

**HOWARD DANIEL**

**Interview 228a**

**August 3, 2011, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this wide-ranging interview with Jonathan Gerland, native Lufkinite and long-time Love Wood Products employee Howard Daniel discusses his life in the forest products industry and his musical hobbies. Mr. Daniel started at Love Wood Products in 1957 and worked as the bookkeeper, salesman, and eventually the president before the company closed in 1985. He discusses their plants in Diboll, Waco, Tenaha, and the Dallas area, as well as the mechanics of making wood flour. He talks about their different products, like wood flour for school desks and roofing products and miracle bark, to name a few. Mr. Daniel also reminisces about his love for music, particularly singing, which began in the 1940's while he was in the Navy and continued with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Chorale, the Seagle Colony, and choral training in New York. He also started the Temple choir that performed in Diboll at Christmas. Mr. Daniel also talks about the musical piece he is currently writing and his love of the piano.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today's date is August 3, 2011. My name is Jonathan Gerland. We are at the History Center; today I'm with Mr. Howard Daniel and we are going to do an oral history interview. I thought Mr. Daniel, if we could, maybe just start with telling us when and how you came to work for Love Wood Products.

**Howard Daniel (hereafter HD):** In 1957, I do remember that, I was working for Lufkin Industries in the office there and at the time friends in the Presbyterian Church, which included Jim and Mae Love, said they were needing somebody. Earnestine Kerr was the secretary and sort of the everything and they needed another somebody to be everything so...

**JG:** What was that last name?

**HD:** Earnestine Kerr.

**JG:** Kerr.

**HD:** K-e-r-r.

**JG:** Okay, I'm sorry, go ahead.

**HD:** Well, I believe her husband was at one time the postmaster here in Diboll. Anyway, they invited me over, the Love's invited me over to...we just met and kind of hit it off real good. Had supper with the Love's and he said, "You want a job?" And I said, "Well I think I do, I think I'll try this." So, I came here and not sure of the date but in the year of 1957 came down actually and took Earnestine Kerr's place. She was leaving because I

think her husband was transferred or something. So, I became basically the bookkeeper, the secretary, the whatever we needed to do.

**JG:** What was your educational and professional experience to that point?

**HD:** Well other than just early business college some university work.

**JG:** What schools did you go to?

**HD:** SFA, Lufkin High School and from that point on I never, never finished a degree, never finished a degree. So, but anyway I came to work down here, found it a little bit bustley at the time because we were in the process when I came of building plant number 2 in Waco. Plant number 1 was here, Jim Love came in and I guess you realize that they were taking all of the waste, dry waste, from planed lumber and grinding it up, re-milling it to wood flour. It could be made into any mesh which was generally because the screen sizes.

**JG:** Describe say your first day at work when you first came to Diboll, the plant. I have heard that the wood dust, the wood flour, was just dust everywhere.

**HD:** Well the Wood Flour plant did create a lot of dust.

**JG:** What was your first impression? What do you remember about that first day and what you saw, or the first time you saw that?

**HD:** Well, I'm trying to think. I thought gosh that is a lot and if I spend very much time out here I'm going to have it all down my back and everything else. And, that was true of the people that worked there.

**JG:** Did people wear mask or anything?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** They did okay.

**HD:** They were not required to, but most of them did.

**JG:** Okay.

**HD:** So, occasionally some of them just made it without it, but it was you know a busy thing. The big grinding machines...

**JG:** And you had never seen anything like that before?

**HD:** No, no, no. Everything was electrically controlled almost push button set up for the plant. And none of the plants in the ensuing years were never really very big because all

they did was take this material in and automatically run it through the machines and grind it to the size that we needed it for whoever.

**JG:** So, essentially sawdust and shavings and things like that?

**HD:** Sawdust and shavings dry, dried stuff.

**JG:** They would pound it and break it down into smaller particles, dust.

**HD:** Yes, we used hammermills, attrition mills.

**JG:** What is an attrition mill?

**HD:** An attrition mill is a rather hefty machine that has heavy plates that grind against each other. A hammermill has literally hammers, steel hammers and it just sort of I guess for lack of a better word beats it to death.

**JG:** Pulverizes it?

**HD:** Pulverizes it, but in an attrition mill it squeezes it. Sorry we don't have a TV here. If the stuff is going through those two plates which are sort of corrugated are going against each other in opposite directions.

**JG:** He is sliding his hands back and forth and pressing his hands together to illustrate the attrition mill.

**HD:** You can get a reasonably good cut from that first round but if you are really looking for a very fine, fine product you leave it and keep it going through this attrition mill until it becomes almost powder. And a lot of our product at times had to be that fine. Also, it was more dangerous I guess to the fear of explosion and fire was always there.

**JG:** Yes, I was going to ask you about that. Were there any fires during your time of work?

**HD:** We did have some, we did have some. I don't remember if we had one here in Diboll; we may have.

**JG:** And that would be such that I know even at the Fiberboard plants that is always real dangerous because the particles are so small it's just almost like spontaneous combustion just the whole atmosphere blows up.

**HD:** Well, the problem is the grinding, you know, because that makes it so fine.

**JG:** Yes, that could spark it.

**HD:** So, we were always very careful that we did have, we did have a few on occasion but for the most part mainly you needed to keep your facilities as clean as possible. This was another ongoing thing. Housekeeping was one of the important things. You couldn't let it get really covered up in fine dust or any kind of stuff like that. So interesting though to see and of course you know, hammermills today are used all over the place for everything, usually cutting, grinding. Attrition mills are used in many other industries because of its ability to pulverize as opposed to just breaking up.

**JG:** Who were the customers? Where was this wood flour shipped to?

**HD:** Wood flour was mostly shipped to roofing companies.

**JG:** For the felt and all that?

**HD:** In those days before fiberglass everybody used paper. They use a paper sheet, any kind of waste paper craft that sort of thing, made an actual sheet like a paper mill only heavy and then it was impregnated with asphalt. Then it had a layer of sawdust or wood flour, again impregnated with asphalt and the final cover on roofing was mica, of course it still is even on fiberglass. But fiberglass...

**JG:** That is like m-i-c-a?

**HD:** Yes, mica. Fiberglass uses a similar mat only it is fiberglass so, it's impregnated your asphalt but they don't use any wood on it. I think the wood added an extra in it. Most of the majority of our customers were roofing companies.

**JG:** Roofing companies. What about drilling mud, was some of it used there?

**HD:** We did make some drilling mud on order occasionally but not a great bit. It works just about the same as a big slurry of whatever you could pour it in. It would seal off, seal off breaks in the ground and then we had another interesting customer, Dow Chemical. Dow Chemical used fine wood flour if they had a break in the piping train anywhere within this huge complex they would dump wood flour in it. The flour then would go with whatever they were making to wherever the break was and seal it until they could get it fixed. Interesting use of it. Let's see, we had a Pennsylvania company, let me think who was that.

**JG:** Well, maybe some of that will come back to you but let me ask you about... I read somewhere in the fifties and sixties most of the product was shipped by railroad.

**HD:** That is correct, that is correct.

**JG:** How was that working with the railroad companies? You being the bookkeeper I imagine you at least kept the books up. Anything beyond that or did you have to coordinate and work with TSE [Texas South Eastern Railroad], George Honea or anybody?

**HD:** Oh yes, they furnished all the cars here and shipped out. What was the best thing for us and all of the mill work companies where we did establish new plants, and I ought to go back and say, we were building Waco...

**JG:** I'm sorry I got you off track.

**HD:** ...which was in connection with the William Cameron Company, mill work. They only import and use ponderosa pine. Ponderosa is better because it doesn't have as much pitch in it. You can use yellow pine and we did.

**JG:** That is what Diboll used.

**HD:** Yes, ponderosa was a better deal. You didn't have much of the gummy stuff. We used ponderosa there. All of the output of their sawdust and shavings from their operations we took, we remanufactured it into one kind of flour or another and sent it. But at that time and may still be, the railroads had established a tariff that was favorable to the millwork people here. You could ship from say Redding, California or Oregon, Washington, anywhere the ponderosa was produced to this part of the country and even further for a very favorable rate. The material, the raw material, came in at that rate to Waco. Let's use that for an example. Then when they shipped their stuff out it continued on that same favored rate and the residue which we were taking also were shipped on that same favored rate.

**JG:** So, the raw materials would be logs coming to the William Cameron Company.

**HD:** Or, just rough lumber, you know, coming into Waco.

**JG:** Now, William Cameron made windows and door sashes?

**HD:** Windows, door sashes, shutters, anything cabinetry millwork whatever.

**JG:** But, not raw lumber they worked with some type of finished product.

**HD:** Well generally you could buy I think they did run some good wide ponderosa stuff for building but a lot of it millworks, most of it.

**JG:** Right.

**HD:** That same deal for instance, if you were going from Redding to New York would be, let's use the example \$1.95 a hundred weights. I don't remember what it was but anyway \$1.95, but it could be stopped in Waco, milled, and sent on to New York with a balance probably at Waco for \$1.35 and then from Waco to New York was simply the balance of that whole rate. A very intricate type thing and we had lots and lots of dealings with the Intercontinental Railroads because of this but they were very generous with this

type thing. They needed the lumber shipments real bad so they created rates that were favorable. We were able to use those because we were using part of whatever came in.

**JG:** Well it gave a little more value to their service too. They handled essentially the same thing multiple times it was just different forms and shapes.

**HD:** There was a transient charge involved with all of this. Whatever your rate was in a transient charge of maybe \$27.50 or something like that, a rate from Redding to Joplin, Missouri for instance where there is a roofing plant would be \$1.05. Okay, it would be a \$1.05 to Waco, let's say again for an example, when it moved out it cost nothing except the transient charge if you were going to Joplin.

**JG:** Now, I know you eventually became president.

**HD:** That is right.

**JG:** Your conversation here you obviously I assume you eventually got in on decision making of how to transpire all this business. But, initially were you involved with that or was it bookkeeping only?

**HD:** No, I did bookkeeping and as we expanded we gradually picked up more people. Mr. Love...

**JG:** But, I mean eventually you got to the decision making process, okay we are going to route it this way and all?

**HD:** Right, sure, right. Sales, it was up to me to try to keep enough sales available for the production. The problem with the plants where we had them, they were all in conjunction with other plants and the agreement was to take it all regardless of whether you could ship it anywhere. So, it behooved me and anybody else that could do it to secure as much business as we could. And for the most part we did well. We had some lean times when it got a little bad. The roofing business in those days was a bustling industry itself, big, big, names in roofing.

**JG:** I didn't want to completely take you off the subject here. I know you wanted to establish that Waco was being put in when you first started. You want to continue?

**HD:** Waco was plant number two, probably the largest of the plants. You always have to plan for storage as well because if you can't ship it in bulk in a rail car you would have to bag it. And, we did, we bagged a lot and inventoried a lot but it was always handy when someone came along and said they needed a bag. We also did, let's see the third plant was...trying to think...it had to be...

**JG:** Was it Clifton or Anonna?

**HD:** ...Dallas, Dallas and there we were involved with the operations of Temple.

**JG:** Temple Manufacturing Company.

**HD:** Temple Manufacturing in Dallas.

**JG:** They made wooden crates and things, boxes.

**HD:** Right, right, same set up with shipping.

**JG:** So, all the plants had to be close to a supplier of the sawmill, residue basically from some other manufacturing process.

**HD:** They were all adjacent and all we did was just put big piping in and they would blow it over with air. We had large tanks to hold it. The fire problem, when we had it, usually occurred in one of the tanks because a piece of metal often would get in, come along with the stuff. We hated that but it happened. The metal would cause a spark as it went flowing into this tank and frequently it would start a blaze that you would know was happening kind of like a smoldering thing but it will eventually go. In that case then you had to empty everything by hand out of that tank and we did that on several occasions.

**JG:** How big would the tanks be?

**HD:** Oh gosh, it was like a big corn silo.

**JG:** Okay.

**HD:** Some they varied in size depending on what was coming in but, like a big, big silo.

**JG:** You said Waco was probably the largest plant. I have some report here from 1968 where Waco employed twelve people.

**HD:** Right.

**JG:** I think even at that time that was the biggest operation. Was that true to your memory?

**HD:** That is true, right. In Diboll we had our first mill manager that I remember was Earl Chance, many people will remember him and later Dick Donovan. And even in the course of doing other things here we had other employees besides. We had a regular accountant after awhile and I had a secretary. Jim Love had a secretary. We had Bruce Bain for a while who worked on engineering problems. Our plant manager, overseer was W. F. Taylor from Diboll. He spent a lot of his lifetime in our employment going from place to place. And then later on as we gathered more plants we had Herbert Harris, both of them excellent guys who could, both of them could do almost anything you wanted them to do. They knew how; if you had a problem they could fix it. Then I was going to move on, after Dallas we had Clifton which is...

**JG:** Near Waco?

**HD:** ...west of Waco with a work company there, same set up. We had probably five or six employees there. The whole thing is these plants were so automated that you really didn't need a lot of people to run them. All you had to do was walk in and push the right button and it would do everything it was supposed to do.

**JG:** You were mentioning people awhile ago and I may want to come back and ask you some specifics about that but one name that keeps coming to mind especially when you are talking about automation is Mr. Mikulka, Mike Mikulka.

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** Was he actually a Love Wood Products employee or was he Southern Pine Lumber that also worked on?

**HD:** He was a Love Wood Products employee for awhile. When they brought him here...

**JG:** Tell who he was. Tell a little bit about what you know.

**HD:** Dr. Mikulka was a refugee from...actually he married a Swiss lady but he escaped from Czechoslovakia during the Russian stuff there and he married this girl from Switzerland.

**JG:** And, I understand he was fairly highly educated.

**HD:** Oh yes!

**JG:** The modern scientific method of forestry and wood science.

**HD:** A PhD, the whole thing, very, very, very intelligent guy and he worked on a number of projects. But, I'm afraid I would have to say that Love Wood Products just wasn't big enough for him to really expand his influence on how to do something. That being my take on it but actually he and Mr. Love were really good friends as well and we did whatever we could to help him until he got going good.

**JG:** So he had a lot of input into the machinery?

**HD:** That is right.

**JG:** So, a lot of the automation was due to him?

**HD:** Yes, this was something he was used to doing in Europe.



**JG:** In Europe, okay.

**HD:** Very interesting guy as a matter of fact. Very down to earth even though you knew you were talking to a real brain you know, so a really nice couple.

**JG:** And his wife was Maja?

**HD:** Yes, Maja, Maja.

**JG:** Maja I'm sorry. I've seen it spelled M-a-j-a I think so...that is my east Texas pronunciation.

**HD:** From here he moved I think if I'm remembering correctly he moved to Corvallis, Oregon to work for one of the plywood, particleboard or big outfit, maybe Georgia Pacific, I don't know.

**JG:** I've seen some of the correspondence between he and Arthur Temple, Jr. and I would say the correspondence kind of bears out what you were saying. He was always if it could be done he always seemed a little bit ahead of even Mr. Temple in some of his recommendations and suggestions about different processes and even plastics. I know a lot of the molded toilet seats were big.

**HD:** This was one thing too he did help us with. For awhile we were making a flour that was used in molded plastics. Actually we have had customers including record companies, you know.

**JG:** Phonograph albums.

**HD:** Phonograph records, shoe heels.

**JG:** Shoes, I think they were looking at some kind of a drink box container for awhile too.

**HD:** Could be but, then we did...we also acquired in this period a company in Fort Smith, Arkansas that was making school desk furniture. So, we made a form of flour that worked in the melamine plastic molding of these parts and they would make the standard student chair with the desk in the front of it all out of molded wood.

**JG:** Who were some of your competitors?

**HD:** Albert Catalani in San Antonio was a competitor, he did the same thing.

**JG:** Were they larger smaller?

**HD:** Probably smaller but he had been in the business a long time and he had quite a following and we had a really good relationship. We often, if we needed to, we could get Al to ship for us.

**JG:** Can you spell that name?

**HD:** C-a-t-a-l-a-n-i, Albert Catalani.

**JG:** So, I assume he was friends with Mr. Love.

**HD:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** Tell a little bit, I'm jumping all over the place and I apologize but tell us a little bit about Jim Love and what his background was.

**HD:** Jim Love was in the pulpwood business before he came here.

**JG:** In Louisiana?

**HD:** In Louisiana, he operated a pulpwood business and lived in several places over there depending on where they were hauling out of. They moved here from Hammond, Louisiana and he was very active in all the lumbermen organizations and this sort of thing. He was also the president of...not the Lumbermen's Association but...what is it let's see.

**JG:** Some kind of forest products?

**HD:** Forest Products Research Society and he was active in that for a long time.

**JG:** Is that how he met Mr. Temple?

**HD:** He came here looking for sawdust shavings and the story as I remember it was that he went in to see Mr. Temple and told him he needed sawdust and shavings dry to make wood flour. So they provided him the plant here and they got the machinery or whatever they needed to start with and if it wasn't Earl, somebody else started helping him run the thing. They moved the family over from Hammond before they really got involved so much in Diboll. But let's see and of course they were here quite a long time. He had a background, he graduated from LSU [Louisiana State University] in Baton Rouge, not in any category that he was working in. He had a Bachelor of Music degree. He was a good singer too.

**JG:** I want to get into that a little later too but, I know that Mr. Love and Mr. Temple, I guess Mr. Temple did it with Southern Pine Lumber Company but it was a joint venture. Love Woods Products was a joint venture. So, that is my question how involved did Mr. Temple get? Did you see Mr. Temple on a routine basis, regular basis or occasional basis?

**HD:** No, not really. Temple Industries owned fifty percent of the company. On occasion we would see him or a board meeting and for awhile Arthur Temple was the chairman of the board.

**JG:** For Love Wood?

**HD:** For Love Wood and Jim Love was president.

**JG:** I think Mr. Dolben was.

**HD:** No.

**JG:** I mean not president but, wasn't he on the board for awhile?

**HD:** He might have been. I don't remember.

**JG:** What about Latané, was Latané ever?

**HD:** No.

**JG:** No, okay.

**HD:** But, of course we had a lot of interaction with whoever was here at the time. But toward the end of the operations here I saw Mr. Temple more myself but we were basically in discussion about selling and how to do this and how to do that and he was just wonderfully helpful with everything.

**JG:** I don't want to close Love Wood Products just yet. I'm sorry I think I've got us jumping around too much. One other name that comes up a good bit that I wanted to ask you about was Mr. Neville?

**HD:** Ralph Neville, fine guy who lived in...

**JG:** I think he was from Louisiana also.

**HD:** He was from Louisiana. He was a hot shot CPA and all that. He was a friend, he was a friend of Jim's, so at that point and time we had all the plants going and everything was doing everything. Ralph and Pat moved here and he took over the role of accounting and a lot of advice on what to do and what to spend and how much you could and all that. He was really, really sharp.

**JG:** So with you beginning out in bookkeeping you probably worked with him pretty close in the early days.

**HD:** I did. I worked in sales and started traveling some.

**JG:** When did you get into sales and how long were you here approximately?

**HD:** Oh I was in sales probably within a year after him because I had...

**JG:** How did you like that?

**HD:** It was fine. It was good, all good.

**JG:** Was it face to face visits, a lot of travel?

**HD:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** How much by phone did you do?

**HD:** Oh, mostly by phone. We had a lot of good customers and...

**JG:** There was already a customer base when you came?

**HD:** ...a customer base and then we added more. It was a lot easier because we could just phone them. "What do you need?" or "How much do you need?" and that sort of thing. But from time to time I would hop on a plane and go from odd and end places to just visit the people, just good friendly customers you know.

**JG:** How far away would you go?

**HD:** Chicago I guess probably the farthest. An interesting story and this is really a digression, but I was making a whole round including Chicago, but I flew to Oklahoma City and then I picked up a private plane to go to Kansas to the very farthest point in the northwest corner of Kansas. They were good customers but before we could get there we had to put the plane, the pilot said, "I don't think we better try to go to Phillipsburg." That is where it was, Phillipsburg, Kansas. He said, "I am going to have to put it down" because we were beginning to ice, it was cold. I said, "It's okay with me." So we had to put the plane down in Salina, Kansas, sort of mid state.

**JG:** Right in the middle I think.

**HD:** I got a car and I said I am going to try to make it to Phillipsburg before the worst of the weather gets here. And I did, I got there, but as I was coming back in it was snowing. We were snowed in at Salina so I told my pilot I said, "We better go hunt a place to stay." Salina is not that big and we got a motel there. Interstate 40 goes close to it. And we spent that night and all the next day in Salina. We could not leave, so finally I got back on my trip and had to go back to Kansas City, that is where he [the pilot] was from. I went onto Chicago and Akron, Ohio back to Chicago, Joliet, Illinois and from there to Tamco Asphalt Products in Missouri, the one that had the big tornado just lately, the town.

**JG:** Was that Southern Asphalt Roofing Company?

**HD:** No.

**JG:** That was in Little Rock, Arkansas.

**HD:** Little Rock was Southern. Southern actually bought, finally bought our interest in the molded school furniture.

**JG:** Oh, okay.

**HD:** Southern Asphalt and see I think they operated as a molded thing for awhile. They also from time to time would buy material from us to work with. Southern Asphalt had other interest as well. Of course we made lots of trips to Little Rock, Fort Smith, Dallas, all usually in one of the small planes.

**JG:** Were there other salesmen? Were you the only one?

**HD:** No, I was the only one.

**JG:** You were the one.

**HD:** I was it.

**JG:** I think something I read ya'll were nearly a million dollars in sales in '65 and then you peaked, well didn't peak, but the first time you crossed a million dollars in sales was '67. So, that was all as a result of you huh, or a big part of it?

**HD:** Well no, I can't claim credit for all that.

**JG:** Now, when you were working in sales did you get commission or just a salary position?

**HD:** No, just salary. My automobile was furnished from the time I went which is a pretty good perk, you know, to have.

**JG:** Did it have any markings on it? Did it have Love Wood Products on it?

**HD:** No.

**JG:** Just a plain, unmarked car.

**HD:** Just a plain white Buick.

**JG:** A white Buick.

**HD:** Mr. Love loved Buicks. He had Buicks and everybody else had Buicks. Our plant managers had...supervisors all had Station Wagons.

**JG:** Why was that just so they could carry more stuff around?

**HD:** Well they could carry more tools and that sort of stuff, you know.

**JG:** No pickup trucks huh?

**HD:** No pickups, no. Let me get on back to the expansion of the company.

**JG:** Sure, yes.

**HD:** After Waco, Dallas, Clifton then there was a Commerce, Texas and after Commerce we had Annona, A-n-n-o-n-a, which is right up in North Texas, between Texarkana. Then we also finally established a place in Tenaha of all places. That was another yellow pine plant. The folks who owned the mill there were sort of contentious, but we all got along pretty good, but they shipped out a lot of stuff and they are still shipping out a lot of stuff there as far as I know.

**JG:** Wood flour?

**HD:** Yes, still shipping out of there.

**JG:** Okay.

**HD:** Then we moved to Greenville. Wing Industries was the big plant. They had a big plant there.

**JG:** W-i-n-g?

**HD:** W-i-n-g, a Dallas company that started...

**JG:** Another big railroad town or an intersection of a lot of railroads. Which, that was still important I guess to ship your stuff in and out, the raw materials and all that.

**HD:** Sure. The key to the whole thing of being anywhere was where you had the in-transit rate. That was a real, real boom when you could ship them that. The customer usually had to pay the freight, so they loved not having to pay so much freight, you know. But we did Wing. We got the plant built in Wing. Not a very big one, only a one or two person plant. As we went along we made them even more sophisticated, you know, with the...

**JG:** I noticed in one report Annona only had one employee.

**HD:** That is right, Annona had one employee.

**JG:** Marshall had two employees. What did those plants do when that one person was off?

**HD:** Well we would send somebody there. Bill or Herbert would go and they could operate. I could if I really had to. I will digress again if that is okay.

**JG:** Sure.

**HD:** I was in Greenville and I'm not sure why I was there but I was there, anyway the mill was not running when we got there. We had an employee there who was really very good. He knew his business but he kind of thought of doing things a lot of times his own way and it wasn't always the best way. So, I went in and I said, "Why is the mill not running?" He gave some explanation. I said, "Well I think you better start it." He said, "I don't know if I will or not." I said, "Well I can." He said, "Oh you've got to be kidding you don't know how to start this mill." I said, "Let me show you." So, I went over and started pushing the buttons to all the electrical boxes and everything and all the hammermills and attrition mills started running. All of this is coming out of a tank, you know automatically. The tanks were automatically fed. I said, "Does that suit you?" He said, "Well I guess so." I said, "I know how to turn them on." But, anyway that is just one of the little funny things that happened along the way.

**JG:** What did you do when there were such small operations like routine maintenance, but say something like a hammermill broke right in the middle of the run or something? How did you handle the repairs?

**HD:** The plant managers could do work on them. They had to be taken out of service of course temporarily until they were fixed or say an electric motor had to be rewired. We used a lot of electric motors, everything was electrified.

**JG:** So, you did as much in house as you could and a lot of it.

**HD:** Yes, yes, of course a motor had to be taken out. Generally someone like W. F. Taylor and Herbert Harris could go and get things back in shape pretty quick. They were enormously useful. They were great, really good to me particularly because in some of our later years I had...if I needed somebody to take it I would say, "Herb or Bill would you go and I'll go with you." And we did, we did that a lot so, that is how I learned how a lot of the stuff went, how things went. We also had a plant in Bossier City, Louisiana in conjunction with another millwork company. They primarily ran it and did everything but we procured from them, furnished them the machinery and they operated it with one man but oversaw everything that went on. We market it, whatever they made. Then we had another one in...it wasn't Many I don't think...

**JG:** Let's see, I was going to ask you about Miramul and Miracle Bark, Miracle Birch.

**HD:** Oh yes, we haven't got to that. We started in the bark business.

**JG:** How did you get into that?

**HD:** Well we got interested in...first of all, let me do this, the first thing out of the realm of wood flour we got into was ordinary floor sweep. The kind that people used a long time ago, of course, that is a long time ago. People don't use that I don't think anymore.

**JG:** Well tell us what exactly floor sweep was?

**HD:** Floor sweep was you have an oil base floor sweep on say a mill room floor. You clean it, to clean up debris and that sort of thing or even a store.

**JG:** Was it absorbent?

**HD:** Yes, it was made with sawdust, larger pieces, and you would coat it with an oil base. Then, we made them waxed base. We brought in a big rail car tank full of hot wax and kept it that way, kept it hot. We would make wax floor sweep and it was marketed through a distributor. We didn't do it. I did do a little bit of it in Houston with our own little place we had there. People in the big grocery business there were quite a few of them who dealt in it and they had the market pretty well sealed up, particularly there. Then we got into the bark business. That came about through the nursery people that we often would see and so we decided to utilize the bark. The bark was being burned, I think, most of it.

**JG:** For fuel.

**HD:** For fuel, yes. So, we started making the Miracle Bark.

**JG:** And to clarify for the recording, fuel to power the steam turbines to run the sawmill plants.

**HD:** That is right, that is right. So, we started doing that.

**JG:** Who is...anything you remember about how that came about? Did somebody just say do this or do that, anyone's particular idea or how did you get into that?

**HD:** Probably Jim Love's, I think. He had a lot of good ideas and with his contacts and all like that we got into the bark business and of course that was good. We took the bark away from if it was a problem we took it out.

**JG:** Was this before they had the plywood plant? I think it was. Plywood plant went in in '64 I believe.

**HD:** It could be I'm not sure. But we stayed in the bark business quite awhile.



**JG:** That is what I was wondering. That was another question, when they got into plywood did that help the bark business any? Did you have more bark to deal with now or not?

**HD:** We had plenty of bark generally.

**JG:** Even without the plywood plant?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay.

**HD:** We may have gotten it from them too. but we experimented with it for awhile. All the...

**JG:** Did you mix anything else in with it or what?

**HD:** Well we did finally. We started putting in anhydrous ammonia, spraying it with anhydrous ammonia. Kept it in a compost area for x number of weeks and daily with a front end loader would turn it and keep it moving. We had a little problem with right at the beginning. I don't know if it was our bark for sure but we sent a truck load to a grower in Louisiana and he swore it killed all of his azaleas, oh, but anyway.

**JG:** A grower, you mean someone who grew azaleas for sale to wholesale.

**HD:** A regular sale, a wholesale nursery. We sold a lot to wholesale nurseries. We sold a lot in bags and we sold a lot in bulk.

**JG:** Did your stuff kill the azaleas?

**HD:** No, I don't think so, I think there may have been something about it at the time that some element that might have got, azaleas are pretty persnickety anyway.

**JG:** Finicky.

**HD:** And, mine are dying with me watching them, watering them every day.

**JG:** Well it is so dry!

**HD:** But we started bagging and of course that took a number of people.

**JG:** What kind of bags did you use?

**HD:** Plastic, paper or plastic, plastic coated inside.

**JG:** No burlap?

**HD:** No burlap.

**JG:** No burlap.

**HD:** We used to put regular dry sawdust in burlap.

**JG:** So, how...this is just coming to mind, how new was that to use the kind of bags y'all were using, plastic bags?

**HD:** New, very new actually. Of course we bagged ahead of that the floor sweep material and it had to be impervious to leaking and that sort of thing. Your bark basically was damp, you know, and all the better I think. Of course, it took a new approach to sewing and you had to sew the bags.

**JG:** Stitch them up.

**HD:** Had to stitch them up. We had a good business going in bags then we got into the bulk. There are a lot of growers who don't want bags. They don't want to sell it they want to use it. So, then we bought a dump trailer and then we could send it in bulk to people and all he had to do was go in and dump it.

**JG:** So, that was with trucks?

**HD:** A truck.

**JG:** A truck, okay. Was it your own truck or did you hire out drivers?

**HD:** That was our truck, yes.

**JG:** Were the drivers of the trucks Love Wood Products employees?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay.

**HD:** So, that remained a fairly good and busy endeavor while we were doing that. We also made...

**JG:** Let me just interrupt you. How were you still in sales then?

**HD:** Yes, I was probably just almost in everything.

**JG:** Everything, okay. Well how was that? You know, you start basically a new product, how difficult was it to find customers and how did you do it?

**HD:** Well one or several of us would attend shows, like nursery conventions and that sort of thing.

**JG:** So, you would go to those and meet people.

**HD:** Yes, we would go to those and we would take samples and meet people in the business. That is how we got to the point of making it for other people, bagging it in their bag, what you call a private label, big, fairly good size business in private label.

**JG:** That would be like some of these big store brands today. Like if, I don't think Lowes' or Home Depot has their own brand of mulch and stuff but, something like that?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** It is coming from here but another company puts their name on it.

**HD:** Right, it would be in bags generally.

**JG:** You would just ship it in those bags to start with.

**HD:** So the private label business was pretty good and we did pretty well in the miracle bark business. It finally ended up being miracle bark.

**JG:** And everything came from bark from pine trees?

**HD:** Right.

**JG:** I know during the hurricanes, you know some of the old homes and things were I guess ground up for bark and I heard there was a lot of termites and stuff and things like that. But, yours was all pretty fresh.

**HD:** Fresh off the trees.

**JG:** Fresh cut trees from lumber so, you never had any problems.

**HD:** I don't know of any occasion where we had a termite problem. Of course we were composting it, but I doubt if a termite could live in that because bark goes through a heat, a natural heat for one thing as does wet sawdust as you know.

**JG:** It gets very hot.

**HD:** It gets hot and you could see we just composted out in the open. We had a new plant for that.

**JG:** Where was the compost plant?

**HD:** When you go in the main gate at the mill, the main mill sawmill gate, just keep going around and go across the railroad and behind Temple White and all of that back in there we had a concrete.

**JG:** Louis Landers had said that in the summers he worked at the handle factory and he said that y'all, Love Wood Products, had the best soda water options.

**HD:** We did?

**JG:** He would come over because y'all had drinks like Nehi's and stuff like that. Do you remember anything about that? Anyway, the point is y'all were fairly close to Temple White and some of the other plants.

**HD:** Oh yes, the main plant, the sawdust plant was right there on the railroad where the rail and then a little further over where the big pipes come through to the mill or the planer or whatever, it was just past that.

**JG:** I interrupted you when I asked you about sales of the bark. You were beginning to go I think in a different direction. Do you remember?

**HD:** Well of course we worked primarily with all of the nursery growers, nursery retailers that sort of thing and for the most part we did a pretty good business. Sometimes it would get slow, but we had bagging facilities and we would bag it.

**JG:** Did you make it year round? I know obviously it would be seasonal as far as sales maybe. Was it a seasonal business as far as sales?

**HD:** We made it year round. We sold it year round. Sometimes it was less used particularly the planters and the growers, but if they were selling it in the winter which is a good time to get it while you would get a lot of bag business that way.

**JG:** The winter and spring.

**HD:** The regular growing season there was a lot of it going out and the big nurseries that pot and grow plants and all.

**JG:** I have a couple of notes here about some other ventures you may have ventured off into, Moldwood Plastics in Fort Smith, Arkansas and Quick Turf in Dallas, what were those?

**HD:** Mold Wood in Fort Smith was the company that we, I was telling you about that we acquired with the molded school desk.

**JG:** Oh, that was that one, okay, Moldwood, M-o-l-d-w-o-o-d

**HD:** M-o-l-d-w-o-o-d, some rather attractive stuff as a matter of fact. Again, it was something we really didn't need to be in and so we sold that to Southern Asphalt.

**JG:** Why did you not need to be in that?

**HD:** Well the competition in that is really, really good, a lot of people making this sort of thing. You see a lot more now that is just pure plastic, little chairs and stuff.

**JG:** I saw the transition of that probably when I was going to school. I remember sometimes we would have classrooms that the seat itself would be plastic but the table top would be some type of composite. You can definitely see sawdust at the Formica top or whatever that hard top ever got chiseled out or whatever it was like particleboard underneath it. We had even in high school we still had...it wasn't solid wood, but it wasn't...it was more like plywood to the backs of the seats and chairs and stuff. I don't even know what they are now. I guess they are all plastic.

**HD:** The ones I've seen lately are all plastic.

**JG:** All plastic.

**HD:** The ones in Moldwood though were very sturdy, in fact they were fairly heavy. With the finer the sawdust mix in your melamine or whatever it is, the heavier it would get.

**JG:** What about Quick Turf?

**HD:** Quick Turf came along at a time when as still part of the ushering in the nursery style business. There was a guy in Dallas if I recall correctly who had this deal and he was interested in getting somebody to help him. We never really got involved in it but his thing was like highways and where they cut them down, the hillsides and that sort of thing. You still see some of this. Most of it is a net now, that sort of thing.

**JG:** To keep the erosion down.

**HD:** To keep the erosion down. Quick Turf was a sprayed on thing. You would spray it on and it was...

**JG:** Yes, they still use that. I've seen them use it. So, what is that and is it the same thing today as it was then?

**HD:** Well, pretty much I think. It is grass seed and grass cuttings, which supposedly will take roots and fertilizer and everything.

**JG:** Was wood flour mixed in with it?

**HD:** No, no, they would make kind of a mat of this stuff to hold erosion to a minimum and grass to come up through it, you know.

**JG:** So, did Love Wood Products get involved with that?

**HD:** No, explored the idea but no.

**JG:** Never did do it, okay. Oh, I didn't mean to necessarily close it out but I guess...what I am saying is I am leaving it open if you think of something else let me know but I guess let's bring it on up to when it started being closed out. But before we did that I just wanted to ask you about some of the changes that you witnessed. You started in '57 and I guess went into the '80's. What would be some of the more significant changes that you saw in that particular aspect of the industry? Maybe even how other, for lack of a better term, advances, electronics, computers, machinery whatever during that time and how that affected or didn't affect the way you did business?

**HD:** Well electronics as we know of now was not any kind of an issue and computers not either. The actual closing year was 1985.

**JG:** It was a Utah company wasn't it? I think at least the newspaper said at least it was Pine Mountain.

**HD:** Pine Mountain, yes.

**JG:** I think the Diboll plant had shut down by that time hasn't it?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** I think you had Waco, Greenville and Tenaha at that time.

**HD:** Right.

**JG:** So, maybe just tell us how it got to that point.

**HD:** Things were...getting back to your fiberglass competition one of the things, there are still some few, few roofing companies that are making the paper board and wood flour roofing but, nearly everybody got into the fiberglass roofing.

**JG:** Why is that?

**HD:** That is a whole application almost in itself. You didn't have to add all this stuff, you know. So, the only problem with fiberglass and it may be certainly improved, when they first came out with fiberglass it was easily broken, easily broken. You weren't up on the house walking on your roof. If you did you had to do it lightly, anyway that is partly my opinion. Fiberglass though was a good product and still is, but it's cheaper, cheaper.

Everybody pretty well got into the fiberglass business, so as that sort of wound down then it wound down the use of the sawdust or the wood flour.

**JG:** So, a big part of your business then?

**HD:** Yes, that was the major part of the business was in the roofing. The Tamko people...

**JG:** Is that T-a-m?

**HD:** T-a-m-k-o in Joplin, Missouri.

**JG:** T-a-m-k-o, Tamko.

**HD:** Tamko still makes a good...

**JG:** I think a few years back when I put shingles on they were Tamko.

**HD:** ...they still make a good roofing. They also make fiberglass. They make a good paper and dust roofing. As a matter of fact the young man who owns and runs Tenaha sends all his products to Tamko. So, they don't have more than a car or two a week, but anyway I think that was probably...

**JG:** The biggest thing.

**HD:** ...the biggest thing. The guy from Utah, Salt Lake City, who happened to be a very close friend of J. W. Marriott...

**JG:** The hotel guy.

**HD:** The Marriott's are from Utah, anyway, he came just looking because of their fire logs, they were looking for...

**JG:** Fire logs? The little things you buy in the little packages at the grocery store?

**HD:** Right.

**JG:** Okay.

**HD:** They still furnish a lot of those too. He came initially and we did a little preliminary talking and everything and he came back and I got to thinking myself, you know this might be a good way or a good time to go ahead and get out of this business if it's going to go more and more the other way. And so we discussed it and I actually discussed it myself with Mr. Temple and he said if you can get the right price for it he said, "Go ahead, everything is for sale for the right price." I said, "Well I will see what we can do." So we did a bunch of palavering around until this gentleman brought his son who was

running one of his plants in California over and apparently they liked pretty well what they saw and finally agreed to the deal. And, we only sold them the physical property; we didn't sell them the corporation and then the month of July I finished closing out all the legal stuff too.

**JG:** So, Love Wood Products sold the physical plants but it was still an existing corporation, so you had to do a lot of legal stuff to shut it down, so to speak.

**HD:** I did that.

**JG:** How long did that take?

**HD:** From the time you communicate with the state, the secretary of state and all not too long, but at that time John Sloan was still working at the law office here in Diboll and he handled all that for me. I might say brilliantly too. He is a whim dilly. He is good. But we got it closed, and signed, sealed and here you got it. Their real big plant, the new owners, believe it or not is Greenville. They started making Pine Mountain logs right away and still do. You will see Pine Mountain in the stores still and they make other brands as well.

**JG:** That was the story for Love Wood Products, is that the story for most wood flour businesses today?

**HD:** I would say so. Most people in wood flour business are...

**JG:** Nobody has found other uses for it?

**HD:** Well there are other uses but major plastics and all the different kinds have taken over a lot of molded items that used to have flour. In our case roofing was the biggest customer, probably ninety percent of it I guess. We closed up and shut our doors in July or August of 1985.

**JG:** You mentioned Mr. Temple in the shutting down, what about Mr. Love? How was he in all of that?

**HD:** Well he was in everything, involved in everything.

**JG:** Was he ready?

**HD:** I'm not sure that he really was. This was a baby, his baby and I can understand that.

**JG:** [Locomotive whistle sound] That is our whistle on the locomotive outside.

**HD:** Somebody is blowing the whistle. I can understand that because it was part of his life for a long time.

**JG:** Well he started in 1951, so that would have been 34 to 35 years.



**HD:** So I think he finally thought maybe we are pushing the envelope to keep trying to go. See the contracts with the material were ongoing so, we were having to take the material whether we had a place for it to go or not. There were good reasons I think to sell it.

**JG:** So did the new company take over your contracts as well?

**HD:** Yes, they had to, that was part of the deal.

**JG:** So you didn't have much outstanding when you were shutting it down. You didn't have a whole lot.

**HD:** No, just the legal stuff and that wasn't too bad.

**JG:** How many employees were there at that time approximately?

**HD:** Let's see Jonathan, we probably had seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, probably fifteen or sixteen, I would imagine.

**JG:** And again, Diboll wasn't a plant at that time just offices. How many were in the office at that time.

**HD:** In the office was myself, Jim Love, Dorothy Farley, Audie Pounds, Beatrice Berry, and I believe that was it, five of us. We did lots and lots of business by phone, went a lot of pounding the pavement, you know, find business for ourselves, which was good.

**JG:** Well anything else about Love Wood Products you would like to add or anything that I omitted? At least give you that opportunity.

**HD:** I can't think of any particular detail, unfortunately, I probably have a lot of detail somewhere.

**JG:** You'll be remembering lots of things when we turn the recorder off.

**HD:** Right, but they were interesting years actually. A lot of people that we interacted with customer-wise, all of the faculty here at Diboll which we had a full contention of, everybody if you needed some help you could go ask somebody, you know. And I did that a lot.

**JG:** Now, Mr. Love lived in Lufkin. Where did you live?

**HD:** He lived in Lufkin; so did I.

**JG:** You lived in Lufkin as well. You mentioned earlier when you went to his house for the dinner was that over where I live now? Had he built that house yet?

**HD:** No, no, they had...

**JG:** I think he built that in late fifties or sixties.

**HD:** No, they bought the one over close to you.

**JG:** Oh, I thought he built it.

**HD:** It was already built, no.

**JG:** Oh okay, I'm sorry.

**HD:** They bought that one but, before that I think they had bought one on Kerr, West Kerr, almost from where the law office is there, Wayne Haglund's office is now.

**JG:** Okay, okay.

**HD:** The big Italian house there, a big white house there. And, later on they moved down here. The Neville's when they came here from Alexandria or somewhere.

**JG:** The Neville's?

**HD:** They moved down in south of town here, not in South Meadows but in this addition down close to the day care center.

**JG:** I guess you were eluding a little bit to the Diboll community just awhile ago, let's talk a little bit about your experiences with Diboll Days and then we will get the Rotary Club and things like that. I know I've seen pictures of you dressed up in your suit and you were a...I may be totally wrong about this, but it looked like you were posing as the railroad conductor in those Diboll days when TSE ran the excursions.

**HD:** Well I probably was. On occasion we would be teamed with TSE.

**JG:** The railroad.

**HD:** One of our fundraising things was to run the train from Diboll to Lufkin and back and we would sell food and stuff on the train and what not and a charge to go, you know. So, that probably was one of those occasions.

**JG:** I think if I remember right those were the years, I guess you were with Lottie's team.

**HD:** And, on other occasion...

**JG:** I think that was '66 and '68, those particular ones.

**HD:** Could be, of course Diboll Day and other times we were all busy doing whatever, whatever your group was into. We did a lot of cooking and feeding and I did a lot of that myself too.

**JG:** Did you do a lot of raffles and bingos?

**HD:** Raffles and bingos.

**JG:** [Locomotive whistle sound] That whistle keeps blowing. Any particular besides the railroad thing, any other particular memories or anything stand out in any other Diboll Days? I guess you were involved in pretty much every one of them huh?

**HD:** Pretty much, pretty much.

**JG:** From I guess you would have been what '57, '58. I was trying to remember when they went to every other year, but quite a few Diboll Days huh?

**HD:** Quite a few.

**JG:** Who was Love Wood Products usually teamed with? Do you remember?

**HD:** It would change from time to time. We would be TSE, the main office occasionally, sometimes Temple White. It depended.

**JG:** How much did Mr. Love get involved with Diboll Day stuff?

**HD:** He did quite a bit, he liked Diboll Day and he, company-wise too we contributed a good bit to Diboll Day.

**JG:** Financially, money?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** Did Mr. Love talk to you about, or maybe you can just share as someone who knew him and worked for him, about his interest in... appreciation for libraries. What can you share about that?

**HD:** His big interest in libraries started in Louisiana. I believe his father-in-law, Mae's father, was involved with the State Library of Louisiana. In later years, Jim became chairman of the Louisiana Library Commission, and very much involved with a lot of people, scholars etc. etc. who were involved in it became good friends of theirs, longtime friends. And, Mae of course was a graduate librarian from LSU [Louisiana State University]. Her first job was in...

**JG:** Did he talk about books a lot?

**HD:** Yes, he loved books and their house was covered up with a lot of books. So is mine, but I like books too.

**JG:** My wife told me years ago, ten or more years ago for every book that comes in the house at least one has to leave the house.

**HD:** Does that happen?

**JG:** No, not quite, much to her displeasure. (laughter) Anyways, I know that was real important to them.

**HD:** Yes, it was very important and Mae too. Mae did a lot of work. When they moved here of course they brought the same love for libraries and got active in the Texas State Library and the locals too. Of course, their main contribution of course was to the T. L. L. Temple Library when they started building it. The man who designed the original structure designed the State Library in Baton Rouge. So they knew him and they asked him to come and design it and he did it. Of course, they have added to it now so, all through the years he was active in the state level, made a lot of trips to little towns who were getting help getting libraries started and everything, considered it very important and so did she. She continued on the State Library Commission after he died. She was equally interested in all of it. We used to exchange books and that sort of thing, you know.

**JG:** Did he have a particular interest or did he have a favorite?

**HD:** You know I don't know if he had a specific interest it was just books and reading, the educational aspect of it.

**JG:** Let's get a little bit more, now we are getting back to you, I don't know and you go as far or go somewhere else if you want to, but I just wanted to ask you about your involvement with the Temple Choir and the Community Theater and things like that, some of the arts.

**HD:** Quite a few years ago when the holiday season and the Christmas holiday season started coming around they said well we need to do something, so I said well okay let's have a choir. "Will you direct it?" and I said, "Sure." So, it really got to going really well after they built the new office building.

**JG:** '79 or 80, somewhere in there.

**HD:** Yes, and we did that of course a number of years. This was just a gathering of employees, you know. I don't know of anyone that was a trained singer except me, but I wasn't singing. We would do some rehearsing along before and then we would set us a performance date and got it advertised and we had a lot of people come to hear.

**JG:** How easy or difficult or how did you recruit people that wanted to be in the choir? I mean, I seen photographs, you had pretty good numbers.

**HD:** Yes, I did.

**JG:** Was there just a lot of interest?

**HD:** Yes, a lot of interest in those days. I would talk to them about it and go to departments and say, "Hey we are going to do a singing and you need to come," you know, and all that. Almost every year the same ones would come back again and of course some new ones occasionally.

**JG:** So, how many shows did you do? Was it just Christmas?

**HD:** Just Christmas.

**JG:** Just Christmas, okay.

**HD:** Yes, it was the only thing I did here but...

**JG:** Would it be more than one show or was it a onetime thing in December or?

**HD:** We have done two here of the same show. We would do it for the public and on occasion they would ask us to do it for the party type thing so we would go back and repeat it for that.

**JG:** Where were they done?

**HD:** In the foyer of the office.

**JG:** In the foyer of the office?

**HD:** Yes, it's a good place to sing by the way, good sound.

**JG:** Good acoustics. Was it in the middle of the day or the evening?

**HD:** In the afternoon when the public was invited and usually at night is when we sang for the employees, you know, festive occasion, mostly Christmas stuff, a lot of the carols. I would introduce occasionally a singer that I knew that was really good including Nita Hurley to do, to come and sing and they were always glad to come, you know.

**JG:** Did you have live music, piano?

**HD:** Piano, yes.

**JG:** Did you have a regular piano player or just vary from year to year?

**HD:** For a long time I had the same one and then I've had different ones.

**JG:** Was it acoustic piano?

**HD:** No, I don't know where they got it. It was a little Spinet they got down there.

**JG:** So, an electric organ kind of thing?

**HD:** No, just a piano.

**JG:** That is what I meant by acoustic, just a regular piano.

**HD:** Oh yes, just a regular piano.

**JG:** Okay, they would just roll it in somewhere.

**HD:** Roll it from somewhere. And they managed to come up with some risers for us so I would have everybody in the proper tiers. My voice teacher from New York came one Christmas.

**JG:** Who is that?

**HD:** John Seal, who was my voice teacher.

**JG:** Oh, your voice teacher from New York.

**HD:** He was here visiting and I said, "Well you've got to come hear the famous Temple Choir," so he loved anything. A raconteur from way back and they came and sat and he said, "You know your group is good." I said, "Well of course they are I'm not going to have a shabby group here." John Seal and I were also very good friends. I had always wished, Jonathan that I would be able to sing myself until about ninety if I made it that long, but that is not happening and not going to, but he was at ninety still a strong robust voice and couldn't see because of macular degeneration, at the time of course he wasn't teaching anymore, but songs he knew them all. He was quite a character. But anyway he liked our program. He said, "You know I got the feeling that I was looking at Toscanini" and I said, "You've got to be kidding" and he said, "No, your movements and control of those people were like Arturo Toscanini" the famous conductor of the New York Philharmonic. He said, "Man you have made my day." So, anyway...

**JG:** Well tell how did you get interested in voice and singing?

**HD:** This goes back a very long ways. In my days of the Navy, '44, '45, '46 I got involved in a group of singers, sailors, and we would do shows and sing in church where we were required to if you were going to be in the group. So, I was doing that and when I got out of the Navy in 1947 I just sort of kept it up, you know, beginning singing. I

started some study and I did some study in California, Los Angeles and of course later on in New York and I was already singing. That is how come I guess Jim and Mae ran across me at the time I came down here was we occasionally would sing together in the Presbyterian choir and mostly I was guest singing. So, I sort of kept it up. I already could play the piano not just great but...

**JG:** Growing up was your family musical, was there any interest in music?

**HD:** No, I think they thought I was going to the devil because I was involved in all of this stagey stuff you know.

**JG:** Now what year were you born?

**HD:** 1927.

**JG:** '27.

**HD:** That makes me 84 now.

**JG:** I've always liked the Walton's television series and of course, it's been on here the last couple of years, so you would have been of that era anyways as a child, the '30's and the music. So were you not interested in the popular music of that day or were you?

**HD:** Yes, oh yes.

**JG:** Any of the popular music?

**HD:** Yes, I did all sorts and liked it all. I got involved more in the concert movement to do that though...

**JG:** How was it to be exposed besides the radio I guess growing up? Did you have a phonograph player?

**HD:** Oh yes, we had that and of course a radio, later a TV. We didn't have TV when I was...

**JG:** Where would you get your record albums, phonograph records?

**HD:** I was just trying to think, probably in a store somewhere.

**JG:** I'm really jumping around, but you were born in '27, but where were you born and raised?

**HD:** I was born and raised in Keltys, Texas.

**JG:** That is right. So I guess Lufkin, you would have gone to Lufkin and gotten your record albums at a Lufkin store I guess.

**HD:** Right, right. So, after beginning that way I kept plugging on and later went back to Los Angeles and worked some with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Chorus. Did some things and of course New York and went to school. I went to Seagle Colony, which of course is a school for singers, and they trained a lot of people for the concert stage or opera if you have that kind of stamina. I never thought I might have that kind of stamina but I did some opera occasionally. I worked there and over the years I got involved as well in musical comedy stuff on stage and graduated a long time later or fairly a long time later into the spoken word. So I started doing just regular stage plays.

**JG:** Now is this all before Love Wood Products?

**HD:** No, no.

**JG:** This is over the course of your whole time.

**HD:** The course of my whole time. I did most of it in more recent years. The Community Playhouse was established, a very successful group. For a long time we had one just as successful before that. These things have a way of...

**JG:** Was the Navy your first real opportunity to perform like in performing arts?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay, the Navy okay.

**HD:** Yes, and I enjoyed doing it.

**JG:** So, you went in the Navy right out of high school?

**HD:** Yes, I was all of sixteen years old.

**JG:** That is what I was doing the math when you were talking awhile ago. You would be sixteen or seventeen.

**HD:** A child from Keltys that had never been anywhere. Can you imagine?

**JG:** That was the end of World War II.

**HD:** Can you imagine the shock?

**JG:** Had you ever even seen the ocean? Had you been to Galveston or anything?

**HD:** Oh yes, I had.



**JG:** But you were in the Navy, where all were you in the Navy?

**HD:** Just in California, everything ended in '45. We were...

**JG:** So you graduated from high school you were sixteen.

**HD:** In '43.

**JG:** In '43 and you pretty much went straight to the Navy.

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** I guess you had to have your parents' signature.

**HD:** I did, they didn't want to but they did.

**JG:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**HD:** I had one sister.

**JG:** Younger or older?

**HD:** She is older than I am, still living.

**JG:** I assume you wanted to go, what was it that made you want to go?

**HD:** Well I thought I wanted to go and I also realized that at some point the draft board would be knocking on the door, so I wanted to go where I wanted to go, not just wherever they send me.

**JG:** How many of your school friends were...again I guess you had to have parental consent at that age, you probably didn't have many your age that were going or did you?

**HD:** No, I didn't.

**JG:** You didn't. What about friends who were older did you have many friends who were going?

**HD:** Some a little older were already there, in the Navy, but that was quite an experience.

**JG:** So, you were ready to go and wanted to go?

**HD:** I decided I better.

**JG:** I think that was my dad. He joined the Navy in I'm not sure what year. I was born in '67 and he joined two or three years before that. He went in the Navy for the same reason, that was in Vietnam and he figured he better go while he had the choice.

**HD:** Well, a lot of wonderful experiences and some not so but nevertheless I did and glad I did. One of my impulsive things that I'm prone to sometimes do impulsive things, you know.

**JG:** So that got you some of your first taste of public performing arts and you enjoyed it?

**HD:** I did, I did, liked singing and never dawned on me that I particularly could but apparently I could and I was...already knew all my notes and everything, you know. My folks started me on piano at five and...

**JG:** So you did have some music growing up, not everybody encourages their kids to do that kind of thing.

**HD:** I got some early training that way and that was good.

**JG:** Well if you were five...

**HD:** After awhile you get bored and "I don't want to do that."

**JG:** Did you have a piano in your house?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** Well that was pretty good wasn't it for 1932?

**HD:** Yes, we had a piano and we had a car. I couldn't believe it.

**JG:** Was your piano in tune?

**HD:** Yes, and we kept it that way.

**JG:** Well that is pretty good.

**HD:** Still do. I have two now.

**JG:** Two pianos.

**HD:** And almost every day I play something.

**JG:** Well that is great.

**HD:** Mainly to keep some flexibility in these fingers.

**JG:** Well that is good.

**HD:** And I'm writing a piece. I'll probably be dead before I get through with it but, anyway it's...

**JG:** That is what I was going to ask you, you say you play every day...I play guitar a little bit and it's been a long time ago since I played every day, but I found after awhile when I do play I wind up playing not the same thing but almost the same thing. Do you find yourself doing that?

**HD:** I'm guilty of that too and one reason why one thing probably for you too, you are doing something familiar that is unusually good exercise for the hands in my case and yours too probably.

**JG:** Not necessarily for me, sometimes mine is the easy stuff.

**HD:** Well I'm trying to develop this sonata thing and...

**JG:** Well you are still learning. You are progressing. See I'm not progressing anymore.

**HD:** If I ever get it on paper it will be Hallelujah. We will have a concert.

**JG:** Well I want to hear it. How long will it be?

**HD:** Before I get it done?

**JG:** Well no, the piece of music.

**HD:** The piece will not be very long. It's kind of like a small piece of sonatina type thing you know, probably around five or ten minutes long, but it's rather intricate.

**JG:** Do you have...I assume you have certain parts, but I mean do you have a beginning and an end yet or is it the ending that is not there yet?

**HD:** The ending is not there, the beginning is pretty well formed. The theme which is the middle of it is pretty well set.

**JG:** So, you just don't know how it's going to turn out, just like writing a novel.

**HD:** That is right. Like I say, I may never get it written. I may never get it finished. Right now from memory I can do...

**JG:** What key is it in?

**HD:** E flat major.

**JG:** E flat major. Does it ever drift into the minor?

**HD:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** I would like to hear it sometime.

**HD:** All right, well come over and bring the kids and we will do it.

**JG:** E flat major. Is that a favorite key?

**HD:** It is a favorite key. I sang a lot of stuff in my day in E flat. Depending on your vocal range a lot of times you end up needing to sing songs in certain keys. I often sing in B minor which is kind of weird in its own way.

**JG:** Now see B minor would be more, of course I don't sing, but of course everybody sings, I don't like to sing.

**HD:** You don't? You don't sing when you play the guitar?

**JG:** Well I can't sing, I can't sing, well I do to myself but I spare everybody else.

**HD:** I think you ought to do it, by George.

**JG:** But, for guitar it's all the straight...I don't know if it's the right word but it's C, D, E, G, F occasionally, but anything with flats.

**HD:** You can't play flats. How about sharps?

**JG:** Well I can.

**HD:** Sharps?

**JG:** Well yes, all the sharps like E, D, and G.

**HD:** E sharp, yes.

**JG:** Well not E sharp, no, no, I just meant that have sharps in them, that is what I was talking about. But, C, D, E, G, and maybe F and A but the B's...

**HD:** C, D, E, F, G, and A.

**JG:** Well F doesn't have a good open course. See basically what I'm getting at is most of those keys have the open string. It's easy to play the open chords. F and now again it's not that I can't I can do all the bar chords and stuff too but, I find G is my favorite key.

**HD:** G is a nice key and it's pretty.

**JG:** I like to play a lot of finger picking where I have a melody and a rhythm going at the same time and G, E minor, the relative minors and D and B minor, C and A minor, those are all good keys.

**HD:** I like minor keys but.

**JG:** What I'm getting at is I don't know if I could accompany you very easily in E flat.

**HD:** Well I can sing in G.

**JG:** Or I could capo and play in D, capo in one fret and play in D.

**HD:** I can sing in G. I have had some experiences in places where they couldn't play in anything but the key of C and I managed.

**JG:** They don't play the black keys huh?

**HD:** I managed; it's too low for me.

**JG:** They don't play in anything but ebony keys on a piano.

**HD:** They don't play those black keys. Six sharp though is enough to drive anybody crazy.

**JG:** What is that?

**HD:** B natural.

**JG:** B natural no, I don't...anyway...I would just capo on the second fret and play an A. See guitars can cheat sometimes with those capos and things.

**HD:** Well that is right but you can't cheat on everything though.

**JG:** No, no, no, and guitars can also relatively easily retune, you know, we can do open tunings where we can get those droning bass notes and things.

**HD:** Well I have my piano tuned to an A 440 pitch which is for the singer. It's got a nice ping to it and if you don't hit the ping on the right tone you can tell it. I was singing Jonathan...here I am just...are we...

**JG:** Yes, we are still recording. I'm sorry I started talking about me and got off of you.

**HD:** Well I think you ought to work on your guitar. I was singing with the Los Angeles Symphony Choral and we were doing Alexander Nevsky out of Prokofiev, very patriotic, Russian Patriotic and their fight, Nevsky and his fight against the Swedes, you know, Swedes conquered Russia and had a very pretty thing, very difficult. So of course I was tenor and I had a high B natural to sing and had a wonderful conductor with an ear like you had never seen. I didn't quite make the B natural, he stopped the whole orchestra and I figured well the tenors are going to catch it or somebody is. He said, "Howard you sang a shaded B flat and it's a B natural, do not do that again." I didn't, I didn't want to be embarrassed anymore you know. He really had an ear.

**JG:** Kind of stood up on your toes a little bit huh?

**HD:** Squeezed your butt. Oh, I forgot about that. (laughter) That was always a joke when you needed a high note, squeezed.

**JG:** Well I think I covered most everything that I really wanted to. Is there anything, I'll give you one more opportunity to...I think that was a clipping we had when you became president. You became president of Love Wood in '75 I think.

**HD:** Well we didn't get around to Rotary Club but that is all right.

**JG:** Oh yes, did you want to say a little something about Rotary Club?

**HD:** Well, of course I enjoyed having Rotary here when we did.

**JG:** You were one of the founding members right?

**HD:** Founding member.

**JG:** Was Mr. Love a founding member?

**HD:** Yes, he was a founding member. Mr. Pickett kind of got us organized there. He in his later years, he had an office there with us in the building. He had just tons of files and papers most of which were sent to the Houston museum.

**JG:** Yes, I think we got a few of his papers.

**HD:** You may have.

**JG:** But, I think you are right. It's been awhile since I looked at them.

**HD:** We had a good time in Rotary. I don't know, couldn't ever really determine why it didn't go better. It did for awhile as you know, but every now and then you get to this business of well I don't have time, frequently from people in the Temple group. Seems to me they probably had about as much as I did or you did so...

**JG:** Well looking back y'all had a good diversity of backgrounds, initially. I guess you were doing what Rotary wanted you to do, was to spread it around to different professional positions and occupations and y'all had a pretty good representation early on. I guess it just might have built up a little bit but then gradually started to decline. I know when I came along in '99 it was declining then and I don't think we ever, it went down each year. We got down to about three or four and you can't do much.

**HD:** You can't do much that a way.

**JG:** Of course Love Wood Products can run a whole plant with one. (laughter)

**HD:** Yes but you got a lot of switches to push there. I'm in the Lufkin Rotary Club.

**JG:** Oh, you are now?

**HD:** Yes.

**JG:** Oh well good. Did you go straight over or did you wait for awhile?

**HD:** No, I was away for awhile and didn't go, but I went back and I still enjoy it. I think it's a wonderful group.

**JG:** That is good. I was invited of course by Lufkin and Angelina. I guess I'm one of those ones that didn't have time and just didn't make time.

**HD:** You just didn't make time to go and you should, with your background you should, you are right.

**JG:** So you are still with the Lufkin club, which sponsored the Diboll club.

**HD:** Right, right.

**JG:** Anything else you want to add about Rotary.

**HD:** Well I can't think of anything of any consequence.

**JG:** Well we have been going a pretty good while so I thank you very much for your time and with that I will stop the recording.

**END OF INTERVIEW**