

ALAN MILLER

Interview 171a

October 19, 2007 at his home in Diboll, Texas

Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, long-time Temple Public Affairs director Alan Miller discusses his life and career before coming to East Texas to work for Temple and then his experiences in Diboll. He reminisces about his time in the Navy, radio-broadcasting working for the Yakima, Washington Chamber of Commerce and the American Forest Products Association and for U.S. Plywood. He discusses shutting down the town of Camden for U.S. Plywood and moving the townspeople to Corrigan using FHA housing and distributing the W.T. Carter locomotives. He then moves to talking about his twenty years at Temple, starting in 1970, and mentions Clifford Grum, Joe Denman, and Arthur Temple, Jr. He also discusses the failed U.S. Plywood merger, the successful merger with Time and Eastex and eventual spin-off. Mr. Miller's time in Public Affairs saw the new campaigns that stressed Temple's desire to be a good neighbor and have responsible forest stewardship and the necessary split between corporate and government affairs with the new complexities in environmental regulations. Mr. Miller spends a lengthy part of the interview talking about working with Arthur Temple, Jr., his treatment of this company and employees, and his visions for both.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is October 19, 2007. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm with Alan Miller and he is going to tell us about his experiences working with Temple. I believe he started in 1970 as Director of Public Affairs. But, before we get to that point, Mr. Miller I was wondering if you could begin by telling us where and when you were born?

Alan Miller (hereafter AM): June 23, 1924 in Bellingham, Washington. Bellingham is ninety miles north of Seattle, which puts it only 20 miles from the Canadian Border. So that is the farthest point west almost that you can get.

JG: How long did you live there?

AM: Up until I was eighteen.

JG: Eighteen. Okay.

AM: Then I joined the Navy.

JG: You joined the Navy and that was during World War II?

AM: Right.

JG: Okay. And how long did you serve in the Navy?

AM: Four years.

JG: Four years. Where did you serve?

AM: Almost everywhere but about eighteen months overseas and then came back on a Navy assignment to go to Officer Candidate School and Yale University in 1944.

JG: Okay. So that is how you got to Yale?

AM: Yes.

JG: And what did you major in?

AM: Electrical engineering.

JG: Electrical engineering.

AM: And never touched a whiz. (laughter)

JG: Electrical engineering.

AM: I had the impression then that that was what the Navy needed, were Senior Engineering Officers. That was the real lack of talent in the officer corps. So, although I wasn't crazy about the curriculum, I thought I owed it to the Navy to at least try to be what they wanted.

JG: So I guess there was at least at that point maybe thoughts of staying in the Navy for a while?

AM: Maybe, I made the decision then, I went in the reserves in '46. It was a four-year tenure. And when that expired it was three days before the Korean War started. And if I had been called back in Korea I probably would have stayed in the Navy. I'd had eight years in by then. That is only twelve to run to retirement, but I didn't get called up.

JG: You didn't get called up. What did you do? What were you doing at that point?

AM: I hate to tell you this. I got so concerned about not being called. I couldn't imagine why, so I called the U.S. Navy Personnel office in Washington, DC and said, "Aren't you people calling back radar officers?" And the voice on the other end said, "Yes we are, what is your name?" And I said, "I forgot" and hung up. (laughter) And I never got touched.

JG: Never got touched. That is funny. How did you get to work in forest related occupations?

AM: I think probably because of my upbringing. Where I lived and what my family did for a living.

JG: What did your family do for a living?

AM: My dad was in the logging and lumber industry when I was a kid so, I kind of fell into that.

JG: Did you work with your father some?

AM: No I didn't. See, I left home when I was eighteen so there wasn't much opportunity to do that. And when I came back I went into radio broadcasting business because that is what I had done just before I enlisted. So I stayed in that until 1950.

JG: And where did you do that?

AM: Typically in Bellingham and some in Seattle.

JG: Some in Seattle. Okay.

AM: But, I found out it didn't pay anything so it kind of left you at loose ends. It was something I loved to do but there is only one Rush Limbaugh, as an example of someone who has made a lot of money in that business.

JG: So you were actually a broadcaster?

AM: Yes.

JG: Okay. And, so up to 1950 and then what was the step that got you working with American Forest Institute?

AM: I was the assistant manager of the Yakima, Washington Chamber of Commerce. And the senior officer at Cascade Lumber Company called me in one day and said, "We need a position filled with the A.F.P.I. Will you be interested?"

JG: That is the American Forest Products Institute?

AM: Yes. And I said, "Yes, I think I would." And that is the evolution of it. So I opened their new office in Denver in 1958.

JG: Denver, 1958. And what exactly did you do with that, what did that entail?

AM: It meant setting up what we call tree farm committees, which were business men in the individual states that had an interest or a business allied to the industry and/or tree farms. And those men or women were instrumental in getting legislation passed in

Washington or in their state legislature that would be of interest to the industry as a whole.

JG: And in what states?

AM: Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska.

JG: Okay. And that was considered like a regional office in Denver.

AM: Yes, I think there were twelve if I am remembering right, twelve regional offices.

JG: Okay. And then in your career what happened after that, after the two years in Denver?

AM: I came to Tacoma, Tacoma to Eugene and Eugene to San Francisco.

JG: Still with the A.F.P.I.?

AM: Still with the A.F.P.I. and then eventually with the U.S. Plywood. And in 1967 U.S. Plywood transferred me from San Francisco to Lufkin to oversee the construction of new housing at Camden, Texas. U.S. Plywood had bought the W.T. Carter Lumber Company and we had to close the company town because they kind of had a grandfather clause. So long as the Carter's owned it the state didn't really care whether it was in sanitary compliance or anything else for that matter. You know, it was a typical old, difficult to say, but run down company town. But when U.S. Plywood bought it, then all the obligations that the community had to respond to in Texas fell on U.S. Plywood. So the only thing we thought we could do was to close the old company town, rebuild the community at Corrigan and transfer the employees there. And so that was what my job was, was to move approximately 400 families.

JG: Do you remember what the job title was?

AM: I don't think it really had one. I guess administrator would be the best thing. It was the on-site manager if that phrases it a little better.

JG: And that was the primary objective was just handling that process. I'm sure that was quite a...

AM: The balancing act was to make sure you provided housing that was superior to anything they had had, of course. So we provided the land and utilities and roughly half of their mortgage needs in the first five years, I believe it was. And we agreed to move all their furnishings at no cost to them. So it was a move in at no expense.

JG: And that was into housing in Corrigan?

AM: Right, into housing that was half subsidized at the time. And they were typically two and three bedroom. Something like you'd see Habitat for Humanity building today.

JG: So, you worked with some Federal Programs?

AM: Yes, the Farmers Home Administration was the senior government entity involved. But, also the county of course had to provide easements for sewage treatment plants as an example and county road crews helped with road construction to open up the building site areas.

JG: I know in the past you mentioned to me about the number of locomotives, steam locomotives that Carter had out toward the graveyard.

AM: I believe it was nine of them, if I remember right, Jonathan.

JG: And you were involved with finding homes for those, is that right?

AM: I'm just glad that I was smart enough at that time to recognize them for the value they had. The corporate office in New York of course had no concept of what a steam locomotive and the logging locomotive could mean historically to a community. So, they had made arrangements to sell those engines to a scrap yard in Houston for \$5,000 a piece. And I found out about it and called them in New York and frantically said, "My God do you know what you are doing? These locomotives have an intrinsic value to East Texas that is beyond any kind of monetary consideration. Well you would be much better off enjoying the publicity you would get in donating these locomotives to individual communities or college campuses or any number of things I can think of. And typically the people you gave them to would be more than willing to haul them off, wouldn't cost you anything." So that is what they finally did.

JG: Were you...did they say, "Okay that is a good idea, you take care of that" or how much involved other than what you described?

AM: I was kind of a liaison between the people that wanted an engine and New York. Of course by that time it was in the lawyers' hands.

JG: I know for instance the City of Livingston got one that is very nicely displayed there by their public library and they have a very nice canopy. In fact, I had taken our architects down there to look at their big wood timber covering they have and had requested that is what we would have here. But because ours is so long and tall to have the structural stability that was needed with wood it would just be humongously massive. And they felt that steel would better serve our needs. S.F.A., Stephen F. Austin State University has one at now the Arthur Temple College of Forestry – one of the old Shay engines. Of course Texas Forestry Museum has one and I think two of them, at least as of a couple of years ago, were still operating up in Arkansas.

AM: I think there is one at the State Railroad too.

JG: Okay, but anyway, so yeah that was quite a good deed you did.

AM: I don't think they ever lost one and I don't think anybody who wanted one ever reneged. I think all nine engines were saved as it turned out.

JG: And then one the Carter family still has, I understand. It was at one of the museums in Houston and they recently gave it back to the Carter heirs.

AM: Oh, is that right?

JG: It is sitting out in a field not too far from the Camden sawmill and it is on private land that I understand the Carters still own, Engine 14.

AM: I didn't know that.

JG: Yes, it's still there. In fact the City of Corrigan was looking after we got ours up and displayed, Corrigan was looking at relocating that one to that little park they have by the Union Pacific track and they were talking about that. Okay, so you were there I guess roughly three years at Corrigan.

AM: Yes, just about three years.

JG: And, you hinted at, at least in your description about how you talked with them about Public Relations as far as donating locomotives instead of selling them for scrap. Tell us a little bit about how you got into PR, so to speak. Can you comment on that?

AM: Well, I guess after I was hired with A.F.P.I then of course you are exposed to the major industrial forest products corporations because of the activity you do. And, that got me to U.S. Plywood and U.S. Plywood eventually to Temple.

JG: And you were hired in '70, I understand, as Director of Public Affairs?

AM: Right.

JG: Okay. Who interviewed you, do you remember?

AM: Clifford Grum, who eventually ended up as CEO of Temple.

JG: And, so you got the job. What did they tell you your responsibilities were?

AM: To make sure we kept our noses clean and to not...to always be a good neighbor. It was Arthur's phrase and I picked it up of course, as our advertising theme as well. But he had a very genuine interest in what the community thought of us, meaning all of the communities wherever we had land or plants and people. And, it was a very genuine obligation on his part. It wasn't showmanship and it wasn't just strutting to show his

feathers, it is the way he felt. Maybe the last person I've known in major industry that really had a bonifide interest in the community with no reservations, none.

JG: Who did you report to?

AM: I reported to Clifford Grum initially. Then when Clifford went to New York to run Fortune Magazine I reported to Joe Denman.

JG: Okay, so did you have any direct relations with Mr. Temple?

AM: You couldn't help!

JG: You couldn't help, right. As I was asking that, I thought that was a dumb question. (laughter) Everybody had some direct relations from the top to the bottom.

AM: He was not a person who...he didn't like to have to take the time to tell you what to do and then watch you do it. He would give you an assignment and then for all intents and purposes you disappeared in his mind because he had already taken care of that. That is the way he managed and I loved him for that.

JG: And, I asked him one time about that 'Do it right, but do it right now' and he told me he did not like to hear people talking about what they were going to do.

AM: That is right.

JG: Just do it. He said that was really the gist of all that.

AM: I remember something that documents that. Several years ago, maybe not that many, ten maybe, we had bought new glass for the front of the library.

JG: Here in Diboll?

AM: Here in Diboll. And, in order to do that we had to go through all the mechanics of getting architects to redesign the front of the building so it could accommodate the new type of glass we needed and then you needed a reputable glass contractor. And it all ended up in a compendium about an inch thick of material that had to be taken to the Temple Foundation to get the appropriation to get the job done. And Arthur said, "Do I have to read this goddamn thing?" And I said, "You sure don't, but I knew you were going to ask me if I had it and I was going to make sure that you at least saw the evidence." And he said, "Well fine, that will handle it, won't it?" And that was that. But that is the way he operated.

JG: I in recent days have been going back and looking at some of the annual reports, specifically the focus of this...of my inquiry was the recent decision that has been made by the company to divest themselves of their timberlands. And going back in those reports all through the fifties just about every annual report they talk about the forest, the

timberlands and the importance of it. And starting in the early sixties it is not as much mention. You can see the focus is getting into mortgage financing, some real estate, developing the marketing program. You know, Mr. Temple spent that first decade or so rebuilding the plants, regenerating the forest and then he focused that next decade at least from the business standpoint from the marketing side. Of course, at the same time there is a lot going on in the community. The early sixties was when the town was incorporated and there is a whole story there. But, getting back to my point, by the late sixties there is a return to the importance of the forest. In fact, several annual reports they close by saying "although it doesn't show on the balance sheets our timber resources are our greatest asset." It is sort of ironic when you start seeing that in that context leading up through '69 and you see these things that you are talking about "but we want to be a good neighbor" and it's in those annual reports and it's talking about environmental issues and ecology, all of that. So, having set that stage, and again you came in in '70 just the previous year was the first public stock offering. The company was listed on the New York Stock exchange and then now there is this new thing I guess called Public Affairs. Now, I understand they may have been handling those duties through other jobs. I know Latane was involved. He was sort of a publicist you might say.

AM: I think Latane would be the last typical public relations man the company had before I came aboard.

JG: Before you came aboard. So, can you comment a little bit in that perspective of what...because I'm seeing that, the E.P.A., Environmental Protection Act came somewhere along in there, late sixties early seventies. You know I guess what I'm focusing on is these new jobs that have been generated because of Mr. Temple's desire to grow the company, grow the community together. Can you comment any on that and what this thing Public Affairs was all about as the company moved? And, also in '72 Mr. Temple during all this time he is looking for a partner to get a paper mill and of course '73 was the eventual merge with Time, Inc. and Temple-Eastex and all that. So, can you just comment on what all was going there and how that affected your job and what your business was?

AM: I think basically the thing you had to remember about Arthur's goals and aims at that time, you stated it very well. He wanted to be a larger company but he wanted to use the asset of his timberland to get there. I don't mean by selling it, I mean by using it as a resource. So, the merger with Eastex was much more easy to accomplish because we had a million acres of timberland to go with. And I'm not sure...I don't really know why he had such a fixation on paper mills, but he did. Years before when the Southland Mills were building Lufkin for instance, he was a pseudo-partner in that involvement too and they just couldn't get along so they broke up. But, I guess in his mind he thought that was the best utilization of your forest resource was to use all those scraps that you couldn't make plywood or lumber out of and use that to make paper. It made sense in his mind and I think that is where his driving force came from. So, he and Mike Buckley had been friends for years at Eastex so the merger was a typical go ahead since they were a Time company in the first place. So the acquisition by Time and the subsequent merger of Temple and Eastex accomplished all those things Arthur wanted.

JG: Now, there was an earlier merger, I know it was announced in the Free Press. I forget the company now. Do you remember? Was it U.S. Plywood?

AM: Yeah, it was.

JG: Okay. There was an announcement in the newspaper – pretty much said it was going to happen. And then a couple of weeks later on the back page there was a little statement that it had been called off.

AM: I will never forget that, Jonathan. My office was in the old commissary building, which of course is gone now; it's been torn down. And it was in a hallway off directly across from Arthur's office. And I heard his door slam one morning about 8:30 and he turned the corner and walked into my office and stood there and stared at me with tears running down his cheeks and he said, "I cannot do it. I won't sell to those sons of bitches." And that was it. Something happened between he and Carl Bendetson. He never explained it to me and as far as I know he didn't explain it to anybody else. My guess would have been that Bendetson wanted to sell the timberland that long ago. Because I had just gone through an experience with U.S. Plywood on the West Coast overseeing the liquidation of McCloud Lumber Company in Northern California. And that is what they did; they moved in and cut every single standing piece of timber. That was a mill that had operated for almost a hundred years almost like Temple. Old growth pine trees, just gorgeous country around Mt. Shasta. And the whole idea was to buy that lumber company and liquidate the timber to make the profit. Of course the mill is closed because there was no timber left to harvest.

JG: I know it's interesting too, in the early '70's and again in the annual report how there...it actually said this to the stockholders something along the lines of "your ownership of 13 shares of stocks represents indirect ownership of one acre of timberland." And it even broke down how many board feet was on that one acre, so just the fact that they were equating your interest in a company directly to the forest it's ironic. So much of that is focused on the forestland and the merger I think Temple brought nearly 475,000 acres and Eastex had about 585,000 which gave them over a million. And, of course Temple in '67 had already started to realize that some of their timberlands previously thought of as timberland was what term today would be high value real estate.

AM: That is what the lakes did.

JG: With the lakes, and they commented on the proximity to the lakes, cities, towns and highways as the new public highways were being developed. So, they started I think within a few years they had about 25,000 acres that they had developed and identified.

AM: That is right.

JG: That is really where Sabine Investment came in. I think it was actually formalized in '69. So again, you know in history nothing happens over night. It all happens...you can look back and see where things start to fall into place. But again, I guess the point where we are both talking about is just how focused they were on the forest. And, when they gave up timber for the Big Thicket, when they sold timber as high value real estate, even in these annual reports they talked about were replacing it with more timberland. Or as timberland becomes available and there is a focus on trying to...often through the late '60's and early '70's they were getting about half of their timber needs from other sources.

AM: That is right.

JG: Buying it outside, but again they always explain that by doing so allowed their ownership of lands and timber to grow. And that it was important that the forest grew more than what they cut. And, so anyways it is just fascinating. Can you comment a little bit with this in mind, I know all through the early '70's we commented on "we want to be a good neighbor" which stuck around for a long time. I can remember that even into the early nineties, I guess. But in some of these early seventies they talk about these "Trees Forever" programs. Another one was "The Perpetual Forest." Can you comment on any of that?

AM: The perpetual forest program actually was a series of strategically placed road signs that identified that particular tract as being a perpetual forest that had been forested since "x" date.

JG: Selectively.

AM: That is right, selectively harvested. It was our idea to perpetuate the idea that these forests are here forever as far as we are concerned. But they are working forests all the time.

JG: Not an even age forest, not a clear-cut forest.

AM: That was it.

JG: But a selectively harvested and then selectively managed replanting.

AM: I used to love listening to Arthur rant and rave at pulp and paper conventions because he just hated clear cutting. He just thought it was an abysmal way to manage a forest. And he would just rant at their conventions just to make them angry and then stomp out with a grin on his face. (laughter) But you are right, selectively harvesting was always the aegis that we used. And it works at a great advantage for sawmills and plywood plants but it's not too good for paper mills.

JG: So concepts such as this, perpetual forest, trees forever program were probably as much advertising as anything.

AM: Oh yes.

JG: But, it was a reflection of what the forestry department was doing. When you came up with concepts like that, was that just part of your daily job duty or if you can, just describe the process. Did Mr. Temple come or Clifford or any of these other people come and say here is what we want?

AM: They were usually just bull sessions and something would just pop out of that as an idea and a concept to try.

JG: Were people from the forestry department involved in things like this or did...what type of management?

AM: It's a funny thing. Those get arounds used to occur at a restaurant called The Pine Bough in Diboll, which, in my mind was one of the finest eating-places in East Texas. But it had a aura about it.

JG: We need that to come back here.

AM: Oh gosh, do we ever need one of those. But, typically you would have lunch there and just general conversation. You might be talking about Jack Dempsey one morning and the secretary the next. But eventually nuggets of information about the company and what we were doing or what we were thinking of would pop out as well. And that is where most of those ideas came from. We didn't have sit around planning sessions or seminars. It was mostly on the fly.

JG: It wasn't planned planning sessions is what you're saying.

AM: No, they sure weren't.

JG: No little conference room.

AM: I don't think Arthur ever had time for that kind of crap in his view.

JG: Yes.

AM: You mentioned the point – he didn't like people to talk about things; he liked people that did things.

JG: Right, yes, show me don't tell me.

AM: Yes.

JG: And he did want it done immediately.

AM: That is right.

JG: Okay, up through the Time merger what would you say were some of the issues that emerged out of that merger with Time? You mentioned a little bit about clear cutting. I know Eastex had been doing some of that. Temple forest had not been done that way, at least not as a matter of policy.

AM: No.

JG: They might have done it on a very select tract when nothing else would...the tract was too far-gone otherwise I guess. But not just the clear cutting things, but anything in your mind that you would care to comment on through that, cause as we know just within ten years the company spun off. I know Mr. Temple often said, "It was like getting the company back."

AM: It was a very uneasy marriage I guess would be the best way to describe it. I don't think New York's culture understood East Texas at all. I don't think anybody at the Time, Inc. executive level had any interest in the south in any sense. Because they honestly believed they were a hell of a lot smarter than we were (laughter). Even in how to run a sawmill for instance or manage the timberland. There wasn't that spark of camaraderie that you would have seen within the staff of Temple for instance. It just never melded that well. And, there were some obvious political differences too between the managements of Time and the management of Temple Eastex. They were very liberal in their political understandings and that doesn't run too well through a southern culture I don't think, even today and certainly not that long ago.

JG: I know I keep going back to these annual reports but of course, for those ten years the Temple report was pushed inside the larger Time report and you know, Forest Products did get several pages but it was always almost at the end. (laughter)

AM: Always an afterthought.

JG: Right, right, right and there is even a picture in one of them of Arthur and he's got that stern look and I know he is trying to look tough. But they have artistically taken him out of the background. It's just his pose there and then they put these products behind him and he almost looks sad. (laughter)

AM: I remember that picture like it happened yesterday and he was in a foul mood that day. God was it awful...oh. The nicest thing about him he could be in a foul mood but five minutes later it was all over and done with. But the Time producer of that photograph was insistent that they wear hard hats and so I'm handing them out and it reminded me of the Nixon confrontation with his PR men. Remember when he almost set him on his butt and he got mad at him? I got about twenty feet away and I just happened to turn around, thank goodness because that hard hat was coming at me from Arthur through the air. (laughter) And he didn't say a word; he just threw it at me. So I caught it,

put it down and that was that. I think as the picture shows, if I remember, some wearing hard hats and some weren't. Isn't that right?

JG: Well in this one here I don't know. He is in a suit but like I said they have taken him out. It's just his face and his body, they selected him out of the photograph and artistically put the products behind him and then put graphics. It is a layout in the annual report so you can't really tell what else was going on but he's just got that stern look. And again in the context if you look through these annual reports and here is the chairman and all that and they are all sitting around their desk with their hands on their hips and smiling. Here is the group vice president of publishing and books and magazines and all these and you flip on back towards the back and then there's Mr. Temple and he's just got this sour look on his face. And, then under his name it just says Arthur Temple Group Vice President, that's it. Then on the very, very back inside cover where with Temple Eastex it is listed that he is Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, but of Temple Eastex not of Time. You know, it's just only an observation really, I guess. You see again all these annual reports and you know he is very much put his stamp on all these reports and then you get to Time and he is buried in there and he's got this sour look on his face.

AM: It always reminds me of that famous picture of Winston Churchill when the photographer walked up to him trying to get a mood and jerked the cigar out of his mouth and then took his picture. It is that classic of Churchill. But those were typical Arthur pictures all through those years.

JG: Okay, tell how and maybe your job didn't change any with the spin off in '83 when Temple Inland, Inc. was formed. Can you comment on that?

AM: Well it was like Arthur saying it was like going home. I think we all just got together and said, "Well that was an interesting experience now let's run this company." And that is essentially what everybody did. They just all got behind their jobs and it was 1972 all over again when we were building particleboard plants and expanding fiberboard plants and building plywood plants and particleboard plants elsewhere across the country. All that generated the interest again. It was a fun time, real fun time.

JG: Now, I know Public Affairs eventually became Corporate Affairs, or at least...and then there was Director of Governmental Affairs. Can you comment on that, just how the public affairs office maybe changed or grew as the company grew? For instance, when you first started did you have a staff?

AM: I had a secretary when I first started and ended up with seven people I think on the staff when I retired.

JG: Okay.

AM: And by that time, Government Affairs was so large and its own concept that we spun it off from Public Relations. Tony Bennett was then the major driver of the Government Affairs side and Carolyn Elmore of the Public Affairs side.

JG: Okay.

AM: Government Affairs responsibility typically was because of environmental concerns of our paper operations to be honest. It wasn't, it was of no consideration or very little consideration of our forest operations because we had been such great stewards of our timberlands that basically if the government had any interest in ours it was "how do they do that?" Not why do they do it, but how do they do it. Because they wanted some benchmark that they could use to identify proper stewardship of your timberlands. We had a hell of a reputation. I mean a hell of a reputation and all justified. I've always...I've used this as an example. Weyerhaeuser had probably the best advertising campaign that identified their forest stewardship of any company I've ever heard of. But they never backed it up on the ground and I think we were able to. We had that jewel of a situation where managing our timberlands to their highest potential was not only good business sense but it was an obvious asset to the entire area. We just had the best of both worlds and why they gave it away I'll never know. I didn't think anybody had that much greed in their soul, but I guess they do. I don't think you're whistling Dixie if you think a company in Oregon is going to give a damn about what people in East Texas think of their timberlands. That is going to happen.

JG: What year did you retire?

AM: 1990.

JG: '90, okay, so you worked twenty years?

AM: Yes.

JG: This may be covering things we already talked about but this is a more general line of questioning. In those twenty years what would, is there anything we haven't discussed that you would want to comment on as significant or just memories that you have that stand out?

AM: Just as an observation it was extremely difficult, well that is not fair. It was difficult to operate within the executive culture of Temple to be honest with you. Because the driving force had say from 1970 to 1982 was Aggie inspired. If you weren't an Aggie just forget it, with very, very few exceptions. Clifford and me to be honest I think, I don't think I would have been hired by anybody other than Clifford or Arthur because I didn't have the qualifications. I didn't go to Texas A&M.

JG: What did they think about having an Ivey Leaguer?

AM: The interesting thing is I was never an Ivey Leaguer in the typical concept that you would call an Ivey Leaguer.

JG: Right, right.

AM: But I was noted as very suspicious – even Arthur for a while. He said, “I’m not sure about you people.” And I said, “Arthur please don’t throw me in that category.”

JG: I’m from the other side of the continent.

AM: I’m from Seattle, crying out loud. And he said, “Oh that is right, okay I understand.” And that is all he said. But if I had been born in Connecticut he wouldn’t have hired me either, I don’t think.

JG: You choose the date ’82 I don’t know if there is any significance there except...

AM: Well ’82 was after we left Time.

JG: After you left Time okay. So what changed then within the company beside Temple Inland? They started hiring other people besides Aggies?

AM: The last, I always called them the ’64 Aggies. In 1964 Denman and Temple went on a hiring spree to create this marketing concept that you were talking about.

JG: This was right after Latane’s failed Great Texas Lumber.

AM: That is right. (laughter)

JG: There is a whole story there.

AM: And they went to A&M to get those people. No that probably, I’m just guessing, that was probably Arthur’s idea. Excuse me, Joe Denman’s idea. Joe had gotten his degree in architecture from A&M and was an Aggie to the core and I think it would just have been second nature to him to go to A&M to look for marketing people to create this new division within the company. But that is where it all started.

JG: And that is what became the upper leadership.

AM: That is right.

JG: You look at Harold Maxwell.

AM: Harold Maxwell would have been the last of that generation.

JG: Okay.

AM: They all came in '64 and '65, Joe Sample and there were several others.

JG: Henry Holubec was he in there?

AM: And Henry, there is no bigger Aggie than Henry Holubec. I love that guy. (laughter) He got caught in the cross hairs of another executive who is not an Aggie.

JG: Is that Michael Dingman?

AM: No this was....well I can't think.

JG: I've heard...

AM: Wayne somebody?

JG: McDonald?

AM: Wayne McDonald.

JG: So I guess, I keep going back to this; I'm just interested I guess more in your daily routine so to speak as being with Public Affairs. Maybe in the early days verses the later days, you know. You may have already answered it when you talked about these bull sessions at the Pine Bough and things like that.

AM: It was mostly implementation of the corporate imprint on any of our acquisitions or new constructions. And there were a lot of them in those years, you know.

JG: Did you travel a bit?

AM: Oh yes.

JG: Did you go to all the plants, the forests, tours?

AM: That was it. It was a traveling kind of job.

JG: Hands on, hand on observations.

AM: Those things were all hands on.

JG: And then come back and devise a...

AM: That was the way...that was the only way Arthur knew how to operate. That was the only thing he was comfortable with was getting his nose into a situation so that he could divine a course of action from that and then turn it over to somebody. That was the way he did things. So that typically...I kind of followed his vent. I'd go to Memphis for

instance, to find out what the attitude in Memphis to our new plant on the river. And then just feel it out and understand it. Then know from there what our...

JG: And you did all of that on the ground?

AM: Yes...what our employees and our management in Memphis had to do to keep this situation as comfortable as they could between them and the community. Because each one operated as a separate entity as far as those responsibilities were concerned. There wasn't a manual that told you what to do if something happened. You had to fly by the seat of your pants and I've always been familiar with that and appreciated them more anyhow.

JG: Right. Now, you were mentioning about Tony Bennett coming in to direct the Government Affairs and how that was primarily environmental affairs or a large part of it.

AM: And taxes.

JG: And taxes. And I know Mike Harbordt was hired really as the first environmental person.

AM: That is right. Almost the first one in the industry that literally had that hands on responsibility.

JG: Was he hired before or after you came on?

AM: I think he came aboard about six months after I came.

JG: About six months after you came, okay. Did you work with him on some projects and if so how close?

AM: Yes, very close to this extent. We would confer with each other but I never was a participant in his hearings, for instance in let's say Austin or Washington because those are so technical and so precise that you don't want a Public Relations impression at those kind of meetings. But I'd do a lot of the groundwork with him and we'd work up the presentations and he always was the front man that carried them through. In fact I would never even go into the hearing rooms because I wouldn't want to associate myself that closely with him that I may be called to testify on questions.

JG: Right.

AM: Because I had no academic understanding precisely like he did. He was a very fine man though; gosh he did a good job.

JG: From what you are describing I'm getting the picture that you were a lot of behind the scenes and very much on the scene but as far as the voice that comes out, not as visible I guess.

AM: No, that is certainly true.

JG: So, in that context describe or explain the column that you had in the Free Press. How did that come about?

AM: I think Paul Durham just called me one day and said "I have a hole in the editorial page. I'd like you to write 400 words a week." And I said, "Until how long?" And he said, "Until one of us is dead." (laughter) And that is exactly what happened.

JG: And just as simple as that, whatever you wanted to write about?

AM: Oh yes, never bothered him.

JG: And tell a little bit about that, about your column. It was called the T-Wheeler right?

AM: Yes.

JG: How did that come about, how did you get to be the T-Wheeler?

AM: I don't know why it turned into a political exercise. I think it was because Paul was such a yellow dog Democrat and I was such a Republican that we, as real good friends, we never fought over it. But we used to discuss it a lot but never to the point of raising our voice, never to the point of stomping out mad. So I divined the idea to make sure I wasn't using the company as my vehicle, I turned my dog into my political analyst. Susie was always the spokesman (laughter) for whatever message I was trying to bring at that point.

JG: And you would have these conversations with Susie and report on what Susie thought?

AM: Susie and I would have conversations. And I remember Mike Harbordt walked into my office one day and he said, "Is that dog really talking to you?" (laughter)

JG: In writing that column did Mr. Temple ever directly comment on anything to you or did you ever hear of anything that he might have said?

AM: He sent me a note once and said "I love the column you wrote on your dad on his hundredth birthday." He said, "I always admired people who loved their parents." And that was all he said.

JG: I know he generally stayed out of the papers if he could.

AM: He was awfully careful about not meddling. One of the things I remember is a story Paul told me once. He said Arthur was selling timber treated gates through the Big Tin Barns, I guess. I don't know how all this started. But you could buy an unassembled gate and just bundle up and carry it home and put it together. He said "Paul give me a picture of that gate so we can use it in our advertising." So Paul walked up to the Big Tin Barn and they had one assembled and it was leaning against the wall of the building and Paul of course shot a picture of the gate (laughter) and took it to Arthur. Arthur said, "What the hell is this?" And Paul said, "You wanted a picture of the gate." And he said, "Would you buy that gate?" And Paul said, "No." And he said, "I want a picture of the gate that will make somebody buy it." So Paul called me and said, "What should I do?" I said, "What I would do is, I would hang that gate and then I'd put a girl on it." And that is what he did. (laughter) And Arthur said, "See, that is what I wanted." (laughter)

JG: Let's see, is there anything else that you would...I know a lot happened during that time from '70 to '90.

AM: It is an experience that I was real fortunate to have. There is a lot of things I guess with age that you would have done differently. And there were some disappointments along the way. But I guess the most crushing thing, Jonathan has been the liquidation of the company. I just find that so hard to accept. I didn't ever think that I'd see it go in my lifetime. I don't think...you know, if they're bragging about having a guaranteed timber supply of twelve years, that isn't saying much for the longevity of the operations, to be honest with you, I don't think. We have no asset that isn't available to anybody who can buy a building now and go out and acquire cut timber on the open market. I just think it's too bad. If Arthur was able to stave off, because everyday of his life somebody wanted him to sell that timberland. And probably everyday of his life somebody was telling him why he should. But he knew an asset when he saw it and knew how valuable it was.

JG: Yes, like I said, even in those annual reports you know, they close one of those reports in sixty with that statement that "the timberland was the most valuable asset."

AM: I think the most terrible thing that happened to Arthur probably was the Depression. Because they had to sell some timberland just to keep the mills operating then just to raise enough cash and that just almost destroyed his family. He wasn't the only one that felt...I think that is kind of interesting that the Temple family per say would have been the only lumbermen in this part of the country that saw timber as an asset. Isn't that interesting? The rest of them always saw it as dollar bills that grew vertically and he saw that his grandfather saw that initially. I just think that is amazing. Well all of the attitudes that his family should have had living in Virginia where the first Southern Pines were cut, knowing that Chicago and the lake states where everything was mined out and the same thing in New England. And then to come to the south and see it as an asset is just an amazing transformation.

JG: Yes.

AM: I don't know what the answer is and I don't have one I don't think. I don't know what to think about where the company is headed. I'm just so glad I was here when it was at its end to be honest with you. It's a nice place to leave, you know. Isn't that when quarterbacks leave? Before they get...

JG: Supposedly that's the idea anyway. Of course you could be like Roger Clemens and keep holding out for another year in baseball.

AM: Wasn't that a miserable thing that Steinbrenner did to Torre? Gosh. To think twelve years he had been in the playoffs – all twelve years and won four World Series. And he says, "Tell you what we'll do, we'll pay you five million then we will give you a million incentive..."

JG: "For each step of the playoffs."

AM: "For each step of the playoffs." Gee whiz, Tore should have punched him in the mouth. I guess the only reason he didn't is because he's eighty years old.

JG: Well, all right Mr. Miller I sure appreciate that.

AM: You betcha.

JG: I had other questions but they are just not coming to me at the moment. I think we covered some good materials today. If we come up with some other ideas or whatever we may do another one if you'd like too.

AM: Sure, I'd be glad to chat at you, you bet.

JG: It's all fascinating, just the years leading up to when you came on board and like I said, just all that was going on. When we look back on it historically it's very interesting to say the least. Just seeing how everything was falling in place and all the details that made up the big picture.

AM: I guess if you look at it from a historical perspective it's really kind of amazing that the company lasted as long as it did because that isn't typical with family owned corporations. It just doesn't work that way.

JG: Right.

AM: And see they had gone almost seventy years as a family corporation, really. And then to see it go thirty or thirty-seven more is just kind of amazing in itself.

JG: I think a big part of that is Mr. Temple, of course, who we are talking about Arthur Temple, Jr. who just passed away last year. He came on board at a very high management level in 1948 when he was just 28 years old, and for all practical purposes when his

father died in '51 was very much leading the company. Of course W. Temple Webber was chairman of the board for many, many years.

AM: There was a lot of pressure that long ago to liquidate the company.

JG: Right.

AM: I don't think the family per say didn't want to fool with it. Arthur was about the only one who really saw it for the value it had.

JG: Mr. Ward Burke has talked to me about some of those early board meetings in the early fifties and through out the fifties. And that Arthur was always concerned about his aunts and uncles and just what their interest or lack of interest might be. He did, even early on he had this idea and several people explained it to me this way, the concept of him being a visionary which he was, but a lot of people commented that it might not be in the sense that most of us may think of the term visionary. He just had so much energy; he had balanced energy. He had some dream and vision in sight and he was just willing to take whatever step was necessary to get there.

AM: That is right.

JG: And just always keep...he set his goals high and he wasn't bothered by failures. And someone was just telling me this the other day that he actually failed a lot. But his successes were so great that no one remembers those failures.

AM: That is right.

JG: And it was just that most people, myself included, at any one step having met a bit of a failure that might be the end of it for us. But he kept moving. He always had things going.

AM: The interesting thing is you said he had failures, he sure did. It's kind of interesting that the corporate failures in the later years of the eighties and nineties, typically the nineties, had more devastating affect however than anything he ever did. You can imagine the retail yards going broke. You brought that up way back when. That was a devastating thing and would have sunk most corporations. He kept it alive.

JG: Yes, it was millions of loss.

AM: Yes, gosh when a million was an awful lot of money.

JG: Yes, they got out of that, licked their wounds and moved on. In '64 they started over again. And again that says a lot too about the family. Late fifties early sixties is when he brought Latane in and they just didn't work out. But, in later life you know, Arthur talked very fondly and highly of Latane.

AM: Oh yes, I don't think there was ever any question that they didn't love each other but as business men working together it was never going to work.

JG: It's interesting to, you talked about how Mr. Temple could go from one extreme to the other and back and forth and I know just my limited conversations with him I can certainly identify with that.

AM: Oh yes.

JG: Specifically when we talked about, he brought it up a lot of times about who gets the credit. And he would always say, "It just gripes me that people" always newspaper media what ever you know, "they give me the credit for that. And you know it was really Joe Denman or it was Stubby or this person or that person." But then he would always come back around and say it was his idea. So he was definitely a man of contrast and even contradictions it seemed at times.

AM: Oh yes, and I don't think I could ever hold it against him that he had a consummate ego, because he did. He sure did.

JG: I know he called me one time, I wrote a little article on the Pine Bough. You were talking about the Pine Bough restaurant. And I didn't say yea or nay Latane, or yea or nay Mr. Temple, I just mentioned...and there was a photograph of Latane. Latane was at the grand opening of the Pine Bough. And as you know he would call himself a publicist, and very much so. We laugh all the time practically every picture we have of Latane in the early sixties he's with a group of salesman and he's pointing. And he's got everybody in the picture looking at where he's pointing whether it's left or right or up or down, and that is the pose. But anyways, he was at the grand opening. Mr. Temple (Arthur) was away on business and just wasn't there. I didn't comment on that at all, just basically told about the Pine Bough, mentioned when it had the grand opening, just used the newspaper reports you know, how many people were there, people from Lufkin, Diboll, everybody in the county showed up. There is a picture of Latane with all the waitresses and the cook. He's there with his little tie and his coat. That was pretty much it. And it was the day the paper came out and I got a phone call, Betty Burkhalter, "Arthur Temple is on the phone." I picked it up "Yes sir." "That Pine Bough, that was my baby." He said, "Latane was a great guy and everything and he did a lot of good, but that Pine Bough, that was my baby. You got that?" I said, "Yes sir." And click; that was it. (laughter) And there were several other instances like that where he was concerned enough that like you said, he maybe had the ego. But yet, then once you gave him credit he would go back, "Well no, there were others involved." That is what I'm getting at, back and forth.

AM: I don't know how many times he had done that to me. He had said, "I don't want to be highlighted in this, take me out of that lead paragraph." I don't know how many times he would tell me that. And some stories you couldn't write without him being in the lead paragraph.

JG: That is right. That is right. It's like darn if you do and darn if you don't a lot of times. We even kind of went round and round on the name of the History Center one time about whether Temple should be in there or not. I know we were talking about it and I had suggested and we still deal with it today. We are not just the Temple family archive. We are not just the company archive. We are the community archive. We serve all the needs and interest. We collect materials and papers, you don't have to be a Temple, you don't even have to work for the company. It is this area's of East Texas' history. And so we were also considering about funding. You know, you are well aware of people's thoughts about the Temple Foundation whether it be the company or the family foundation and what those foundations had done from the beginning. We have got to have community buy in and community support or you are not going to get the foundation support. It works both ways. Anyways we were talking about all that and Carolyn Elmore was in there and we were just saying that if we put the Temple name in it that we might not have that community support and buy in necessarily. I guess that was coming as much from me as from anybody. I don't know if maybe it was accurate that everybody felt that way. I know later on that Carolyn thought very much so that the Temple name needed to be there. Anyway, that is partly why we went with The History Center. Just keep it generic. It will help define what it is and get interest that way. But, anyways apparently word got back to him that we were taking the Temple name out or not including it. And, he didn't call me directly but word was communicated back that he was very upset and that the Temple family had supported this thing from day one and why in the world would we take the name out. So the word I got was that Mr. Temple was mad at me. So, I said well that is easy we will just put Temple back in. We actually had the sign out here on the road and it was called the Temple History Center, Temple Memorial whatever you know. It wasn't no sooner than we got the sign out word communicated back to me, "How in the world are we going to get the community to buy into this thing if the Temple name is in it?" So we came full circle back around. I don't know the only thing I can think, and there were other instances, that's my experience of arguing both sides maybe. I don't know. I've heard those stories, you know, that he would play the devils advocate.

AM: Oh yes, sure he loved to do that.

JG: He would get you to argue and look at all sides and directions. But, anyways that is neither here nor there.

AM: It was his way of putting you back on the right track too, without telling you you were stupid. You know, which that is a fine art for a manager or a superior supervisor to be able to show you that you are off track but you aren't stupid. And he had a finesse of being able to do that. You'd get back to your office and start thinking about it and then say, "Why didn't I think of that?"

JG: I know also in those early years we have got a lot of photographs of him around the plants. You were talking about how he liked to visit, assess what was there, give an assignment and then step away. But in all of these, lot of these early photographs he has got a note pad and he is writing stuff down.

AM: Every year he would buy a new Cadillac. He would send Vernon Burkhalter to Detroit to pick it up and drive it back. And the first thing he would do is take it over to the auto shop and have them drill a hole in the dashboard so that he could put in his note pad rest. (laughter) You know if that four or five thousand-dollar car that many years ago and just drill a hole in it. (laughter)

JG: Had to have his note pad rest. I talked to him about, not that, but about the fact that he was writing notes. He said he had a lot of sleepless nights. He would think in the night, think of things they could do better, ideas. He would often times would come down, that is when he was still living in Lufkin but he would come down to Diboll and work out some solution to some project. Or why the plant wasn't doing what it needed to do. Of course he describes all that as the fun.

AM: I remember one day we had a blowback at the particleboard plant. It's when the combustible material accumulates to a flash point and it explodes. Just whew, well of course it blew the roof off and it's supposed to so it won't damage the building. (laughter) I called Arthur and told him what had happened and what we were doing about it. He asked me, "Does Joe Denman know?" I said, "No he is on a cruise in the Caribbean." He said, "Call him and let him know." I said, "Oh" and he said, "Yes, let him worry a little bit." I had to call the Norwegian Cruise line or whatever it was at their corporate office to get their radio link to their ship which he was on. And the ship in turn had to go ashore to find him and bring him back and so it just tore up his whole day. Joe said, "Why the hell are you calling me?" And I said, "Arthur said if somebody has to be upset it ought to be Joe Denman." He said (unintelligible) (laughter).

JG: What you are saying about Mr. Temple and you can see it, I sure didn't know him personally like you did or so many others, but he just had whatever the word is, but the ability and the desire I guess to balance the corporate world which he was very much a part of. He was a wheeler, he was a dealer, he did all those things but at the same time balancing the corporate world with home and East Texas and even more specifically with Diboll. I know, you and I have had these conversations before about how he never made a business decision without considering how it would impact the people of the company, the workers, the people at the mills at the plants. He just had that ability and desire. I don't know if, and when I say we I don't mean the company, but in corporate America, I don't think you have that any more.

AM: Oh gosh, no, certainly not now.

JG: It was probably rare during his day, but certainly not now. So much has changed.

AM: I still remember for instance carrying a payroll to one of the U.S. Plywood mills from Eugene Oregon to Mapleton, and that was eighty miles away on Christmas Eve. It was a termination of the entire plant and they picked Christmas Eve as the way to do it.

JG: They did that on some of the mills in East Texas too.

AM: I thought gee-whiz.

JG: I think Wiergate shut down on Christmas Eve.

AM: Is that right?

JG: I think so, the Wier Longleaf Lumber Company.

AM: Yes, I just couldn't believe it.

JG: That was I think during World War II. I think it was in '42 that they shut down, or somewhere in there. I may be wrong. Well all right Mr. Miller, I sure appreciate it. Thank you very much.

AM: Thank you Jonathan.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcriber's Note: In a later, unrecorded conversation with Jonathan Gerland, Alan Miller added several more insights to this interview. Among two of his most important duties with Temple as head of the Public Affairs Department were speeches and the annual reports. Mr. Miller wrote or helped craft all of the speeches given by the upper level executives in the company. He also wrote and was responsible for putting together all of the annual reports. This required a bit of travel, as he visited all of Temple's locations across the country. In these two duties, Mr. Miller was largely responsible for crafting Temple's image for both the public and its investors.