

MARIE H. TEMPLE
Interview 101a
October 27, 1985
Marie Davis, Interviewer
Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

ABSTRACT: Marie Davis interviews her aunt, Marie Temple about growing up in Diboll and working in the commissary. Mrs. Davis lived in Diboll for most of her childhood and she recalls her school days and the young people's recreation. She also mentions funerals, the school fire, the Airdome Movie Theater, and ice cream.

Marie Davis (hereafter MD): Today is October 27, 1985. I am talking to Mrs. Marie Temple. She lives in Pasadena, Texas. She came to Diboll at an early age. My name is Marie Davis. She is no relation to the Temple family who founded Diboll. Aunt Ree, when were you born?

Marie Temple (hereafter MT): July 4, 1894.

MD: That makes you how old?

MT: I am now 91 and will be 92 next July 4, that is in 1986.

MD: Where were you born?

MT: In Angelina County, four miles from Lufkin on the Hudson Farm.

MD: Who were your parents?

MT: My mother was Whilomene Glass and my father was John Hudson.

MD: You stayed there in that area for a while and then when did you come to Diboll?

MT: It was in 1908 with my grandfather. My mother and father had both died and we lived with my grandparents. They came to Diboll, left the farm and came to Diboll in 1908. We went on down to Emporia and stayed a while. There were a lot of houses down there then. We went in one of the company houses and when the manager's house came vacant, they wanted my grandfather to take charge and rent those houses that were left. There was a mill there for a long time. They really did good business, but Diboll outgrew them. He moved everything up above Lufkin, somewhere, I don't remember.

MD: When you were living there, that mill had burned?

MT: No, it didn't burn. They just moved everything.

MD: Did you tell me one time that you all played on the old locomotives they left there?

MT: No, honey. There was nothing like that kept.

MD: Tell me about your clearing that land down there.

MT: Oh, clearing that land down there, we were nothing but kids. That lumberyard was not concrete or anything. It was just big pine, not logs, but they had sawed them at the mill and they were about two inches thick and eight or ten inches wide. The trees in those days were so big and all. They just put them down on the ground and made the lumberyard. After the sawmill was moved, there were those puncheons down in that ground, it was just solid there. It was just as rich, good rich wood. We went in and we moved them. We had a horse. We moved all those things out of the way. We cleared all that out and burned it up and we plowed it up. We planted cotton and we planted a garden, corn and cotton. We made about two bales of cotton. My grandmother said she wanted us to have a cotton mattress out of it and we had the cotton ginned so we could make a cotton mattress and the rest of it we had it put in a big bale of cotton. We had a lot of peas and a lot of vegetables. We had hogs, chickens, and turkeys and cows and a few guineas. We had some real nice Poland China hogs. We went out there and we made a boat, it is a wonder we hadn't drowned. We went out there and our grandparents would let us have a gun, we would go out and shoot ducks. One time I let two ducks swim together. They told me to do that and I would save a shell. I let two swim together and I killed two at one time. The snakes were awfully bad out there, the old water moccasin. It was a wonder we hadn't got bit, but we didn't. We worked, too, I had to milk the cows and feed the chickens, the turkeys. Then this cousin that lived with us, Beeder Glass, took care of feeding the horse and the hogs. In the evening we had a lot of stuff to do. Our grandparents were old and they couldn't do anything, and boy, would we keep things moving.

MD: What were your grandparent's names that you lived with?

MT: My grandfather was Ben Glass, Benjamin Glass, and my grandmother was a Cravey before she married and her name was Mary Glass. They had six children, two boys and four girls and a bunch of grandchildren.

MD: Was the commissary at Emporia when you moved down there?

MT: No, there was no commissary. There was a big feed store. Diboll didn't sell cow feed then and nearly everybody at Diboll had a cow. They would go to Emporia at that feed store and buy their feed. It was owned by Shug Albritton. He would deliver the feed, but they would have to walk from Diboll in order to order their feed and then he would deliver it.

MD: Were there any other stores down there, any cafes or saloons?

MT: No, no, just the feed store.

MD: About where you lived is where the Catholic Church and day care center are today, isn't it?

MT: I don't know where the Catholic Church is. I haven't seen it, I would love to see that.

MD: Okay, I will take you down there sometime.

MT: There was a well there, we had a well dug. I am good about remembering trees.

MD: When you lived at Emporia, what did Diboll look like?

MT: It isn't anything like it is now. There were some houses along the railroad track there, quite a few in the Italian quarters and the Negro quarters. The white quarters were a pretty good size, but the mill and everything has grown so much since then.

MD: Do you remember what the houses looked like?

MT: They were not painted inside or out. But they were good houses. They were sealed with what they called "Beaded Ceiling." But there were no electric lights. Later on they had electric lights. There was no running water in the houses. But everybody had a hydrant in the yard. They had to go out there for the water. In later years they put in electricity, running water, bathrooms and water heaters. Diboll now has conveniences as any city.

MD: Where did you go to school and where was the school located?

MT: I could show you where it was.

MD: Where do you think it was?

MT: I know right where it was. It burned the first of the school year and we did not get to go to school that year. A boy named Grady, the lumber that the schoolhouse was built out of had knotholes in it. The girls would stick notes in there to hide them, and he saw one sticking out and he just struck a match and stuck to it. It went off just like powder. It burned to the ground. It was only a three-room school. I was in the professor's room, high up, and then there were two more rooms down. We didn't get to go to school until they built a new one where the present school is.

MD: Who was your teacher?

MT: Allen O'Quinn.

MD: About how many kids were in your grade?

MT: There were about twenty-five in this room.

MD: Was more than one grade in there?

MT: Yes, I think Mr. O'Quinn would teach whatever he thought a child could observe.

MT: Did you have to buy your own books?

MT: Yes. When that school burned, it burned all my books. We had to buy new books when the schoolhouse was finished.

MD: Did you have any activities at school?

MT: Well, we would play ball at recess.

MD: Did you ever put on any programs?

MT: No, we never had any programs until after we moved in the new school and then we did.

MD: Where did you go to church?

MT: The church was just this side of the commissary, the south side. The Methodist and Baptist used that church. The Methodist had it in the morning and the Baptist in the afternoon.

MD: How would you get from Emporia up to the church?

MT: We would ride that train.

MD: Oh, the train would stop?

MT: Yes.

MD: How much would it cost you?

MT: A dime. We would ride from Emporia up to Diboll, but when church was over we would walk back home. It wasn't very far up to Diboll from Emporia. But it thrilled us kids to get to catch the passenger train and it would stop there and take us on and put us off at Diboll.

MD: That church burned. They made apartments out of it and they burned.

MT: I think it was where Wes Ashworth lives now.

MD: What did you all do for recreation? For fun? Did you have parties?

MT: Yes, we had parties occasionally at Diboll. We would all gang up and sing. We just really enjoyed singing. There wasn't much going on and finally there came to Diboll a little picture show.

MD: Where was it located?

MT: You know where they sold wood, when it comes off the planer? It was there. They called it the "Airdome." We would only have a show about twice a week. Sometimes little traveling shows would come in there and they would put up a tent. Everybody would accommodate them and go to the show. I remember one night after I was grown, this little show came into Diboll and we didn't know if it was kinda "smutty" or if it was a good show for us girls to see. We got these married women to go with us, but we didn't want our boy friends to know we were going. We were just going to sneak off and go to the show. We kind of went around the back way and went in the show. There was a man up there talking in the show and I think he knew our boy friends was coming in there. He said something about it was coming a storm to the right, we looked back and there were our boy friends coming in. We were just dumbfounded. Bessie Rutland would do anything like that with us kids.

MD: Did you ever have a job when you lived there?

MT: I worked in the store at Diboll.

MD: You worked in the commissary? About what year was that?

MT: In 1917 and 1918. I was working there when I married. I quit that job when I married and went to Houston.

MD: Who was head of the women's department?

MT: Mrs. Farrington was. It was during the war. She got off and helped sew for the Army boys – Red Cross. I knitted. My extra time at the store I knitted. I had it all to myself there for several months. Wasn't much doing, you know? Somebody would come in and buy a calico dress, thread, or shoes. But we had a good line of stuff. In the spring we would get our hats in and all the dressing that went on them. We furnished Diboll women their hats. We had a big opening just before Easter. It was something!

MD: Did you all decorate the hats?

MT: Yes, Mrs. Farrington and I did. We would have a drummer come down with the ready-made clothes. When I worked there I bought me several ready-made dresses.

MD: Did you enjoy working in the commissary?

MT: Yes.

MD: Did you get to meet a lot of people?

MT: Oh, I already knew them.

MD: Did a lot of people come to the store just to visit?

MT: No, I don't think so. They came after what they needed and to go to the post office and to get groceries. The market wasn't connected to the commissary, it joined it. They got their meat in the meat market and their other groceries in the store. Everything they were, they got in the dry goods department, underwear and everything.

MD: Did you let people charge?

MT: Oh yes. There wasn't very much silver that changed hands because they had the checks. The company would issue checks. But if they let their money stay in the office long enough, on pay day they would draw silver.

MD: Now there were some Italians who lived in Diboll, do you remember them?

MT: Yes.

MD: Where did they live?

MT: There was an Italian quarters, a Negro quarters, and the White quarters. The colored children didn't get to go to the White school, but the Italians did...

MD: Did you know any of the Italians?

MT: Yes. They all came to the store to buy materials to make their clothes. The men had to go upstairs to get their pants and shirts and things like that but the women all came to the dry goods department.

MD: Then at one time the men's clothing was upstairs, is that right?

MT: Yes.

MD: Where did the Italians go to church?

MT: I don't know. I don't think there was any Catholic Church there. But they went to school in the White school, but there was a Negro school there.

MD: Tell me about going to the Italian wedding.

MT: Well, of course, I was working there in the store and this Italian boy and girl wanted me to come to their wedding. They went to Lufkin and married a week before by the

county, and later they were married by the Priest. The Priest came in from Houston on the eleven o'clock train. I got four or five of my friends and we were going that night to the wedding. I was scared. I shouldn't repeat it now because I have such wonderful Catholic friends. The Catholic Priest had on his robe and, oh, I was scared. They had wine. I wasn't used to that. They got married and they began to drink wine and I was so glad when they said, "Let's go home." You know I didn't hardly sleep that night thinking about that wedding.

MD: Tell me about the funerals they had in Diboll.

MT: Nearly everybody was buried at Ryan Chapel.

MD: They didn't have a funeral home, did they?

MT: No, no.

MD: Then they didn't embalm people then?

MT: I helped embalm a woman.

MD: Did they embalm them in homes in Diboll?

MT: When people could afford it, they would come down from Lufkin and embalm them in their homes. But everybody mostly was buried at Ryan Chapel.

MD: Do you remember anybody having a bakery in Diboll?

MT: Yes. Mr. Copes (Bassett) had a little bakery. He would bake his bread and come around in a little one-horse wagon and sell it for ten cents a loaf. It was really good bread.

MD: And what about the boys that sold ice cream?

MT: Yes. That was Frankie Oakerson or Oalkerson. In the summer time, he would make ice cream over there in his mother's front yard. He would put it on his wagon and go around all over Diboll selling ice cream. He kept on with milk and ice cream and went to work for a milk company in Houston and did real good. He married a girl from Emporia, a Thompson girl. They have a family in Houston. Of course, they are old people now, like me.

MD: But he started out with ice cream?

MT: He started out with ice cream in Diboll.

MD: Somebody said something about the Broker girls. Did they have a little business?

MT: They took in sewing.

MD: Were there a lot of people who did things like that in their homes?

MT: No. They didn't do it all the time, just when Easter was coming up. I will tell you Jane Wall did more sewing than anyone, Mary's mother.

MD: Had Copestown been established?

MT: There were a few houses at Copestown, when I left Diboll. But it had grown some.

MD: Do you know anything about Asenath Phelps coming to Diboll.

MT: Yes. I remember her coming one time. Mr. Bassett Copes was related to her. They took her around in his wagon, over there toward the old Morris place. That is all settled now.

MD: Was Diboll a good place to live?

MT: Yes. There was not as much meanness going on. Everybody was congenial and everybody knew each other. When they met it was, "Howdy do and how are you today?" When one got sick people went in and helped.

END OF INTERVIEW