RUBY SMITH GOINS
Interview 192a
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Patsy Colbert, Interviewer
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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Patsy Colbert, former long-time Diboll Independent School District secretary and business manager Ruby Smith Goins reminisces about her more than 30 years employment with the district. The interview focuses on the integration of Diboll's schools and Mrs. Goins' experiences from the perspective of an administrative secretary. She particularly remembers the paperwork required by the Texas Education Administration throughout the integration process. She mentions Mr. Massey, Mr. Ramsey, and Mr. Pate as being instrumental in the process. Mrs. Goins also mentions Bettye Greer, Mr. Dunlap, Mr. Foster, and various school board members.

Patsy Colbert (hereafter PC): Today's date is Wednesday May 5, 2010. I'm Patsy Colbert and I'm here at The History Center interviewing Mrs. Ruby Goins. And, we are going to talk about the early days of integration at the Diboll ISD. Mrs. Goins if you will just tell me when and where you were born?

Ruby Goins (hereafter RG): I was born in Pennington, October 26, 1937.

PC: Okay. And when did you come to Diboll?

RG: We moved to Diboll in 1953. I started my sophomore year, tenth grade, at Diboll. My dad was a preacher.

PC: Okay.

RG: He pastored the First Assembly of God Church here in Diboll.

PC: Okay, pastor of the church. And what year?

RG: From '53 to '56. And, they moved in May, early May of '56 and my sister Alice Kilgore had married and I stayed with her until I graduated.

PC: Okay. And what year did you graduate?

RG: 1956.

PC: 1956, okay. So, where did you grow up most of your life, in Pennington?

RG: No, mother and daddy moved from Pennington when I was just a little kid and Daddy went to Beaumont and got a job in Beaumont and, then we moved to the Groves. It's in the Beaumont area. We lived there until he was called to preach. Then we moved

to Beach Creek, just out of Livingston. I went to the middle of the fifth grade in Groves and then from the fifth grade through the ninth grade at Livingston. And, then I went to the tenth grade until I graduated here at Diboll.

PC: And you've been here ever since.

RG: Ever since. (laughter)

PC: Well that is great. Now, did you go to any type of business college or college of any kind after graduation?

RG: No, I didn't go to any college after I graduated. When I first graduated I went back over to, mother and daddy had taken a church over in Louisiana and I went over there and stayed with them a while. But, I was courting Granville Smith and so we got married in September of '57, 56, I guess '56. And, then I worked in Houston for a little while at Prudential Insurance Company but, that wasn't working out with us being married so, I came back to Diboll and Foster King had a music store in Diboll and his wife came over and asked me if I wanted to work in the store. They had opened a store in Lufkin and she wanted to know if I wanted to keep this one opened down here for her. So, I went over there and started working, keeping it open. So, we didn't have a library in Diboll at that time so, I would go down to the high school and check out. Mrs. Schinke was the librarian then. She would let me check out books. I would check out books and read them. Frances Wells was Mr. Ramsey's secretary, she's Frances Morris now, and I told her I said "why don't you quit this job and let me have it and so, then I won't have to come down here and check out my books. I'll be here and can get them." So, when she got ready to quit she told Mr. Pate and he came down to the music store one day and said "Do you want, Frances said you wanted that job, do you want that job?" And, I said "yes sir, I sure do." So I started working for the school and I stayed there for thirty seven and a half years.

PC: Oh wow, that is interesting. So, Mr. Pate actually recruited you.

RG: Right. I worked for him ten years when he retired. He retired after I had been there ten years. I got my ten year service pin the year that he retired.

PC: Okay. Now were you his secretary then during that time?

RG: Well I was Mr. Ramsey's secretary for a couple of years and Betty had a baby, Jean was born and she said that she would take off and let me have the superintendent secretary job while she had Jean and then when I started my family she would come back and we would just swap out, you know, while we had our children. And, I never did have a child so I kept the job. (laughter)

PC: Now you're talking about Bettye Greer?

RG: Bettye Greer, uh-huh.

PC: Okay.

RG: So, I worked as superintendent secretary from after about two years. I think it was about two years I worked for Mr. Ramsey. Of course we were all in the same office then, the complex was the front office and Mr. Ramsey's office was over here and Mr. Pate's office was back behind us.

PC: Just all right there together.

RG: Right.

PC: And so, you started to work for Diboll School District when?

RG: In February of 1957.

PC: February of '57. And you retired when?

RG: Thirty seven and a half years, 1993 I believe.

PC: Ninety four I believe, 1994 somewhere in there. So, you were secretary for Mr. Pate and also for Mr. Ramsey when it was all in the same complex?

RG: Well no, when Betty left Betty was secretary to the superintendent and I was secretary to the principal. When she left I moved to secretary to the superintendent and they hired, that is when they hired Mrs. Ramsey as secretary to Mr. Ramsey.

PC: Oh, okay.

RG: They hired his wife, and she was there for a long time. I guess till they retired.

PC: And then at one point we know they finally separated the administration.

RG: Yes, they built the administration when David Foster came.

PC: Okay.

RG: I believe he followed Mr. Pate. He was the next superintendent.

PC: Yes he did. Now, is that when they built that little building? Do you remember that?

RG: Yes, the administration building.

PC: So you were there then. Okay, well mainly our focus today is to try to get a good record of the history of integration and desegregation for the school district. That is really

what we will focus on today. Can you just tell me first what was your earliest experience of being around the other race? You know, as a child or whatever it was.

RG: Well I don't remember as a child I don't think I was. But, after we moved here to Diboll in the school district well Mr. Willie Massey was the principal over at the black school, over the Temple School you know. He just practically run it, you know. Actually he just did everything and it was in with our school. I remember when we made the budget out we set a certain portion aside for them. We paid their teachers and so forth.

PC: Okay.

RG: But, he didn't…it wasn't mingled together, you know.

PC: So growing up you didn't really have any…

RG: I don't remember any.

PC: …being around black people or anything. So, really your first experience would have been in your career at Diboll ISD. Okay, so you were hired as the secretary and you were there in the administration office so, what was your first knowledge of the school board talking about integration? How did you come to know…

RG: All the paper work!

PC: All the paper work, okay.

RG: We had to fill out all the paper work for it, you know. Of course, it was mandated by the government and we didn't have any choice about it. If we wanted to continue getting funds we had to do what they said. We had a lot of paper work we had to fill out and send in and we did several…I can't remember that much but seems like we did several little things to kindly get it prepared, get it started.

PC: Yes ma'am. In '65 they had the Freedom of Choice.

RG: Yes.

PC: The school board voted to start with Freedom of Choice that year. Through the records shows us that they just had one black girl to register at the Elementary School, Valerie Anderson, that very first year. So, you being secretary then at the school were you also secretary for the school board? Did you attend the school board meetings?

RG: I don't think I did at that time.

PC: Okay, so as far as paperwork you were doing this and filling out this paperwork for…

RG: The government forms that they sent us.

PC: For Mr. Pate?

RG: Yes, right, yes, the superintendent's office. And, we had to fill out all, you know, how many kids we had and all that kind of stuff.

PC: Okay, then in '66 the school board voted to end the athletic program at the H.G. Temple School, high school, and they brought the male seniors over for athletic purposes. Then, in '67 the high schools were fully integrated and then fall of '68 all of the schools were integrated. So, there were four years process there. Four of five years of the process starting with Freedom of Choice to being fully integrated. So, and you mentioned about the paper work and things, so these were things that were coming from the government.

RG: From Texas Education Agency.

PC: From TEA, okay. In looking at the school board minutes there was a Mr. Anderson with the Texas Education Agency and he gave a report in November of '66 on recommendations of how to do the campuses, do you remember anything about that or meeting him?

RG: No.

PC: What were your feelings about integration, your personal feelings about integration?

RG: I always felt like that every kid should have an equal opportunity for education. And, when we went over and saw some of the things that they had over there, their equipment and so forth, it would just nearly make you cry.

PC: Really.

RG: Because they didn't have the same advantages that we had.

PC: Really. And I guess you were aware of it with the budget, if you were looking at the budget and you saw it. Was it quite a difference I'm sure in the budget?

RG: It was a lot. Of course the state mandated the salary, so their salaries was the same. And, we did kind of pro-rate the money out according to the number of students they had.

PC: Right.

RG: But, I don't know if it was the way they spent it or, you know, what exactly how it worked out. But, I remember thinking that even the state text books that we…that came over and went to their school weren't as good as ours. And, it was possibly because they didn't take care of them as well as we did, you know.

PC: Right.

RG: And, I don't know if that is the reason or not but, it was a difference in it.

PC: What were your concerns when you first learned about the integration and the schools being integrated? Did you have any real concerns?

RG: Well, I was hoping there wouldn't be any problems, you know. Because so many times when you put a black and white kid together they tend to fight. But, we didn't have a whole lot of that that I remember. I talked to both my sisters, and one of my sisters worked in the school some too. She worked after that time, but she said she had kids in school and she didn't remember them having any fights or having any problems. They just brought them over and they started going together, you know, putting them in the same classes and there wasn't any problem with it. Seems like I remember we had to pro-rate them out, you know, the percentage of blacks. Like, if we had five first grade classes, we had to have the same percentage of blacks in each class. You couldn't have all of them in one class and have all the whites in the others.

PC: Right, so that came from the administrative level as far as figuring out the percentage and getting the equal amount of blacks in each classroom?

RG: Right, yes.

PC: And you were involved with that?

RG: Yes.

PC: Okay. Did you have any fears? I guess pretty much you answered that with just worried that everybody got along and the fights and things.

RG: Just wanted them to get along and not fight.

PC: Right.

RG: I don't remember being afraid of them, you know, of the blacks or anything, not having any problems like that.

PC: Right. Was there anything that you witnessed or experienced that was a bad experience that you care to share?

RG: No.

PC: Okay. Do you know or can you share how your colleagues felt about integration? Was there any concerns from anybody that you worked directly with that you remember specifically?

RG: No, I don't remember. I remember, you know that, of course it had been all over town that everything was separate. You didn't mix together, but as far as…I don't remember any person saying they didn't want to do that. When it came along and we had to do it, well everybody wanted to comply with the law and do what was right.

PC: Right.

RG: I remember the first few years after the high school, you know, came over we had co-honors on everything. We had co-sweethearts, and co on all of that kind of, so they had that.

PC: Mrs. Ingram mentioned that the other day when I interviewed her. That is one of the things that she remembered was trying to keep everything fair and equal and that they started this co-sweethearts with the high school. Do you think that was accepted well by the black students?

RG: Well, I think it was because the percentage was so much higher of whites than the blacks. The blacks would not have had a chance of voting in anybody, class favorites or anything, you know. So, they had co-honors on everything so that they could have their honors. Because, they had come from a school where they were, you know, that was their thing. They could have the honors and everything and then they come over here and way in the minority. Of course, they are not now anymore I don't think. It's a lot different now.

PC: Do you think that idea…where did that idea generate from?

RG: I don't know. I'm sure it was in the administration and board somewhere. The teachers probably had some influence in doing that. I think they all realized it was going to be a problem if we didn't do something.

PC: Well in looking back at it, it certainly was a good way to approach things and keep things fair and balanced so they would have their sweethearts and honors and…

RG: I don't even remember when we quit doing that. After awhile it just got to where it wasn't that big of a deal any more.

PC: It just wasn't an issue to have to address.

RG: Well, the white kids learned the black kids were nice too and they would vote for them just as well as they would a white one so.

PC: Now, after integration obviously your position as secretary did not change.

RG: No.

PC: Were there other changes in the administration after integration?

RG: Well, Mr. Massey was the principal over there and I think they made him assistant principal at the high school when they came over. For two reasons, one because he had been a principal and not to put him back down to just be a teacher, but, they had him to be the principal, vice principal. And, another was they felt like that he could help to control the atmosphere and so forth and help get things working together in harmony.

PC: Yes, ma'am, yes ma'am. How was the process of integration communicated from the administrative level to the teaching staff? Do you have any idea?

RG: No, I don't know.

PC: Do you remember any meetings, you know from administration and them discussing with the teachers, this is going to happen or this is what we expect? Do you remember anything?

RG: No, I wouldn't have gone to those kind of meetings if they had them.

PC: Okay.

RG: Because I was just a secretary and I handled the paperwork and all, but I didn't go to any staff meetings or anything. I don't think I went into the board meetings until after Mr. Foster came and then he wanted me to come and take the minutes of it.

PC: Okay. Did you agree with the process that was taken of Freedom of Choice in that first year?

RG: I think that was the best way to go to start with and kind of get it in everybody's mind what was going to happen.

PC: Right. And, how was your relationship with the school board members?

RG: Well, I wasn't that close with them, I was just a secretary. I wasn't on the board or anything but after I started going to the meetings we were real good friends and everything, had good communication between us. In fact when I retired a bunch of the board members came to my retirement, that wasn't even on the board anymore.

PC: Oh that is wonderful. We also learned from the minutes, in the early minutes from '65 that the school board voted to implement the Freedom of Choice plan and they adopted a resolution for that fall that required a Request for School assignment. They created this form that had to be completed and returned by June of 65 and it had three choices, Diboll Elementary, Jr. High (7-12), or H.G. Temple (1-12). Do you remember who created that form or how the forms were returned and handled?

RG: I don't remember that.

PC: Okay, I believe it was probably just done the first years with Freedom of Choice but it was just a little form and had three little check boxes. The parents had to select and decide.

RG: They had to decide where they wanted them to go.

PC: That was the Freedom of Choice, they could send them to the Elementary White School, the Jr. High-High School, or the black school. And, we know from the records, like I said earlier, the first year of Freedom of Choice they just had the one student. But, the second year of Freedom of Choice, and I believe that was for the school year '66-'67 there were a total of 40 students across the white campuses that chose to go to the white schools, 40 black students. Do you remember anything particular about that year or any problems that they might have had?

RG: No.

PC: Well good. Well, overall we've pretty much been told it just was a great…the experience was very smooth and the transition just didn't have a lot of problems that we've found out to date and we're glad to hear that.

RG: Well that is what I felt like too, because I thought if anything had happened I would have remembered it. And, I really don't remember all that much about anything except I remember there was a lot of paperwork we had to do and send back to the Texas Education Agency on each…at each phase of it, you know, when we had the Freedom of Choice, and so forth. It was just letting them know what we were doing, keeping them up to date on our process.

PC: Is there anything more specific about that paperwork that you remember?

RG: I just remember we had a lot.

PC: Just had a lot of paper work. (laughter)

RG: And it got more and more as the years went on.

PC: I guess you had to report number of students on each campus and then…

RG: Right, yes you did and each grade and everything like that, all of that.

PC: And from what you mentioned earlier, it was from the Texas Education Agency that they were sending out this information to the schools saying that this needed to be done. And then Diboll, it sounds like, just followed that through earlier then maybe area schools.

RG: Well see, that is where our money came from, the Texas Education Agency. Also, our certification, accreditation, you couldn't be accredited if you didn't follow their

guidelines. If you're not accredited then your kids can't go to college. So you have to abide by their rules and decisions you know.

PC: So, that is the paperwork you were always filing out to keep those accreditations?

RG: Yes, and that comes from the legislation sets the rules the Texas Education Agency follows. It's all a government deal but if you don't follow it you get in trouble.

PC: Right. Do you remember anything about accreditation for H. G. Temple High School being at risk due to, you know, once they had the Freedom of Choice and those 40 students left H.G. Temple School and entered the white school in '66-67? Do you know if those numbers caused them to lose their accreditation or had any risk of them losing their accreditation?

RG: No, no, it wasn't that. Accreditation was on what you teach and how you do. What the numbers would have affected would have been the amount of money they got. Because the number of kids that goes to your school is according to how much money you get.

PC: Okay, so that would have been the risk.

RG: It would have affected their finances but it wouldn't have affected their accreditation.

PC: Okay, I see, thank you. That makes sense. Can you remember any incidents that happened during those early years, good or bad that you want to share? Any…especially, you know, if it was a bad incident that happened at the school that fall of '68 during full integration, any bad experiences or good experiences?

RG: I don't really remember anything about that. I remember, I don't know what year it was, but I remember one year there was a pretty good conflict between the blacks and the whites and our pastor, the pastor we had at that time, had some teenage boys and they were friends with some of the blacks. In fact, one black family in particular, the Coleman's, and the Coleman boys came over with them and you would have thought they were white and they were running down what the blacks were doing. That is the only thing I remember about, you know, about the mixes of the races that those boys were just…they felt like they were just as…

PC: They were upset of what the blacks were causing or whatever problem it was.

RG: Yes, at the blacks. They didn't like what they were doing. It tickled all of us. They didn't know which side they was on.

PC: That was several years after integration?

RG: Several years after integration, yes. But, my brother in law mentioned one thing that the football team started winning games after integration.

PC: Yes ma'am. That first year that they brought the senior boys over for football and for sports they had a great winning year during that time. That is in '66 when they brought the boys over for athletics and they had a good year that year. Yes, that is for sure. Do you remember anything about Diboll Day queens, them having separate races for Diboll Day? You know, we had…full integration didn't happen until '68 but in some early sixties years, maybe like '64, '62, somewhere in there, we have a photo of the Diboll Day queens and they were black girls. Do you remember anything about Diboll Day activities, community activities where they had their separate Diboll Day events or Diboll Day queens' races?

RG: No, I don't remember anything about that.

PC: Okay. Any other comments that you would like to share pertaining to integration or something that I've forgotten to ask you that you would like to share?

RG: No, like I said evidently it went pretty smooth because I really don't remember a whole lot about it.

PC: Nothing that has made a lasting impression. What about out in the community, say the grocery stores, and things like that before integration, were there any problems out in the community?

RG: I don't remember.

PC: I know at the Dairy Kream and other places, you know, they had separate entrances or separate water fountains, you know, for blacks and whites and I just wondered if you had any experience growing up or in your high school days experiencing anything?

RG: I don't remember ever having any contact with them or anything. I really don't remember separate water fountains and stuff. There might have been. When I was a kid, and still do a whole lot, I keep my head in a book and I don't see a whole lot that goes on around me. (laughter)

PC: Now, David Foster came here after Mr. Pate retired and I believe Mr. Pate retired in '68.

RG: I was thinking that was when he retired too.

PC: Did his retirement have anything to do with the integration process?

RG: No, it was his age. He had gotten to the age where…at one time they had a mandatory retirement of 65 for teachers. I mean, I don't know if that was a Diboll rule or TEA rule or whatever, but he just got the age that it was…

PC: He had just reached retirement age and was ready to retire.

RG: No, he wasn't ready. (laughter)

PC: Did you enjoy working with Mr. Pate?

RG: I loved working with Mr. Pate. He was real sweet. My dad lived over in Louisiana and when I was working for Mr. Pate well he would come up in the afternoon when he would come over here and visit with us, he'd come up, you know, come into the office and Mr. Pate would say, "Oh your dad is here, why don't you just take off this evening." He would let me off that evening to go be with my dad.

PC: Oh, that was nice.

RG: He was always real good about stuff like that. One year I went to college at SFA, I went one summer semester, and, he let me work. We went to college a half a day in the morning; we worked half the day and we usually worked in the morning, but this year he let me work half a day in the afternoon. He was just always real good to me.

PC: Well good. He saw the school, you know, through some hard times in those early days with funding, was always an issue, you know, with money and I know through the records that the company, of course Southern Pine Lumber Company was always helpful.

RG: They always helped us out.

PC: Do you remember anything about a specific time when the money was short and Mr. Pate had to go to the company? Do you remember any particular time?

RG: I don't remember any particular time but I know they always was good about giving us grants or helping us out and giving money. When Stacy Cooke got on the board, I think he might have been a CPA, I don't know. But, he worked in the finances of Temple and he really helped us to get finances, he did a whole lot to get it going the right way.

PC: Oh good, he was an accountant for the company. We know he was on the school board during the time of integration as well. He is a wonderful man. So, he was really helpful with getting the school onto a better accounting system?

RG: Right.

PC: Was there anything particular you remember?

RG: Well I don't remember anything, but I remember, I don't know how we had reported it to the board prior to that time, but I remember he devised the financial statement and he said "put these figures here, here and here, and that way we can see what we are doing." And, he helped me to fix the form out.

PC: Oh good, that is what I was going to ask you. Was there something particular that he was able to show you and help you to figure out a better system of record keeping?

RG: Then we went to several classes with Bettye, and I think they put in a new accounting system at TEA and Bettye and Mr. Pate and I went up to Nacogdoches to some accounting workshops. Bettye said, "Now you come and listen to all that because it's not going to be long you're going to have to come and take my job." We went and we learned a lot. When she left she left me a little notebook and said, "When you write a check put it here, here, here, and here." And it took me awhile before I learned why I was putting it there, but after awhile I realized it all come together. Because, I never had even had bookkeeping. Nearly all my training was on the job.

PC: Right.

RG: And then after Mr. Foster came, well, we never had been to any of the secretarial workshops and things like that. It just wasn't anything we knew about or cared about and he said, "Oh yes, you need to go to the secretarial workshops." Well, we learned a whole lot when we started going to that kind of stuff.

PC: Well good. Now, you mentioned earlier that you kind of filled in for Bettye Greer, what was her actual position?

RG: She was the secretary to the superintendent. She made the checks out and did the bookkeeping.

PC: Okay. And then you filled in for her after she took leave to have her children and took her job.

RG: Then I took her job and I kept that job from then on until Mr. Ward came. He was the last superintendent I had. I had told, each time I had a superintendent I said…'cause the secretary is a pretty important person to an employer and I'd go in and I'd say well now I'm the secretary but if you want to get another secretary it will be all right with me. Well, every one of them I talked to would say, "Oh no, no, we want you to stay." Well when I went and talked to Mr. Ward he had the funniest look on his face, you know, like, "That is a good idea; I don't want you for my secretary." I said, "But I don't want to take a cut in pay" when I was telling him that, you know. And he said, "No, you won't have to take a cut in pay you're getting close to retirement age." [He] said, "I'm going to get you a raise. I'm going to promote you to business manager." So the last two years I worked at the school I worked as a business manager.

PC: Oh, that is wonderful.

RG: It liked to have scared me to death. I could tell he was going to take me up on not being a secretary.

PC: Right. I guess you pretty much enjoyed working for all the superintendents, but did you have a favorite as far as a personal favorite or maybe just as a working relationship.

RG: Not really. I enjoyed working for Mr. Pate a whole lot because he was like another daddy to me, you know. He just treated me so nice and everything. But, I learned more on my job under Mr. Foster. I felt like I grew more in my experience, my working ability, but I liked all of them. When Jim Dunlap came, well he had come up as a teacher and business manager through the office and so when he got to be superintendent, well the fact is, before then, when they were deciding which one to pick, one of the board members came to me and said, "Ruby what do you think about what we ought to do?" I said, "Well let me put it this way. I need to buy a new car. I'm fixing to buy a new car but, I'm not going to buy it until after find out who ya'll get as superintendent." "Oh is it that important?" I said, "Yes 'cause I might not can work with just anybody." "Well you think you can work with Mr. Dunlap?" I said, "Yes, I think I can work with him." So, when he got to be superintendent, well we had called him Jim, you know, but the day he become superintendent he was Mr. Dunlap from then on.

PC: Oh yes.

RG: And I told all of them in the office, "He is Mr. Dunlap now, he's our superintendent. You got to treat him with respect."

PC: Yes ma'am.

RG: But they were all real good to me and I appreciate all…all of them came to my retirement except Mr. Pate and he had already passed away.

PC: That is wonderful. Well seeing that you worked as long as you did and under many superintendents and you had to see a lot of changes within the school district, and one being especially integration but, you know, it's obvious that there wasn't any real problems. But, looking back what do you see as maybe one of the biggest changes within the school district or the school system during your career?

RG: I think the biggest change and the hardest one to get adjusted to was going on the computer.

PC: Really.

RG: Being computerized and you had to report, it eventually got to where attendance and everything was reported on the computer. Everything went on line you know. And, that was hardest thing to me because I'm not very computer literate even now.

PC: Well you just didn't grow up with the computer and of course, now everything is computer and I'm sure it makes the secretary's jobs a lot easier because you had to do everything typewriter and manual and record keeping.

RG: But then we had to key all that into the computer to start with and that was a big job too.

PC: I'm sure it was very overwhelming to you, not having any prior training on the computer it was quite a change wasn't it?

RG: It was, it was a big change but, we all coped with it.

PC: Yes ma'am. Well, Mrs. Ruby I really appreciate you spending time with me today and sharing your experience with the school. I know the school was very grateful for all your years of service to Diboll Independent School District and, we thank you today for sharing your experience with us.

RG: Thank you too. I appreciate you asking me and I wish I could have been of more help but I just didn't remember anything else.

PC: Well, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW