

**JOHN BOOKER, JR.**

**Interview 224B**

**September 23, 2014 at The History Center, Diboll, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, John Booker, Jr. reminisces about his time building roads and bridges at Boggy Slough and tells stories about his family's interactions with those who lived and worked there. Looking at 1926 and 1951 maps of the area, Mr. Booker talks about the landscape, the bodies of water and how they were dammed, and discusses the process for building roads through the forests. He mentions Charlie Harber, Arthur Temple, Jr., J.J. Ray, the Silvers Family, and Don Kenley. Mr. Gerland asks him about Black Cat Lake, cattle ranching, pasture riders, and the cowboys who once lived there.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today's date is September 23<sup>rd</sup>, Tuesday, 2014. I'm Jonathan Gerland and we are with Mr. John O. Booker, Jr. and we are going to look at several things today.

**John Booker, Jr. (hereafter JB):** Okay.

**JG:** When you and I spoke on the phone the other day I had some highway drawings that your father's name was on and there he is right there.

**JB:** Well I be darn.

**JG:** They identify him here as the County Highway Engineer but you were telling me that he was actually working for the City of Lufkin.

**JB:** Well, I thought so. He worked for the Highway Department and he worked for the City of Lufkin and he worked for Temple, and Diboll and I don't know the dates of all of that.

**JG:** This is... 1926 is the date of these. I got these from TX-Dot, from the highway department.

**JB:** Well, '26, I was born in '21 in Lufkin. so he was in Lufkin then. I guess he was working for the county.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** But that is in Trinity County, but what he was doing over there I don't know.

**JG:** Yes, what we are looking at is the relocating of the highway [State Highway 94] in 1926 and I have another set from 1936 and that is when... in '36 they went straight across.

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** But anyways, what kind of got me to looking at all of this is we were just kind of looking at this area in here, which later was known as Black Cat Lake, but I know others before that – we're looking at a map from 1951 that calls it Black Cat Lake, but on this 1926 map they just say marsh.

**JB:** Right.

**JG:** And others have referred to it as a prairie, Bluff Prairie and other mentions have been Prairie Lake. And some have said that it didn't hold water all the time, it would just be seasonal.

**JB:** That is right.

**JG:** Do you know about when it would have become more of a lake? I understand it is dammed up isn't it?

**JB:** Yes, that is when it was dammed up in the early fifties, 1950's. It went right down the property line of Temple and whoever is on the other side. It seems like it was a doctor or dentist or somebody that owned that property on the other side of the fence there. But I can't remember their name.

**JG:** This is a map from 1951 and this shows what was the old highway that curved down and this is an old timber trestle that was on an "S" curve and they had a steel span over the river and it went back up this way and that was the old highway. (JB: yes) And now this is '51 showing the entrance in here. Now at some point an entrance was put...

**JB:** Right across there.

**JG:** ...straight across. Did you do that?

**JB:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** And, you were saying that Mr. Temple asked you to do that for...

**JB:** Well he didn't ask. (laughter)

**JG:** He told you to do it!

**JB:** Yes, yes. They had...yes this is the way it was.

**JG:** That was the old way.

**JB:** Yes, and this is the new way. Yes, they had a dispute with these people coming around this way and he got tired of the dispute and the roads were bad.

**JG:** Was it the beer joints?

**JB:** Yes, it went right through the middle of the beer joints there, so he said it's bad having an entrance on somebody else, so he said just put a road right straight across there and that is what we did. And that is following the property line Temple had.

**JG:** At that time. And that is pretty much the entrance as it is today?

**JB:** Exactly where it is today.

**JG:** Exactly, okay.

**JB:** Exactly.

**JG:** And you did that you think, like '50 or so?

**JB:** No, it was after '50. It was '52 or '53, somewhere along in there I suspect.

**JG:** Okay, yes because this map is '51 and it doesn't show it so, about '52 or '53.

**JB:** I was...one of my tasks at that time was to build, they had no roads whatsoever in this whole area up here. If you went in there you went railroad or horseback and they wanted to build a road system all the way through to Anderson and Cherokee County up in there. So, I had the task of getting that started and that is how I got involved with this. I had the crew and all the equipment to do that and I got the chore of doing that and then we went ahead and build all the roads through there, my crew did.

**JG:** Talk a little bit about that. Do you remember how that was done? I mean, how did y'all move the dirt around, how did y'all?

**JB:** Well, what we called a dragline in those days. You don't see them now they have arms and things but the dragline they threw the bucket out and had a winch on the machine that pulled up and got dirt in it and swing it around and tilt it and dumped it.

**JG:** So, the dragline would pull scoops?

**JB:** Yes, put the scoop full. It had a bucket on it about half the size of this table I guess. It would have a pretty good scoop of dirt and just sit there and dig and then they would fill it up and have a bulldozer come along and kind of pack it down as you went across there. Once we got somewhat of a little trail across there you could drive it with a car

then well,they came back and we got back over in here and dug-out and leveled it all up nice and pretty.

**JG:** So, what do you remember about the land through here?

**JB:** At that time it was...it wasn't much water in there but it was wet and then it rained and we stopped it up of course. It was a mess but there is a big deep ditch all the way around the left hand side of that.

**JG:** So, it wasn't holding water but it was just...

**JB:** Not then no...

**JG:** ...just marshy and wet.

**JB:** When we finally got across there and stopped it up, then it started holding water.

**JG:** Started holding water, okay.

**JB:** And the relief was back here. I don't know just where it was. Is this Mr. Temple's house?

**JG:** Yes, sir.

**JB:** Yes, the relief was back in this area here. The water went back around into here.

**JG:** Back around into here huh?

**JB:** Well when it filled up it did. It would go in and (JG: come back out) come back out if it got too much in there.

**JG:** Do you remember anything about what this might have been called or any reference?

**JB:** Black Cat is all I ever heard it called.

**JG:** Black Cat is all you ever heard.

**JB:** Yes, that is what we.

**JG:** This is a photograph from some of Mr. Temple's scrapbooks, and you can see here there is not a whole lot of water (JB: no), but it says '41 Keepers Prairie Lake, Boggy Slough, 1941.

**JB:** I be darn.

**JG:** So, that would have been ten years before you, but you don't remember any standing water necessarily?

**JB:** Well, it looked kind of like that, when it rained, yes. I don't know where the fish came from.

**JG:** Would it have been deep enough, what you encountered would have been deep enough to hold some fish?

**JB:** I expect it would, yes.

**JG:** I'm assuming that is where they caught all these fish were right there.

**JB:** Yes, they look like little bass, I don't know for sure, but of course that is Arthur.

**JG:** Yes.

**JB:** In '41 he was...I don't know what he was doing down there in '41. He was...

**JG:** Well '39 is when he built that company clubhouse so he was going in there a good bit.

**JB:** Yes, he was running the Retail Yard there in Lufkin during this period and then of course he went in the service in '42 or '43 something like that.

**JG:** Yes sir, he had told me that E. C. Durham and Judge Minton had kind of taught him how to hunt and he enjoyed going in there.

**JB:** Judge Minton hunted with a muzzle loader shotgun, or rifle, and he was all decked out when he went with his powder horn and all that sort of stuff. He was an interesting guy. But, I don't...

**JG:** You never remember it being referred to as Prairie Lake?

**JB:** No, and that was all way before my time. I went to work in 1950.

**JG:** 1950, okay.

**JB:** And, I wasn't familiar with this area much then but we had already started the road building project and we were up close to Rayville I expect somewhere along in here when he had this emergency so we pulled everything off.

**JG:** And you didn't even know that your dad was involved a few years before that, putting that through.

**JB:** Yes, I didn't know. He worked...we lived in Groveton for awhile and he worked for the, he was a resident engineer for the highway department then.

**JG:** Well that is probably when he did this map because that is what it says, Highway Engineer.

**JB:** I was, well I was very little I think. I don't know when he moved to Lufkin, but I entered kindergarten in Lufkin so it was somewhere after 1921 or '23 something like that.

**JG:** Okay, but anyways, let's look back again at this 1951 map (JB: okay) and of course apparently that is what this is showing. This is the road going in.

**JB:** That is correct.

**JG:** Which used to be the old highway (JB: that is correct) and they just straightened it off and the only road it shows then was getting to Rayville and that was it.

**JB:** Yes, that was it and that was a pretty poor road then.

**JG:** And, at the time the original clubhouse, now not the one Arthur built in '39 but the one that T. L. L. had done and Dave Kenley was involved with was over here on the slough itself.

**JB:** That is right.

**JG:** So, I guess that is what that road is there.

**JB:** That is right.

**JG:** And then just this little road.

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** So talk a little bit about how you approached putting in these roads going all over the other places.

**JB:** Well it was fairly simple. All the logging had been done in this Neches Valley all the way through. It was done with spinning off the railroads and running...

**JG:** The spurs and everything.

**JB:**...lines all and spurs and all in the woods and everything. That is the way we did, we would find those, they were pretty dad gum good engineers even though they were not, because they had to, you couldn't have severe turns or severe ups and downs to put those old engines on them. So they picked out the best route through there, so that is what I did, I just hunted these old spurs up and everything and finally connected them all up. But

they were all built mostly where there had been a railroad before, of course it had grown up in trees pretty good size.

**JG:** Yes, because that would have been early fifties when you were doing that huh?

**JB:** That is right.

**JG:** What about bridges over little streams and creeks and things. Did you have to rebuild all those?

**JB:** Yes, we crossed Cochino right along in here somewhere.

**JG:** Yes it would be on this map here that shows Cochino. Here is the road after it joins and then goes off and here it is crossing those bridges right here.

**JB:** It's almost continuous. It is a bridge here and then a field and then a bridge and then a field right through there. Incidentally I went over that road year before last while I was out at Boggy Slough and it is all still there just like I put it in. (laughter) And this was an old spur here that eventually was the one they run.

**JG:** That was the old Eastern Texas that went from Lufkin to Ratcliff and Kennard.

**JB:** Yes, it was just...

**JG:** See, it went all the way into Lufkin.

**JB:** The bridge was gone.

**JG:** The bridge over the river was gone by the time you got there. So, you followed that road all the way to the river then?

**JB:** Well, you could.

**JG:** Pretty much. There is a bridge there and a bridge there.

**JB:** It ended somewhere in there but it was no point going any further. Then we turned...

**JG:** Well actually no, you just went right to here because this is the old channel. This is the Pine Island Club through here. You just stopped here I bet.

**JB:** Yes, well we brushed this out and you could drive all the way down to the...right along in here somewhere. It seems to me like it was some bad country but anyway, then we came up here and same system just. That is the reason the trail is kind of straight, not severe curves because it followed that old...

**JG:** The old railroad lines. So, what would the equipment have consisted of there, doing that?

**JB:** Oh we had...we took the stumps out with dynamite, we had a two man crew that blew all the stumps out of the ground and then we had two bulldozers and two road graders and this dragline and four dump trucks, a winch truck. We had a horse trailer. We had a pretty good auxiliary vehicle, a truck that had an air compressor on it and all that kind of stuff, kind of a self contained little construction crew.

**JG:** Did you do a lot of scouting by horseback?

**JB:** Yes, yes I did.

**JG:** Anything you remember specific in doing all that?

**JB:** No, except it was hot and lots of ticks and it wasn't very...

**JG:** Well I imagine that Cochino Bayou putting in, how did y'all put in those bridges and stuff? Did you have any kind of pile drivers?

**JB:** We made a pile driver.

**JG:** You made a pile driver.

**JB:** ...out of that dragline we had, we took that thing off and we found an old pile driver weight, you know, and we actually didn't have any leads on it we just got above the thing and hammered and we got pretty darn good with it. We drove all the pilings in that way. But we hit firm bottom over there pretty quick, so well it was a big deal, but I was just surprised. I had no idea what would happen.

**JG:** That is pretty in-genius to come up with your own pile driver huh?

**JB:** Yes, we made the whole thing.

**JG:** Was it just a matter of making the best with what you have or?

**JB:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** Just get it done however huh?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Never asked for any equipment?

**JB:** No, that was all we had but that was enough, it was fine. In those days it was about the biggest you could get. The bulldozer we had was a D-8 or a D-9. It was the biggest one you could have.

**JG:** Yes.

**JB:** We thought it was something else.

**JG:** Was the pilings treated? Was the treating plant in operation then?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Here in Diboll?

**JB:** No, we bought those.

**JG:** Okay, so they were creosoted?

**JB:** Creosoted.

**JG:** How did they get out there by railroad? How did those big creosote posts get out there?

**JB:** Yes, they brought them up by railroad and wherever we could get close enough to it, they would dump them off and we would drag them, I forget just where we came off.

**JG:** Let's see, here is the road as it comes off right here.

**JB:** I think we were on top of this ridge here and it probably stopped, maybe it went down into here a little piece. But anywayso, they would drop them off here. See how that curve comes down?

**JG:** Yes sir.

**JB:** They would drop anything off and we would take one of the little bulldozers and drag them on down and stockpile them until we got them all there. The railroad was running the whole time we were there.

**JG:** The whole time there, the mainline.

**JB:** It was going out and they were logging up in here. They were logging pretty close to us.

**JG:** So they were logging what is now North Boggy while y'all were working?

**JB:** Yes, well they were way ahead of us though. But, the logging department was under Clyde Thompson in those days and that is who I actually worked with. So he...it was all planned out where the logging department would be fairly close to our road so they could cut the timber that had grown up in these roads. So they were ahead of us logging these little spurs that we laid out here like that. We flagged all that out and so they are the ones that cut the trees and left the stumps, so but we had planned it the year before we even started back down in here just how we would go about this thing.

**JG:** Planted trees?

**JB:** No, we planned how we would do it all.

**JG:** Oh planned, I'm sorry, how you would do it all.

**JB:** Because you have to have, when you are cutting the trees you would have to have a regular logging crew do it, so that is what they did. They planned their logging through this area ahead of me so when we got to the point, well it was already cleared and all we had to do was blow up the stumps and start grading and pushing dirt and putting in culverts.

**JG:** And culverts were hauled by the railroad also?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Was it concrete?

**JB:** Yes, we had a concrete plant in Diboll that made them. That was part of the deal and we hauled some by truck and some by rail, mostly by truck. We would haul them up there on a truck.

**JG:** Did you build this one as well, the one that went down, that went south from Rayville on toward Cedar Creek?

**JB:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** Some of that is kind of pretty down in there. So, y'all had to build all that up because that was all...

**JB:** No, it wasn't too bad. It was low but it was (JG: right), but the contour was good.

**JG:** Yes, you can see here this is a ridge here so it's all going down and then gets real flat right in there.

**JB:** And, came and hit the railroad, yes. That was pretty typical anywhere you get close to the railroad there was usually a spur that got you back in there.

**JG:** Now, do you remember the old log house, the old Rushing log home in that north end?

**JB:** Yes, I sure do.

**JG:** What do you remember about that?

**JB:** I didn't know anything about it but I went by there several times.

**JG:** I think it is this road.

**JB:** Yes, that is the main road.

**JG:** Yes, there it is, 316 feet, so I think that is about the highest point in the whole place.

**JB:** Yes, it probably was.

**JG:** Then it just drops off down here to the river bottom.

**JB:** Yes, pretty steep to that bottom. That was pretty typical of that sort of thing. There is a graveyard up there and they had a school up in here on this property too.

**JG:** Are you talking about the Pisgah?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Yes, it would be off the map over here.

**JB:** Oh this other map.

**JG:** Yes, it would be off the map over here. But, the old Rushing home was there any other homes or barns up there?

**JB:** There was none there when I was up there.

**JG:** Just the log house?

**JB:** Yes, and it was in pretty good shape.

**JG:** It was?

**JB:** Yes and everybody talked about restoring it but nobody ever did and I think it finally burned didn't it?

**JG:** Yes, I know it is not there now. I want to think I saw it in 2000 but I can't find any pictures that I saw it.

**JB:** It was pretty, when I was going through there it was...I walked around it once or twice but it was in pretty fair shape.

**JG:** Pretty good shape. Was the roof good?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Was it like cedar or cypress shingles?

**JB:** I don't know what it was. It was probably rich lighter pine instead of...they didn't have any cedar and no cypress in that area there.

**JG:** I meant on the roof?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** The roof was pine too?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** I think it looked like rich lighter pine. That is probably the reason it burned so good. Yes, they made shingles out of the pine but they had to be rich lighter.

**JG:** Rich, yes, yes.

**JB:** But that was typical of that country. I don't know anything about the Rushing people, who they were and what they were doing up there but, there have been home places all through that river bottom.

**JG:** Yes, and probably as many on the north end as anywhere. Charlie Harber, he lived up there. His mom and dad lived up there when he was a boy and in fact he lived right off of this road about right in here. There were a bunch of families that lived along that road and you can still see today certain trees and things that are there.

**JB:** They were all subsistent farmers and their cash crop was cotton and of course after a few years cotton wears the soil out and so they were left with nothing but river bottom hogs which, they ran hogs all over the country then. That is the reason they sold out because they couldn't make a living there. That is where they acquired all this land just many, many, many parts of parcels through there. That was what Dave Kenley did, he was the land buyer.

**JG:** Did you have any relations with Kenley with what you did?

**JB:** No, not...but I knew him and saw him several times. He was still fairly active. He was buying land up north and seemed like he was up in Anderson County buying land. I knew him real well...he was a...

**JG:** Oh yes, that is right he was related to your family.

**JB:** ...yes, but I wasn't very close to him. I knew his youngest boy more than anybody.

**JG:** So, you pretty much followed the old railroad grades and things.

**JB:** Old logging roads, yes.

**JG:** But what was your assignment really, just to go from one point to another or to make it to where they could?

**JB:** The assignment was to build it where they could log with trucks.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** That was the basic assignment.

**JG:** To log with trucks.

**JB:** And to get rid of the railroad.

**JG:** To get rid of the railroad and log with trucks.

**JB:** To log with trucks and, that is what they did. It was very primitive logging. They still used the mules but then the trucks were not...I would say road worthy, highway worthy, they were...and they would load these trucks and the trucks would go to the mainline and unload. That was the beginning and then finally as the road system got a little bit better, then they could bring road trucks in so they started them coming down the new roads and then drive all the way down to Diboll on the highway. So it was kind of a progressive thing.

**JG:** Yeah, took a little time to transition one from the other.

**JB:** But that was the basic thing to convert logging to trucks.

**JG:** Were they starting to immediately... now days they have got deer stands off of every road, were they starting to do that then or was that a little later?

**JB:** No, it was later. In fact, I built the deer stands. That was a little side project since I had the crew out there, so I had to flag out some deals. Originally when they first started having parties a person by the name of Bobby Farley, a forester and I were supposedly the guides because we knew the...

**JG:** The forester, Bobby Farley, okay.

**JB:** Yes, we would go out and put flagging on the road and then we would go and flag into the woods and wrap flagging around a tree and put the hunter right by the tree and that is the way it started. Then somebody said well we need to build some deer stands. So the first ones we built were attached to the tree, like free standing and I probably built ten or twelve of those, I don't know and I finished my whole assignment so then from there on afterwards what happened as far as stands somebody else did it.

**JG:** But the initial ones was just a spot?

**JB:** Just a spot.

**JG:** And they would just what sit down by the tree, stand up by the tree or?

**JB:** Yes, we would put them out on the road and say follow that flagging down and you will see it around a tree, sit down there and put your face, face the wind. It was not a lot of deer then but it was enough deer. It was a hunt-able population of deer.

**JG:** But the first stands you built, describe those a little bit in more detail. Did you just nail two-by-fours to the tree and you climb up it?

**JB:** Well no, you braced it. You build a little platform and it would be hard to describe it.

**JG:** You want to draw it?

**JB:** Yes, it is real simple here.

**JG:** He is going to draw me a diagram.

**JB:** This is the tree, so then you would put...that would be two by sixes or two by eights or something like that, boards and it would be nailed to the tree and then the little stand here would be nailed to the tree. Okay, then the side view it would be like this and then it would be braced.

**JG:** With a brace, okay.

**JB:** Then we started out putting spikes in the tree.

**JG:** Spikes, okay.

**JB:** It wasn't high, that was probably six feet.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** It wasn't high. Then we built some ladders and then we got them up a little higher and as time went on. It was very simple. You could build the whole thing from the ground almost and it worked okay.

**JG:** What did you have a typical tree you tried to build this on?

**JB:** No, just usually a cull tree of some kind, an oak or something, not a good merchantable tree.

**JG:** A sweet gum or something?

**JB:** Yes, just pick out a sorry tree.

**JG:** And, no more than about six feet high, not way up I wouldn't think.

**JB:** You had to tote everything into the woods manually so you didn't.

**JG:** You didn't want to build it too high.

**JB:** You didn't want to use too much lumber. I had a couple of guys that did that and we would just pick out spots on the map and try find a place so we would scatter out, you know.

**JG:** Right, right. Do you remember when, and maybe it was later but, when they really started managing the game a little bit more?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Was some of that going on at the time you were building the stands or was that later?

**JB:** No, no, that was later. I left and moved to Pineland in 1958 so what happened out there after that I don't know. Well, I went every year and went hunting over there but.

**JG:** But you weren't involved with what was going on?

**JB:** I wasn't involved with what they were doing with deer management. As I recall it was pretty primitive deer management. We built lots of food plots and stuff like that. I don't recall, they didn't have many corn feeders, in fact we didn't have any when they first started. That was an add on later but, they did a lot of food plots and planted oats and stuff.

**JG:** Do you remember seeing a lot of hogs?

**JB:** There was a good many hogs in there.

**JG:** What about compared to today?

**JB:** Oh no, it wasn't near as many. Of course, they were fair game, you shot them when you saw them, crossing the road or anywhere, but they were a problem then with tearing up the food plots. They weren't real bad but they were fair game. They just shot them and let them lie.

**JG:** Just let them lay there. Didn't try to eat them?

**JB:** Didn't eat them or anything, it was nothing wrong with it because they originally that is where they came from these farmers and they just went feral. But looking back on it, it was the beginning of a real problem because they are a problem now.

**JG:** What about some other things from that period of building the roads. Do you remember seeing a lot of snakes in those Chocino bottoms?

**JB:** Yes, there were a good many snakes. We never had any close encounters, the crew didn't, but they killed some, the loggers killed a lot of snakes. Most of them, the big ones were timber rattlers and they killed some monsters. There ought to be some pictures of those big old snakes, they would hold them up.

**JG:** Yes, in the Free Press occasionally they would run pictures like that.

**JB:** We killed a few as we went along. I don't know why we killed them, they don't present much of a threat.

**JG:** What about water moccasins?

**JB:** Oh there were a lot of them and you sure had to watch your step around those rascals. They didn't back up and run. It was a little hazardous and you had to be careful with copperheads. If you put anything on the ground you had to be careful about picking it up but nobody ever got bit, everybody was well aware and they were cautious. They looked and I don't recall anybody having a close encounter except that we would find them all the time and I don't recall anybody logging with us being bit by any kind of a snake so it probably wasn't as big a threat as we thought it was.

**JG:** Yes, yes. Were they doing any of the...because you probably encountered some of the loggers and things when you were out there but do you remember any, I know in the forties and the fifties they used to deaden the hardwoods did you ever see any of that?

**JB:** Yes, they did that. They did quite a bit of it on the Pineland side.

**JG:** On Pineland?

**JB:** It was hill hardwood which supposedly had no value and it...it took up space for the pine trees. I think they saved some of their oak bearing trees as they went through instead of cutting.

**JG:** What did you say it was a hill, hill hardwoods?

**JB:** Yes, hill, h-i-l-l, hardwood type hill, not the bottom hardwoods.

**JG:** Okay, not the bottoms.

**JB:** They're the ones that are worth a lot of money but these up on the high ground didn't do well and they are just taking up space so they...

**JG:** I think in the annual reports they sometime called timber stand improvements.

**JB:** Yes, TSI.

**JG:** And, a big part of that was deadening those hardwoods huh?

**JB:** Yes, and they would just deaden them and let them fall where they were.

**JG:** We have got pictures of Albert Mitchell and some others they would kind of girdle, chop around the outside of it and that would be poisoning them.

**JB:** Yes, they would poison them and they...I suppose it was good forestry practice. There was a lot of objections to it from certain people, but as far as improving your land where the pine trees grow best, that was the proper thing to do.

**JG:** Was there any cattle running out there at that time?

**JB:** Yes, in the early fifties, yes.

**JG:** Who owned the cattle?

**JB:** Dave Kenley.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** He was big in the cattle business too. He had leased it from Temple, but they didn't renew his new lease and I believe it was probably...there was cows out there when we started the road thing and I would guess somewhere in the middle fifties they didn't renew his lease and he eventually moved all his cattle out of there. There was...this was...all this at one time was pretty well open.

**JG:** He is pointing to the map around Rayville.

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** I think that is what that white pretty much indicates.

**JB:** Yes, it was kind of a hay meadow looking places all in through there. That was...that lake wasn't there then. It was built in the early fifties. But he ran his cattle all through here, mostly a Brahman type cows, but the cows didn't do well growing with pine timber.

**JG:** Yes, when he mentioned lake just a moment ago he was pointing to the lake that is just off of the old clubhouse which some people call that Buddy's pond, but I don't know how it got that name.

**JB:** I don't either.

**JG:** Just for the recording I wanted to clarify he was talking about that lake.

**JB:** It was fairly clear there. It was just a ravine and...

**JG:** Do you remember who put that lake in, who was over that? Who dammed that up?

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

**JG:** But it was after you got started on the roads?

**JB:** Yes, it was after I got started on the roads. I don't know who did that.

**JG:** Do they pump water in to keep it filled now?

**JB:** No it had enough water shed to keep it full, see the water sheds were way on up in here so it had pretty good water shed on it.

**JG:** I think the dam is on this side.

**JB:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** That is the old clubhouse, this is the pipeline, and there is the clubhouse.

**JB:** Yes, they dammed up this 200 foot contour.

**JG:** But you don't remember who would have done that?

**JB:** No, I don't remember, it wasn't... as I recall it wasn't a very big project. It was fairly easy to do.

**JG:** Was that just to have some fishing to the clubhouse there when they would entertain?

**JB:** I guess it was. I don't really know what the motivation was for building that.

**JG:** Then there is that little bitty pond down there too that is still there and it is kind of troughed up. They got little dams around it. Of course, that is marshy area there.

**JB:** There were several little ponds that were built for the cows I guess because there were places you know along the river you couldn't... cows couldn't get to the river.

**JG:** Right.

**JB:** He didn't want them down in there so.

**JG:** There is one there.

**JB:** He put in some little ponds here, there and yonder.

**JG:** I know at Walkerton they had a good sized little pond. There was a logging camp there at one time, but then Kenley or Ray put in a dipping vat up there and it is still intact.

**JB:** The dipping vat was a compulsory thing. You had to dip your cows.

**JG:** To transport them out of county huh?

**JB:** Ever so often so, seemed like they had one down around Boggy Slough.

**JG:** Yes sir, they had one at Rayville and one at Walkerton. The one here is kind of caved in from, I don't know, there is a lot of hackberry trees along there. But the one at the north end it is still intact. It is still in really good shape, holds water and the concrete slab around it is still there. It hasn't been broken.

**JB:** On this siding is where they loaded the cows. They loaded them in box cars and cattle cars and take them back down and brought them around and send them to Fort Worth, I guess. It seems like a long ways to send a cow, but that is what they did. That was the only way to get them out of there.

**JG:** Yes, you had to either go down to Blix and go to Lufkin or go down to Diboll.

**JB:** I guess they cut across to get on the Santa Fe as quick as they could. But, it was a pretty big operation. He had this whole area as I recall...

**JG:** You talking about Kenley now?

**JB:** No, Ray.

**JG:** J. J. Ray.

**JB:** I think until he went up to this...I'm not sure but I think up into here is where...

**JG:** I think they ran...well maybe it was Kenley but I know Kenley went above there.

**JB:** I think Ray just had this as I recall.

**JG:** The south end.

**JB:** I could be wrong.

**JG:** Yes, he had several thousand head of cattle.

**JB:** Yes, and a pretty nice ranch house here. I don't what happened...yes, I do, that [house] was moved to Spencer Knutson. Yes, that is it, yes.

**JG:** That is Mr. Ray right there. We are looking at a 1910's era photo of the old Ray house. I don't have it here handy but some of these are Rushing's. The old Rushing family from that north end had lived here and they kind of took care of Mr. Ray. I had heard, I think Mr. Harber and some others had told me that Mrs. Ray didn't want to have anything to do with living out in the woods...

**JB:** That is right, yes, that is right. That is what I understood too.

**JG:** But, that is Mr. Ray there and these are just some of his pasture riders.

**JB:** Yes, he had a couple of full time people and I think the Silvers came out there at a certain period of time and she kept house for him. Now, when I was probably at the age of 7 or 8, which would have been '28, '29, somewhere along in there, 1930 maybe my parents would go out about once every month or so and visit Captain Ray at this place right here.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** Then shortly after that he moved and I don't remember the exact date he left.

**JG:** Now, did you ever go with them to visit him?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay, what do you remember about that?

**JB:** Nothing except he had a cowboy that played the guitar and sang. That is the only thing that impressed me. Well, I guess I was six or seven years old.

**JG:** Somebody could sing and play the guitar huh?

**JB:** Yes, I don't recall what song he played but I was real impressed because I had seen them in the movies, you know, and that was a real cowboy.

**JG:** A real cowboy in East Texas.

**JB:** Yes, but...

**JG:** Do you remember anything about their get up, their chaps and spurs?

**JB:** Oh yes they used chaps and spurs, yes chaps were...you really needed them. It was a lot of stickers and blackberry bushes and stuff. And all cowboys wear spurs whether they need them or not.

**JG:** Yes, we have got lots of pictures and it is interesting all those old cowboys are wearing boots but they're lace up boots. Nobody has got on slip on boots like people wear today.

**JB:** Yes, I know it.

**JG:** There all laced up practically to their knee and those were real cowboys but they must have had three dozen tie downs for their boot straps.

**JB:** They were pretty popular because I remember my dad wore those high top lace boots.

**JG:** He did too huh?

**JB:** Yes, outside when they go to work. If they were working outside they wore those boots.

**JG:** Just lace them up huh?

**JB:** I guess. Anyway that was very interesting. I wish I could remember more about him. He died in Fort Worth and I don't know what the date was.

**JG:** '41 maybe, I can't remember.

**JB:** I went up there with my mother to see him. He wanted to see her and give her some instructions about his son, but I don't remember anything about the conversation. He was in bed, he was bed-ridden but that is...he didn't know where he was going to be buried and that is when my mother gave him the plot next to her mother. So, he is buried next to my grandmother there in Lufkin.

**JG:** In Lufkin, right. I think J. J. Jr. is there also.

**JB:** Yes, Mr. Gibson took care of his funeral.

**JG:** Yes, J. J. Sr. died in '41, yes that is his obituary.

**JB:** In '41, yes okay, that is about right. I was thinking I was in A&M then, yes.

**JG:** Called him a Pioneer East Texas Rancher.

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Died in Cook Memorial Hospital in Fort Worth.

**JB:** Yes, that is where it was.

**JG:** Came to Trinity County in 1913 from Archer County.

**JB:** Yes, that is up north isn't it?

**JG:** Drove cattle up the Chisholm Trail through Cheyenne, Wyoming. He was closely associated with Captain Bill McDonald – that is that famous Texas Ranger, and opened a thirty thousand acre Southern Pine Lumber Company ranch in Trinity, County.

**JB:** That sure sounds like a lot of land. He went further up the road then; he went all the way up the road then.

**JG:** Preserving and protecting game and was known as the father of wild game, they quoted him.

**JB:** He was the first one to try to enforce the poaching and he was tough enough to do it. Who is this over here?

**JG:** Yes, that is Dave Kenley there and that is Judge Minton.

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** This guy he has got slip on boots, most of them had lace ups but he has got slip on boots, Judge Minton.

**JB:** Those are real high aren't they? They are not cowboy boots. Yes I guess they are cowboy type boots, he surely wouldn't be hunting in that. He has got a big knife on him.

**JG:** A big knife, and it looks like he is wearing an Army style cap.

**JB:** That was a little spindly deer wasn't it.

**JG:** See there is another one of those cowboys. See the lace up boots?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** That is wolf there.

**JB:** Yes, that is very typical; most of the woods foremen wore those type boots.

**JG:** And that is J. J. Ray and I bet those are lace up boots but he has got some leggings covering them up. That is Walter Robinson.

**JB:** I haven't seen these old pictures.

**JG:** We got all these pictures from the grandson of John Silvers, Sr.

**JB:** Is that right?

**JG:** Yes, that man there, Joe Silvers and that is Charlie Harber.

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** That is that old barn at Rayville but, I was going to show you that picture of all those old cowboys. It might not be in this one, but anyway you can see their boots, they got chaps covering them up here but they all had on lace up boots. These are all at Rayville here.

**JB:** I understand he had pretty good cattle.

**JG:** Look how high those fences are, (laughter) one, two, three, four, five, six, seven boards.

**JB:** I imagine it is easier to see, sitting up. I wasn't get up there. (laughter)

**JG:** Look at those old bulls.

**JB:** They were dangerous.

**JG:** There is him, J.J., feeding them corn. Look at that dog climbing the fence.

**JB:** Yes, they were real cowboys, he was. He was the first one to try to protect what little deer there were and I think I don't know if they ever brought many deer in or not. I'm not sure.

**JG:** Well we've seen sources that say it and then some that just don't mention it. There was some of that going on even bringing in deer from south Texas and even Mexico.

**JB:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** They are feeding the hogs there.

**JB:** There is a little kid, you see a big hog you see little kids on it.

**JG:** That is one of the Rushing's there. He has got his bullets and there is his Winchester.

**JB:** Those cow dogs were rough and rowdy. The Silvers were all inter-tangled in that family. They ended up, this one here is probably the one that went to... I'm not sure.

**JG:** Yes, I think so.

**JB:** And he and his wife were taking care of J. J. Jr.

**JG:** Yes, that is the daddy, John Silvers...

**JB:** I think he was gone by then.

**JG:** ...John Jr. and then Raymond. The man who gave us these photos, his father was Raymond.

**JB:** This kid, well he is older than me. See, I was born in '21, so I was 8 years there and he is a little older than 8 years.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** Yes he was...

**JG:** Yes, see that was a real cowboy there. He has got his chaps on, got his rifle with the butt facing forward, got his rope and he is ready to go.

**JB:** Yes. (laughing)

**JG:** He is ready to go. Then there is a lot of photos of women out there.

**JB:** I be darn. There is the Silvers, the Robinsons.

**JG:** That was Charlie Harber's sister.

**JB:** Yes, Walter Robinson was one of the pasture riders wasn't he?

**JG:** Yes sir, yes that is him now and that is the Silvers.

**JB:** He probably worked for them. Yes, he has got lace boots on.

**JG:** Yes.

**JB:** This one looks like he doesn't.

**JG:** Yes that looks like slip-on's there. See, there is two more women, two women, those are all women, those are all women, more women. (looking at photos)

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** They were just in those Silvers photographs. You don't know who they are?

**JB:** No, it doesn't even look like this country. Well it does here doesn't it?

**JG:** Yes, it is all the same place. It is all pine trees.

**JB:** Yes, yes. It must be some of the Silvers family.

**JG:** And that we believe is the old original clubhouse, the one on Boggy Slough. That is the clubhouse that was on...that is the Boggy Slough one itself.

**JB:** When I was there a flood had come and tore it all up and floated most of it away.

**JG:** Floated away.

**JB:** Yes, it wasn't...

**JG:** And, that is what Mr. Temple had told me, he said they would get in there when he was younger and he remembered everything was by car then, he said they would get in there and a big rain storm would come through and they might be in there three or four days.

**JB:** They couldn't have picked a worse spot.

**JG:** He said that drove him crazy being stuck there because he had things to do so that is why he built one up off that pipeline to get on higher ground.

**JB:** Well that one, going back in there it was...

**JG:** Back to the slough?

**JB:** Yes, it is over here. This right here was a bad spot and I had to...the elevation was such that I had to build a pump in the road to get the culvert there. Once we did that it pretty well worked okay. But, you can go on down here except in good weather. This all got flooded.

**JG:** Yes, when the water got up. Was this where the house that is now the Denman's... what pasture rider was that? Do you remember who was there?

**JB:** No, it is right here I believe right here. Yes, that is where Joe, the house is there and what was those people names?

**JG:** Was it Grumbles?

**JB:** Grumbles, yes Ab Grumbles, yes.

**JG:** And before that it might have been the Silvers I think.

**JB:** It could have been them or the Robinson's or some of those people.

**JG:** But when you were in there it was the Grumbles?

**JB:** Right, yes.

**JG:** Now did you see him out and about when you were out there working?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Now he was still kind of watching and riding and checking the fences and that kind of thing huh?

**JB:** Well yes, it was trespassing along this river was horrible and of course in bad weather you couldn't get in here.

**JG:** So, how would the trespassers get in?

**JB:** Come down the river, just stop and get out and start hunting.

**JG:** Oh okay, just come down the river.

**JB:** Somewhere along the line we pushed a trail all the way across there. You can see...

**JG:** Yes.

**JB:** And that was just for the pasture rider to watch

**JG:** To watch the river. Would they have motor boats?

**JB:** Yes, you could hear them. This far up you could hear the motor boats sometime but there was no way to get down there.

**JG:** Get down to them huh?

**JB:** And, they were pretty tough folks. I'm not too sure these pasture riders wanted to tangle with them. They did have one killing out here.

**JG:** At least one.

**JB:** Yes, at least one.

**JG:** Yes, in fact in that article there was one in the thirties and then they had one later in the sixties, Ward Burke has told me about that one and some others have too.

**JB:** They didn't say much about them but it was wild-west country back then, everybody went armed and it was tough.

**JG:** Yes, alright. I think that is most of what I had. I think we've covered everything. You have talked a little bit about the Ray's and the Silvers. Did you ever know any of the Silvers?

**JB:** I met them out here. I mean I did, I know I did but I don't recall it. But then when J. J. Jr. bought a place out at Glen Rose, a ranch out there, he got them to go out there and run the ranch for him. He lived here in Lufkin and they were there and I went several times out to the Glen Rose Ranch.

**JG:** Oh okay, what do you remember about that?

**JB:** That was after the war.

**JG:** After World War II?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** What do you remember about that?

**JB:** It was a real nice ranch. I don't know why...it was built on a creek called Squaw Creek and it never went dry.

**JG:** Squaw or squirrel?

**JB:** Squaw.

**JG:** Squaw.

**JB:** S-q-u-a-w, the last Indian was killed in that part of the world were two squaws and they ran them down and killed them, so they named it Squaw Creek. That is where the nuclear plant is just on down.

**JG:** Right, right.

**JB:** But he had the Silvers there and she kept house and he did whatever the handy man did. He had, as I recall he didn't have a big herd of cows, thirty or forty something like that and a couple of horses. But it was a beautiful place and it was about seven or eight miles out of town, maybe not that far.

**JG:** It was a rock house wasn't it?

**JB:** No, it was a two story frame house.

**JG:** Okay. Mr. Joe Silvers went out there several years back because he remembered being out there as a kid and he wanted to go back and that is what he was telling me, that nuclear plant had it all fenced off. But he somehow either got permission or I think he just, if I remember right, the story he told me was his wife waited in the car and he climbed the fence. But, he had to go in one more time and just see the place.

**JB:** What did he say about it?

**JG:** Well he showed me some pictures. I don't know why I was thinking it had rocks, maybe it had a rock fence or something.

**JB:** I remember it was a frame house.

**JG:** Yes, I remember him showing me pictures of it. He photographed it and just kind of looked around and then he left. He didn't want to get caught or anything, but he just wanted to see it one more time.

**JB:** It was a pretty place. It was absolutely spotless. That woman was some housekeeper. Everything was in perfect shape. Of course they didn't have that much to do but she had it in perfect shape.

**JG:** And what was your connection to them?

**JB:** The Silvers?

**JG:** Yes.

**JB:** They were working there for J. J. Jr. and I went out with him.

**JG:** J. J. Jr.?

**JB:** Yes, I rode from Lufkin.

**JG:** You were just a friend?

**JB:** Yes.

**JG:** Oh okay, a friend.

**JB:** Yes, he would go out occasionally and I after the war could get off and he would come by and want me to ride out there with him. I enjoyed going and then my

**JG:** What kind of cattle did he raise?

**JB:** He had heifers?

**JG:** Heifers.

**JB:** Yes, he had good stock.

**JG:** All pure heifers?

**JB:** Yes. That was just a...I don't know he didn't really...we would go out there and I don't recall him ever getting on a horse. He would just ask Mr. Silvers how everything was going, type conversation, how many head we got now and how many cows, you know, he just...I don't know why he bought the place in the first place. I don't think he did either, but he would go out about once a month. I'm sure he got a pretty good price for it when the nuclear plant wanted it. (laughter)

**JG:** Yes, yes.

**JB:** He ended up... kind of a tragedy the way he ended up. He got involved with a woman and somehow she manipulated and got all his money. And I thought from listening to my parents that he had a trust fund and I don't know how somebody would get a hold of that. I guess you could. But anyway he went broke and had to leave, couldn't stay in the hotel. Mr. Dupuy, I'm thinking Carl Dupuy, he was into race horses and he had some in Maryland, so he sent him up there.

**JG:** Is that Dupree or D-u-p-u-y...or r-e-e?

**JB:** Dupuy.

**JG:** Okay, D-u-p-u-y.

**JB:** He owned the Chevrolet station there in Lufkin. He made a lot of money, but anyway he got into horse racing and J. J. Jr., he sent him up there and all he could do was walk the horses. He couldn't ride, he was pretty old, not that old, but he was kind of deteriorating. Anyway, he died up there and Mr. Gipson, Gipson Funeral Home, was a good friend of his and he had his body shipped back to Lufkin and he buried him in the cemetery, the old cemetery. He died a pauper.

**JG:** At Glendale.

**JB:** But anyway, it is kind of a tragedy.

**JG:** I think he is buried right by his dad.

**JB:** Well, I don't think so, but he could have been. I know where his dad was buried and that is where my grandmother is and I don't recall seeing...I don't remember ever going to his grave.

**JG:** Somewhere I have got a picture after we finish here I will see if I can pull it up. I was pretty sure it was.

**JB:** Well yes, I would like to see it. I'm curious about it. I've been threatening to take my grandson and go out to that cemetery and see if I can find my grandmother's grave and Mr. Ray's, Captain Ray's grave.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** It is...he was an interesting guy. He never worked a day in his life that I know of.

**JG:** J. J., Jr.?

**JB:** Yes, he was kind of a drug store cowboy type. He wore boots and a big hat but, he seemed very knowledgeable about horses so he might have in his younger days.

**JG:** Did he talk much about his dad?

**JB:** No, no, what I heard about the old man was from my parents.

**JG:** Okay.

**JB:** And I don't know how they got connected with him but they did some way and of course, they would go out there and visit quite often. My dad worked for Temple from...he went to Lufkin in 1918 and I think he worked for Temple about eight or nine years before that and he moved to Lufkin as city engineer, he got a job up there as city engineer and that is where I was born in Lufkin.

**JG:** Yes, I think you told me earlier that your father was down in Mexico...

**JB:** Yes, before that.

**JG:** ...and then when Poncho Villa started causing trouble they had to leave and he got down here and he answered, I think if I remember right, an ad in the Fort Worth Star Telegram.

**JB:** That is right for Dave Kenley.

**JG:** That Dave Kenley had invited him to come down.

**JB:** Yes, and they wanted him to lay out the railroad system and he ended up doing a lot of other stuff besides that. Anyway, he was...he liked to build railroads.

**JG:** Yes, yes.

**JB:** That is what he did when the war started he wanted to do something patriotic so...

**JG:** You're talking about World War I?

**JB:** Two.

**JG:** Two, okay.

**JB:** Yes, he was too old for World War I and so he built railroads up in the Dangerfield area when they put in some sort of a plant up there. So, he went up there and did that as part of his war effort. It's all very interesting.

**JG:** Well, I appreciate it Mr. Booker. I'll go ahead and stop the recorder now.

**END OF INTERVIEW**