

WESLEY ASHWORTH

Interview 41a

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ABSTRACT: Life-long Angelina County native and long-time Southern Pine Lumber Company employee Wesley Ashworth recalls how life in Diboll changed from 1922 to 1984. He remembers the Great Depression, the burning of the box factory, the changes Arthur Temple, Jr. made to Diboll when he came to town in 1948, and how Diboll has evolved from small sawmill town with dirt roads to a real city. For the most part, he approves of the changes to his home town and looks back with great happiness when recalling his over 48 years of service to Southern Pine Lumber Company.

An interview with Mr. Wesley Ashworth. He lives in Diboll, Texas, and his current address is 913 Newson. Present at the interview is Joanne Musick, Bea Burkhalter, and Megan Lambert.

Megan Lambert (hereafter ML): We need you to identify yourself as if we didn't know who you are. Tell us when you were born and all that.

Wesley Ashworth (hereafter WA): This is Wes Ashworth and I was born November 22, 1899. I was born in Burke, Texas and I moved to Diboll in 1922 and I have been working for the company ever since then up 'til the end of 1964. In other words, I put in about forty-eight and a half years for the company here.

ML: What was your main occupation during that time?

WA: Well, I started out in the carpenter gang and went from there to the repair gang on the dolly run and from there to mill No.2 at night during World War I. Worked out war stamps and war savings bonds there. I left over there in 1919 and came to the shop. And I wound up in the shop, working in the shop and on the road, railroad and so that ended my career with the company.

ML: Sounds like you..... I think we are ready to go and I would be happy if you would start at the beginning and go to the end, as far as you can.....

WA: My name is Wesley Ashworth and they generally always call me "Preacher" (laugh) used to be my old name. Miss Bea remembers that. For years around here everybody said "Preacher" and, of course, I would answer to anything they called me, especially when it come time to eat. (Laugh) I started out here as a carpenter helper and then I went from there to the repair gang on the dolly run and then to mill No.2 at night. I worked out war bonds and war saving stamps in 1916 and '17 and '18. In 1919, I came

from there over to the shop and that's where I retired from the company at when I was working in the shop. I worked on the road. I was conductor, brakeman, I was fireman. In fact of the business, I run a little bit but I didn't care too much about that because I was having too much fun on the other run.

When I came here, Mr. Watson Walker was general manager over the whole plant. Mr. E. C. Durham was general manager and vice-president of the Texas Southeastern Railroad. Mr. Dred Devereaux was bridge foreman and he also wound up as construction foreman for the mill. The men in the office was Hymie Wise, Mr. Eeton, Fred Nelson, and Mr. Hefner. He was in the office. That was the office crew. The roads here were so rough you had to ride a horse, or go in a buggy, or walk. That was the only way you could get around. I remember there used to be a bridge right this side of Mr. Walker and Mr. Durham's house, there. Raymond Willis and old man Lige Christian got drunk one evening and Raymond run his right wheel off the edge of that bridge. He told old man Lige Christian, "If you wasn't so heavy we could pull out." He said, "No, you can't because we are about to turn over." He said, "I don't care about you turning over but I am going to stay in this car." (Laugh) I remember that very well. Mr. Durham, he generally always had, mostly had charge of YMCA here with the boys. He would carry us out on trips, camping trips. He was at one time manager of our baseball team here. And we had a pretty good, I would say, little sawmill team, we won nearly every game we played. We just played only on the weekends and on holidays. But we really did have a nice little country ball club.

The church houses stood upon Hines Street up there where my old house is located. The Methodist had church there one Sunday and Sunday night and the Baptist had church there on the next following Sunday. And the fifth Sunday they would take and swap about. One would have church services on the fifth Sunday and the next on the fifth would come the other's time. Finally in 1940 or '44, something like that, First Baptist Church went into full time building program and we changed over and had church then every Sunday. And finally the Methodist, they went into full time services. In fact, we really enjoyed one another when the churches were divided up. Everybody worshipped together and had a good time and everybody was friendly.

Of course, in them days there wasn't any automobiles, wasn't no TV's or nothing and people had to visit one another to enjoy themselves. That is the way people got around here in Diboll for enjoyment. After TV's and automobiles begin to come in, along in '23, and '24, and '25, why then the town looked like they were still friendly, but it look like every fellow was for hisself. Because they didn't want nobody coming in and disturbing them on their TV programs and they didn't want to disturb if they want to go for an evening or afternoon drive. They wanted that.....we all enjoyed one another and had a good time.

Roads and ditches were so bad; people had to have a light at night to come from church. People had what they called old hay burner lantern that we used for a light to travel by. I know there was one dear old lady here, I won't call her name. But anyhow she would follow along close to the young boys and their dates and that would make them mad. And they couldn't hardly get along. You remember her, Miss Bea?

Bea Burkhalter (hereafter BB): You could always tell the boys that had been out with her girls. Because the seat of their pants were scorched. (Laugh)

ML: What is the name of this lady?

BB: Ask her if you don't want to tell.

ML: You don't want to tell the name of the lady?

WA: You know Paula Jones

BB: A dear old soul.

WA: It was something back in them days, young people and the old folks.

ML: Did you call it a hay burning lantern?

WA: Yes ma'am. That's what we all called it. It was a night lantern. We called them hay burners.

ML: Like the cow kicked the lantern over.

WA: Yes ma'am. Because they smoked up so bad.

ML: I see. My goodness. Well, tell us a little about what it was like to work for the company.

WA: It was a wonderful place to work. In fact, in those days when I was working here when I was young the wages were mighty cheap but groceries, dry goods, shoes and everything else you bought was cheap.

BB: House rent.

WA: I think we lived about as good in them days as we are living now. Of course, you have more money to spend now than you did back in them days, but everybody enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it. I had some hard days and I have had some easy ones here with the company. But I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it. But I enjoyed every one of them. It was a nice place to work and there is one thing about it, the superintendents and general managers of this plant here, if one of the employees got sick and off, they really wanted to know how the people were taken care of. If you needed any assistance, they was always ready to come to your assistance. They were fine about that. I don't believe that a person then could work for a better outfit than Southern Pine Lumber Company when I was working there. Of course, it has changed to Temple Industries and all, and then to Temple-Eastex, but when it was company owned and they tell me now, it is still a fine place to work. People can't beat it. I know you can go somewhere else and may find better wages than you can here, but the wages are pretty fair now days and people is really enjoying it.

I know what they had then was an old company store and they had their clerks that waited on you. When I would buy anything they would weigh it out on these scales and Mrs. Farrington, Fannie Farrington, she was over the dry goods department and the ladies department. And when she came to Diboll, she ran a dress shop. Miss Bea, do you remember that? She ran a dress shop right beside what we called the old library. She ran that hat shop for years and finally they got her to come into the store down there as manager of the ladies department there. They were so worked out until she died and I think everybody in the whole world that ever knew Mrs. Fannie Farrington really thought she was a fine lady. She was the best.

ML: Very good things about her.

WA: She was one of the best. Mr. Bud Rutland, he was the first postmaster down here. And he and the post office was in a little old box car.... railroad box car, what they had for a post office. When the mail would come in, he would take the mail and lay it up and let the people come there get their mail and everybody else's. Everybody would laugh about it and he said, "There is no need in me going through it when you can pick it out yourself." He finally turned out to be manager over the store. He was general manager over the old commissary store. Mr. Frank Farrington, he was postmistress. Miss Zettie Kelley, she worked for him and the postmaster. Miss Bea, do you remember anybody else that worked for Mr. Farrington besides her? Frank Farrington.

BB: Bertha Bowen.

WA: Yes, that's right.

BB: You know she worked for Miss Zettie before she went down south somewhere and became postmaster down there.

WA: That's right and Miss Zettie Kelley followed her. She retired and she finally got to be head postmaster when they moved it from the old commissary building over to what they call the shopping center now. They had bank and post office over there. She was postmaster. Then after she retired, Mrs. Powell got to be postmaster, then Mr. Bernice Hines, he followed her, then they moved the post office up to the new building and he was postmaster there for a few years and then he finally retired. Then...Miss Bea, who followed him?

BB: I don't...I was trying to think....Kerr, I believe Mr. Kerr, I believe.

WA: Yes, Kerr. Yes, Mr. Kerr followed her....Mrs. Hickman she worked in the post office until she retired. Sis Davis worked there and now she retired. That crew that they always had up there, they were always friendly and always willing to stop and wait on you. And anytime you came in if anything that went wrong with your box or anything like that, just tell them and they would certainly come to your assistance right quick. They were friendly in every way. In fact of the business, everybody that I always saw that has a position where they waited on people, they was always friendly and courteous

in anything they started to do. And it made it mighty nice and might pleasant for people to follow after them. I know the kind of treatment they get when they go to them people. It was a wonderful place to work. They had some wonderful, wonderful managers and everything over each department.

The town has made a severe change since we started with Mr. Arthur Temple, Jr. When he came here and took over. I believe he came to Diboll in '49. That is when he came to Diboll as general manager. He went to improving the town and people said, "Oh, this is going to be the prettiest broke sawmill town you ever saw." And it was busy. I think it has grown every day since. They now have one of the finest offices that you can find anywhere.

The way I look at it. I think it is one of the growinest and one of the best. I know people appreciate it. The work they are doing now. They appreciate that and they have some of the finest people now working in that office that a person can be. They are just as friendly and ready to show you around and they don't mind stopping their work for a minute to show you. And it certainly makes it nice for people to go down and visit and see the improvement and all that's been made in Diboll since '49 when Mr. Temple came here. Mr. Arthur, Jr. It was pretty rough, a pretty rough place to get around in. But he certainly has improved it. Good concrete streets and all.

The old Baptist church up there, when we got ready to move it Milton Bradford was pastor here and he went to Mr. Arthur Temple and wanted to buy some land to build a new church house on. So Mr. Temple said, "No, I won't sell you any land, but I will give you some land right across the highway from where the shopping center is now." And it went on for a couple of months or more and Mr. Temple called Mr. Bradford back in the office and told him, he says, "If you will trade me that land back for some land, I'll give you land over there next to the pecan orchard over there. I will guarantee you I'll build a road and black top it from the highway down to the church or either do that or concrete it if you will swap land." He said, "Let me call a meeting." He called the deacons all together and Mr. George Smith he was chairman of the deacons at that time, and he said, "I think that is one of the best moves that we ever had in Diboll." He says to get a building off the highway because Mr. Temple wanted to keep it for commercial property. And so he gave us the land where the First Baptist Church is now and built us a highway down there to it. I always give Mr. Bradford credit for getting this land because he went down and made the arrangements for the land for the First Baptist Church is now. I think we have a mighty pretty church building. People enjoys and I will always be grateful for Milton Bradford for the work that he did here in establishing the First Baptist Church where it is located now. I know Miss Bea remembers when the old church was up on the hill. About how the boys would knock out the windows, lights and...it would keep people busy putting in windows, lights and putting in doors. They would even tear them down.

Joanne Musick (hereafter JM): Oh...how did they do that? With rocks?

WA: With rocks and brickbats and anything they could get their hands on that would go through the walls and glass. There were some pretty rough kids around here but there is one thing about it, they would always go to church.

ML: They went to church anyhow, but broke the windows.

WA: They went to church and look to see what they had torn up. That is where the funny part was to see what they had torn up.

ML: Go and see what they had torn up.

WA: At least it was still a good town to live in and still is. Nice improvements down here in the housing development. Nice places and nice people with the old retirement people. I know Mr. Arthur Temple either sold this land or give it to the government to build these places and I think it is a wonderful place to live. It was certainly nice of him and it is well kept, too.

ML: Oh....it is beautiful....beautiful.

WA: A person couldn't wish for anything any better.

BB: How many units are there in this one and that one over there and over on....?

WA: Miss Bea, I would just have to ask them. I don't know.

BB: Just wondered exactly how many units.

WA: I imagine around forty or fifty.

BB: I imagine there are forty right in here where you are. Anyhow there is people over behind you and that row down...I've forgotten the name of them...across the street. I just wondered how many units they had built when it first started.

ML: I was talking to Mrs. Inez Asher this morning over here. And she spent a lot of her childhood in Fastrill. And in fact, she was there during the Depression and she said that they hardly knew there was a Depression, because of their relationship to the company. I wondered if you felt that was true in Diboll, too. That you were kind of insulated from the effects of the Depression.

WA: It certainly was. A lot of the times that I just made one and two days a week and was proud to get that much. That Depression it really learned people back in them days the value of a dollar. People of today...I hope they never do have to go through one like I did, but if they did, why they would realize and began to appreciate the value of a dollar. They sure would. Because it was rough back in them days.

I know out at Fastrill at that log camp out there that was one of as pretty logging camp that a person ever went into. It had wide streets in it, had long streets, had sycamore trees up and down the streets and they were really pretty. Of course, it was a sandy hill, but it was certainly a beautiful logging camp. Had the homes fixed up pretty nice for those employees out there, both white and colored. It was really fixed....beautiful.

ML: What work were you doing during the Depression?

WA: I was working in the shop and on the road.

ML: In the shop...but sometimes they couldn't give you more than a couple of days work a week.

WA: That's right. Lots of the time it was just one day a week on the log train.

ML: Well..... Yes.

WA: It was rough back in those days.

ML: Did you hear a lot of talk about Hoover hogs and all that?

WA: Beg you pardon?

ML: Did you hear a lot of talk about Hoover hogs? And stuff..

WA: Well....that was all you could hear say. The first time when you saw any rabbits running they would say the Depression is about over because I saw a Hoover hog running around. They called rabbits, "Hoover Hogs". It was rough back in those days. It certainly was. The company was really good to employees because they wanted them to stay because they knew what sawmill hands were back in those days. And what they had was already trained up and they knew what it cost to train them a new hand. And the company did all they could do to hold their people together. They were really nice to them. They sure was. You couldn't ask for anything any better. Because they didn't bring the Depression on. We don't know who brought it on. But I know one thing, people always cussed Hoover about bringing on the Depression. But if Wall Street and all would listen to Herbert Hoover, there never would have been a Depression. He tried to get them to keep that money rolling and not have no depression, and they wouldn't do it. Times when he was in office, they tell me, that he never drew any money for his salary. That he paid his help out the salary that he got. What little salary he had left was very little. Herbert Hoover paid his own employees there in the office out of his own salary.

When John Kennedy was elected president, he never did collect any money. He told them he didn't need it. After he got killed, his wife didn't take nothing.

ML: What did you think of Roosevelt?

WA: Roosevelt...well, I tell you, if it hadn't been for Roosevelt bring on the NRA and all, we would still be under a depression for a long time. These people that gives him "Hail Columbus," about what he had done in the foreign countries and all like that. I think Roosevelt was one of the finest Presidents that we have ever had and I think next to him, John F. Kennedy would have followed along in his footsteps. I think John F.

Kennedy would have made a fine President and I know that Franklin D. Roosevelt was, because he put a many man to work that was on starvation.

ML: Yes.

WA: He really did. I think he was a wonderful president. These people didn't like him, but I did.

ML: Who didn't like him?

WA: Who was that?

ML: Who did not like him?

WA: Oh, there was a lot of people right today that give Roosevelt down the country....right today.

ML: Because of selling land and giving land to people.

WA: That's right. Because he was helping people that was suffering...that was really suffering. Roosevelt helped a many person....especially when he brought on that NRA and that WPA. He began to bring that Depression out into life and people began to prosper again. Everybody begin working and you hardly ever heard of anybody being hungry or in distress any more. Times were picking up. I tell you...I think 'til yet that Roosevelt was one of the finest presidents that the United States ever had.

ML: How about the CCC? Was there very much of that around here?

WA: Oh yes. There was. There certainly was. There was a lot of people working for that. That was what we always called the PWA. That CCC business because they had people in the Army. Boys would join the Army and would get so much a week...of course, they got their board and that is where a lot of the boys got to go to work because they didn't have no work and they joined that CCC business. These people said that was a waste of money, but I can't figure it out how it was when you are helping someone that is really naked and hungry and you give them a job and put them to work so they can survive and feed their family. I don't think that is wasting money. I may be wrong in my ideas about it, but I don't think it's wasting the government's money. Because they had it laying up there and they ought to put it to some use. And it went back to the government anyhow. People got some benefits from it. I think the CCC and WPA were two nice things that Roosevelt hatched up. I really do.

ML: How about Social Security?

WA: Well, we started Social Security in 1937. These people didn't like that until after they found out what it was all about and then they began to appreciate Social Security. I still think that Social Security is a fine thing for old, retired people because there was a

lot of people that couldn't lay up much before they retired and Social Security has certainly helped a many people and hospitals and drug stores. It has really been a blessing to old people. I still think we live in one of the best countries that the good Lord ever invented, the United States, I still love it. I went through some hard times, but I still love the United States.... I sure do.

ML: When you talk about those hard times during the Depression, and you said that sometimes you only had one days work a week, how did you make ends meet during that time?

WA: Well.....lady.....there wasn't but one way and you had to depend on the good Lord... that was the only way out... it sure was. You know He always sends us the Good Book...He always sends us the sparrow and He feeds them and all like that and certainly if people will trust in Him, He will certainly care more for a human being than He does for a sparrow. He tells us in His word that He will take care of us and I don't think that anybody that will trust in the good Lord will go hungry for anything they need. I think their needs will always be supplied. There will always be a way arranged. If we look at it in one sense of the word, we don't own nothing in this world. The good Lord owns it all. He gave it to us. He gives us strength and health to get out an work and make a living. In fact if it wasn't for Him giving it to us, I don't know. He provides for us. He certainly does.

ML: Do you think that people used to share more in those times when they had to share and help each other out.

WA: Why they did. I remember many, many times when I was working up there at the shop... when a person got sick, people donated and make up their hospital bill and pay that for them. I have helped do that many a times and for many persons. And people living in their homes that burned, they would take up a collection and build them a home. Miss Bea, you remember when Gertrude Bonner's home burned out there at the Chapel. We took up and collection and built her home for she was a widow woman and we took up a collection and built her a nice home.

BB: We used to always bury the dead, too. You would take up the money and pay the bill.

WA: Yes. Yes. Young people around here would sit up at night when people would pass away and there wasn't no funeral home or nothing. Young people would sit up at night and have helped dig many a graves out at Ryan's Chapel before the undertakers got to where they done it. I have laid off and helped dig many a graves. I have helped put a many a person away.

BB: That is one way that we made it during the Depression....everybody did their part. If you remember those community gardens that we had over there....across the highway. Everybody had a community garden up there. You went over there and worked it and then you divided your vegetables and we canned everything we made over there....

ML: Who established the community gardens?

WA: The company....

ML: And anybody who wanted a little garden could....?

WA: Anybody that was willing to work and try to make them a living, they could go over there and pick them out some land and go to work on it and make them a garden. Mr. Walker provided tools and teams to work it with.

ML: Teams, too.

WA: He certainly did. He would always see that people had something if they just would try. All they had to do was just get out and try a little bit. Even if it was in the Depression, it was a wonderful place to live. I know people have a hard time, but it was a wonderful place to live.

ML: So far, I have yet to hear anything negative about living in Diboll. It seems to me that everybody just really....

WA: If people leave here you will see them coming back. When they retire they come back to Diboll. It seems to me that everybody just really....

ML: Really?

WA: Then lots of people retire that works.... and come back to Diboll. Come back and make this their home.

ML: Where did you get your nickname?

WA: Beg your pardon?

ML: Why do they call you Preacher?

WA: I would always be singing and going up there at the shop and the old shop foreman got to calling me Preacher and then everybody else got to calling me Preacher. That was all that I knew here for years was "Preacher" and nobody never did call my name. it was the preacher andpreach in church, preach out on the works and it was preaching everywhere.

ML: Because you were singing?

WA: Huh?

ML: Because you were singing and going on.

WA: Because I was singing and going on all the time.

ML: You talk about the shop...what did you do? In this shop....which shop?

WA: I was in the shop...I worked in there as a machinist helper. All maintenance shop. Finally the last several years before I retired, I took the shop foreman the last seven years and then I retired.

BB: Did you work under Gus Allen? Or did he come after you?

WA: Gus Allen was up there when I came from the mill over to the shop and he was a good blacksmith too. I believe Gus Allen was one of the best blacksmiths that I ever saw. He could really work any kind of iron he got a hold of and he could build anything. He really knew iron and knew how to temper it and knew how to fix things and we had some good lay men up there...old man Luke Quarrels, Arthur Sturrocks and a whole bunch of them up there and they were all mighty fine men. We all worked together up there...had to if we didn't, Mr. Walker would have run us off. We had to cooperate with one another.

BB: I imagine these ladies are wondering why we used a blacksmith back in those days they used mules.

ML: Inside.....

BB: Everywhere... all over. Incidentally they used mules....

ML: That was quite a job, wasn't it? To keep up with it.

WA: Going back to Texas Southeastern Railroad everybody in town called it "Take it Slow and Easy" because it was TSE, the initials of it. Well, I'm going to ride the Texas Southeastern, Take it Slow and Easy to Lufkin. Lot of passenger trains were going on the local of a morning to Lufkin and back and they would run one out there to what they called Vair out there at the camp out there, and Gipson, the company's camp was there. They would run one there and the company moved the camp up to Rayville and they run a passenger train there and they moved to Walkerton and they run a passenger train out to there and then they moved it to Bluff City and that was out at the fifty... forty-five mile marker and they run a passenger train out there. You could go out there in the afternoon and back after they went to Lufkin. People enjoyed that. Heap of times when there wasn't no passenger train and first one that came to Diboll, they would get the woods foreman to give them a pass on the log train and they would ride the caboose on the log train..

END OF SIDE ONE

BB: I forgot about those log camps you called. How many were they? Start over and tell me all about them.

WA: The first camp was out here at what they called Camp 1 and Camp 2, they were over in Trinity County. One of them was over in the Gipson Settlement, Camp 1 was and Camp 2, I can't think of the name of what they called it. Then they moved them both together up to Rayville and that is where the second camp was down there out from Walkerton and from that they went out to Bluff City and moved to White City and they logged down there from 1917, 1918, I believe it was, up to 1920 and they moved from there back to what they called Fastrill.

BB: Now Alceda [Alcedo]....

WA: Well, Alceda, that was a branch of it and after they cut out there, Alceda [Alcedo] ... they brought them to Fastrill. That is where the camp got enlarged there... that was one of the most beautiful camps a person ever saw. And everybody that lived there some of them are living here now... and they will still tell you now that they had rather live in Fastrill than live in Diboll.

ML: Mrs. Asher said this morning.

WA: They will all tell you that. They enjoyed it...it was a wonderful place to live. A real pretty place to live.

JM: How did they live out at the camps? Tents?

WA: No... they built houses. The first camp they had tents... first camp had tents... after they moved...

BB: Some of them had boxcars that they lived in... passenger cars.... When they moved Fastrill here Willis Jordan was still living in one because they parked them across from my old house. That is where Pat got her arm cut off. His two-year-old baby and they had parked that car there until they could get moved into their house. She got out and was playing there and that is when the train cut that baby's arm off.

ML: Oh, her daddy....

WA: Dr. Tally, he was the doctor out at Walkerton. He was the camp company doctor out there and they finally brought Dr. Tally into Diboll and he was the head doctor here for the company for years and then they brought... I can't think of the doctor's name that relieved him. But anyhow when they went out and put in a camp at Gilmer, what they called... Alceda [Alcedo] Camp, they had a doctor out there by the name of Lukey... Dr. Lukey. I helped build some houses.... some rooms onto his house. I was in the carpenter crew. When they went on to Fastrill, Dr. Turner... anyhow he had a son that was good looking. I remember Dr. Turner out there.

BB: That was Harold's Daddy. That Harold Turner's daddy.

WA: Yes. I can't remember....

ML: It will probably come to you in a little while.

WA: Anyhow, I think the first doctor that the company had here was named ... Dr... Dr. Matthews. He was the first doctor here.

BB: Was Dr. Cook a company doctor?

WA: No... he just practiced here. Dr. Matthews was the first and the dentist. Wonderful doctor, but I hadn't think of his name yet.

BB: No, he just practiced on the side.

WA: One of the doctors was already in here and I can't think of the first one that followed him, but anyhow...

BB: Dr. Mann....

WA: Dr. Mann and Dr. Smith, Dr. Crab, Dr. Dale, Dr. Chandler, Dr. Hoot, Dr. Eddins, Dr. Rice....

ML: My, you sure can remember them... Great!

BB: Wes's mind is still working.

ML: I don't know how he does it...

WA: Camp..... I believe he would help us...everybody said he was one of the best pneumonia doctors that they ever saw. He never lost a case while he was in Fastrill to pneumonia. Daddy said he was wonderful.

ML: Was there a lot of pneumonia up there?

WA: Ooooh, yes. Back in those days, lady, when the flu and all was raging back in 1917 and 1918 there was a world of it. There was a world of flu... Miss Bea remembers that. They died here in this sawmill town, like hogs with cholera. Many a person passed away with the flu before he doctors found out what killed them. It was awful. I know I had the flu and pneumonia both, but they cured me of both. Wonderful. Working with me through the night.

JM: What did they do to treat you? How did he cure you?

WA: How'd they treat it?

JM: Yes, how did they treat you? The doctor.

WA: (Laugh) Well, I guess it was just a miracle.

ML: Just a miracle?

BB: Wes, one thing they did was they put all those hot patches on you. You know, they just blistered you. I had pneumonia and they blistered me from ear to ear. Hot patches, mustard plasters.

WA: And another thing they wanted you to keep the doors open if you had pneumonia. They wanted you to keep the doors open and move, have them move the bed just as close to the doors as you could because there wasn't no ceiling fans or nothing like that. You had to keep the patient as cool as you possibly could. They moved that bed right up to that door. And that is the way most of the time they doctored, by keeping you where you could get some oxygen. They said that was the only way you could get it. And back in those days, they didn't want but one or two sitting in the room with a sick patient either.

ML: Really?

WA: Because they said more than that would take up all the oxygen and the sick person wouldn't get any.

ML: Really?

WA: That was one way that doctors treated people, back in those days when there was no ambulances, or no hospitals, or no nothing. It was all done by old homemade remedies and things like that.

ML: Do you remember some other homemade remedies?

WA: Oh yes, homemade remedies. People used to make their child if he took a cold or croup or things, make a bag. Tie a bag of asafetida around his neck...uuu. I had rather take a beating any time than wear that. I tell you right now that would move you. That was rough.

JM: I noticed you are missing the tips of two of your fingers did that happen at the sawmill?

WA: It happened at the shop. Tall..... motor wheel... stacking up so tall..... and swung around and caught my finger. Had on some gloves and it never even broke the cloth on the gloves. Masked the end of the fingers off. You see this one...

JM: Did the doctor take care of it for you?

WA: Dr. Dale fixed them up. Dr. Crab fixed them up.

ML: What was your most favorite job that you did with the company?

WA: Well, where I had the best time and the hardest work was in the shop.

ML: In the shop.

WA: In the shop... getting them old boilers up there in them locomotives. Boilers sometimes you come out of there just as black as smoke. A person could be and everybody would laugh at you and all and it was fun.

ML: It was fun?

WA: Fun and hard work.

ML: Dirty.

WA: And popping off all time. That was the only way in the world that you could enjoy it. We had an old boilermaker up there. One of the best. His name was Perkins and everybody called him "Monk". And he would see a bunch of boys working and maybe he would see one giving out and all like that and he would start in with an old tale and would say, "Boy, come on here. Mr. Walker is looking at this thing." That is the way he would keep scaring those up there by his popping off. But everybody enjoyed it. We all had a good time and hard work up there at the shop. We all worked together and hurrahed. Nobody never ever get mad. Just hurrahing and have the best time.

BB: Wes, everyone of you had to take a bath when you left there every night, too, didn't you?

WA: Yes. They finally gave a bath house there close to the shop and that is where we took a bath because back in them days, there was a lot of them people that didn't even have a bath tub in their house.

JM: They... the men?

ML: Really.

WA: And us men that worked at the shop, we could always take a bath in the bathhouse and you could see them when the whistle blowed. Just run and they would grab their clean clothes and go put them on. The first one down there to get under the shower, they had three or four showers and that is the way the first one that got in there would get to bathe first and get out.

ML: That was right there at the shop?

WA: Yes, ma'am. That was the fun about it. The boys that worked at the sawmill would bathe out there. Mr. Walker built us a bathhouse right there close to the pond

where the water would run back in the log pond where we wouldn't be wasting no water. For year and years they pumped most of the water for Diboll from Ryan's Lake out here to Diboll and what they called an old air jacket..... out there at the lake. That thing would pump water from the lake to Diboll pond and that is the way the company kept water in the pond especially when it got to getting dry weather. They would pump water in there.

ML: I have another way that log ponds were sometimes used. Did you ever hear of a baptism in a log pond?

WA: Oh, good night, yes. Well, they had, let's see, one, two, three, four. They had four ponds here and a couple of them were clear ponds. What they called a clear pond. And that is where they would get the drinking water and pump it over into high tanks and then the lines would run from there on to the main line and then they would tap off the main line down to your house. That is where they got the water and most of the hydrants was on the outside where they had a wash basin where you could wash your hands and face on the outside what we called the back porch. And always had in the wintertime, they would box those hydrants up in boxes and fill that up with sawdust to keep it from freezing. My old daddy-in-law, he was a pipe foreman, mill foreman for years. You would see him with that little wagon going around when it would get pretty weather and refilling those what we called boxes. Hydrant boxes, that is what we called them, and seeing that they were all filled where the hydrants were. You could tell everybody to be sure when it get cold tonight, wrap that bib up now to where it won't freeze because if it does, you will be out of water. That is the way we took care of our pipes. We wrapped those bibs at night and would have to unwrap them in the morning to get water.

ML: Every morning?

WA: That's right.

ML: Yes.

WA: Right after Mr. Temple came here, then they went to putting in baths and everything in them houses and went to improving them. That is why I say it has been one of the finest places that a person would ever work with. Southern Pine Lumber Company. Yes, I don't think you could go anywhere and beat the management that they have had here at this place. Absolutely wonderful.

ML: Wasn't that true from way back in the beginning of the founders of this company?

WA: Yes, ma'am. Mr. Tom there had the name of Mr. T.L.L. Temple. He founded this company. He came to Diboll and founded this company. And Miss Bea, when he first came to Diboll where this place got its name, if you remember. There was an old man camped right down the old mill hill there was named "Diboll". They called him "Di Bowl" and when they started this company they named it Diboll.

ML: Hum...

WA: Some people yet call this place “Di Bowl”.

ML: “Di Bowl.”

WA: “Di Bowl.”

BB: Did you meet?

WA: If you would go with me everywhere and they would say, “Are you from “Di Da Diboll” and I would say, “Yes.”

BB: Wes.

WA: We call it Diboll, but it don’t spell “Diboll.” It spells “Diboll.” Diboll that is “Dibool”, that is not Diboll. I marvel at the people about the name of it.

BB: Wes, did you meet the Diboll people that came from Louisiana? Not the last Diboll Day, but the Diboll Day, before that. The fellow... Was named “Dibool”.

WA: They still call it “Dibool”?

BB: They came back here to see where their great-grandfather lived. They went down to the Temples.

ML: That was a French name.

WA: I can just still think about the days what nice streets and all the people have here now. Easy and complete it is and what we had, Miss Bea, when we were younger. It was rough back in them days, but we enjoyed it. Young people would go out at night and get the persons and all that and have a big picnic time. Get our wienes, wiene roast. We thought we were living in we had a good time and we enjoyed it.

JM: Did the company provide you a house?

WA: Beg your pardon?

JM: Did the company provide you with a house?

WA: Yes. House. You paid so much a month rent on the house and they had then, back then had what you call light cords that came down for lights. And they would charge you fifty cents a month for every, what we called drop cord in your house. You paid fifty cents a month on your rent on that. They would charge you so much a month for your rent.

JM: How many rooms were there?

WA: Oh, sometimes there would be two, three, four, sometimes five, just on account of how large a family moved in there. If a family didn't have much room the company would build them another room on to the house.

WA: Build onto the house to keep a good sawmill hand.

BB: Most of the houses were built three rooms down this way and a hall and one room over here and a porch.

WA: Then some of them had two rooms. Then a hall and one room over off to the side.

BB: That's when they built on.

WA: Nearly almost every one of them almost had a hall and in the wintertime I would nearly freeze to death.

JM: Really?

WA: Yes....

JM: Do you remember when your company changed from tokens to change at the bank?

WA: How's that?

ML: Do you remember when your company changed from tokens to paying you in money?

WA: No. It was after Mr. Arthur Temple came here. I don't remember what year.

JM: Did that seem to suit you better to pay you in cash money?

WA: Miss Bea, do you remember?

BB: No, I don't remember.... But it was sometime after Mr. Arthur died, that they changed. I have a couple of those old checks that Mr. Temple had made. One dollar and a fifty-cent, a quarter and a dime and a nickel....

WA: There was one time that the company paid off here. Paid the hands off and they had what they called pewter checks. Pewter... nickels, dimes, quarters, halves and dollars and five dollars. I believe that some of them were ten-dollar bills, I know it was. And they went from that to what they called checks and they paid off with checks for a long time and then they went to during the Depression to what we call "White Horses". You would go draw a slip and it would be so much money on that, written down on a slip and you could trade and tear that out just like tearing you bank checks out of our bank

book now days. And that was what we called “Grey Horses”. And then they went from that to paying off in silver after the Depression was over. ... and then they paid off once a month and it got from that to twice a month and went from that to once a week.... They would always hold back a week’s work on you. If you went to work this Monday morning you wouldn’t get no pay that week and next week you would draw this week’s pay. Of course, if you left or anything like that, you could draw your whole salary. That is the way it started out. ... still have some those checks and some of those old pewter checks that the company paid off with.

ML: Who has these?

WA: Some of the people that used to work here still have some of them. They have them for souvenirs.

BB: Do you think Lefty might have some?

WA: He might. Lefty may still have some.

BB: We can go interview them one day. He worked there at the store all those years.

ML: Can you tell us what your very first memory was?

WA: Beg your pardon?

ML: What was your very first memory?

WA: Of this place here?

ML: No of when you were little bitty.

WA: Oh, when I was a little child, I grew up on the farm out in the country about one mile and a half out of Diboll and times were hard. And there was a large family of us. My daddy never did work here at the company. He had five boys and we all worked here for the company. All five of us. Pappa was always... it was always something about him that he always provided for his family and he always seen that us children got to go anywhere we wanted to go as long as it was a nice place to go. He would tell us to go and have a good time, but don’t get into anything and he said if you do, you are going to get out just like you got in cause I will come and investigate it and I will find out how it all happened and if you are in the wrong, I will get you out. But if you were in the right I would get you out, but if you were in wrong you can get out the best way you can and we knew just what he was saying and we always tried to behave ourselves. Have a good time and enjoy it. We grew up in a large family and then after I got up and was nearly sixteen years old, I went to work for the company. I had four brothers and they all worked for the company. By the time the youngest brother got...when he got large enough to work, he went to work for the company and we moved off the farm to Diboll in 1922. I have been here ever since after we moved to Diboll. A wonderful place.

JM: You were sixteen when you started with the company?

WA: Beg your pardon?

JM: You were sixteen when you started with the company?

WA: Yes, ma'am.

JM: Started in the carpenter shop?

WA: I started in the carpenter shop... working on these houses, the company houses.

JM: Building the houses?

WA: Yes, ma'am. I went to work for a carpenter foreman that lived in Burke. His name was Curry.... M.C. Curry. He was carpenter foreman and a good one. The best fellow to work for that you ever saw. If he told you to do something... the way he wanted it put up there... you had better put it up there like he said if you wanted to stay and if you didn't he would give you your time right quick. And back in them days the company would stay with a man... the foreman if he fired a man, they would ask him what he fired him about and he would tell him. He didn't take the other fellow's word but he took the foreman's word for it. And if he was in the right, he would let him go. And if you acted right, maybe you could come back later and go to work if they thought you would be straightened up and make a man they would let you go back to work. You had to straighten up. And be a real citizen if you got to go back to work. Because if they once fired you, that was all.

ML: That was it.

WA: One thing about it, don't never tell Mr. Watson Walker a lie when he was our general manager, because if you did, you wouldn't never get back on.

ML: Really?

WA: He said, "I just can't stand...." Said, "I can lock up from the thief, but you can't lock up from they that tell you a lie." You just can't get around it. Said, "They would lie to you when you know good and well they are lying."

JM: How many people do you suppose worked here for Temple when you first started working...Southern Pine Lumber Company when you came to work?

WA: Well, one thing about it when Mr. Arthur Temple came and took over, he had the authority to spend the money and do something. Those other fellows ahead of him, they didn't have wherewith or the go ahead like Mr. Arthur Temple. Because Mr. Tom Temple was here in them days and they were trying to save from..... people and those old

fellows like Mr. Walker, Mr. Durham and all them. They just didn't have the authority to spend like Mr. Arthur Temple had. Because when he took over he was the whole chief. He wanted them all to know that and he was a good one, too. And he is still just as nice as a man can be. I don't believe he has ever had an employee yet that when he would pass him, he would speak to him and if you wanted to see him... all you had to do was to go down and tell them that you wanted to see Mr. Arthur. And you could go right on in and see him and talk to him. He was willing and ready to listen at you. I think from his idea of listening to people out on the works and all, I think he has become one of the greatest managers that a sawmill company could ever have. Because he grew up in it, he knew it from the time he got here as a young man and he took different people's ideas about it and he worked it all up together. And he had really come a long way. He really knew what to do and I think he has improved this place.... oh, I know he has and Miss Bea does, too. He has improved this place... this town 100%.

ML: Really?

WA: He certainly has. And a person that don't want to live here now... he just don't know what living is.

ML: Yes.

WA: They just don't know what living is. I don't think there is anybody that can say too much for Mr. Arthur Temple and the other people ahead of him. They were fine, but still they just didn't have the power that Mr. Arthur Temple had when he took over.

BB: Wes...

WA: Because his grandfather and all was gone and his father was still living. He was one of as fine a man as ever lived. Mr. Arthur Temple, Sr. – he was a prince. I think that is where Mr. Arthur Temple got his knowledge and his experience and his know-whereabouts from his daddy. He was a powerful person.

BB: Wes, how many people worked for the company back when you first started? How many employees?

WA: Well, when I started here, we just had mill No.2 and mill No.1 and the planer and didn't have no box factory, handle factory nor nothing. But just a sawmill and there wasn't too many people that worked here. I say at both mills, day and night, and the planer and those that worked out on the yard and stack lumber. Around two hundred fifty. That is pretty close guessing.

ML: Could you describe what a typical day was like? Start early in the morning and go right on through?

WA: We went to work at 6:30 in the morning and worked until 5:30 in the afternoon. We got off at 12:00, had lunch from 12:00 'til 1:00. Went back to work then until 5:30.

We worked ten hours a day, six days a week. It wasn't just five days, it was six days a week, ten hours a day. I have worked many a day up there at that shop. I have put in many eight and nine hour days a week up there working day and night. When those engines came in broke down and I have worked many a night all night long...

ML: Did you get overtime if you worked all night long?

WA: No... there wasn't any overtime in those days. Worked straight time. Overtime started way back.... way after Mr. Arthur Temple came here, time and one-half started.

ML: When did overtime start? Was there ever very much labor organizing, unions or anything like that?

WA: Oh, well, they tried to organize the old box factory and after it went through it wasn't long until the old box factory burned. I don't know how it... how it ever caught, but it burned up one day around twelve o'clock.

ML: Noon?

WA: Noon, after it shut down. I never will forget it. I was in the hospital. Had been operated on and the carpenter foreman here then was named W.W. Jackson. He came up there to see me and said, "Well, guess what happened in Diboll this afternoon?" And I said I had no idea and he said the box factory burned up. I said, "Oh, no." Yes and he said it went down in ashes. It went from one end to the other.

ML: Did they ever rebuild it?

WA: No ma'am. It burned in '45.

ML: They didn't rebuild it? In '45, huh?

WA: I never did work there at that place, but everybody said it was good place to work. I know a lot of them got their fingers chipped off and all like that.

BB: Wes, they didn't rebuild that one, but they built one up there in Copestown.

WA: Oh yes. Well, they built a small one up there, yes...

BB: During the war....

WA: That old building was already up there... I think that old building was already up there, wasn't it, Miss Bea, when they reopened?

BB: I don't know.

WA: But they never did rebuild the old box factory back...

ML: They employed a lot of women there at the box factory, didn't they?

WA: Beg your pardon?

ML: Didn't they employ a lot of women?

WA: Oh, yes ma'am, they sure did.

ML: At the box factory.

WA: Women made good hands over there then and they couldn't get all men... over half of them were ladies that worked over there.

ML: Really?

WA: Yes ma'am. And they had lots of nice homes built over there for the employees. That is what they call Lakeview addition over there.

ML: Lakeview?

WA: Lakeview.

ML: What did the husbands of the women who worked in the box factory do?

WA: Oh, they worked around the mill, shop and planer.... out on the yard. Nearly everybody that wanted to work them days could work.

ML: How about black people.....

WA: Oh, yes, yes... they mostly worked out on the yard and some of them in the mill.

ML: Some in the mill.

WA: The biggest majority had rather work outside. I know that.

ML: Where did they live?

WA: They lived... the quarters were back on the other side of town. That's where the quarters were.

ML: Was there ever a very big black population here or was it pretty small?

WA: It was a pretty good size. Yes ma'am, sure was. I imagine it was sorta... that there were as may black folks here in Diboll as there were whites... sure was. Lot of good colored people worked here. They sure was and lot of them would do anything in the

world for you and they always respected themselves. And eating... when eating... when six o'clock come of an evening they never did cross the side of the track... they always stayed over there. Never did allow that. They stayed by themselves.

ML: Was it a law or was it something that everybody just went by?

WA: Well, it was just certain at the time... and the colored people followed it. They came over and traded at the store. Treated them nice and all that but when six o'clock come, they didn't pass. They stayed on their side of the town.

ML: Huh? Tell us about the family that you raised. Did you raise a family?

WA: No ma'am.

ML: You didn't raise a family?

WA: We never did have no children. I remember one time here when I was small. They had what they called an old Airborne for the picture show and Miss Bea, you remember where it was located right here. And the old fellow that run it by the name of Chaney and he had a fellow by the name of Copes that was running the picture and you could hear it all over the town any time... picture caught a fire one night and that old man came down the aisle chewing that brown mule tobacco hollering "Shut her down, Bassett, she is burning up!" And everybody come around... and said, "Go put her out Bassett, she is burning up." And Mr. Tucker and Mr. Farrington, Heiny Weise, they bought it and run it what they called the old silent picture show. You remember that, Miss Bea? They had one here and it finally burned and they built one up there in Copestown. Do you remember when?

BB: *The Perils of Pauline*, Wes. That was my favorite one. Serial they run, *The Perils of Pauline*.

ML: Is that the one where they put her on the railroad track and all that?

BB: And all that stuff.

ML: Tell us about social events that there used to be. Was there ever church socials and revivals and that kind of thing?

WA: Oh, yes. Every summer the Methodist and the Baptists would always have a revival and sometimes it would nearly run a month. In a revival. It sure would. They never had no two or three day revival. If they couldn't have as much as ten or fifteen days, well, they didn't want that preacher. They wanted that. Miss Bea remembers that. They wanted somebody that would rouse up the people and they just figured a two or three day revival that was chucking money away in them days and they had to have a real revival and the people here. The Methodist would have a revival. They would always have the house full – if they had it under a tent. It would always be full and the Baptists

same way when they would have a revival. There would be as many Methodist in their revival as there would be Baptists. They would just come and help one another.

ML: Really... people just loved the revival itself.

WA: That's right. They just loved revivals in them days and they loved people. They just loved people and they would come to them. They really did.... just flocked.

JM: Do you belong to the Baptist church?

WA: Yes, ma'am.

JM: Where were you baptized?

WA: I was baptized in the church... they have built a baptistery now.

END OF INTERVIEW