

**RICHARD DONOVAN**

**Interview 178b**

**August 2, 2017 at The History Center, Diboll, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, long-time Angelina County resident and conservationist Richard Donovan talks about his father, Allen T. Donovan, touching on his early career but focusing on his time at the Xact Clays and Magcobar mining operations near Zavalla. He talks about growing up in Zavalla, spending time at the plant with his father, a childhood accident, interactions with African Americans, and earning money as a child. Mr. Donovan also discusses the changes within southern Angelina County and East Texas at large, as the lumber companies moved in and changed the economy and the landscape and then left again. He talks about farming, hay baling, stock raising and the coming of the stock laws, types of trees, and race relations. Jonathan asks about the current state of the East Texas environment and problems with development and Mr. Donovan discusses these issues as well.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today's date is August 2, 2017. My name is Jonathan Gerland. I'm with Richard Donovan today, we're at The History Center and we're going to do an oral history interview. We were just talking a little earlier and Mr. Donovan has been interviewed a number of times. He has given some good interviews with David Todd I think of the Legacy, the Conservation Society or Association of Texas and a number of other places, but this is actually the only interview that you and I have done. He has done a lot of interviews with me as we've interviewed people across the community. So, thank you again for coming today, and you've talked a lot at times, but you haven't, I don't necessarily know on the other interviews about your family, your dad, your mom, maybe just talk a little bit about your father. How did he come to this part of the world?

**Richard Donovan (hereafter RD):** Jonathan my dad to me, and I sincerely mean this, was maybe the most intelligent man I ever saw. My dad came to Texas from Missouri, northeastern Missouri, and he must have come when he was around, I don't know, in his early 30's. I'm not sure, but the oil boom I think probably brought my dad to Texas. He first came when he was 16 to Corrigan, Texas as a telegraph operator for the ACWT. He was a telegraph operator there when he was 16 years old for either one or two years, I'm not sure. Then he returned to Paris, Missouri which was kind of his focal point for his family and he did a lot of things, but one of the things I thought was interesting was he and another fellow opened a business where they had a truck with a big platform on the back of it to haul their tools and vises and anvils, and all the necessary equipment they needed. And they would get a message to go to a farm, that was all farming country up there, and they would get a message to go to a farm and they would go out and repair a tractor or an old truck of some kind, combines, all that kind of equipment. But, my dad was a restless type of guy. His mother and father had separated or divorced when he was a

very young boy. He had several older brothers and a couple of older sisters I think, but he had grown up living with one and another and some of his brothers and that sort of thing. But, apparently my dad loved to read and that I think probably caused him to be like he was. Somewhere along in his life span, after the telegraph operator, he became interested in electricity and somehow, I don't know much about my dad because he never told me anything about himself. Most of the stuff I learned about him I learned about him way later in life. But he became an electrician for circuses, and two circuses in particular. One of them I have a contract he signed with the Christy Brothers I believe it was, but he was in charge of the car that produced the electricity for the circus, because in those days...

**JG:** A railroad car?

**RD:** Yes, they had a special car that the generators were in and towns in those days couldn't provide electricity for that volume of electricity even if they had electricity so, the two trips he made, one was on the inside of the United States from somewhere up east all the way to the west coast and then they crossed over the line in Canada and came back east, went down west and came back east and he did that twice, two years in a row I think it was. Then he lost interest in that and he came to Longview, I believe it was. I will bore you with an interesting story and if you want me to stop, just give me the signal.

**JG:** Go ahead.

**RD:** He got off the train in either Kilgore or Longview, and once again my memory is hazy on all this. It's been so long ago, but he got off the train at either Longview or Kilgore and checked into a hotel there and while he was staying there, the train comes in and this guy gets off the train and he has got an awful lot of luggage and the porters are grabbing their luggage and scurrying around with it and they finally get it checked in and gets up to his room and gets all his luggage into his room and he is there for some days sitting in the lobby. And however it happened, some guys invited him to join them in their card game every Saturday night or whatever it was. I don't remember. He said, well I don't know how to play cards, and they said well come on you will enjoy the fellowship, the social life, so he said okay. So, they go almost every night and he loses money regularly, you know, because he doesn't know how to play. That goes on for quite some time and he has lost a good bit of money and of course the other people they all enjoy him being there because they're getting his money. So one day he packs, this is unbeknownst to everybody at the time, but he gets all his luggage ready and he calls the porter and he says now look, I want you to have these out on the platform out there at a certain time and have everything ready because I'll be leaving at this certain hour. So, he goes down to the card game that night and he is playing cards and he starts winning, and he wins, and he wins, and he wins, and everybody is, "oh how your luck has changed." He keeps winning and winning and he is way ahead of the curve and he told the guys, excuse me he had to go to the restroom. He knows exactly what time it is because he hears the whistle and he goes out and tells the guy to get the baggage on the train and he gets on the train and he leaves with everybody's money. I thought that was an interesting story.

**JG:** Now was that before he came to Zavalla area?

**RD:** Well actually he went on from there to Browndell.

**JG:** Okay.

**RD:** I thought it was Long Bell Lumber Company that was there, but somebody had a pretty large sawmill there and he went...

**JG:** Kirby did.

**RD:** Kirby, okay. He even went to Pineland and went to work for Temple Lumber Company for one night.

**JG:** One night? (laughter)

**RD:** Yes, he went there and he told them...

**JG:** Did he play poker there? (laughter)

**RD:** No, he went there and made application and told them that he could wind the electric motors and they found that out, they said, "well we have plenty of work for you." He said okay and so they told him to come to work, it was after hours, I forget what shift it was, but some night shift, and he got there and they took him to a room and opened the room, and he said it was a huge room and he said the electric motors were stacked just as high to the ceiling as they could be stacked and he said a sea of electric motors, and they said, "here is where you will work right here, so get started," and was about to leave. My dad said, "well what do I do after this?" They said, "don't worry there will be plenty more motors when you get through with them." So, he wound motors that one night and left and never went back because he didn't want a job winding motors, you know, that just wasn't my dad. So, then he went and left there and maybe worked in Jasper. Jasper had a power generating station and I think he might have worked there some. But I think he was working on the rebuilding of the highway...the highway that runs through Brookland and Jasper and San Augustine. What is the number of that highway Jonathan, you remember?

**JG:** It's not 96 is it?

**RD:** I think it's 96. I think they were paving 96 and I think he was working on that and he met my mother who lived in Brookland at the time. So then they got married and then I was born in Jasper and then...

**JG:** Say your mother and fathers name?

**RD:** My father's name was Allen T. Donovan. I have always been intrigued by that Turnbow because, of that T, because that was Turnbow.

**JG:** T-u-r-n-b-o-w?

**RD:** I think that was right Jonathan, but you look back in history and the Turnbow name turns up several different places. One place in particular was the Turnbow family, owned a huge plantation in either Louisiana or Mississippi, I'm not sure which.

**JG:** I think Louisiana.

**RD:** Then somewhere else I ran into the Turnbow name, and I can't remember. But my dad didn't like to use it. It was Allen T. I never heard him use the term Turnbow in my life.

**JG:** And you don't really know who or much about your grandparents, his mom and dad, do you?

**RD:** I don't know anything about any of my grandparents hardly, Jonathan, because my mother's mother died when my mother's sister was born. And my mother was only 3 or 4 years old at that time, so I never knew. She was a Garlington and the Garlington's are from over in that part of the world around Hemphill over in there. You've heard of the Garlington Massacre I guess, or the Garlington Feud?

**JG:** The dogs, yes.

**RD:** Yes, and the Enner's, my grandfather was an Enner, and he was...

**JG:** Is that your mother's father?

**RD:** Yes, and he was very detached from his family and I never met any of them. The only family I ever knew growing up was my mother's step-mother's family. In fact, I got an email just yesterday, really surprised me, that some of them are getting together here in August at Dean's restaurant, of all places in Huntington, and I don't know why that selection is made unless some of them live far to the north and east and they just settled on that place. I don't know, invited me to join them and I haven't seen any of them in decades.

**JG:** And what surname is that again?

**RD:** Well they came from Lowes, L-o-w-e-s, and there is a cemetery over at Lonestar. You probably know where Lonestar is, but that is in Sabine county. It's just a row, I don't know how long a row that is, Jonathan or nothing, but my step great grandfather's children, a long row.

**JG:** There's a Lowes creek over there that drains into the river or lake over there is that the same name?

**RD:** It could be.

**JG:** L-o-w-e-s.

**RD:** It could be the same family. I never was aware of the creek but yes it was there. I remember going to their house they didn't have any water of course. They had outdoor toilets, of course the same for me until I was 12 years old, but it was very, very primitive lifestyle they lived. But you could hear the whistle at the Pineland mill blow if the wind was right. When they blew the whistle at Pineland you could hear it, if the wind was blowing from the north, you could hear the whistle blow so it was fairly close to the Pineland Mill over there.

**JG:** So, you were born in Jasper?

**RD:** I was born in Jasper.

**JG:** Just outside Jasper?

**RD:** In the hospital, they took me to the hospital and the hospital gave me this.

**JG:** Yes, I was going to ask you about that. He pointed to his eye. Tell about that.

**RD:** Well a very poorly trained, crude, rough handed doctor with a pair of forceps damaged the nerves in my right eyelid and I enjoyed the benefits of that all my life. And kids today talk about harassment or bullying or something like that I endured a lot of that as a child because of that.

**JG:** Now it's the eyelid that was affected?

**RD:** Yes but of course as you see...

**JG:** What about the eye itself can you see out of that eye?

**RD:** Yes, I can but it has gotten, the droop has gotten more as I have aged the skin has sagged.

**JG:** So you just weren't able to keep your eye lid open?

**RD:** Right and I later learned much later in life that had my parents known, etc. later in life that there was technology that could have gone in and repaired that, but it didn't happen.

**JG:** Did your parents ever talk to you about it? Do you ever remember any conversation about it?

**RD:** Oh, it was a subject of conversation for a while, but you know it wasn't a particular eventful thing to us because it was a fact of life and that was it.

**JG:** We're jumping around...well I started to ask you, at some point I want you to tell about the automobile accident that happened in Zavalla. You've told that story too a few times, but I don't know if we have it recorded. Chronologically we are in Jasper, what brought your dad, and I want to get to the clay plant too.

**RD:** A very eventful day in my life. My dad had taken a job in Newton at the John Roberts Service Station Garage. My dad could do anything, Jonathan. My dad was just a genius, really. He had finished high school and like I said he...

**JG:** And you were born in '36 just for the record.

**RD:** Yes.

**JG:** So, this is after you were born.

**RD:** Yes, and we moved to Newton and he went to work for John Roberts and my mother got a job in the courthouse at Newton. I've got a picture of her and some other ladies. This must have been in '37 or somewhere along in there, they had a pretty significant snowfall and they had this guy that worked in the courthouse and all these women had him down and were rolling him in the snow outside the courthouse. He was the janitor or something there, and one they all liked or didn't like or something, but here's six or eight women, they've got this old guy down rolling him in the snow. I thought it was kind of hilarious they had that photograph of that.

**JG:** So, your mom worked at the courthouse, where were you when she worked?

**RD:** I suppose I was being taken care of by someone Jonathan, I don't know. I was at home and my dad went down, and this is acetylene welding at that time, and my dad had gone down into this tank to weld something for someone and while he was down in this tank you might imagine that the oxygen level was pretty low and the settling and burning and breathing must have been pretty difficult, and he got acetylene poisoning I think was what it was. My dad was in a coma for about three months.

**JG:** Wow!

**RD:** He was a skeleton, they said when he got up, but he was unemployed and everything for three months and our family was pretty destitute. Had it not been for my mother's work, we really would have been...but when he got up from there he went back to work for a short time and then he got this call from Zavalla, a place called Xact (X-a-c-

t) Clays. It was operated by three men, Bob Carr, the Carr Brothers, Bob was one of them. I can't remember the other one's name right now, Mack McBride, the three of them, two Carr brothers and Mack McBride opened it up and they were mining filter clay.

**JG:** Do you know where they were from?

**RD:** I do not. (**JG:** okay) They were mining filter clay and were shipping it up to the northeast. It was used for processing cooking oil and filtering cooking oil and various products like that. It was a very primitive operation and I remember my dad talking about when he went there they had a concrete floor with pipes circulating through it and they were heating water or something flowing through that, crisscrossing through those pipes underneath that floor and they would stack that clay on top of it and dry it and take wooden mallets and beat it up in small enough chunks that they could feed it into the mill with shovels. That is how primitive it was.

**JG:** What would happen in the mill?

**RD:** Then they would grind it into powder and blow it into tank cars, actually I said blowing, I'm mistaken about that. They would take five-gallon buckets and form human chains and pass it from the mill...

**JG:** You were thinking about sawdust instead of clay.

**RD:** Yes it was clay. Finely powder clay, very finely powder clay.

**JG:** Did it have a color?

**RD:** It was white. It was mined in behind the Kitchens Cemetery down Hwy 69 south of Zavalla place called Kitchens Cemetery. Turn down that road and it was mined in that area back there. Well, that went on for a while and then oil became a real product in Texas and so the Carr Brothers found a deposit of East Texas Bentonite nearby, so they began mining that and transferred the mill over from grinding filter clay to grinding drilling mud and they called it Xact Clays and they would ship out this clay in 100-pound sacks to oilfields. So, you can imagine that that took an awful lot of different equipment than what they had before, so they began, it was so primitive. Everything was so primitive in those days, and the war was starting about my life time, you know, the war started in early '40's and I was born in '36 so you can see how old I was.

**JG:** So, what was your dad doing in those first few years?

**RD:** He started out as a machinist, mechanic, welder, all-purpose thing in a very primitive plant.

**JG:** And about how many employees did they have?

**RD:** Well Jonathan, I think it was very fluid because they needed a lot more men the day they had to load the cars and the day they did some other things, so they just had to go out and get people, you know.

**JG:** So not a lot of steady full-time employment, just...

**RD:** And people were looking for jobs of any kind back in those days, so you could just get people pretty easily, but when they started this drilling mud and stuff they had to switch over and get pretty serious about it. But, Jonathan, I remember my dad making reduction gears out of truck transmissions, and like you're coming off a motor that is turning 1800 rpm's and you got to reduce it down to three or four rpm's. You have a lot of reduction to do and sometimes it would take several transmissions hooked together to achieve that speed and he just did some very complicated things.

**JG:** Just all on the fly, I mean, with scrap parts, just taking automobile transmissions and adapting them.

**RD:** Truck transmissions for the most part and adapting them to the thing.

**JG:** To what was needed.

**RD:** I remember a thing they had where they fed the mill with wheel barrows. They had a long ramp but first they put in a big dryer, a rotary dryer, and they fed that rotary dryer by hand with shovels. You can imagine feeding wet clay into a rotary dryer that is pretty hot, what kind of job that is.

**JG:** A lot of short handled shovels, yes.

**RD:** Then on the other hand you had guys where it was discharging, where it was hottest, and they were running up there with wheel barrows and sticking them under a discharge and running back out of the way until the wheel barrow got filled and then run in there and grab the wheel barrow and then another guy would be standing right there with a wheel barrow inserted underneath there real quickly, and then he would turn around and run, dump it on the floor where it would lay until it got cool enough that they could feed it into the mill, and then load it back into the wheel barrow again and go up a long ramp and go into this feeder, into the mill, a rotary mill, a Raymond Roller mill. And it would grind it into a fine powder and blow it over where it was put into a 100-pound sacks and load it into box cars. And you had one man operating the sacker and three men pushing the buggies and unloading it into the cars. But the problem was a lot of times as those guys, the ones who were taking the finished product, the crude product and take it and put it into the roller mill, they couldn't tell exactly what the level of the food for the mill was going into the mill, so a lot of time they would either choke the mill down or let it run empty. You never heard such a racket in your life when that roller mill ran empty. It would self-destruct if you let it run like that for very long, so my dad knew he had to do something. So he fashioned two electrodes that he let hang down into the hopper of the

mill and hook an electric current to it and put a light bulb over there so when the guy, the product would still have enough moisture into it would make an electrical current in between them, and make the light bulb come on when it got full so they could stop putting it in there and when the light went off they knew the level had dropped down low enough to start putting it back in again. So, that ceased the problem of the mill getting too full or too empty. The amazing thing to me is I was just a little child now and my mother had gotten in real bad health by this time, and I was allowed to roam that mill unattended for years. No chain guards, no belt guards, no safety precautions of any kind. This is before OSHA and I just remember growing up in that mill like that, just completely unattended almost. The mill hands kind of took care of me and that is just the way it was.

**JG:** So your dad liked to ramble a little bit, but as I understand he stayed there a good long while. You grew up there, you got a job there, you met your wife there, your sister-in-law worked there, was it the diversity of the work you think that kept your dad there? That it was so just kind of wide opened?

**RD:** No, I think the fact that he had a family by that time.

**JG:** Okay.

**RD:** I think when my dad married and I was born, that changed everything for him. Like you said...

**JG:** You asked earlier if the whistle still works, there it goes.

**RD:** I think the diversity of the work...I'll bore you with another story Jonathan. TU Electric or TP&L or Oncor, whatever you want to call it, at that time didn't have enough power to run that plant as it mechanized and grew, so they had to generate their own electricity.

**JG:** So the clay plant had to generate its own electricity?

**RD:** Yes, generate their own electricity. We lived nearby and our electricity at our house went off and on, so the electricity the utility company provided was very sporadic at best and not enough to run that plant, so they had to provide their own generators. So, once again this is during World War II. And, you know people at that age couldn't even spell diesel much less know what a diesel motor was, because diesel hadn't come along to this part of the world for sure at this time. But one day about three or four flat cars were unloading on the siding there and on them were parts of this huge, absolutely huge, diesel motor, four cylinders. One man could not pick up a piston, just a piston head, one man could not pick that up, that is how big they were. So, they were all filthy and dirty and had traveled open on that train and everything, so my dad poured the foundation for the thing and got it ready and cleaned all the...in fact, I think he had the foundation ready by the time it got there.

**JG:** Concrete foundation?

**RD:** Yes, oh yes, a massive foundation...and prior to that they had run a little butane fired engine, Waukesha engine, what it provided prior to that which was very insufficient, but anyway this huge diesel Fairbanks Morris Diesel was unloaded... and if I get too long Jonathan just go to waving your hand.

**JG:** No, no, you're good!

**RD:** And, they unloaded this diesel there. and my dad started getting it cleaned up and washed up and by that time he had also poured the foundation and built a shop there. They had a very nice shop facility and turning lathes, which he didn't know how to operate. but he learned how to operate, taught himself how to operate a big turning lathe. and they unloaded that diesel there and cleaned it all up. got a couple of A. G. Perry cam in there with a couple of A-frame trucks and set the big diesel super structure up there and got it all ready and got it put together. The fly wheel was about 8 feet in diameter, it was huge flywheel, and the generator was about 8 or 10 feet in diameter. Got it ready to go and called a couple of engineers out of the Houston office, that is where the executive offices for Macgobar... Macgobar had bought out Xact Clay's by that time, and he called Macgobar office in Houston and talked to Willard Johnson, who was president of the company and said, "I'm ready to bring this thing online now and I need some engineers come in here and synchronize the current," so, they sent a couple of engineers up there and they worked for a week trying to get that thing synchronized and they couldn't do it. They said well, we will go back to Houston and we will be back next week and work on it some more. So, Mr. Johnson called dad and said, "Allen" said, "what is the matter?" "Can you get that thing going?" He said, "Well Willard I'm sure I can," but says "I think I probably can." So, my dad...some of the parts had come in big wooden barrels, Jonathan and my dad had them take one of those big wooden barrels and set it up out there and sent another guy into Zavalla to get a sack of salt and...

**JG:** A what?

**RD:** A sack of salt, a paper sack, a fifty-pound sack of salt...

**JG:** Okay.

**RD:** Brought it back down there and told them to make a big slurry of water and salt in that big wooden barrel and have that ready and then he had them run two long electrodes from the generator out to that barrel of salt, which was sitting outside on the ground. He contacted, right now I can't think of the name, but the guy in Lufkin that had an electrical shop here for a long time, Hughes Electric. He called Mr. Hughes to come down there and told him, said to put his equipment at the plant and be ready because he was going to throw it online and help Hughes to get it synchronized. So, anyhow he did. Hughes was an electrical engineer I think. I'm not sure, but anyway got him over there and got the big diesel running and had two guys standing there, told one of them to throw an electrode

over into that barrel of salt water and gave the signal and everything and threw the other one over into that thing and they said that diesel went boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Just went under a tremendous load all of a sudden whenever they did that, the resistance in that water, and said all of a sudden, the barrel began to smoke and a barrel full of water now, that barrel began to smoke and the wood caught on fire. It had metal bands around it and that metal bands was what was hot and they began to smoke and the wood was smoking, kind of catching on fire. All of a sudden Mr. Hughes stepped outside and gave the high sign that everything was ready. So, then they jerked the electrodes out of the water or something, I'm not sure but that is the way they synchronized that current and got it ready to go. I thought that was pretty ingenious on my dad's part.

**JG:** Yes, and so you witnessed all that? You saw it, yes.

**RD:** Yes, and another time, another story. You get my age, that is all you got Jonathan is stories.

**JG:** You live life forward, but you understand it backwards!

**RD:** Yes, so the clay pit was some miles out and the last one was in what is now Upland Island Wilderness in the National Forest. The Forest Service did not own the minerals, so Macgobar bought the mineral rights, the mineral rights from whoever owned the mineral rights. I don't remember who that was. It may have been William Cameron & Company, I'm not sure. But anyway, that is where the pit was and the guys that were doing the hauling, this was a contract operation, Macgobar didn't have anything to do with it but the guys doing the hauling told Moore Brothers, who was the contractor I believe...

**JG:** Moore, M-o-o-r-e?

**RD:** Yes, it might not have been Moore Brothers, but Moore did more contracting than anybody. It might not have been them, it might have been somebody else that done the contract, so I better back up on that. Anyway, they told the contractor they needed more money and the contractor said no, that is all you're going to get, so anyway over the weekend some enterprising fellow went out there and salted that dirt road with roofing nails so when the crew came out to go, all the dump trucks showed up Monday morning to go to work they all got flats along the way and never made it out to the mine because they had roofing nails in their tires. Tire operators from all over the country were down there fixing flats and everything else, so they just didn't know what to do. Well by that time they had taken this old Fairbanks Morris generator out of production and it brought in 4 Caterpillar side by side diesel generators and were generating power that way. So, this old diesel sitting over there unused and they came to dad and they said "Allen we are shut down, we can't operate, what are we going to do?" Said, "that is all in that sandy dirt out there and we'll never get all those tacks out of there." So dad said, "okay" says he told them said, "go get a welding iron and welding rail and cut that railroad track and cut that rail and cut it a certain length and go out to that old truck and cut the front spindles off of it and weld onto the end of that and put tires on it and built a little rack up on the back

there so that welding machine could sit up there on that and get a trailer hitch on it, so we can pull it with that jeep. And so, they did all that and set a welding machine up in the back of that and had them to go out there and take the field coils out of the generator from that big 8-foot generator and take the field coils out of that and fasten them up under the bottom by that railroad iron he had. So, he hooked all of that on the back of the jeep and had them go out where the nails were and start up the generator.

**JG:** Made a big magnet?

**RD:** Made a big magnet and drove down through there, Jonathan, and picked up railroad spikes because there was an old tram road is what the road they built by the forest service so they utilized the tram road, picked up big railroad irons and timber spikes you used to fasten bridge timbers together, just picked up all kind of things but a ton of those roofing tacks and just in a few minutes they were ready to start rolling again. Once again that illustrated my dad's...

**JG:** His resourcefulness.

**RD:** He was quite a guy!

**JG:** He just had a knack for that didn't he. Talk about school, and I don't want to totally leave the clay plant because I know you worked there. But talk a little bit about growing up in that community and going to school in Zavalla.

**RD:** Zavalla was, as you might expect, was a roughhewn community. At one time, I can remember five sawmills that were within "city limits" of Zavalla. There were no city limits of course, but within what we would think of as the city limits. One of them was a big steam operated mill set right up beside the railroad track there called the Corrigan Cross Lumber Company and it is right by the depot. And, then there was Chickasaw Lumber Company was there. I won't be able to sit here and think of them like this, but Zarsky Lumber Company was there, and in fact Zarsky still has some lumber operations down on the Texas coast area around Corpus or somewhere along that way. I run into the name just traveling through down there, is the reason I know it's there. And then the Kimbrough Brothers had a mill there and Minyard Cryer the most famous I guess to me was, I can't think of his name right now, it just...but there was a guy that was a big peckerwood sawmill there. Minyard Cryer became probably the most reliable sawmill there. Nat Boykin was there, Nat dragged some logs out, some sinkers out of the Neches river that had been floated on the way to Beaumont and they had sunk and Nat dragged enough sinkers out of the Neches River to build the foundation to his new home when he built his new home. He took them to his mill and sawed them up but there were just any number of sawmills there when I grew up, employed a lot of people. It was hard hot work and then of course the railroad ran through town and they started out loading, the first thing I remember was cross ties. If you can believe this I don't have any idea what they weighed but they loaded those cross ties, hand-hewn to begin with, into box cars on their shoulders of men and those men would stand those cross ties up on end and had a pad on

their shoulder. They would tilt that log over on their shoulder and walk up to what I remember as no more than a 20-inch-wide board. It might have been a 14-inch-wide board. I don't know how thick it was but it wasn't very thick.

**JG:** Did it bow and flex pretty good?

**RD:** It bowed and flexed pretty good and they knew the trick to that would be to synchronize their walking with the bows and flips in that board and as you bounced it would bounce you on up and if you were synchronized your steps the flexing of that board and they walk in that boxcar and throw that cross tie over their shoulder onto the floor and stack it up in that boxcar and then go back down that board and get another cross tie and go back up it.

**JG:** Now were those put on flat cars or boxcars?

**RD:** Boxcars.

**JG:** Boxcars.

**RD:** Yes, the first ones were boxcars and I'm sure it was a hard job to unload those things too.

**JG:** So, a lot of hand labor?

**RD:** Yes.

**JG:** Very labor intensive.

**RD:** All hand labor and then later on of course, they began loading it with mules.

**JG:** Mules.

**RD:** And then the cross ties played out and they began bringing in logs. They loaded an awful lot of logs there. In fact, in one place there they had two huge steel pipes.

**JG:** What kind of logs?

**RD:** Most of them were pine. They might have loaded some hardwood logs there toward the end, seems like.

**JG:** Do you remember about how long they were?

**RD:** Oh Jonathan, they were pretty long. I would say, not long like today.

**JG:** They weren't doing whole trees?

**RD:** No not like today, but I would say they were probably 20 feet long or something like that. Now, the peckerwood mills couldn't haul logs, I mean they didn't deal with logs like that. Their logs are much shorter but those logs we considered long at that time and they were probably about 20 feet long or something like that. They would bring them in there and they erected two big steel pipes must have been six inches in diameter I supposed. Firmly embedded them in the ground and into cables and back off out there and they cant levered those two pipes over the railroad track, over the siding and then the railroad would pull cars under there, empty flat cars, and leave them and then the men would come in there with their teams and position the flat cars underneath the A-frame and they would start loading the logs onto the car with the mules. I remember the mules getting too hot and seeing blood running out of their nose. I remember one time, this is an interesting story.

**JG:** Okay, we are back now. He was telling me about the mules working so hard and getting so hot they had blood come out their noses and then he was starting to tell another story. (laughter)

**RD:** Well it was about this crew of men working and in the crew were some black men and I can't remember what this black fellow was doing but he got so hot he passed out so they grabbed him up and Dr. Alexander who had come there and come to this part of the country to the CC Mill or the CCC Mill that was just east of Zavalla in the Angelina National Forest back in the thirties. And he had moved into town and opened up a practice in town and had a small office beside Mr. Tisdale's General Store right in town. So, they grabbed this fellow that was too hot up, he passed out and ran to the doctor's office with him and the doctor wasn't in his office and so they ran in with him and laid him on the leather couch there in the doctor's office waiting for the doctor to come back. Well the doctor was back in the back room there, little two room office building and he was back in the back room mixing up some kind of compound and the doctor had gotten old by that time and he couldn't hear and he was just an elderly gentleman, but very domineering strong presence guy that he was, and he walked into the room and he... here was this black man surrounded by some white people that had brought him up there, and some black people that had brought him up there. But anyway, they were in the doctor office with this black guy lying on the couch, and the doctor had a real deep voice and began hollering, "get him out of here, get him out of here, get him out of here." And they didn't understand what he was saying. He said, "get him out of here," so they got him out of here and he said, "take him around on the side of the building there." So, they went around to the east side of the building, the sun was over to the west of course so on the east side of the building was a small patch of Bermuda grass and so they took him to the side of the building in the shade and laid him down on the Bermuda grass and the doctor came out and attended to him and got him fixed up, you know, and got him going. But he did not want a black man lying on the couch in his office and this was in probably the late 40's, I suppose. But that was the attitude at that time. Now there were no black people lived in Zavalla, or the closest was the Boykin Settlement, which was probably 8 or 10

miles away. They did come into town. I worked at a general store and they would come into town to buy supplies.

**JG:** Is that how you met the Frazier's?

**RD:** The Frazier's was an exceptional family Jonathan. I never knew any of the family except Harrison Frazier Sr. and Harrison Frazier Jr. and they had the first mechanical hay baler I ever saw. Up until that time people piled their hay up around a pole out in the center of the field and kind of covered it up with little pieces of tin and all that kind of stuff they could scavenge together and have heaps of hay out in a pasture and then they would turn the cattle in there and let them eat out around those poles.

**JG:** So, it wasn't baled up at all it was piled up.

**RD:** I never saw any hay baled until I saw...now you could buy hay brought in from other places.

**JG:** Oh yes, but you never saw it baled.

**RD:** Never in my life. And the Frazier's had this hay baler and...

**JG:** A square baler?

**RD:** Yes, I never saw a round bale until, oh long very old you know.

**JG:** Do you know what brand it was by any chance?

**RD:** I sure don't. It was green in color is all I can tell you, so it might have been a John Deere, but I don't know.

**JG:** An Oliver or John Deere or something.

**RD:** I don't know, I don't know. But, my dad hired them to come because we had lespedeza hay. That was the field product, pasture product at that time. If you wanted to raise hay it was lespedeza, and you had it inoculate it and do all kinds of things before you planted it. It was pretty good hay.

**JG:** Was there any blue stem around at the time, or had all that been replaced?

**RD:** It was all gone now in the forest; it was for people who let their cattle roam and East Texas was like that up until the '60's.

**JG:** But "improved" pastures were lespedeza.

**RD:** Lespedeza, if you wanted hay, that is what you were after was Lespedeza.

**JG:** Nobody had put in coastal Bermuda or anything?

**RD:** No, never heard of that.

**JG:** Okay.

**RD:** Coastal came along I was a grown man. I can't remember but Coastal came along much later in life. But the Frazier's came and baled that hay and...

**JG:** Pulled by tractor and powered by PTO?

**RD:** Yes, and it was fed with a fork though. You pulled it up and it was stationary...

**JG:** Oh, okay; it was stationary.

**RD:** ...and you pulled a rake and a big long 8-foot long rack or something like that and you run around that field with that rake and circle back by the bailer and it pulled it a lever and the rakes would come up and drop off that load and drop it down and make another sweep and come back around.

**JG:** But the baling machine was stationary?

**RD:** It was stationary.

**JG:** You brought the cut grass to the machine. The machine didn't pull behind the tractor, okay.

**RD:** Right, and then there was a couple of guys standing at the baler with pitch forks that were grabbing this loose hay that the raker brought in and they were tossing it over into the baler. Then there were a couple of other guys...

**JG:** Is that in the '40's still, or the early 50's?

**RD:** This is in the '50's.

**JG:** The 50's, okay.

**RD:** And a couple of other guys were dropping big square blocks in behind each bale. They knew how long to make the bale you know and so they had a big block of wood that they dropped in behind there and that is how they compressed it and then two guys with bailing wire. It was run through there and had a twister and they would twist that bale and about that time it would kick it out the end.

**JG:** So, a man would have to bind it and tighten it and twist it?

**RD:** With hay wire. You had a little special tool that he stuck in some eyelets and that thing twisted around and away it went. But that was no grass string was used in those days, it was all hay wire. Of course, hay wire was essential around the place too, you used it for so many different things.

**JG:** Baling wire would hold everything until it was replaced by duct tape.

**RD:** Yes, used for gate hinges and just whatever else you can think of.

**JG:** I still use it to hold license plates on.

**RD:** Yes, exactly.

**JG:** So, the racial views of the community were distinct.

**RD:** Yes, and Jonathan I will tell you another peculiar thing and this was really brought to my attention by Rose Carter, which is one of the Frazier ladies that I got to know later on in life. Wonderful people!

**JG:** One of Harrison's daughters.

**RD:** Yes, one of Harrison's daughters. We were talking about some old-times, reminiscing, of course I did not know her then, but we knew the same people in a lot of areas, and I said something about old Coon and she said who? And kind of laughed when she said Coon, and I said Coon, she said who was Coon? I said, and then it dawned on me that I had said a sensitive word and I said he is the black guy that worked for Mr. Barge and lived down on Popher Creek, and as you know Popher Creek is an Indian name, I forget maybe if it was Cherokee, I'm not sure which.

**JG:** Yes, a chief.

**RD:** But he lived down on Popher Creek out on Mr. Barge's. Mr. Barge owned a lot of land and he lived down there and tended to the cows and things on Popher Creek and he would come into town on Saturday at different times. And I was talking about old Coon, but she laughed about that and I said Rose that is the only name I ever knew him by in my life was old Coon. And Jonathan I can tell you a story about old Coon if you will indulge me. I started shining shoes in Zavalla when I was probably 8 or 10 years old, I'm not sure which age, probably 10.

**JG:** Now, before you go on, how far away was your house, I know where your house was, but how far was that from Zavalla town?

**RD:** Okay, I had three houses. When my family first moved to Zavalla they moved right near the clay plant, which was five miles out of town. Then when I was sometime

between three and six, not sure what years, my family moved into town right on Hwy 69; as you are just entering in Zavalla from Lufkin, we lived on the right-hand side. That house is no longer there, but we lived in a house there about a mile from school. I walked a mile to and from school every day. But, I shined shoes when we lived in town so it was real convenient for me.

**JG:** Oh okay, I was just trying to place how you got to town to shine shoes.

**RD:** I shined shoes.

**JG:** Hoboed on the train huh?

**RD:** Yes, I remember that train. That train was an important part of everybody's life. I would shine those shoes and Saturday was a big day, and to put it in perspective for you, the biggest day I ever had was one Saturday I made \$7. It was an election day, so at ten cents a pair you can imagine how many pairs of shoes I had to shine to make \$7. Sometimes people would give me a nickel tip but it was rare that I got a nickel tip.

**JG:** Where did you set up your shoe shining spot?

**RD:** Well luckily, I acquired the barber shop and I say luckily because as soon as I started shining shoes, the next Saturday I believe I had six competitors. But the leverage I had was that the barber shop was mine. I had laid claim to the barber shop.

**JG:** Barge was the patron of land and you were the patron of the shoe shine.

**RD:** The shoe shine business. (laughter) But I had a lot of competition the whole time, but my security was the barber shop, because that is where men were and it was a good place to get a shine. But, I was shining shoes but when business would get slow I would go out and work the street. So, I was over at Mr. Barge's store and Coon was sitting outside the window of Mr. Barge's store with his feet on this little sidewalk that ran in front of a big glass windowsill. I walked up to him, he was dressed up, Coon would get dressed up and sometime he would come into Lufkin somewhere and he would be drunk when he come back in on the bus that night. But that is another story! But, I walked up to him and I said, "Coon let me shine your shoes." He said, "oh no I don't want to shine my shoes." I said, "look, as dressed up and as nice looking as you are" see I had gotten to be a salesman by that time, I said, "as nice dressed up as you are, you need to shine your shoes." "Well okay," he said. So, he puts his foot up on that and I am right across the street from the barber shop by the way. He puts his foot up on my shoe shine box and I am busily applying the paste wax to the first shoe and all of a sudden, I heard this voice scream "boy". And, I don't know that the voice is directed at me so I continue to shine Coon's shoe and all of a sudden, I hear that scream again "boy!" I looked around and the barber is standing in the front door of the barber shop and he sees me and he motions to me and he says, "boy come here." So, I dropped my shoe shine work and run over there to him and he said, "boy what are you doing?" I said, "I'm shining shoes." He said, "who's

shoes are you shining?" I said, "I'm shining Coon's shoes." He said, "boy you get back over there and you get that box and if I ever see you shining that nigger's shoes again, you're not ever coming into my shop again." So, Coon was aware of what was going on. So, whenever I was approaching back to him again from the barber shop he had quietly taken his foot down off the box and was looking off in the distance and I just picked up my box and was embarrassed away. But it was a sad thing. I made up for it because as I said Coon would go off and drink sometime. In fact, sometimes he wouldn't be drinking, but after I got up as a teenager and managed to have some kind of old car I might be in Zavalla at ten o'clock at night and Coon would come in on the bus and he would have to walk about three miles home and I picked him up many a number of times and took him home. So, I kind of made up for that over the years giving him rides at night.

**JG:** Tell about another event that happened at the barber shop when you got run over.

**RD:** It was at the front of the barber shop. I was in second grade, school was almost out. I was supposed to sing a song in a play at the school maybe that Friday night or something, but it was raining that day and the surge of kids were headed down the street going home after school and it was raining and I was kind of at the back of the pack. I was one of the smaller ones of course, in the second grade, and there were several of us second graders back there, Julius Lovett I think was with me or somebody, but anyway, we were running home and we came to some cars that were parked and sticking out in the street, so we had to circle around to go around those cars and to do that you had to get out into the road just a little bit and there was a lady from out of town, she and a local lady were riding around together and there was a group of men clustered up underneath the awning at the barber shop and a group of men clustered up under the awning at Barge's store.

**JG:** Because it was raining.

**RD:** Because it was raining yes. So, when us kids, when we got there we kind of had to circle around that group of men that were clustered there and the older ones got by first but these two women were coming behind in their car and were looking at the guys and talking I guess, and all of a sudden one of the women screamed out, "stop you've hit a child." And the older woman threw on the brakes and the men from the barber shop ran out there and I was completely wrapped around the front axle so the men had to pick the car up and unroll the wheel and twist me from around the axle. Well it just providence was that my dad had come in from the clay plant, Macgobar, to bill out some cars at the depot.

**JG:** Bill out some cars, rail car shipments?

**RD:** Yes, that is what you called billing them out, you would go make out a bill of lading and ship the cars out, and he was in town to do that. He didn't normally do that, but for some reason that day he did. Somebody knew he was there, so they ran down there and got my dad and came back up to the accident and loaded me in the back of the car, you

know. They didn't know anything about how to handle people or anything. They loaded me into the back of the car.

**JG:** Now were you conscious then?

**RD:** Semi-conscious.

**JG:** So, she ran up behind you or?

**RD:** Behind me yes.

**JG:** Came up from behind you and ran over you and you got tangled up in the axle?

**RD:** Yes. And, my toes were caught in the spokes of the wheel, the spokes of the wheel.

**JG:** The spindles of the wheels, yes.

**RD:** Yes, and got me wound around the axles.

**JG:** So, they had to lift the car up and get you out from under it.

**RD:** Yes, roll the wheel backwards and get me out from under there and so, it had torn a hole in my side and broke my pelvis.

**JG:** You were about 8 or 9 years old huh?

**RD:** Yes, I had just turned 8. April 8<sup>th</sup> was my birthday and this was in May so I had just turned 8.

**JG:** Just turned 8, and it broke your pelvis, tore a hole in your side.

**RD:** Just rolled the hide up on my arms, the skin. I had a couple of lacerations here and there and it was a mess. So, anyway they loaded me in my dad's car...

**JG:** Do you remember who it was that hit you?

**RD:** I do.

**JG:** Okay.

**RD:** She didn't live there, and I only saw her once after that.

**JG:** Your dad took you to...?

**RD:** Well I was headed that way. There was a pumping station up there called the Atlantic Pipe Pump Station and right by that pump station was a bridge, it was not a creek just a ravine there. We had a serious lot of rain and that bridge had washed out on Hwy 69 and 69 was unpassable. We had to detour traffic around and that sort of thing so, they called...we had telephones by that time, and so they had called an ambulance and the ambulance came down and met us where that wash out was. My dad took me to there. So, they took a stretcher and went around on the railroad embankment and walked down the railroad track and cut back to the highway and loaded me onto the stretcher and carried me back up on the embankment and back around and took me to the old Angelina County Hospital. Had the big steps leading up to the front so, most people don't know what that looked like.

**JG:** So that is '44 then, 1944?

**RD:** Yes and took me in there and we essentially, the way I refer to it nowadays, is they just put me on the bed and told me to get well because they didn't do anything to me. They didn't put me in traction or anything like that. And, what I think is humorous is I mentioned earlier that I was supposed to sing a song at a play a few nights after that, a program, and I sang that song during my unconsciousness while I was there in the bed. They told me about it you know.

**JG:** Do you remember the song? What song was it?

**RD:** Jonathan, I can't remember right now. I used to remember that, but you know in the last five years my memory, the last two or three years my memory has evaporated. It is a very strange thing that has happened, but it is.

**JG:** So, you sang your song.

**RD:** I sang the song and I was unconscious for three days I think.

**JG:** Wow!

**RD:** And they didn't expect me to live. They told my parents, in fact my mother was in the hospital in Scott & White over at Temple.

**JG:** Temple, Texas.

**RD:** And...

**JG:** You mentioned her health problems what was she in for over there?

**RD:** Jonathan they never were able to identify what she had. It was just a horrible sickness that she had, is all I could tell you.

**JG:** But she was in Temple when you were at the hospital in Lufkin?

**RD:** Yes, and she was not able to come.

**JG:** During that whole time?

**RD:** The whole time.

**JG:** Three months?

**RD:** No, she got to come home a week or so after that. I'm not sure, but my aunt from Beaumont, who was my stalwart all of my life, my aunt from Beaumont.

**JG:** What is her name?

**RD:** Etha Cowart. Her husband was Assistant Tax Accessory Collector for Jefferson County for years and years and years. He ran for Tax Accessor Collector one time and came pretty close to winning, but he didn't. His dad was very prominently associated there and he had married the big name in Beaumont. The oil people from down there, Jonathan.

**JG:** There were several of them, McFadden?

**RD:** McFadden, he married a McFadden and they had one child. In fact, at one time he was the only person without the name McFadden I think, or that wasn't...I think he was the only person without the McFadden name that was buried in McFadden Cemetery plot. When he died they buried him in the McFadden Cemetery, but his wife died real young, really young.

**JG:** But she came up to see about you?

**RD:** Yes, she came up to see about me and stayed with me until the crisis was passed, you know. In fact, back in those days, you had trouble finding people that had the same type blood that somebody did and my aunt luckily had the same type blood that I did, so they were able to give me a transfusion, which I needed badly, which may have saved my life. I don't know. She came up and stayed with me and I sang that song.

**JG:** So, you didn't get out until right before time to go back to school.

**RD:** Yes, and had to learn to walk again. That was a funny thing. I crawled for several weeks after I got to where they told me I could get up and about. I crawled for a while on my hands and knees because I didn't know how to walk.

**JG:** Now you were in the hospital all that time?

**RD:** No, they let me go home after a while, but I was there a long time.

**JG:** And your mom was in Temple during that time?

**RD:** Yes, then she came home to see me, but she couldn't spend an awful lot of time with me, so I was there. But the people of Zavalla, some of them, were just so very nice. I remember the Rhodes Family, R-h-o-d-e-s, were very good to me. The Moses Family were very good to me. Just a lot of people were very kind, visited me often and brought me things, and all that sort of thing. I still have some books that the people brought me while I was in the hospital. But anyway, of course I grew back crooked. My pelvis all broken and all that sort of thing so.

**JG:** Reminds me of that little boy on the Yearling, the little boy's name was Nodaway, and the grandma would call him my crooked little boy. That is the way you were huh?

**RD:** Yes, and didn't cause me any problem at all until I was about...I had my first problem with it when I was in my twenties. I played sports and all.

**JG:** Yes, you played basketball.

**RD:** No problems what-so-ever with it, but in my early twenties I got down in my back, use that term down in my back, pretty badly, but I got over that. No problems for a long long time and went to work for Love Wood Products, a division of Temple Industries and went to Waco as plant manager of that plant for a while, five years.

**JG:** Before we get that far into the present., talk about how smart your dad was, just able to do most anything if there was a need.

**RD:** Electrical and mechanical.

**JG:** Electrical and mechanical yes, talk about your education, and you went on to college, right, and got a degree in college. What prompted that?

**RD:** Well Jonathan, I look back on my life and I think about the wasted opportunities. It makes me ache to think about it but anyway.

**JG:** Did your father encourage you in that?

**RD:** Well yes, not dramatically.

**JG:** It was your idea, not his?

**RD:** Well it was kind of a...I got encouragement. The main encouragement I got from dad was being with Macgobar, I got to work with chemist, and geologist and engineers a good bit as I got on up to teenager and got to associate with them. The first job I ever had

was being a bottle washer for the chemist who would come up, actually he was a geologist chemist, he was more of a geologist than he was a chemist, but he would come up and test the raw material. So, I got to help him because it was an awful lot of washing to do. I would ride the school bus from school every evening down to Macgobar plant and get off at the plant and go in and wash bottles until quitting time and he would drop me back off at my house after 5 o'clock sometimes 6, so I got to be around people...

**JG:** People with educations.

**RD:** ...educated people and they would encourage me, you know. They were real good to me. Most of them, in fact all of them, were really good to me but Larry Herman, who just died recently, was my best encourager. He was so good to me in fact he would invite me to come to his house and go to, in fact he still lived with his mother at that time. He let me go to the Houston Fat Stock Show. The first two or three times I ever saw the Houston Fat Stock Show was I was invited to go to Larry's house.

**JG:** Now he was a chemist there?

**RD:** He was a chemist. He went everywhere. He went to Florida and to Wyoming and North Dakota and all that but.

**JG:** With his job?

**RD:** Yes. He was like I say he was a chemist. And...

**JG:** What did you do with him, the same thing bottle washer or go in the field with him?

**RD:** I washed the bottles but then also I got to graduate up to rod man, because he would do surveying and did a lot of surveying, and I would carry the rod and I learned about that you know.

**JG:** So, you were like your dad in the sense of picking up knowledge anywhere you could?

**RD:** I was very fortunate to be exposed to a lot of things that a lot of people were not you know. So, and I learned to weld and use a cutting torch, and use a turning lathe a little bit, and... but my dad always discouraged me from that type of stuff because of my eye. He was always constantly, he didn't harass me or anything like that, but he would say, "boy you ought not be doing that," or something like that and discourage me from being a welder or...

**JG:** Now why is that?

**RD:** Well he was afraid a piece of metal would fly and hit me in the eye or something like that.

**JG:** You only had one good one so didn't want to take a chance.

**RD:** If you just got one good one, you better be a little bit more careful with it than if you've got two, you know, so he discouraged me from that, but anyway. I graduated from school and I had planned to go out for basketball. A couple of my friends went and they made the team. Once again, I was...

**JG:** You mean for college?

**RD:** Yes, and once again I was unlucky. We were playing softball just before the end of school my senior year and we were barefoot. You know kids took their shoes off then, in fact I didn't wear shoes most of the time until I got up in the sixth, seventh, eighth grade, maybe before I started wearing shoes, but we went barefoot an awful lot of times, Jonathan. You might wear them to school, but you took them off really quickly or something. Everybody went barefoot, and your feet were real tough and real thick. I knew a guy that could run through a grass burr patch and never look back. I couldn't do that, but he could. But, I graduated from school and enrolled in college and was going to work towards an engineering degree. Well, as you can imagine I graduated from Zavalla and I signed up for chemistry and I walked in... and are you familiar with a valancy table.

**JG:** It's been a long time.

**RD:** I walked in and I'm in college and I'm with all these kids that know what all that is for the most part and I encounter a valancy table and all that other stuff and I am just out of my mind. I don't know what they are talking about, and I don't have the study habits because I didn't prepare myself. I made just the kind of grades I wanted to make. I'll tell you another story, and I'm ashamed of this, but I'll tell it. My high school English Literature teacher was Mrs. Crain and I liked her a lot. She was an elderly type lady, but I liked her a lot and she liked me. But, the class was the 8<sup>th</sup> period which was the last class of the day, and even after I graduated from high school and I was planning on going to college, and I was going to try to make an athletic scholarship at a junior college, Panola. I continued to play basketball at 8<sup>th</sup> period because they would let me; I would cut her class. So just a few weeks before time to graduate she saw me and said, "Richard you need to come by my office," or come in my room or something. So, I went and I said, "yes Mrs. Crain." She said, "have a seat." Okay, she said, "Richard you are going to have to come back and repeat English Literature again next year." And I'm a senior now Jonathan.

**JG:** And you're like what?

**RD:** She hit me in the head with a hammer you know. I said, "say that again." She said, "yes you are going to have to repeat." I said, "why is that Mrs. Crain?" I said...and I hate to say this Jonathan but I strived to make 70, that was my benchmark was if I make 70, I was okay.

**JG:** Just get by.

**RD:** Yes, that was it the whole time. That started with me in about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and there is a reason for that and I won't tell you what that reason was, but in about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade I just changed it all. I will tell you that off tape sometimes what caused that. But, she said, "yes" she said...I said, "well Mrs. Crain I made 70." She said, "yes, but you have cut class I believe 13 times this six weeks, this last six weeks." And she said, "I cannot advance you with that many absences from class." Well you talk about a kick upside the head, but that was that, and I said man it just took my breathe. I sat there and meditated for a few minutes and she was just very quiet. And finally, I said, "Mrs. Crain can I make you a deal?" She said, "yes, Richard I will listen to it." I said, "Mrs. Crain if I will make 90 on the final exam will you pass me?" And she contemplated that for a few seconds and she said, "yes Richard" she said something to the fact that you're a very capable student and she said, "I will advance you if you will make 90." Well, I had to go back through the whole book Jonathan and go to work because that was the final exam. For the next...I don't know how long it was, maybe two weeks, I worked on that English Literature book and I made 93 on the final exam. So, but anyway I got to college and I was not prepared for it. I didn't have study habits and so many of the courses were above and beyond me that I had not been exposed to even.

**JG:** Now where was your mom in this? Was she an encourager?

**RD:** Yes, my mother encouraged me to go to college as well, but you know, I hitch-hiked to college and enrolled and I hitch-hiked back home.

**JG:** To Nacogdoches?

**RD:** Yes, I got me a room up there and with another boy from Zavalla that was going to college up there, and he later dropped out. Anyway, I went two years and learned all I needed to know (laughter) and decided...I always intended to go back. I fully intended to go back to college even when I dropped out. I said I'm going to go work a little and make some money and come back. Then I came back and went to work laying board road in the oil patch. That is hard work so I went home one weekend and Macgobar was building a new plant in Zavalla, so I made job application there and of course they put me to work, and I worked there for a couple of years.

**JG:** By that time how many employees are there? It's a bigger operation.

**RD:** Yes, they are running about 88 I think.

**JG:** 88, yes.

**RD:** Yes I think that is what it was.

**JG:** A big operation.

**RD:** Yes, and oil well drilling was going gang busters you know, at that time. So, I worked there and got a job in the lab. I worked up from digging ditches to a steel worker and then got into the lab. And I married Bonnie by the way!

**JG:** And she was working there.

**RD:** Yes, and...

**JG:** Where was she from?

**RD:** She is from San Augustine. Her daddy was manager of the V. A. Ranch over there. It was a pretty good size ranch for East Texas, back in those days. They raised registered Brahma Cattle.

**JG:** And what was her maiden name again?

**RD:** Berry, B-e-r-r-y.

**JG:** And her sister worked there as well. In fact, that is how y'all kind of met was through her sister.

**RD:** Yes, through her sister. I got her sister the job there.

**JG:** I remember you saying once before you used to travel up to San Augustine. Was that to see Bonnie after her sister began to work there?

**RD:** Yes.

**JG:** Because you would drive up to San Augustine.

**RD:** Yes, Bonnie came over to visit her sister and that is how I met Bonnie.

**JG:** So, then you started keeping the roads hot to San Augustine.

**RD:** With all the money I could get I did. So, I forgot where I was going with that thought but ...

**JG:** You had returned there and got a steady job there.

**RD:** Then I got my draft notice. See the Vietnam, the Korean war was still going on at that time and I got my draft notice, so I went up and passed the draft with flying colors. Back in those days you met at Lufkin at the bus station, Trailways Bus was chartered to take you down there. A huge bus load of kids went down there for that thing and went in

there and they stripped you off naked and you went through all of that and looked you over, passed that, and got back and the draft board said you will be notified sometime within the next twelve months. It will probably be sometime within the next 12 months, you will be called. Well almost 12 months to the day I got a call, but in the mean time I had that first bout with my back that I told you about, so I go back but I'm over it. I am over that bout with my back, but I go back and go back through that process again. They tell us what room to go to so I'm sitting there and they call my name and I walk up there and they said...the Navy man, it was the navy technician doctor I guess, I'm not sure but anyway, he said, "Mr. Donovan do you want to go into the Army?" I said, "I'm about as close to the Army as I want to get." He kind of laughed and he said, "well I tell you what, I'm going to classify you as 1-Y," but he says that means you will be, if any kind of conflict escalates back in Korea, you will be the first one called, you are classified as 1Y.

**JG:** Classified as what?

**RD:** 1Y, one Y.

**JG:** The letter y.

**RD:** Yes. I said well, that suits me just fine, so he gave me a bus ticket, the other group had already gone, so I had to catch a bus ticket back home. I got in late that night and Bonnie was spending the night with my mother and dad. Actually, my mother was dead by that time and my dad had married again, and Bonnie was spending the night with them and when I walked in the door...back in those days people didn't lock their doors so I just walked up and opened the door and walked in the room, and you talk about utter surprise, they were just startled to see me walking in the door because they thought I was on my way to Fort Carson, Colorado, which is where everybody left to go. So, I was without a job, all ties had been severed with everything, so it was a perfect opportunity for me to go back to college. I went back to SFA and enrolled and got my BBA from SFA and made real good grades the second two years I was there. Not real good, but pretty good.

**JG:** Better than 70 huh?

**RD:** Yes.

**JG:** Talk about the landscape back then. What do you remember as far as compared to the landscape today and you know, even include fences?

**RD:** The landscape was vastly different in my youth. People had to fence livestock out. People did not fence livestock in. If you had a farm and you wanted to keep the cows and hogs and things out you had to build a fence around your farm to prevent that.

**JG:** They were ex-closures not enclosures.

**RD:** That is exactly right.

**JG:** You kept them away from your food, your crop lands.

**RD:** Yes, because there was no stock law and cattle and horses and hogs and mules and everything roamed at will. That was just the way it was. In fact, a real quick funny story I will tell you. I remember old man Mr. Barge had a man named Luke, and Luke came in front of our house one time on Hwy 69, pulled off the shoulder of the road and started feeding cattle right in front of our house. My mother saw him and it incensed her, and she ran out the front door hollering, “Luke you get on that truck and get on down the road with him.” She made Luke get in there amongst all those cattle and they all had horns and everything and she made Luke go in amongst those hungry cattle and get that hay and throw it on that truck and go on down the road. My point is, he was feeding right on the shoulder of Hwy 69, a major highway, U.S. Hwy 69.

**JG:** So, the cattle just roamed (**RD:** at will) all across the highways.

**RD:** Yes, and so did hogs. And there were a lot of cattle that caused car wrecks. People were killed.

**JG:** Yes, especially at night, I bet.

**RD:** Yes, and cattle on the railroad tracks and a funny thing about it, and you may have heard other people talking about this Jonathan, I don’t know, but the engine would be going down the track and see cattle on the track and they would start leaning on that whistle and the cattle knew to just get off the rails, you know, they soon learned to adapt. They didn’t have to get very far off the track they would just get off the rails a little bit and they would be safe. But, the engineers would wait until they got to right at the cattle and they would toot jets of...issue steam out the side of the drive wheels through jets of steam and they would get right even with those cattle and they would pull that string and open those jets of steam and burst that steam.

**JG:** The shuttle cock I think.

**RD:** I mean the cattle would vacate their premises then. They would run parallel and put that scalding steam on them and they would move out of there in a hurry. They made a lot of noise when it issued too. But the timber was very different in a lot of ways. There had been some timber left that was below the minimum cut when the logging was done and it was still here. Out in the long leaf country when you left Zavalla going east on Hwy 63 as you exited town you went up a steep hill, and when you went up that steep hill you entered what was long leaf country. It was deep sandy soil and it was that way all the way to Jasper County line, except for one little small patch in there where you hit some hardwoods. And I’m real familiar with that area because Macgobar drilled it extensively looking to see if there was any minable clay beneath that straight way where you saw the post oaks and things growing and it never was. I’m very familiar with that part of the world, but essentially everything else was long leaf. But that part of the land had been

destroyed, but they had brought the CCC in and there was a big CCC Camp set up there. I've got a scar on my leg where I had a risen, as we called them, lanced on the side of my leg when I was a boy by old Dr. Alexander when he was still a doctor out at the CC Camp. But all that country had been replanted with long leaf seedlings and they were up about shoulder high or so by the time I came along. I do remember another thing Jonathan, it was a piece of land in there. What was the scandal with Terry, a scandal about a state employee that was working with the land board that got involved with selling timber and pocketing the money. What was his name? He had a trial.

**JG:** I vaguely remember that. I wouldn't recall the name.

**RD:** I remember the tract of timber that was involved in that. I remember seeing it as a kid, but anyway, all that country Boykin Springs, The Blue Hole, most of Jasper County up through there had been re-seeded with the longleaf pine seedlings or the Forest Service, some of their improvement techniques because they were professionals and you hear that so much, let them manage the thing, and I believe that to a degree, but people do make mistakes. They made a big mistake by bringing in a plant called Slash Pine. They brought it in from Florida and it was just going to just be the savior of this part of the country because such a wonderful plant. And it hasn't worked here, in fact they're wanting to clear cut that now and replant it.

**JG:** They just haven't grown very well.

**RD:** They haven't done very well at all and they get to the top and they...

**JG:** Kind of stunted.

**RD:** Yes, they are just not very good trees for this climate, but they had planted an awful lot of slash pine in there as well. But, timber companies had gotten into replanting Loblolly by that time a little bit, but people were still burning the woods for grass because the stockman all liked the grass.

**JG:** And again, the cattle were all free ranging.

**RD:** Free ranging cattle up until...

**JG:** So, you just burn the land, especially if it's the government land, just burn it, huh.

**RD:** Yes, and that makes the grass sprout. The grass didn't have as much nutrition in it, but people didn't know that. It was just green grass and that burned grass didn't have as much nutrition in it.

**JG:** By summer, no nutrition at all practically. What about the cane and stuff, had it already been gone?

**RD:** Most of the cane was gone. Now you get off around Graham Creek and different places we went to, but Graham Creek was the most memorable place I remember where the switch cane was.

**JG:** That would have been about the only thing that would have been around in the winter time. Was that pretty well contested, as far as these ones that were grazing their cattle?

**RD:** There were some disputes over that, and this is my cattle drains here and you get your cattle and get on out of here, or you went as far as hogs, as well you know. There were some disputes about that. I don't remember any life or death altercations or anything like that, but there were in other places, but there were some. I know one guy that got his arm shot off in an altercation over hogs.

**JG:** So, from summer on until the winter spring grass came in, they had to supplement it with feed, right or with hay?

**RD:** No, they did not feed; the cattle were on their own. They ate what they could get.

**JG:** Corn or hay?

**RD:** Jonathan, to the extent that they fed them was this, they would load up a few what I call nubbins of corn in a toe sack and Mr. George Blake, he would walk, he was the walking man but everybody else would get a few nubbins of corn and a burlap bag, we called them tow sacks, and strap around your saddle horn and would head out on a horse and he found a bunch of cattle and he might throw one or two ears of corn down for those cattle to keep them just semi-domesticated and then he would ride on until he found another pretty good size little pack and he could call them and they would come in and he would throw down another ear of corn. And this is typical everywhere, not only where I grew up but in all of East Texas that was typical just to keep those animals semi-domesticated because they did not feed them. It got so bad the government fenced the government land up and put cattle guards and then they leased out land to stockmen, and the stockmen would sign up to put in so many head of cattle, like maybe I would get a lease and I would sign up to put in 25 head of cattle. Well, the next thing you know I might have 50 head of cattle out there, I wouldn't be honoring my contract and everybody was doing the same thing and the forest was vastly over grazed. But that was just the way it was, so then people had to reduce their herds and resorting to feeding range cubes in the winter time and all sorts of things.

**JG:** Cottonseed mill.

**RD:** Yes, cottonseed mill was the big thing. All of that evolved over time and I remember that Angelina County got the first stock law of '52. I remember that, but Tyler County and some of the other counties, they didn't get a stock law until the '60's. I can't remember what years they were, but it was another decade or longer before they finally

closed the woods in East Texas. It was referred to in East Texas as the closing of the woods. But until that time, you could release a cow and if they were inclined to do so, they could probably make it to Beaumont. They may have to wind their way around fences, but it was probably open in places all the way to Beaumont and probably to Marshall the other direction I don't know. But, people...and Mr. Barges' cattle were fed right there in the middle of town and I have seen both Hwy 69 and Hwy 63 closed down because Mr. Barge was feeding his cattle, and in fact Luke was feeding Mr. Barge's cattle and people would be so mad they would be blowing their horn and trying to ease by.

**JG:** Was that just for convenience to stay on the road and feed them right out of the truck that way?

**RD:** Well Mr. Barge's barn was just off the road there at the intersection of 63 and 69.

**JG:** Just feed them right there.

**RD:** And Luke would be feeding them at the barn and then that dirt road that goes up to the cemetery, and he would be feeding right up that dirt road. And those cattle would just come running through town bawling and bellowing right through the middle of town just like that. And hogs were common in town just lying around on the streets and that sort of thing you know. It was just a very, very...in fact, I mentioned earlier about the engineers and the chemist and the geologist that used to come to Zavalla with Macgobar, they referred to Zavalla as the land of hogs, logs, and dogs. That was the...

**JG:** Hogs, logs, and dogs.

**RD:** Hogs, logs, and dogs, that is what they referred to as Zavalla.

**JG:** Kind of had a reputation outside because the plant by that time had other plants, I mean the company had other plants all around.

**RD:** Oh yes, when Macgobar bought them, you know Xact Clay is when my dad first went to work and then Macgobar bought them, which was later bought by Dresser Industries and which the vice president of the United States later was the director of Dresser Industries as you recall.

**JG:** Yes, so they were used to other regions and places of doing business and so that is the reason why Zavalla had that reputation I guess.

**RD:** They were graduates of Rice University and schools up east and all that kind of stuff you know, so Zavalla was very foreign to them.

**JG:** Yes, well talk a little bit, I see it's almost noon. I don't want to take too much more of your time but talk a little bit about...and if we can I would like to do more interviews later because we've got so much we haven't covered, but talk a little bit about you and I

have talked about it a number of times, just East Texas perceptions of the region. We've talked about how the Hill Country embraced their natural surroundings. You don't see the Hill Country leveling hills for development, yet in the so-called Forest Country we don't appreciate and we certainly haven't embraced the forest, which is one of the more defining and historical aspects we have. Would you care to elucidate on that?

**RD:** Jonathan, I can pontificate on that for quite a while and the things I'm going to give you strictly are my opinions, and they're worth just what you are going to pay for them. But, there are two things at work there if I can keep my mind focused on both of them now but really there are two issues. One is let's start with the people, I think and this is changing of course and a lot of people jump on me and severely beat me in the back of the head if they heard me say this but I think the people of East Texas are, I think they are ashamed of where they live and are somewhat ashamed of our "Society". I don't wish to offend anybody by saying that because I am as East Texan as you can get.

**JG:** You're from the land of hogs, logs and dogs.

**RD:** I'm from the land of hogs, logs, and dogs, as primitive a society as you can imagine in today's world. But you had these people here that were farmers, subsistence farmers. They lived off what they grew and what they caught and what they killed, mainly. And the big timber companies began to arrive here and let's just say, the 1890's because they began to cut the logs and float them down the river etc, etc. But they began to come in here and build these mills, so these people gradually left the farms and went to work in the mills and then they brought in people from the outside to work in these mills. Keep in mind Jonathan this is my own ideas now, my own philosophy. These people went to work at the mills and they begin cutting the timber and cutting the timber and the circles got ever widening, circles that they were cutting the timber and stripping the timber and all of a sudden, they looked up and all the trees were gone essentially, and the mills loaded up their sawmills, they pulled up their rails, they loaded them on their steam engines, they threw the money on the back of the cars and drove away. And they left these people standing here in what I will refer to as a desolate landscape and these people had no other way of making a living. They turned back to the land but the land really wasn't fit for use. Number one, it was not really good farmland after about two years, and there were a lot of stumps and everything involved and these people had forsaken their farms and lived in towns now for a couple of decades. It was a desolate landscape they had, so here they are in a landscape that has been rejected and they themselves have been rejected. They are worthless people living on worthless land, so how could you have a really good opinion of yourself and I think that has been handed down generation after generation. You can look at the way we litter our roads and the way we live and I think you can see that manifest in a lot of the culture of East Texas. Now it's changing and it's changing for the better, but it's been a long slow process for that change to take place and it's not complete by any means. I contribute that to the fact the way our history evolved. Another thing is I put a lot of that responsibility on the timber companies. There have been a lot of timber companies, a lot of them from distant cities, the Four C just for example over at Crockett, Houston County. Those timber companies came in, they stripped the land of their

resources. They didn't provide the people for any way, shape, form, or fashion, as I said. They pulled up their assets and left and people destitute. But the ones that stayed went into this operation of the denuding the land. This has been in recent history and once again a lot of people will get mad at me when they hear this. But, I still believe it. They denuded the land and have gone back with Loblolly pine plantations. And the market for that timber has diminished and the countryside, the beautiful countryside we had here has been destroyed. Our highways, you can get off the highways and find pretty places, but our highways typically traverse the denuded landscapes that had been reseeded and replanted, but it's a monoculture and loblolly pines for the most parts that are small, yet still. So, much of our beauty in East Texas is hidden and we don't have any way to take visitors to see that beautiful country like Boykin Springs for instance. That is a place that is dear to my heart. It is in a beautiful area, but the Forest Service has allowed it to degenerate and people don't care anything about going there so much anymore, and it's not a good local tourist attraction anymore, so East Texas is not set up for a tourist destination. Like our Neches River, to me our Neches River could be a wonderful resource as a paddling trail if we would just do a few minor things to make it accessible. There is no way you can access the Neches River hardly, it's very limited access, but it could very easily be made. I think people would come from far and wide if they could have a paddling trail that was of any sufficient length and places to camp and that sort of thing. We just have not taken advantage of the beauty we have here. I take my own hometown of Lufkin, it's called Tree City USA, but if you are a stranger passing through town how many trees are you going to see as you pass through Lufkin? How are you going to be attracted to Lufkin, Texas as you pass through Lufkin? Now we've got the Temple Urban Forest that is on the rise there and that will be visible to some people over a few more years but we planted Bradford Pears and we plant...

**JG:** When did this start? It's something I've noticed in my own life. I'm fixing to be 50 years old, and so I don't know if it's just that I've, if it's something that has changed in recent years or if I've just become more observant of it, but it seems all the construction in the last 20 years, the whole methodology is just clear the land. It doesn't matter what is there just clear it all.

**RD:** That is exactly right.

**JG:** The only thought to anything about the land is are we going to have to do a retention pond or not. It's clear the land, build whatever it is you're building and then put in an artificial landscaping, the bare minimum. So, when...is that something that has changed in recent years, or just the way everybody is doing things now or is it that I'm just being more observant of that? I take for example there all the new construction where Lowe's was built, Home Depot, different things like that, even when they put the little over pass between like where the mall is, Target and all that, the bank that used to be there. There were like seven, six or seven relatively mature, they weren't full grown pines but tall pines that were left over from a bigger forest that you didn't have the limbs until higher up. Banks even use that as icons for their corporate logos and things but even that in the last few years has been cut to make two or three parking spots.

**RD:** That is exactly right, Jonathan.

**JG:** Just what...is that a change?

**RD:** I became cognoscente of it in the sixties. The developer would go out to put in a residential development, and they would unload bulldozers and clear everything out of the way because that would facilitate their construction. They could just zip right down through there and build homes without any trouble. I think they just didn't give any thought to the landscape. They were just not cognoscente of it. And then when they got through, they come back and planted some kind of little old tree in the front or left it up to the buyer to come in and plant whatever he did at the time. But it was just easy construction, that is what the whole methodology was. Then right there where you are talking about, there is a bank there and like you said there was a little clump of nice trees there that came in and cut down just to make a couple of additional parking spaces. And, up there where Zelesky used to be, there was that lot that faced the loop that had a whole series of beautiful pine trees on it and whoever bought that lot just went in and clear cut it and sold the logs and nothing has been done with it in the last ten years. They just cut the trees of that to make what little money they could.

**JG:** And you see other communities that, and that is where I get this term embraced, they have sort of embraced what is already there and you build around it or not even build around it, you incorporate it into the plan. So, it's not like we are talking about something totally foreign to anybody it's just.

**RD:** And they don't call themselves Tree City USA either.

**JG:** Yes.

**RD:** We call ourselves Tree City USA and we are not much into the tree business. You know, loblolly pines is what would be a major tree for me to plant in the City of Lufkin. Lufkin has a lot of clay in their soil and longleaf wouldn't grow here very well I don't think, but loblolly pine would do really well and of course live oaks are good because they don't grow as tall and might be more beneficial to plant live oaks, but this is pine tree country and so I'm a pine tree man myself.

**JG:** Really where I was coming from was just keeping what you have. That is sort of the first rule of conservation, is don't undo what can't be redone. But I don't know, maybe I'm just being a little more aware of it. It's things that we've talked about, development just hasn't seemed to be any proper planning I guess, for long-term planning. The attitude has been "come one, come all we don't care how you come, just come."

**RD:** Yes.

**JG:** And you look at so much of the “development” and it’s up one day and it’s vacant the next and we’ve just sort of opened ourselves up to some idea and very rarely does it ever fulfill even the hopes, the few dim hopes that it might have and what we are left with is like the ER’s. I mean how many more ER’s can we have. Anyway, I’m getting off subject there but...

**RD:** Well I think that is an important subject, Jonathan, and I wish that the people that make these decisions would have these subjects. Beauty attracts and draws things and East Texas diversity here is just fantastic and oaks are beautiful and pines are beautiful and you know, let’s just stop and talk for a second, deviate here for a minute. Every time you eliminate a species something happens. I don’t know what it is. I don’t know what happens. I don’t know what the long-term consequences are, but you eliminate one creature and something happens. There are no more bob white quails left in this country. When I was a kid the country was full of bob white quail. There are no more meadow larks left in this country. I never see or hear a meadow lark anymore. When I was a kid this country was full of meadow lark and I could just go on and on about the kind of things that have disappeared, and I know they’re in existence somewhere else, but they’re not here and what that does to ecology I do not know. I do not know, but I know we have fire ants we didn’t used to have. We have replaced maybe bob white quail with fire ants I guess, so maybe that is a good swap, I don’t know, but anyhow we have a lot of things, giant salvinia that we didn’t used to have. But my point is, as we destroy the ecology that was here, we are going to get something different. Now whether that something different is going to be better or worse I don’t know, and the people of the future will have to make that decision because it’s not going to be me, I’m out of here. But we just don’t know what the long-term consequences is for these “improvements” we’re making are doing.

**JG:** Yes, alright well I think we’ve probably covered a lot of ground and we have got a lot more to cover.

**RD:** That is up to you Jonathan.

**JG:** If you’re ready to stop for this session I’ll stop it. I appreciate you coming down.

**RD:** Well I’m afraid I deviated too much and I apologize for that.

**JG:** No, no, it’s all part of it. Thank you!

**RD:** And feel free to edit that as much as you want too. I’m just about to lose my voice but...

**END OF INTERVIEW**