

Benjamin Weber
Interview 251a
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Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer
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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, New York native Benjamin Weber reminisces about his life. Born in New York City, Mr. Weber came to Texas during World War II as a guard at several POW camps, where he guarded captured German soldiers as they worked in the local lumber industry. He worked out of two camps in Lufkin and one camp in Huntsville. Before the war ended he was transferred to the Pacific Theater and spent time on Saipan and Iwo Jima. After the war Mr. Weber returned to New York, but after a while he moved to Lufkin with his wife, a native of the area. In Lufkin he worked for the Coca Cola bottling plant, sold Chevrolets, and sold insurance. He also managed a semi-pro baseball team called the Dirty Sox and ran the local bowling alley. He discusses all of his jobs, his wartime experiences, baseball, his chances to sing on Broadway as a child, and his decision to settle in Lufkin.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is May 21, 2012. My name is Jonathan Gerland. I'm with Mr. Ben Weber at the History Center in Diboll and we are going to do an oral history today. We are going to talk about several different things I think, his time during World War II and just specifically being a guard at some of the German POW Camps and also, maybe baseball and softball after the war here locally and maybe a few other things. But, Mr. Weber if you would let's just begin maybe by setting the stage and telling us when and where you were born.

Benjamin Weber (hereafter BW): Well I was born in New York City, in the heart of New York City. Everything goes by numbers in my day and it was I was born on 161st Street in 3rd Avenue in the Bronx.

JG: When was that?

BW: That was in 1924, June 30th.

JG: June 30, 1924.

BW: Yes sir.

JG: What did your parents do? What was your father's occupation?

BW: My father was an interior decorator. In those days that is what they called the painter because it wasn't just a matter of putting paint on the wall they did decorations and then painted those in different colors so it was very artistic on his part.

JG: Did he work for himself or did he work for a business?

BW: He worked for himself, he sure did.

JG: What are some of your earliest memories growing up in the big city?

BW: One thing that I always enjoyed while I was there and just a kid playing handball. I don't know whether that is a thing down here. It's a hard rubber black ball and you got to get it against the wall and it's quite a thing. I think a lot of them now use racquets for that kind of stuff but, I did that and I enjoyed it. I also enjoyed going to where they had the playgrounds. They only had the playgrounds at those times at the schools and it would be certain times they would lock the gate and you couldn't get in so we would climb over it. And, but that is where I first learned to do different things.

JG: Did you play any baseball?

BW: I played stick ball and it's quite...it's still a game up there. There was a great outfielder for the Giants and that is how he got into baseball was playing stick ball. What was his name? Willie...well anyway right now I can't think of it.

JG: You are not talking about Willie Mays are you?

BW: Yes, centerfielder for the Giants. Anyway, that is some of the stuff I was able to do.

JG: How did you get down to this part of the country?

BW: Well I got into the service. I had to fight my way to get into the service but, I got into the service and...

JG: How do you mean by that? Did you join too young?

BW: Not too young but I only weighed about 102 pounds and I think the limit was 112 so, every time there is a place called the Battery in New York and down there they had all the different services lined up and I started first going to the Navy and they told me they couldn't use me. Then I went to the Marines and they said we sure can't use you and Coast Guard. I went to every service that was down there. I went to the Army and they said well we really can't use you but I tell you what you can do. If you really want to get in the service there is a method. And, I said, "I'll do anything I can to go in." He told me to go to the draft board and tell them you want to volunteer and you'll have to have your mother's signature to do that. And, I went ahead and got my mother to sign it after three or four weeks of battling it I took it back and they said that I could get a number and be called even though they normally didn't do those things. And, what would happen is the next man that was going to be called and go in the service I would take his place and that is how I went into the service. The man that I took the place of he never went in the service. He wrote me letters thanking me and all that kind of stuff. I think he had two children.

JG: So, the war was already going on at this time?

BW: Yes.

JG: Okay. Do you remember what was your...where were you when you got the news about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

BW: I was sitting in the movie house and I had already applied and tried to get in. That is when I went back down to them when Pearl Harbor was bombed. It was a shock. My father was alive at that time and he had served at what they called Schofield Barracks on Hawaii and he was very impressed with how much the damage was and how many ships were in there when they shouldn't have been.

JG: So, your father was serving?

BW: He had served in between World War I and World War II.

JG: In between, okay. So, you got the news while you were in a movie house.

BW: Yes, they stopped the movie and announced it.

JG: Would it have been late Sunday afternoon, Sunday evening? I guess the attacks happened in Hawaii early Sunday morning so I guess it would have been much later in the day.

BW: I don't know exactly what time it was but it was a shock. Then all of a sudden everybody said "well if we are going to do this I'm going to go in the service and I'm going to do this" then after things calmed down they think better of it and a lot of things different, you know.

JG: So, when did you join up? When did you finally get into the Army?

BW: I got in there in 1942 in November.

JG: In 1942, okay. Where did you do your basic training?

BW: I did it in the same place I went to. It's called Camp Upton. It's not there anymore on Long Island. (**JG:** Okay.) And, I did all my basics there and I have a very strange story that I don't think most men put up with. I got through with my basics and then they put you in a tent, what they call a parallel tent. It's a big tent where a lot of men can...

JG: What kind of tent?

BW: A tent, a parallel.

JG: Parallel.

BW: It's actually a big long tent and they said well you will ship out from here. Well, three days went by and everybody else was gone and I was still in the tent by myself then they would bring some more people in there. This went on for about three weeks almost a month and I never got shipped out. I always kept getting put on kitchen duty. You would get up about three or four o'clock in the morning and they were waking me up three or four o'clock and I'd say, "Am I on this stuff again" and they would say, "Yes." I said, "Why am I on it all the time." And they said, "Have you ever looked on the end of your bed? It says kitchen police, KP, on it." I said, "I'm going to have to be smarter than this army if I'm going to be all right. Anyway, after awhile they finally come and got me and put me on a truck with the other men and took us down to the railroad station, lined us up and the officers, there were three officers and they came down to see what kind of material they were going to get. They got to me and he said, "I can't use you." And, I said, "why not?" He said, "Well you are too small and you just don't fit the thing that we need." I said, "Do you mind telling me what it's going to be." Well, it's going to be a military police escort guard but you are too small.

JG: What size were you then? How tall are you?

BW: It was the weight. I didn't weigh but 105 pounds.

JG: The weight okay, 105, the weight.

BW: And I was probably about five-two, not very big and all the guys when I looked down the line all of them were like five eight, five nine some even six foot. Anyway, he went to walk away and I said, "sir, I have put up with a lot" and I said, "I can do the job. If you let me go I can do whatever you need me to do." He said, "Well how tough are you?" I said, "I boxed; is that good enough for you?" He said, "Where did you do it?" I said, "I boxed in the P.A.L." That is the Police Athletic League and he said, "Did you win everything?" I said, "yes I won every boxing thing I done." And they said, "What did you win?" I said, "Well I got three golden gloves and I still have them." He said, "I tell you what I'm going to give you a shot." He said, "I'm going to take you into this unit. The first time you screw up though you are out and I don't know where you will go. You may go to an infantry unit, you could go anywhere, but I'm going to do it." Anyway I stayed there and I said okay. They put us back on the truck and took me right back to where I was at to start off with. Then that is where I took my basics. I took all the firing of different guns the sub Thompson's and everything else, more shotguns than anything else because that is what we were going to use rather than the rifles. Anyway, they called me in one day and they said, "we are going to make you Cattery" and I don't know if you ever heard that word. Cattery is what they do for people that are stationed permanently somewhere on a training base.

JG: Spell that.

BW: I don't know if I can, cattery.

JG: Not cavalry?

BW: No, cattery. It means that you are stationed on that base permanently and you can come and go as you please. You had a pass but you could do whatever you wanted to do and you were training these men as they came in, six weeks, some of them went only as much as four and a half weeks, but that is what you done. You trained them how to march, you did it all and then they said to me we are going to do this. I hadn't been in there very long and they made me corporal and just think I was a corporal and these guys were 28, 29 you know, though the youngest was two besides me. And I said, "I'm going to do this" and I said, "What am I going to do if I fail?" And they fixed it where I didn't or guaranteed it. They taught me, they worked me over and I was the boss sometimes, that is what I thought, you know, not really, but I thought I was one. But anyway, that is how I got in the midst of it. That is why I gained a lot of respect because I done my job and I done it very well. Then they moved us over to a place called Miller Field that is on Staten Island. That is when the prisoners were coming in on Fort Wadsworth.

JG: Wadsworth?

BW: Yes, Fort Wadsworth, and...

JG: These are Germans?

BW: These are Germans and Italians.

JG: And Italians.

BW: We had both of them. They said that train is going to be y'all's right there that is backed up. I said, "what are we going to do, where you going to transport them?" You are going to start doing that and they hooked two what they call lower and upper birth trains, where you have the place where you can sleep and then they had a kitchen car on it, which was an open car that they cooked on. Anyway we got the first load of them and loaded them up and I had...I thought it was going to be a picnic. It was not, but anyway. The man that I had trained was there with me and you know, when you train men you are not a sweetheart. You really, you got to really dig in and a lot of them may not like you because of the way you talk to them and make them do things. And, anyway the guys were very good to me and I set the guards. I was one of the non combats that would set the guards where they were going to be stationed on a platform with shotguns throughout the train.

JG: Noncommissioned is that what you mean by non combat?

BW: Yes, noncommissioned. Anyway, we took off and I believe the first place that we dropped them off was in Tennessee and I believe it was outside of Memphis, there was a camp. Then when we went back we were free. I mean, you know, we didn't take anybody back or nothing like that. There was nothing to do. They cooked for us and we went back, we went right back to Staten Island. Then we started going to this Fort Wadsworth and

going there every time we came in we had to go right over there, clean up, take a shower, go over there, start loading them on another train.

JG: More German prisoners.

BW: More Germans, yes. I had some Italians that we took to Florida. I don't know why they went there but they went to Florida and the camps were just opening up at that time. Anyway, I did that and I did it for almost a year, I rode the trains. Then one day they said we are short on some of the camps that we are trying to open up new ones and that is when I got down here and stayed.

JG: To Texas?

BW: I first went...I didn't stay but for three days. I first went to Florence, Arizona and we took the prisoners off and they were Italian and we took them off. And we stayed there for awhile because the people that...the guards that were there were short handed so, I stayed three days until another company came in and then we wound up over at Huntsville.

JG: Was that your first camp to visit in Texas in Huntsville?

BW: Oh no, I went to one that was already in Center that had just opened up.

JG: In where?

BW: In Center.

JG: In Center, okay.

BW: Sorry, I'll be more precise, my slurring.

JG: No, that is fine.

BW: We opened one up in Fanning, in Tyler while I was here. We did a few things around, you know, we didn't just stay at the camp. In other words when they brought another company in there then we split it up and we had time that we could go out and do service like we would have to march 12 miles and back and that kind of stuff. We would have to redo the camp in a lot of areas, maybe the barbed wire, they didn't string them just right; we would have to help them do that kind of stuff.

JG: So, were you ever stationed at a camp for any length of time?

BW: Oh yes, I was over there at Huntsville. They called it Huntsville but it was between it and...

JG: Riverside?

BW: Yes, Riverside.

JG: How long were you there?

BW: I was there about...well, it was warm when I got there and then it was ice on the road when they were wanting to move me so, I was there probably six or eight months.

JG: Okay, okay.

BW: Actually I think we could have stayed there but you know they...the prisoners at that time still believed that they were going to win the war. So, when they got into those camps they set up kangaroo type judging on a person, their people not us. And, it became quite a deal trying to keep those things separated in that. Anyway...

JG: Was there a routine at the camp? What was a routine like?

BW: Yes, the routine was before they decided to let them go out and work they had to go into the back part was a great big area for doing soccer and things like that and we would let them go back there. Then we would have to do the towers in the back to keep them where they were supposed to be. Anyway, we done that and I took them out, I took a few out and got them to work. I was the only guard that took...I took six of them out. There was a stone quarry over there in Trinity and I took them over there where they could chip these and make blocks out of it so that we could use the blocks for the entrance of the camp and things like that. It wasn't to beautify it but just give it an in and out area. I took them there and we got...I brought them back at lunch time and then I took them back out and they asked if they could do this all the time and I said well I'm not the guy to tell you that.

JG: Could they speak English?

BW: There would be some, yes.

JG: Okay.

BW: Actually most of the ones that we had there were not true Germans, they were Czechoslovakians that had taken into the service and Germans. There were a few of each, you know, that they had conquered or done whatever with. These people were coming out of North Africa after Patton kind of whipped up on them a little bit. They were all of Rommel's troops and, you know, he left and he went over to Italy and these guys just started giving up and so, we got overwhelmed with so many prisoners and that is when we shipped them back on the boat and put a big red cross on the side and they went to different camps. We were not the only company that done this. There were probably three or four companies that were doing it everywhere.

JG: What company? What is the identification of your company?

BW: 353rd MPEG.

JG: MPEG, what does that stand for?

BW: Military Police Escort Guard.

JG: Military Police Escort Guard.

BW: Yes.

JG: So, how many when you took the six to work in the quarry how many of you were there of guards, how many guards?

BW: Me.

JG: Just you, okay. Now did you assign them to civilians that were working there?

BW: What we did there was a guy that was the supervisor yes, and he came out and he explained to me what needed to be done. And even if you can't speak...I speak a little German, nothing great, but more probably dirty words than anything else, but you can convey what you want them to do and if they are willing to do it you can walk amongst them and show them what you really need done. So, this supervisor of the quarry, he showed them how and what needed done and then set them aside over to one place.

JG: So, Americans were there working also right?

BW: Yes, I don't know how many they had there.

JG: It was an ongoing operation and the Germans were just brought there to work.

BW: Yes, yes, but they needed, they were needing more people to work. Everybody was gone in the service. The thing they used was like a hatchet, a flat blade hatchet like this and that hatchet was maybe about that wide or maybe more and it was sharp. That is what they chiseled it.

JG: Chiseled the rock.

BW: Yes, more or less. They didn't take a hammer and chisel it they just chopped it and chop the edges off and get what they need to do. They found out that was a good thing. Then I started taking lunch out for them where they could stay all day.

JG: What would lunch be?

BW: Well, they cooked their own down there. We didn't cook for them. They had their own cooking.

JG: So you supplied the raw groceries and they did their own cooking.

BW: Yes, we even bought some sausage for them and they cooked the sausage. They made a lot of soups rather than being fancy. There was not much meat, there was no meat hardly for us let alone for anybody else. But, we ate their cooking so, I got it fixed where they could take their couple pieces of sausage out and do just like we do, you go to work and you got to have something to eat and that is it. That was kind of in the best time of the year. I don't remember exactly but it was the best time of the year and we were starting to get close to the cooler weather. Then the German sergeant came out, I was on what they called charge of quarters and that is when you are responsible for different things that have to be done.

JG: Go ahead I was just looking at my notes, but go ahead.

BW: He came out and he wanted to talk to me and he came to the...(cell phone ringing). I'm sorry.

JG: That is fine.

BW: Anyway I ask, I said, "they asked me if they could go out and work and I said I don't have nothing for you to work but I'll talk to the captain and see what we can do." I mentioned it to him and he said, "You know we have been thinking about the same thing that we need to get them out and work them instead of just sitting around eventually causing a problem." Anyway, they worked it out with these wood cutters. These people like Angelina Lumber, which don't exist anymore, but Angelina Lumber. I think they done some stuff for Southern Pine. They even done a few things for the Papermill.

JG: Now, not the Huntsville camp. Are you talking about the Huntsville camp sent people over?

BW: I brought them over here, yes.

JG: Oh, you brought them over here. Each day or just drop them off?

BW: Each day. What they did, they went ahead and got people that had trucks, you know, that was in the woods. They were doing it in the woods with those trucks anyway, taking cutters and stackers and all of that and that is what they were going to do. They were going to put some of them with the crews that was going to go in there and cut.

JG: So, you would drive all the way from Huntsville to Angelina County and then drive back that evening?

BW: Yes sir.

JG: How many hours of work did they get done?

BW: Well they probably didn't do but about four hours anyway, period, that is about all and maybe not that much. Here is what they did and you have to forgive me, my memory is going back a long way. They put them in the woods and they had to do so many pins they called it, timber pins and that is a stack of I believe 4x6, four feet long and six foot high, I might be wrong about the measure, and then they stacked them in there and that is all they done. They never did anything else. Then if they worked the next day they loaded the trucks with it. They could take those things and throw it up on it. The way they loaded trucks then they loaded them into almost a v.

JG: So was this pulpwood?

BW: Yes, pulpwood, yes, and there was some timber also that they had cut.

JG: For boards.

BW: Yes, for boards yes, longer stuff. At that time they used mules in there that waddled in the mud and everything else. They were the ones that pulled the timber logs out further where they could get them and I think they used the mules to load the wagons for all I know. I know they got done before we got back out there.

JG: So how many men typically, if there was such a thing as typical, did you bring from Huntsville over here to do work in the woods?

BW: Finally we wound up with four truck loads of them.

JG: Four truck loads at a time.

BW: And that would be about 24 or 25 in the truck. They built a wooden thing over the truck like we have a thing on the back of our truck to cover right, well they did the whole truck except the cab and it was a long wheel base truck and that is what they did they loaded them up in there and brought them over here.

JG: Were these marked army trucks?

BW: No there weren't no markings at all. These belonged to individual men that did this for the companies anyway.

JG: They contracted?

BW: Yes, they contracted out with the government to haul them eventually over here is what they did.

JG: And you typically carried a shotgun?

BW: Yes.

JG: As far as being a guard?

BW: Yes. Well basically a shotgun was easier to handle and not only that it did the job better.

JG: Did you ever have to use it?

BW: Once, and...

JG: Was it shoot to kill or shoot to warn them or what?

BW: I did kill. I am not proud of it. It was when they were rioting over there.

JG: Rioting?

BW: Yes. What they did, they finally, the ones that were just hard and Nazi or whatever you want to call them, they decided they didn't want these men going out to work anymore and they said it was helping the United States too much. And then they started holding what they call kangaroo court and if the guy said he was going to go out anyway they killed him. They would wrap him in a blanket, disconnect the pipes onto the latrine and beat them to death. I think the marker at one time was there, I think it still is, thirty some odd they killed.

JG: That is at the Huntsville Camp?

BW: Yes.

JG: So, what was the occasion of you using the shotgun? Was it during one of those episodes?

BW: Well they were...we couldn't get them out of the...it was Thanksgiving. I know that like it's in my blood. It was Thanksgiving and they thought we would all be gone so they were going to have a good time, you know, they were going to have fun and they were going to beat up the ones they wanted to kill. We found three that was dead down there, they hanged. Then they went into where they do the recreation in the back and so the German Sergeant came up and told me what was going on. He said the ones that were supposed to be in compound one, three is in one, one is in two and they're all mixed up. And so what was left of them in the compound, we made them go back to the back and try to get them to do the right thing and go back to where they were at. This one guy went into where the...one of the buildings and we went in the building, the officer and myself and two others and we found the guys under the bed. When this guy came out of the latrine he wanted to beat somebody up or do something with them. He had a pipe and I didn't shoot to kill him it just happened.

JG: Yes, yes. How many guards were there per prisoner?

BW: It was I think even on that sign; I think it says 3,000 of them.

JG: Three thousand prisoners. How many guards did y'all have?

BW: There were two companies that were guarding and that's 151 in one company and 118 in the other. We were in the 151 G.I.'s but that is not all guards either.

JG: Not all guards.

BW: You got cooks and you know, and everything.

JG: Besides the riots you just described overall, how was the behavior of the prisoners?

BW: Oh it was great after that. (phone ringing). I am so sorry.

JG: That is all right. If you need to get it we can pause it.

BW: Go ahead and pause it. It's my wife.

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JG: Okay, we are starting back again. Okay, you got into Lufkin how?

BW: That is how I got into Lufkin is because all these things were going on and they decided then to put a camp in Lufkin where they could work them right out of the camp here and not be driving them all over the place and getting them away from the arrogance of some that were in that camp and let the ones that really wanted to work to bring them out and let them work.

JG: So, Lufkin had two camps eventually. What was the first one?

BW: The first one was the one out there where the U. S. Forest Service has built their building now.

JG: The one where they put the marker?

BW: Yes sir. That was the first one and I think we had 207 I believe there and we put them in that concrete building in the back. It was there but I don't know why it was there, but we cleaned it all up, secured it and done everything.

JW: So, you were stationed at that camp then?

BW: Well, I came over here is what I done to open another one. There were two camps in Lufkin. People don't know that. There was one where the middle school is now.

JG: Right, that is where I went to high school.

BW: Is that where you went to school?

JG: Yes, it is now the middle school, right.

BW: Well there was an exhibition of buildings there from the old Forest Service, they had the Forest Festival there and then there was a baseball field in the back too.

JG: That is where the Foresters played right?

BW: Foresters, yes sir.

JG: We will get into that a little later.

BW: Yes, that is where they played. They changed the name though to the Angels. I may be wrong but anyway. So, I opened that camp and it was the dickens to secure though because those buildings had wide doors on them. We had to get where they could sleep in there and we put them on bunk beds and things like that.

JG: Were you in Lufkin during the Normandy invasion in early June of '44? Were you in Lufkin then?

BW: I don't think so.

JG: The reason why I'm asking is I remember when we did the World War II exhibit in 2005 I think there were three editions of the Lufkin newspaper that day. It was June the 6th and there were three editions telling the updates of the Normandy invasion and one of them, I can't remember if it was first, second or third but, on the front page was a little news item where it said the P.O.W.'s at the Lufkin camps were on strike, that they refused to work. I don't know if they wanted more money or less hours or both, but I was just curious if you were here during that.

BW: I think one of the things, and I may be wrong about this, I think one of the things was they weren't getting the PX stuff like it was from the main. They still didn't have a PX in Lufkin.

JG: Okay, what is PX? (Post Exchange, military base retail store)

BW: That is where they can buy stuff. That is where they went...

JG: So, the local store.

BW: ...where the guys went to get their beer and so forth and so on. It's got a name but right off I can't think of it. But anyway, that is what was really happening. I remember

hearing about it. They sent me to school I think about that time. I went to a school over in Georgia.

JG: But, you were saying the ones that came from Huntsville here...

BW: To work.

JG: ...it was mainly because they were willing to work in the woods and that kind of thing.

BW: And, we took them for granted too much after awhile. There was men that were happy to be here and happy to be pleased that to know that nothing was going to happen to them anymore. I talked to one or two of them and we would sit down and I would try to understand them, what they were saying. If you stay long enough with something like that and they will eventually catch on some of the words that you are saying also and you can communicate with them.

JG: Did y'all have any kind of official interpreters in these units? Did each camp have some person?

BW: No.

JG: No!

BW: We were out there on our own.

JG: I guess that wasn't a priority really to communicate with them.

BW: Well we had to do that on the trains, you know, we were there on our own. Nothing else, it had to be done. I spent a lot of time on those trains. In fact, you can get sick from the motion of the train and you would get off and they would march you somewhere and you could watch the line, they would be marching like wiggling all over until they got where they were getting to the trucks to get on. I went to every state in the United States with prisoners except North Dakota. That is the only state.

JG: Now was that before you came to Lufkin?

BW: Yes just before.

JG: Before you came to Lufkin, okay.

BW: In fact when I got to Lufkin there was already some prisoners there from the first company of men that were here and some of them started to point to me and some of the other guys, some of the prisoners, you know, and saying "Americana" they were saying that we brought them there. And, we did. We backed the train up but we didn't stay. We didn't even know where the camp was. We backed the train up and they came got them

and they marched them to the prison camp. We never went to the prison camp. We were in Trinity we never got out of Trinity and we went back up through St. Louis and back over to New York. We went right back where we came from. Am I mixing this thing up for you?

JG: No, you traveled around a good bit didn't you?

BW: Yes, I did. I meant what I said, every state.

JG: But you were always responsible for the prisoners on the train.

BW: That is right.

JG: Then you would ride back to Staten Island. Is that where most of them came?

BW: Well they actually came into Fort Wadsworth. That is where they had them.

JG: And, where is that at?

BW: I believe that is at the bottom of New York.

JG: Not Staten Island, Long Island I guess.

BW: Well, there is Staten Island. We were there on Staten Island because that was an air field but it was never used anymore since the war. They stopped using it and we stayed in a hangar. We had bunk beds in the hangar and all over the place. They cooked in the corner for us. We didn't stay there very long. We would come in maybe three days and we would go out again.

JG: Take more, transfer them all over.

BW: Oh, they were coming in left and right. You got to remember...

JG: These were only the European Theater prisoners?

BW: These were all from Africa.

JG: Okay, everybody came from Africa.

BW: Everything that I handled was from North Africa, Rommel's troops. I mean no question about it. What is his name two pistol Annie? He is the one that destroyed Patton. I mean he beat him up and then Rommel left and went to Italy. He left those guys cold and I think that is where him and Hitler had got cross ways and he stuck him up there in France with nothing. He never did anything much for them. He never gave them material. I think he wanted him dead anyway, an opinion.

JG: Talk a little bit more about your time in Lufkin. Can you describe the barracks, not necessarily the barracks but the structures and things as it related to Huntsville? Were they bigger camps, smaller camps?

BW: Oh no, we were a lot smaller, very small.

JG: Huntsville was a lot larger.

BW: Yes, and it was camps started here and there with very few German men in it. Huntsville was like the headquarters to send them out and that is basically where they did it. I didn't get to see a lot of them that may have switched and went to another camp or whatever because they needed them. I know this. I know what I did from Huntsville to Lufkin and also to Center. I went up to Center and I went up to Fanning one time. That was a long trip. It was a long trip then. It was two lane highway. (laughter)

JG: There is a photograph here I'm flipping through. There is a photograph of Mr. Weber. He is in uniform and he is standing up to a microphone and it says "from campus studio radio student's present program over station KSAM." What was that about?

BW: That was at the college.

JG: Sam Houston State?

BW: Sam Houston, yes. Most of the ones that were there were girls, there were not that many men but there were young boys there too. Anyway, they asked if they would come and entertain us and I went and I sang for them.

JG: You sang for them okay. So, that is you singing there over the microphone.

BW: I want you to know I sang very well. I could have been on Broadway. You are shaking your head, but I could have.

JG: You could have, okay.

BW: Yes, I went over and my mother let me go over there with this lady and I went over to...

JG: Now you are talking about when you were a child?

BW: Yes, I was 13. I went over to Broadway and this may not be what you want to hear but anyway, I went over there and at that time they were doing what they call curtain call and it was for the Dead End Kids. You probably never heard of them. It was going to be a play on Broadway and Ward Bond was going to be in it. Humphrey Bogart was going to be a part of it and a lady that was a silent screen star...I'll think of it in a little bit, anyway, I got picked and the lady got the contract and took it home to my mother and my mother said, "no I'm not going to let him do that." I could have made two movies. One

would have been “Going My Way” [Mr. Webber probably refers to the 1940 movie “If I Had My Way”] with Bing Crosby. That is not balarky.

JG: So, going into the military trumped out. That would have been I guess late thirties early forties that you are talking about.

BW: Yes.

JG: I meant to ask you this earlier did you have brothers and sisters?

BW: Yes, I did. I had a brother that was an invalid and I had a younger brother also.

JG: Did he join the military?

BW: Yes, my younger brother wound up in the Marines, yes.

JG: So, you came to Texas serving as a guard here. How did you get out of Texas? I think you told me you wound up on Iwo Jima so how did that happen?

BW: Well what I did they sent me to school in Atlanta, Georgia and I didn't know the big picture at that time. They said even though I had some time with the guns and all that I had also gone to Camp Abilene which was, it's not there anymore, but it had the...I forget what division it was but anyway it was an armored division and I had to take the combat training there, true combat. They would stick you in a hole and run a tank over you and stop over you and see how scared you would be. Anyway, then they shipped me to Atlanta from there and it was school. They were trying to get us to know enough about medicine in case...I didn't know I was going to the Pacific then, in case we had to invade Japan. They wanted combat medics, is what they wanted. I went to school there, graduated from Overthorp in ninety days and they sent me to Kennedy General in Memphis, Tennessee and I did some more training, medical training, and got my certificate. Went back to Abilene and they said we are shipping you out and I hooked up with an outfit in Fort Lewis, Washington. I was there about a day and a half. They came in and said, “we are loading you up you are going to the Pacific.” And, that is where I wound up going. I went to the Pacific.

JG: What division were you in then?

BW: I was just hooked to this company. I was going to be reassigned to wherever they were going.

JG: Oh okay.

BW: They took me to Hawaii and there were Army guys that was on there but they got off. I didn't. I didn't get off. When they came back there was other guys getting on there and I asked them where they were going. They said, “We have no idea, we don't know.” I said, “Well, okay.” I got on that ship and the first place I went was not combat but

Enewetak. I don't know whether that is the island they blew up with the atom bomb or not but they tested one on an island Enewetak. I think it was (unintelligible) I'm not sure. Went there and Tenian and then I got off in Saipan because they got off. I stayed down on the beach mostly, close to the beach, and the beach commander come by and said, "oh you Army guys that are here" I think it was about 38 of us I think, he said, "you are going to get on, they are going to bring boats in and you are going to go out and get on a ship." I said, "Okay." And I did. When I got out there they were all Marines. I said, "hey where are you guys going?" They said, "Well we really don't know, maybe to the Philippines." I said, "Man that would be good duty" because the Philippines were kind of cleaned up already, you know. Anyway, we left and we had a slight attack by a submarine which was not true. It was one of ours that surfaced and they thought it was something else. Anyway, I said this is wild.

JG: Now why do you think a few Army personnel were attached to the Marines?

BW: Well, I can tell you.

JG: Okay.

BW: When we got there we had to transfer to an LCM that opened up in the front and anyway, they did that. They run at the beach and the guy goes, "whoever run that boat he forgot to put the anchor down when he was supposed to be way out there." He dropped it but he didn't drop it right so it was like here to the wall to the beach from me, so then they decided that they would go in on threes, so anyway, I got there and there was a beach commander and we were sitting on the beach and he said, "what are you guys doing here?" And, I said "I don't know but they told me to come up here and I'm here." And he said, "Are you the only non-combat?" And I said, "no there is four of us I think maybe five." And, he said, "well we are going to have to do something with you." I said, "all right." He said, "I'm going to hook you up with the 4th Marine Division." I said, "And what does that mean?" He said, "well you will be attached but unassigned." I said, "Okay." He said, "Have you got any papers on you?" I said, "No, I don't have anything except that I was supposed to get on that boat and be here." Anyway, he come the next day and he said, "well you guys are here for a reason" and I said, "Well I hope I am, I didn't want to come here for nothing." I said, "This is not a nice place is it?" And he said, "No it's not." Anyway, we were there for as soon as they took the airstrip they were going to go ahead and bring the B-29's that were all over the place. They were having to ditch in the water, every one of them because there was no place for them to land. They couldn't get back to Saipan, which was the base for all the B-29's. Our job was to protect them when they came in and protect if they were going to go out again. We had ammunition there for them. We had oil and gas dumps for them. They had their own crews that would do it, but we were supposed to protect all of that that was there. I think we done a good job but they still had to ditch in the water because the airstrip that they really needed for the CB's to redo, there were CB's there, they didn't get it long enough and so they had to wait. They did continue to ditch for like about a week or maybe two, just about a week. Then they started saying they were going to start bringing them in that night. We had a little band side charge after us and I was in with two other Marines and

they said just keep your head down you are going to be all right. Anyway, you got the diary?

JG: No sir.

BW: This is something you really need. This is...you have this though where I was a temporary guard?

JG: Yes sir, yes sir.

BW: This is a meritorious service that I don't know whether you have that or not.

JG: I don't think we have that.

BW: That is me. Let me get this. Here we go. This is very interesting. You might want to make a copy of this. These by the way, these things, there is the B-29 and this you got. I'm going to get down to these if you don't mind. You got the temporary guard too don't you?

JG: Yes sir. So, you were at the 232nd General Hospital.

BW: No, that is what I was protecting.

JG: You were protecting it.

BW: Yes sir, I was there for them. I was actually...

JG: It says here you were a member of the 232nd General Hospital Iwo Jima Volcano Islands when you got the meritorious service unit.

BW: Well, it came through them because I was not assigned to anybody.

JG: Okay.

BW: This is when I was young. This is my wife that died, but that is when I was young.

JG: Oh yes, that is nice. We will have to get a copy of this.

BW: This you are welcome to if you can use it. This I carried on the Island.

JG: A flag huh?

BW: Forty eight states.

JG: Yes, a forty-eight states flag, yes, small.

BW: Yes, that is small. That is what you carried on you.

JG: You carried it with you.

BW: Yes. If you have any reason for it you are welcome to it. It will never get used anyway.

JG: Yes, we will definitely like to get a copy. Is this a journal you kept, you wrote this?

BW: No, no.

JG: No, no.

BW: No, I took that off...I keep saying these things. It may sound like I'm bragging. I killed him and I'm going to leave that...I got it interpreted. I didn't know what I had. I had no idea and I think the interpreter was Greenwood or Green something.

JG: Lieutenant Goldberg.

BW: Goldberg, well I was close. He interpreted.

JG: This was a Japanese soldier's diary?

BW: Yes, yes, this is his from what he sees of us.

JG: Okay, so a Japanese soldier wrote this and you had someone translate it.

BW: Well it was a book and I had no idea what we had and I said I would like to know what it is, you know, so they said well you will have to go down on the beach and maybe they can tell you if there is an interpreter out on one of the ships.

JG: Okay, yes.

BW: You can make copies of those.

JG: Yes, so anyway were you actually on Iwo Jima during the fighting?

BW: Yes, it wasn't over. I wasn't on the invasion, don't misunderstand, no.

JG: Okay, it was late February I believe wasn't it in '45?

BW: When they finished it up?

JG: Well, late February through early March.

BW: They invaded on February 19th of '45 and the thing is the Marines had...when you get to reading that you will have a better understanding of what went on. They bombed these people constantly for months, almost three months they bombed them.

JG: Before the invasion.

BW: Yes, it didn't do any good. I think 18,000 Marines got wounded or dead and I believe something like 20,000 Japanese died on that island under the ground. That is a lot. Just think that is eight square miles. That is all it is.

JG: So, how long were you there on Iwo?

BW: Probably about two and a half weeks, something like that. I wasn't there very long.

JG: Did you ever come back to Texas as a guard again?

BW: No, no. When I got hurt they took me out of the service.

JG: How did you get hurt? You said you got hurt.

BW: Yes. It was in the antipersonnel shrapnel that I got hit with. I got it stuck in here.

JG: Your right eye.

BW: Yes, and of course the eye is gone now. It lasted a little while but not very long.

JG: Was that on Iwo Jima when that happened?

BW: Yes. They brought me home and landed in California and they were fixing up a medical train to go east and they put me on it and dumped me in the hospital when I got there.

JG: So, you went all the way back to New York then?

BW: Yes, you have to if you are going to get out. Actually at that time if you had so many points you could get out anyway. You didn't have to be walking wounded or anything else. It depended on time and service and time on foreign soil and medals that you had and if you had been wounded you got out. That doesn't mean they kicked you out, it was up to you. I went right back to the same camp which they turned into a hospital which I went out of was Camp Upton. I stayed there I think maybe two months in the hospital off and on and then they came around and said you could go out if you wanted to. I said, "boy do I." They said well you are going to have to wait until we figure out how much medical you are going to need. Then maybe when you go out you can go to one of the hospitals and the government will pay for it and all that. In about ten days later they came and they said well we are going to try and keep you. I said how long and they said until we get things settled, you know, with what we need to do with you

physically. I said, "I don't want to stay." And, they said, "well the only way you can go out now is AMA and I went AMA."

JG: And what is that?

BW: Against medical advice.

JG: So, how did you get to Texas? When and how?

BW: Well...

JG: You had such a good time here huh?

BW: Well, I liked it, you know, I was a city boy and when I went back I had met a girl here and I asked her...

JG: In Lufkin or Huntsville?

BW: In Lufkin and I asked her to meet me in New York, I wanted to marry her. And, she said okay and she met me.

JG: Who is that?

BW: She is dead now. She is the one in that picture.

JG: What was her name?

BW: Boles, her maiden name was Boles.

JG: How did you meet her, just in town or what?

BW: Well I went to town several times when I was here but there was nothing but forest, don't misunderstand. We also had to do duty on the bus. The bus came in if they had G.I's on it we had to check passes and dog tags. Make sure the dog tags matched up with the pass that they weren't AWOL or something.

JG: Oh okay. In addition to guarding German POW's you would do military police stuff at the bus stops and stuff.

BW: That is right. Well, we did it in town period.

JG: Right.

BW: But anyway, this leg gets cramped on me. I'm sorry, my leg does that sometimes.

JG: Oh yes, lean back or whatever you need to do. You can lean it up in that chair.

BW: No I'm fine. I worked in New York.

JG: So, y'all were married in New York then?

BW: I worked in New York for maybe 8 months and I had to belong to the union. I still got my card though.

JG: What kind of work was it?

BW: I was sitting on a truck for Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer and I'd go up to Yankee Stadium and we would unload the beer up there and about three hours I would come back and I had the rest of the day off and I did that every morning. One day we went there and the doors was closed and I said, "what are we doing, what is going on?" And, they shut us out and they were just going to shut us out and move the plant to Jersey and I said "well I ain't gonna do this I'm going to Texas."

JG: Go to Texas huh?

BW: Yes, we had a baby about that time so I packed them up and came down to Lufkin. I had no place to live and we lived with her brother for a little while. I went to work at Coca-Cola plant and loved it, loved this area. It was a new life. I loved it. I still love it. With all that there is I loved it. I worked for Coca-Cola a while and then I went to work for Angelina Chevrolet and sold cars, became the big boy in it and did very well. Then I decided that I needed to do something else so, I went in the insurance business. I sold it out after 22 years. I also had the bowling alley, sold it.

JG: Was that Lufkin Lanes?

BW: Yes.

JG: Okay. Tell me a little bit about that. How long were you involved with that?

BW: About four years.

JG: Was Murphy Martin connected to that?

BW: Oh, you know Murphy?

JG: A little bit.

BW: He lived next door to us on Ellis Avenue. His daddy also worked at the Coca-Cola plant and so did his uncle. Yes, I knew Murphy real well.

JG: How was he connected with the bowling alley, was he?

BW: No, he was a radio announcer and he had gone to Dallas and lived and then I was in New York. He also went to New York with ABC.

JG: Yes, he was an anchor up there.

BW: Yes, I visited with him and I visited up there and I knew him real well, real well. He was a good guy.

JG: But, you were the owner of the bowling alley up there?

BW: Yes, and that was because of Arthur Temple. He is the one that took care of me.

JG: What do you mean by that?

BW: Well, he was just a nice man. He was a good man. We were in the Jaycee's together and that is a long time ago. I think he's only about three years older than me.

JG: He was born in twenty.

BW: Yes, something like that. We were in the Jaycee's together and we were just kicking it off. The war had destroyed everything and they wanted to start it over again and Gus Busch, did you know that?

JG: I know the name.

BW: Yes, all of us we started the Jaycee's. You get close to people.

JG: So, Mr. Temple how did he help you with the bowling alley?

BW: Well, he owned the building.

JG: He owned the building, okay.

BW: They had not been able to pay for the building so, he said just let me know when you can and that is what I done.

JG: So, you managed the bowling alley also then.

BW: Yes, I stayed there and I bowled too.

JG: You bowled too, okay.

BW: My first wife we all did it.

JG: So, how many years did you do that, the bowling alley?

BW: About four.

JG: About four years, okay. Did y'all have any notable bowlers come through the area to bowl there?

BW: Yes, there was a guy Weber, Dick Weber, I think he...in fact he was national champ for years.

JG: No relation to you huh?

BW: No, spelt the same though.

JG: One b?

BW: Yes, one b. I went up to Chicago to Brunswick, we had 24 lanes and I told them it was not profitable to have 24 lanes in Lufkin at that time. So, I told them I was going to take 12 out and I could either give them back to them or they could help me sell them. They helped me sell them and I put pool tables in there then alongside of them.

JG: So, was it ever doing good with 24 lanes?

BW: Oh it didn't do that well. It was a struggle constantly, you know. It was a burst of everybody going there and you'd have to wait for lanes and all that kind of stuff. The guys that owned it, did you know Benton Musslewhite?

JG: I know the name.

BW: Him and Fred Bennis from SMU, that is the ones that really started to get into it.

JG: And that was right after the war.

BW: Oh no that was in 1960.

JG: Much later, but when you were involved with it how close to the end of the war was that?

BW: I wasn't involved with it I already had my insurance agency and worked for Coca-cola. The coca-cola plant was right after the war.

JG: What years were you involved with the bowling alley, approximately?

BW: Well, I can almost tell you. Let's see, Kennedy was killed while I had it.

JG: '63 then, in there.

BW: Yes.

JG: Okay, I guess my question I'm not really sure when the bowling alley began.

BW: Well it wasn't started by me. It was started by Benton and them.

JG: Okay.

BW: They got Arthur to build the building on the property, which he owned the property.

JG: So in the fifties or?

BW: I took it after about a year and a half. It was all jumbled up. They were wanting out.

JG: I was thinking it was closer to the end of the war.

BW: They were wanting out.

JG: Well, let's talk about your days with baseball and softball. I think Angelina Chevrolet was a sponsor of a team or two or even a league. Didn't they build a softball field?

BW: No, we had what we called the W.O.W.

JG: Woodman of the World.

BW: They had a field, it was their field.

JG: Now, where was that located? Wasn't that located near the bowling alley?

BW: Yes, in fact the bowling alley was the backside of the field. What is that shopping center Chestnut Shopping Center?

JG: In that area over there.

BW: Well anyway, you go almost to the street because it was a dirt road there. It wasn't like it is now. So, if you backed up almost to that street that is where the stands were where people sat. Then the home plate was up and then the next thing you seen was the old Panther Drive-In. You could see that from there. We had as much as 3,000 people out there watching those games.

JG: Yes, Roscoe Ivy has told me about that was some good participation.

BW: He was a fine ball player. He was actually one of the best and believe me, I had him for awhile. I forget why we split up. I think he was wanting to go where he worked or something. They had a team and he promised he would do that.

JG: He was telling me too about how air conditioning and television kind of ruined all that because people used to get out more and would come and watch a ballgame, a baseball game, and when air conditioning and television came along it kept people inside.

BW: I built about three or four houses. I say I did, Arthur would say hey I want to build you a house. I'm not making this up. He would say he wanted to get it started, the addition, like the one on Atkinson Drive back in there that was his addition. Him and R. B. Thompson and Billy Lee, and I don't know whether you know those names or not, but anyway, he said, "I want to build a house in there for you" and I said, "okay where?" He said, "On Chambers Street." I said, "all right." He built it for me and I think my payments were like \$38 a month. I said, "Well this is good stuff" so I went to him and I said, "I want to build another house." He said, "Where?" I said "I don't know yet." He said, "Well when you find out I'll get Billy and them to take care of you." I did, I built another house over on Pershing over by the Lufkin Industries on the back side. Anyway later on I told him I wanted to build another house and I built it on Randolph. You know where Randolph is? Well, R. B.'s son's name is Randy and that is where it came up with Randolph, anyways behind the Memorial Hospital.

JG: Talk a little about that time period sort of semi-pro, I guess it was semi-professional league right?

BW: Yes, the baseball?

JG: Yes, just talk about that. What was that all about? You know, we don't have that today. Tell for people today what that was about.

BW: Well, it actually it was financed to come here by several men. I don't think Arthur was involved at that time. Arthur was working in the lumber yards. He wasn't president yet of anything. I think the Kurth's fixed it where that could be. The field was built just where I told you back behind all those exhibit buildings. They played Tyler, Beaumont, and maybe Austin I think. It wasn't a local thing where they could just have a league locally. They done real well but it was never a profitable thing. People didn't want to go out there and sit in the heat and all that kind of stuff.

JG: Roscoe told me when I asked him what does semi-professional mean he said, "well it meant that if you had enough money left over after paying for your gas to go travel and your other expenses, if you had enough to buy a hamburger you were doing good."

BW: He is right, that is exactly right. That is exactly what you had to do. (laughter)

JG: He explained the winners usually got a certain percentage and the losers got less of a percentage. That is how they would...it would be the proceeds from the sales of the tickets from the spectators.

BW: The boys that I had, the Dirty Sox...

JG: Yes, tell about the team.

BW: ...well they were part of a baseball team of the school. They wanted to make some money so I said well I don't know where we could do it. There is community called Nigton...

JG: Over in Trinity County.

BW: ...yes, and that was their biggest thing. They liked to play baseball over there and they had some guys that could throw the ball and hit the ball. We would go over there and we would put a little money in the pot, you know, maybe as much as \$20 and that is a lot of money and we would put that money and go over there and play them. Sometimes we would win and sometimes we would lose.

JG: Now is this baseball or softball?

BW: No, this is baseball, everything was baseball. Softball is where you are talking about over there with the W.O.W. That was not baseball that was softball.

JG: Right. Is this the Dirty Sox we are talking about?

BW: The Dirty Sox, yes.

JG: And that was a baseball team?

BW: Baseball team.

JG: And you were the manager?

BW: Yes, that was my baseball team.

JG: Did you play also?

BW: I was just fixing to get to that. Yes, I played right field in softball, but I didn't play much in the baseball but anyway, I played and we went over there and only had nine guys and we went over to Nigton to play them because they had 200 bucks they wanted to use and we didn't have that kind of money. We went over there and we managed the guys and I put them where I wanted to and got down to the very end and we were getting clobbered. We couldn't have won it if we...if God had put us on base we couldn't have. So anyway, I got up to bat and I hit it hard and I hit it over the second baseman's head

and I ran and I was just having a good time and I slid into second base and I broke my leg.

JG: Oh no!

BW: Yes, I sure did. They didn't want to move me. I mean it broke both bones, you know, so they loaded me in the car and taken me to the hospital to get something done to it. Man, I was saying "I hurt, I hurt" and all of a sudden I heard whack. And the guy Ray Jayroe he whacked me and knocked me out. I was out for about ten minutes or longer, but they were rough, they were rough kids. I wasn't that much older than them either.

JG: Now, Angelina Chevrolet sponsored a team right, your employer?

BW: Yes, sure. I worked for them.

JG: Okay, did they sponsor for the Dirty Sox?

BW: Yes, that is the one they did. I put it together. I put the Dirty Sox together and before all that...

JG: Now what years would that have been early fifties or late forties?

BW: Oh it was in the fifties. And, before that I managed another team. You ever heard of Ralph New Oldsmobile?

JG: Yes.

BW: Well, I managed their team for them before that and they kept saying we need to get a team going and we need you to come get somebody to get some money for us so, I told the guys I was going to leave and put another team together.

JG: So, y'all played the baseball y'all played at Forester Park then?

BW: No, that is where the...

JG: The Foresters played.

BW: Yes, that is where they played. No we didn't play there we played at the school. That is it.

JG: Did the school know about y'all betting and gambling?

BW: No, they didn't. Most of those guys had young ladies too, they had girls.

JG: But, they were out of school right?

BW: Yes, you couldn't do that if you were in school. Puss Irwin, did you ever know him?

JG: Who?

BW: Puss Irwin.

JG: No not really.

BW: Coach in Lufkin, he was the one that was their baseball coach.

JG: So, you had a long insurance career then.

BW: Yes, I did.

JG: How did you get to do what you do now? You are courier now for the bank.

BW: Well, I had...

JG: Does that go back to your POW guard days?

BW: No, what happened is that Pony Express wanted to spread out. They were all in Houston and all along Interstate 10 and all that.

JG: Now what is Pony Express? You mean Wells Fargo?

BW: No, Pony Express that is it. The Pony Express name itself.

JG: And, what is that?

BW: Well, they delivered stuff like Fed-Ex.

JG: Okay.

BW: All that kind of stuff so they needed somebody up here so I went down and interviewed and they said, "well what kind of a car do you have because we want you to use your own car?" I said "I got a van." And anyway I started building routes for them. I went as far as Tyler and that was good territory and then I did one all up through Timpson and all up through Tenaha and Joaquin and came down into San Augustine and made all those different areas. I got them, I think the total was 38 banks.

JG: Just First Bank & Trust?

BW: No, First Bank & Trust never entered into it except one bank and that was Diboll.

JG: Oh okay.

BW: They didn't have those branches they have now. Those are all since I've started.

JG: Okay.

BW: Anyway, I got them I think it was maybe 42 different stops and I worked it myself for awhile and then one day after three years they called and said, "you are going to have to bring your own work in to the Feds." We were picking up and delivering work for the Federal Reserve through the banks. They said, "Well you are going to have to bring it in yourself." So, I said okay and they said, "Stop here at the office." Went down and knocked on the door of the office and nobody would answer. I said, "Well what the heck is going on." In a few minutes the guy opened the door and he said "Ben they are closing up they are going to take bankruptcy."

JG: Which bank was that?

BW: That was the whole company. I said, "well they owe me money." He said "well they are going to take bankruptcy you'll probably never get it." Anyway so, I came home and I came back the next morning I was in the bank...

JG: Here in Diboll?

BW: ...yes, and I said I'm going to ask them and see what they want to do. Jay was in his office and I knocked on his office and asked him I could come in and talk to him. He said, "yes, come on, I've been wanting to talk to you. What are we going to do about all this?" I said, "that is what I'm here for." He said "what do you mean?" I said "I'll do your work. I'll do everything I can do." Instead of doing service work I took on the banks and it was very profitable as far as I'm concerned. And, that is what I did and then I started hiring people because it became such a burden. I would be doing it until sometimes one o'clock in the morning. I would have to get it down to the Federal Reserve and maybe I wouldn't even get there until ten o'clock.

JG: Where was that?

BW: In Houston. It was it's not anymore. They have moved it to Dallas now. There is a Federal Reserve, but you can't do the stuff that I was doing with them. And that is what I done and that is how I got started. He said, "do you want anymore banks" and I said "yes, I'll take some more." He said, "Well we are going to grow." He said, "You stay with me and we are going to grow." We got fourteen of them now and there is going to be more. That is how I really got into it. I don't know whether Arthur had anything much to do with it. He was alive and kicking in that day. He wasn't bugged up like he was in the later years. He would call me and I'd go down and sit and talk to him. He would talk about God and everything else. I have the deepest respect to this day for him. If there is a man that has been on this earth that done so much I don't think he ever realized how much he really did for people, especially me. I mean that.

JG: Well, Mr. Weber I think I've asked most all the things that I had. Is there anything that you would like to add before we wrap this up? Is there anything I forgot to ask or omitted?

BW: I'm proud of what I've accomplished, little old nothing from New York, on the streets of New York, didn't have much to eat half the time. It wasn't because my mother didn't try. It wasn't anything for us.

JG: Yes.

BW: Yes, I'm proud of it. I'm proud of Lufkin. I'm proud that they accepted people like me, didn't mistreat me in any way and gave me the opportunities that they gave me. I went to school in Lufkin also. I went to Pinewoods' Business School. I did everything I could do to make myself that they would want me in this town for business or want me to work for them or something and it worked. I'm very fortunate. I'm very fortunate to be able to sit here at my age and tell you that I work every day. My record of my service is one of the things that allows me to sit here because it taught me to take care of myself. Am I preaching now?

JG: No, no. I wanted to give you the opportunity.

BW: That is what I feel like. It could never...I know there is some bad people in this world, but there is Lufkin is the most wonderful place that I could have ever sat down and ate breakfast and supper and went to bed.

JG: Thank you again Mr. Weber. I sure appreciate it.

BW: I hope I haven't been too lousy.

JG: No, no. I'll go ahead and turn this off then.

END OF INTERVIEW