

Marvin Baker
Interview 66a
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Sandra Ingram, Interviewer
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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Sandra Ingram, Marvin Baker reminisces about the Baker and Fairchild family histories, attending school in Burke, helping his mother after the death of his father, and farming. He also discusses his time reforesting areas of East Texas with the C.C.C. during the Great Depression.

Sandra Ingram (hereafter SI): I am interviewing Mr. Marvin Baker at his home. Today's date is July 11, 1985. My name is Sandra Ingram. Mr. Baker, where and when were you born?

Marvin Baker (hereafter MB): I was born in Angelina County. Location is about two hundred feet from the east and west í on the east end of the Angelina County Airport runway. That was theí my birth place.

SI: What year was that?

MB: August 21, 1918.

SI: Do you know anything about your grandparents or when they came to this area?

MB: Well, it's limited but seems though the best I can remember, that Grandpa Fairchild came from Louisiana into East Texas in, let me see, something like in the year, oh I'm guessing now, maybe 1850, 1855, along with so many of the people, residents of Burke and Dibollí Ryan's, Week's, and they settled southeast of Burke. My grandfather's home was about two miles from Burke. He was a farmer and, heí I believe he was the second county precinct road commissioner of the Angelina County. At that time I don't know, I mean, I don't know what the precinct number was, but the best I can remember he was only about the second elected county road commissioner of this precinct. He was a man of quite a background of education. And I best remember my grandmother, she could neither read nor write. And that is why I remember so well him reading the daily paper to her, and then she would, not cutting my grandpa short, but she was such a listener that she knew more about the news than he did, although he read to her everything that she got to í from the news. And, Sandra I don't know ifí was it all right for me to say that?

SI: Sure.

MB: He spent a lifetime I guess, after he came to Texas in one location which is the present home site and is still very vivid, you know. You can't he and grandmother had I don't remember how many children but a number. And the Fairchilds were some of the early, I guess you might say, progressive citizens of Angelina County. And one in particular, I. D. Fairchild, was kind of the guiding factor of the whole family. He was a lawyer and at the time of his death he was state senator. And he had a great, great bearing or great, great influence on me and my brothers and my mother's actual survival.

He took us in and seen that we had, that my mother was widowed with five kids and he took it upon his self to be the guardian and the financier and just, you know, took care of us up until he got killed in the year '28. Him and some state senators, to the best of my recollection and history there, that they were looking at some possible farm roads somewhere near Fort Worth when he got killed. And of course about that time the old black depression I guess, that the American people ever known came around, you know. And I know that he left a widow that has meant a whole lot to me in my lifetime that wasn't any kin to me other than, you know, by marriage. But, she always seemed like a very, very close blood kin to me because she was a woman that looked out and tried to help and do some of the things that I.D. asked her to do on his death bed and she was Mrs. Margarite Fairchild.

Most of the community knows that she was the first woman regent of the University of Texas. And not long ago someone was talking, maybe this man was on the board of regents with her, said that she was the one that went all out to have a girls dormitory on the University of Texas. The men, all the other men, said, "No way are you going to have a girls dormitory on the grounds of The University of Texas." She said, "Well we'll see about that." And through her great strength she did win out, and they did build and she had a great part in the first girls dormitory. And the record speaks for I mean the, what do you call, the cornerstone, mentions her as the First Woman Texas Regent of The University of Texas.

Of course, I'm talking about these people's educations and I'm kind of hesitant to tell about my own personal education. Burke was a grammar school only. Lufkin was a high school for our community, you know, we were bussed into Lufkin. And the best I can remember about my personal education is very limited. It seems though as I recollect Burke was a thriving little community. And we'll most everyone that went to Burke school was rural, farm people. And of course we believed in having lots of fun. And this I know this is mighty negative, but we thought that the way to have fun was to provoke and aggravate our principal, you know. And I remember very plainly that Howard Walker, which is now ninety something years old and is still living, doing good, he was the county school superintendent and we thought a gang of about ten or twelve boys, we thought it was smart. We thought we were really doing something to provoke the teacher. Of course, he would whip us, but that didn't bother us, we thought that was just but anyway we'll it became pretty serious as I look back and think. Mr. Walker couldn't get anybody, well the principal that we had had for years became sick physically, and he couldn't and so he had to resign it. And so here and possibly it was on the strength of

these ten or twelve boys that provoked him and he just didn't want to kill any of us and he just resigned. And so anyway, Mr. Walker sent two or more substitutes down to take his place. And, they went back after a week or so and said that no way they wanted to teach at Burke. Finally on one Monday morning, facing us as we taken up was a man about six feet eight inches tall. And he introduced himself as Mr. Holland Lee, a retired educator, principal, and teacher at the time. And I'll never, never forget him. It was a changing point in my life from a teenage boy. You know, we had that basketball court out on the ground and us boys, we taking time about bringing the basketball in. We thought that it was pretty good, it was something kind of extra to get to bring the basketball in and have a certain place to put it. But anyway, the second morning I believe that Mr. Lee was there well, the first morning he introduced himself he says, "I understand that we've got some little problem here at this school." He says, "I'm retired and I don't have to come down here and take this job for a livelihood. But I promised Mr. Walker that I would try to help you. That he needed me." And what he says, I remember this, he says, "I've come down here to teach you boys and girls." And he emphasized the "Teach" I remember that. He says, "Now I don't know if you are going to learn much, but I'm going to teach you." And I don't know whether that makes sense or not but anyway in that tone of voice, but anyway at recess that second day well it was my time to bring in the ball. So I brought it back to the desk at that time, back to the school room and he looked back there and he said, "Young feller, bring the basketball up here." And he was a very distinct talking fellow. You know, I mean he come there with wanting us to understand every word he said. Well, I forgot what he said, or didn't pay any attention so I went dribbling the ball up to his desk, around him you know. And just as I got the ball on the floor and started to raise up, well, this old limb that was about one inch in diameter caught me across the back and just like to have broke my backbone. And from that moment on I began to learn something. I look back and it was I learned more in the six months. He was a mighty math teacher and I liked math, simple you know. Math you would have in the seventh grade. And I just eat it up the way that he taught it. And I think actually in my life it helped me so much, the six months that I got under Mr. Holland Lee.

And of course, it come time to go on to Lufkin for I went up to Lufkin, you know, like most all the other kids, and I just didn't something back in my mind said that now this is not for you. This city slickers, you know, city all these fancy shoes, and fancy clothes, and I was very, very uncomfortable. And so like so many boys that didn't have somebody to really control them, which my mother tried to but did the best she could. And I talked to her and just told her that I just didn't want to go to Lufkin High School. And that was the beginning of look boy, you are going to have to make it, you know. And so at about fifteen I guess well, I started out to farming. And

But before this my two brothers and I was down on my Aunt Emma's dairy and visiting her and she told us three boys, Baker boys, that, "Look, if you will go gather all the eggs that is in the barn and everywhere, you know, didn't have a certain that I've got a nice little gift that I'll give you." She didn't say money because that was so scarce. But anyway we got all the eggs gathered up and boy there were some of them, you know and she was the one that graded them out. But the gift that she gave us was this. This uncle, he

was a dealer in saltwater ponies, horses. I don't know whether you know, many people there is a few, quite a few people remember them my age that came into this community. And Uncle Al would order these carload, they would come in and he would sell them out, trade them, try to make a dollar. But this little foal had lost its mother. She had gotten killed in the freight. She said, "Now there is a little pony, little salt water horse I want to give you boys." Well we didn't have any at that time I don't even know whether we yes we possibly had a mule, you know, a mule to farm with. But, anyway, I remember carrying the horse home. The other boys, brothers older than I they said, "Now that's yours, you take care of it."

So I got home and I guess that horse became my second love in that period there. And he was real small in stature, in size. But I got him back to growing after he lost his mother there. And we were just inseparable, you know, after a couple of three years. And finally, I don't know how it come about but Eugene and Wilburn they just decided they would give me their part of the horse or maybe I just taken it I don't know, but anyway because they couldn't ride him. He would balk with them you know and finally they said, "Well, we just won't have nothing to do with him." Anyway for about six years there I was all over the country on that saltwater horse and I never turned down a race anywhere. And of course, there is a lot of men living around today that can tell you that stuff. They just didn't outrun that salt water horse. He was a little stallion.

He and I know you may want to cancel this out but this is back into some more serious history of this horse. My cousin, Corb Conner, back in them days certain men they corralled or stud a big stallion or a jack to raise mules, you know. But at this time my cousin had this great fifteen or sixteen hundred pound Prussian horse that he stood there and he charged ten dollars for the service. And my good friend, John Dillman Burke owns several miles east of him, and I lived in between, me and my saltwater stallion. But anyway, the deal was back in them days that when the mare brought the foal well then they went and paid for the stallion fee, see. Well, all right it liked to cause a killing the best I can remember. And both of the men were very, very I call them real tough pieces of humanity back in them days. John Dillman Burke was an old math teacher, country school teacher, which owned the mare and Corbett was a prosperous farmer which is the father of R. B. Conner and L.J. Conner and Oneta Hendricks. Anyway, when the foal came well of course it came from my service of my saltwater horse. Well Corbett wanted John Dillman to pay him for the ten dollars. And Mr. John said, "Now Corbett you wouldn't want me to pay for that little foal. You ought to be ashamed to say that that would even come from the mighty horse you have, siring it."

But anyway, it come back around to me and they come ask me and I had to tell the truth that I knew what took place. So that stopped the killing. But anyway that is some of the experiences that I always will remember, about the only transportation that we had. And as this horse, three years there, seems like three, one, two, three, along there, well he was all the power that was on the little fifteen acre sandy hill Baker Farm there at the east end of the Angelina Airport. But he was so mighty and such as about a seven fifty eight hundred pound horse. Which that is not very big but the size didn't make any difference to

him. He would do about anything I urged him to do, you know. As far as just pulling a plow and you know, taking care of the place.

So, I guess here along come as I said the Depression days were just getting more serious and harder. On the little farm we were just barely surviving. And my mother would go and she and I and my sister would go to Lufkin. Get somebody maybe to transport us up there. And she would go to the First State Bank where Mr. Shands was president, Bubba Shands. And she would borrow there were three years there that she would borrow twenty five dollars for her and Ruth and I to survive on for the year. And usually we would make maybe one or two bales of cotton and get five, six, or seven cents a pound for it, maybe thirty dollars a bale. And then we would go pay it back. And during that time we raised our peanuts, we raised our sweet potatoes, we raised our pork, you know. And then we'd go again. I think that went on for about three years.

And then to me one of the greatest things that ever happened to an American boy at that time, especially the farm I guess, I don't know how to say it, "underprivileged." One of the greatest men I think that the United States has ever born was Franklin Roosevelt. And when he taken office he said, "Oh something has got to be done." Because a great nation like this, we was just well the rich, the poor and all I mean the supposed to be rich and all were just having a terrible time. But anyway that is when the Civilian Conservation Corps, I don't know whether you a lot of people definitely don't know anything about it or at least people my age or older remembers the great help that it brought about on kids that didn't have an opportunity to do anything. And you and he made sure that it was for the underprivileged, and you had to be, you had to be a pauper almost a pauper to be able to join the three C's. I mean, it was for the underprivileged and it wasn't for just you know, everybody. And you had to be, I believe the record showed you had to be on relief which meant that you were getting commodities, you know, like our welfare is today.

But anyway my mother was so she had such pride that she never had signed up and I couldn't qualify to get in. As I said, we were going to Lufkin and getting that twenty five dollars a year, and we were existing. When I got to watching these other boys going off and wear them big old fine shoes back, warm wool clothes and I wanted some of that. So I set in to join the three C's. I remember that we went to the agent, the proper channel. She said, "No way, your mother owns we owned a hundred acres of land by the airport, the Angelina County Airport. She says, "You're just as well off." But we were so poor but anyway, after months and months of me begging, there was a means of me going in. And of course I remember very well the farm boy like most of us in there were, when they shot me with all those shots it liked to kill me. I laid helpless for two or three weeks and the doctor came by one day and said, "Oh, Baker Boy you are going to live. We just getting you into shape to live." And sure enough I did. You know about three weeks I woke up, I mean I got up and man I felt good. I was just you might say a real light weight when I went in there. Well, I came home in three to four months and a lot of people didn't even know me.

SI: What did you do in the C.C. C.?

MB: Weí thatí reforestation was I think was the greatest thing the three Cø ever done besides build roads. We built parks, and I was thinking the other day, thinking about most of the pine belt from Zavalla back to Jasper down toward Beaumont, all that area there. I remember that as a seventeen year old boy, all that had been cut over and fire had swept the country and all you could see was old black rich lighter pine stumps. Well theí the programí the program would take theí the programí leadership of the three Cø would take us into these areas with pine seedlings and we would line up like a marching army and we would set these little pine seedlings out by hand, see. Now they do it mechanically but with a sharpshooter, and we would go over them hills and down in the valleys setting those pines out. And now, of course, some of them are fifty years old. And I see them and I think you know, reminiscing about having a part in setting out a tree that is almost, you knowí it is a beautiful tree today.

SI: That would have to make you feel proud.

MB: Right. Well allí and of course they fed us good and clothed us. We got twenty five dollars a month, you know, the enlisted men. Good doctors. And then that is where I began to realize that I wasnø so smart. Of course, I really thought I was smart, just real smart when I left grammar school. And then one night a lady teacher that needed a job real bad too, we had several that came in there that didnø have employment and the government employed them to come down to teach us illiterate boys that wanted to further our schooling. Well, some of the boys hadnø evení well, I would say most of them did have a high school education. But a lot of us didnø, dropouts. Well I set out to take school at night and I í it was a wonderful experience. I learned to type. I wasnø ever real proficient at typing but I could type, hunt and peck, you know. And I taken I believe a business arithmetic because that was kindly my desire. I liked the math, I liked to, and so I feel like the years that I put into it that I did finish high school, the equivalent see. And then later on well I taken a correspondence course in the little building trades and I enjoyed that. And itø meant a whale of a lot to me.

But, Iø say that backí I remember a time in my life that I was coming back home to visit my mother. See what it was your home got theí it was thirty dollars a month. Your mother or your father and mother got the twenty five dollars for their help. And you got the five dollars. And it helped and the reason I say it was such a great help to the whole nation, you know, that it helped the home as well as the boy that was there in the camp see.

And soí I remember too talking about the timber, my mother had this hundred acres of pine timber. Then it was burnt over and ití mother had about eighty five acres of the finest, longest, tallest pine there was anywhere in this community. And I remember how close my mother came to selling it as a boy. Maybe I was coming in the three Cø and she wanted to kind of get iní no transportation you know, and three miles out in the sand and walk and walk or ride a horst. But anyway, I remember this man coming in and introducing himself. I was sitting on the front porch and mother was sitting on the swing.

And this man, he was as I would call it in them days, he was really dressed up. He had on a new set of khakis and I remember him. And he said, "Mrs. Baker I understand that you want to sell your place, your hundred acres." And she says, "Yes we need to sell it and resettle in close where we can better carry on." He says, "Well how much do you want for your hundred acres here?" She said, "Well it would take a thousand dollars to buy it." Now that was a hundred acres of good pine— eighty five acres of good pine timber and fifteen acres of what we called gardening ground. And the man said "of course I'm big ears, you know about this. I'm really thinking we are fixing to pull up stakes and resettle and all. He says, "Mrs. Baker, I'll tell you, I will give you nine hundred and fifty dollars." And I remember my mother says, "No you misunderstood me I think or you— you don't understand. It's a thousand dollars or no sale." Well it wasn't no sale. But in three months or four months after that there was a man walked up to the front door and

END OF SIDE ONE

MB: This man walks up to the door and he says, "Mrs. Baker, I see you have some fine tall pine trees down here on your land and I need to buy so many, a truckload, for a power company, where I don't know, but they are going to be special poles. And we'll take care of your timber and we want graded poles." And I remember momma says, "Well about what are you going to pay me?" And he says, "For ten or fifteen poles you are going to receive between three hundred and three hundred and fifty dollars." Well momma like to have fainted because see— and he says, "Furthermore if you'll let us have them we will be buying several loads if you will sell them to us." That was an answer to our prayers. That was our survival. We were so thankful we didn't sell the land because it supported my mother for years and years to come, just the special pole timber that came off of that. You know what I'm talking about, just the tree poles.

SI: Is the land still in the family?

MB: No, no the Angelina Airport owns it. I mean Angelina County owns it.

SI: Well, I'm interested in this farming that you did because you have quite a reputation around here as a farmer. Could you describe the farming you did as a boy and then the farming you are doing now, and the differences in the crops that you raised?

MB: Well, the experience— yes, on this fifteen acres as I said about the mighty saltwater horse. We had some experiences in the early production of commercial tomatoes. There was a man came into our community and sent out notices that he would be at the old Methodist Church at Burke to give us a line— line us out and teach us how to grow the shipper tomatoes. Which this tomato was picked when it was green and mature. It was packed a certain way in little wooden boxes and put in freight cars and shipped out. And I remember that this was what I had been looking for. For me it just opened up a world. Now, this is where we were going to get rich, you know, I said— oh said, make a living. So the first— after all the teaching and information and instruction from this gentleman, well, I go out and I prepare a quarter of an acre. And I go in the timber and split my

stakes. Stake them just like you wanted them, and then we tied them. Of courseí well, before that, he told us how to build a hot bed and how to take the plants from the hot bed to the cold frame and from the cold frame to the field. And I planted a quarter of an acre. And I was so interested in it and naturally I just stayed with them every time I came out of my little crop. Every evening I would go up and plow through them, or pet them, and prune them and fertilize or whatever I thought had to be done. And this was my first big money making deal in my life. Well, when the market opened this little quarter acre of tomatoes it grossed a hundred and seventy five dollars. Well, it made me so happy and my mother too. Why that was more money than we had ever had in our life. Or I had. And so we just said, like all good Americans, weðl just get rich. Next year we will just plant an acre. But hereø where most of us donøt understand the free economy. I plannedí I worked all winter getting the sticks. Cut five thousand, I think fifty four hundred plants to an acre. Fifty four hundred sticks I had to cut, maybe I had some left. And man I had tomatoes hip high thatø go four clusters that have half a bushel to the stalk. Why, I went to market with the first little sampling. Before I got to the shipping shed when a friend of mine said, òAh Baker, turn around and go back, turn around and go back. The market is closed.ö

Well I didnøt know what he meant by that, òThe Market was closed.ö Well, it hadnøt rung a bell. Well, I got on up there and it had closed. The market had dropped completely out. They wasnøt even buying them. It wasnøt no price. You couldnøt even give them away. I mean the man came in and give us allí he had good intentions, but about that time everybody decided that they needed to grow tomatoes. So we didnøtí it wasnøt no market. But anyway, I remember that was the first real good lesson that I got in economics and overproduction. And not knowing and not having a market for something you go out to produce itø our modern day 1985 farming is the same way. You know, we will go out there and produce tons and tons and tons without assurance of a market see. And, but anyway, you know, it was a great experience.

Our farming tomatoes, you know, we usually had as I said a few acres, three or four acres of cotton. We called that our cash crop, you know, before we grew tomatoes. But the tomatoes didnøt stay that way always. I think the next year or two they began to pick up and it separated the weak from the strong. And you know, then it came and lasted a pretty good market for several years in Burke.

Of course, I learned something about growing corn from some of the old pros. You know corn, I guess is one of the most important plants that is known to manø early survival, you know. I remember a man by the name of Lumby Williams which is the father of Bert Gann, the real estate woman. To me he was one of the finest farmers I have ever met and talked to. He had more logic and he didnøt have to tell you he proved it. You could just look at his farm, he was a small farmer. Just look at what he had done and you knew he knew what he was doing. And cotton farming was, oh it was kind ofí I never could figure out why we all just still hoped that we would get a good price for cotton. And Íí in my days of memory I donøt ever remember getting enough to pay for the, you know, expenses.

And of course peanuts was a very popular small farm item, you know. It was very essential in the family diet. It was a staple 'cause you could put it up, put the peanut up. You know, you could just use it so many ways in the diet, in the food chain.

Sweet potatoes was a very popular vegetable if it's called a vegetable. I guess it is, isn't it? And then you could bank it up and it was a winter survival food because you could use it from one gathering to the next you know, for twelve months. And it is still one of the most wonderful foods that we know of, is the sweet potato. Of course it dates back to why, you know, meat was out. If you had beef on the farm then well you canned it you know. Some of the farmers were fortunate enough to raise good beef and they would can it. And thinking back on the farm back in them days, well, we had fresh beef maybe twice a year. And that was brought by the front of the house out on the Fairview Road out there where I lived, by a man by the name of Brashear. Old Uncle John Brashear would butcher maybe a couple of beefs and put them in his wagon after the frost would fall, you know, when it was cold and he would bring them into Diboll. And they just after he would get to Diboll to peddle they would just cut them off a roast, whatever, steak, right there in the wagon, you know. And that was very memorable, you know.

And then it was the sugar cane was very popular in the small acreage around this community. And my first real experience with sugar cane, which I haven't raised any sugar cane, but I worked with other people that did. And I remember as a sixteen year old boy I had an old slow speed, ton '50 model truck. About a '24 model I guess. But it was a powerful piece of machinery and I managed to put it together. And, I contracted this man's three acre cane patch. And my agreement was to strip it, cut it down, and haul it to a certain destination for them to grind and make the syrup. And of course that was another experience that I will never forget. I had forethought enough to find the best cane strippers in the country, although they were adults and some of them were in their sixties even. But I talked them into the notion of helping me and there was a standard, I believe it was two gallons of syrup a day that they would get for their work to help me get this prepared and get it to the mill site. And gosh, when the man paid me off, well, I just had almost a truck load of syrup. And, I would take it home and put it under my bed and momma and us we would trade on that syrup all the winter. You know, it is just like putting money in the bank. And that's more farming that helped people survive.

Sandra, I don't know and then of course, I got away from my, I always called it my first love, you know. And I always had a little old garden around where I lived up through the years. And of course, we bought this little place in '53. And of course, so much of it had changed I didn't know anything about the what the soil extension people were doing on bringing back some of the old wore out land. Well, this little place here at one time was one of the most prolific corn farms in this whole community. You could ask most anybody about Darrel Wright. This was his homesite. He was a known corn raiser. But, anyway, I set out to make pasture. I wanted to get in the cattle business. Boy, I really got big ideas. And I come to find out that I couldn't even get the grass to grow in the ground. My goodness, back when I was farming as a boy, I couldn't leave the field hardly without the

grass coming up behind me. But, anyway come to find out the soil was depleted of all nutrients. It was acid prone to the highest point when the chemist at A&M, I mean Stephen F. Austin told me, "You haven't got anything." You know. So he sets me out a plan to put lime and plant legumes. And in four years, well I turned the old piece of ground around. Not all, but most of the place was worn out. When Darrel Wright left the land went with him because they didn't have the great care of the land like they have today. And it wasí that was just wonderful for me to see seven acre hill turn from nothing in four years to a beautiful grass and coastal Bermuda hillside.

Of course for about thirty years, I built in a small wayí contracted and built homes all over the community, Lufkin and Polk County, in the county. And my desire someday was to have enough physical strength left to garden all I wanted you know. Of course, the nice thing that come back to the modern tractor and modern tools and all. And I would just smack my lips thinking that someday I was going to get to use them to garden with. And I have, you know. And I haven't got aí I wouldn't say a complete, but I have the necessary tools that makes farming a pleasure, you know. A lot of people don't realize but to go out and plant a good row and plant accurately you have to have a good planter, mechanical planter. And to get your ground prepared, you have got to have some good plows. Of course, in this latter years here now, they have got what you call the tractor grown tiller. Six foot wide and when you run it across, it is just like your little push tillers. It just tills and levels and does a beautiful job. It just makes anybody that has had all these problems before of trying to burst the clods and all that, you know, and it's just a pleasure to have the nice tools that the American farmer has today. And of course, that is one of the reasons that we so over produce now. We've got such fine engineers to back us up. And if you want to produce something, go to the drawing board and they will come up with it, see. Just like this year on this little place we've got eighteen acres in production on our farm here and I lease my neighbor, Mrs. Rector, twelve acres of sand hillside up here to plant watermelons on. And you can see the watermelons out there. It is just producing watermelons. And I don't know what I'm going to do with them because the market is jammed there. You can't hardlyí

SI: I noticed that.

MB: Farming never wasí he never had any promise of anything anyway. A lot of people seem to think the farmer ought to be on par with other industries. But there is no way. It would be nice if we could, but it's kind of like one of the old national agriculture commissioners. He was talking to a bunch of farmers in the farm belt and they was all gathered there and a lot of them had their heads down and this wasn't right, and that wasn't right, you've seen it going on. I forgot what his name isí was, but he looked out over the hundreds of farmers and he said, "Let me tell you something, If you don't like what you are doing, this is a big country. There is lots of things. Get out of it."

You know, I thought that was right. Instead of crying and saying "I can't make no dollars and Uncle Sam ought to come in and subsidize me because he is subsidizing everything else, you know," Amtrack, the great railroad system, airlines. Why can't he subsidize me?

Well he has, you know. I think that is the ruination of our farming now. We subsidize men that think they can make a million in four months and sit around on their bottoms the other eight months. You can't do it. But I notice in the last couple of years they are waking up. They are diversifying and the fellows that are really serious and have been dug in for years and years, you know, they don't lose their farm. But about eighteen percent of them are going by the wayside because they thought it was a wonderful life right there and Uncle Sam subsidized everything you make. But I always say that in a free economy it always comes back home. You have got to pay the bills. Somebody has got to pay the bills. And that is where it is now. The tax payers start paying the bills and this fellow we got leading us now, I think he would like to leave a record that, "omy, my, let's get it straight. A little straighter than we have had it."

And of course, it is like the W.P.A. days. I mean in the '30s as they say, they never did quit that. It done its work and if they had cut it off, but it was so good that they just let it keep coming on and on. And of course, our farming here now there is an article in the little paper today about the farmers market up here. I know the help we all got sense enough to know that if you produce something that you have a market for it. And for years we hadn't had a market to carry our little surplus. Some fellow's garden out here maybe he has several hundred dollars worth of surplus. It goes to waste or he gives it away. But now we have the little farmers Farm to Market place up here at Lufkin through the leadership of The Chamber of Commerce, and through the mighty chair and concern of the Temple Foundation. They bought us a cover and I mean they contributed to buying it. Now it's just a wonderful atmosphere. To me it's a carnival atmosphere. Just to go up there and sell your vegetables three times a week, which is Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays, you know. And gosh, it turns over it's just a big impact in these little gardener's lives. They come there and sell, and we just have some of the finest gardeners in East Texas as there are in, I think, the world as far as that goes.

But this is sad, you know, when you think that farming there is so many people starving to death today and here we are in a land that we are producing we just can't even begin to get it to these people that needs it. They have ruined their land, most of them. They were self destructive. You know, they took all their cover off their land, you know, like in Africa, you know. And of course, you take all the cover off your land, your cattle eats all the grass and all the little things that providence has provided to hold that land together, boy you've got destruction, see. And they just go from one area hoping that the next one will be better, you know. So the drought, I've forgotten just what acreage is going to desert in Africa because it is overgrazed. It's sad. We are trying, you know, we are getting food to them some, but they said very limited because it is millions of them starving to death and we have we don't have means and ways to really take care of all of them. Although we have got food if we can just get it to them. Of course, they are fussing and fighting and killing each other there all the time. You can't get any

So farming, what it was anybody that has lived, it's the most important industry on earth and the biggest on earth, you know. And I'd say this, reading this month's *Progressive Farmer* (July 1985) which is one of the nicest farm journals that is put out in the south. It

was originally called "Al Capps" a man by the name of Al Capps, I believe, started editing it. It's a great informative magazine now. And this month is a beautiful story on I guess one of the greatest gardeners that was ever born in America, was Thomas Jefferson. Anybody that would just read his life, how he loved and almost worshipped his garden. Although he would leave on ships, he was ambassador to Europe for years before he became president, was elected president for two years. And the reason that article there, he said that in his estimation, you know, he was president of these great states for two terms, and he says to me, he says, "It was the most honorable profession that God would ever hand out to man." Well I can't deny that, you know. I mean I'm not that much up on it but reading his quotations about his gardens and how he laid them out and reading it, I am so thankful that eight years ago whatever society or people that is seeing about historical background, they sent a man in by the name of Hatch and told him to bring Monticello back, the gardens. Well, that plantation was five thousand acres, and he had one hundred forty one employees at that time when it was going full force. And his kitchen garden was ten acres, imagine that, see. And it was just beyond human imagination how beautiful it must have been. Because he was, you know, Thomas Jefferson, I mean that's right, Thomas Jefferson, he was, I think about five professions that he was proficient in. He was an architect, one of the greatest philosophers, you know. I don't know, he was just a man that was a great horticulturist. He had about five or six different apples and along about eighteen hundred and he had his stone walls built to where there was such an elevation on the mountain that he took advantage of all of the sun rays and the frost date line. It's just wonderful to think that a man back then you know, would have brought that much knowledge to the garden today, because as you read it, you can't help but believe that he was one of the greatest farmers and gardeners that the United States has ever had. All right you know, plus all the great work he did as a leader for our nation.

So I just I don't know how to say about it, to say that I really truly love the ground because I'm not a very decorative type farmer. A lot of fellows seem to do the work real neat and all but mine is kind of rough shod, but I usually come out with a, you know, a good production. I guess the secret to all of it in East Texas, I was raising a certain vegetable and they would say "Baker, how in the world did you do that man? I planted two times and never did get nothing." I says, "Well, the difference was I planted four times." So that is the way you look at it. But it's all right I'd say that any free American, you know, most all Americans are gardeners. But if they haven't ever gardened they have missed a great, great lot, you know. And I think everyone ought to have a little time in being able to work in the old good earth.

END OF INTERVIEW