

MAUREEN WEIMER

Interview 86A

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Becky Bailey, Maureen Weimer reminisces about Pine Grove Church in the Red Town area of Diboll. Mrs. Weimer's husband, Charles, pastored the church in the early 1950's. She talks about Mrs. Fannie Farrington's desire to bring a church to that area of Diboll, convincing H.G. Temple to build them a church building. Mrs. Weimer recalls Women's Society of Christian Service meetings, the United Methodist Women group, Vacation Bible School, and Methodist Youth Fellowship. She mentions the Farringtons, Ballengers, Tatums, Mirandas, Guerras, Simms', and Greers, among other families that attended the church.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): Today's date is December 29, 1985. My name is Becky Bailey and I am interviewing Mrs. Maurine Weimer on the little church in Red Town. Mrs. Weimer, just to start off let's get a little background on you. Where were you born?

Maureen Weimer (hereafter MW): I was born in Dallas.

BB: In Dallas, in what year?

MW: 1914.

BB: 1914. And you married a Methodist preacher?

MW: He wasn't, at the time, he was studying to be.

BB: So you have been in the ministry sort of all your life?

MW: Pretty well, since we married in '33.

BB: Principally, we want to talk today about the Pine Grove Church in Red Town in Diboll. And tell us what you have heard about how it got started. I know you weren't here right then, but what people told you.

MW: Well, some of the charter members told me that it was first held in the old scout house, from there they went to a little house, and finally Mrs. Farrington went to Mr. Henry Temple and asked for a place for the church. They had a pretty good number of families that attended at the time. They had been holding prayer meeting in this house on Thursday evenings. Different groups would take the Upper Room and use it for devotionals. And they felt a need for a church, so Mr. Henry built a small church. It held fourteen benches in front and there were four small rooms in the back.

BB: Did it have an altar in the...

MW: In the front there was an altar and there was a place for a choir, they had a bench in the front and they had a piano and Mrs. Farrington, Mrs. Frank Farrington, Mr. and Mrs. Gus Ballenger and Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Tatum and their families went over there.

BB: Did you want to see some more of these names?

MW: I'm just trying to see. There were three Mexican families in that part, Mr. and Mrs. Miranda, Rosie and her husband, and Mrs. Bessie Guerra and her family, and Mrs. Lozono and her son. I don't remember, he had a sister. Then some of the other families were Henry Evans, the Louis Minton's, Mrs. Frank Ruby, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Ruby and their family, J.D. Burchfield and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Sims. Jim in the post office was one of the members, I mean, in the bank. Mr. and Mrs. Greer, Mr. and Mrs. Bryce and their family, Arvil and E.J. and Ruth Harrison and her children, Shirley Terrell and her brother attended. And the Chris Landrum's, the Fate Patrick's, William Welch, Bill Powell and family and the Saxton girls were some of the members.

BB: So it was about twenty-five families, wasn't it?

MW: There were others who would come in from time to time, you know. At Christmas time we would have them standing on the little porch, the picture shows the little porch, and sitting in the windows. There were no screens, it would really be full. Mr. Henry would go from church to church and it was not unusual to see him sitting on the end of the pew with a little child on each knee.

BB: Was it just at Christmas that he would come or?

MW: No, he would come regular, at certain times. He attended all the churches.

BB: Oh, he would just go one Sunday to one place and one the next?

MW: Yes, and there were two weddings, one before we went there was Nelda Faye Tatum, married E.J. Bryce. And then Frances Guerra, I can't remember her husband's name. I have a picture of them at their wedding.

BB: And that was while you were there?

MW: That was a wedding while we were there. And then some of the...

BB: Was the church already built whenever you got there in '47?

MW: Yes, it was built somewhere around '42...

BB: So they only met just a little while.

MW: ...during Ben Roper's stay at Diboll. He was there for two years and during the time he was there he went down to the house and preached and then he preached in the little church, the first preacher. Then Rev. Edward Gentry was there and then Charles Weimer was there from '47 through '49. Then Charles Woodard was there, and he was there I believe two years and, then Charles Weimer went back for one year in '51.

BB: Okay, were there pastors after that or was the church...?

MW: Then the church was moved. It was given, at that time it closed and went into other churches. Some of them went to the Methodist church and some to the Baptist church.

BB: At that point.

MW: Yes, and they moved that church then to the Assembly of God Church, which was given to them.

BB: Where is the Assembly of God, which one are you talking about?

MW: It's down on the highway next to the Pentecostal church.

BB: Okay, that one.

MW: It was on the old highway behind it.

BB: And it was used for...?

MW: A parsonage at first and then a Sunday school room, I was told.

BB: I see, well, how did this start out, did it start out as a circuit, part of the circuit in the Methodist Church?

MW: Yes, Charles was at Diboll and he would go to Pine Grove and preach and then come back and preach at Burke at eleven. At two services on Sunday morning.

BB: Okay, now this was with the Burke church or with...?

MW: It was with the Burke church when we were there.

BB: Oh okay. Was Diboll and Ryan's Chapel together in the circuit?

MW: No, no, Diboll at that time was not. I don't think. I think Burke and Ryan's Chapel at that time were. Diboll and Ryan Chapel had been in the past, but I don't know too many details, you know, just what year and all that, though I did have it at one time.

BB: So he was preaching at Diboll?

MW: During the time we were there the Hankins were very active. I didn't say that and I don't want to leave them out because she...

BB: All right. So the Pine Grove Church was with the Diboll Church on the circuit?

MW: The preacher came from First Church but I don't think it was on the circuit at that time, until Charles came there. And then it was with Burke. Because I don't believe Brother Gentry preached at Burke. I think he only preached down there and I don't know of any place else whether he preached in another church or not.

BB: You know, it's such a small town that Diboll was back then, it surprises me that they had a mission like this with First Church so close.

MW: Well, they weren't going anywhere. And there was a whole bunch of little children, just a whole lot of them. I don't, couldn't tell you how many and sometime those poor Sunday school rooms were overflowing with little children, you know.

BB: So it was mainly bringing it to them to make it very convenient for them to come to Sunday school.

MW: You see, they wouldn't come, Mrs. Farrington had it in her heart to take it to the little Mexican children. I'll tell you, she was really a devoted woman. She could stand up there when there was no preacher and she would deliver a sermon.

BB: Oh really, I didn't know that.

MW: She was really good and a devout Christian. I don't know...

BB: What sort of services would they have, did they have, like M.Y.F. [Methodist Youth Fellowship] and ...

MW: Oh, I did want to mention, yes, we had a very special M.Y.F. We would take, they would let us have a bus to take the children to the meetings and many times we brought the banner back so many times for attendance until they quit, put a limit on the times you could get the banner.

BB: Oh no. Where were these meetings, in Lufkin or Nacogdoches?

MW: Bethlehem, Lufkin First [church], anywhere in the district, you know.

BB: Who would let you have a bus?

MW: They would, at each school.

BB: Oh, the school bus, okay.

MW: And I don't know who was responsible for that. Once a month we had a temperance meeting, where any of the children could come from the community. We had a leader, we had special songs, a devotional service and then we would have refreshments and games. So it was a fellowship time. Now, during the time we were there, there was a very active W.S.C.S.

BB: Let's put on tape what that means, a lot of people won't know.

MW: Woman's Society of Christian Service.

BB: Right, which turned into the...

MW: U.M.W.

BB: U.M.W. now, right, and that is United Methodist Women. What sort of things would you have there, would they take on as projects?

MW: Well, we mostly did whatever the district called for. I was trying to remember, we had some studies, mostly Bible studies. And I can't remember really, you know, special projects.

BB: Did you ever help host any district meetings or anything like that?

MW: Yes, that district meeting I was telling you about where we passed the food out the windows was a district W.S.C.S. meeting. I know Mrs. Leach, you remember her, very active in our district. And Mrs. Musslewhite and all of those, active from First Church, they were just amazed at the food.

BB: You didn't have a kitchen in that church? Everybody just brought food?

MW: No, just brought the food, they cooked it around, see, there were several houses around close by and they would bring food, every family would bring something. I know we had...

BB: Where did you eat?

MW: Sawhorses with boards on them out at the side between the church and the road. There was a road went right by the side and then there was a road went in the front.

BB: Where about is this location now, exactly?

MW: It's on Farrington, I'm trying to...I'm sure that's why it was named Farrington because of Mrs. Farrington. I could point it out but describing just where...the Lewis's lived on this side of the road and then our church was right there, just across from it and kind of like that, you know a road here and a road there.

BB: I'll have to go down and look.

MW: And it's down, I'm trying to think exactly, I believe Temple Associates is on this corner and I may be wrong, it may be straight down there, but it is on Farrington.

BB: Okay, so you were here when it closed again in '51?

MW: Yes, well, we had gone to Ryan's Chapel full time then, Charles had, and we didn't know they were closing until they had.

BB: Oh, so he was no longer preacher. Did they not have a preacher during this time, or something?

MW: Evidently not, as near as we could tell, because it kind of just closed out. It didn't close exactly; they must have had a few services on and decided to do that. I'm not sure. Mrs. Tatum might be able to tell us. I tried to ask the other women and they couldn't remember just why. I think it was...it seems like to me it was either '53 that it really closed out.

BB: Oh, but you, you were there in '51.

MW: We went in '51 see to '52. Because that was the first year Charles was at the chapel. And it was about a year after that. And C.F. Lords had come in and I think that all in all, they agreed...

BB: To go ahead and split.

MM: ...to go to other churches. It may be that the membership had dropped down or something.

BB: Do you remember what it was like in '51, how many members you had?

MW: The membership had dropped down because some of the young people had grown up and left. Now, E.J. married Nelda Faye Bryce, Nelda Faye Goins. She's running a beauty shop in Diboll now. She might have been able to help if I could have gotten a hold of her. And I can't remember E.J.'s father's name, I remember the people but not his name.

BB: Okay, you said you had a picture of it?

MW: I think it's, you should have it if not it's at the library.

BB: Oh, okay. I just haven't been...it's in the drawer up there?

MW: Yes.

BB: I'll have to look. Who did you send it with?

MW: Charlene.

BB: With Charlene. It's there, I just...Do you know how many members there were?

MW: There is another chart for that.

BB: Okay, while you are looking for that I'm going to read this in because I stopped the tape. In 1946 Brother Gentry was paid \$583.00 by the mission as his yearly salary. And they paid all the conference askings that year, right?

MW: Yes. I can't find any of the others.

BB: Okay, in '48 Burke and Pine Grove together are listed as 61 adult members. Burke here is listed separately as having 46, so that would make what? Fifteen adult members then for the...

WM: How many?

BB: Total membership would be about 90, here, according to this. Average attendance was 50 for that church. It doesn't list the number of...it only had thirty in church school.

MW: This lists the W.S.C.S., one.

BB: It has one society but it doesn't list the number of members.

MW: It doesn't? Oh, we had a good Vacation Bible School, I forgot that.

BB: Yes it list 30 in here.

MW: Here it is right here. It doesn't...fifteen Methodist pupils in Vacation Bible School. 1950, this is the year we were there. Average attendance of church school, goodness gracious, this is hard to read all of the...it doesn't have it listed.

BB: Well here, even Diboll, the Diboll Methodist is listed with 177 total membership, with 57 adults.

MW: In Sunday school here, I'm trying to see if I've got the right one, yes, adults over 24 years in Sunday school was 23 average attendance, and here is 26 children in Sunday school and that would be 26 and 23 in Sunday school.

BB: That's good. Let me see...I found here the financial report.

MW: Total full membership, now is what I am hunting, 146, no, yep, that is right. 146 total school membership reported last year, that's active and inactive. Three infants presented for baptism that year and three others, children, youth and adults.

BB: Okay, this was in 1948 and down here it says for Burke and Pine Grove it says Charles Weimer and it says paid for minister \$1500 per year. Now, then it has Burke listed next and it says \$750 was that additional or do you think...?

MW: Burke?

BB: Burke paid the \$750 and they came up with the \$800?

MW: No, I think they paid the smaller amount. See we had a supplement to our salary that year because when we went there we were supposed to get \$1800 from Burke and we found it was only \$1500 and the conference supplemented our salary that year.

BB: To make it the \$1800 per year?

MW: Per year.

BB: Right, and this was in '48.

MW: Is that a '48 book?

BB: Well it says '49, so '49 would be for '48.

MW: Yes.

BB: So you feel like Pine Grove paid part of it and Burke paid the other part, right? That is hard to believe.

MW: Yes, I never did know this. Listen do you know what we were getting at Ryan's Chapel? \$250 a year, plus an expense account. Plus they gave him seven suits in nine years plus shirts. And one year they gave all of us shoe certificates at Clark's. One year they took me out and outfitted me completely before I went to a meeting.

BB: Oh goodness \$200 a year.

MW: They bought enough clothes, \$250, but he was working at Diboll and we had our own house.

BB: Yes, but my goodness.

MW: At that time, that was all they could afford. Yes, we rented our own house.

BB: I was going to say, you paid for it, didn't you? You don't get rich being a minister do you?

MW: No you don't. Now, here's the '47 book, let's see what we can find.

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MW: When some, one mother would bring her baby's pallet and put it down and let the baby sleep in the aisle while service was going on. And some of the children would get on the benches and go to sleep.

BB: These benches, did they have backs to them? They had backs?

MW: Yes, they had backs. They were homemade pews, yes they had backs.

BB: Tell me what their revival services were like, were they longer than an hour, were they...?

MW: I don't think any more so than ordinary, we'd have a call, had some members but I couldn't tell you the numbers or anything. We had some good revivals there and I can't remember names of others that come in and preached. I know his father preached, I think, twice during this time. By the way, the little boy going up the aisle to go into the church is my son, who lives in Duluth now and I'm behind him. I don't know who is in the car taking the picture. Probably Charles, you know, wanting a picture of the church.

BB: Tell me about the M.Y.F. district meetings you had. Did you have to feed everybody?

MW: When we had them there, yes, and we had the regular meetings where they called the roll and they had they business of the M.Y.F. And they always told how much they gave to that M.Y.F. fund. And the Methodist Youth Fund. Then, there was one district meeting especially, where we had the tables piled so high with sandwiches until we were afraid they would fall on the ground. We had the table outside and under it was big tubs with ice and cold drinks.

BB: Just kids from all over?

MW: Yes, from the whole district would come.

BB: Tell me about the stew, the fellowship you were telling me about.

MW: That was before the church was built, I think, when they were trying to have enough fellowship to get started and they had stew in a black wash pot. And they called it "slum-gullion" and Tincy told about it, how good it was, Tincy Evans, she was there.

BB: Just everybody bring something and drop it in.

MW: And I know during Frances Guerra's wedding, oh, I wish we could find that name. But Jessie Malanders can tell you his name. And if I could find that picture of them, right after they married because Charles married them. Then they insisted we go to the house with them and they brought in a pig on a platter like that. And they had food everywhere. You can't imagine. And they went on...we finally had to leave but, three or four o'clock in the morning.

BB: Oh my word.

MW: That is the way they did after a wedding.

BB: They celebrated long and hard, huh? How neat.

MW: But we would have hot tamale suppers, I remember they would insist that we go home with them. And one time we went home with them and we hesitated because this family was really not well to do, you know. It was one of the Mexican families and they were really nice people. And she brought out, she made big pots of enchiladas that were just so good. One time they made hot tamales and we would have a feast. We'd just do different things. One time we had an ice cream supper and different ones brought in cakes and that was over at Rosie's house. We had such good times.

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