

ROSCOE IVY

Interview 246a

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Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, Roscoe Ivy reminisces about playing sports in the Lufkin area, particularly high school football and baseball and softball. He played football at Lufkin High School for Coach Abe Martin, and he talks about their games, their record, and their coach's motivation style. Mr. Ivy also talks about playing football and baseball for the Army during World War II, particularly when he was based in Lake Charles, Louisiana as an aircraft mechanic. After the war, he returned to Lufkin, where he worked for the U.S. Postal Service and then for an insurance adjusting company based in Nacogdoches. Through his professional career he continued to play semi-pro baseball and recreational softball. He played for the Lufkin Merchants baseball team, the semi-pro team that played in the pro level Lufkin Foresters Park when the pros were out of town. He also played softball for the Lufkin municipal league. He mentions his fellow players, their opponents (including the Diboll Millers), and some particularly memorable games.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is February 7, 2012. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm with Mr. Roscoe Ivy here at The History Center. We are going to do an oral history today and we are going to talk a little bit about his baseball playing days in conjunction with an exhibit that we are working on but then also a little bit more about his other sports, football, and playing for Coach Abe Martin and just some other things we will talk about a little later. So, I don't know where the best place to begin but maybe let's just start with playing football for Coach Abe Martin if you think that will be a good start.

Roscoe Ivy (hereafter RI): That will be a good start.

JG: Well, tell us, you started playing football in '37 is that right? Is that what you were telling me?

RI: The picture that I was in is 1938.

JG: '38, okay, for the '38 team.

RI: In 1938 I was a sophomore and I played in '38, '39 and '40 and graduated in the spring of '41.

JG: Okay and Coach Abe Martin had just come I guess in '37 right, the year before?

RI: He came in '36 and the football season of '36 was his first year there and he won that first district championship in 1936 that Lufkin ever had.

JG: Okay and from what I understand Lufkin was just a mediocre team maybe bordering on below mediocrity before he came.

RI: That is right. It seems that Abe Martin turned around the picture and made Lufkin a winner.

JG: How was he as a coach when you started playing football and you were actually playing under him? Just describe him.

RI: Well he sincerely cared about the players, the boys and, several of them referred to him as dad. Several of the boys on the team did not have a father and they looked up to Coach Martin like they would their dad. One of which was Billy Lee Thompson. Billy Lee thought the world of Coach Abe Martin and he was very instrumental in getting the things together that resulted in the stadium in Lufkin being named Abe Martin Stadium.

JG: Billy Lee Thompson?

RI: Billy Lee Thompson, yes. Billy was one of the trainers or water boys or whatever you called them in '38 and then he came on up. He was younger than I was. Then he and George Kelly Dupree were the two managers they called them. The equipment or whatever the team needed that is what they did. We all thought the world of Coach Martin. We all sincerely played hard for him and it was...we felt like it was an honor to play for Abe Martin.

JG: I guess he was the only coach you ever had in high school so, you didn't have much to compare him to (**RI:** That is right.) but I guess you were kind of aware of the whole town and community after his first couple of years of sort of turning things around and winning. Is there anything you can comment on that that you remember experiencing at that time or did you kind of realize what was going on?

RI: Well, I think in '39 we were co-champions, district co-champions. Then in '40, I think Jacksonville beat us out in the last ballgame of the season 7 to nothing in the mud in Jacksonville.

JG: Seven?

RI: As I recall the score was seven to nothing.

JG: Okay.

RI: And, Frank Devereaux hit the line three times and we thought he got over once in those three times but the official ruled that he did not get over.

JG: Y'all needed a coach's challenge, huh?

RI: Right, wrong or indifferent Jack Sisco was the head lineman or the field judge that ruled that he didn't get over the line. The film showed that he did and it's my understanding that Coach Martin never used Sisco again in any of his ballgames. He cost us the district championship.

JG: Yes, one play huh. What position did you play?

RI: I played half back, right half back.

JG: Right half back, okay. So, you were running back right?

RI: That is right. We had to run off a balance line, a-formation, unbalanced line and unbalanced right and left and then double wing formation which we called b. We had a quarterback, a full back and two half backs, left half and right halfback.

JG: All right, mostly run plays I guess.

RI: Yes, but we always had a good quarterback that could pass pretty accurate. 1944, I had already graduated from high school and gone into the service, is when they really had a good team. In '43 they went to the state finals. I was already in the service at that time. They played San Angelo in Dell High Stadium in Dallas on Christmas Day of '43. Unfortunately Lufkin lost. I think the score was 21 to 13 or something like that. They got beat. In '44 they had an excellent team. Carswell and my brother was the receiver and they went to semi-finals before [being] eliminated.

JG: I was going to ask you who some of the teams that you played when you actually played. I think in this '39 season, the season opener I was reading in the paper was Austin High School from Houston had come to Lufkin and said there was a special train. I think 300 people came on a special train all the way to Lufkin...

RI: That is right.

JG: ...and the team and the cheerleaders and the band and everybody got off the train. I guess that is where the high school was then was kind of downtown. It said they had a parade from the train station to the field.

RI: To the stadium.

JG: Yes sir.

RI: The stadium then was right where the Boys & Girls Club is now behind the old high school which is Pinewoods Academy now. There has been two more high schools since that high school was a high school. The middle school was the second high school and then the third high school is out on the loop.

JG: Yes sir. So, who were some of the teams that you played outside of Austin High and Houston? Who were your teams you played at that time? You mentioned Jacksonville.

RI: Yes, Nacogdoches, and in our district, Nacogdoches and Jacksonville.

JG: What about Tyler? Did you play Tyler much?

RI: No at that time Tyler wasn't. We played them in bi-district, John Tyler.

JG: Okay.

RI: You know Jon it is hard for me to remember.

JG: Okay, well I know in later years I guess until Lufkin got good...

RI: Livingston we played, we sort of down through the years we outgrew some of the schools. We played Groveton. We played Groveton and Livingston and Jacksonville, Nacogdoches.

JG: I guess since Lufkin was just then starting to have a good team what were some of the rivals? Was Nacogdoches a big rivalry at that time like in later years?

RI: It was at that time and still is.

JG: I think Nacogdoches beat Lufkin most of the time back then, or not?

RI: No, Nacogdoches won in '39, they beat us in '39, this team right here. It seemed like it was 8-6 and that is who we tied with for the district championship, but they went on and represented because they beat us. Won and lost games were the same, but they beat us and they advanced to the next level and I don't recall how far they went. I think maybe they got beat out on the next level.

JG: Right. Well, what about some of the other fields that you visited how did they compare to the Lufkin field, the field itself and the stadium?

RI: All of them were about the same. They had creosote poles and...

JG: Did you play at night?

RI: Yes, play at night and wooden stands.

JG: Bleachers?

RI: Bleachers, yes.

JG: Did anybody have any covered bleachers or were they all out in the open?

RI: All of them were in the open as I recall. And sometimes they would have a press box that looked like an outhouse sitting on the upper level of the home side, you know.

JG: The home side okay. How about, I know today it is a big deal for Lufkin traveling a lot of times the traveling Lufkin fans outnumber the home team fans the schools are playing, what was it like back then?

RI: Well, the town of Lufkin was a population of about 6,000 at that time when I was in high school and compared then to now it's like an A-Model Ford and a new Cadillac as far as the facilities.

JG: Fan support maybe even?

RI: Fan support yes. Its unreal now compared to what it was back then. Abe Martin helped generate some of the interest that wasn't there before. He was the starter but, that again the teams, the facilities, the equipment, back then wasn't near what it is now.

JG: Any particular games stand out in your memory over any other games?

RI: Yes, I guess the game in '39 when Nacogdoches beat us 8-6 and they wasn't even supposed to beat us at all but they had a punter, I can't remember his name, but seemed like every time he kicked the ball he would kick it out within the five yard line.

JG: Out of bounds inside the five, okay.

RI: Yes, no chance to run it by.

JG: Kept y'all pinned in huh?

RI: That is right.

JG: Any particular plays y'all had that were stand out plays?

RI: Every once in awhile we would pull a double reverse.

JG: Okay.

RI: Mainly it was just blocking three yards in a cloud of dust.

JG: Say that again so the tape can understand it.

RI: Mainly our big running plays were just three yards in a cloud of dust.

JG: Three yards in a cloud of dust. (laughter)

RI: But, we did have some passing and pretty accurate passing, but the game has progressed now to what no comparison to what it was back then. Both at better equipment...

JG: I guess you didn't have face mask back then did you?

RI: No face mask.

JG: Just leather helmets or leather?

RI: That is right, molded leather helmets as I recall. They didn't have any of the plastic bubble type helmets that they have now. That came on later. The webbing in the old leather head gears were not near what the suspension is in the new modern head gear.

JG: Right, right.

RI: But, probably I guess we didn't hit as hard as they hit now is the reason we didn't need any better head gear. (laughter)

JG: I understand there was a player for Lufkin that died from injuries in a game. Maybe it was just before your time. Do you remember that?

RI: In 1937 Marvin Marsh suffered a ruptured spleen where he was kneed by a Jacksonville player. I'd rather not call the man's name because it was never actually determined the identity of the man that actually kneed him. But, his dad was an army captain...

JG: Mr. Marsh's?

RI: Yes, right, and Marvin Marsh had already received a notice that they were accepting him to...

JG: West Point?

RI: ...West Point and one of the requirements at that time at West Point was your body couldn't have any serious scars on it and his dad let him lay there. They could have saved his life if they would have operated on him. His spleen was ruptured but he didn't want no scar. He wanted his boy to go to...he didn't realize of course that he was going to die.

JG: He didn't realize it was that bad.

RI: He told them not to scar him up he wouldn't be able to go to West Point if he had that bad scar. Consequently he died, bled to death internally.

JG: Wow, wow!

RI: And then Glen Spurgeon was another player on this team. I don't see him here in this picture in '39.

JG: He is looking at a 1939 team photo.

RI: Do you see a Spurgeon anywhere in this? Yes, right here.

JG: Yes.

RI: He died his senior year from Leukemia.

JG: Leukemia.

RI: That was a tragedy for the whole team.

JG: Yes. Well, let's see here. How did you travel when you played other teams?

RI: We had chartered buses.

JG: Chartered buses, okay.

RI: We didn't go on school buses. Some of the smaller schools still go on school buses. Coach Martin, when we would go out of town any distance, like my senior year we went to Dallas and stayed in a hotel downtown. I can't remember it right now. That was real unusual that country boys go up and stay in a hotel.

JG: Downtown hotel in Dallas!

RI: Downtown hotel. We played in Dal High Stadium [Dal-Tech High] and I don't remember now who we played.

JG: What stadium was it?

RI: Dal High, D-a-l high, h-i-g-h.

JG: Oh okay, Dal High [Dal-Tech High].

RI: School boy stadium it was an abbreviation for Dallas High.

JG: Oh just Dallas High, oh okay.

RI: They called it Dal High, Dal High School Boy Stadium [Dal-Tech High]. I'm trying to remember who we played. Adamson, we played Adamson and as I recall we won the ball game 7-0.

JG: Any particular speeches that Coach Martin delivered that you can remember or anything specific about Coach Martin that you wanted to add.

RI: Well, he was pretty adamant about playing the ballgame and playing it right and playing it hard, but I never recall him losing his temper. He was always calm and collected about his locker room speeches before the ballgame and at the half. I remember

his favorite saying, “we are just a bunch of country boys but these city slickers put their britches on one leg at a time just like we do.” That was a favorite expression I remember Coach Martin saying.

JG: I think according to this newspaper article here he, of course he had coached mostly at Lufkin but also a little bit at El Paso and then one year in Fort Worth, but his high school record was 95 wins, 14 losses and 1 tie.

RI: That is right.

JG: That is pretty good record.

RI: That is a pretty good record; that is right.

JG: Of course then he went on to Texas Christian University and did a lot of...had a good record there as well.

RI: That is right.

JG: I see here in 1941 it says they opened against Palestine.

RI: Palestine was one of our...

JG: Beat them 83 to nothing.

RI: That is right.

JG: I think at the beginning of the year Lufkin was ranked number one that year in '41.

RI: Yes, I distinctly remember the score 83 to nothing.

JG: Now you had graduated by that time right? You graduated in '40 you said or what?

RI: Yes, when was this?

JG: That was in '41 I believe, the 83 to nothing.

RI: That was, I had already graduated.

JG: You had already graduated, okay.

RI: I graduated in the spring of '41 and that would be in the fall of '41.

JG: Fall of '41 right.

RI: I was at Stephen F. Austin at that time.

JG: Yes, that is one of the things I was going to ask you, any players when you played that went on and played football in college or even beyond college that you know of?

RI: Yes, there are several of them played college ball.

JG: Okay.

RI: Bobby Bounds played high school ball and, you know, Jon my memory is failing on me.

JG: That is okay. That is okay. That is alright. I'll tell you what let's move on to baseball a little bit. That is mainly what I wanted to talk about. Now, you went into the service right?

RI: That is right in October 28, 1942.

JG: What branch of the service did you go?

RI: Army Air Corps.

JG: Where did you wind up? Where did you serve?

RI: I served three years one month and six days. Went in and joined basic training at Ellington Field in Houston and after six weeks I was transferred to Wichita Falls at Shepherd Field school where they taught us aircraft engine mechanics school. I was there for about three months and then they transferred me to Lake Charles Army Airbase to the third airport for training command and I stayed at Lake Charles until I was discharged in 1-2-3-4-5. Did I tell you that? December of '45 the Colonel that passed out our discharges said that you guys will have something to remember, you won't have trouble remembering the date you were discharged from the Air Force, Air Corps. Today is December 3, 1945 which relates to be 1-2-3-4-5 and I've never forgotten it.

JG: You've never forgotten it. (laughter) So, he was right, huh?

RI: Right. I was on ground crew at the airbase there at training command. We trained crews for six weeks and then they would go overseas as a team. We first had the Martin Marauder, which were a medium bomber; then we had the Billy Mitchell Popping Johnny, B-25's.

JG: That is what Frank Devereaux was on right?

RI: That is right. He was in Italy on that kind of airplane as a gunner. Then we went from the Douglas BA-26. McDonald Douglas manufactured the airplane and it came out the last new planes the Air Corps had, the Army Air Corps had before the jet era. This plane had twin engines, R-2800 Pratt and Whitney engines, 13 foot Hamilton hydromatic

props and was redlined at 425 miles an hour, prop job, and that was unheard of back in the days of propellers. Of course, it would stall out if it was a jet now. (laughter)

JG: So, you trained ground crews then?

RI: We were the ground crews that trained the pilots.

JG: Oh that trained the pilots, okay.

RI: The pilots would come in and they would fly the crew. They would have a gunner, an engineered gunner, a co-pilot navigator and a pilot. It was a three man plane an attack bomber.

JG: Kind of a medium gage.

RI: A medium attack bomber. It would carry a bomb load of two five hundred pound bombs and it was manufactured in Long Beach, California. I was fortunate enough that eight of us from Lake Charles were sent out there on assignment to go through factory school. We'd start at the blueprint section all the way out to where it was completed and they taught us how to preflight them and taxi them. And, the eight of us went back to Lake Charles after a month at the factory and then we were assigned as crew chiefs of the different flights.

JG: Was most of your time working with the B-25's though or not?

RI: No, we didn't have them there but about a year there in Lake Charles.

JG: Really, okay.

RI: The last 18 months that I was in, stationed at Lake Charles they were bringing in this A-26. They called it the Invader.

JG: The Invader, of course the B-25 is famous for Jimmy Doolittle and the raid on Tokyo from the carriers.

RI: That is right.

JG: I believe the people at the time never thought that big a plane could have launched from one of those short carriers.

RI: Our baseball team had flown down to Cuba for a three game series out of Lake Charles and I played on the softball team and baseball team and we went down there and played at Batista Army Airbase, an American base there in Cuba. We beat them two out of three and coming on back it was on the 5th day of August 1945, I recall, word came in on the radio to our pilot that we had just dropped a bomb on Hiroshima and killed an estimated 100,000 people. We said bull, bull, bull, that can't be right. We don't have a bomb capable of killing a 100,000, but what we learned later that was the atomic bomb

they were talking about and then the next one was Hiroshima and then Tokyo didn't want to catch the third one so they said, "we give, we give" and they surrendered after those two dropped.

JG: Hiroshima and Nagasaki I guess huh?

RI: I salute Harry Truman for having guts enough to say bomb them because he probably saved a million American soldiers and sailors and marines lives by going. We would have had to invade Japan and no telling how many men we would have lost.

JG: Yes. So you were playing baseball and softball?

RI: At Lake Charles Army Airbase, yes.

JG: Okay, okay.

RI: And one of my teammates on the football team was Major George Simler who played for Maryland and I was a punter on the team and the blocking back and he was our right end and our fullback was Joe Watson, who later made All-American center at Rice.

JG: Okay, so you had an Army football team also? Is that what you are talking about?

RI: Yes, we had the Lake Charles Army Airbase football team.

JG: Yes.

RI: Watson did well for himself. He played for Temple High School and Lufkin played Temple in '42.

JG: You are talking about the town of Temple, Temple Texas?

RI: Temple, yes. I guess in '43 because I wasn't on the team in '43. I had already graduated. Anyway, Watson said to me, "you from Lufkin?" I said "yes." He said "we played Lufkin, you had a nose guard that every time I carried the ball he would full back it, high school for Temple, I would wind up with a face full of mud. He would grab it and hit me right in the face with a hand full of mud and I can't think of his name but I think if you could call out some names I might remember it." And, I said "well that sounds like Buddy Shaw" and he said, "that is who it was, Buddy Shaw."

JG: Again, that is the days before face mask so they could put mud in your face.
(laughter)

RI: Yes, your face was open season. (laughter) Anyway, Watson went on to play football at Rice and made All-American center. George Simler wound up as a four star general at Randolph Air Force base. They played with two pretty famous teammates.

JG: Did a lot of the people that played football also play baseball or was it rare like you played both?

RI: No, we had a kid named Tommy O'Connell that played shortstop on the baseball team and also...

JG: I was just writing something down.

RI: ...he was also the receiver on the football team.

JG: So, ya'll would just play other Army bases then?

RI: Yes.

JG: I assume was everything segregated then?

RI: Oh yes.

JG: Okay. So, even in sports you didn't ever play any black teams?

RI: We didn't have any blacks on the team at all.

JG: Okay.

RI: Either on football or baseball.

JG: And you never played any other bases that had blacks?

RI: No.

JG: Okay.

RI: We played at Randolph, we played at Barksdale, we played at SLI which now is Southwestern Louisiana at Lafayette was SLI, Louisiana Institute at that time. We played them and a little boy Jessie Paul Lot who played for Lufkin High School was on their team. He was in the Big 12 training down there and incidentally he scored three touchdowns against us that time. He is about five foot tall, fast as greased lightning and I told our guys I said, "this kid, Jessie Paul Lot" I said "he is fast as greased lightening if he ever gets around that end he is gone." And, he did that three times to us that night.

JG: Turned the corner, huh.

RI: That is right. I was living in San Antonio, my job took me to San Antonio when this George Simler was promoted to four star general, commanding general at Randolph Air Force base, George Simler.

JG: Okay.

RI: In 1959 when TCU played the Air Force in Cotton Bowl, Simler was Colonel, a full Colonel and he was athletic director at the Air Force Academy and my son and I, my son was 12, we drove up from Waco where I was working and went to the ballgame. As we were walking to our seats, around the stadium to our sons the Air Force team their dressing room was right here and the back door, the front lead out to the football field but the back door here was kind of a dog run outside, well for what reason but it had chain link fence and couldn't get to it, you know. Anyway, and he was standing outside there for some reason or another and as I walked by he hollered at me and said, "Roscoe Ivey" and I looked and I said, "well hello Major Simler" and I looked at his collar and I said, "oh I'm sorry, you were Major the last time I saw you now Colonel" full colonel, and he stood there and talked to me a few minutes and he said to me, he said, "well I guess you are going to be pulling for us today, the Air Force." I said, "Well, your opponent's coach was my high school coach," so I said, "you put me on the spot now, let's just say may the best team win." And, they played a nothing to nothing tie.

JG: That was the Bluebonnet Bowl?

RI: No, the Cotton Bowl, the Cotton Bowl Classic in Dallas. Then when he was transferred to Randolph Air Force base as Commanding General, this was in 1971 some twelve years later, he was promoted from a three star general to a four star general. And when I read it in the paper I called to talk to him and I got a secretary and she said, "Well who are you and why do you need to call and talk to the general?" I told her, I said, "well, I'm just a personal friend of his, he and I played football at Lake Charles Air Base on the same team together and I just wanted to call and congratulate him on his promotion." She said, "wait just a minute I think he might like to talk to you." Another secretary answered, I had to go through two secretaries and I told her the same story and she said, "Well I'm sure he would like to talk to you" and she said, "just a minute." I heard her turn around and say, "General there is a gentleman that has known you since Lake Charles Airbase when you played football with him." He said "yes, I want to talk to him whoever he is." He came on the line and I told him and he said "well hello Roscoe, you remember the last time I saw you we were at the Cotton Bowl." I said "yes, and you had Colonel and now you have got the fourth star and I wanted to call and congratulate you on your promotion." He said "it is good to hear from you" and he said "I'm just snowed up with paperwork up to my eyes right now having taken this over two days ago" but he said "I intend to get on top of it and have you and your wife out to the officers club and have dinner with me and my wife." I looked and looked and looked and waited and waited and waited I never got that.

JG: He is probably snowed under all that paperwork huh?

RI: He was promoted to the fifth star like Hap Arnold who was the fifth five star general for the Air Force. He was promoted to go from Langley Field, Virginia to get his fifth star and he and the captain in the F-trainer plane from Randolph took off to fly to

Langley Field, Virginia for that purpose to have the fifth star pinned on him and he did the victory roll and crashed and killed he and his captain (**JG:** Golly.) right there on Randolph Air Force base.

JG: Wow, I didn't know that.

RI: This was in 1972 I believe, 1972.

JG: Well let's move baseball back to Angelina County.

RI: Okay.

JG: So, after your military service you came home and I guess home was Lufkin?

RI: That is right and I went to work. I got out on December 5, 1945 and on January 6, 1946 I went to work at the post office. I worked ten years at the post office and the pay wasn't too good and I told my wife, I said, "you know we are not going to be able to educate our three kids at the rate I'm going what I'm making." I was there ten years and had gone from 86 cents an hour to a \$1.35 an hour after ten years at the post office. So, I got to looking for another job. I found a job that was vacant and it required a four year college education but I only had two years of college, but they said in view of my job stability at the post office, ten years, and the fact I had three kids, wife and three kids, and that I cared enough about that job after I got the interview that I went on my own on my day off from the post office and asked that manager if I could ride with him and see what that job was like because I would hate to quit my job and realize this is not what I wanted. And he said, "well sure if you are that interested you are welcome to come up here at Nacogdoches and go with me on my days run." I found out later that he recommended me over the other two college graduates because of that very reason that I asked on my day off.

JG: And what job was that?

RI: Insurance claims adjuster.

JG: In Nacogdoches?

RI: That is where the office was. I went to the General Adjustment Bureau which was a nationwide outfit at that time which has kind of sprung off right now. I was there 31 years in claims business.

JG: With baseball, didn't you start playing baseball in '46 or '47 somewhere in there?

RI: I did, I started playing with Lufkin Merchants in semi-pro baseball team. Then we had a city softball league and I played for Lynn Motor Mercury and Lufkin National Bank in '49. Lynn Motor Mercury in '51 and then Ralph New Oldsmobile sponsored a team in 1952.

JG: Okay, and that is Lynn, L-y-n-n?

RI: L-y-n-n, Lynn Motors.

JG: Lynn Motors.

RI: Lynn McGauyer owned Mercury Motor Company there on First Street in Lufkin.

JG: Well, tell me a little bit about that. What is meant by semi-pro?

RI: It means that you played the same game but you don't make the same pay. (laughter)
We did good if we made hamburger money when we went out of town to play.

JG: Now when I played little league ball we got free snow cones and all ya'll got was hamburgers.

RI: If we made enough to buy a hamburger each we were doing well. We just...we had some pretty good teams though.

JG: Now I was going through the newspapers and there was a lot of talk about the Lufkin Foresters during that time but I didn't see much about the Merchants.

RI: Well, they didn't mention the Merchants much.

JG: Why is that? Did y'all play each other?

RI: Well no, the Foresters was a professional team.

JG: Oh, it was fully professional, okay.

RI: Right and they were kind enough when they were on the road to use their facilities to play semi-pro ball.

JG: So, Foresters, the people who played that that is their only job, right?

RI: That is right. They were pros.

JG: They were pros, full pros?

RI: Class D, but they were professionals. That was their job.

JG: Okay and they had a full...probably played more games and a bigger schedule and everything. Okay, well let's focus in on the Merchants and everything and your experiences there. Who was some of the other teams that you played?

RI: Well, the Diboll Millers, we played them and of course they were sponsored by Southern Pine Lumber Company and they didn't have to worry about where the bats were coming from or who was going to pay for the baseballs and so forth.

JG: So, you mentioned that did each player have to bring their own equipment and uniform, bat?

RI: Well your own shoes and glove you had to have.

JG: Your own shoes and gloves.

RI: The sponsors furnished the baseballs and the bats and stuff like that, but as far as travel expenses that was on, we were responsible for that.

JG: That was on y'all. What days were the games on?

RI: On the weekends because we all worked. See, baseball was just a fun thing.

JG: Saturdays and Sundays or Sundays only?

RI: I remember several times we went to Center and Center had a good semi-pro team and we went up to Center and played a Saturday afternoon game and stayed at the hotel in Center and played a Sunday afternoon ballgame. Pete Runnels played before he went pro; he played several ballgames with us.

JG: Okay, for the Merchants?

RI: Yes.

JG: Okay.

RI: And, Les Taylor who turned pro about the time Pete did played for us and then we had some softball players that played both softball and hardball.

JG: Such as yourself right?

RI: Right, Luke Hack and Roy Myers and Roy Sinclair,

JG: What position did you play?

RI: I played infield, mostly third base...

JG: Third base.

RI: ...both in softball and baseball.

JG: What was your batting average, hardball batting average?

RI: Well, we didn't keep statistics.

JG: You didn't keep statistics.

RI: Now in the softball league we did have statistics. I have got newspaper clippings and articles about our softball venture in city league. We won the city championship with Lynn Motor Mercury. We won city championship the next year with Ralph New Rockets Oldsmobile Dealer. The next year with the W.O.W. that sponsored the league.

JG: Woodmen of the World?

RI: Yes.

JG: Woodmen of the World, okay.

RI: They built the field, paid for the field to be, the lighting and really had a sponsor not only for our team but they sponsored the whole league.

JG: Where was the new field?

RI: Do you know where Chestnut Village is now?

JG: Yes.

RI: Across from Brookshire's there up where that little strip shopping center is there used to be a hardware store right there on Chestnut on top of the hill across from the street where the bowling alley and right behind here is where this shopping center makes an L right here and goes on down this way, right here is where home plate was and all the rest of this was vacant land.

JG: And that was a softball field?

RI: Yes, the W.O.W. Softball Field. And, Murphy Martin, who wound up...

JG: The voice of the Dallas Cowboys.

RI: ...that is right, and prior to that he was in...

JG: Broadcast.

RI: ...ABC Nightly News, on ABC. He started out announcing our softball games in that W.O.W. Softball League. And, I'll tell you an incident that happened, it's kind of funny. My son was about six years old and he was our batboy and he was at every ballgame and one night Bubby didn't show and Luke Hack who was one of our star

players said, “where is Bubby?” I said “Bubby is sick with the measles, he couldn’t come tonight.” And, Murphy Martin was standing right behind me and I wasn’t aware that he was anywhere around and I said, “Luke Davey cried when I left and I told him if he would quit crying I would hit a home run for him.” And, Murphy when he announced the starting lineup when I came to bat Murphy said “Roscoe Ivy, third baseman is up, his little boy is there batboy who is sick and can’t be here tonight and Roscoe has promised to hit him a homerun” on the radio.

JG: He announced it on the radio.

RI: He announced it on the radio and low and behold I hit two home runs.

JG: Alright!

RI: And, the second homerun Murphy said, “Bubby you better stay home all the time, your daddy’s done hit two home runs.” (laughter) But, I said now how did Murphy know that and Luke said, “he was standing right behind you when you told me that.”

JG: That is a good story.

RI: Funny thing sometimes happen.

JG: That is a good story! I guess we can ask this about both since you played softball and hardball at the same time I guess, so I’ll just ask the question and then if you don’t mind just tell in your answer if it was hardball or softball. Kind of the same question I asked you about football about traveling to other places. Who were the teams that you played? Compare the fields, for instance you mentioned the softball the new field but where did you play when you played hardball in Lufkin? Where was your home field?

RI: At the professional field, I told you awhile ago. The...you called the name of the team. What was it?

JG: The Foresters?

RI: The Foresters, well they had their own field, right where the middle school is now. You know where the Middle School is on Denman?

JG: Yes sir.

RI: Across from the Methodist Church there now.

JG: Right, right.

RI: Well, that was Forester Field.

JG: That is where I went to high school. It is Lufkin Middle School now, okay.

RI: That is right.

JG: That was Forester Field?

RI: It was the old fair grounds in the early thirties and early forties. During the war it was the fair grounds and then when the war was over with they built a ballpark there where the fairgrounds were and they called it Forester Park.

JG: Forester Park, okay I didn't know that.

RI: They were kind enough when they were on the road to let us use it. Now, we couldn't play night games because we would have to pay the light bill. That we couldn't afford, but we played Sunday afternoon ballgames when they were on the road and they would let us use the park.

JG: Okay, okay.

RI: One incident and there is no witnesses still living that can verify this (laughter) but Billy Lee Thompson was there, Joe Tilley was there, my dad was there, my brother was there and a whole bunch of witnesses, but they are all dead and gone. I cannot think of one person that was at that ballgame that is still alive. But, it was in the paper so I guess I can tell it. We were playing Pineland and the score was 7 to 5...

JG: This is hardball?

RI: Baseball right, Pineland was ahead of us 7 to 5 and about the 7th or 8th inning, close to the end of the ballgame, I came to bat with two men on base and I don't remember how many outs, but I do remember that it was a two balls and no strike count. The field was a humungous field. It was 405 feet down the right...the left field line and 409 feet down the right field line and 500 feet to deep center field. No park in America was ever that big.

JG: Wow, 500 feet!

RI: We asked the owner, Bill Rogers, why they put the field, the fences back so far and he said "so we wouldn't lose so many baseballs in homeruns."

JG: This was Pineland's field?

RI: No, this is Pineland that was playing us in Lufkin at Forester Park.

JG: That was Forester Park you are talking about, wow that is huge!

RI: Anyway, my brother – Les Taylor was on second and my brother was on first and I don't know how many outs it was. I do know that it was a 2-nothing count and he threw one down the center right down the middle and I swung for all I could muster and it

cleared the fence. They estimated 457 feet from home plate. We scored and put us ahead 8 to 7 in the 8th inning I believe it was.

JG: Was that left field?

RI: Left center field, from 409 to 500 somewhere in between. Anyway it was estimated that the ball traveled 457 feet and the pitcher for Pineland came by and shook my hand after that ballgame and he said "I pitched with the Fort Worth Cats in the Texas League for 7 years and I have never had a ball hit as far as you hit that ball today off of me." He said "I just wanted to congratulate you" and shook my hand.

JG: You don't happen to remember his name do you?

RI: I have tried to remember his name but I don't remember. I did remember it at one time but, too many nights has passed. Joe Tilley was in the stands and he come running down to the bench and grabbed my cap and started back to the stands with it. I said, "Joe we are not through playing." He said, "I'll be right back." So, I borrowed somebody else's cap to go out on the field and when he brought my cap back he brought it back full of money. He counted it out later and it was \$12.50 in that cap that he got in the stands from that homerun that I hit. At eighty two cents an hour that was almost a week's work.

JG: Just a collection in congratulations huh?

RI: That is right. And, it came out in the paper the next day, on Monday, this was on Sunday afternoon, Monday it came out in the Lufkin paper in the sports column that why is it a semi-pro man can hit a homerun out and there has not been a homerun hit out of this park this year. And you know what? Bill Rogers the owner of the team the next week moved the fences, moved it in to reasonable distances.

JG: Yes, that is a pretty big deal. A lot of centerfields aren't even 457 feet.

RI: Well that is right.

JG: About 300 or 330.

RI: Well right now in the majors when they hit one 450 or 460 or 70 feet it's something.

JG: It's gone.

RI: And, a 21 year old kid playing semi-pro ball hit one like that it is unreal. But, anyway it happened and there is no witnesses that can attest to it but, there might be in the newspaper archives.

JG: Yes, we will have to try to look that up.

RI: Do you have all of the newspapers?

JG: Yes sir. About what year would that have been?

RI: In '47 I believe.

JG: 1947, okay and I guess it would be from spring through summer.

RI: Yes, I don't remember what month it was maybe July.

JG: Okay, about how many games did y'all play? What was a season, typical?

RI: What the semi-pro baseball?

JG: Yes sir, semi-pro.

RI: We played probably twelve games or so.

JG: When you say semi-pro I guess you did get paid. Was it based on proceeds at the gate?

RI: That is right.

JG: Okay.

RI: You know you're supposed to pay a tax, a recreation tax, lord we never did pay no tax. We would just get the money and divide it up.

JG: Divide it up. Would you divide it up after the game?

RI: Yes, right there.

JG: Right there after the game.

RI: Yes, you know, you would take in two or three hundred dollars but that is not any money time you give one team 40 percent of that and one team 60 percent. The winner got 60 and the loser got 40 whether you were home team or visiting.

JG: Didn't matter. So, 60 for the winner and 40 for the loser and then divide it up amongst the team?

RI: Yes, and usually we would have 12 or 14 players. We went to Conroe in 1947.

JG: Yes sir, you were telling about that before, go ahead and tell that again.

RI: Conroe had at every position was a Southwest Conference baseball player, one of which was Charles Devereaux was the centerfielder.

JG: Frank's younger brother.

RI: Frank's younger brother, Charles Devereaux, was the centerfielder and a boy named Thornton was the shortstop. I can't remember any of their names anymore.

JG: Charles was an outstanding shortstop for Baylor. Is that right?

RI: Right and a good hitter. Frank never did play baseball. Frank played football. But, anyway they had gone the week before we played them into Dallas and played in a state amateur baseball tournament and won the state championship and they were scheduled to play the Humble Oilers. The Humble Oilers Refining Company had a team that they sponsored in Baytown.

JG: And, that is professional?

RI: No semi-pro.

JG: Oh still semi-pro okay.

RI: They worked, but they were sponsored by Humble Oil Refining, but they worked there. One of the prerequisites for getting a job at Humble Oil and Refining is if you are a good baseball player you get a job. Our centerfielder, Luce Carswell, when we played them was offered a job with Humble Oil Company to play centerfield for them, our centerfielder. But, he was going to Rice on a football scholarship. He said he appreciated it, but he was going to have to finish his college education. I forgot where I was before I got side tracked.

JG: Oh, you were talking about Conroe's team and they had just won the state championship.

RI: Oh yes, they were scheduled the next Saturday night or Sunday to play the Baytown Oilers. They called them the Baytown Oilers which was sponsored by Humble Oil and Refining Company. The team made up of all employees of the company. Anyway, something came up that Baytown had to cancel their ballgame and they couldn't come to Conroe and play them as they had scheduled and so, we had already contacted them and asked them how about a ballgame for the coming week. They said, no they had a game scheduled already with Baytown. Something happened and Baytown had to cancel the ballgame so their manager called me, I was the manager of our Lufkin Merchants team, and he called me and said, "we've had a cancellation with Baytown can ya'll come this Sunday." I said, "well let me see if I can get in touch with enough players to come down there." So, I called him back and told him we would come down, we would come play. They beat us 5 to 4 in ten innings.

JG: Ten innings.

RI: Yes, we had to go in extra innings for them to beat us.

JG: How many players were you able to get together?

RI: We had ten and we had three pitchers who were interchangeable in the outfield. They could pitch and play outfield so if we needed to change pitcher we just put the pitcher that was on the mound back out there in the outfield and bring them back. That is what we had to do on two occasions in that ballgame. But anyway they had a real fine team and we were very fortunate that we could play them that close. And, the city secretary was named George Ivy from Huntington and I wasn't even aware. I had a cousin down there in politics from Conroe, city secretary, and he came to the dugout and introduced himself and said, "You don't know me but I'm kin to you." He said, "I'm from Huntington. You're the Huntington Ivy's and your dad's name is Roscoe." And I said, "Yes, I'm Roscoe Junior." And, he said, "I want to say one thing, that you boys took them to the end. That is the best game we've seen these guys play in a long time, y'all give them a run for their money." I think we got \$240 was our part.

JG: Wow, for losing!

RI: Between the ten of us we got \$24 a piece. One of the, well Carswell came up from Houston to play centerfield for us that day and we just stood there and I gave him his \$24 just like everybody else and lord I just look back now and think we could have cost him his scholarship at Rice.

JG: You are talking about Carswell?

RI: Yes, Luce Carswell.

JG: Yes.

RI: He made all-state and my brother made all-state.

JG: Who was your brother?

RI: Jack.

JG: Now were there rules back then?

RI: Yes, Interscholastic League, yes there were rules.

JG: So, you couldn't do that.

RI: Yes, I remember Jetter McKinney...

JG: Well, how did Charles Devereaux do it?

RI: Do what?

JG: You said he played for Baylor, was he playing for Baylor at the time?

RI: That is right. Well, Conroe the 60 percent they didn't give it up it went to the Conroe Baseball Association. Each one of the Southwest Conference baseball players had a job and they were down there to perform their job for the baseball services for the town. Charles's was once a week sweep off the apron at one service station down there. That was his job and each one of them had something like that. Go empty the waste basket in the mayor's office.

JG: So, they had a little angle or racket to get by?

RI: Yes, and they didn't get the money passed out to them like we did. We went by the rules except we could have cost someone their eligibility.

JG: Yes, wow, wow!

RI: So, we made \$24 apiece that night.

JG: Tell me about Pete Runnels. How was it like playing for Pete or with Pete I guess?

RI: Pete was a really good baseball player and really easy to get along with.

JG: Did y'all kind of know when he played that he was going on to something else?

RI: Had no idea.

JG: Had no idea.

RI: No, he just fell right in and we just all we thought all equal ability but he had that uncanny knack of hitting left handed and poking in the left field. I think he had 12 homeruns in his 12 years of pro baseball. He played with us one weekend and Monday he hitchhiked to Henderson and contacted Guy Honeycutt, who was manager of the Henderson team and Class D League, Class D East Texas League and asked him if he could try out and he talked to him a few minutes and said, "yes you can try out with us" and he liked what he saw and signed him up. He played three weeks for Henderson and then Chickasa, Oklahoma in another Class D League bought him from Henderson and he went to Chickasha and played three-fourths of a season and set a new record for doubles in that one season, a short season because he didn't get there until the middle of June. Then the next year at Chickasa he set two or three records while he was up there and the next move was Texarkana bought him in the big state league and he proceeded to hit over .300 with Texarkana and then Knoxville bought him in the Southern Association and Knoxville was a farm team for the Washington Senators and on July 4, 1951, '52, '53...July 4, 1953 Washington called him up on July 4th and Washington Senators was to play the New York Yankees on that Sunday that Pete was going to be there in time to play for the Senators and we watched Pete on my dad's Hoffman, round screen television. Through all the snow we could make out that is Pete Runnels playing second

base for the Washington Senators. Then he played about 4 years for Washington and then Boston bought him. In two years he was American League batting champion in '61 and '63. He would have been in '62 but Ted Williams beat him out by a fraction of a point. That is all in the papers, that is all record.

JG: Right, right. You obviously enjoyed the game of baseball.

RI: I do. I still enjoy watching them.

JG: Just tell me what is the appeal? Why has it been a big part of your life? You know, you played high school and in the military.

RI: When I was a kid we didn't have baseball in high school when I was growing up.

JG: Oh that is right.

RI: Several of us liked to play baseball and there was a vacant lot out in front of my house on West Grove Street where houses are now but it was all vacant lot and all of us got together and we put a backstop up and mowed the place. We put a mound out there, a pitching mound; put toe sacks with sawdust in them for the bases and a screen for the back so it wouldn't go into the street or in somebody's house and we played baseball and football out there. If it was football season we made it a football field. If it was baseball season we would make it a baseball field. We would get momma's flour and make a white line down the left field for the field line. We mowed it and we kept it ourselves. It wasn't furnished like they have now.

JG: But you used real baseball bats and balls.

RI: That is right. Of course the kids for Christmas, the mommy and daddy would, the kids we played with would give them baseball and bats and we wound up with six or seven bats, maybe two dozen baseballs and everybody would bring a glove, a baseball and a bat and that is the way we played. Just played! We didn't play for competition we just played baseball.

JG: Did you have enough to play nine on nine?

RI: No we never did. We were lucky to have seven or eight and when somebody hit a fly if you caught the fly ball you get to come in and bat. If you threw somebody out at first base then you would get to come in and bat. So, we just had...

JG: So, not like a team just playing.

RI: That is right, just playing but really, that was really sandlot baseball.

JG: Right.

RI: But, semi-pro we were a little more refined and more polished.

JG: You actually had a team. (laughter)

RI: Actually knew how to pull a double play and all that sort of stuff.

JG: So, how did you keep up with the professionals? I assume you kind of kept up with what was going on in the big leagues. Was it radio? That would have been in the thirties right? When you were a kid growing up?

RI: Yes, I was born in 22. I will be 90 years old in September and that is the reason my mind is getting a little fuzzy when I try to remember names.

JG: You are doing good.

RI: Trying to remember names it gets fuzzy.

JG: So, you were playing sandlot ball in the twenties then before the Depression then?

RI: Well, I guess I started when I was ten years old, ten or eleven years old.

JG: Okay, so early thirties then.

RI: That is right, that is right.

JG: So, did all the boys that played keep up with the Yankees and Red Sox and all that?

RI: Well, yes because I remember when we were smaller we would get together and say, "I'm going to be Babe Ruth." I am going to be this one and I'm going to be that one, you know how kids will do. Well, I'll tell you something real funny. Artie Dixon "I'll tote the note?" [Artie Dixon owns Dixon Furniture and his advertising slogan is "I'll Tote the Note"]

JG: Yes.

RI: He is my friend and has been a long, long time. I went in not long ago to visit with him and buy a piece of furniture and he said "you know Roscoe I'm going to tell you something. You know when y'all had that softball league down there, me and my little friends that lived in the area mostly on Fenley Street there close to y'all's softball diamond league, W.O.W. softball league diamond we would come down there, walk down there, six or seven of us little friends, when we were seven or eight years old, we would walk down there and watch the ballgame," and he said, "I remember you not only hit home runs you would hit them over the light poles." I said, "Oh bull." He said, "Yes, yes, yes, I remember that." He said, "on Saturday mornings when me and my little friends would get together and we all want to play sandlot ball" he said, "I will be Roscoe Ivy." (laughter) I said, "you know, you never know what kind of an impression you are making on some kid, you ought to try to do right when you are around little kids and do the right thing because you never know what kind of impression you are making."

JG: That is right. Well anybody that can hit that long of a homerun at the Forester Field. Were you known to be a power hitter?

RI: Not until that day!

JG: Not until that day! (laughter)

RI: There is a few of the guys still alive that played in the W. O. W. League. Ralph Roots is about my age and he is still alive and George Honea is about my age and he played on the Ralph New Rocket team.

JG: Who is that?

RI: George Honea.

JG: George Honea, yes. He was over TSE railroad.

RI: Yes, he is in bad shape but he is still alive. Ralph played for the paper mill. We played golf together too out at Lufkin Country Club until we both got too old to play golf. He laughed and said, "yes I remember Roscoe when he come to bat I would move out behind the light poles." Ralph said that. (laughter) I said, "oh Ralph don't tell people that."

JG: I assume you are right handed.

RI: Yes, right and right.

JG: Bat right and throw right, okay.

RI: That is right.

JG: And, mostly played third base?

RI: Mostly played third base. I have occasionally in the softball league I started out playing third base but after 3 years in the league I found out my arm strength wasn't quite good enough that short distance to throw them out from third base so I moved over to second base. I could throw it just as accurate this way or this away. If I had to go toward the line to pick it up and couldn't turn and throw him out I would back hand it like that. When I was at Lake Charles Air Base I played in the city league sponsored by the Calcasieu Chevrolet, Judd Reeves, Calcasieu Chevrolet team sponsored a team from the base in the city league at Lake Charles. The Colonel made arrangements for us to have a 6x6 truck to pick us up at the field and take us to the stadium where they played softball in downtown Lake Charles and we won the city championship in Lake Charles.

JG: So, you really were into baseball. You played in military and city leagues and then when you got out you were playing hardball and softball.

RI: I played until 1954 and I decided well, I better start teaching my son how to play baseball and be the coach instead of the player. I guess I did well. He got a college scholarship on his baseball.

JG: Where was that to?

RI: SMU [Southern Methodist University].

JG: SMU. Did he get drafted by any pro team?

RI: Boston was interested in him, but he wasn't interested in going to some rookie league. He went to rookie league for Boston in upstate New York and he was there a week and he told Rocky Jansen, who was the Red Sox chain with the Red Sox and was the manager of the rookie league up in Watertown, New York, David told Jensen I think I'm just going to hang them up and go home.

JG: Is that your son David?

RI: David and he said that is the best thing I ever done. He said there wasn't even a college graduate of all the players there, I was the only college graduate and most of them couldn't even speak English and he said, "I looked around and thought to myself what in the world are you doing up here, you don't belong here." The first week the townspeople came out to watch them practice and David said, "I hit several home runs" in practice, batting practice. He played third base and hit .386 his senior year and played first base I mean and hit .386 and played the entire season and didn't make an error. So, I'm real proud of him.

JG: That is pretty good.

RI: Another one my exploits I started officiating, football official in 1949 working peewee junior high, class A, as low as you could get learning and I worked my way up to high school ball, 2A and 3A high school and I got transferred with the company I was with...

JG: The insurance company.

RI: ...yes, to Waco where I met the right people that could help me and I started getting junior college games and Southwest Conference freshman ballgames. I got five of those because one of the main officials in the Waco chapter was Dwight Parks, who was one of the mainstays in Southwest Conference. He took a liking to me. He was an agent we represented in the claims business and he took and put me under his wing and pushed me and told Abe Curtis, the commissioner, keep an eye on this young man he is going to make you a good official if you just watch him. Abe Curtis gave me five Southwest

Conference freshman ballgames and in 1963 in a December meeting of 1963 I got a call at two o'clock in the morning that Baylor Coach John Bridges said, "I hate to wake you up at this time of the morning but" he said "what I'm fixing to tell you is going to tickle you enough that you won't want to go back to sleep." He said, "you were voted into the Southwest Conference as a game official today Roscoe." And, I spent the last nine years of my officiating as a college referee and I hung them up in '73 after 25 years of officiating football. I worked in the Southland Conference and in the Southwest Conference.

JG: Well I did not know that at all. I bet you've got stories to tell about that. We might save that for another interview.

RI: Right.

JG: I did want to ask you the question we talked about before we began but before we get to that is there anything you would like to add specifically about baseball? I just remembered one of the things I wanted to ask you when y'all played Diboll and you were playing hardball and ya'll played the Millers, the field was right here wasn't it, where we are?

RI: That is right, right here in this area.

JG: Okay.

RI: It seems like it was closer up that way more. Of course it's changed so much it's hard to tell.

JG: Right. Any particular games you remember playing the Millers here at this field?

RI: Yes, I remember Ray Rector could break a curve ball and he could start it on the outside of the plate and break it on the inside cover of the plate. He knew that when I stepped up to the plate he was going to feed me curve balls, curve balls, curve balls.

JG: Did he ever throw a little change up in there every now and then or was it just straight curve balls?

RI: He didn't have to throw nothing but that breaking curve ball. He would tell me what he was going to throw and I still couldn't do it. I think his name was Ray, Ray Rector.

JG: And they would always be strikes huh?

RI: Oh yes, he had good control.

JG: A lot of people can throw curves but they are not strikes. If you got discipline to layoff of it you are going to be okay. But, if you don't, it's going to be a strike, you are going to have to swing. (laughter)

RI: He would throw one and I would think when it left his hand it was going to be way wide and then it would start breaking and breaking and it almost hit me. He would break it that far. I never saw...

JG: He was doing his hands about 2 feet, a 2 foot braek huh?

RI: I never saw a man could curve a ball as much as he could, nobody. He didn't want to throw me no fast ball though. He didn't do that.

JG: You would hit it over the fence huh?

RI: I could hit a fast ball.

JG: Yes.

RI: That pitcher I hit that home run off of threw me one right down the middle and shew, I caught it just right.

JG: That was because he was down two balls to nothing huh?

RI: Yes, he wanted to get a strike.

JG: Not that way! (laughter)

RI: He got a strike all right, I struck it pretty good.

JG: Yes, yes, you hit it pretty good. Any other players that you wanted to talk about that you played with or against here in Diboll? You mentioned Ray Rector that is pretty good. Anybody else stand out?

RI: I played in the Houston Post tournament shortstop for one game with Diboll.

JG: Okay.

RI: I can't remember what year it was. I remember it...

JG: With the Millers?

RI: Yes, the Diboll Millers in the Houston Post Tournament. They used to come from all, Weimer Truckers, Baytown Oilers, I mean they picked the cream of the crop semi-pro's all around the state and they would have as many as 18 teams down there playing in that Houston Post Tournament. It was a big outfit and Diboll some way or another didn't have a shortstop and they asked me if I would fill in for them and play shortstop for that one ballgame and it seemed like we played the Weimer Truckers. And Jack...

JG: Jack Devereaux?

RI: No, not Jack Devereaux, no...Jack Warner.

JG: Warner.

RI: Do you know Jack Warner?

JG: Yes sir.

RI: He was the pitcher on the mound that day. I don't even remember who won or if we lost or what.

JG: How often did that happen especially someone such as yourself that loved to play so much how often would you have played for other teams or say hey we need someone for next weekend or something like that? Was that fairly common?

RI: It was. I went to Center one weekend with the Baytown Oilers. They came through and contacted me and they said they were short an infielder and could I go with them and play that ballgame for them. Played Saturday night and Sunday evening.

JG: Do you know Reuben Jelly Samuel? He was a black man and he played ball for Diboll in the late forties and early fifties.

RI: No, I didn't know him.

JG: Of course, you know, a lot of these sawmill towns had black teams as well and I apologize I don't think I'm remembering this right, but I think he was over at Shreveport playing for a team and I think Diboll beat his team and their team was pretty good, something like that. Anyways, he wanted to play for the winning team so he came to Diboll just so he could play baseball. But, he had to work a year I think before he could make the team or something like that. There's other stories like that where maybe even the time period just before yours that might have been more common, but there were these people that just loved the game so much and they would go from team to team kind of like a hired gun so to speak.

RI: In 1948 [54] my son had asthma real bad and he was born in '46 so that would make him 8 years old and Dr. Thames said, "you know, if you could get a leave of absence from the post office, don't quit it but get a leave of absence and y'all move down on the coast I think that salt air might help David with his breathing." So, I took a leave of absence, moved to Baytown and I had an uncle that was a paint contractor down there and he gave me a job while I was there to make a living while we were there for that purpose for my son's health. We went out to a city softball game and low and behold two of the players from General Tire and Rubber Company was from Lufkin, the catcher and the second baseman. Two boys named Fenley and they said, "what are you doing down here?" I said, "Well I live down here." They said, "Are you playing softball?" I said, "No

I haven't been here very long and I just came down here to watch y'all play. I didn't even know y'all was down here playing." He said, "Would you like to try out for our team." He said, "Mr. Sloan is our manager and I'll tell him that we feel like you would help our team." Sloan told him said, "well tell Roscoe tomorrow afternoon such and such a time to bring his glove and shoes out here and work out with us and I'll make the decision whether we can use him or not." Sure enough I went out there and tried out and he said, "Tell you what we will give you a job at General Tire and Rubber Company if you'll play ball for us." I said, "Okay." So, I finished out the season playing with them and he said, now everybody has to start on the line loading 90 pound bales of synthetic rubber bales, and 90 pound bales coming off the assembly line was just one right after another. I lasted two weeks. I said, "Man I would like to play ball for you but I can't handle that 90 pound bale every five minutes just coming off that assembly line just one right after the other." I said, "You are going to have to get somebody bigger and stronger than me." I quit, but it did get me the job. My softball got me the job.

JG: Yes, your ball playing got you the job.

RI: He told me he said "Roscoe the job requirement everybody has to start and go through to advance."

JG: Did your wife come to many of the games and watch?

RI: Oh yes, she complained about how the kids was raised at the ballpark on them hard seats.

JG: So, they would travel with you too when you would go or just the home games?

RI: No, not really. Mainly there...we lived on Martha Street which was right by the diamond.

JG: Okay.

RI: Part of the time I didn't even own a car. It's a good thing I lived close by so I could walk to the ballpark.

JG: Walk to the ball park. All right, well I think we got some really good information there. I appreciate that. You were going to tell me when and how and the circumstances of how you met Mr. Arthur Temple, Jr. and his wife Mary.

RI: My dad had the paint contract on their first home on Southwood Drive and as I recall now it was not no houses around. It was a blank meadow on Southwood Drive and their house they just built set back some way off the road. Of course, it's all built up now but then it was just a lone house sitting out there by itself. Seems like it was a long way off the road but it couldn't be too far. It was 1937, if I recall correctly. My dad had the paint contract on his home. My dad was a paint contractor and they were finishing it up and my dad was painting on the inside and he had me painting inside the kitchen cabinet when I

heard a car door slam outside and somebody come in and start talking and dad was talking to Arthur and Mary about the colors and what they liked and going on and I stuck my head out the door and dad said, "Arthur this is my son Roscoe, Jr. He is learning a trade. I just let him paint inside the cabinets." That is how I met Arthur and Mary.

JG: And what year was that?

RI: About '37 I think.

JG: '37, wow!

RI: He and Mary had just married in Texarkana and they sent...

JG: He was born in '20 I think wasn't he?

RI: Yes, because he is two years older than me I think. That would make him 91. Anyway he was just a young man.

JG: But not too much older than you.

RI: Well let's see. I was born in '22. I was 15 years old and he was 17, he was two years older than me. I was 17 so he was not more than 18 years old when he and Mary got married. I think they married in Texarkana and the company sent Arthur to Lufkin to head the retail Lumber yard right there on Frank Avenue now, but it's where the underpass is. It wasn't no underpass but Temple Lumber Company was right there. Lottie worked there as the bookkeeper in that retail lumber yard. That is how Arthur and Lottie met.

JG: So, you met him painting his cabinet doors.

RI: I was inside, painting inside the cabinet. Dad wouldn't let me paint on the outside where it could be seen.

JG: Okay, well all right. I appreciate it very much. I see we've gone about an hour and a half or so. That is a pretty good amount of time. I appreciate you Mr. Ivy.

RI: You bet! Anything I can do to help I would be glad to do so.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: Mr. Ivy was telling me a little bit just after I turned the recorder off. I wanted to be sure and capture this, the Woodman of the World, the city league championship you were saying how many people would come for that.

RI: The stands were full and cars were parked everywhere, people at the outer line in the backfield. I would estimate 2,500 to 3,000 people would be present for the city championship.

JG: And you were saying the reason that you thought was there was no televisions during that day, no air conditioning, so it was people were limited on entertainment.

RI: That is right and at no charge for coming out there and watching the ballgame, just all for free.

JG: Now that was the softball games.

RI: That is right.

JG: The softball games were free.

RI: That is right.

JG: That is a pretty good audience, 2,500 to 3,000 people.

RI: That is right.

JG: Then you were telling me a little bit about your last semi-pro game was against Nigton.

RI: Yes, Nigton and Lufkin Merchants.

JG: Lufkin Merchants. Were y'all an all white team?

RI: We were all white.

JG: And you were playing Nigton which was an all black team.

RI: All black, and I remember the...

JG: Where was the game?

RI: In Nigton.

JG: In Nigton, okay.

RI: And, Fairbanks Deason was the manager and owner of the Nigton team and he owned the honky-tonk and the bar and the beer joint was behind home plate and behind where the press box would be, that is where he was and he was announcing, had a PA system. The first time I came up out in left centerfield there was a house, little old frame house and a colored family that lived in it was sitting out on the porch swing, swinging

watching the ballgame. Three hundred and fifty feet out there or so, you know, because it wasn't no fences just wide open spaces and I caught one good one and hit the ball right at that house and it took one bounce and went on the porch with them where they were swinging. Of course it was a home run. You had to run it out, but that far back and up on the porch I didn't have trouble making it.

JG: So, there was no fence is what you are saying. It was just far enough they had to run that far to get it.

RI: That is right. If you just hit at all you had a homerun made. The second time I came up to bat Deason said, "here comes the clipper, here comes the clipper, the clipper is next up" is what he said. (laughter)

JG: Called you the clipper.

RI: The clipper is next up. (laughter)

JG: What did you do then?

RI: I don't remember, probably struck out.

JG: Did y'all win?

RI: We were ahead 12 to 11...

JG: 12 to 11.

RI: ...in the last inning with 2 outs and they had the bases loaded...

JG: They had last bat.

RI: ...they had last bat and the guy hit kind of a lazy fly out to left field and Joe Peppered was our left fielder and he camped under it just like that. Of course, all the base runners were going with 2 outs and a fly ball they were gone and it dropped out of his glove and we got beat 14 to 12.

JG: Bounced out of his glove, oh my gosh!

RI: If it had held on we would of won 12 to 11 and we would have got whatever money they made we'd have got 60 percent of it instead of 40.

JG: How big a turnout was the audience compared to some of your other games?

RI: Oh they probably had a couple of hundred there.

JG: A couple hundred there. So, mostly black audience?

RI: Yes, all black. There wasn't no white folks there.

JG: How often did y'all play?

RI: Once a week.

JG: No, I meant how often did you play teams like Nigton? Were there any other teams that had black players?

RI: No, that is the only one.

JG: The only one. Did y'all play them at other times?

RI: No, we just played them that one time.

JG: That one time and that was your last game huh?

RI: They contacted us and said they didn't have a game and would we be interested in coming over there and playing and we said well sure we would. They treated us like a million dollars.

JG: Okay, well good. Okay, I just wanted to get those last two stories on the tape. Thank you!

END OF INTERVIEW