

DR. GARY CAMPBELL

Interview 146a

July 25, 1994

Becky Bailey, Interviewer

Daniel Guerrero, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Becky Bailey, Diboll Independent School District Superintendent Dr. Gary Campbell talks about his teaching career in various East Texas and Houston area schools and then his progression to the position of Superintendent of Diboll. He talks about the need to work with the teachers, principals, and school board to raise the district's test scores, to update the curriculum and facilities, and utilize the district's money in a way that will benefit the students and teachers. He is especially excited about technology and computer upgrades for the classrooms.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): Today is July 25, 1994. Dr. Campbell, I'll start by asking you to give me your full name and some of your background – where you were born and that sort of thing.

Gary Campbell (hereafter GC): Ok, it's Gary, and my middle name, I take the initial "M", but my mother's maiden name, Magee, M-A-G-E-E. And from what we can tell it was a group of people, who came out of Louisiana, probably up from the east coast, southeast coast, and down to Louisiana. But that was her maiden name, and that was the name that she gave me. I was originally born in Port Arthur, Texas, which is approximately 90 miles from Diboll. Still considered Southeast Texas, but it does bump up against Louisiana in that corner of Texas. We are kind of down there where the turn is made along the coast. Down along East Texas, and we are approximately 15 miles from Bridge City, which is right on the Louisiana borderline.

I was born there on Jan. 26, 1955. I went to public schools there all the way up until I graduated. Which was...I graduated in 1973 from a large....which was then 4A.... but is now the top 5A... system in Texas as far as population-wise. It was Port Arthur Thomas Jefferson High School. I had a baseball scholarship to South Texas called Bee County Jr. College in Beesville. I went there a year. Stayed there and played baseball in their conference which included Wharton, and Temple, and San Jacinto Jr. College. And we played teams like Panola that is up here in East Texas. I ended up coming to Stephen F. Austin because I had heard a lot of good things about it. And it was academically rigorous and I like East Texas, being from here. So I came back home and actually drove to Stephen F. Austin from Port Arthur. I kind of came in on the weekends a little bit, but I lived at Stephen F. I finished my Bachelor's there in 1976, with a bachelor of science in education. I stayed there and kept doing a little bit of some master's degree work. I was a graduate assistant there, and helped teach some courses for a semester, because I graduated in three and a half years from Stephen F. Austin and ended up getting my first job after '76. I started in Vidor High School as a coach and a teacher. And from there I went to Lufkin and helped to coach their basketball team, which won the state

championship. And I also was coach of Lufkin East Jr. High School. And that was in '78, '79 school year.

Wanting to get a little bit more involved in the decision making nuances of school, I was at Stephen F. Austin one day and they told me about a job at Crockett. And to make a long story short, I went over there and applied and got the first assistant principal that they started at Crockett Middle School. So I did that in '79-80 school year. I stayed there a year and another opening came up in a real growing, progressive school district down near Houston, called Humble. And I was fortune enough to have gotten that job. I stayed there four years. My first time there.

I was a grade-level assistant principal, and that was a school within a school concept, where you do attendance for kids, keep up with where they are going, you do their discipline. So you kind of have your own little school within this big large school building. It was a large... at the time Kingwood was with us, so we were close to three thousand kids.

BB: On one campus?

GC: On one campus.

BB: Goodness sakes!

GC: Which is larger. It is one and a half times the size of Diboll just on one campus. ... Because Diboll has approximately two thousand kids. So we were close to three thousands. When Kingwood split off and they started their own school in 1981, I was still there until '84, and I had a chance to go to Klein. They had just opened up a brand new... excuse me, a brand new high school over there. So I was able to go there and help them to graduate a class in '88, was my first graduating class. I went there in '85-'86 school year. And I stayed there five years, and had a real good experience there. It was another large high school with about twenty-five hundred kids.

Then I had a chance... one of my best friends was principal of Humble High School, and he wanted me to come back over there because I had a hankering to... and I don't know why... to move on up and work in higher education a little bit and to pursue my terminal degree, which I had gotten my master's degree in 1979 at Stephen F. through an outreach program in Humble, where Stephen F. goes up to Humble and teaches classes. So I was able to finish my master's degree that I had started at Stephen F. in Humble in '79 and also get all of my certification because I got my principal's certification and my superintendent's certification in 1981.

So I When it became a reality or possibility to apply at the University of Houston that was the closest college that grants doctorates. There are only about five in Texas that grant educational doctorates. And the University of Houston is one of them, and thought to be one of the better ones. So I applied there, and you had to have all of the supporting documentations of your previous scholarships, your commitment, your years of experience, and all this... you have to put that together into a packet. So fortunately I was able to apply to the university and got accepted. And got accepted in 1989. Started

my course work over there. Started slowly at first and then as things got more expensive and hours started costing more, I started kicking things into high gear, and actually started taking as many as 18 and 21 hours a semester. I was doing that at night going every night. And that got to be a lot of strain on the family, but fortunately I was able to get through with my degree. I finished that in 1993.

BB: Sounds like.....

GC: I did all that in less than four years. So generally they say that it takes between five and seven years to finish a doctorate. But I was able to get that done by going at nights. It was a strain, but thank goodness, I have that behind me!

BB: I believe so.

GC: When I finished that... go ahead you may have another question.

BB: I was just going to ask what brought you to Diboll because that was just about the time that you finished when you came here.

GC: Right, that is absolutely right. I walked across the stage in May and touched up my dissertation shortly thereafter, had it all accepted, bound, got all that to the publishers and had a conversation with Bobby Baker who was the previous principal at Diboll High School. He and I are friends going back to our Lufkin coaching days in the late '70s. And I was trying to get one of our coaches from Humble placed up here who wanted to move on. And in that conversation, Bobby told me that he was looking at one or two superintendent jobs in the area. And that touched off a "Well, good luck to you. I hope that works out." And when that became a reality, I think we talked one more time previous to that or since then and he told me that he had accepted a job at Central as superintendent. So I applied for his principal's job, because I like this area. I was familiar with Lufkin and Nacogdoches. And I was ready to assume the responsibilities for a building level. I had gotten a doctorate, had fifteen years of administrative experience and I was ready to start assuming some of those responsibilities. So they tell me that out of a group of fifty-three prospective applicants I was chosen by a site based committee of eleven to thirteen teachers and Central office and that kind of thing... I was on the job, came up here and moved in ... actually one of the funny things is there was not any housing at Diboll at the time... no rent house, and we had trouble finding housing when we came up here in the fall of '93. And I actually had to stay in Livingston for the first three months with a friend who has twenty something acres of land who is principal of Livingston High School. So we stayed in a little cabin house that he built for his mother who is still living, who likes her place where she is, so she is not actually moved in there. It was like a little one bedroom efficiency lofted camp house thing. And I stayed out there for three months, my wife and kids did, too, and we would drive to Diboll.

GC: Plus, I play golf a little bit, and having a golf course across the street didn't hurt.

BB: Not at all!

GC: So those were all the variables that led into the decision. Plus I needed to get out of the city a little bit; the city is getting too large. And non-personal. It just is really... kids kind of start in those large schools kind of become numbers and in a small town; you kind of get to know people a little bit better. And the community activities here are just really... there are breathtaking with what everybody does and gets involved in, and it is really good from that standpoint.

BB: Well, it was kind of a leap for you to go from the building principal to...

GC: Well, essentially if you really want to be practical about it, I went from assistant principal to superintendent, because I had not been in that principal's job but about three months. Bill Ward, and Dr. Worley, and I were driving to a workshop in Huntsville and Coach Vanover may have been with us too. And he mentioned that he was in the final three for a job up near Dallas. Up until that time, I had no inkling that he was actually looking. In fact, I felt a little bit betrayed, because I had come in here based on a relationship in the interview process, and then all of a sudden he was up and gone. And my immediate reaction was who is coming in as superintendent? And who will that person be, and what will my role be? Will I be able to work with that person? Those were all things that were going through your mind. And he had even made some comments that he wanted to take me and the athletic director with him to Dallas and into whatever positions they had open up there. So I knew that he liked what I was doing and he felt that he and I could be together. And to make another long story short, it was about five days after that when he was given the job and the next thing that I knew, I was at a board meeting the night of... called in to interview for his position that he was in the process of leaving, with the board.

BB: Do you bring any hesitations? Do you think you...?

GC: I went to the board that night... That is a good question. They said, "We want to offer you this job because you have the credentials, you have a doctorate degree, you have got a lot of years of experience, and we are going to help support you." And I said, "I don't want the job."Because I feel like I have not done justice to you all with things I want to do with the high school, because I spent fifteen years getting ready for that and I'm not getting the chance to do it, and I am happy. I like what I am doing. Let me help you find a new superintendent. And I will help you because that is part of my doctoral stuff, so I will help you..." And they said, "No, we want you." And I said that I appreciated that but I don't want the job, because I am not ready for it. And they said that by the time that it rolls back around, you may not either be here or this person may stay a long time. So they convinced me to go ahead and take it. And I had a couple of other people who were relying on me for their positions, and they wanted me to take it, vs. what was the unknown out there.

BB: Well, now that you have been in it since October, what type of plans have you made for the district or changes that you think need to be made? You have had time to get your feet wet.

GC: Well, first of all, it has been a real exciting opportunity, but it was been real scary, too, because a lot of things that I should know by this time, I don't know and I have had to learn. And sometimes that is the hard way. That is the best way a lot of times, but it is also the hard way, because you have not had time to explore the range of what is out there with the knowledge... so I have had to pick up a lot of things by doing and that has been helpful in one way and it has taken me a little bit longer. I find out every day how much I don't know about this job. But then... that gives me a well experience to build on, because I am actually adding things... what works and doesn't work and those kinds of things. I have had to actually learn by doing, and in the long run that is going to help me.

One of the things we have had to do this year, which is good from the standpoint... any time an organization.... If you are going to make a great organization... you have to do it, I have found by personnel more than programs. A great outgoing leader will drive changes, whereas programs put in, but not run effectively or efficiently, or with no vision in mind, will not run things well. Programs don't run things. So most of my year this year has been spent, when we have had to make changes, making sure that we get the right person for the job to come in and make the programs go, or to invent programs. So one of the things we have been... had a lot of experience with this year and a lot of success, plugging in, when we have had the opportunity, through attrition or something else, to plug in the right person for that job. Be that a great teacher, be that an assistant principal, be that a principal, be that a curriculum director. That has all we have been doing so far this year is interviewing and hiring. In the future that should pay off for us. We have hired already this year... we got a new Jr. High principal, I brought in a new band director, the athletic director preceded by about twenty days. We have a new curriculum director, we have got a new assistant principal at the high school, new high school principal who replaced me and we will be hiring within the next couple of days, a new assistant principal at the Jr. High. So about eighty percent of our administrative openings have turned over this year.

BB: Really, the only ones that have stayed put are at the elementary school and the primary school. And that is all. Everything else is changed.

GC: Everything else is flip-flop and changed over.

BB: So now that your personnel is more or less in place, do you look for that to stabilize for a while?

GC: I hope so, because I think in this district right now, we need some stability, I think the nature.... do you want?

BB: Go ahead. (Pause)

GC: One of the first things, once we got our personnel kind of in place and it... really we didn't wait for this to happen... the test scores, which in Texas are the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, which is called TAAS, have been on somewhat of a small decline in Diboll. And depending on who you talk to, a rather large decline in some areas. And I'm not going to say that we are going to take credit for those changes because the credit always has to come from the teachers who are actually teaching the kids. They are the ones who deserve the credit, and the kids who are putting forth the effort. And that can sometimes vary from one class of kids to another. You may have an exceptional strong class of kids to another. You may have an exceptional strong class come through a glut and your test scores will deviate somewhat from year to year. But when we came in we found that the test scores here in Diboll to be something that we really could not live with. And Mr. Ward started the focus of what our test scores have shown to look like. Our math was just terribly, terribly low, and we had some thirty percentile masteries in most grade levels in Diboll ISD. Coupled with a focus this year on math, and we have kept that going, I was able to bring in a lady who is real good with minority kids and making sure they set high expectations and those kinds of things. That was one small thing we did. But our test scores when they came back, like in May, from the state, every area was up significantly, except one point which is insignificant, in the high school exit level. Math went from the thirty percentiles from the large part to fifty, to the upper fifties. So there was a wide gain at least in those areas and we want to keep that going up. But the TAAS scores seem to be doing a lot better in our district, because that is one of the things the state grades you on now. They grade you on your TAAS scores, on your drop-out rate, and on your attendance rate.

BB: Specifically, what did you do as far as district-wide to focus on math?

GC: Starting two years ago, Dr. Worley and Mr. Ward implemented something called, AEC, which is an Academic Enrichment Program. And it added thirty minutes to the school day. And a lot of tutoring happened in those areas. I started some things and Rick Owen has kept them going where we did some pull out with those kids who did not pass exit level high school on three different areas. And we started putting a lot of emphasis on individual teachers working with those kids, some in the morning and some around lunchtime and some in the afternoon. We started focusing; number one, on math totally across the district because that is where our lowest scores were, and we also did some pull-out with kids and teachers and that seemed to very much help...

BB: I know that at the elementary level, there was a lot of teacher training and a lot of money spent on math manipulatives. Concrete things.

GC: Yes, just across the system we found our math scores to ... I mean everybody worked real hard... Jr. High, Elementary, Primary ... those scores there show just a real big increase because of teachers working with kids, and kids mastering the concepts.

BB: The trick is always to make sure that math goes up, but that writing doesn't go down.

GC: I have found as a philosophy that what we focus on improves. But it has to improve without other things being detrimentally affected.

BB: Easier said than done.

GC: I believe that you can get quality across all programs and all areas.

BB: Ok. What other changes then do you look for? Just to keep up the emphasis? Or...anything specific?

GC: We are not satisfied with the TAAS scores. I don't think anyone who looks at them would be, although in most areas we are either at or close to the state average. I would like to get those scores above the state average. I would like to increase the focus and awareness across all areas. We want to bring in, just one example, your focus always should be, I guess, totally across the district, on your exit level kids, but you can't forget the building blocks that take place on the elementary level. So there is a balance, you are not pitting one campus, or one group against another. But you also have to remember that your exit level, where your kids are, that is a real prime focus of resources and materials, because those kids are now leaving your school district with what you have impacted or imparted to them and what they are going to be doing down the road. But that in no way belies the importance of what happens on that early elementary level. Especially because in those first few formative years, research says as much as 70- 80 percent of your knowledge comes from. So there is a lot of things that are gathered... and kids are like sponges, and they pick up and they take with them. So sometimes just when I have said that your better coaches need to be on the lower levels, sometimes even your better teachers need to be on those lower levels. I don't think you can out work an elementary teacher, as creative and innovative as they are with all of their manipulatives, with their visuals. And our elementary school here and in our primary school, to a large degree, I have found nothing but that kind of creativity. Mrs. Cheshire and her group over there do thematic units and everything seems to fit together well and the kids have a lot of good experiences. It's not just totally academic without experiences and the whole picture seems to fit together just real well. I have been real happy with the education because I have a daughter over there. I have been real happy with what I've found and seen over there.

That... those are some things I have noticed. But we are going to be looking at adding some courses to our curriculum. We want to add some advanced placement courses, which we really don't have right now. And that would be for the kids who.... sometimes honors can be written as advanced placement courses, but it is a matter of how you write to the state for it. That if a student would take an advanced placement course, do the test and master the test, you can actually get college credit and be a leg up on other kids by having advanced placement courses in your curriculum. And we want to add that. I mean you could essentially place out of your freshman and sophomore year if you have those classes in place in your curriculum and you test out of those classes. So you can short-circuit a lot of college by really committing to the high school and committing to

your course of study here... and then how well you test and place out of those. We want to add some of those.

BB: In speaking about curriculum, because I was in that workshop with Dr. Worley, is that still going to come about? The curriculum that he was considering purchasing?

GC: We are looking at right now a thing, I have to get Mr. Paul, because he is brand new and I want to get him involved, but it is a curriculum assessment package, of where a teacher through a data base, and with our computers being right here on hand, we would be able to assess through data, rather than to go back through lesson plans or through curriculum guides, and we would be able to assess what the state has for us as far as essential elements. Teachers can look and see what this grade level needs, what the grade level ahead of them is looking at, and what the grade level behind them should do. And those are some things that will allow us to do. And it would be a real quick assess for teachers as far as that curriculum.

Another thing we would like to do through curriculum, is we would like to start having some inter connective meetings. We tried to get that done this year and didn't get that done. But I would like the... especially where the grade levels bump up against each other where you are in transition. I would like the fifth grade teachers to talk to the sixth grade teachers. What are you doing? What does the state say we need? What do you want done? I would like the eighth grade teachers to talk to the ninth grade teachers. And when you have your curriculum sequenced in that manner where everybody is singing the same tune and on the same page, it can't do anything but strengthen the overall curriculum. And those are some things that we want to do this year, too, is have some inter connective meetings where we get people reflecting and talking about things that are going on. And we are going to feed the teachers when they come up and do some of that and we are going to do some of those kinds of things.

Another thing we are trying this year, which we are doing this as a group of Angelina superintendents, we are going to do it once every semester, we are going to have what is called a report card day. And we are going to let the teachers on these two days, sleep in late, come up about 11:00, because the state says you have to give an hour of in-service to call this an in-service day, and then we are going to feed the teachers and then from about one or so, till about seven, they will be here to have parents come up and pick up report cards so that we can pass the parent's work day so that they have time to come up here and do that. And we are going to do that 2 days. We think that is going to focus parent's attention on being a part of the whole solution and also to take responsibility for the student and their report card.

BB: Oh, that sounds terrific. It really does.

GC: We are going to do that this year.

BB: How are you finding people, as far as meeting change? Sometimes change is so hard for people who have been here a long time. Do you find us open to change or not?

GC: I would say about seventy-five percent of my expectations are open and I have found people to be about three quarters open to change. There is still a little bit down deep that they want to do, that we call twaddy. This is the way it has always been. And you have to move past that. But change is hard and people are resistant basically to change. They like things pretty much as it is. People will tell you that if it was good enough for aunt so-and-so, it is good enough for my kids. I have not felt a lot of pressure by people to make necessarily significant changes. In fact the pressure has come from me and our team exerting pressure to change from within. So the outside pressure to say you'll need to do this or that or the other, I have not found, which is arguably good or bad. But I have our drive to want to see things better for Diboll kids and teachers to be more than what even the board wants to see done. So sometimes we have to slow ourselves down because some of us have been to larger districts, Rick Cowan, myself, Vernon Paul, and Coach Vanover and we have seen what is out there and what to bring some of those ideas and resources to Diboll. So I guess our wanting to make things better is more of a pressure on ourselves. By and large, people have accepted our ideas and changes, but we really have not made that many significant changes. This year could be a year that we will try to do some small restructuring. I know that at the high school, one of the changes that they want to do over there, which I agree with, is that they want to take the thirty minute enrichment period that we just talked about, and they want to put that at the end of the day. And what that does, is, you identify those kids who either, and you can do it a lot of different ways, who are failing a class at the time, or have not mastered one of the TAAS exit level tests. And it could be for a couple of other reasons, and you would make those students have mandatory after school tutoring. They can't leave. The kids who are taking care of their business, not in trouble, mastered the TAAS, on grade level ready to graduate, etc., etc. You would let them leave school a little bit ahead of time. So they would get about a thirty minute break, and that would be an incentive to taking care of your business and doing well, and the kids who are not, you make them stay and you help them with their school work. That is one of the changes that we see for the next school year as far as the high school.

Plus we are adding to a program called content mastery. We are doing that on the elementary and primary level right now. What that is, that is a pull-out program for those kids who are not mastering a particular concept in a particular grade or a particular curriculum. And you have a series of teachers or a team of teachers, a couple of teachers and an aide maybe, and they get these kids sent down by a particular teacher to work on... it may be fractions, it could be decimals... or something like that. They work with that student for a period of time and once that concept has been mastered they send that student right back to class to be right there with the other kids. We think there is a lot of potential for that program.

BB: To be honest, we are way behind. Most other school districts have had that in place....

GC: Have had this for seven to eight years.

BB: And how are they finding out overall, are they still pleased with the results?

GC: Yes, in fact... a lot depends on how school districts put their parameters. Some call it a special education program. Other school districts have expanded it. And that is kind of what we are going to do, to allow our lower socioeconomic kids, our chapter kids, and our special education kids access to that. In fact, you could build the parameters to where everybody has access to it. It is just a matter of how you build the parameters.

BB: How many teachers you have and all that.

GC: How many teachers you have, how many resources, how much time you have to serve them, and those kinds of things. I have found that as a whole our district is real receptive to that. Although not many people know much about it with the exception of a couple principals, myself and my wife, there are very few people who know about it or have seen it work. But I have worked with it as an administrator and she was one of the first teachers that did it in Humble ISD.

BB: Uh...

GC: There is a lot of potential though.

BB: In talking about the changes, do you see things that we need to do with our facilities?

GC: Yes.

BB: And what would those be?

GC: We started some of those. Our facilities here, for the most part, structurally are pretty good. Esthetically and things that I like to call those little peripherals like paint, carpet, and nice things that make the teaching environment nice. You can't do a lot with space. I know that a lot of people at the elementary have said to knock this wall out and knock that wall out, and those kinds of things. You can't really do a lot with that because it is cost prohibitive to completely redo inside renovations to schools. But things that can make people's appearances nicer by paint, carpet, new lighting, those kinds of things, which no, they don't make you a better teacher, no, they don't make kids learn more, but they make your environment nice, that you like coming to work. And that we hope imparts to kids. So we have kind of gotten aggressive about starting one or two projects on every campus this summer. We kind of got a late start because of having to get board approval. But the board has been behind all of this. We are renovating the sixth grade wing right now. And you heard from the conversations that we are doing that. We are completely taking back 2400 square foot of unused space at the elementary to make a content master center, which is going to be one of the finest in East Texas when we get through, if not the state. And all of that will be computer staffed, the whole nine yards. We are going to be doing some air conditioning work at the elementary school here shortly. We have turned in two portable classrooms by knocking out a wall, which is a temporary wood wall, and made a stage where Mrs. Cheshire's kids can go in there a

period at a time and see plays and those kinds of things, which the acoustics will be better and the lighting will be better and all of that. We have done that. At the primary school, we have painted just about

END OF SIDE ONE

At the primary school we found an area just across from their old library, which already had a wall out between their two rooms, which it was used for two teacher classrooms. We put the library over there and we completely painted that inside out and we are in the process of putting in new lighting. So it is really going to be nice when we get through with that. At Jr. High we have the sixth grade wing, at the high school we had a gas line problem where the gas line ran under the slab. And we had to cut that, drop it down from the ceiling. We finished that. The high school has a nearly one million-dollar wing coming with technology labs...with... there are four different labs, plus a tutorial lab that is going in. So that really is going to be a nice deal too. We were fortunate to have some fund balance built up in the district and the only thing I felt a little bit in that, is the district's philosophy prior to me coming was... we are going to brag about our fund balance that we have two point something million, but we are going to sit on some old buildings and some old classrooms and some antiquated strategies and teaching styles. I tried to convince the board, successfully so far, that let's spend some of that money down to a safe level and you really want to spend it down to about a three month operating glut, so that in case you have an emergency. But the more money that you get from the state, the less that you need to keep on hand, it is kind of rule of thumb. So we are advocating to the board that we always keep about a million dollars in the fund balance, but we needed to spend some of this money to help things progress in our district. So we have been fortunate to get the board to buy into that, and that is what we are doing.

BB: I spoke at length with Mr. Ward about the computers, and of course, you inherited all of that. How are we coming?

GC: That is coming along real well. We have already passed... there was a ... we put in a three component process when we got here. And that is, we wanted to talk to the teachers about what is coming, and we did that. We wanted to talk to the community, and we had a technology fair at the civic center. And the third component, which is not yet fulfilled, but we want to do that at an in-service, is I am trying to find a lady from Apple with... I know who she is, if she can come and if not I want her to find somebody, to talk to the teachers about "How do we teach differently with computers." And that was the third component of this plan that we developed. We have gotten just about ninety-seven or eight percent of our teachers trained, twelve hours of computer training. They all have got and will have the docking stations are now in and they all have power books, which they will be able to do computers and grades and those kinds of things. We have got Sassi which grade book program that we are going to be training the teachers on. That has come in and we spent about fifty thousand dollars for that. We are looking now to drop wiring in classrooms because we eventually want to put six to seven computers per classroom. And all that has got to be done, old antiquated rooms. And that was not part of the technology plan. We have had to do some different things with

that. But all of that has got to be brought up to scope. We have got to have new wiring and those kinds of things, which you can't put new computers in old school classrooms because they don't have the amperage, and the electricity is not there to hold it. Down the road we are talking about networking all of our campuses. Rooms within a building and then also campuses within a district. Also down the road we want to do some distance learning. And also down the road we also want to tie in some of the libraries to an area like the high school, primarily, where kids can do research. Sam or Stephen F. or Angelina and never have to leave Diboll. They can pull up books, pull up research, and all of that is possible. We are talking to the phone company now about fiber optics. Only differencing we are having now is what kind do we get? Do we try to get the brand new that is just out that has the voice and data and the picture? Or do we accept a little bit of...what... and it changes so fast. Just the data. And all of that is on fiber optics. And this stuff is coming down in price, but the longer we wait the more we are going to get. And that is kind of where we are right now.

BB: I was reading through my classroom teacher's association magazine this weekend and ... a lot of what is done in the state with the re-codification and all of that kind of stuff that is going on... how does that impact our local district? I mean they are even talking about site-based management having less of an advisory role and How do you see those?

GC: Well, Commissioner Meno has advocated some changes, and I think that is what you are talking about ...to the state board. Some of the things have got some merit that I have looked at, some other things I am...I am real concerned about. One of the things he is advocated doing is taking a lot of the local control out of the school board's hands. And I understand why he may want to do that because of maybe having some boards who have abused their powers or who basically don't know much about schools. And he is trying to rest it with superintendents. This may sound kind of bad, but I don't mind having that responsibility, but I like having seven board members that you can bounce things off of. Arguably sometimes people view them as having too much power, but I think there is a balance between teacher empowerment, and I do believe in a bottom up philosophy, but where I draw the line on site based management, and it is a line that everybody draws, and you have to... there is always argument some way or the other. I believe that site based management to a degree is input and other people see it as ultimate decision making. And that is where... you could spend months talking about... is it definite, legal decision making or is it input to a degree on up the ladder. And there again is a happy marriage in there, but I think that is where people have conflicts over site based management, it is "Can we...do we have the ability to hire as a campus?" And we don't, because the board is the ultimate hiring authority. But when you get into that site based management taken too literally, it can severally impact an organization, because you have a lot of conflict and sometimes it is over power and control. Sometimes you are together and there is... the input on up the chain of command makes sense and is very much as far as moving organizations forward. But sometimes when a vision for a school district coming from one end is in conflict with another, then you have to resolve those conflicts. We have met more in the district since we have been in that our previous administrations. We have probably about four or five site based...district site based

meetings this year, and there probably weren't but about two last year from what I can tell. So we have tried to step that up, because having meetings and talking with people is the key to making organizations work.

BB: So, what do you see if you were to just predict the future? The role of the local school board....do you think it will stay about the same or diminish in power as time goes on?

GC: To be honest with you, things don't change that much. I don't see that the role of the school boards, unless they do a lot of drastic restructuring that I... it's out there, but I just don't see it. School boards have a real heavy lobbying type thing, and I don't see a lot of significant changes. But I see teachers still being able to take empowerment for their classrooms and the kids learning and that is always where the emphasis is going to be because that is the level where the impact is made, at the classroom with teachers and students. The focus of resources and supplies and materials have got to be to that teacher. And we have to tell them they are doing a good job, pat them on the back when they do and support them. I think that is what our role is.

BB: Do you have anything you would just like to add? Maybe something I haven't asked you about?

GC: I think we are in an opportunistic mode in Diboll. We have got some good resources. We have got some good things here by virtue of being bumped up against a fortune 200 company in Temple, and some things we want down the road and that we have gotten so far are going to come through with, and by Temple. I would like to have an elementary science wing one of these days. I would like to have some things there. I am trying to empower some people to help me write a grant. I have pitched that to some of the people at the elementary school. I have gotten back a little bit; it is going to take a long time. We are not sure if we can do it, but my thing is that if you want it bad enough, that is one thing I am pretty sure Temple will fund, and they like that kind of thing. And if it just takes some time and effort, we need to stop what we are doing for a minute and do it.

BB: You are speaking to me because I need to be the one doing a lot of that.

GC: And I would be glad to help in that. I have helped to write some grants. But my general... but when I have thrown that out over there, I have gotten... we don't have time to do it. But at the same time we identify that we have problems and those problems being facilities and needs, and if we have one then let's try to scratch it or solve it. And if that is one of the ways to ask for a grant and get that on the front burner, just because we have gotten a grant here in the last couple of years, doesn't mean they won't fund another one. That is one way of helping to resolving some things that we need. And I would like to do that.

BB: Well, you really have some nice plans; this has been a good interview.