

JEFF HOLBERG
Interview 033a
1978[?]
Diane Tate[?], Interviewer
Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Diane Tate, Diboll City Manager Jeff Holberg (1976-1981) speaks about his job as city manager and the projects underway throughout the city. He speaks about the changes in recreational facilities and the sense of town pride.

Comments: (as noted by the transcriber)

The interview with Jeff Holberg, City Manager of Diboll, begins immediately with a question. The interviewer does not identify herself, the interviewee nor the place and date of the interview. While this information has been recorded on the label of the cassette tape, there seems to be some uncertainty as to who conducted the interview and when it took place (these items appear with a question mark on the label.)

The tape lasts approximately 12 minutes and has some audible difficulties. There is a distinct clicking noise that can be heard throughout the entire interview. Some words and phrases were difficult to understand. These spots have been marked in the typescript as unintelligible.

Reference was also made on numerous occasions to a particular club, the name of which I could not determine. This has been denoted in the transcript by a blank line followed by a word club.

Diane Tate (hereafter DT): We want to know when you came here and we'd also like to know how it's changed. How Diboll's changed.

Jeff Holberg (hereafter JH): Well, I came to Diboll in August of 1976.

In some ways it's hard to tell, specific changes, when you, when you gone through. Ah, they don't stand out as much as let's say, if you were here, say, and come back five years later. Then the changes are obvious. But, yes, there have been changes. From, a management viewpoint, a lot of the changes are, considerable. There are several hundred thousand dollars worth of improvements, underground. That no one sees. There are some bricks and the mortar, and mortar kinds of improvements that, that I happened to witness. Ah, we built a new police and fire station; starting in 1976, we saw a corporate office building built, a library added on to, major renovations in the shopping center, new housing divisions. Dual growth for the community. New industry being built.

DT: What about the park area?

JH: The park. We also spent quite a bit of money in the park. Ah, as of today it's not all completed. When they built the new office building in Whispering Pines Park it became evident that we were losing some of the recreational facilities. We were losing the swimming pool, the scout house, and the tennis court. The idea started out to replace just

the swimming pool and the tennis courts. I had a feeling at the time in just talking to the different people in the community that, that it probably was an urge to do more. We began talking with Booster Club, with city council, the park and recreation board, people with local industry and the general consensus was this was a golden opportunity, let's see how much we can do. What are the things we really want. We can prepare, the baseball fields were on private property that was prime for development. We felt like that it was time for those to be placed in a public area. Land dedicated to public use. As a result, what started out as about a 140,000 dollar project turned into one that cost over half a million dollars. We built a swimming pool, four ball fields, jogging course, a lake, and tennis courts. We moved one of the older buildings into the park to replace the scout house. Ah, we added the additional recreational facilities which, quite a few people enjoy but not that many people have access to. We built a covered basketball court. It went beyond just what the government was willing to do for the public, but, to the point of what the public would bear and what they're willing to put their money into. The Booster Club contributed heavily to making the improvements in the park something lasting, with a sense of value, for the use of the community.

But more than that, I've, I've watched the progress of Diboll, in the rather unique sense, of community spirit. The town has always been like that. From Arthur Temple all the way down. And that community spirit has grown, in the past four or five years. It hasn't declined. In 1980 when Diboll Day came around everybody thought that we wouldn't meet previous goals because the economy was so bad. Four hundred people laid off. Before it closed, by gosh, we set a new record. That speaks well of any community. But it speaks even more highly of Diboll. With Diboll, by the way it came to be and the way it's grown up, years (...unintelligible...) but there are those here that, that other communities only hope to have. With contentions that you get in other parts of the country, particularly in the areas of minorities and integration, have not hit here. We haven't had those kinds of problems in near the magnitude as elsewhere, because, from top to bottom Diboll is made up of people, who accept everyone else. Just ask them. From the corporate leaders down to the garbage men, everyone tends to view everyone else as being just another human being. And, that speaks very highly of the people of Diboll.

DT: What about some of the recreational programs in Diboll?

JH: Ah, I just happened to witness the initiation of the recreation program, for the youth, here in summer months. Ah, funded entirely by the Booster Club. The first year was no where near a success. The following years, they stuck with it and developed, ah, a pretty good program. Ah, I'm not sure if it's going to be an ongoing one or how long it will succeed, but the effort has been made and it has been rewarded. Ah, our other more traditional types of recreation programs, such as softball and little league have grown, astoundingly. Ah, there's lots of people put in lots of hours to see that the youth of this community have activities that are of a wholesome nature. That may sound trite, but, give kids the things to do that are clean and good and you won't have as many going through the court system. And Diboll has done an outstanding job of it. These things ought to be carried on.

DT: You keep mentioning the Booster Club funding all of this. Are these programs funded in any other way besides the Booster Club?

JH: No. ah...

DT: So people continue

JH: Yes, every two years, the community raises a considerable amount of money. That may change in the future, I don't know. But, things like little league ball and the recreation program have been funded by the Booster Club. Ah, very few places will you see that. The Booster Club has had a tremendous impact on this community. Too often, we rely on government or someone else to do things for us, instead of banding together without the encouragement of the government to do something for ourselves. And, we're gonna have to get back to more of that. The Booster Club has said let's make this community something that, that we can all enjoy. It goes beyond recreational facilities and programs. There's a library, the day care center. All reflect an ongoing interest by the community, to making it something more than just a place to eat, sleep, and work.

DT: Ok. I have one last question for you. Do you think that Diboll has grown for the better or has it found people to do the changes we make?

JH: Gosh yes! Diboll, before I came here, got through the other period of "buzz through." But it is still like a jelly seed. It is still progressing. In almost every sense of the word it has progressed. We got a good industrial base, a good economic base; the town's facilities and services are equal to about everything in most other communities. And even the larger size. It's hard to define what you call progress. In some people's terms sheer numbers and size makes progress. But in Diboll quality is a bit more. We've grown in size, but without sacrificing the small town quality. Sometimes its growth has been very painful. But, on the whole, it's been for the good. And I, I cannot help but think that it will tend to go in that direction in the future. In the short run, it'll be economic, bad time, like we're going through now. Ah, but in the long run, ah, I think, we can do nothing but progress.

DT: I want to thank you for your time and...

JH: Ah, I've enjoyed, I've enjoyed it. Hope to be put down in posterity, and somebody'll think I have something nice to say.

END OF INTERVIEW