

BARLEY LENDERMAN

Interview 230a

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Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, longtime Angelina County Airport employee and manager Barley Lenderman reminisces about his career with the airport. Starting during high school in 1972, Mr. Lenderman spent his entire working life at the Angelina County airport, going from mowing and bush hogging the grounds to bookkeeping to assistant manager to manager. He spent 30 years as the airplanes and the field of aviation changed. He talks about the changing aircraft types, the changes in rules and federal regulations and personnel, getting a instrument landing system, lengthening the runways to accommodate larger planes, and the rises in fuel costs. Mr. Lenderman discusses the famous (and infamous) airport visitors, reminisces about commuter air service to Lufkin, and talks about the famous airport café.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is Wednesday August 10, 2011. My name is Jonathan Gerland. We are in the History Center today and I'm with Barley Lenderman and we are going to do an oral history interview. Barley if you would maybe just begin by telling us when and how you came to work at the Angelina County Airport.

Barley Lenderman (hereafter BL): Okay, it's kind of an interesting story how I got started. The first I can remember about the airport I was raised and my informative years when I was young was in Burke and I can remember when I was four or five years old riding over to the airport with my grandfather and we would watch the Trans Texas DC3's come in. They would turn and the wind would blow us and that just kind of fascinated me. And which, like I said I was four or five years old or something like that and never give a thought that I would spend a career out there before it was over with.

JG: When were you born, what year?

BL: 1955.

JG: '55 okay so, this was about '60.

BL: So, this was in '59 or so I'd go out there with my grandfather and we would go out there and we would stand and watch the old DC3's of Trans Texas Airlines. But anyway to make a long story short, I was attending the Diboll school system, I went to Diboll High School and when I was a junior in high school the summer going into my senior year I went down to the personnel office at Temple looking for a summertime job and they sent me over to Temple, back then it was Temple Industries hangar to work on Saturday for Mr. Bill Lindsey. He was chief pilot for Temple at the time and I started out during the summer working over there mowing the yard and I'd clean all the airplanes. At that time Temple had one of the first Learjet, first business jets that ever came out. They

had a Learjet and a Cessna 207, single engine airplane and an old Aerial Commander, twin engine airplane. And I cleaned the outside of these airplanes, swept the floor, mowed the yard around the hangar and so forth. And in the meantime my younger brother Dennis, which is three years younger than me, he got a job over at the airport for the county at the terminal, mowing and taking care of fueling airplanes and so forth and it rocked on along and before the end of summer or so the job was going to wind up just being a Saturday job of course, after school started my senior year. And my brother told me, said, "Hey they are looking for somebody else to hire over there to help fuel airplanes and stuff." At that time the fuel section of the county airport over there was running 13 hours a day fueling airplanes. So, I went over and talked to the manager of the airport over there at the time, which his name was Harold Ray Modisette was the airport manager and of course he knew me because I was working across the ramp over there at Temple hangar and he hired me. It was kind of an odd thing he hired me for five cents more an hour than what my brother was making. I believe it was \$1.55 an hour at the time. So, I went to work for the county over there fueling airplanes, mowing, bush hogging, working on runway lights and first one thing and another.

I went ahead and worked over there in the afternoons and on Saturdays and I graduated from high school in 1973 and I signed up and I was accepted and I went to SFA. Went up to orientation and got my schedule and enrolled in SFA. All this same time I was still working at the airport. Back then the county did not pay overtime and there was no limit on how many hours a person could work. At the time there was about four or five of us guys working just fueling airplanes and doing maintenance and we was working and was getting paid on the two week schedule. We would have a hundred four [104], hundred fifteen [115] hours for two weeks work over there at the time; of course it was just straight time, no overtime or nothing. So, it was quit flexible on when you worked and so that made it real easy for me to go to SFA in the mornings and come back in down to Burke at the Airport there and work till twelve or one o'clock. We closed at eight o'clock at night so I worked my way all the years I went to SFA. I went to SFA a little over four years, but all this time I was working 40 to 50 hours a week at the airport too because you could build up the hours like that. I went four and a half years you might say of college at SFA and never missed a paycheck from the airport either.

In the meantime the manager at that time Mr. Modisette, he had a bunch of back trouble. He had two or three surgeries and he was off a whole lot so, he got me to start doing the bookkeeping and the accounting work for all the fuel sales and stuff for the airport. So, more or less I took this load on plus he was just showing up maybe once every week or two, you know, when he wasn't having some of his troubles with his back and stuff. To make a long story short I wound up doing the accounting for the airport plus kind of making sure the guys kept all the airplanes fueled and we kept retail business going over there plus keeping the maintenance of the airport up too. So, that started me out on the accounting and bookkeeping end of the business over there. At the time we were probably selling 300,000 gallons of fuel a year or something like that. We had...this was mid seventies [1970's] or so, I think there was 30 or 35 maybe between 30 and 35 airplanes based at the airport at that time. There was the Temple Inland hangar and the County had three of the old Quonset type hangars and of course we had the terminal building. That was the only thing at the airport. All we had was a rudimentary landing system which was operated by, you know, they called it a Vortak. VOR out near Prairie

Grove and what this done it more or less just oriented the airplanes on a compass degree heading to put them on the center line of the runway to land if it was bad weather. The minimums back then was like, I believe it was 350 feet and a mile and what this is saying is that airplane is not suppose to descend any lower than that and have forward visibility of a mile or it wasn't legal to land. But, of course pilots being pilots they would stretch this fact every chance they got and that was one of the most intriguing parts of the job. When we had bad weather like January or February and the flight service station, the guys over there, they were the ones that handled all the business end of the flight plans and the weather and stuff. We would all go out and watch when somebody called in on the radio that they was going to try out an approach. We would all go outside the building and look through the fog to see if we could see the airplane coming in and all. They might miss it and we might see the airplane coming right over the hangar or so forth. It was kind of funny. Anyway, to get back on my original story there, like I said the airport had about 35 airplanes based there at that time and there was just a very few hangars. But, we had a commuter airline in there coming in at that time. The time I went to work there Trans Texas was already evolved and they called themselves Texas International at the time.

JG: This is about...you started in '73 so this would be mid seventies?

BL: This would be '74-75. They had changed their name to Texas International Airlines and they were flying the Convair 600 which was a 40 passenger turbo prop. But they were running I believe it was two flights a day to Dallas Fort Worth area and then one to Houston and they would come back in at like four or five o'clock in the afternoon then they would pick up the passengers that were trying to go to Houston and they would carry them to Houston. The morning flights at that time were all going to Dallas. Love Field started out and then it was DFW opened it about '76 or '77 I believe when DFW Airport opened.

JG: So these planes that took people from Lufkin to Houston, where were they based? At Lufkin or did they just stop off at Lufkin between Dallas and Houston?

BL: Right, the headquarters of Texas International at that time was in Longview. That was their regional and I think it was part of the old...Gregg County used to have an Air Force base and I think it was one of the reliever bases and I think they were using the building of the old lever base but that was where Texas International Headquarters was at that time. But, of course it what it was...they had the essential air service deal through Congress at that time where they were subsidizing smaller communities, subsidizing them to get airline service into these places because they wouldn't pay a balance even as a whole. That is a little bit further on in the story. But, that is kind of what was the demise of commuter service in the end at Lufkin you know, because they cut the subsidy out and so later on commuter airlines it wasn't paying them to come in. That is actually why we haven't got one right now. But anyway we had the Flight Service Station out there which was the opportunity for pilots to come in and file flight plans and check the weather at Lufkin or check the weather where they were going. The flight service technicians then I

believe there were about 14 on the payroll out there then and it was 24 hours a day. There was a man sitting at that radio 24 hours a day there.

JG: Whose payroll were they on?

BL: Federal Aviation Administration. But they would take flight plans and put them in teletypes and in the computer and that would be in the Federal Aviation system then you know. They would know whether that this pilot failed to show up they would know where to start looking for him.

JG: So, they were FAA employees? It wasn't like reimbursement to the county or anything?

BL: No, it was FAA employees.

JG: They were FAA people. They just were stationed at the county airport, okay.

BL: Yes, it was 24 hours a day and so you had a good many people actually working under that one roof at that time. There was like 13 of those guys and during the daytime there would be two on duty there with the FAA. Then you had one maintenance technician that worked for FAA and his sole job was to keep all this federal equipment operating, teletypes and so forth. The operation on my end of the deal down there we had an airport manager and we had at the time there was about five or six employees that fueled the airplanes, mowed the grass, worked on runway lights and done the rest of the maintenance around the airport. Then we had the airline folks down there which was like I said, it evolved into Texas International and there were three to four of the airline employees, it varied at different times, but there was three to four airline employees down there. They sold the tickets, weighed the baggage and loaded the airplanes and so forth on that. They also made reservations. They were always hooked into the teletype system to where they could make reservations. If you wanted to connect with at the time Braniff or any others, Delta, United, anybody that they could go ahead and sell you a ticket in Lufkin to go to New York if you wanted to go there, from Lufkin. So, you had those employees there and then you had a rental car agency at the terminal there. At the time it was Hertz when I went to work there. Hertz Rent a Car had a person there eight or nine hours a day. Then we had a café of course that they still got in the airport where a person could come in if they stopped in Lufkin en route somewhere they could get a hamburger or something and that kind of helped us out on fuel sales because we would get a lot of traffic. If they stopped in Lufkin to buy fuel simply because they could grab a snack or grab something to eat on the way and so that was kind of a benefit for fuel sales and what we made in the café.

JG: So how many were county employees, just county?

BL: The café folks were county employees and there was usually two to three of those in the café. There was about seven or seven to eight in the fuel office, the FBO, we called it. The fuel office and the Fixed Base Operator is what FBO stands for. Seven to eight in

that and he had about three in the airline, you had about thirteen in the FAA, one down at the FAA maintenance and you had the rent a car folks and then like I said two to three in the café, you probably averaged twenty to...anywhere from twenty to twenty three people worked there every day at the airport at that time. Part of that you got less now partly because of course the automation stuff. That cut down on all kind of manufacturing. That was a mass exodus of manufacturing jobs when you just got computers for instance and the same thing happened with the FAA. They eventually went to this system with the superstations they called it and so they done away with the little places like Lufkin or wherever it had a flight service station.

JG: I don't want to jump too far ahead, but I know eventually you went into management.

BL: Right.

JG: And so, I guess my question was and I know we will certainly get there when you get into the management side of it, but would be funding. How was it funded? You may not have known much about it at the time, but in looking back on it how was it funded? You mentioned the subsidies of some of these other groups.

BL: Well I can't speak with certainty about right now with the way the economic situation is, but all through the years I worked there we operated simply off the profit from fuel sales and hangar rentals. We always made money! We were never into the tax payers pocket out there because we...like I said when I first went to work out there we were probably selling 300,000 gallons a year. Well back then fuel was a whole lot cheaper than it is now but higher revenues always exceeded our expenditures by usually...I can remember, I can speak from certainty for the last ten years I worked, which I retired in 2002, that we would exceed our expenditures anywhere from a hundred to a hundred and eighty thousand dollars a year. That is profit but what we would use this profit for we would apply for these government grants, FAA grants, which were 90-10 grants. That is where the government would give you ninety percent of a three million dollar project and you had to have the money to match the other ten percent. That is what we used our profit for was to match these grants. Say if you get a four million dollar runway up here that would say that we need to come up with ten percent of that to match it and that is what we used our profit for. It was kind of like the engine pulling the train.

JG: Right, right.

BL: And, of course the café never really completely made money per say in the café all the years I worked there, but it generated all this side money coming in because like I said, you would have people...we would get a Learjet in and they would buy six or seven hundred gallons of jet fuel from you and hey if we didn't have that place for them to grab a hamburger on the way to Atlanta, Georgia or something they would land in Tyler or Conroe or somewhere. And so, I justified the café by using that justification.

JG: You would have lost the fuel sale.

BL: But anyway we have always turned a profit out there. It worked up to...at the time I retired I was selling a million gallons a year. Of course, the fuel had got to the point I think when I retired it was running close to 2.50 or 2.75 a gallon. We were turning about a buck a gallon profit off that fuel. Of course, that paid our salaries, paid the utilities on the airport and left us money to match these grants with too. Which, like I said I can't speak with certainty whether this economic climate lets them do that now, but that is the way it was when I was out there. But we made money for the community and also we had a lot of businesses that would actually, I got into the Chamber of Commerce before it was over with just for information purposes mainly. We had a lot of businesses that came to Angelina County simply because they could fly corporate people in and try to make sales to them and so forth. It was a really big economic benefit for the airport there.

JG: I know we are kind of jumping around. I did want to come back to the money a little bit and talk about some of the capital improvements and talk about these grants and stuff but since you mentioned about corporate and things like that, where was Temple in all that as the business, Temple Eastex, Temple-Inland?

BL: Temple played a big part in it and I'm sure they still do. Temple played a big part in it because at that time this was starting in 1972-73 and this was a real growing period. Temple of course, if you think back this was the year they incorporated in 1973 I believe. I may be off a year or two. They got on the stock market.

JG: In '69 they went public and then Time bought it in '73.

BL: I remember all the Eastex, the deals with them merging with Eastex Pulp and Paper down at Evadale and of course that put more flying and more business into the airport up here. Eventually we wound up with the entire aviation division. Eastex merged with them up here. Temple went from having one Learjet and two small piston airplanes up here at one time we had four jets sitting in Temple's hangar over there and two helicopters based right here in Lufkin. One of the jets was, if you put airline configuration in it would carry eighty passengers. That is a big airplane. I can remember many months that I billed them \$150,000 for fuel.

JG: A month?

BL: A month! That is big! Which the economy down turn now and all and Temple doing their business process and stuff it's not near that now, you know, as far as out here but I can remember they were a huge part of our budget out there.

JG: Were they the biggest?

BL: Undoubtedly they were the biggest and probably the second biggest income we had was the military, the government. We had a lot of Huey helicopters, Apaches and Black Hawks. I mean a lot of military stuff come in out there.

JG: And why would they come in?

BL: There was a lot of traffic between Fort Hood and Fort Polk and if you look on a map we are just about halfway. Those helicopters notoriously short ranged on fuel and so we were halfway and man we would pick up that traffic going and coming. We always liked to see that because they were easy to deal with. They had a government credit card and man you just swipe it through the machine and you are gone. (laughter) So, they were about the second biggest revenue that we had out there.

JG: Do you think that is continuing today or not?

BL: To an extent. Now I don't think...it just don't seem like Fort Polk is playing as much a part in the operations as military of Texas as what it used to. I mean and I take it from Louisiana of course most of their flights. I'm not really sure but I don't think they are quite as big as they were but, they are still over here though.

JG: What about like some of the other companies like the Papermill, Lufkin Industries and like that?

BL: We had Lufkin Industries, when I went to work out there Lufkin Industries had one of the old DC3's which, I still love to hear those things run. They had one of the old DC3's down at Lufkin Industries and they had a Beechcraft Bearing. That was one of the last DC3's I know of that was actually still flying business in East Texas. Temple had one at one time but that was before I went to work there but Lufkin Industries had a DC3.

JG: Now this is the same plane or the same type of plane that you enjoyed seeing as a kid?

BL: The Trans Texas, that is right. The C47 was the military version of it.

JG: Yes, the C47.

BL: They had a DC3 and a Beechcraft Bearing that Lufkin Industries owned. Southland Paper Mill which was still Southland when I went to work there, they had a Beechcraft King which was a turbo prop, a pretty modern airplane for the time. But, I can remember the old DC3. We would go down and fuel that thing up with hundred octane aviation fuel and it would always...every time you filled it up with fuel you poured five gallons of oil in each engine. I mean we just carried the five gallon pails of oil with us when we fueled the airplane. It was going to take five gallons. We had to use a ladder to climb up on the wing and pour these five gallon pails of oil in each engine.

JG: It just burned that much oil.

BL: Those old radial engines and when...if you ever seen a radial engine start up you'll see the big puffs of smoke blow and that is oil blowing off the cylinders.

JG: Now those were four cycle engines weren't they?

BL: Big radials, they were a round circle through here.

JG: But they just used a lot of oil, burned it unintentionally.

BL: Yes, but it was amazing. I've said before God has been good to me because I had an amazing time and that is the only job I ever had, right out there.

JG: Yes, right out of high school.

BL: Right out there.

JG: I was going to ask you too did you finish your degree at SFA?

BL: I never did. I was one of these kind of guys, of course I worked at the time and I still am, I'm still guilty of that fact, my interest just jumps all over the chart and I never could declare a major.

JG: Yes, that is what I was going to ask you, what were you shooting for?

BL: I done everything from political science to climatic geography, history, I done it all but I never declared a major.

JG: They didn't have airport manager huh?

BL: No, they didn't have one of those. I guess the biggest thing, the smartest thing was get a major in business or something but I jumped all over the map. I went about...I think I must have a 100, at the time you had to have 130 semester hours I think for a bachelors degree and I think I have probably got 140 or 150 but I never majored, never finished nothing. But, also I had another thing play into the situation. At about the time I should have been getting serious about getting a degree up there the airport manager that was having the back trouble that I spoke of before, he had to retire. He got disability but he hurt his back at the airport working on a bush hog, but he had to retire.

JG: The airport manager was working on a bush hog.

BL: Working on a bush hog. I was helping him and he hurt his back and that was the beginning of that. But anyway to make a long story short he had to retire all of a sudden with disability. Well here there is no assistant manger slot out there then. Here that left me and I was already keeping the books and so I just kept keeping the books and trying to run the airport too and stuff and all and I done this for about six or seven months and all and that is when I kind of skipped a semester at SFA and was working on that. The Commissioner's Court was overseeing. They were the umbrella over the airport. They had an airport board that was an advisory board. That is what it is they give you advice. But anyway, the Commissioner's Court opened the job up for resumes or whatever and I

put my resume in at that time. I was twenty, twenty-one years old and one of the flight service guys that had retired from the Federal Aviation Administration put his resume in and there was two or three more. To make a long story short I came out second in the deal, so they appointed Chuck Moore, Walter L. Moore, airport manager and of course I was still keeping the books and all this. Well Chuck, I knew him because I had worked with him out there before he retired and we got along real well.

JG: He was the FAA guy?

BL: He was the FAA guy but he got the job as airport manager.

JG: The Flight Service Station person?

BL: Right, but I knew him. He was a friend of mine and we got along real well. He had retired and he was a lot older. We all kind of looked at him as a mentor. He could give us advice, but anyway he got the job, so I was working for him and I was still keeping the books and all. He told me he said, "Just keep doing what you are doing," you know, and all this kind of stuff. We got along real well. So, I worked under him and eventually after about a year, well he talked the Commissioner's Court to "Hey name him assistant manager to give him a position," to where I would have some standing anyway, you know, which I was doing all the bookkeeping all this time anyway, so I knew everything going on at the airport. In fact I knew more than what he did about the financial parts of it. But I done this for about five years I guess.

JG: Who was the County Judge then?

BL: Dan Jones, County Judge.

JG: Dan Jones.

BL: When I first went to work out there Claude Welch was still County Judge then. But anyway Dan Jones was there when they hired Chuck as the airport manager to take over but I got named assistant manager and I was doing all the bookkeeping and all and I done that several years. Then in 1990 Chuck retired. He said, "I've put in all these years with the federal government and done this" and I guess he invested with the county's retirement system also and he retired. Well I sent my resume up there again and they appointed me. Which I had done been there for years and years at that time you know. In 1990 I believe was the year I became the airport manager. All during this period of time we were getting more and more airplanes basing at the airport and all.

JG: Talk a little bit about some of the capital improvements.

BL: Okay.

JG: Improvements around the airport itself.

BL: When I went to work out at the airport we had four runways which is actually when you look at it from the air it looks like two but, you got a runway number from each end. Had two runways there and one of them was 4200 feet long and the other one was 3600 feet long and they were gravel. Can you imagine this? Which, I don't know you may not be familiar with it, but I say gravel they were chip sealed runways which you got the tar laid down like they lay on the highway out here and then they come along and sprinkle rock on top of it.

JG: I think they been doing that here on the northbound.

BL: Yes, that is most dangerous thing you can do for a propeller airplane because propeller is going to get chipped when it sucks the rock up. But, that is the way the runways were then.

JG: Now, that wasn't just here that was fairly common elsewhere.

BL: Well it was probably pretty common because, you know, I don't know but that is one of the biggest dangers you have is gravel hitting a propeller doing 900 miles, the rpm of a propeller, 9000 rpm's. But, anyway after I... not long after I came to work it must have been in '74 or so, we started to really begin to get lucky getting these government grants to extend these runways. The first time I think we extended to 36 or 3800 foot runway out to 4,000 feet and that would be the north south runway. It went to 4000 feet then we got another grant to extend the east west runway and we went to 4600 feet.

JG: Now what types of planes did that enable you to handle bigger planes?

BL: Yes, when we went to 4,000 foot at that time anyway was kind of the magic number whether you could safely handle the average business jet. Anything less than that now they land them a lot of places but you lose that margin of safety. But, we went to that 4,000 which Temple at that time, Temple had their Learjet and they were flying in and out on 4,000 foot. But we went to 4400 feet and then when I was manager in 1992 we extended the east-west runway to 5200 feet which was right at a mile. We got another grant for three million dollars and we put the instrument landing system in and that was the biggest boom we ever had was that instrument landing system, because that took all this worry about if they were going to make it in a fog or not out. That instrument landing system would put them on the center line of the runway if they followed that right down. So that lowered the minimums of landing and so we could handle stuff that other airports couldn't handle in here when we got that ILS. They called it an ILS but it was an Instrument Landing System. We got that in '92...

JG: Now that was a grant?

BL: ...along with that 5200 foot runway so we could almost handle anything.

JG: That was mostly with federal money?

BL: Federal grants, yes.

JG: Was that like a 90/10 also?

BL: That was a 90/10. Everything we got was a ninety ten.

JG: How much work was it to get that grant?

BL: It was a lot of work because the main part of the work was you had to acquire the land. We didn't have the land so we would have to start negotiating with the land.

JG: Where did that come from? I mean who owned the land?

BL: Well the land that we put the landing system on belonged to the Treadwell and Conner family up here at Burke. An old line family that is been there since there was a Burke existed. The south end of the airport you always dealt with the Fairchild family on the south end of the airport and then the east end you always dealt with the Burrous's. Through the years I think, I looked the other day, I've still got at home a list of all the people that we've bought land from since the airport was built in 1947 I think and there is something like 44 different land owners that have been dealt with through there through the years acquiring property. But if you run in to somebody you know that...one time we run into a person that just wouldn't sell and we had to have the property. The government told us we had to have it and we went and filed for eminent domain which everybody hates that and all, and I do as much as anybody else, but I mean, but we filed for eminent domain. And in eminent domain the person that is trying to acquire the property puts up in escrow account the value of the property which has been established and it sets up in court if it goes to court. It was settled before it went to court and we bought the property. But that is how we always...but the property acquisition and then you had to pick engineering firms. It was mostly a lot of meetings and discussing the pros and cons of this company verses that company and this kind of stuff. Of course, you had the FFA guy sitting in on everything that happened, you know, to make sure we were crossing all the T's and dotting the I's.

JG: How competitive was it? Was the Angelina County Airport competing against some regional ones for the same thing?

BL: It was pretty competitive in fact right down to the old field in Lufkin and Nacogdoches; now we had some competition with Nacogdoches. We usually came out on the top end of the deal.

JG: Why do you think that was?

BL: Well I don't know. We...I like to think that we just put on a good proposal, but Nacogdoches actually scored some runs too on a deal there but it was kind of political over there. They had a congressman one time that was kind of intervening a little bit on them getting the landing system before that some more...we got a landing system before

anybody else did up here. But Nacogdoches kind of slipped in and got one through the back door which was real smart in the way they done it. They...

JG: Now this is all the feds right?

BL: Right, they convinced a commuter airline to come into Nacogdoches under the condition that they get an instrument landing system over there. Well they carry this proposal to the congressman that was serving at the time and say, "Hey we can get an airline in here but we got to have an instrument landing system." Well the congressman earmarked some money for them for the instrument landing system just due to the fact that they had more or less put out some monetary incentives to get this airline to come in so they kind of back door beat us out on that deal. Well, they didn't actually beat us out but all this money is in competition through block grant programs. The Federal Aviation Administration gives TXDOT Aviation Division "X" millions of dollars a year and it's to be distributed out to deserving airports projects. So everybody in the state is competing for this block grant of money to get their part of it you know. So TXDOT Aviation Division over in Austin, you know, before it all starts out I'll write them a letter requesting hey we need this and all. They will send it back and say well give me some background of why you need this and all. It was kind of one of these kind of deals of how you get the grants was whether you could justify, "Hey we really need this." We always...

JG: Who would you say has been some of the good friends of the airport in government politics or whatever you want to say?

BL: Say what you want to but Phil Graham helped us out. Phil had his tactics and advantages and disadvantages but Phil Graham really helped us a whole lot when he was in Congress. But we had some good folks that would go to bat for us over in Austin too. In fact I wound up being good friends with one of the division of aviation, the administrator. I think he is still in office over there.

JG: Who is that?

BL: His name is Dave...if you hadn't asked me I could tell you.

JG: I'm sorry. (laughter)

BL: He is on the website, David Fulton.

JG: David Fulton.

BL: He is the administrator. I think he is still working over there too but, he helped us out a whole lot because I would get on the phone and I would talk to those people and I'd finally get him on the phone and sometimes he would fly over and have lunch with me or whatever. I would say "Dave we sure need this" or whatever you know, and all which it is just like anything else it's justification in selling your idea to them.

JG: Talk a little bit about some local politics and maybe that is not a good way to ask it, but just the working relationship with the county government. I know and what I'm kind of...what I know of is recently, you know, some of the stuff that has been in the newspapers in the past year about, you talking about the cafeteria, is it making money is it not making money.

BL: Well I always made sure when we had a new commissioner or a new Commissioners Court elected I wanted those people to see what we were doing out there. I would get them out there and feed them a hamburger and we'd get, either walk or get in a truck or something and I'd show them what we were doing and what we were expected to do out there and what we hoped to do. But I mean I educated them. You had to do that. Everybody had to do that and I could carry them in there to my desk and I'd pull out the figures and show them where we are paying our way. Show me where some of these other folks are paying their way, you know. But they all understood. I worked with some real good people and the commissioners all really backed me. I can think of very few occasions where I didn't get what I needed. And I think in Austin too, I had some real good people and I had real good work in Austin. In fact we done so good over there that one of the high points of my career out there was in 1997 we were named Texas Airport of the Year. Out of 310 airports in Texas we were on the cover of their airport directory, the picture of the Angelina County Airport. I went over, me and the County Judge Berry at the time and we had a big banquet and we had a thousand people in a room there and call me up and they gave me...that was a big high point because there are very few airports get that.

JG: I think it may still be there, but there used to be a little sign underneath it. Is it still there?

BL: I think it is.

JG: Airport of the Year or something like that.

BL: There was a plaque hanging somewhere in the building. But that was kind of the high point deal because I figured you know, they recognized us, we made it!

JG: And who gives that?

BL: Texas Department of Transportation, Aviation Division.

JG: Texas Department of Transportation.

BL: But we were named Airport of the Year and went to Austin and got it at a banquet.

JG: You mentioned a little bit, you know, the FAA being there, the Flight Service Station and included with that is that the National Weather Service Station or is that different?

BL: The Federal Aviation folks out there, the Flight Service Station we call them, they were certified. They were weather certified and they did the observations every hour on the hour and this was in addition to their duties of talking to the airplanes on the radio, filing flight plans and stuff. But each one of those were weather certified where they were certified and they did this weather observation for them. Like I said, twenty four hours a day every hour on the hour or they might miss it by a minute but they were out swinging their thermometer doing the weather observation. They would come back in and set it down on the teletype and type it in there and it went all over the world what the weather was in Lufkin, Texas.

JG: Part of that N.O.A.A. like the NOAA Weather Network.

BL: Yes, the National Oceanic Atmosphere, yes. They handled that too.

JG: So those were actually people on the spot and of course now days...

BL: Now days they have an automated system out near Farm Road 2108 there that does it all automatically.

JG: And that happened during your time there?

BL: Right, this was in...

JG: Talk a little about that.

BL: ...must have been about '96, '95 or '96 the flight service stations as we knew them ended. They went to the super stations and...

JG: How did that affect what you were doing? I know they were there you know, but as far as your...

BL: Well it affected the economy because you lost that many people up here that all of a sudden wasn't living in Angelina County then. And they had a problem at the time because, "Hey we've shut the flight service station down, it's all being handled out of Conroe and what wasn't computerized you got 110 people working down here doing this but we still have to have a weather observation made in Lufkin every hour, what do we do?" Well, to settle that problem they contracted for about a year while they were trying to get this automated weather station assembled and in Lufkin. They contracted it out with a company that put a man sitting in a desk there and all his job was once an hour to do this for about a year and a half before they got the automated system in. But they kind of put the cart before the horse down here and moved all of them off and then decided hey we got to have the weather in Lufkin, you know. (laughter)

JG: Of course I know it's still, they still have reports today and I guess it's some of that same automation that they set up back then.

BL: Yes.

JG: You've already talked a little bit about it but, you know, that was one of the questions was technology. Just how technology changed during your time and anything else you want to share about that.

BL: I can remember the Flight Service Station, like I said they had the weather station and all and they had a fax machine, a huge fax machine probably four foot wide that printed out paper with a weather satellite map on it and for some reason the paper was always wet. I guess it was some kind of electrical charge went through it and made the actual lines and so forth for isobars or milibars on the paper. And then of course you didn't have the computers then. They had the teletypes where they would set up on the console and type on a teletype and at the same time it run out a ticker tape, you know the little holes in the paper and they would poke this in there and they would in the teletype machine if they wanted to send one they would thread it in there and it would zip through here, you know. It was just holes in the paper reading. It wasn't any such thing as a portable computer back then. And like I said the weather observation people they would walk out and swing one of those thermometers and they would leave it sitting in a cup of water for some reason to get the ambient temperature the same or something but they would pick that thermometer up and walk out the door and swing the thermometer you know in the air and then look at it and they would come in and write all this down and here the teletypes. The teletypes were a big thing back then because that is the only way they had to communicate what was going on. Airline down there was the same way. If you bought a ticket there they didn't type it in on a computer or something and your name was in Dallas or wherever it was done with a teletype also. So they had teletypes down there at the airline too.

Through the years I hadn't really touched on it much but through the years after Texas International Airline they done some mergers. They merged with Continental Airlines down at Houston and of course, you know, you done got a big player in the game then and Lufkin was a small fish so they pulled out of Lufkin. That left us without an airline at the time, so some of the powers that be in the county and also I think state folks helped us too, we started looking for another commuter airline to come in and fill that gap. At the same time the federal government cut back on a little bit of this subsidy that they were paying Texas International to come into Lufkin. They cut it back from like \$110,000 a year like to \$80,000 which was just like a check to them to come into Lufkin plus whatever they made off of Lufkin. We got an upstart little airline down at Clear Lake that was carrying NASA people around called Metro Airlines and their main, they got started simply to fly NASA employees from the airports in Houston over to the facility at Clear Lake, NASA. So they branched off from there and bought three or four more airplanes and they were flying the old DeHavaland twin otters which was a high wing twin engine turbo prop airplane and they expressed interest in flying into Lufkin and they set up the same thing with Tyler and Longview and so they set up an office in Lufkin and they were flying from Houston to Lufkin and leaving Lufkin and flying to Tyler, Longview, and into DFW and then they would do the whole thing backwards again each day. They flew in and out of Lufkin for about three to four years I guess. They were

the last one airline that I knew of that actually made a profit out of Lufkin. I think they made a profit.

JG: What about Chaparral? I remember seeing something about them.

BL: Chaparral Airlines they came in when Metro Airlines sold, they sold. At the time a lot of these larger airlines buying out these little ones.

JG: What year would this be?

BL: This would be in the early eighties, '81 or '82 something like that. When Metro pulled out you had Chaparral Airlines moved in and I think their headquarters was in Abilene, I believe. They started flying in and they operated in and out of here for a year and a half or two years maybe.

JG: But they still got subsidies too right?

BL: Right, they got some subsidies. And, then Chaparral folded their doors. I don't remember exactly what the consequences were, the reason they went out of business. We had one other one try it called Centex Airline. Their headquarters were in Brownwood and they had twin engine piper Navajo Airplanes and they were running a couple of two or three flights a day out of Lufkin. They didn't last but probably a year or year and a half, something like that. In fact Ben Barnes, the ex-Lieutenant Governor owned part of Centex Airlines. That was after the Sharpstown deal was all over with and so forth.

JG: So what we are talking about is passenger service planes so, when did all that end?

BL: Commuter airlines, the last one we had it was probably 1985 or '86.

JG: What about mail, was any mail being carried while you were there?

BL: Yes, when I went to work over there in the early seventies and up to the eighties I guess, Texas International, that was one of their big things. They hauled a lot of mail at Texas International. Those old Convair 600's they had a cargo door they would open it up and they would have four or five of the orange bags of mail in there and they hauled a lot of freight too. And then after they left I think Metro Airlines was still flying a little bit of mail. During the time Metro was flying in and out of here for some reason the postal service discontinued flying it and I guess was trucking it to Houston somewhere then but the mail ended.

JG: What about like United Parcel Service were they flying in during your time?

BL: Yes, they got started, I don't remember the year, but before them we even had one that was flying freight out of there called SMB Stage Line. They used to, they would leave a plane there all night and it would fly out every morning and come back that night, SMB Stage Line. They flew air freight and they flew a little bit of mail too. They had the

old Beach 18 twin beaches and they flew to Dallas, flew the mail and freight to Dallas and then from Dallas I found out later they had hubs all over Missouri and all and that was the name of it, Sedilla Marshall Boom is where the SMB name came from. They flew freight out of there.

JG: Now UPS what did they fly?

BL: UPS started out they always contracted with a charter service or something. Most of the time for about five or six years up until about two years before I retired they flew an outfit called Martin Air. Martin Air had about twenty airplanes I guess and they kind of specialized and contracted with FedEx or UPS and they flew all the UPS in and out of Lufkin. The airplane would sit at the airport over here all day and then they would fly out late in the afternoon. We would fuel them up and they would fly out and then seven or seven thirty in the morning after we opened the airport we would look up and there they come in landing with a UPS truck would be out to meet them. They done this for four, five or six years that Martin Air was flying the United Parcel Service.

JG: Do you know where their planes went, did they all go to Houston?

BL: They were going to Dallas.

JG: Mesquite, Dallas, okay.

BL: Dallas yes.

JG: I worked there in the late eighties at UPS. I remember our hub was Mesquite.

BL: Well that may have been where it was. It was somewhere. The Martin Air I guess they had kind of a lock on that contract because they had done that for years.

JG: I guess it might be a little different before you became manager and then when you did become manager, but if there is such a thing describe a typical day and if not a typical day maybe a day that, you know, within a couple of week period. And especially as airport manager just tell us what you did as a manager?

BL: Well what I would do generally at the time we were open from seven o'clock in the morning and we didn't close until dark or even after dark before the time change deal. But we were open from around twelve or thirteen hours a day, but I would come to work at seven o'clock.

JG: Now is this before you were manager or after?

BL: This was after and all the time actually. When I was manager I would get there at seven when my first guy got there so I was there to oversee whatever went on. I would get there and my fuel guy would get there or whatever and I would go in there and gather up all the invoices from the day before and the credit card slips and the cash and stuff and

I would go in and I'd...before I got computers I would do this on ledger forms and stuff, I'd do each day as a page, you know, all the cash sales, the credit card sales and the charge sales. We run a lot of charge accounts with local people, but I done all that. I would make the bank deposits up and I would make bank deposits a couple of times a week. At the same time my fuel guy he was fueling all the people that would be leaving early in the morning like Temple or anybody else that had a business trip that day. He would be out and we would get calls, "Hey come down and fuel Temple's Learjet or fuel this." He would be fueling the planes and stuff and then the café ladies would get there and I'd give them their petty cash to operate out of for the day. They would open up the café, you know and get ready to serve a hamburger or breakfast or whatever to the folks in there. Usually it took me about an hour or an hour and a half to do all the bookkeeping and so forth unless it was the end of the month and the end of the month it was an all day deal. I had an old Underwood typewriter I would type out each invoice and stuff, you know. It was all by hand. We would get fuel deliveries and of course we had inventory to keep up with on our fuel. I had to check quality control every morning because this aviation gas has got a tendency in these tanks to condensate and you get condensation in them. The first thing when the guy would get there to fuel the airplane...I mean to work the line every morning it was part of his job and he would go out with his pad and he would get the meter readings for the fuel that was sold the day before, you know, the meter readings for the start of that day and that is how we kept up with how much fuel was sold and these meter readings had to match the number of tickets to the fuel that was sold by gallons. But, he had to drain the sumps into trucks on the tanks because we had ten or twelve thousand gallon tanks you might get a quart or two of water out of each one of them every day. You know water and airplanes you don't put water in airplanes. So, we would drain the sumps, you know, and he would drain the sump which was at the bottom of the big fuel tank. He would open this valve up and hold a bucket under it and fuel and water would run out until you got just clear fuel and then you would shut it off and you poured it in a barrel and we would keep it, the fuel and water mixture which now days would be completely illegal. You would have to do something else with it. At that same time when I first went to work there of course the FAA people they were there twenty four hours a day so the airport doors never actually closed on the airport. We would fuel airplanes all day. I would always have one or two guys that would just come on and usually they would concentrate on keeping all the grass mowed or the lights fixed or some of this stuff. The money was the fuel going in the airplanes. Somebody always concentrated on that first and then number two was our maintenance and stuff. But we kind of handled everything.

JG: What might be some issues that might come up during the day? I don't necessarily mean problems or anything.

BL: That was one part of it being such an interesting job because you never know what is going to break down next. It's just like any other business. I have been out when it was twenty degrees working on runway lights trying to dig in the mud and stuff to fix this electric cable that broke in two. I've been up on a beacon tower when it was twenty five degrees trying to fix that big circular rotating light that everybody seen. I mean it's been...

JG: Your predecessor ruined his career working on a bush hog.

BL: I mean it was something every day. It was not a boring job by any extent. And, you never knew who...we touched on this a little bit before but, you never knew who was liable to land and step out of an airplane next. I've met two presidents out there and met every governor of Texas. I've met most of nearly every officer in the State of Texas. I've met all sorts of movie stars, singing stars. I mentioned earlier to you the other day. SFA used to sponsor a whole lot of these rock acts would come play at the coliseum or somewhere, especially back in the golden days I called it. The aviation that rock and roll had every big band had them an old airplane, which it killed a whole lot of them. Lynnard Skynard got wiped out in an airplane, Ricky Nelson, but all of them had to get them a big old airplane. They used to buy a plane from an airline that had so many hours on it an airline had to park it, but all these rock bands would come in in all kind of airplanes and stuff, you know. We had the band Chicago, the Eagles, and Boston. I remember Boston came in an old Lockheed Electra one time and gosh those things have been falling out of the air for twenty years when they came in with that thing. They lost one up near Buffalo, Texas one time.

JG: Did you get any of their autographs?

BL: Yes, I got several of them. I came across...I was digging around the other day and I came across in my drawer, I found a picture of Merle Haggard where he wrote, "To Barley, one of the good old boys" on it. I've got one of Linda Ronstadt when she played over at SFA and I met movie stars and television stars.

JG: When they landed did they pretty much have like limos waiting for them and stuff?

BL: Some of them did and some of them didn't. It's kind of weird. You meet some of them that you can just tell right off the hand and say hey this guy is just like I thought of and then you get one that you think is a nice guy and all and he gets out and turns you could kind of get a little bit of a darker picture of the guy. One of them I think right off hand, which I guess could be slandering people here but, one...I better not get into that on this tape.

JG: Oh okay.

BL: Some of them you would think would be real nice guys and you would start talking to them and all and hell they would just piss you off right quick.

JG: Really? Now how were the Eagles, the members of the Eagles?

BL: They were nice people, nice people.

JG: Now Joe Walsh used to be...

BL: I remember Henley telling me that he was from up around East Texas.

JG: Yes, he is from up around the Caddo Lake area.

BL: Yes.

JG: Did you talk with people like Joe Walsh or you know he was always...?

BL: I don't remember him but Henley sticks out in my mind for some reason.

JG: Yes, John Henley.

BL: I met a lot of the old television stars that I grew up with. Fess Parker, now that was the nicest guy you ever met. Which he just recently...Fess Parker, James Drewery was the little guy that played The Virginian. I've met him.

JG: Fess Parker was...

BL: He played Daniel Boone, Davey Crockett and all that.

JG: Yes, yes, Walt Disney stuff, yes.

BL: And...

JG: Now, why did they come in, for just shows in Lufkin and Nacogdoches?

BL: Fess Parker came in he was buying cattle here from Harry English, had a red Brahman ranch up here between Lufkin and Burke there and he would have these sales, big shows you know and selling Brahman cattle. Fess Parker was in the cattle business and he came in to see or buy some of those cattle. And, then like most of the musical groups were going to play a concert somewhere. I can remember back in the late seventies the first stars I ever met, which was kind of real exciting at the time, there was a big place opened up in Lufkin on the loop over there. It wound up being a skating rink but it was called the Showboat at that time. They were going to have musical acts and stuff and kind of have BYOB deal. It run for about a year but they booked some pretty big people in there because I never will forget walking in to the airport there, I went to work at eleven o'clock that day, I was going to SFA, I walked in the lobby and there was a Texas International Airline had a flight scheduled to come in at like twelve or twelve fifteen. I walked in and looked over there and there was a fellow sitting in the lobby there had a cowboy hat on and a pair of faded out blue jeans and I looked and it was Marty Robbins sitting in there. He had played this Showboat club the night before or something. Then when George Jones had his musical park down here by Colmesneil there were a lot of them flying in for that. I met the Conway Twitty's and the Tanya Tucker's and all those because this was the closest airport to get a small business jet or whatever a star would be flying in, you know, to drive to Colmesneil. Of course George Jones flew out of here a lot. I mean George Jones was in and out of here nearly every weekend because he

would go down there and do his thing and then go back to Nashville during the week. But, I remember Walter Mondale very plain. I never will forget Walter Mondale came up here. He spoke at a chamber banquet, him and Ed Koch, Mayor of New York came in here. We spent two weeks with the secret service guys. I mean this is we are talking vice president here. We spent two weeks with secret service guys. They would show up every day.

JG: He was a sitting vice president.

BL: Yes, he was sitting vice president but the secret service would show up and they wanted the personnel record on this guy that worked for me and this guy and all you know and they run all kind of backgrounds. Every other day they were having a planning meeting you know, highway patrol folks there and had the DPS helicopter crew from Beaumont was up here, you know, for high security. And they wanted to know is this door usually shut? Does this gate usually shut on this hurricane fence over here? What is going on here? I mean it was never ending deal there. It was kind of ironic to me because they flew in two C130's. One of the C130's had a limo in it. They backed the limo out and come to find out they always carried a spare airplane anyway. But the C130 landed and taxied in and he stopped, it was so big we couldn't turn it around well, he parked on the end of the runway and then here come the C130 in with Mondale on it. Well I had my parking chocks out and I was going to park him, you know. It was kind of exciting at the time. I mean I had to wonder in the twenties then things were still a lot more interesting then than they are now. But, I get out here and park Mondale and there was a bunch of people all lined up all up and down the fence there and Ed Koch got out first and then Mondale. Well, Mondale came around and I shook his hand and all and my guys, I had three fuel guys working at the time and we had to keep traffic going in and out of there at the time, business still went on even though you had the Vice President there. And my guys two of them were local kids and all who lived around Fairview over there and anyway, one of them wound up being a corporate pilot and he is a pilot now that worked for me but anyway I shook Mondale's hand and he came on in and I don't think I ever actually met Koch, but they came on in to the hurricane fence there of the yard of the airport and I looked over there and there was two of my guys. There was a Beechcraft King Air came in and taxied up and my guys were always trained to park the airplane and ask them if they need fuel. That is the way you meet and greet and sell fuel. Well, I hadn't told them any different and the entrance to the tarmac out there was kind of crowded with people to see Mondale so they got the bright idea they would just run over to the hurricane fence and here they just grab a hold of it and jump over the fence to the fuel trucks. Well, their feet hadn't no more hit the ground secret service had them by the elbow here. (laughter) And all the time they gave this little pin that said "A" on them. I guess it was for airport or authorized or something. I said, "Hey they all right, they're all right." But that is how particular they were about this. They had my guys by the shirt collar by the time their feet hit the ground when they jumped that fence. They were just jumping the fence to go park their airplanes for the fuel truck.

JG: Well, it made you feel like they were doing their jobs anyway, on both accounts.

BL: Yes, right.

JG: Well that is interesting. Talk about some of the more memorable people that you have worked with. You've mentioned celebrities and everything but pilots that might have been regulars out there like Horace McQueen, you know, some of those kind of people. Anything you want to share about that?

BL: Well they were...99% of those people were real good people I thought. Two of them of course were killed in the Lufkin Industries plane crash back in '81 or '82.

JG: Who was that?

BL: One of those guys that was killed in that plane crash gave me my first airplane ride. Ray Fisher was his name. But I'll never forget I fueled that airplane that morning and it crashed right out of Denver and killed those ten folks and that was a blow! But, through the years I've had some scary times out there but there were never anybody in my twenty nine and a half years I was there with the county, which is a total of thirty if you count the summer I worked for Temple, nobody was ever killed on my watch out there. But I was always very scared of something going to happen, you know. I had some close calls. We had one airplane to completely lose control and went through a hangar and burned a hangar and airplane both up but the two guys got out of it okay. One of them was a doctor. I happen to be standing in the door of the terminal and was looking out at the runway when he...I seen the airplane hit the runway and bounce into the air and came down one wing was on the ground. It come spiraling across the tarmac right into one of our old hangars there. All I could think of was "Oh my God" and I ran out the doors there and grabbed up a seventy five pound fire extinguisher that I couldn't do it right now at all, and ran down there with that fire extinguisher probably two hundred yards to the hangar and by the time I got down there I could just see fire going everywhere and I didn't know where those two guys on the airplane was. I thought they were in the airplane. It had one wing that had just sawed through the hangar and the airplane fuselage was right on the outside and of course you had a hundred gallons of hundred octane fuel. It was one heck of a fire going there and I couldn't see those two pilots, those two guys on the plane. It scared me to death and I started spraying that fire extinguisher, blew it out and didn't even make any effect on the fire. We had one airplane sitting in that hangar there. The fire was burning all around it and all I could think of well, I can save this airplane so I started pulling this airplane out and Bruce Owens, who was Temple's helicopter pilot at the time, came over and helped me and we pulled the airplanes out of that hangar and saved them from burning in there too. Come to find out the two guys had got out of the airplane and ran to the hurricane fence. They were standing behind the hangar but I thought they were in the airplane originally. That was scary. About once a year we would have an airplane to land with the wheels up. That happened pretty regular which usually that was no big, the airplane would skid on the belly and that would be about it, you know. We had one old boy out there they wound up arresting him for drugs. He crashed a 172 out there one time and just balled it up into a ball of scrap metal, fuel leaking everywhere. We got down there, it was right at dark there and we got down there right at dark. Fuel was leaking out of the old airplane wings and they were all crumpled

up. He was coming out of there wanting a light for his cigarette and fuel going everywhere and all. We called the highway patrol in the meantime and they got out there and they carried the old boy in and done a drug test on him and he had drugs in his system and stuff and all. Then we had two or three actual drug bust out at the airport. One of them we had a twin engine airplane that flew in a whole load, seven hundred pounds of marijuana from Belize and they surrounded it and accosted it out there about eleven o'clock one night.

JG: Were they already looking for it or did y'all alert them?

BL: They were tracking it.

JG: Okay.

BL: They were tracking it. Anyway, we had one old boy that was flying in some kind of synthetic drug from Austin area over there and he was bringing it in balloons and they arrested him mid day over there one day.

JG: Now did the law enforcement alert ya'll what was going on?

BL: Yes, we always knew what was happening.

JG: Okay so they alerted you "hey a plane is fixing to land."

BL: Yes, because I went out and met the old boy that had the balloons full of dope and asked him if he needed fuel or whatever and I knew we had undercover Lufkin. They had a task force in the county. It was the Lufkin police, the sheriff department guys and DPS were all undercover. They were all over the airport when this old guy came in. I asked him if he needed to fuel up. He went into the building and I knew they were going to arrest him but, I didn't know when. They wound up arresting him in the bathroom and he had some of those balloons full of dope on him, but he was flying it in.

JG: But, you went ahead and went out and asked him if he needed fuel?

BL: Yes, I fueled a whole plane load full of dope at two o'clock in the morning.

JG: You did it knowingly at the time?

BL: Yes. About two o'clock one morning one of the flight service guys called me on the phone. We had a call out system where if somebody needed fuel they paid extra we would come out and fuel them. About two or two thirty in the morning I got a call one night somebody needed fuel and I get up and go on out there. I'm talking to the flight service guy. The Flight Service Station was still open then. A fellow named Roger Parker was working that shift and he told me he said "Barley, DEA called me and said you are going to have a plane that is inbound that they are tracking." He said, "Apparently they have done called you needing fuel." I said, "Yes, I got a call from somebody that was

fixing to be in out there needing fuel or whatever.” I think they had called me from on the ground around Houston or somewhere but anyway I come out there and I get out there and Roger tells me he said, “They are going to land but the DEA is tracking them in another airplane but they’re running without lights.” I get out there, you know, and sure enough I see the landing light didn’t come on until they were a mile or two off the runway, but this twin engine plane landed. The guy was just as nice as all get out. “We need some fuel, fill both main tanks.” I put like 50 gallons in each side of it, they pay with a credit card and all the time I’m fueling them I’m looking around the doors are open on the airplane and I couldn’t...it was a big twin engine Piper Navajo is what it is and I filled them up and they paid for their fuel and they left, taxied out and took off. The lights went out and few minutes later Roger said, “Well here come the feds now.” Well we could hear the airplane we were standing outside the building. We could hear it but we couldn’t see it. They didn’t have any lights on, they were running without lights. They landed in one of their King Aire’s and I poked a hundred gallons of jet fuel in them right quick and they gave me a credit card and run in with the credit card, but I could see they had gun racks with M-16’s or something in their airplane. I run in and run their credit card through and all right fast and they took off without any lights chasing them. I always wondered, the next day we finally found out. Me and Roger, he came to work back at two that afternoon, we were trying to find out. We got involved with this, where did they get them at or did they get them. We finally found out they arrested them in Oklahoma. But that was one thing that always kind of bothered me. When you get called out at two o’clock in the morning you never know who you are going to run into out there and I would always carry a gun with me.

JG: Now who is the DEA, for the recording?

BL: Drug Enforcement Agency.

JG: Okay.

BL: But, you never knew.

JG: Now, how often did you get called out? I mean, who would call you? Not just anybody could call you.

BL: Overall we would have two or three a month.

JG: Now, who is calling, the government?

BL: Or the people wanting fuel, but when the Flight Service Station was open there they would be talking to an airplane on their radio and they would say, “Can we get any fuel tonight.” Roger said, “Yes, I can call somebody out.”

JG: Oh okay.

BL: But after the Flight Service Station closed the people had to do the actual calling themselves then, you know.

JG: So, y'all were pretty much obligated to fuel anybody that needed fueling?

BL: Well, yes but we always liked doing it because we charged them twenty bucks above the cost for a service call we called it, you know. That was cash money you know.

JG: That is interesting. Let's see here. The whole time you talk I'm always thinking of something else to ask because one thing leads to another. I'm kind of at a loss right at the moment. Well, training, we talked a little bit about education, but to be airport manager is there any kind of training or certification you had to do?

BL: No, I know without a doubt most of the airport managers now got some kind of Bachelor Degree in Business Administration or something you know.

JG: But, there is not a certification or anything that you did?

BL: No, now there is some technical colleges that actually teach courses in airport administration. The old school back when I was working out there that would kind of train pilots plus any other parts of aviation related things was there was one in Oklahoma called Spartan School of Aviation. Mainly what they trained was pilots, but they also trained people to do the charter end of it and things like that and that went right down to bookkeeping and all, but there was really nothing as such as airport administration at that time.

JG: I was going to ask you, I thought of something and then I forgot it. Sorry about that.

BL: Oh, no problem.

JG: Well, while I'm trying to think of it is there anything else that you can think of or that you would like to share? Maybe I'll remember it here.

BL: Well I don't know right off hand. I'm like you, I'll probably think of something else later on.

JG: This wasn't it, but what were the most common airplanes that came in say when you first started verses the last day?

BL: When I first started it was the single engine Cessnas and you had the twin engine Cessnas and then the Piper had a few single engines but most of theirs was twin engines. The King Air which is turbo prop, there was a few turbo props when I first went to work out there but then again they started to get more and more turbo props in and all the business jets at that time were what we called turbo jets, which wasn't a very efficient jet engine. We always kind of laughed and said it was kind of like pouring a water hose full of gasoline on a fire. I mean you had to keep the fire going. Then they came out with a

fan engine that was a lot more efficient and all but the turbo props and then along about the late eighties or whatever when the fuel prices went up drastically and all a lot of these aircraft outfits went out of business. Cessna went out of business almost except for they were the one that made two models for several years on there. But the biggest increase I guess was the turbo prop and really the little fan jet business. The smaller jet business jets, you know, that would carry six or eight people have grown a whole lot. I still go over to the airport occasionally and there is more and more of them around six or eight passenger jets. Your bigger corporations, of course is going to have the bigger jets but like you're Temple, when I retired at one time they had the huge jet. The one I was talking about in passenger configuration would carry about eighty passengers but Temple has gone to what I call a mid level business jet which is a ten or twelve passenger, three engine, Falcon 50 or 900 versions. But you see more and more the business jets, the smaller business jets like I said Temple was medium size to large. The smaller business jets are not much more expensive than a turbo prop airplane. You are talking two million dollars to two and a quarter for a jet which the speed is not that much different either on them.

JG: What about like the Experimental Aircraft Association? I can't remember when that got started. Was that while you were still out there?

BL: That was really started here in East Texas really took a hold about the time I retired or a little after. Of course it's been around nationwide I guess for fifty years or whatever.

JG: Yes, a long, long time, at Oshkosh or something like that.

BL: But by the time I retired I seen less and less recreation flying and more and more business which I guess the economy done that. Used to a fellow could come out, you know, and fly around on a Saturday or something, you know. That was back when you were paying fifty cents a gallon for fuel or seventy five. When I went to work out there, I've got a copy of a fuel invoice where Arthur Godfrey, the fellow that had the nighttime NBC television show out of New York, bought some fuel out there and my brother signed the fuel ticket. I've got a copy of it with Arthur Godfrey's signature on it. He bought a hundred gallons of hundred octane gasoline for thirty eight cents a gallon. This was 1975. Now it's running well over four dollars a gallon. So that is the difference and of course in the process, which everything else has went up too but it hasn't went up in relation to that. That priced a lot of the smaller folks that just liked to fly around on Saturday out of the picture. So more and more of your flying is strictly business instead of recreation now.

JG: Who were some of the common or regular recreational pilots in those early days, during your early days, anybody that you can remember specifically?

BL: Yes, you had the Manning brothers and their dad. They were originally from Jasper, which Jerry wound up being chief pilot for Temple before he retired. The Denum family in Lufkin had some airplanes back then.

JG: Is that Joe Denman?

BL: No, Denum storage.

JG: Denum, D-e-n-u-m, okay.

BL: Yes, and Robert Conner down here that has got the Conner, he had an airplane that he flew on Saturdays and stuff a lot. But some of them and a lot of them are dead and gone now. There used to be a good bit of that but like I said it's turned more and more now into...now there is a lot of smaller businesses that put the plane in the business name and use it for personal use which they just divide it out on their taxes or whatever. But right now there's a lot of them that has got their airplane, like I said, under their business. They may use it to fly down to the beach for the weekend or whatever. But, like I said, when I went to work out there, there was thirty five airplanes based at the airport. When I retired in 2002 we had over ninety. That is how much we had grown in the time, went from 35 to 90 airplanes at the airport.

JG: And those mostly all stayed in county owned hangars?

BL: Right.

JG: Now Temple owned their hangar right?

BL: Right, Temple owned theirs and the foundry, Lufkin Industries and the Papermill owned theirs and essentially the rest of them were owned by the county.

JG: Now, the Papermill were you kind of aware of who was in and out all the time?

BL: Pretty well, pretty well.

JG: Or did they have to buy fuel for you to know?

BL: We pretty well knew what was going on everywhere. We weren't actually nosey but I mean that is part of business you know is to.

JG: I'm just curious about the Papermill as far as their, you know, it changed hands several different times.

BL: When something was fixing to happen in a company a lot of times we would know it before some people would actually because you would see somebody come in and you'd start checking. We always had some way to look up an airplane number and see who it's registered to.

JG: Okay.

BL: Say somebody is coming in with Company AB, you know a whole lot and their toting brief cases, you say hey they are doing business. They are doing something with them and stuff and all.

JG: So, they didn't necessarily have the company logo on the plane?

BL: Right, you would look the number up.

JG: Now Temple for a while at least had the T-wheel on theirs didn't they?

BL: Yes.

JG: Do they still?

BL: They stopped doing that when security became such an issue, you know.

JG: Okay.

BL: You would have someone walk out there, some nut throw a satchel bomb in an airplane just because it had their logo they had them pissed off at them for something.

JG: When was that?

BL: That was probably in the early nineties that started disappearing. Nearly every company used to have their deal on there but it became less and less probably in the early nineties.

JG: So nobody really marks their stuff.

BL: There is still a few but not very many.

JG: Okay, well doggone it I knew there was more stuff, but I think we kind of covered most all of it. I'm sure we will both probably remember a few things. What about as far as the county employees, did the county employee's numbers change much over your time approximately thirty years? I know the FAA and the feds kind of moved out, but you know, your fuel sales went up.

BL: There is less works out there right now, but business is kind of down right now, from what I understand. Don't hold me to it, but back also then there were more youth working there. I'll say like your co-op and agriculture students and part time and it kind of went to changing in the mid eighties I guess and we kind of started working into more a full time profession working out there. In fact when I retired everybody that worked for me was full time so, that put an older age bracket working out there then, which had its advantages actually.

JG: So, you couldn't do today what you did then?

BL: No.

JG: You couldn't start off like you did working summers and move in.

BL: Not really. That is kind of a shame in a way because there is good reasons for it but, it's a shame in a way. The same goes for Temple over here too. You know, Temple used to work a whole summer crew but it all turned into we had a budget to operate off of, so much salaries and also there is not much at an airport the work goes on all year. It's not just a whole lot of summer, "Hey we can do all this maintenance?" because it goes on all year. But I had a budget hearing and I knew we had to keep this place open from seven in the morning to seven at night and I knew how many people it took to do it, to fuel the airplanes and keep the maintenance and it turned in to full time then, you know. Also, back then you didn't have to pay overtime either, you know. But we went on to the retirement system I guess in the mid eighties was when the county first joined the Texas County District retirement system and that gave us a pretty good incentive to keep some employees in its own because I would always tell those guys listen our hourly pay is not all that great out here but it's retirement. That is the old time you look at the end product of it you know.

JG: Yes.

BL: And that is true because the county retirement is pretty good because it runs into the folks in Austin and all. Our retirement comes out of Austin.

JG: Pulls in with others.

BL: Texas County District Retirement account.

JG: Yes, with other counties and stuff okay.

BL: When I retired out here I had some of the best guys that worked for me and usually they had been at other jobs but one of them had been a foreman with Duncan Construction for twenty something years and he had some eye problems and he had to give it up for about a year. He had a detached retina and stuff and he had done worked for Duncan for twenty something years and he had a detached retina and he was off for about a year and he started looking for jobs and he just happened to come to the airport and all and I started asking him questions and asking folks about him and, "Man you can't beat this old fellow" and I hired him. He made a dang good employee and then there is another guy had worked for Lufkin Industries for awhile and he went through one of their layoffs and I kind of picked him up at about the same time I did this first one. He was probably forty years old at the time and he turned out to be a doggone, he is kind of a jack of all trades guy. He would work and do anything. Then when the Papermill went through one of their name changes or whatever and all they done away with the Brushy Creek Wildlife thing down here by Lake Livingston, they got rid of an employee that had been with them for about fifteen years. This guy was 51 or 52 years old, I mean anyway I

found some of my best employees that had been with other companies for years but they was in that fifty to sixty range where they wasn't ready to give it up and I had some good employees when I retired. The guy that took over that was my assistant manager Randy Carswell is manager out there right now, he worked for me fourteen years before I retired. I recommended him when I left. They kind of delayed about six months but finally they gave him the job. He is the manager right now. If you get good people, hang on to them, you know.

JG: Yes, oh yes, that is right. Well, I'll give you one more opportunity. Is there anything else you care to share that I've neglected or did we omit anything?

BL: That is all I can think of right off hand.

JG: Let me just back up a little bit. You mentioned when you were born, born and raised in Burke area.

BL: My mother and all was raised in Burke from when they were kids. We lived in Burke until I was six years old and Dad and Mother bought their place at Beulah. We moved to Beulah, lived out there until 1970 and Mother and Dad built a new brick house in Burke back up here by the airport there. They go back up there in 1970 which, you know, when I went to work originally out for Temple in '72. So, I was kind of gravitating all around the airport all this time. Like I said when I was going out there as a little bitty kid I had no idea I would spend thirty years working out there, you know.

JG: Now who was your grandfather the one you mentioned that used to...

BL: Clifford Morris, he is the one I did the oral thing for.

JG: Clifford Morris, okay that you interviewed. So, he used to take you out there?

BL: Yes, he would carry me out there in his old '58 or '53 GMC pickup and we would stand there at that barbwire fence watching the old grass growing and those old DC3's turning around. There's still some pretty good pictures on that Burke website. I think Patsy or somebody may have put them on there.

JG: How many acres was the airport when you started?

BL: When I started it was about 400 acres but, it's up now close to 700.

JG: 700 acres. We've mentioned bush hogs and mowers quite a bit through all this. How often did y'all mow, say in the summer and spring, when you actually had grass to grow?

BL: Well when I first went to work out there of course the bush hogs weren't advanced and tractors and so forth but the grass would get pretty scrubby before we would mow it.

JG: Okay.

BL: But, you get more and more instrumentation, they got this instrumentation landing system in out there. At that time you couldn't have grass interfere with the landing system. The beams or whatever got over so high. I always, it was kind of a personal tick of mine I guess you would call it, but I always liked to see well mowed grass and so I kept a guy during the growing season, I kept a guy when I was manager on our bush hog pretty much all summer because I like a good mowed place.

JG: Yes.

BL: But I mean that was one of the biggest things that had to be done out there was that and the runway lights maintenance. Now them runway lights are really important.

JG: How many lights per foot?

BL: There is one ever two hundred feet.

JG: One every two hundred feet.

BL: One every two hundred feet on each side.

JL: On each side, and you are talking the runway is about a mile long.

BL: You are continually fighting fire ants and crawfish with those things out there.

JG: Now were they surrounded by pavement for the runway or they off the runway?

BL: They are ten foot from the edge of the runway.

JG: Okay, so they are surrounded by grass.

BL: Yes, grass and you know the kind of soil we have there in East Texas, I mean it's just gumbo or mess or whatever and in the summer and spring you had the fire ants are drawn to electrical fixtures.

JG: Oh yes!

BL: You are continually having to keep the fire ants killed out of them so, between that and the mowing that was the biggest maintenance we had.

JG: A big part of the budget huh, expense budget?

BL: Right.

JG: Yes.

BL: Sure was.

JG: I guess you maintained all your own equipment and everything.

BL: Yes and on rainy days or something when there wasn't much aviation traffic out there we always kept four or five gallons of paint, you know, and I always liked to keep my guys busy. We always had four or five gallons of paint and if it was rainy day or something and wasn't much traffic my guys would be painting a wall somewhere. We kept it looking good. We kept it looking good.

JG: You were there when they relocated the entrance right?

BL: Yes.

JG: Can you tell a little bit about that? What was going on with that?

BL: Well we needed to lengthen that runway and also to put that landing system in we had to be in alignment with the centerline of that east and west runway and it stretched out for 1200 feet from the end of that runway and that put it at the farm road up there, I mean at highway 59 almost. If you remember the old entrance runs right through where the middle of part of that runway is right now so, we had to change entrances. Well there we go into buying property. We had to buy property and stuff to reroute that entrance road around that. But, the landing system was the primary reason that the entrance to the airport was closed and moved over to 59 anyway which, of course business wise and aesthetics it looks better off 59 anyway.

JG: Yes, give you more exposure. A lot of people maybe didn't even know it was there if they didn't have an entrance, yes.

BL: Yes, that was in '92 when we did all that.

JG: '92 moved all that, planted the live oaks along there.

BL: Yes, Mr. Temple paid for those live oaks and there is 222 of them. I can tell you every one of them. I had to water them for three years and we had about 20 or 25 to die during the summer because there is no watering system there. (laughter)

JG: How did you water them?

BL: A barrel and a bush hog.

JG: A barrel and a bush hog.

BL: We would put a barrel on a bush hog and we would fill it up with water. I had one guy, I would drive the tractor and one guy would dip gallons of water out and pour around these trees when they were young.

JG: Two hundred and twenty two, man.

BL: Two hundred and twenty two. I can tell you every one of them. (laughter)

JG: Man that took awhile didn't it?

BL: It did. I mean between that and the mowing it took six hours every couple of weeks to keep them up because you know, weeding and mowing too.

JG: I would figure out how to have a long long water hose and just pull it however distance between each tree and let it sit there a while and pull it a little more.

BL: Well there is 222 of them.

JG: I know that took a lot of time. Wow! Well all right Barley I think that will conclude the interview. I'll go ahead and stop it. I sure appreciate it.

BL: All righty!

END OF INTERVIEW