

**JOE WYATT**

**Interview 214a**

**November 30, 2010, via telephone**

**Patsy Colbert, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Patsy Colbert, former Diboll football coach and teacher Joe Wyatt reminisces about his 10 years at Diboll High School. Coach Wyatt managed the football program during the final years of racial integration. He discusses his interactions with his players, white and black, and any problems that might have been caused by racial tensions. Coach Wyatt reminisces about Superintendents Pate and Foster as well as Principals Ramsey and Massey. He discusses his fellow coaches Eberlan, Porter, Spencer, and McGilvra, working with the school board, upgrading the athletic facilities and equipment, building a new gymnasium, and making the playoffs. Coach Wyatt believed athletic success helped the entire district gain pride and recognition and is proud of the success he helped foster in Diboll.

**Patsy Colbert (hereafter PC):** Today's date is November 30, 2010. I am Patsy Colbert and I'm here at the History Center in Diboll, Texas and I'm going to interview Mr. Joe Wyatt at his home in Hewett, Texas via the telephone today. Mr. Wyatt was the coach here in Diboll at Diboll High School from 1967 to 1977. So, Coach Wyatt if you could, let's just begin and tell me when and where you were born.

**Joe Wyatt (hereafter JW):** I was born in San Augustine, Texas on October 3, 1931.

**PC:** Okay and can you tell me a little bit about your personal background and your family background?

**JW:** Okay, my daddy was Eddie Wyatt. Let me just say this, and I think I've kind of been proud of this, I don't know what great grandfather it was, probably my great-great grandfather got a Spanish land grant from Stephen F. Austin and settled in San Augustine. So, the Wyatt's, we've been in and around San Augustine for a long time. My mother was... my daddy farmed and my mother's daddy was a blacksmith. Anyway they married and it was during the Depression and things were tough and anyway, we moved to the valley around 1938 or '39, somewhere along in there and I grew up really in San Benito down in the Rio Grande Valley, graduated from San Benito High School. I attended Centenary College in Shreveport for two years. It was during the Korean War and I was drafted and spent two years in the army and after I came back out of the army I transferred to Baylor University where I graduated from Baylor.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** That is okay?

**PC:** Yes, sir. So, which college did you get your degree from?

**JW:** Baylor.

**PC:** From Baylor okay. Where was your first teaching job?

**JW:** It was in Lyford down in the Valley. I went there in 1956. I started teaching and coaching in Lyford. I went from Lyford to Los Fresnos in the Valley and then from Los Fresnos I went to Boerne right out of San Antonio and from Boerne I went to Tomball and was there one year. That was in '66 and then the next year I came to Diboll as head coach.

**PC:** Okay so you began your teaching in Diboll in 1967 I believe?

**JW:** Correct.

**PC:** Okay and how did you know about this position here being open?

**JW:** I read it in the paper, the Houston Chronicle or the Houston Post, whichever paper we took. Tomball is right north of Houston, right out of Houston and we took a Houston Chronicle or something and there was an advertisement in there that Diboll was seeking a head coach and I read it there.

**PC:** Oh okay. So, they actually advertised the position in the Houston paper?

**JW:** Yes.

**PC:** That is interesting. Okay and who actually hired you?

**JW:** Well I called Mr. Ramsey and talked to him, didn't know him but anyway I came up and visited one afternoon, my wife and I did, and then went back and then the school board, Mr. Ramsey called me and told me the school board had selected me along with five other applicants to interview for the job. And we met whatever night we met, in fact we met where the fire station is now. There is a room in there, in city hall in there, we met in there. Buddy Temple was president of the school board at the time and I think Stacy Cooke was the vice-president of the school board. Buddy was not there and the reason they told me that Buddy wasn't there was he didn't want to be influenced or he didn't want to use his influence in selecting a head coach.

**PC:** Oh okay.

**JW:** He turned it over to the rest of the school board. I think Stacy Cooke was the chairman that night, acted as chairman that night. Mr. Pate wasn't there. Mr. Pate was the Superintendent but he wasn't there, Mr. Ramsey is the one that sat in and represented the school that night.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** So we met, I met with five others and I interviewed and went back in there at the time. After all five had interviewed, Mr. Ramsey came to the door and asked me would I come back in, that the school board wanted to talk to me. They asked me if I would take the job and I told them yes.

**PC:** Well good and the rest is history! Well that is great! Now, you were hired as the head coach of the high school athletic program. Did you also teach a subject?

**JW:** Yes, oh I started out teaching PE. We had the old gym up there by the elementary school. I don't know if you remember where it was or not.

**PC:** Yes sir, the big green gym.

**JW:** The big green gym. That is the only gym we had.

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** I started out teaching PE a half a semester up there. I had boys and girls PE. I was the only PE teacher and the kids had to walk from the high school up to the gym to take PE. And, of course on rainy days when it was real, real bad I went down to the high school. I can't even remember where we went on bad days, but anyway, I taught that first year or so I taught health a half a year and then I taught PE a half a year. Later on after the new gym was built I taught full time PE and then I got back out of that and I just really got tired of playing all the time and I asked Mr. Ramsey could he would put me back in the classroom and then I taught health.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** Full time health teacher.

**PC:** Okay, and we will get to the new gym in just a little bit. I wanted to ask – during the interview process was the integration issue discussed? Did you know that the athletics had already been integrated at the time of your interview?

**JW:** I don't know. I don't remember that. If it was I don't remember it, I just don't remember it.

**PC:** Okay. It wasn't an issue that you remember during the interview process?

**JW:** Not an issue that I remember.

**PC:** The school that you had came from, was it integrated?

**JW:** That first year, it was the first year of integration where I came from.

**PC:** Now, what was your first knowledge of the Diboll schools being integrated and you know, when you came here your knowledge of the high school boys already being brought over the year before and then the fall of '67 the school board voted to integrate the high school only, and the other campuses were Freedom of Choice, so you know, were you in on any discussions pertaining to that?

**JW:** No ma'am I was not.

**PC:** Okay, and how did you feel about integration of the high school your first year here?

**JW:** What do you mean how did I feel?

**PC:** Did you have any issues with the integration, that the high school was going to be integrated your first year here?

**JW:** No personally I didn't because I had come from Tomball and we didn't have a problem one in Tomball. It was just like those kids had gone to school together all their lives.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** Now, let me say this, the integration did not...I don't know if you remember or anybody who reads this or listens to this will but, Elmer Redd, who was the coach at Lufkin Dunbar, told me one time he said, "I know why you don't have no problems with the blacks" because I was raised in the valley with the Hispanic kids, you know.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** Integration did not bother me whatsoever, really. So, there was...and I don't even remember when I first heard about the first integration. Somebody had told me, I guess somebody had told me they was fixing to integrate and I said, "That is fine, I just came from a school where we just integrated."

**PC:** Okay, so you had earlier experiences of being around the other races before coming to Diboll?

**JW:** Yes, before coming to Diboll.

**PC:** Okay, now like I said your first year here at Diboll was the second year of integrated sports. Did you have any experience coaching integrated teams before coming to Diboll?

**JW:** Well yes that year of...well of course however you want to say integrated, in the Valley probably three-fourths of our teams were Hispanic.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** And then when I was coaching down there. But in Tomball that year we had...I don't know how many blacks there were on the team but there were lots of blacks on the team in Tomball that first year of integration.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** I'm not clear on one thing. I don't remember, I thought and my understanding was I didn't know they played the year before I came. I thought that they came over that spring and worked out in the spring. I don't think they played basketball because Mack didn't play basketball I don't think his freshman year.

**PC:** We had...let me find my exact dates...1965 was the first year of Freedom of Choice and they had one elementary student to go the white elementary campus that year. The second year, 1966, the school board voted to continue Freedom of Choice but they also voted to end the athletic program at the H. G. Temple High School. So, the male seniors chose to attend Diboll High School so they could continue playing sports. Mr. Massey, in the school board minutes he actually went to the school board and gave a report that he didn't have enough boys to make a team. But, he also knew that the boys that were interested in sports, if they didn't have sports to keep them there, he was afraid they would quit school. So, he asked if the H. G. Temple black boys could play with the Diboll High school, the white school boys. So, the school board voted for that. I believe there were...I don't remember the exact number, but there were 10 or 15 boys like Johnny Jones. You might remember him?

**JW:** Yes, they did.

**PC:** They came over and played that year with Coach Simmons and that was the year before you came.

**JW:** Yes, when you said Johnny Jones I remember Johnny Jones playing.

**PC:** Yes, sir. Then in 1967 the school board voted to integrate all of the high school. Again, Mr. Massey had reported to the board with Freedom of Choice they had about 40 students across all campuses, black students, to enroll at the white school and that made enrollment at H. G. Temple School low and he didn't have enough high school students to meet the accreditation requirements. So, not only was H.G. Temple School at risk of losing their accreditation it also put Diboll High School, the white campus at risk so they integrated the high school in '67.

**JW:** Yes, I think somewhere in '67 or '68 Freedom of Choice was thrown out.

**PC:** Then '68 was fully integrated, all the schools were integrated.

**JW:** Yes.

**PC:** So, that brings us up to date on that and again the fall of '67, your first year the high school was integrated. Do you recall any problems or any situations among the students and players during that year?

**JW:** We had no problems whatsoever with the players. Black and white players got along great.

**PC:** Did you have any interaction with Mr. Massey during that year because he would have still been principal at the H. G. Temple School that year?

**JW:** No, no, the only thing Mr. Massey told me was we talked and I knew who he was. He came up to me one time and said, "Coach I think you are real smart, you are not using black kids just for the fact, you are putting them in the line. Most people want to take black kids and put them in the back field but you are putting them in the line." No, we had some...there was some good leaders in both races. You take Danny Baker and Richard Warner, Lynn Pavlic and that bunch they were good leaders, they helped. Mack Mitchell helped tremendously with the blacks.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** And so it was...somebody...I didn't see this but I was told this, they said there were two girls fighting one day I think around the cafeteria or somewhere and Mack went over and separated them and said, "Why don't you people behave yourself and do what is right." So, they were two black girls. And, things like that.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** We had help there. There were a lot of kids who really tried to help and tried to make it work. Of course, there were problems around that we had with integration. They had two schools who had come together. One of them had been doing things one way and another school had been doing things another way and when you bring one school in where the other school had to abide by the other schools policies and stuff which they had not been used to there were a few problems that we had.

**PC:** Right, okay.

**JW:** But, we finally survived.

**PC:** Well that is great. Now we know the Temple Tigers had a real winning team before integration, were you surprised at the talent of some of the players and their winning record or were you aware of it?

**JW:** Oh yes, Temple had some great players.

**PC:** Did that...it seemed to help the Diboll Lumberjacks you know, those first few years because they had a really good team and that seemed to pull everybody together. Could you just comment on that, on the camaraderie of your team members?

**JW:** Well like I told you we didn't have any problems amongst the team members. The team members the first year I think we went four and six and the next year we went five and four and then the third year we went eight and two which set a new record for wins for Diboll.

**PC:** That is right, that is right. That is great. Okay, what about in the classroom experience? Anything that you witnessed there as far as integration and the races mixing in the classroom those first few years?

**JW:** No, not really. It was a typical classroom.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** It would be a typical classroom that I had. Teaching PE you know it was kids played and in health it was just teaching classroom. Everybody sat down to do their work. If they didn't want to do their work, goodnight Irene!

**PC:** Yes, but not any issues that were strictly racial issues?

**JW:** Not any issues in the classroom that I can remember that were strictly racial.

**PC:** Now according to the minutes of the school board one of your first recommendations was to end the girl's basketball the first year you were here. Again, the high school was integrated and the Temple Tigers girl's basketball had a great team and I particularly think of Minnie Faye Jones who was a very talented basketball player. Were you aware of just what a talented basketball player she was before you made that recommendation?

**JW:** To be honest with you I don't remember making a recommendation that we end the basketball, I don't know.

**PC:** Yes sir, it's in the school board minutes in '67. That was her senior year when the high school was integrated that was her senior year. She was a great basketball player. The year before she had ...

**JW:** Oh I knew she was a great basketball player.

**PC:** ...had made 72 points in a game. So, I always thought about her situation with the high school not having girl's basketball, you know, how that affected her and possibly getting a scholarship or something. I was just wondering if you recalled anything with her situation.

**JW:** I didn't have anybody in basketball...why we didn't because see I was the only PE teacher.

**PC:** Can you repeat that, I'm sorry I didn't catch that.

**JW:** See I was the girls and boys PE teacher so we may not have had a girl's basketball coach available to coach.

**PC:** Oh okay, okay.

**JW:** That may have been the reason that we did it because we did not have a girl's...there was no lady out in PE or the athletic program whatsoever.

**PC:** Okay, so that would have had an impact of course with having girl's basketball then.

**JW:** Yes.

**PC:** Okay. Do you recall any conversations or the feelings of other teachers and colleagues pertaining to the integration of those early years? Was there any discussion in the teachers' lounge about integration?

**JW:** Uh...I didn't hang around teachers lounge a whole lot.

**PC:** You were too busy weren't you?

**JW:** I was too busy. I never did, during all my whole teaching you know, I coached 35 years and I never went in the teachers' lounge because I didn't care about listening to everything going on in teachers lounge and so I didn't hang around in there. Because they would always be asking this and talking about this or that which I didn't care about so I didn't hang out in the teachers' lounge a whole lot. I'm sure there were teachers who were for integration and teachers who were against integration.

**PC:** Right. Do you recall your first years here at Diboll any black teachers that you taught with or were around?

**JW:** Coach Porter.

**PC:** Okay, can you tell me about your relationship with Coach Porter? I know he was under you of course with the athletic program, so share with me about Coach Porter and also I wanted to ask you about Coach Spencer.

**JW:** Coach Spencer and Coach Porter both great people. I had one night, it was the first year because we were still over at the old gym one night and there was a man who walked up to me and he said, "I envy Coach Porter." I said, "Why?" He said, "Look over at Coach Porter." And we looked over at Coach Porter and there was about five or six white boys and about five or six black boys all huddled around Coach Porter and he said,

“They all love him.” And, so he said, “I envy Coach Porter” and Coach Spencer also but Coach Porter was a great person to work with. Integration and our athletics might not have gone as great without Coach Porter really. He did a good job to help in integration. Coach Porter wanted to do what was right, but I couldn’t ask for a better friend than I had in Coach Porter, really. He was a good coach and he was good for Diboll, Coach Porter was. At the time he was very good for Diboll.

**PC:** Well that is wonderful. You know he is still on the Diboll campus. He has not retired completely yet. We did have the opportunity to interview him. He was on the white campus before integration and then the first year of Freedom of Choice, so he was one of the first black teachers on the white campus here at Diboll. Everybody speaks highly of him, of course. What about your relationship with Coach Spencer and how did he interact with the whites?

**JW:** He interacted...Coach Spencer was over at the junior high. Well, he and Coach Porter really were both over at the junior high until the first...Coach Porter and Coach Spencer coached the junior high I guess for the first up until 1971 or 1972 somewhere along in there. Coach Porter and Coach Spencer were at the junior high and they ran the junior high program great.

**PC:** Now in reference to integration and the administration, when they made the decision in '68 for full integration how did the administration communicate that to the teachers, you know, was it discussed in an open meeting or anything like that?

**JW:** If it was...hey, let me tell you something what has this been 50 years ago? (laughing)

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** I can't remember. (laughing)

**PC:** That is okay. Just wondering if anything stood out in your mind about an announcement that the schools were going to fully integrate?

**JW:** For some reason we all knew we was fixing to integrate. How we learned we were going to integrate...I think the law came down that said there would be no more Freedom of Choice, that you had to integrate.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** Somewhere along in '68 along in there they made the law there was no more Freedom of Choice. You had to integrate. Because there were several schools in the area, Dunbar fully integrated in what '70 something like that...anyway.

**PC:** 1970, yes sir. Well according to the school board minutes, the school board actually voted in February of '68, excuse me, April of '68 they voted to continue the Freedom of

Choice and then just a few weeks later there were a couple of men from the Department of Health Education and Welfare that came down and conducted an investigation regarding the elimination of the dual school system and then the next week the school board voted to fully integrate. So, you know, we gather it was from the government men.

**JW:** Men told them full integration is coming might as well go ahead and do it.

**PC:** Do you remember anything about an assembly with the children? I recently interviewed Mark Shepherd and he remembered his father, you know, making an announcement and all the kids were in an assembly and he remembers his dad speaking to the crowd in regards to everybody getting along. Do you remember anything about it?

**JW:** I remember Mr. Shepherd talking but I don't...you know, about the situation and getting along in school. I don't know what Mr. Shepherd said, like I said that was 50 years ago.

**PC:** Right. I was just wondering if you remembered like an assembly with all the students maybe when school started and it being discussed.

**JW:** I don't remember it but I know Mr. Shepherd came and that is about all I can tell you.

**PC:** How was your relationship with the school board?

**JW:** I had a great relationship with the school board.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** I really did!

**PC:** Were there any incidents that happened during the early years of integration that you care to share? We have already spoke about it a little bit, but just wondering is there any particular incident whether the first years of integration or later on at any time during your teaching career at Diboll schools pertaining to racial issues that you care to share?

**JW:** I don't...off hand I can't say anything about any racial issues.

**PC:** I know that in my high school days and I believe it would have been my junior year '74-75 we had some racial tensions, but I can't really remember what they started from but I was just wondering if you remembered anything about that?

**JW:** Let me tell you something and I'm going to go back, I take the Oliver North stand. I think we had a racial fight every year. We had racial tensions every year, there was a racial fight. And, to be honest with you most of the time it was started by the girls.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** The boys got along good. I am serious! The boys, all the boys got along good.

**PC:** I have heard that several times so you are not the first one to tell me that, so I'm not surprised.

**JW:** This never happened. What I'm fixing to tell you never happened but it was like this. A black girl was walking down the hall and the white girl was walking down the hall and they meet. Now, they can't go around each other but they got to bump into each other. They are the only two in the hall so they walk down the hall and they bump and they can't pass each other without bumping into each other.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** That is kind of the way things were.

**PC:** Right, just that kind of situation would come up.

**JW:** Yes.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** Yes. We turned out school one year for a day on account of racial tensions.

**PC:** That is the incident that I'm remembering. It was my junior year I believe and we were all out on the campus and then school was dismissed but I couldn't remember what it started from.

**JW:** I told the athletes, the football players, I said, "If we get into anything you come on out to the gym. I mean, once it starts you come to the gym and don't even fool with them." And, a lot of times there would be black and white kids both coming out to the gym while they were carrying on out there.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** Now let me tell you when things got tough...after the first Sunday night after *Roots* things kind of got rough that week after the movie. You remember that?

**PC:** Yes sir and someone else mentioned that in a prior interview about that movie and you have to think of what was going on in the world too.

**JW:** It kind of got raunchy that Monday morning after showing that first show of *Roots* on Sunday night was really a tough situation. I don't remember if we turned out school then or not, but racial tensions got pretty rough around then. Go ahead and ask me some more.

**PC:** Okay, now one thing I wanted to ask you about is your relationship with Mr. Massey, but when the high schools integrated fully according to the school board minutes they voted to offer Mr. Massey the assistant principalship of high school, but in his personal interview that he did in 1984, he tells that he declined that offer and chose to teach math his first year so he would not be in an administrative position. He thought he would be able to help the black students better, but then we know that later he did become assistant principal that year. Do you...

**JW:** I do not remember that.

**PC:** Do you just remember him as the assistant principal or do you ever remember him being in the classroom?

**JW:** No, he was never in the classroom. He was just assistant principal.

**PC:** In the annual that year he is shown as a math teacher but we know later he became the principal. We have just been confused about that because of his interview.

**JW:** I personally tell you I don't remember the situation. I just remember that he was the assistant principal.

**PC:** Okay, now in 1968 we know the new gym was built and that was just your second year here. I noticed in the minutes that you were able to make some changes and make some decisions on that. Can you share anything about the new gym project? Were you involved with that?

**JW:** See the football team dressed over at the football field at the time and I wanted to move the football team to dress in the new gym and because that is where the school was, that is where the kids were. The kids had to walk all the way to the field house. Especially after football season was over what was I going to do with these kids on bad weather days or what are you going to do with them walking over to the field house. And I said everything would be so much simpler if we could let them dress here in the gym, so we made some changes where we put lockers for them to dress in the gym. That is about all really that I remember that I recommended.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** Oh, and equipment room...we did something to the equipment room but I don't remember now, but I know we did something to make it bigger but I don't remember what it was.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** Oh wait one other change, yes. Where my office was...was supposed to have been some kind of equipment room and I told them that I wanted for my office...there were two little offices out there in front but I wanted an office. So, I said I want...and they

okayed me having that room and making it my office. They paneled it and fixed it up where I would have an office.

**PC:** That is the gym we still use today. I went over last night and watched my grandson play basketball, still using it today.

**JW:** Oh yes!

**PC:** Now we know also that the school board voted to name the gym after Mr. Pate. Do you recall any discussion on, you know, how that was decided?

**JW:** It was already done before I got there. I knew that it was going to be Mr. Pate's gymnasium, which was fine!

**PC:** Okay, okay. Now I'm looking at a copy of the school board minutes from January 18, 1968 and it says "Coach Wyatt made a presentation of athletic equipment to the board reviewing the safety features and cost of football gear. In addition, Mr. Wyatt passed out a copy of his proposed football budget for the coming year which was included an inventory of equipment on hand against the equipment necessary. Included in Mr. Wyatt's recommendations were the following, and there is list of about 14 items." One of which I quote, "Mr. Wyatt included a list of training rules concerning smoking, drinking, late hours and other items requiring disciplinary action which the coach needed to have board adoption." Can you share anything with me about that?

**JW:** With the budget or the training rules? Laughing

**PC:** The training rules. (laughing) You must have had a few situations to have put that in your list. (laughing)

**JW:** You know you have to have something ironclad to make it stick. I knew that there will always be some parent out there that if something happens to a kid you know, you have to discipline a kid in some way or somehow, well that is no good, you know. You have to have something with teeth in it and to have teeth in it I got board approval with teeth in. So, that is why I wanted board approval to have something with teeth in it.

**PC:** Okay, and share with me about the football budget. I'm sure when you came here you didn't have a lot of equipment. We know the H. G. Temple School had very limited equipment.

**JW:** They did. I thought the equipment at Diboll High School from what I had been used to in the past from the schools I had been at was very inferior equipment, really. Coach Simmons had started and had ordered some stuff and had started in replacing a lot of the equipment but there was still a lot of it that needed to be brought up to date on equipment. But, he had done a pretty good job in starting and getting things updated. What I did was I took an inventory of everything that we had. Which I think any business should have. If you are in a business or anything like that you know what's on hand. You

need an inventory of what is on hand. And for another thing too, I told them, I said, "For insurance purposes." If something happens to the gymnasium and it's torn down or burned down or blown over from a tornado we have an inventory of what was in there so we can show it to them, exactly what was in there.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** What I did for the board, I presented...I made a folder whatever you want to call it and I gave each board member, I knew Mr. Pate wasn't going to be there. I gave Mr. Ramsey and each board member a copy of it. I told them here is what we have on hand and here is what is used and here is what is new, what little we have new left on hand, this is what we need to carry on if you want a successful program. See up until the year before I came six games was the most they had ever won in the whole history of the school.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** That is all they had won. I think Coach Simmons had won six the year before I came. Up until that year five games at the most is all they had won. They had never had a winning season.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** I said, "If you want to, fine." Now, let me get back to the school board. You asked me about the school board and I didn't have a chance to answer. We had a great school board. Diboll had one of the best school boards at that time that you could ever ask for anywhere. They were great school board members. They were willing and wanting to do what was best for the school system and for Diboll and the school system.

**PC:** That is great!

**JW:** And it was, the school board members were...during integration they were the right people. I guess the Lord put them in there at the right time. They really handled...Carl Pavlic and Richard Albrecht and Stacy Cooke and Mr. Shepherd and Buddy was there.

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** Buddy was only there for...he didn't run next time. Oh, my goodness he and oh...he's a sheriff, a U. S. Marshall.

**PC:** Let me see...

**JW:** Oh my goodness.

**PC:** Let me see if I can find my list of school board at that time.

**JW:** Help me.

**PC:** Marshall Capps, Stacy Cooke and Dick Albrecht were on there in '65 and '66. Mr. Shepherd came on in '67 and '68.

**JW:** Let me ask my wife. There is one more on there too.

**PC:** Dewey Wolf? He wasn't here then I don't think was he.

**JW:** Honey what is Jay's buddy he plays golf with that he referees with? Oh Mr. Conner.

**PC:** Oh yes, Robert Conner, yes he was on there.

**JW:** He was on there.

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** Let me tell you they did a great job. I don't know whether Diboll's school system would have been what...then when they hired...they did a great job in hiring Mr. Foster. He was the right man at the right time too.

**PC:** Yes sir, he was hired in '68. Mr. Pate retired in the summer of '68 and they hired Mr. Foster in '68.

**JW:** I probably had a hand in hiring Mr. Foster and I didn't realize it at the time. I have a cousin...Mr. Foster was in administration at Stephen F. Austin but he had taught at Aldine. I had a cousin visiting with me and I had taken him down to the field house and we were looking around. I don't know why Stacy came by. My cousin had taught at Aldine. I said, "Who are y'all considering?" And, I think Stacy said, "I can't tell you" but he wrote down David Foster and my cousin turned around and said, "Son you can't find a better man than that." And they hired him.

**PC:** Oh, that is great. Now back to this list of recommendations to the school board you made in January of '68 and keep in mind this is before full integration was coming that fall.

**JW:** We were already fully integrated that year, the first year I was there we were integrated.

**PC:** The high school was but fall of '68 was full integration.

**JW:** Okay, all right, okay.

**PC:** And this is January of '68. You also made a recommendation that the Temple School dressing room for boys and girls physical education and boy's athletics be

expanded. You stated you did not believe enough room was available to accommodate the needs that would be pressing especially if it were necessary to make this school house the junior high activities. Can you share with me the condition of the dressing room at the Temple School?

**JW:** The best I can remember was they didn't have enough...it wasn't big enough. It wasn't enough space big enough if we fully integrated everybody for the junior high athletics for everybody to dress at the junior high. It wasn't big enough.

**PC:** Especially with seeing that full integration for junior high was coming.

**JW:** Look you have to know...what did they have at Temple High, 75 or 80 students at Temple High School? I am just guessing. They had enough room probably for their football team which probably consisted of 20 to 25 kids to dress. Now you are looking at a junior high over there that is going to have 45 to 50 kids to dress. So, you are doubling the number of kids that were going to be there. So, you had to have additional space.

**PC:** Okay. Did you have any input on the junior high athletic program before they made the decision of full integration and integrating the junior high white and the H. G. Temple School of how the athletic program was going to work that fall? Did you discuss that with Coach Porter and Coach Spencer and administration in reference to junior high athletics being integrated?

**JW:** Let me say this...I think we went ahead, you'll have to help me here, but I think we went ahead and played integrated junior high football that year. I don't remember playing segregated football. Of course Coach Porter and Coach Spencer coached the football team and it wasn't segregated.

**PC:** You talking about the junior high that year in '67?

**JW:** I think we had integrated junior high football that first year too even though Temple wasn't. I can't tell you where they worked out but...

**PC:** Okay I'm looking at the '68 annual which would be the school year '67-'68 and the photograph of the Little Jacks of '67 Coach Porter is the coach, I believe and it is an integrated team so, you are correct.

**JW:** Okay.

**PC:** So, ya'll went ahead even though the classroom was not integrated the sports were integrated at junior high.

**JW:** Yes.

**PC:** Okay. Wow that is interesting, I had not realized that. That is great. It was also on this list that you made the recommendation of the girl's basketball that I referred to

earlier. Just for clarity on that. Now, moving on share with me Coach McGilvra was hired the next year in '68 maybe.

**JW:** Let me say when I got there and took the job in '66 it was what in July?

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** And Billy Burke, Coach Simmons had gone to Jasper as the head coach, left there and went to Jasper and Billy Burke was the assistant coach and he wanted to go with Coach Simmons. I got to coaching school and they called me and told me Billy Burke was going to leave and go with Coach Simmons. Now this is two weeks before football season started and I'm the only coach. I don't have a coach. Well, Coach Gartman was coaching JV and I tried to find a coach at coaching school and I could not find a coach at coaching school to help with football and coach basketball. I came on back home and somebody told me that there was a coach that had coached at San Augustine that wasn't coaching. I think he was selling...working for a chicken place and traveling and he might want to, and it was Roy Eberlan. I got a hold of Roy Eberlan and he came over and he said, "Yes I might be interested." We talked and he took the job and after one year he wanted to go back into what he was doing and then I hired Coach McGilvra.

**PC:** Yes sir, the '68 yearbook I referred to has Coach Eberlan, Coach Gartman and Coach Wyatt. And, just for the tape your first year you were hired summer of '67.

**JW:** No summer of '68, summer of '67 right.

**PC:** Yes sir, that was also part of your recommendation in the minutes from January '68 about they were going to have to raise...you advised them they would have to raise the pay up in order for you to obtain an assistant because you were having problems hiring somebody at the level that Diboll was paying at that time.

**JW:** When I was trying to find a coach they wasn't paying anything hardly and they just kind of laughed at me.

**PC:** Actually the statement you make and I quote, "No one was having any luck securing coaches at a price below \$1500 scale." So, apparently they were paying below the scale.

**JW:** I think they were paying like \$500 or something like that for a coach.

**PC:** So you hired Coach McGilvra. So share with me your coaching days with Coach McGilvra.

**JW:** Oh, we probably could sit down and talk all day about my coaching with Coach McGilvra.

**PC:** He was well liked.

**JW:** He was very, very, well liked. Coach McGilvra primarily was hired as a basketball coach and he was a very, very, successful basketball coach and very well respected throughout the state as a successful basketball coach. But, I told coach McGilvra he never gave himself credit enough. He was a good football coach. He was a very, very good football coach and I said, "You never gave yourself credit enough of being a good football coach." And, he was he was a fine football coach.

**PC:** Wow, that is great. Now in '68-69 Coach McGilvra led the Lumberjacks to their first crown since 1944 and it was predominantly an all black team and they became district champs that year. Can you share anything with me about that particular victory?

**JW:** We were thrilled to death. In fact, we had finally...you know, once you start winning in one program it will fold over to another program if you let it. And, we were glad that we could start winning. I was really proud for the basketball team and Coach McGilvra that they had won the district championship.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** I was proud for Diboll. You see, when you win a district championship it puts you on the map because you are looking...you know, then you look in the paper and Diboll is playing and next week Diboll is still playing, there is Diboll still playing. It puts you on the map.

**PC:** And the whole town gets involved then don't they?

**JW:** The whole town and the citizens get involved. This doesn't reflect on Diboll but let me...this is the way it was. When I went to Los Fresnos the last time in '77, '78 they had only won three games in four years something like that. The first year I was there we won eight games and missed the playoffs which that was back only when one team could go. We were second place. The superintendent later told me, "I did not realize how winning in football could affect the whole community." He said, "The people in the community are happier and the people in school are happier, we have less discipline problems in school because you are winning." Now, that is what I wanted to say. We started winning and when you are winning you have less problems.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** I want to go back to '67 one time while I'm thinking about it.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** There is a couple of things that I did to help with integration with the football team. One of them was sweethearts. I knew that the black kids didn't want a white girl for sweetheart and I knew the white kids didn't want a black girl for sweetheart. So, I asked the teams, I sat down and this is what I told the team I said, "Fellows let's just lay it on

the table. You white kids don't want a black girl for sweetheart and you black kids don't want a white girl for sweetheart." And I said, "Am I right?" And they all said, "You are right coach, you are right." I said, "Let's have a black sweetheart and a white sweetheart, how does that sound?" And they were just thrilled to death that we had the black sweetheart and we had the white sweetheart.

**PC:** That is wonderful. I have asked other students that very question of how that came about because we know in the early years of integration according to the annual we had football sweetheart and co-sweethearts. So, I appreciate the clarity on that. That is wonderful and it worked really well.

**JW:** Now, let's go back to another situation, cheerleaders.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** I asked Mr. Ramsey why we don't have a black cheerleader. He said, "Well they didn't come over to tryouts." I said, "Were they asked to come over and try out?" He said, "No not really." I said, "Did the eighth grade vote on the cheerleaders?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Did you let Temple eighth grade vote on the cheerleaders?" He said, "No." I said, "Well I don't think that was kind of fair." So, Mr. Ramsey and I sat down and we discussed it and we both came to the conclusion that next year there would be at least one black cheerleader or two black cheerleaders that we would have.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** To help with the integration.

**PC:** That is great, just trying to get everybody involved in every aspect of the school that is great.

**JW:** And, there is another thing I did too every year in captains. I always told the kids to vote on two captains but we always ended up with three because let's say if we had two white boys that were elected I always had the next highest black kid as a tri-captain. If the two black kids were elected captains...and a lot of times two black kids were elected captains. Then, we always put in a white kid as a captain so we would be totally integrated. And in the dressing room when we first started dressing in the dressing room, on the lockers I would put a white kid and a black kid, a white kid and a black kid to help integration to be there just to help be there instead of all the black kids dress over in one place and the white kids dress over in one place. I made them all...and I don't think they ever even noticed it.

**PC:** For them to mingle with each other.

**JW:** For them to mingle with each other, yes.

**PC:** Well you know a lot of times you know, when you are in the locker room with your coach, you know, things are different and if things are going to be brought out on the table sometimes that would be the best place to happen. Did you ever have any discussion with any particular student and having any problem say in the locker room?

**JW:** No.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** No, no, I'm serious. Number one I wouldn't allow it, I really wouldn't.

**PC:** Yes, they knew better didn't they? Is there anything else you remember pertaining to the sweethearts, the cheerleaders, you know, that you made sure took place to help them with the transition.

**JW:** This is...I tried every way in the world that I could to get them to intermingle and to work together.

**PC:** Okay, the first year y'all chose to have the black cheerleaders did you have any problems with getting any black girls to try out for cheerleader?

**JW:** I don't remember.

**PC:** Okay.

**JW:** Now, like Mr. Ramsey said, "If no black girl comes out we can't help that."

**PC:** Okay, now I know Mrs. Dunlap was the lady coach and PE teacher when I was there, was she there during the early years of integration?

**JW:** I don't think so. What was her name? There was a lady before Mrs. Dunlap, PE teacher before Mrs. Dunlap I think. Let me tell you about the cheerleaders, the black cheerleaders. Elmer Redd, who was a coach at Dunbar, he was a coach at the University of Houston, we talked all the time about the way things were and we laughed and we joked with each other but he told me this he said he went to this school and four or five black girls came up to him and started telling him that there weren't no black cheerleaders. He said "well how many of y'all went out?" And none of them went out. He said then you don't have no problem. He said you can't blame nobody but yourself because none of them went out. Now, whether anybody went out I don't remember but the opportunity was there. The opportunity was there for black cheerleaders to make sure that they try out.

**PC:** Now I wanted to ask you quickly about Mr. Foster. We know your first year here you were under Mr. Pate and then Mr. Foster came in the summer of '68. Can you share with me anything you remember particularly about Mr. Foster and especially those first years?

**JW:** I can, Mr. Foster was a tremendous...Mr. Foster was the right man at the right time to help Diboll with the integration, with upgrading the school system and everything. He was the right man at the right time. Mr. Foster was a good public relations man, he mingled well with the community and they called him...they nick named Mr. Foster Mr. Clean. Every time you looked around Mr. Foster was having people clean up. He would call me over and say, "Coach," he would say, "There is some paper out there on the front of the high school campus. Get your PE class out there to pick up that paper." So, I would get a PE class and we'd go out there and pick up all the paper around the campus.

**PC:** Well that is great. We have heard a lot of good things about Mr. Foster.

**JW:** Now, our relationship as far as athletics with Mr. Foster...he told me one time when he got there he said, "I don't understand athletics." And if something pertained to athletics he would put down and write me a little note and then he would sign it 'your superintendent who does not understand athletics.' The years we were in the playoffs and we'd have to meet on Saturday for the playoff game he would say, "I want to meet on Monday, I don't want to meet with you." I said, "Mr. Foster we can't wait till Monday to meet." I said, "We have to secure a field and we have to get an official, we got to get all this stuff. We can't wait till Monday." He would say, "Why?" I'd say, "We got to do it Saturday." And, so he says, "I just don't understand you people in athletics. Why don't you wait till Monday and do it on school time?" I said, "We can't do it." But, he was a great school man. Let me emphasize he was...his knowledge of TEA [Texas Education Agency], the rules and everything that pertained to TEA and what they needed to do was unreal.

**PC:** That is great. Now we know that you retired, you didn't retire you left Diboll in 1977 and went to Axtell. An article in the Free Press on leaving Diboll said, "This was Diboll's first glory era in high school football and in 1970 and '71 y'all won district title and you left with a winning tradition." That was a quote from the Diboll Free Press. So just to sum it up can you just share with me how you felt about your teaching and coaching days here at Diboll.

**JW:** Let me just say this, they say where you raise your kid is home. We raised our kids in Diboll so Diboll I guess will always be home for us. Now, does that answer your question?

**PC:** Yes sir. Now I also noticed that you had your most memorable victory was a 1970 game with Hemphill. The score was zero to twenty-two in the third quarter and then after third quarter the Lumberjacks exploded and came out with a 28-22 victory. Do you recall that game?

**JW:** Oh do I ever recall it! I turned around and looked up in the stands at the end of the third quarter and there wasn't nobody in the stands but the coaches wives and the band and the cheerleaders. (laughter) Everybody had done...there were eight minutes left to play. I can tell you exactly. There was eight minutes left to play and the center snapped

the ball over the kickers head and they got...it was twenty to nothing I think and they got an extra two points and we went down and kicked off and held them and got the ball back. We threw it, I think we threw a touchdown pass to Bill Yates and that made whatever...22-7 or whatever. And, then we came back and I think we threw another touchdown pass to Bill Yates which made 22-14. I think the third touchdown or the second one, I can't remember, was a screen pass to Bill Gartman, tight end. Oh, first of all after the first touchdown we onside kicked and got the ball and scored and the second time we onside kicked and got the ball. Then the third time they thought we were going to onside kick and we kicked it deep and we held them and got the ball. Anyway, we scored on a screen pass to Bill Gartman and we went up 22-22. And, then I think it was 22-22 and we got the ball again, I don't remember how much time and I can't remember how we scored the last touchdown. We went ahead 28-22. Now, you won't believe this...oh I know what happened, we intercepted a pass because it was 22-22 and I figured the coach across the field had time to run the clock out and he would settle for 22-22 as a tie. But, he didn't we intercepted a pass and may have run it back down to about the five yard line I think. But, anyway we scored and went ahead 28-22 and then we had the ball on the three yard line fixing to score again when the game was over.

**PC:** I bet that was a game the fans regretted leaving.

**JW:** I tell you...I always went down to the Pine Bough. Are you old enough to know the Pine Bough?

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** I always went down to the Pine Bough on Saturday morning and we had coffee, there was always a bunch of guys and I walked in and they all said, "We can't believe it." I said, "You should have stayed."

**PC:** Now, you left Diboll with a record of sixty-two victories, thirty-nine losses and two ties according to the Free Press article so, that is a good record.

**JW:** A good record.

**PC:** Well it sounds like you had a good time in Diboll and as you said this is where you consider home and raising your children here. And so we are glad that you still call Diboll home. Now, I do have one other question that pertains to integrated activities for Diboll Day. Did they have integrated Diboll Day queen's races when you came to Diboll? I'm sorry I said that wrong. Did they have segregated separate races when you came here or was it already integrated?

**JW:** Are you asking me were the Diboll Queen candidates integrated or segregated?

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** I don't know but wasn't Elaine James a candidate, the first candidate for Diboll Day?

**PC:** Debra Washington.

**JW:** Yes, Debra Johnson was. [Washington]

**PC:** We know in 1962 and 1964 they had separate Diboll Day queens. They had the black queen's race and the white queen's race. So, we were just wondering when that was all integrated. We are assuming it was probably at the time of school integration.

**JW:** I did one other thing too that first year. I only had one thing to do on Diboll Day. That first year I was there we played an afternoon football game on Diboll Day and I went to them and I said we ain't going to do this again. I don't care anything about playing Saturday afternoon.

**PC:** Okay, so they played a football game for Diboll Day in '68?

**JW:** Yes, we had a football game on Diboll Day on Saturday afternoon. And they may have been having them in the past but, I told them it interrupts our schedule and I said things are wrong. I said, "If I'm here I'm never going to schedule another ball game on Saturday afternoon." We will play on Friday night like we always play. Oh, it just messed everything up playing on Saturday afternoon.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** So, I changed that. I made a few changes when I came on.

**PC:** Now, is there anything else you remember about the Pine Bough that you want to share with?

**JW:** Enjoyed going to the Pine Bough.

**PC:** It was the hang out wasn't it?

**JW:** Oh yes, we loved to go to the Pine Bough. I thought the Pine Bough was a unique place to be. Like, if you wanted to meet somebody just say, "I'll meet you at the Pine Bough."

**PC:** Coach Wyatt is there anything else that you would like to share with me today that I haven't asked you about?

**JW:** We've talked about so many. I'm looking at the clock and we've talked an hour and five minutes.

**PC:** Yes sir, I appreciate your time. Well that is all of my questions and if you don't have anything else to share with me that will conclude our interview.

**JW:** If you think of something else later on that you want to ask you can call me and ask me. I'm saying '77, '87, '97, '07 that is 45 years ago. We are talking about 45 years ago.

**PC:** Yes sir.

**JW:** To remember everything exactly how it was, and what we did and what was said and what wasn't said, that is 45 years ago.

**PC:** Well you've really given us a lot of insight today especially pertaining to the football program which we feel like played a great role in the integration process and with it going as smoothly as it went in those early years of combining the students together.

**JW:** I'll say one other thing too, I had a man tell me...I had a school man...I think a school man tell me or somebody that wasn't from East Texas, and he told me this he said, "Until Diboll got in the playoffs I never even heard of Diboll. I didn't even know where Diboll was, but when Diboll got in the football playoffs I had to go to the map and look it up to see where Diboll was." He said, "We never even knew where Diboll was, but once you got in the playoffs then we knew where Diboll was." He said, "As far as a lumbering town yes but as far as"...now the lumber people, business people did but the school people throughout the state didn't know where Diboll was really.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** They had never been to the playoffs. They had never won anything. So if you are never in the playoff or win anything you are never in the paper. You are not in the Houston paper or the Dallas paper or anything. They list all the teams where they are playing. He told me he said, "I didn't know where Diboll was, but I went and got my map and looked it up and I found out where Diboll was because ya'll were in the playoffs."

**PC:** So, sports kind of put them on the map.

**JW:** I would like to say that. I don't know if anybody else would say that. (laughter) We started winning and we helped put Diboll on the map as far as the school system is concerned. We are not competing with Temple now.

**PC:** Right. Well Coach Wyatt I really appreciate your time today. Thank you for doing this interview with me today.

**JW:** I consider Diboll...I got dear friends in Diboll, dear, dear friends in Diboll.

**PC:** And your children and your precious little granddaughter is here too.

**JW:** Like I say Diboll is home because that is where we raised our kids there.

**PC:** Right.

**JW:** You have a good day!

**PC:** Thank you Coach Wyatt.

**JW:** The Lord bless you honey. I enjoyed it very much!

**END OF INTERVIEW**