

HOWARD WALKER

Interview 102a

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Becky Bailey, former County School Superintendent Howard Walker talks about his life and reminisces about his education, his early jobs, and his time as Angelina County School Superintendent. He recalls the difficulties he encountered trying to get his teacher's education and some of the issues involved in managing a large rural school district.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): My name is Becky Bailey. I am interviewing Mr. Howard Walker. Today's date is June 18, 1986. Mr. Walker, would you give me some personal background, like where you were born and who your parents were? That sort of thing?

Howard Walker (hereafter HW): I was born in Angelina County. I mean, excuse me...

BB: That's okay.

HW: I was born in Kauffman County in what is known as Legg's Prairie, January 8th, 1894. Now it is known as Cedar Vale. There was a little post office there, Ashworth. And I was born in a little old house close to what was known as the Bowie Farm. Then my father and mother sold the place and built a new home still on Legg's Prairie, but my father got acquainted with some people that had been down here in Angelina County. And he liked to deer hunt and turkey hunt and such as that, and to fish. And so they got him in the notion and the later part of 1899, why he decided to settle the place there and move to Angelina County. So we fixed up a covered wagon and tied two Jersey cows to the back. And had one little black pony and a mule to the wagon and started out. Came around by Crockett and crossed the Neches River at what is known as Red's Ferry, just above where 103 crosses between Lufkin and Crockett now. And the first time we camped at the old Shug Chancey Place up there on the Highway No. 7, now. So that is the story now to get me over into Angelina County.

BB: Do you remember that mule ride?

HW: Sure I remember a lot of things. I can tell you all about the things that happened when I was three years old.

BB: My word, you have a good memory.

HW: I can tell you about...now if you want me to go into all those details, I could tell you about my two brothers and all that, about the things, the old cow out across the street

that had hydrophobia and went mad, you know. And about gathering the earthworms from behind the plows and throwing them in the tank. Going with my father when I was just between four and five years old. We went to Carrol and sold two bales of cotton. And at that time, why they paid everybody in silver. That was under Grover Cleveland when he was president, you know, why we went on a silver monetary basis. And he (father) got that money in sacks and he threw it in the back of the wagon there and came home. Yes, I remember about all of those things. Back there before we ever left Kauffman County. I could spend a whole day a-telling you about going down the creek with them. We thought if we could get an old hard-shelled turtle, something like that, just about as big as a saucer or a plate, we had a wonderful meal up there in that part of the country. And we had trouble with the water situation. We would have to get it out of the tanks. I remember that they used alum and egg beat up together to clear the water and settle it down the mud to the bottom and all those things. Yes, I remember all those things. I suppose I could tell you about things that happened when I wasn't over two years old.

BB: How long did it take you to get to Angelina County? Do you remember that?

HW: It took us about four or five days. We camped on the way, you see.

BB: Did you bring everything that you owned?

HW: We brought all the stuff that we expected to have, yes. Brought everything that we needed, you see. We left a lot of stuff and sold a lot of stuff before we left there.

BB: How would you go about crossing the river? Was there a ferry boat?

HW: On a ferry. That was Red's Ferry. Red's Ferry. It was there. And Mr. Mathis up there close to Red's Ferry, he has parts of that old ferry. The part that they hook the chains on and such as that. Yes, I remember crossing and spending the night up there at the old Chancey Place and my father found out from those people that there was a place for rent down in the lower part of the Red and McAdams settlement. So we took out the next day and went down there and he rented what was known as the Sardon Place. That is right north of 103 on that west side of Boudan Creek. And a lot of the land that we worked was on one side of the creek and some of it on the other side of the Highway goes right through the old farm where we cultivated that one year. And while we were there my father found out that he could buy a place down here between the Chancey and the Bonner farms- about 150 acres it turned out to be 175 (acres) from the Beasley's. An old place and there was an old double pin log house with what we called a dog-run, you see, between the two big rooms. There was a side room on it and that is where we moved the second year.

BB: Okay, and your dad was a farmer?

HW: And we farmed there. We lived there for a long time. To make things short now, I had better not go into too many details. We farmed there and my mother's people had come from Mississippi and they had gone on out to Butler Co., Matador, and in 1906, by

the early part of 1906, why we started out there. On the way that far we picked cotton, you see. And around up to Sherman and Van Augustine, I have a daughter that lived at Sherman, I told her about where we picked cotton, all along up there around Van Augustine and Sherman, back in there. So we had two fine dogs, and one of them got killed there on the railroad at Van Augustine. And so we made it on out there in a covered wagon. Went on out to Childress and turned south and went into Butler County, Matador. And that is where the Boren's lived and we spent one year and farmed out there that year. Raised cotton and I was one of those independent kids and I had lots of fun doing lots of things. Killing rattlesnakes and catching bobcats, coyotes, and all those kinds of things. So we stayed one year there and then came back.

BB: And you've been here every since.

HW: Anyway we moved into Lufkin on Charlton Street up here and lived there about three or four weeks. And I showed some of you a little book about the school in 1906 and '07 that I went to about three weeks there. So we lived on Charlton Street there just a very short time, you see, and then went back to the farm. But instead of going back to that farm, we went to another place up there in the McAdam's and Red settlement and bought a place from a Mr. Crocker. They wanted to buy that place so that I could go to school. So I went to school up at Cordaway Springs, old #30 or they call it now, Redtown or Red school. It was always Cordaway Springs.

BB: Cordaway?

HW: C-O-R-D-A-W-A-Y. Cordaway. Cordaway Springs.

BB: And that is just up here north of town? Isn't that north of Lufkin, here?

HW: It's up in the northwest end of the county. Right south of Wells.

BB: Oh, okay.

HW: And it's still there. I carried these historical site people up there and we drove up where the school grounds used to be. Drove the car right up to the old school. The old school building has been destroyed for years. And I told them that was just about where I sat on a long bench. No desk, or no nothing, you see, at all. I had to take the books and write on the desk in your lap or put the books on the floor. And the old building had one door on the south and one door in the east end and that is all it had. It didn't have any windows in it. Just an old shack of a house. No ceiling or anything at all.

BB: It would be hot or cold, wouldn't it?

HW: Well, anyway...

BB: Were you about twelve years old when you went to school there? Ten or twelve?

HW: Now I have a photograph of myself at that school. I'll bring it in here and show it to you.

BB: Okay. When did you finish your education?

HW: Well, now I went there the one summer term and then I went another regular term. And of course, the first year I started they put me in the fourth grade to start with. My mother had taught me how to read and write and do arithmetic and everything. And then the summer of 1911 or '12, I went to Burke school to Mr. W. A. O'Quinn and Mr. J O. Saddlewhite. Mr. O'Quinn taught down there in the early history in Diboll. So now...they ran a lot of that stuff in the paper before. I'll go in there and bring that to you in a minute. Some of that stuff. I was preparing then to take the college entrance examination. See, they told me; the teachers and such as that had told me, since you haven't gone to a high school, or anything like that, "Why you can't make it. You can't make it. You can't make it." I have been told that all my life since I was a kid. I raised my own cotton patches; I had my own potatoes and I peddled those potatoes, and I had my own hogs and I had my own yearlings, and I peddled the stuff over at Pollock, and at those sawmill camps, and things like that. Made my money to go to school. So I went over to Sam Houston.

BB: Okay, what year was that?

HW: That was 1912 and '13 was the first year.

BB: Right after you went to Burke?

HW: Yes. I had already checked to see how much it was going to cost me before I went over there and all that. And I sold those two bales of cotton and I lacked a lot of money and I went up to the old National Bank at that time and saw Mr. Henry Gibson. He was the cashier. He says, "Nope, we can't let you have that money. You're just a kid." I said, "I want to go to school and I need so much more money." He said, "Well, maybe you had better go see Mr. Bonner. Old man, Mr. Bill Bonner was president of the bank at that time. That was the old bank building. I went up there and he said the same thing. He called me, I knew him and he knew me and he called me by my first name. Says, "I can't let you have that money. You are just a kid."

"Well, I need the money, I want to get somebody to help me get some more money so that I can go on over there and have enough money to pay my board and everything. My board and my place to stay and my board is going to cost me eleven dollars a month. And I need some more to help me finish the whole year." So he said, "Well, have you got anything for security?" I didn't know much about what security meant, you see. "Well, have you got any hogs?" "Yes, I got hogs; I got chickens; I got cows, and I got all that kind of stuff." "Give me about how many you have of this that and the other, and I'll fix a mortgage." Well, I didn't get my seventy-five dollars. He deducted ten percent interest a year from that. Anyway, I had enough so I got ready to go. I caught G. L. & N. [Groveton Lufkin and Northern] train over there and went [to] Groveton. Caught the M.

K. & T. [Mississippi Kansas and Texas] – monkeys, kangaroos and tigers. I went over to Trinity. I caught the I. & G.N. [International and Great Northern] – Independent and Got Nothing. So then I caught the Tilley Special from Phelps over to Huntsville. That is how I had to travel to get over there.

BB: Four stops.

HW: I had to travel to get over there that way. So I took the entrance examination and I made it. So it was pretty hard for me the first year. I'm not going to brag....the first year was kind of hard.

BB: What did you major in?

HW: Well, I majored in the Social Sciences, psychology and everything I could get. I just did everything, I guess. I took a lot of special rural education work over at A&M, and everywhere else. Well, anyway, I happened to be pretty smart, a pretty prominent student over there because I was editor of the Houstonian, that was the college paper – the chief of that. And then I was editor of the college annual the next year. So I guess I was pretty smart. But I got a resolution from the Sam Houston Alcalde staff about three years ago that said that my annual was the best one that had ever been published. Now wasn't that something you see. Now that is part of my education. But I made it good. I took part in everything, but I had to work to help finance over there. I caught these big old grasshoppers and I would sell those to the biology laboratory and I caught frogs and I caught those frogs down on those creek banks, and sell them for twenty-five cents apiece. And I took part in everything and I was on the football team, basketball, played basketball. So we were out at the crooked field, the old football field over there. Down next to a little old house where they kept a lot of the tools and things like that on the football field, an old big cottontail rabbit jumped out. Boy, listen, I caught that thing. I ran right down there across that football field and I caught him. I sold him for a dollar and a quarter.

I was on the debating team. I just showed them, you know, that I could do it. They had told me that, "You can't do this and you can't do that and all that." I have been told that all my life though.

BB: When did you graduate? What year?

HW: Well, now I went back, you see. I went into the service in the later part of...I taught...I got a life-time teaching certificate. I taught then in 1913 and '14, I believe. And then I taught in '15, '16. And then I went back to school one year. But then...I taught up at the old Dunn school, old Bethlehem in '17. 1917 term, 1917, '18 and then I left there and went to the Navy during World War I, you see. In early 1918, and served on...that's the battleship or cruiser that I served on, Old North Carolina. I was an expert gunner on that thing.

BB: Did you see Europe? Did you get over to...

HW: Well, we did protective work. We guarded the convoys of the soldiers across the Atlantic. There wasn't very much to do but to take those soldiers over there you see. And we guarded those transports. I have a lot of photographs in there. Pictures, you know, of transports, and I could name a lot of them; President Grant, Antigua and the Mongolian, all those transports. We guarded those over the Atlantic. That often reminds me...I studied; I worked; I read everything. I've got books in there that I ordered when I first started to school, public school – encyclopedias and histories, such as that. I've still got them in that library there. And I learned a lot of those things. And when I...we passed the Azores Islands over there, you see, and such as that. And I often used to think about the poems that I learned and all those things. I studied and I learned things.

Behind him lay the great Azores
Behind him lay the gates of Hercules,

BB: I recognize that one.

HW: Before him not the ghostly shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The mate- what shall I say for low the very stars are gone.
Why say, Sail on, Sail on.
Brave Admiral, must we pray?
What must I say?
Why say, Sail on, Sail on and on.

BB: That is about Columbus, right?

HW: Columbus.

BB: Right, I had to learn that one too.

HW: And then at the last part of the last sentence, “He gained a world and he gave to that world its grandest lesson, “On, Sail on!”

Oh yes, I still got a whole head up there.

BB: After you got back from the Navy, what did you do? Did you go back to school or start teaching?

HW: Well, I tell you what. I got acquainted with....just as quick as the Armistice was signed we came into New York. We happened to be coming into New York and most of us were transferred off of the ship, you see. We cleaned out the old harbor. The old nets and things in New York harbor and Pelum Bay there. And I got acquainted with the captain of the station there and he happened to be a cadet over at A&M one time. I said, “Yes, I remember going over to A&M. We had a track meet over there with Bryan Academy and A&M.” And you know what? I won the Southwest Championship in high jumping. And I said, I just got a whole boxful of medals that I won at different track meets and at different things like that. And I got acquainted with him kindly, you know.

And I put in for release, you see, anyway. I went in for four years. You see, you had to go into the Navy for four years. And the first thing I know a few morning after that why they called my name to give me a release. Called me up and asked me how...asked me, "Do you know how to get home?"

I told them about the best route around through Detroit and all up in St. Louis and then catch the Cotton Belt from St. Louis to down home. And so they gave me enough money to buy my ticket and everything. And I came home. I had promised though. I had made a promise that I would go back to school to take a lot of more work, you see. Schoolwork. But when I came back, my daddy was a carpenter. He sold the place out there and had just moved into Lufkin. My daddy and mother, living up there by themselves. So I did carpenter work, you see. Putting on the roofs for houses, building little houses for a while here. When it was raining, I happened to be down here at the H. E. & W. T. [Houston East and West Texas] depot and this fellow walked up there and says, "I need somebody that can write signs for these highway crossings and culvert signs and depot signs and such as that."

Well, didn't anybody show up. Directly I walked around and said, "Well, I had mechanical drawing and I can do all kinds of work like that." I said that most of it would probably be done with stencils.

And he said, "Well, you're hired."

So he made me in charge of a car over at Wakefield. It was over at Wakefield at that time. And then I used that car, supply car and all, cooking and everything in it. And I would move it where I wanted to and this, that, and the other. So, I moved over to Diboll for awhile, putting up signs for awhile. Then I moved to Lufkin, of course, and stayed there awhile. Then I moved it on up to the Angelina River up there so that I could fish. Put on some trot lines, and things like that.

BB: And paint a few signs on the side.

HW: I worked for them good. I worked for them good. But see I had promised to go back to school that fall, you see. So when I got way up to Appleby, Garrison, and all up through there somewhere and I told the superintendent who came up there. "Now listen, I made a promise when I got out of the Navy that I would go back to school."

"Oh, now listen. We don't want to loose you. I'll tell you what we will do. We will give you a big...a good job down in"...See it was unusual to find a college person to be doing that kind of work. But I got along fine. Shoot, I could write those signs, draw them out just as good as anybody. Depot signs, culvert signs, rivers and all...He said, "I'll get you a job in the Houston office if you'll just stay and do it." I said, "No, I got two brothers in the railroad and they're the contrariest people in the world. I don't want to be connected with the railroad business at all. And told him that I had enjoyed the work and everything.

He said, "Yes, we like you and we want you to stay." But I didn't, I went back into...

BB: To school. A&M.

HW: I went one year then and got all kinds of extra work. Then from there I went over to...as head master at Peacock Military Academy in San Antonio. But I didn't stay there but just about six or seven months. I got tired. I had just come out of the military service and I didn't want any more of it. Now, Lord, I could go on. After I left there, I went on down into Mexico. I was going way on down in the silver mines way on down in lower California and Mexico, that part of Mexico. But then old Diaz, they were a fighting down there. No, I am going to get out of here and I come back out. So I decided I was going to Alaska.

BB: You have been all over.

HW: So I stayed there in El Paso, I think one or two days. Went to Los Angeles, took in Los Angeles and everything. So there was an old boy I got acquainted with from Independence, Kansas. He was going with me. So we got up to the Ciscoe Mountains, the other side of Mt. Shasta in California and got snow bound. Couldn't go any further. And they didn't know when it would be open. So we came back down to Sacramento and stayed there a few days. Went back up to Redding, California. I told him, I said, "Listen, I'm getting restless. We are going to have to do something."

So there was a big construction camp there, you see. And we went down there and this old boy, he needed some people to climb poles on power lines up there. I could have probably climbed them better than he could, but anyway I didn't. I didn't worry about that. No, I just wasn't qualified in a way. So I went back and the next day I went back out there. There was a foreman putting in a big concrete piers for the big steel structured lines, you see. I was getting a little bit restless. I said, "I'll tell you what I will do. I'll get down in those holes in that mud and water and tie that reinforcing and do anything else; set those templates and all that and everything. I don't want a durn penny for it. I just want something to entertain myself and do." He looked at me; he looked at me. "By golly, if you feel that way, you are hired." And I did that a few days and everything like that. Every once in awhile...see, I had all that stuff: engineering, surveying, trigonometry, and all that stuff, calculus, and everything like that. But I never did tell anybody you see. I wouldn't tell them. So you know what? A few days, not very long after that, I would just get down in those mud holes and I would do anything. It wouldn't make any difference what it was, I would do it.

So a lot of times the dog-gone engineer would be absent. I would take the transit over there and level it up and everything. I would get one of those helpers and he would take the batter on those things and the slopes and would level all of them across, you know. So the engineer one day came out and said, "Say, I want to know who in the devil is doing this?" They said, "Tex." They called me "Tex" you see. Because I was from Texas. Called me "Tex." Okay. It wasn't long before they put me in charge of twelve engineers and gave me a station wagon.

BB: Oh my goodness, what year was that?

END OF SIDE ONE

HW: I went over here to teach in Richmond, Parrish. The superintendent of schools over there. I started out as a school teacher and I'm going back to school teaching business. So

I wrote him a nice letter. They said anytime that I came back out there they told me to call the San Francisco office and we'll tell you what to do. So I'm going to make it all short there. So anyway, I taught school over there.

BB: In Louisiana?

HW: In '24. That was when my wife and I got married, you see.

BB: And so she was from Louisiana?

HW: In '24. So they wanted me...so I thought that would be a good trip that summer. So I took off...we did and went out there and I called up to the office in San Francisco. They told me to go up to Round Mountain. They said that you know where it is up there. You'll find out where the camp is there and everything. They had a nice tent-house fixed up for me. Everything there and we spent all that summer in California.

BB: How neat!

HW: They paid me while I was out there and I didn't do anything. Oh, they tried to lure me back into working for them, don't you see. But I came back. Then after that I left there and came to San Augustine. The people had heard that I was over there. I mean, they heard that I was a school teacher some way and they wanted me to be principal of their high school over in San Augustine. Well, I went over there and signed a contract. They wanted me to sign a contract for three years. I said, "No" just for one year. And I had already made up my mind that I was coming back to Angelina County and run for County School Superintendent. So I just taught for one year over there.

BB: So that was in 1926? That you were in San Augustine?

HW: Yes, that is right.

BB: And then you came back here...

HW: In 1925. So I made the race for County School Superintendent from over there.

BB: You ran for it here.

HW: You see, I would come over here on Saturday's, and such as that, that spring. So I was elected County School Superintendent over two fine gentlemen.

BB: How would you campaign? What were the campaigns like?

HW: Well, I just made little talks. I never even mentioned the fact that I had any opponents. They called me a young squirt and things like that several different times, but I never paid it any mind. I just made my little speech, you see and things like that, and went on about my business. I never did even mention the fact that I had any opponents.

Whatever they said I never would comment or nothing at all. I would just make my little talk and go on.

BB: Well, I'm surprised with you gone so much....

HW: And I was elected over both of them about two to one. Both of them were fine men. Old man Giles Perkins and old man John Massingill. Mr. Giles Perkins was a good teacher in the county and old man Massingill was a teacher and ex-county judge. They were good people. I thought a whole lot of them, but I never did say anything about them. No, sir. I don't believe in that kind of stuff. I don't believe in that.

BB: Who do you talk to? What kind of gatherings....

HW: Well, I had little speeches, you know. We had little political rallies all over the county, you know. And I just made my little talk. But I...every time I had a chance before the election, I traveled all over the county. I want to tell you this little story. I can tell you many stories. So out there out from Prairie Grove, you know where it is? I stopped there by the side of the fence, right there beside where old man Powell lived. You know where those Allbrittens and Powells all used to live there. I used to know all of them. I stopped there and a fellow was plowing, plowing up his cotton stalks. He got to the end and he stopped there. He said, "Well, I know who you are. I don't have time. I don't want to waste my time with you."

I crawled over the fence. I never would let anyone outdo me at nothing. So I crawled over the fence and I took the lines and threw them over the handles. I got between the handles of the middle buster. He looked at me so funny. I said, "Come on follow me around."

BB: And I will tell you.

HW: I just went right on, you know. And I did a good job. I did a whole lot better job than he did because every once in a while he had dodged those cotton stalks with the middle buster. He come on back. "Well, I will tell you now. I'm going to vote for you and get everybody else I can to vote for you. A guy that can plow cotton stalks better than I can. I'm sure going to vote for him." I thanked him you know and went on about my business. And that's the way I electioneered. Oh, yes, I just went around and was nice to people, you see.

BB: Did they have any rallies in Diboll?

HW: Oh, yes, they had rallies in Diboll and everywhere else. They had rallies in Beulah, and all those places. They used to have them every where – little speaking and box suppers.

BB: How many people would come?

HW: Well, it would be the whole community.

BB: Everybody would come?

HW: Everybody in the community would come out. I never will forget Beulah over there. That old church house is still there. We made speeches off of that. I hadn't noticed the other folks about their talk and everything, so I got up and I thought I made a pretty nice little talk, you see, about my services and everything like that. So when I got through you could have heard a pin drop. There was no applause, no nothing. I walked down the steps and all and I said to myself, "Well, I guess...." Mr. Perkins was teaching school down there that year and Mr. John Massingill had taught down there, you see. And you know what?that was the voting box at Beulah, I got every vote except there. I said, "Well, I guess I just stunned those people." They were just so surprised that that young guy could get up there and make an oration. Well, that's under my County School Superintendent. There are thousands of things before that that I could tell you about my experience.

BB: How many schools were in the district now?

HW: Fifty four.

BB: And it was just Angelina County?

HW: It was the schools all over the county.

BB: What was your job, per se? What did you do?

HW: I did everything in regard to the schools. I okayed all the teacher's contracts and I checked all the schools and everything, you see, and all that, made budget out in every school. (Pause)

Now this is a little note. I did this just a few minutes before you got here, you see. Diboll Common School District Budget for 1928-29. Now I'm not positive, that might have been '27-28 because there wasn't a '27-28. State and county balance, \$15.89. Local tax balance, \$21.91 [SEE FILE FOR COPY] State and county and that is what we expected to get, don't you see?

BB: From the state.

HW: Ninety seven hundred dollars. Local tax, we expected to get that. The total income for the district...that's the budget. Okay.

BB: \$16,305.04

HW: Now here are the teacher's salaries, don't you see? Now I worked up the budget for every school in the county.

BB: I wonder how many teachers was that? Do you know for Diboll?

HW: Oh, there was six or seven then. See, we were buying some chairs for the auditorium, don't you see that - janitor, wood. And then I allowed \$500 for miscellaneous expenses. See we were going to have a lot of balance.

BB: You were really going to have money left over? Total expenses were \$13,831...

HW: Well, you know there are a lot of times that things come up you see. Things like that. But that was the budget that particular year, don't you see.

BB: See, and one teacher makes that much money now. More than that.

HW: Yes, but listen. They were getting sixty and seventy and seventy-five dollars a month, see.

BB: That is really interesting. Can I have that?

HW: Yes, you can have that. Now that is just a temporary budget, you see, that I first worked up. Now it is in my original handwriting in a folder in there. And I just turned that over and found it. I said, "Well, that may be interesting." We worked up a budget for every school. And you see what it says up there?

BB: For the nine months.

HW: For the nine months term, you see. Now a lot of the school's budgets was for six months. A lot of it was for seven months. A lot of it was for eight months. A lot of it was just five and a half months, you see, budget for the different schools over the county. See that was an exception to have that school nine months. You know what I did several times down there in Diboll? We needed some extra money and I got Mr. Rutland, Mr. Walker and those folks down there, and Mr. Devereaux, who worked in the office. I went down there and showed them the budget. Showed them how much we had needed for teacher's salaries, that was maybe mid-term. And all that. And I said we need this much more money. They would give me a check for it and I would deposit it in the school district. They did that - Southern Pine Lumber Company.

BB: Would do that for you. Well, now

HW: That was the temporary budget, you see to start out and set up. I did that for every school in the county, don't you see.

BB: And there were fifty-four of them when you started out.

HW: Man alive. Mr. Saddlewhite, he made a talk to the Forum up there not long ago and he said that Joe Saddlewhite was school superintendent before I was, don't you see? He said, "My daddy built a lot of nice little school buildings all over the county and Howard Walker come along and he tore them all down and he moved them all or sold them all."

BB: So you tried to consolidate?

HW: Well, when I first went in office, now I...it's up there in the Forum where I worked out and got the State Department to approve my transportation program, you see. See, there wasn't a bus in the county or anything, you see. And I set up that budget and...

"You can't get that approved. They won't approve that." But they did. They approved it and gave me so much money for each bus that we put on to transport these kiddies. I often think about transporting the high school from Burke a lot of times. Those old mean boys down there, you see. Some of them. Those old Baker boys, there was two of them, you know. And old C. B. Fairchild's boys, you know.

BB: And they had to come to Lufkin, didn't they?

HW: We brought them to Lufkin then, you see. But that was temporary because you see at that time Diboll wasn't affiliated, don't you see? They didn't have the credits.

BB: Oh, that's right.

HW: You understand?

BB: We didn't have enough high school credits.

HW: No. And naturally we didn't have the facilities down there that we had in Lufkin. And so...

BB: Did you bus Diboll's kids to Lufkin to high school?

HW: No, no.

BB: They had to find their...

HW: No, we just finally...just quick as we could, you see. I put vocational Ag. And home economics in the Diboll schools when I was in the school office, too. Went down there and had a hardware company to go down there with me and let the Home Ec. Teacher, she got all the stuff she needed for the Home Ec.[homemaking] Department and everything like that. We bought it.

BB: Right then, and put it in.

HW: So that is....and I did a lot of those things that they said we couldn't do it, but we did. Every school. I did it for every school. Lufkin, Diboll, Huntington, Zavalla...there are six high schools in the county now and there were six high schools that I put vocational home economics in way back there, years and years ago.

BB: When you say there were fifty-four schools, does that count elementary and high schools or is that just community schools?

HW: That included all of the schools - Lufkin, all of them. That included all of them.

BB: Prairie Grove and...

HW: That included all of the schools, every one. Diboll, Huntington...

BB: That whole list.

HW: That included every school in the county.

BB: When did the school start becoming independent?

HW: Well, the first one was Lufkin, of course. And it was about 1907.

BB: Oh, so you weren't county superintendent over the Lufkin Schools?

HW: Yes, I was. I took care of all the finances when I was in there in 1927. Took care of the Scholastic Census Report, and all that. Every one of them.

BB: When did they become an independent school district, by themselves where they weren't affiliated with the county?

HW: Well, I don't know when it was. Especially that part. You see, we took care of high school tuition and Scholastic Census and everything for years. And when I went out, I was still doing that. I don't know just what year that ceased to be.

But now Diboll didn't become an independent school district until way late.

BB: 1955, I think.

HW: That was what I say. Somewhere.

BB: Real late. Okay.

HW: Let's see here.

BB: How long was our term?

HW: Four years.

BB: Four years.

HW: Four years. See I served in 1927...didn't I give you a list of the county school superintendents?

BB: Not me. You must have Brenda.

HW: I left it at the library there.

BB: Yes, at the library.

HW: Well, you can get that. Here's where they voted the bond issue to build an additional building at Diboll, you see, in 1945. 1945.

BB: I was looking to see when Emporia was in 1927? Were they gone from the time you were...

HW: No sir. Oh, yes, they were gone before I came in. Oh, yes. They had already disbanded, you see. See this is a...I just wrote this from my records in there. [SEE LETTER IN FILE]

BB: Yes, this is 1898, 1903, I think.

HW: You see now, Southern Pine...

BB: Southern Pine #54.

HW: 1904. And here's where Diboll really began. 1907 and '08. That's when they really became a school of its own. Emporia and Ryan's Chapel and all of that come in there, don't you see, in 1907 and '08. Emporia ended then, don't you see?

BB: I think the last one you have here is 1903. Right here.

HW: Yes, that is the reason I was saying it was already gone. Then they changed the name to Diboll schools, you see.

BB: It was just called Southern Pine.

HW: Southern Pine, but it was changed to Diboll in 1907 and '08. You can have that if you want it. I just scribbled a lot of that stuff. I'm always...

BB: Now here...we have had a Mr. I. D. Fairchild mentioned several times in other interviews. I wonder what date that was. It has Southern Pine #54, the first teacher was I. D. Fairchild and he made \$60.00.

HW: That was in 1897.

BB: Yes, look that was in 1898 and '99. Yes.

HW: He was a teacher there. He was one of the main teachers. You can have that.

BB: Thanks, that will be great.

HW: Now, what other questions...do you have any other questions because I could talk for a whole week on my experience, of course. You know it takes a long time...

BB: Did you have a standard contract for all the teachers, or could each school make up their own contract?

HW: No, we had the same contract. Diboll, Huntington, Zavalla and everybody had to sign the same kind of contract.

BB: How did the school boards work? Did you have local school boards, too?

HW: Yes, now listen. I might have mentioned it here to show you. Now the Negroes, they had their own school boards. You see? I might have mentioned it there at one time. I just wanted to do that specially to show you.

BB: Well, you have down here that Emporia had a colored school, too.

HW: Yes, the trustees. Walter Norris, Amos Brown, and Ed Jackson. You see, now they had their own...that's at Emporia. Now Emporia had a white school too. And that's the way it did all over the county that way. We had the Negroes...they had their own trustees in the particular school.

BB: What was their job, really as far as what they could do and what kind of policies could they set?

HW: Just like the school boards today. They really were the ones that finally okayed the teacher's contract and signed the teacher's contracts, you see.

BB: So you worked for them?

HW: I worked with them. I worked with them. I worked for them. Of course, I had some ups and downs. Listen, I got along with the trustees. None of them ever...but I remember several occasions that the trustees, you know, they would get to thinking about some personalities and different things like that. You know what I would tell them? I said now listen I want you folks to know now, I'm not interested in you...I'm not interested in you trustees. I'm interested in the children of Angelina County and that's who I am working for. And that is what I'm going to do. And I let them know that too.

BB: Right off the bat. Did you run for re-election after that first term?

HW: Well, you see, then I skipped four years and then I came back and served four more years.

BB: You just decided not to run?

HW: Thirty...thirty-one, you have that list with the dates and everything. It was thirty-four or thirty-five. 1930-34, 38 I think.

BB: Were there any big changes from the time you left, the first time you were superintendent and when you came back as superintendent?

HW: No, no, everything was just about the same. But I had set up through all the consolidation programs, you see. But the four years there, they hadn't made any moves at all. But anyway, you see the consolidations were made when I was first serving. Hudson was established in 1928, Central was built, and all the school buses were put on all over the different places. Odell, Concord and Zavalla and Sulphur Springs, and all that when I was in there the first term. I did that and that was the reason the people wanted me to come back and serve again because I had done so much for the schools.

BB: Did you notice that the Depression had hurt education when you came back?

HW: Well, I don't know whether it did particular.

BB: I just wondered if you had lost a lot of teachers or weren't able to pay the teachers.

HW: No, I think that we got along okay.

BB: As well as you could.

HW: I think the Depression didn't affect us in education program particularly.

BB: Okay, in the county the main method of financing the school was from the state and local taxes. Is that true?

HW: That is right. Those are the two...

BB: Even today.

HW: Financing sources. Of course, we have...you see now, I went to working on this special aid, you see. And the schools would qualify, they needed maybe \$500 and they may need \$600. And the state would give that on a special aid, don't you see? You see, now here is the state apportionment and the local taxes and then if the school...we standardized those schools, don't you see. And we would have to do certain things and all this to qualify to get this state aid. Now that was the three sources of schools in the county. We got aid on transportation. Got aid on high school tuition and a lot of those things.

BB: You mean, the kids had to pay tuition?

HW: No. The state...

BB: The state made up the difference.

HW: The state made a lot of that up, you see.

BB: Oh, I see. Who was the main taxpayer in the county back then? Do you remember?

HW: Who was the main taxpayers?

BB: Were they individuals or were they companies?

HW: Well, of course, as far as the individual taxpayers the big companies were the big ones. Like Southern Pine, Lufkin Industries, like that.

BB: The same as today.

HW: And then the big lumber companies. You take now that we had Manning business down there now. You know that that was one of the first schools in the county that was affiliated was Manning. And that's how we managed to do that. Mr. Flourney was Superintendent down there and we managed to get aid from the company. Financed some money to run the school nine months.

BB: By the time that you were school superintendent the second time, were some of the schools starting to become independent?

HW: Oh yes.

BB: How many were you down to then?

HW: Well, I think Huntington and Lufkin were the only ones.

BB: That had left by '38.

HW: And were independent.

BB: What do you think the greatest accomplishments were during your superintendency that second time? What are you most proud of?

HW: Well of course, there are several things but the one thing that I am most proud of was preserving community centers in the county. And that was accomplished through the consolidation programs. Now if we had gone on like a lot of the counties did way on back there, they just drug along and didn't do it. And all of their schools come into one big school. Well, now here is the thing. Hudson out here is a rural community. Listen, it's got one of the best schools in the county. Now I could explain to you why as far as quality education because the integration program that lowered our quality of education very much. They don't have the Hispanic and they don't have the black. Central doesn't either. They just have a few blacks up there. And now that accomplishment of establishing those schools.

BB: Smaller schools.

HW: Zavalla schools, and those schools around Huntington, you see. Central school, they are first class schools and they have good programs, understand. They have Vocational Ag. And home economics. They had had it ever since 1928-29. Along there, you see. And they have an opportunity there, the kiddies do too, to....say here in Lufkin. You take Diboll. The Vocational Ag. program down there. Those boys and girls down there around Diboll, they have an opportunity to do better than these folks here in Lufkin in that category. They same way with Hudson, the same way with Central, they same way with Huntington. They have an opportunity of more individual attention, you understand?

BB: Because it is smaller.

HW: It is small. And that makes it. You take Diboll, Hudson out here, Central, those folks. Listen they turn out some very fine students. And possibly if they had all come into Lufkin, those kiddies wouldn't stand a chance that they do now. Do you understand what I mean? Now that is one of the accomplishments that I think that I did more to because they said that I couldn't do it. They said I couldn't put those schools together. They said I couldn't do it.

BB: It makes them big enough to have the opportunities and they are not too big...

HW: That is right. They are large enough to have all kinds of courses and everything like that and I'm glad in a way....of course, they have the basketball and the baseball and...but too much....just like Lufkin, here. During the football season, they have nine coaches. That is wastefulness. The people have gone nuts over such as that. Too much of it you see. Now I believe in athletics. I believe to a certain extent, but I don't believe to go to the extremes that we have gone in.

END OF INTERVIEW