wheels. You could run it on the railroad, on or off. He drove it a little too fast. His speed limit was 20 miles an hour and I had ridden with him we were probably going 45. So, he comes back one day and says let's go out on the track. Of course, he needs a hand to help him set the wheels to get them all hooked up and I told him that I had a bunch of [unintelligible] to check and I couldn't go. So, he goes to Don and he didn't ask him really, he just says, "Come on." The temperature then was about like we are having right now, about a hundred during mid day. They went out all the way across highway 94 into Boggy Slough and they decided to come back over land. That is when we still had a railroad all the way up to highway 103. And Don can interrupt me anytime he wants to, but, anyway, he was coming out of Boggy Slough and it was so dry and sandy that sheets of sand would just come over the hood because this old thing set about that close to the ground, about six inches and it got too hot. Now, you want to tell them what happened when it got too hot?

**Harrison:** When it got too hot the sand was coming up so fast and he was driving so fast it was coming up in sheets. You couldn't even see out anywhere from the windshield. Finally that car just sat down and stopped, "Whop!", just like that. And he says, "I wonder what is wrong?" (laughter) So, we got out, raised the hood, you could not see the motor. You could not see it at all. It was nothing but sand, dirt under there. He had plowed up that whole countryside through there. It had to be towed in and it had to be washed and the motor had to be changed. He finally had to get rid of it, you couldn't even repair it.

**Honea:** How far did you have to walk?

**Harrison:** We walked, I don't know, several miles. Well before we got there, when we first started from Diboll we were down on the track and he was doing about forty-five or fifty miles per hour on that rail. And, I mean that rail I mean it was just..., well I thought, "This is it! I'll never get out of this alive. (laughter) I am doomed!" I said, "Mr. Jackson, aren't we driving a little bit too fast?" "Ah, no!" And I knew I was just as well to shut up. "I'm doing the driving," I knew that is what that meant. But, even though we got over there and did all of that, I was glad of that because at least we were on land. Up until then, I thought we were on air.

**Honea:** Don said, "why wouldn't you go with him?" I said, "because it was your turn." (laughter)

**Dover:** That ride with him was like mine with George on that motor car that day. “Come go out there with me, I want to take that motor car. I want to try it out.” He sat up on the back of it all humped up there and that thing...bump, bump, bump. I bet we were running sixty miles an hour and I looked and we were that close to the rail. I said “this thing is going to jump and we ain’t gonna...scared wasn’t the word. “Oh, it ain’t gonna do nothing.”

**JG:** Judge Crager was telling me the other day a story about his dad on a motor car. They were out around the Boggy Slough area and said his dad always brought back some whiskey and stuff on the car and he had that thing loaded and anyway, somehow the thing got started without him on it and started heading back to Diboll. And, he somehow telephoned in. I guess his dad was the telephone guy anyway, he telephoned in and they threw all the switches to get the car to go through and they derailed it over here at the end of the line.

**Honea:** Yes, if you push it to get a reverse start it can go without you. If you do that and if you didn’t jump on it...

**JG:** Yes, he said he was trying to get on it but, he fell down or something. It was a pretty funny story. It might have been Mr. Jordan, and he had just heard that the car had wrecked and he ran out there and he saw the wreck and everything and he thought that Harold’s dad was dead or something. I don’t know, he played some kind of joke on him. It was pretty funny story.

**Harrison:** Well we had a lot of fun. For me, I enjoyed working for TSE and I enjoyed working for the Temple family. They were good to us and Mr. Temple was not what you call a very demanding person. He said what he expected and that is what he got but, he didn’t tell you how to do it he told you when to do it and he said when he wanted it.

**JG:** Do it right and do it right now!

**Harrison:** How you did it that was up to you. He allowed you that. Once he told you, he didn’t interfere with you. When he said what he would do and what he wouldn’t do that is what he meant but, you could count on his word. I enjoyed working with everybody there. George, Charles, I think we had a lot of fun.

**JG:** Let’s just maybe get each one of you to comment briefly on how you got into TSE. Gary Mike said he was wanting a day job and I think George said he worked for Southern Pacific. His dad was a long time Southern Pacific employee and said you wanted to work on a short line, didn’t want to go union.

**Honea:** Oh, no it was a day job and I had a night job so I wanted to change.

**JG:** So, maybe just each one of you how did you come to work for the TSE.

**Honea:** Charles and I both worked for Southern Pacific. I came first and he came six months later.

**Foster:** Six months later.

**Honea:** We worked together with the exception of six months right at 42 years. Don had already made his stake. To tell you the truth there wasn't one cross word because Charlie was always taking care of me. Why would I want to jump on him?

**JG:** Did you work in Lufkin too?

**Foster:** Yes, for thirteen years. Boots Jackson brought George down here and Boots Jackson came in there one day and asked me did I want to come down here. That was when Mr. Jordan was retiring. And, I said "well you want me to come down there and brake-in?" "No, you just come the first of August and go to work." That was the day that Mr. Jordan wasn't there. So, I come down and I didn't know what to do but, they...Don and I worked together. Don and I worked together there in accounting. Well he told you what he did and it wound up I had the freight accounting and the car accounting. Of course in later years I was in charge and I had the girls to help. That is the way I came down to TSE. Just like George I was working evening or nights with Southern Pacific. Most of my experience was yard clerk.

**Honea:** Shortly after that Mr. Jackson had a stroke wasn't it a mild stroke?

**Harrison:** A mild stroke.

**Honea:** And we really wasn't given any instructions for anybody to take charge. We just all kept doing what we did. I don't know how many weeks that we didn't see or hear from anybody, we just carried on just like we still had a boss but we didn't have a boss. Don was the oldest of all and he had been there two years.

**Harrison:** About two years.

**Honea:** We was running around like we thought we knew what we were doing. (laughter)

**Harrison:** We didn't ask anybody if we knew what we were doing. Nobody told us we didn't know what we were doing so we just did it.

**JG:** That was in '61?

**Honea:** Yes, we finally got a letter from Mr. Temple, thanking us for carrying on, but we wasn't really ever...just no one said, "you do this, you do this." Mr. Jackson was off with sick leave.

**JG:** And, what was wrong with him?

**Honea:** He had a minor stroke.

**JG:** A stroke, okay.

**Harrison:** He was eventually confined to a wheel chair.

**Honea:** But, he worked a good bit after that.

**Harrison:** Yes, he worked a while.

**Honea:** He was there a good bit after that.

**Harrison:** Yes, that is just what I was thinking.

**JG:** George, tell the story about, this is I guess in Lufkin when you worked for Southern Pacific, the fellow, the banana train.

**Honea:** Oh this was just a joke. The Southern Pacific, it's when I worked for Southern Pacific and, the train operator had a lot of people in the office then. There was ever kind of job in the world. He got a lineup every eight hours from each operator for the oncoming shift. This particular evening in the afternoon it was a log train coming through going somewhere back over from Polk County out to Keltys. And this old gentleman that was the operator, he put the ACL #110 [Angelina County Lumber Company Engine 110] and in parenthesis he would put "bananas." Well everybody knew it was wrong and the agent comes over one day and decides that is the last time he ever wants to see the word bananas. We called it a sight and this guy's name was Louie Lasham. "Louie I don't want to see bananas on this sight again." The next day the same thing, just a typical joke on the railroad.

**Foster:** That is when Mr. Woodall was there. Everything up there you got a letter, you had to acknowledge receipt and understanding.

**Honea:** Oh, don't look at me like that. (laughter)

**Smith:** That is where you got that! George used that. We had to sign everything. (laughter) That is good!

**Honea:** I didn't want you putting bananas. You see right here where you signed this. (laughter)

**Smith:** Yes, that is right.

**Honea:** Can we quit?

**JG:** We can quit. I sure appreciate it.

**TAPE STOPPED  
END OF SIDE TWO  
END OF INTERVIEW**