

LYNN REYNOLDS

Interview 257a

April 23, 2013, at his home in Groveton, Texas

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, longtime Trinity County Commissioner Lynn Reynolds reminisces about his 36 years as a member of the Commissioner's Court. He talks about his reasons for running for commissioner, his duties while on the court, and the changes in the county and in politics throughout his tenure. He talks about taxes, property appraisal, landfills, roads, and the Deep East Texas Council of Governments. He also discusses the effect of Lake Livingston and the National Forests on Trinity County's finances and citizens.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is April 23, 2013. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm in the home of Mr. Lynn Reynolds in Groveton, Texas. We are going to do an oral history interview today. I met Mr. Reynolds at Elaine Lockhart's funeral visitation a few months ago and I kind of had a good little visit there and he had told me that he was county commissioner here in Trinity, County for I guess from '61 to '97 and so...

Lynn Reynolds (hereafter LR): Thirty six years.

JG: I think he said he was elected on the same night that Charlie Wilson was first elected to state representative and so, anyways we will hopefully talk about a lot of different things today. Maybe if we can begin Mr. Reynolds just tell us when and where you were born.

LR: I was born in Possum Walk, Texas. That is about five or six miles east of Pennington, Texas in August 25, 1930. We lived there until I was five years old and in 1935 we moved to the community of Chita, Texas and lived there for one year. We bought a place below Carlisle, Texas and I grew up there the rest of my life or most of my life and we farmed, wagons and mules and that is the way we made our living. My daddy never worked a day in public life. He always farmed and raised cattle and rooter hogs and that is the way I grew up. I went to school at Carlisle and I went to school in Groveton many years ago. The road going from our place to Carlisle was so bad it was a county road, and that was in the late forties and all that I decided that maybe someday I could be elected to county commissioner and fix that one road. That was all I was interested in, that 3 miles of road there down to our place. The other roads in my mind didn't mean anything, just that one road. And, low and behold in 1956 I decided I would run for county commissioner and at that time it was still a dirt road. It was four of us in the county commissioner's race during that time and me and the incumbent was in a run-off. His name was Bill Raspberry and they said I was too young at that time and being four of us in the race he and I got in the run-off and I believe that we run it off in August and he defeated me that time. So, I said well it wasn't no disgrace to get beat it was a disgrace to stay beat. So, I come back to Groveton on a Monday morning and told the

people I was going to run in four years again for county commissioner and I held onto that promise and I was elected in 1960 and took office in 1961.

JG: Talk a little bit about your growing up. You mentioned, you know, that you knew the road was bad and you knew there was a way to fix it and it was through county government so, talk about the Depression era and maybe the role of government and specifically Trinity County. Trinity County was always an agriculturally based, whether it was farming or timber so, if you wouldn't mind just talk a little bit more about your growing up and you know, what formed that thought process about being elected to help things.

LR: Well I knew at that time in the fifties, after I came out of the service in 1949 and I got to thinking about the county government and the process. I had been encouraged to run for state representative from some people at Carlisle, Texas where I was at and I felt like well, I did not have enough of money and didn't have the right knowledge of state government at that time, but I became interested in county government and I felt like the best government we could have in our country was local government which was formed by the county government, and my uncle being elected county commissioner in 1945 from Pennington...

JG: Who was that?

LR: My uncle.

JG: What was his name?

LR: Clifton Reynolds.

JG: Clifton Reynolds, okay.

LR: Clifton Reynolds, he was my uncle and he was elected in 1945 and he still lived at Possum Walk and when he was campaigning in 1945 he did it by horseback from house to house. He got elected then and in his 36 years as county commissioner he had one opponent and in the fifties, well...

JG: He served 36 years?

LR: He served 36 years.

JG: And that is how long you served right?

LR: Yes, so anyway, well he kind of encouraged me a little bit back in the fifties, you know, to run for county commissioner and I got to checking around and I said well to fix that one road that I been interested in I'm going to run. Back then the motor graders were pulled with "cats" and had a guy, it took two people to run a motor grader back then. You had a "cat" to pull it with and the guy on the blade back there...

JG: You mean a caterpillar tractor?

LR: Yes, a caterpillar tractor. That is the way they started out. They would come down there and they pulled all the dirt up in the middle of the road on one side and go back and pull it up on the other side and leave it there until it kind of dried out or something and then come back and spread it out. So, us with wagons and mules we had trouble getting across it sometimes and the road was so bad then it was hard to go down the road with a wagon and pair of mules. I farmed most of my life with mules and we worked the land with turning plows and cultivators and I've run cultivators and done all that with wagons and harness up the mules and wagons.

JG: Talk a little bit about working with animals, mules and farm labor. You know, my generation and certainly up through today has no concept other than what we read about. Someone whose had hands on experience just talk a little bit about that. What all was involved with doing work with animals?

LR: Well, one thing that we always did, we always had good horses and good mules, and in the morning we would get up and we always ate breakfast by a coal oil lamp and we ate supper by a coal oil lamp. We would farm and to this day I don't know how we held out or the mules held out all day plowing. We would go out and take a turning plow and turn our land over.

JG: About how many acres did you cultivate?

LR: Well we had about 40 acres that we cultivate with mules during that time. And we would take cultivators and we would plant the cotton and corn and all that stuff and then row cropping is what we did.

JG: How many acres would be cotton?

LR: Well we would have about half in cotton and half in corn.

JG: Okay, and cotton, where would you sell your cotton?

LR: Well we would haul it to Trinity.

JG: To Trinity.

LR: We would hire someone with a truck. This one guy in Carlisle had a truck that he done most of the hauling for the people in Carlisle there. We would haul it to the gin in Trinity and all of it was dirt road then, all the way. We hauled some to Onalaska to Kickapoo to a gin down there in wagon and mules and we had high frames on the wagon and we put a bale of cotton on there and go to Kickapoo. They had a gin there. Cotton wasn't bringing very much then, but we just kind of existed but we had woods full of hogs and lots of cattle and we always canned a lot of stuff and raised a big garden.

JG: Talk about your hogs. How did you keep up with your hogs?

LR: Well we had hog dogs that we worked the hogs with and we would go in the woods with and build hog pens out of logs. We would cut the logs off the company's land, back then it didn't make any difference.

JG: The lumber companies?

LR: The lumber company's land, and we would build hog pens and we had wings on the hog pens and we would pen the rooter hogs in there and vaccinate them and then in 1947 I believe that we sold the mark to a guy here in Groveton, which was a banker, for his cousin to have and they gathered over 2500 head of hogs.

JG: Twenty five hundred with y'all's mark on it.

LR: With our mark.

JG: What was your mark?

LR: A swallow fork, an under bit in one ear and a swallow fork and a hack in the other ear and that was on over 2500 head of hogs.

JG: Wow!

LR: But we run them in the Trinity River bottom and had acorns, I mean had plenty of acorns and the pecan trees were so big you couldn't put your arms around them and those hogs would get fat on those pecans and the meat would be just white as snow. We dressed a lot of hogs back then and haul them to Trinity to the grocery stores and meat markets and barbecue places back then.

JG: Describe hog killing time.

LR: In the winter time we tried to kill hogs, you know, when it was cold and we would just have a hog killing and kill about ten hogs at a time. We had a big old barrel and we would put the heads down in the barrel and scald them. That is the way we would scald them. We would take a butcher knife and scrape the hair off of them and hang them up then and gut them. A lot of times if they had a little hair left on them my daddy would take a razor and shave it off and we would wash them down before we carried them to the market. Back then we were getting 18 cents a pound is what we were getting for them. We sold a lot of hogs on foot and we got ten cents a pound for those.

JG: Who would buy them?

LR: Well the grocery stores would buy them in Trinity there and the meat markets and different people. We would sell hogs a lot of times to individuals and some of them would want to buy a half a hog and some of them wouldn't, but...

JG: How big a family did you have? Did you have brothers and sisters?

LR: Yes, there were four of us kids. I had an older sister, and myself and another brother and my younger sister. There is four of us kids.

JG: What were your mother and father's names?

LR: Winford Landrum Reynolds, she was a Landrum from Diboll.

JG: Okay, she was a Landrum.

LR: She came out of Diboll, her dad and mother, he worked at a sawmill over there in the twenties at Diboll at that lumber company so, that was my granddaddy.

JG: So, do you remember his name?

LR: Well I be!

JG: It will come to you at some point. Okay, so that was your mothers and again what was her first name?

LR: Winford.

JG: Winford.

LR: Winford Reynolds, Pat Landrum, Pat Landrum was his name.

JG: Pat, okay.

LR: He lived to be 92 years old and never was sick and died with a heart attack and fell in the floor, 92 years old. We all are connected, my mother's family is connected to Ryan's Chapel. We made that homecoming way back there. We would hire people to take us in a truck over there to the homecoming because all we had was wagon and mules and we couldn't go.

JG: Take too long huh?

LR: Yes, we would get different people to go over there and my daddy would give them some money for gas or whatever, but we made that homecoming every year. I believe it's the first Sunday in June I believe when it, the first Sunday in June.

JG: And what was your father's name?

LR: Lent.

JG: Lent, how do you spell that?

LR: L-e-n-t.

JG: L-e-n-t. Is there a story behind that name? Is it connected with the feast?

LR: Well my dad he farmed, like I said, farmed all his life and worked cattle and everything and he, like I said, never worked a day in his life in public work. He always just managed there.

JG: He always just worked on his own farm, yes.

LR: But, he had a little problem drinking and it's a bad thing to say but it's the truth and he stayed in trouble a lot during my lifetime, even when I was little. Well, he got in trouble at Possum Walk, that is how come us to leave Possum Walk, he got into some trouble and was sent to the penitentiary for five years and us four kids, my sister was just born and I was five years old at that time. I can remember it like it was yesterday him going there, but...

JG: So, you and your other siblings had to kind of take up the slack I guess in his absence.

LR: That is right, that is right. But they sent him for five years and he stayed three months and sixteen days.

JG: Oh okay.

LR: My Aunt Deely Friday, which was his aunt, they made three trips often on behalf of us kids to get him out and Ma Ferguson was governor of the State of Texas at that time and they let him out after three months and sixteen days.

JG: Where was he imprisoned, Huntsville?

LR: Ferguson Farm.

JG: Ferguson Farm, okay.

LR: While he was there he was, what do you call them...running the ferry. He would run the ferry between the Ferguson and East Town farm, and he lived down on the river in a little house they had down there.

JG: You said the ferry?

LR: Yes, they had a ferry. He run the ferry across there from East Town to Ferguson, across the river.

JG: Oh okay, across the river.

LR: So, he come out and when he come out that is when we moved from Possum Walk to Carlisle.

JG: To Carlisle.

LR: But, the bad thing about back in those days you know trouble would follow you, regardless of where you would go it would always follow you. So, he was killed in 1951, January 1951 at the age of 47 years. So, at that time I became the full support of the household at that time. My brother and sister finished that year of school and had come back the following year and started and graduated from Groveton High School. It was a pretty good load during that time, you know.

JG: Now you were in the service you said?

LR: I had just come out of the service.

JG: Just come out of service. What branch?

LR: The Mechanized Calvary, I went to Germany on that deal.

JG: In the army?

LR: In the army yes, the regular army. But, when I come back and all this went through and I kept trying to farm; I farmed a couple of years there in the Trinity River bottom lease land there and I farmed the land there and one year I made 40 bales of cotton and the next year I made about 45 bales of cotton. I would haul the cotton pickers out of Trinity. Back then you know we had to pick it and we would...I could go to Trinity and bring the hands out there and they would pick the cotton and I would haul it to Weldon. At that time I was hauling cotton to Weldon.

JG: Weldon, W-e-l-d-o-n.

LR: That is right. They paid more for the cotton during that time so, I started hauling it over there. That is where I carried my cotton to.

JG: Now who were your hands were they white and black?

LR: White and black, yes.

JG: Okay.

LR: Mostly colored people though.

JG: Okay, from...

LR: From Trinity.

JG: From Trinity, okay.

LR: I had to go to Trinity to get them and bring them back out but they was some of the best people in the world during that time. The main thing I always thrived on was being honest and they were honest and had done what they said they would do and I tried to do the same thing. So, we had a great life and farm life but it was a country way of life and then when you get out of the country way of life and come into the whole county it's all together different. But it's all kind of the same, you know, farming and building roads and stuff. We had our drainage system and the farmers had to take turning plows and all that to drain the water off the farm crops and all that so the same thing kind of work with the county commissioner.

JG: Let's talk a little bit about the early years of being a county commissioner and of course the overall context will be since you were there for 36 years obviously there was a lot of change, a lot of change in society during those years from '61 to the late '90's. So, I don't really have any particular order in which to address some of these issues, but maybe the better question would be just talk about what were some of the issues that were important in your early years. You know, you came to office in '61 so what would you, besides fixing that one road (laughter) what did you have on your agenda that you wanted to do? And, did you fix that one road?

LR: It was already fixed between the time I run the first time and I was elected in 1960 and sworn in '61 it became a farm to market road.

JG: It took away your whole campaign platform.

LR: That is right. The best thing that ever happened to our local government and our local counties, small counties, was Dolph Briscoe and Senator Colson the bill, the farm to market road bill.

JG: Farm to market road bill.

LR: I mean that brought us out of the mud and put us on highways and got away from old dirt roads that you would bog down on. But...

JG: Talk about some of the specific roads. What were some of the earliest farm to market roads in Trinity County?

LR: The earliest roads were going to the Friday Community, in that area and a road going from Groveton out five or six miles on the Carlisle to Chita Road out of Groveton here and the road coming out of Trinity which is the 356 road, farm to market road.

JG: Okay.

LR: It come down and what they would do is build part of the road one year and four or five years they may build another section. The job that the commissioners court had in the beginning of my time and in later years too, is the court designated each commissioner designated what farm to market road he would like to see the state build. And we had four commissioners and during this time we had, they done the traffic on it and done all this and then the state would really pick the road that had the most traffic and the most need they would build that one. So that is the way all the farm to market roads got to be was the commissioners court, it come through the commissioners court over their recommendations and that is the way we got started. One time a commissioner would have a road that really needed traveled and bus routes and all this and that was the road we always tried to work on first. The commissioners would always give in to the other commissioner or something because of a school bus route. And the school system was one thing we were really interested in as a county commissioner. One of the hardest things that I had was when lake Livingston came in, those fly by night subdivisions would come in and build subdivisions and pull up dirt roads in there and may put a little gravel on it or do something and the school bus would go to bogging down on those roads and it wasn't the county commissioner's responsibility, but due to the voters that were living in there and the school superintendents that we had here in Groveton they would talk to you and try to get you to fix those roads. That became our number one priority, was getting the school buses to school and our roads, and that is the same way on the farm to market roads.

JG: And you still had the county school system then for a large part. Was Groveton already independent by this time?

LR: Yes.

JG: Groveton itself was?

LR: Yes, it was an independent district in the sixties, back early it wasn't, but it was independent.

JG: How many county schools were still around in the early sixties?

LR: All the small schools, Carlisle School and all the local schools had done gone. We had Trinity School and Groveton School and Pennington School had already come into Groveton too. We had Centerville and Apple Springs. We had four school districts in the county.

JG: But there were still some county schools that the county managed?

LR: No, not at that time in the sixties.

JG: Oh okay, all of them had become independent.

LR: All of them had become independent.

JG: Consolidated.

LR: Consolidated into the Groveton Schools, but they had a lot of routes, you know, that the road was bad during that time.

JG: For the school buses?

LR: For the school buses yes.

JG: So, the county worked pretty close with that even though as you described there was a little overlap of legal responsibilities, but at the same time that is what the public perceived or expected.

LR: Yes! Well, another thing that we...when I first run for commissioner there wasn't no contractors in Trinity County that would help people, you know. And my person that I defeated, he helped everybody. Now he was a real politician and his name was Bill Raspberry.

JG: How do you spell that last name?

LR: Raspberry.

JG: Raspberry, okay.

LR: He helped everybody. I mean, regardless of who they was he helped them and he was hard to beat, that is why I had to make two runs at it. But he taught me some lessons back in those days, that you need to try to help the people although you're bending the law, and all Trinity County and all the commissioners, if we passed by a person's driveway and they were bogging down in it we would fix it. And I kept doing that down through the years you know, trying to help people you know. But they finally have gotten now where a commissioner, you can't do it at all. You can't do it at all but back then we were trying to help the people. All my time as commissioner I counted myself as a servant to the taxpayers of Trinity County and I always counted that the equipment that we operated belonged to the taxpayers and it was theirs, it wasn't mine. I was the overseer of it. I was their servant and I mean when they complained I tried to be there to take care of them. We done a lot of work that was not lawful say in Houston or somewhere like that you know, but being local and being a small county, all the county commissioners tried to do the same thing, you know. We tried to help people by using the county equipment. But when we started out though my salary was \$3750 a year, I

brought home \$312 a month and had I not of run for commissioner four years earlier and was defeated I would have quit because at that time I had three kids and bringing home \$312 a month or \$290 was what my paycheck was every month. But, my wife got a job and we held on and I just kept working and I had a few cattle.

JG: And tell for the record your wife's name?

LR: Velda Wayne.

JG: Velda Wayne and she was here earlier telling me that she had went to school with Charlie Wilson in Trinity. Maybe we can hear a little bit more about that later, but anyways I'm sorry, continue on. You were talking about the timing of you becoming commissioner and take home pay and things like that.

LR: Well the first time that we...the first when I was elected the county furnished the truck you drove and I bought my first truck, cost \$2000 without any taxes on it or anything. It was a Chevrolet truck and I drove it for four years or longer. Our gasoline during that time didn't have any state tax on it or anything so we were buying gas at eighteen cents a gallon.

JG: Eighteen cents a gallon!

LR: That is what the county was paying for gas at that time in 1960, but the diesel was a little bit cheaper than that. In all my years as county commissioner I drove a county truck. Now then if I was still commissioner I would still be driving county truck because now then the commissioner buys their own trucks.

JG: They get an allowance?

LR: They get an allowance and which that runs up into pretty good money but you can buy a truck on that allowance, you know, if you wanted to, you know, but I always figured I could save money for the county by driving a county truck because I felt like I could operate it cheaper than I could my own. The allowance would be more than what I was doing for the county, you know, but we had to be conservative back then because we were depending on the federal forest funds and our lateral road money; we got a little money out of lateral road money, then we got the registration fees from the trucks and cars, you know, and it was split four ways. All the funds were split four ways.

JG: What were the four ways to the different precincts?

LR: The different precincts.

JG: To the commissioners.

LR: Yes, and we got off into where that some of the commissioners, a couple of us, had more mileage than the other two and we had a pretty good battle in the commissioners

court dividing the money. My theory was always that the money should be divided by the mileage of roads and not split just four ways down the middle. So, we finally got that done and that was a pretty good battle, but it worked out good.

JG: Talk a little bit about, you mentioned the National Forest Funds, talk a little bit about that and what that meant for a county such as Trinity, where more than half the county I guess is controlled by timber interests, lumber and paper companies and then within that too is the National Forest. Of course National Forest land is, I guess for practical purposes, is taken off the tax rolls because it's government owned, but talk about, I don't even know if compensation is the right word, about about the federal funds to compensate maybe for those National Forest lands. What is that exactly?

LR: Well the government bought this land back in the thirties and I did know how many acres they owned in Trinity, County but it's a big portion of Trinity County, it and the timber companies too. And what happened, their sales we got 25% of the money.

JG: Of whose sales?

LR: Federal forest.

JG: Federal forest.

LR: Federal forest gave us 25% of the money.

JG: So whatever timber they harvested...

LR: We got 25% of it.

JG: ...you got 25% of it.

LR: We got 25% and it was divided between the county and the schools. The school got half of it and we got half of it.

JG: So, you each got twelve and a half percent.

LR: Each got twelve and a half percent so that is the way it was divided and the precincts would divide it out equally you know during that time frame.

JG: Was that considered fair to the locals?

LR: Well at one time when they were selling timber it was fair and we was getting along pretty good and then the, I don't know if it was the bird watchers I would call them, they come in and the red headed woodpeckers, they found some nests in the federal forest land and they shut it down. I mean the timber sales were almost to nothing. We didn't hardly get any money out of it those years, and DETCOG had done formed and all.

JG: The Deep East Texas Council of Government.

LR: They had formed at this time and I was part of that deal.

JG: You were showing me earlier where you were a founding member of DETCOG.

LR: Yes, and we all got together and we decided we needed to do something about the woodpeckers and a group of us got together and went to Washington D.C. and DETCOG paid most of the way for us to go there. There was some timber men and several commissioners went up there. I think there was about ten or twelve of us went up there and met with Agriculture Department.

JG: Who was that?

LR: Agriculture Department that was over the timber and over the land and all of this. I made a talk before that committee and I did know the guy from South Texas was chairmen of that committee, Delajosh or something. I can't remember it's been so long ago but, I stood up and made a talk before that committee and told them what the red headed woodpeckers had done to Trinity County. They had put an area around the nest 200 acres and we felt like that was just too much land you know taken out and they wasn't marking the timber and they wasn't trying to sell no timber to the Forest Service because they were scared of the bird watchers I called them, you know. But, they backed off a little bit and started selling a little more timber but I mean for a few years there we were in bad shape in Trinity County because that was what we were depending on.

JG: And what years would those have been roughly?

LR: That had to be in the eighties.

JG: Eighties, okay, that is what I thought.

LR: Yes, early eighties.

JG: Any particular people in mind that stand out in your memory as influential during that time of people say with the locals of the national forest here or environmental groups? Was Mr. Courtney for the Forest Service?

LR: Yes, I knew him.

JG: He was over it, yes.

LR: Yes, I knew him, yes. They all were doing the best they could. They were trying to help the counties. When DETCOG was organized we had a little bit more influence with the different organizations and we drifted along there and getting by pretty good and Walter Diggles, you know Walter Diggles?

JG: Walter Diggles?

LR: Yes.

JG: D-i-g-g-l-e-s.

LR: Yes, he is the best thing that ever happened to DETCOG because I mean he was honest and he wanted to help the rural counties.

JG: He is still over it isn't he?

LR: He is still over it and he is still a good friend of mine. He has done a wonderful job trying to divide the money out and trying to get the projects set up and I served on that board I don't know, five or six years as grant committee....

JG: On the DETCOG board.

LR: ...the DETCOG board to serve there. We were trying to help people in the rural areas with their water and sewage and our water tank here in Groveton came through DETCOG, part of that grant we got here in Groveton. I was sitting on the board at that time when we got that. But, we all tried to work together and every two years during election of the new state officers we would always go to Austin and Walter was a big part of that, you know, getting everything set up and the Deep East Texas Council of Government. I served as president two years of DETCOG, I mean of North East Texas Judging Commissioners Association so, we all worked together but it was a lot of changes during those times. A lot of changes, people didn't realize how far we've come from where we started. But, it was so many different commissioners and judges have changed down through the years while I was on the court.

JG: Were you ever approached or did you ever consider running for judge yourself?

LR: Yes, and I was offered a sheriff job one time. We had a sheriff that was doing a good job and he resigned the job and they wanted to appoint me as sheriff. I had been on the court I don't know five or six, maybe two terms, something like that and they said we will give you a hundred dollar a month raise if you will take it. I thought about it and I said no I better stay where I'm at. I can help more people by being county commissioner.

JG: Yes.

LR: And, that is what my job was to try to serve the people.

JG: What about judge, being judge?

LR: Well they thought about it. I've been encouraged to do that too several times but, I always got along good with all the judges. You know on a commissioner court you have got to have two votes and then the county judge and that is the way it works and it

worked pretty good for Trinity County. Our hardest job was when a person resigned or quit a job before his term was up it was our job to appoint the replacement and we would replace everybody except the commissioner. When a commissioner resigned or quit it was the county judge's responsibility by himself which, I was proud of that because I put all the load on him.

JG: We just had that in Angelina County.

LR: I was reading that. But, we always had good judges and most of them worked for the county but my theory always was being conservative. We didn't have much money and being conservative was the main thing. We had, like I said, we worked with probably twelve or fourteen different commissioners down through those years and getting their feeling and how they worked but, we started out with country folks on the court which made it real good. I started out when I went there it was a lawyer that was the judge and we ended up with a couple of lawyers being judges which worked out all right. It was a lot of changes but during tax season was another thing that we had a lot of problems with. In the sixties when we started out the commissioners court was the board over all the taxes and every year well we would...

JG: Like the appraisal board?

LR: We were the appraisal board.

JG: So there wasn't an appraisal district with its own, y'all were it?

LR: We were the appraisal district.

JG: You were the appraisal district as well?

LR: That is right! We would go up there and it would be five of us...

JG: Of course that affected everybody, the schools also huh?

LR: Yes, but we were the appraisers over the whole county so, we would meet up there and the tax-accessor would meet with us and the commissioners all and the judges and we would get there at nine o'clock and stay all day. And, it would take us about a week to go through all the taxes and we would take them one at a time and we would look at them and see if the taxes we thought was right and if we thought it was too cheap or too high, whatever, we would lower it. We would cite them, you know we had our way of citing the people to get them to come in, you know.

JG: Like a citation?

LR: Yes, we would send out a citation and the tax-accessor would do this. He would send out a citation. When I started on the court I will venture to say it was not a house in Trinity County that was valued over \$1500. I mean that was the highest price and most of

them was around \$500 to 8 or \$900 and some of the houses were \$250 was what they were paying on taxes. We would go through it and every year we would go up on the taxes a little bit and I remember one time in later years we went up on the people and boy they raised sand so, we had enough money the following year so we cut them back down and knocked two percent off the taxes the following year so, we rocked on two or three years and we raised them back to where they were and the people were so unhappy because we had raised the taxes. It's hard to deal with them on them taxes. But we done that for years and all the paper companies, Temple and Southland all those people come in, you know, the railroads and the pipelines, we cited all those on the taxes and they would come in and explain to us and all. We would sit there for weeks at a time going through all that and then they would all come back in again and we would meet again. So, we spent a lot of time doing that but my first four years as county commissioner I was just a road hand. I had worked all my life and I had my work clothes on and had my lunch bucket, I run a motor grader and drove a truck, a dump truck.

JG: Hands-on huh?

LR: Hands-on, nearly four years and a guy run against me and got a good many votes and I said well I'm doing it wrong. That is the truth. I said I'm doing it wrong. I said I need to pull my work clothes off and put on better clothes and go to campaigning and be amongst the people, so that is what I did. Even the highway patrolmen stopped me for driving too fast with a dump truck. (laughter) We was always in a hurry, but we managed and I went in the job enthused about being county commissioner because I had come a long way. And the Lord had blessed me. I mean he had blessed me by having an opponent every year. From the time I run all those years I had an opponent or two, for the 36 years but my last four years I didn't have an opponent. At first they said I was too young. I mean they harped on that for years, I was too young and then they got to harping on too old so, I never did get it just right.

JG: You can't please the public can you?

LR: When I quit, decided to retire, Tiger Worsham, Tiger Grover Worsham had worked for me for fourteen years.

JG: Grover Tiger?

LR: Grover Tiger Worsham, and he is still county commissioner now, but when I hired him he worked and got the first paycheck, we paid by the month then, so much a month and he looked at that check and he said "Lynn, I hate to tell you but I can't be here next month, I've got to find me another job." I said, "well, whatever." He stayed another month and he stayed another month and all the time he is saying for about six months, "I can't stay here. I can't feed my family on this." He stayed 14 years and he is the county commissioner today and he has been there since I retired. But the county was in operation, my Uncle Clifton Reynolds, he got into building an airport for Trinity County. All the county commissioners worked together to build that airport.

JG: When was that?

LR: It was in the seventies.

JG: The seventies okay.

LR: Late seventies I believe it was.

JG: How did you obtain the land?

LR: We got it through the Federal Forest.

JG: Okay, from the government.

LR: From the government.

JG: Okay.

LR: We got it through the government and Charles Wilson was part of that getting all that land and stuff. The county went out there, they cut all the timber off of the area, and the county went out there and dug all the stumps up and that was a big job so.

JG: About how many acres was it?

LR: I done forgot off hand.

JG: That is alright.

LR: I would say 25 or 30 acres there but they keep it up now and planes come in, private planes, and the federal forest they fly in, you know.

JG: Okay, the U. S. Forest Service?

LR: Yes, the U. S. Forest Service, they use it.

JG: Okay, talk a little bit about Lake Livingston. You mentioned it briefly in passing earlier but what did that mean? How did people view it when it was talked about, discussed, in the works and then maybe perceptions at the time versus how it's played out today? Is there any change in the way people perceived it? How did you first hear about a proposed Lake Livingston?

LR: I done forgot how it came about but the City of Houston was interested in finding a place to get more water for the City of Houston. They had several meetings. I went to several of the meetings during that time prior to this.

JG: As a county commissioner?

LR: As a county commissioner, yes.

JG: So early sixties.

LR: Yes.

JG: I think they started construction in '66 or somewhere in there.

LR: Yes, they built the dam in '68 or started filling up with water in about '68 but it started in the late '67 or somewhere along '66. They were talking about the land and stuff and what they were going to do and the farm to market roads running through the lake and they had to build all those new, you know.

JG: How did the locals feel about getting their land taken?

LR: Well they were unhappy. They were unhappy because they weren't paying anything for the land. I mean some of the best farm lands in East Texas was that Trinity River bottom. They got to paying them I don't know \$200 an acre or \$150, something like that, some of them nearly nothing. But they were unhappy about it, but they staked it all off and told people where they were going to put the borders and all that. I have a place that is in the lake and I was going to lose all my old home place down at Carlisle and I was pretty sick about that and they had the stakes there where the water was going to come and everything and going to cover it all up there, you know. They got to checking the dam, the foundation for the dam and they couldn't find a solid foundation, so they moved back down towards Coldsprings. I was involved in all this when it was taking place. I was really watching it and they moved it back down the river a few miles, I've done forgot how many miles it was, a good many miles down the river towards Coldsprings. When they did that a lot of the land around Carlisle and that area there it took it all to save the land. So, I was happy about that.

JG: You were happy about moving the dam location, yes.

LR: What the City of Houston did, they built the dam, built all the highways, changed all of those on both sides of the river.

JG: The City of Houston did?

LR: The City of Houston did.

JG: Okay.

LR: But they have the obligation, they bought ten foot of Lake Livingston. The top ten foot of the water belongs to Houston.

JG: Top ten feet.

LR: Top ten feet.

JG: No matter what the level is?

LR: That doesn't have anything to do with it.

JG: Okay.

LR: Ten feet, they can draw it down ten feet. Well, we looked at the map when they drew it down ten feet and you would have to have field glasses around Onalaska and that area through there to see the lake. It would all be back in the river you know, and part of that land through there.

JG: Pretty shallow huh?

LR: Yes, pretty shallow, yes but they put that big bridge. I was there when they built that big bridge.

JG: The 190 bridge?

LR: Yes that 190 bridge at Onalaska.

JG: Yes sir.

LR: I was there when they started leveling it off. There was a cow pasture there and I knew the guy that had the ranch there and he had it all leased. It brought life back to Trinity County and to Polk County, San Jacinto County because it brought a lot of people in; on the weekends the population of the county would double nearly.

JG: And you mentioned earlier when you were talking about the school bus routes, developments along the lake and stuff it brought in more people and stuff so it brought in more people.

LR: More people, more kids.

JG: So as far as population growth it might have been the only thing that made population growth for the whole county huh?

LR: That is right. Those people, you know, they come in here a lot of them on the weekends and build cabins and stuff on the weekend.

JG: Weekend places.

LR: Then they came here and retired and that is where the politics came involved (JG: Okay.) because they came out of Houston and different places and they expected the

commissioner to pave the roads and we didn't have enough money to maintain the main roads much less pave the subdivision roads. They wanted us to take them over you know. We had some battles over that but everybody got along pretty good. But the hardest job for any commissioner is to be elected around the county seat because when you are there everybody from the county comes into the county seat and you hear everybody's problems from all over the county at the county seat.

JG: Right. So you were the commissioner for Groveton and surrounding areas?

LR: Yes, I went into Trinity one time in the redistricting. We got started redistricting you know, and the population and my precinct went all the way from here to Trinity, downtown Trinity. I had a box over there in Trinity at one time for four years but it was hard because the people over there was different than what they are over here. But one thing my father-in-law told me when I first was elected he said, "son get in the middle of the road and go straight down it because it's no difference to the voters on the left hand side of the road than they are on the right hand side, treat them all alike because there is no difference in them." That is the very words he told me and I tried to follow that deal because one year, one term, people vote against me the next time they vote for me, one year they're against me. When you run twelve or thirteen people in that length of time their family, you know, they grew up here. And after every election I never said a word, everybody voted for me. I was everybody's commissioner and I stayed that way down through the years. Like I said, I enjoyed it, helping people.

JG: Talk about, you mentioned a lot of years hunting at Boggy Slough the club there, just talk about that a little bit.

LR: Well in 1960 was the first time I was ever invited there. I'd been elected the new commissioner.

JG: Okay, so you were invited because you were going to be county commissioner?

LR: Commissioner yes.

JG: Who invited you, was it Clyde Thompson?

LR: Dave Kenley.

JG: Dave Kenley, okay.

LR: Dave Kenley. It come through Dave Kenley because they had a place here in my precinct.

JG: Right.

LR: Dave and Ed, I don't know if you knew him.

JG: Yes sir, I knew that Mr. Kenley too.

LR: But Ed Kenley he was a good guy and I got in, he invited me up there. What was so bad about it one way my guy that I defeated he was there too. So, we were both there at the same time.

JG: Both had guns. (laughter)

LR: Yes we both had guns. (laughter) But back then we had just a bunk house type of deal there and all of us slept in the same room. We had a big old pot belly heater back there and we stayed in that and slept on bunks. And I started then and I was invited every year after that my whole term.

JG: So for 36 years.

LR: 37 years I was there.

JG: 37 years.

LR: 37 years there and that is where I got acquainted with Mr. Temple, Mr. Arthur Temple.

JG: Arthur Temple, Jr.

LR: Yes, well it was the old man.

JG: Describe the first time you ever met him.

LR: Well, it was at Boggy Slough.

JG: Okay.

LR: It was at Boggy Slough the first time I ever met him. He was good to support the Nutrition Center when it come in down here in Groveton and different things through that organization, you know. But he was good to Trinity County and he was a common person. He was a people's person kind of like Charles Wilson, he was a people person. Everybody liked him. If they ever met Arthur Temple they always liked him because he was a fair guy. I enjoyed a lot of hunts up there. They finally got it and got it built nice you know and added a new dining room on and all this and got it fixed up nice. But they were pretty strict up there back in those early days there was a lot of commissioners there pretty wild.

JR: Really?

LR: Yes, a lot of them was pretty wild but everything, nobody ever got hurt there. They would shoot the guns off there at the camp and boy that was the wrong thing to do.

JR: How many times would you get invited? Would it be for a particular hunt? I mean, when you were invited was it like county commissioner's week or something like that?

LR: Yes, they picked out counties and we would be with Houston County or different counties, Polk County.

JG: Okay, so it would be for a weekend hunt?

LR: Yes, it would be for a weekend hunt or it may be in the middle of the week. It could be anytime.

JG: Okay, anytime, okay. So it was an annual thing for a deer hunt.

LR: Yes, for a deer hunt but all the commissioners in about three or four counties would meet there and we got acquainted with all of those and down through the years I met all the commissioners and now they are all different, you know. From time to time every four years there was always so many different ones there but.

JG: Who was the keeper of the lodge there in those early days? Do you remember anything about who?

LR: I've done forgot those names.

JG: How was the hunting?

LR: It was good. When we first started the deer was small. They hadn't been taken good care of but you could drive through there and see 30 or 40 deer driving through the pasture but they were all small.

JG: All small.

LR: Well in later years they started feeding them and growing them and they got to be some good deer there then. I never was much of a hunter. That is the only hunt I would go on and then the Southland, well St. Regis, they started having a lodge down here on Brushy Creek. They had 25,000 acres there that the people hunted on there so the commissioner in later years, we were invited down there.

JG: A similar thing there huh?

LR: They had a nice lodge on Kickapoo Creek and their officers would come out and we would meet them. We all just kind of worked together.

JG: Do you remember, this is going back a ways and even maybe before your time as a commissioner, but certainly the Boggy Slough, North Boggy and South Boggy, both was under fence going back even to the 1910's. As a long time resident of Trinity County and

your family lived here a long time what...just comment on that, closing the woods even before the open range was closed, but some of these timber companies, you mentioned being able to run your hogs free, now I know on Boggy Slough they stopped that in the '10's and of course there is...we've heard stories and some of the things that are in the records but just comment on that if you would, particularly the Boggy Slough area and then maybe in general just lumber companies in general and how that, not necessarily lifestyle but that culture change where, you know, someone pretty much had free run of the woods if it was getting hogs or whatever and then all of sudden now you can't do that anymore.

LR: Well it was hard. A lot of people in that area complained about the high fence and a lot of people...

JG: Basically keep out!

LR: ...yes, keep out and they didn't like that you know. But like I said that fence has been there for years and a lot of people...

JG: I think about 1913 is when they first built it, talking about Boggy Slough.

LR: They had a lot of poachers even in the sixties and all. (Is that your phone?)

JG: No, you want me to pause this? (phone ringing)

LR: But, back to the open range they had blocked out the cattle people for years and years on that. (phone ringing again)

JG: You can get that if you need to. [recording paused and restarted] We are back now.

LR: (talking to his wife): The phone is over there. That was Gary. I'll call him back after awhile. No during those years when the open range it had a big effect on the people in Trinity County and naturally I was always for open range because I always had it. All my life we had free range of everywhere, all the company land and everywhere.

JG: It didn't matter which company just...

LR: The company didn't make any difference, so we had open range there but what hurt me was when I was elected commissioner, a few years after I was elected commissioner, well they voted in the stock law in Trinity County.

JG: Yes sir.

LR: And that happened to be my whole area, and what cost the county a lot of money during those years, I always tried to help the people that had cattle because I was for open range all those years, you know. The next thing I guess you would put on there they were voters and we built cattle guards. We started into building cattle guards for all the county

roads that was coming into a highway or into the city or wherever it might be. We built wooden cattle guards and we even paid for some state cattle guards to be built in our precinct on Hwy 355 going out of Groveton there is cattle guards there and different farm to market roads had cattle guards built across them because the state would build them and we paid part of the cost on them, those cattle guards and they stayed there for years and years until they voted to close the range, you know. But all the people around Carlisle, Chita and Sebastopol and all those years and all down around Woodlake area and Possum Walk area and all that was open range. And I mean the people were unhappy when that came in that run livestock but they sent an organization, a Cattlemen's organization to Chita down there and they built a fence from Chita, Texas all the way to Groveton along the highway to keep the cattle from getting on the highway. But back in the early days when the farm to market roads first come out there people would feed the cattle up and down the highway. They would take sacks of cake or whatever it was and pour it up and down and highway. There wasn't much traffic in the sixties during those times you know, and in the wintertime people would feed the cows on the highway.

JG: On the side of the highway huh?

LR: In the middle of the highway on the concrete, I mean on the asphalt right down the middle of the road.

JG: Oh, they didn't want to get their truck dirty huh? (laughing)

LR: And people complained about that.

JG: Oh wow!

LR: But, it's been a fun ride in one way being county commissioner and seeing how people change down through the years and how the government has changed, but like I said the next best government is going to be the county government because they are the closest to the people. One time years ago they voted to have a unit system, road system in Trinity County and I had kind of agreed to that to one point and we already had the guy picked out to be our road overseer and all this and we had a state judges commissioner meeting...Squatty Lions. I don't know if you've heard of him or not out of Houston.

JG: What is his name?

LR: Squatty Lions.

JG: Squatty Lions.

LR: Yes, he stayed there about 48 years in the city of Houston and he was a Spanish type of guy but a good guy. I mean I just wanted to be around people like that when I was first elected you know, because he had some good ideas. But, he made a talk at a judge and commissioner's state convention and he told the little counties, in Houston at that time they had just one commissioner First Precinct over that area and he said, "don't y'all

ever go to a road and bridge unit because you hire an administrator and he takes care of all your roads and when you do that you are taking the responsibility away from your commissioners.” He said, “in Houston we are big and we spend a lot of money, y’all in local areas and got small counties. Don’t do that because y’all need to be taking care of the people.” And that is what we did. We come back and I mean I was against it from then on, the road and bridge because of Squatty Lions, because it just would not work. Polk County, you may have it on record somewhere where they went to a unit system several years ago and it wasn’t but two terms or something like that until they changed all that and went back where each commissioner tends to his own precinct. Although we are county commissioners and we tend to county business, but when it comes to your roads you need to be responsible for them yourself and that is the county commissioner’s job to do that and not turn it over to somebody else. But out of these meetings I went to in state conventions and North East Texas Judges Commission Association we did a lot of good in our area. We started out with about 14 or 15 counties but now I think they are down to 12 counties over the service now and Walter Dickens is still there and doing a good job. They pick some good judges and good commissioners, you know. Back then one term it would be a commissioner hold it and the next term it would be a judge. When we started that is the way we set it up. I was there when it was being set up during that time. It was hard to get the people together though to get them pulling together you know, because it’s hard to get them in attendance but Walter he would pull everybody together pretty good.

JG: You’ve already said that there weren’t any county schools, there wasn’t like a county school superintendent during your years so I know you didn’t have any direct involvement in it, but talking about schools in particular, but say the sixties and seventies of course the whole nation, especially the south, was desegregation, desegregating the schools and integrating. Can you comment any on Trinity County’s experiences with that and living here in Groveton about Groveton in particular or anything you care to share about that?

LR: Well during the...when they integrated the schools here in Groveton one of my best friends, Glen Ward, he and I got acquainted in 1956, both of us the same age and he kind of helped me during those years pulling the voters to the polls you know, getting them to go vote. He had a daughter that was real smart and come from a good family and everything and she started to Groveton School and that was before segregation really came in. She was right there then.

JG: Was she black?

LR: Yes.

JG: Okay, I just wanted to make sure. And, what was her name? Her last name was Ward?

LR: Yes.

JG: W-a-r-d?

LR: Yes, Glen Ward's daughter is who it was.

JG: Glen Ward's daughter, okay.

LR: Yes, and she was the first one in the Groveton School.

JG: To teach or a student?

LR: Student.

JG: So she integrated...

LR: She integrated to the Groveton School yes. They had a colored school right down here right out of town here and right in town rather, but he got her started and she was one of the first one to integrate into the school and no problems. It wasn't many years until they started all, you know, close the school down and integrate everybody. They never had any problems that I knew of, everything worked out real good.

JG: You are talking about Groveton?

LR: Yes, Groveton. I don't know about the other years but Groveton worked in real good because they were all country folks and we all here in Groveton was country folks too, you know. But the superintendents we had during those years they worked right along with them and the teachers all worked along with them and they worked real good during those years. But they had their own school down there and we had ours here. They had their own football team, we had our own football team. They had their own band, we had our own band. But everything worked out good when we integrated together. We had a few old timers that didn't think it was right and didn't want it to happen but after the first few school years, no more problems. The school has more problems now or down in later years or back in the middle of my term, a subdivision was coming in and the kids they will buy a 200 foot lot by 50 something like that and have two or three kids and put them on there and expect them to stay there or catch the school bus and go to school. They had a little problem out of those kids, you know, because they just wasn't the type that wanted to come to school. They come from families that didn't correct them. A lot of them would leave here and walk home and all that.

JG: Kind of related to the schools talk about Groveton football. You had children that went to Groveton schools I guess so, any big rivalries?

LR: Yes, Trinity and Groveton!

JG: Trinity and Groveton.

LR: My son just called me and he played on the Groveton Indians football team and he played the nose guard on defense.

JG: What year did he graduate?

LR: Baby what year did Gary graduate? (Mrs. Reynolds: '78, I believe.)

JG: '78 so, Groveton and Trinity were pretty big.

LR: Yes, White Rock Creek, didn't want you to cross it during football season.

Mrs. Reynolds: Groveton and Trinity, Groveton and Alto, Groveton and Corrigan, those three always wanted to beat Groveton.

LR: Yes, but back then we had some good football players and won a lot of games and went to state twice, won state twice.

Mrs. Reynolds: In '89 and '90 I think.

LR: Yes but we had some good ball players there then.

JG: Let's see here what I've got. Did you know Harold Odom? He wrote those books *Over on Cochino* and *Cecil Creek Memories*.

LR: Yes, that was Wayne Odom, the commissioner out there, his kinfolks.

JG: Yes, Harold Odom, those are two really good books. I enjoyed those. He talks about I guess it would be the ten's and the twenties growing up about probably very similar to your experiences as a child. Growing up he was very attached to the animals.

LR: Yes.

JG: He wrote very fondly of the animals and I know that is the biggest thing I think that the younger generation today doesn't understand is any animal is almost a pet and a pet only, especially dogs, and in the older days, several generations back the animals provided a necessary purpose, you know. Being a pet wasn't high up on the list but he might have been one of the early ones more like today where he was fondly attached to all their farm animals, you know.

LR: I'm almost the same way now. We always milked cows, had our milk cows, we always milked cows night and morning all my life down through the years, before we caught the school bus and all we done all that after we got older. But what I remember is being a small kid five years old at Chita, Texas is that the government started buying cattle and killing cattle and slaughtering cattle. (JG: yes.) And I can remember my daddy, we had some people around Chita, Texas and that area around there, Carlisle, that would pick out their old cows and they would give them \$5 a head. I believe that is right, \$5 a head for those cows and the guy would give them a check, write them a government check for the cows and they would take them out there and pile them up and pour kerosene oil over them. I remember that like it was yesterday and all the family could get

off one of them they would cut a piece of the ham off or something like that. You couldn't give the meat away or anything it had to be strictly for the family. And that was in 1934 and '35. And...

JG: You can still remember that at four or five years old?

LR: I can remember that, yes, slaughtering those cows during that time. It is hard to believe you know that something like that would happen. And then they come along a few years after that and we started dipping cows on account of the ticks you know. Had a regular dipping vat at Carlisle there and we would pen all our cattle and run them through the dipping vat and charge it our self. The government did it for a long time and we started doing it ourselves with a dipping vat there. I would stand at the end of the chute when they come out of there and put green paint on their hip when they come out through there. I was about ten or eleven years old when I was doing that during those years.

JG: That meant they had been dipped?

LR: Been dipped yes.

JG: Green paint.

LR: People would go together and dip the whole herd you know. One time we charged a vat and people got together in Carlisle and bought all the dip and stuff and charged that vat. A cow would jump off in there and come out on the other end.

JG: And the government was kind of forcing people to do that as well?

LR: Yes, they forced them. That was a forced deal but we quit it right after they quit forcing people but we kept it up a couple of years after that.

JG: Charlie Harbor had told me, he was born in '20 so he was ten years older, so I guess he would have been 14 or 15, but he used to work for, as he called him, old man Kenley, Dave Kenley, he was a pasture rider for him and he has told me about that, about witnessing just the mass slaughter of all those cows and he was still kind of bitter about it.

LR: Yes.

JG: I don't think he ever forgave FDR [President Franklin D. Roosevelt] for that because it was just the waste of hundreds of thousands of cows that were just killed and just wasted.

LR: That is right, but the people at Carlisle and Chita and people in those years didn't have no money at all. There wasn't no money and that is the reason they did it because there was no way. They just culled the cows out and I mean just slaughter all them old cows for no reason. If they had been used for something it would have been different, but

take a team of mules and put them up in piles and unhook them and then pour kerosene oil over them.

JG: So, how would they kill them just shoot them?

LR: Just shoot them.

JG: Just shoot them and then pile them up and burn them.

LR: Pile them up and burn them, that was it.

JG: Well that would make quite an impression on a four or five year old boy.

LR: Oh yes! Oh yes, that was bad! But we had cattle as far back as I can remember and I still got cattle.

JG: How many head to you have now?

LR: I've got forty head.

JG: Forty.

LR: I did have a hundred head but down through the years I've cut it down.

JG: How did the drought affect you the past couple of years?

LR: It cost me two years to get over it, take me two years to get over it.

JG: Did you have to dwindle your herd?

LR: Oh yes, yes, but had plenty of water but had to cut them down. If we had another one like we had two years ago I probably won't have any.

JG: My grandfather has got a few head and he has always kept them and it's always something, fence to mend or this or that, it's always something and the family said you know, "just sell them and make it easy on yourself." And, he said, "well I wouldn't have anything to do."

LR: That is what I was doing the other day when you called, was building a fence. I was building a fence the other day but always something to do.

JG: He said it keeps him busy, keeps him active just fooling with them cows.

LR: When I'm bumping up against 83; you think it's time to quit though but you got to keep going.

JG: Yes, keep active.

LR: I've had cows since I was 14 years old I've had a cow. I've enjoyed though serving the people of Trinity County. Like I said they've been good to me. They didn't want me to quit being the county commissioner and there come a time in life when after that many years, you know, it's time to do something else. If you want to enjoy retirement you need to quit in time. I think it ought to be a time not only in term limits but I think it ought to be a time on age. When a person gets a certain age I think they ought to not run anymore. When I started out my opponent was getting on up in years and I felt like he ought to quit, but he didn't quit he wanted to keep running, so when I got that age I decided I would quit.

JG: Now you said you were elected the same time Charlie Wilson was elected to state representative.

LR: Yes, John Kennedy was on the ticket too, he was elected president. Dwight Eisenhower was president when I was elected.

JG: I know your wife said she went to school with Charlie.

LR: Yes, and I knew him too.

JG: And you knew him?

LR: Yes.

JG: So, how did you know him?

LR: Well, in Trinity. I went to school awhile in Trinity and then come to Groveton.

JG: Okay.

LR: Yes, I knew him then too, back then. I knew his mother and daddy real well.

JG: And, who was his mom and dad and what did they do? You were telling me earlier so.

LR: His daddy was a CPA and he done book work for Texas Longleaf and different businesses there in Trinity and his mother was a florist there for years and years and years. I mean good people, but I tell you Charles Wilson he went to work, well he went to the Navy, went to the academy, Naval Academy and signed up for that and they took him, you know, and he went through that and he come back and he was elected to run for state representative in 1960, the same time I did. President John Kennedy was on the ticket too and he ran the same time. In Trinity County during those years there wasn't a Republican in Trinity County, and after a few years one Republican came to Trinity County. Ed Welch was his name. He worked for St. Regis for a long time and he was the

only one I knew of that couldn't vote in a Democratic ticket. He was fully Republican. I couldn't believe it back then but now all of East Texas is going Republican now, every one of them just about it. All the commissioners in our area and all around and judges and everywhere else have changed over to Republican party. I was encouraged to run on the Republican ticket several years ago before I got out of office because I knew everybody and they felt like I could be elected. I said well you can't run on a Republican ticket when all your voters are Democrats and that was (unintelligible) in precinct one.

JG: So you got out in '86?

LR: In '96.

JG: I'm sorry, yes '96.

LR: I was actually in all of DETCOG and...

JG: Yes, talk a little bit more about DETCOG. You were there in the beginning. You talked about the good that it did. How did DETCOG come to be?

LR: Well they were trying to get some areas in the state of Texas to get all the counties together through the government, the federal government would have a say in what could happen, you know.

JG: So, the council of governments?

LR: The council of governments originated from that, the council of governments came through that. And, when it was first started I was on the court then, you know, and I was 100% for it because I felt like it would bring all the people together in East Texas and we all working together could have more influence than the little people in Trinity County. We need to have the number of counties pulling together for the same purpose. Our purpose was to be better servants for the people in East Texas. And we would go to Austin we would have more clout I would say than just one county going. I've done forgot the person's name who was head of Walter. I didn't know them too well because we had just got it set up and everything but, when Walter come on the scene...

JG: You are talking about Walter Diggles?

LR: Walter Diggles, he was real enthused and energetic. He worked with all the judges and all the commissioners. He had no preference. He was in every county in our district, in our association there and we all wrapped around him and relied on him to kind of lead us and he was a great leader. That kind of pulled us all together but it's all been changed. I've been to a few of the meetings since I got out of office and they've always been the same, you know. It is an organization that has kept the same and kept the attitude to serve the people, but a lot of those years it is hard to get people to go even in Trinity County. The judge would go and I would go and we met once a month. One month we meet in one county and the next month we meet in the other. It was hard to pull the other

commissioners in some of them, you know. Some of them wouldn't even attend, you know. But part of them got to where they would attend and then it finally got to where there were more of them coming to our meetings and everything. We would meet from Center all the way down to Livingston and Trinity County, all the counties, Center, we would go everywhere you know. I was a Lions Club member then. I've been a Lion since 1971. I would miss one meeting of the Lion's Club every month going to DETCOG meeting because I was on the board or something during that time, you know. We would sit on that grant committee you know and people would come in on that grant committee and we would review and have a review of what project would poll enough for us to consider it you know. We would have sometime 12 or 14 requests a month and we would cull them out and get behind one of them you know. That is the way we did it. Walter was always a good person to go to on that, you know, and we had some good judges back in those days too that was interested in it, you know. But a county commissioner is a full time job and that is the way I tried to do it full time. I stayed with the Lion's Club forty something years. I'm still a member of it, regular.

JG: Y'all meet in Groveton?

LR: Yes, meet in Groveton every Thursday. Another thing I did down through the years, I went to all the funerals in Trinity County and different places. My wife always said I knew too many people, but I made them all, probably more than anybody in East Texas have been to but I started out when I was young doing it and I've been doing it all my life. I still do it.

JG: Where did your wife work? You mentioned that she worked.

LR: She started to work for the auto dealer here and then she worked 24 years at the First Bank here in Groveton. She worked at the bank.

JG: She was telling me that she never got involved or tried not to get involved in politics.

LR: One thing I found out in the beginning was that I was going to run the job, the commissioner's job, I never asked a person to hand out a card for me. I never put up a sign because signs don't vote. I made every house in precinct one once or twice during election time but I made a lot of them during work time.

JG: You mean house to house visits?

LR: House to house visits.

JG: Door to door.

LR: Door to door and when that subdivision came in on Lake Livingston in '68 and they started coming up there, people registering to vote, I made all those houses. I never ask nobody to help me or anything just vote for me. And, I would knock on some doors and

they would say no, they are not going to vote for me and some of them would be in that subdivision where I couldn't help them, you know. They weren't going to vote for me because I wouldn't fix that road down through there but, I would tell them it don't make any difference go ahead and go vote, I'm still going to be your commissioner. When they started putting up signs about the middle of my term, ten or fifteen years after I was in office, every time a commissioner would run against me they would get those big old 4x8 sheets of plywood and paint their names on there, put them in the back of pickup trucks, drive all over the precinct and everywhere campaigning, put them at polls, close to the polls where people could see them when they went in.

JG: And, you never did that?

LR: Never did that. Now, I can see where state needs to do it, but in a precinct I was always out there amongst the people trying to help them, you know, but I always passed out cards. One thing I've learned about it from the beginning never put your card above somebody else's, always put it below it.

JG: Now why is that?

LR: Well, that is just a habit I got into. The people back in those days they wanted you to come see them. They wouldn't vote for you unless you come see them. Some of your best friends wouldn't vote for you unless you talk to them. (laughter) That is the truth! Your best friend wouldn't vote for you because you didn't come to their house. But the houses I missed they kept the cards, that is what was amazing to me. They would leave them on the doors plum on through the election but I just wanted to let people know I wasn't above them. I wanted to be below them. They would have three or four cards there and I would go to their house I'd put mine on the bottom, never put it on top. They would say well he's been here but them other guys have been here first.

JG: Did Charlie Wilson ever come back here to do any campaigning?

LR: Very little, everybody knew him you know. He would come to our DETCOG meetings you know and make talks, you know.

JG: Like to civic groups and stuff but as far as a campaign stop or anything.

LR: Oh no, everybody knew. He helped the people now. I mean he was the people's representative. He was trying to stay there as long as I did and when he quit he said, we was at the last DETCOG meeting together he said, "I'm going to give it up to you." But we had some good times together at some different meetings and things. I went to all the V. G. Young schooling at A&M. The first schooling we went to out there, the V. G. Young Institute. Did you ever hear of that?

JG: Is that the government?

LR: Local government training school.

JG: Local government training program?

LR: Local government training, yes, V. G. Young. I went there and the first meeting I went to we ate with the Cadet's and we stayed in their barracks, lodging there on the campus. Well then a few years after that we moved to the hotel there close by but, we would have our meetings there at the hotel then. But, the first time we lined up in the hall there with the cadets and eat with them.

JG: Are there any other changes you can think of during your time? You alluded to sort of the changes in voters and how they wanted their elected officials and "I'm not going to vote for me unless you come see me," of course that has all changed today. But any other aspects during your time you saw that was a pretty drastic change from say '61 to the '80's and '90's?

LR: Well it dropped back there during part of that time it was hard to get people to go to the polls and vote. They kind of had it in their mind you going to do what you want to do. They kind of got away from politics a lot of people

JG: Just apathy, you think?

LR: Yes, that is what it was.

JG: My vote doesn't count. It's a simple matter anyway.

LR: My vote don't count, I've heard that, "my vote don't count." My saying was always was, even the people that had the signs on their yards, you know, I went to their houses too and trying to get them to vote you know. I'd try to get them, "well if you not going to vote for this guy why don't y'all split the vote and give me your vote." I said it takes two votes to beat one and I need every vote I can get, but if both of ya'll vote against me I've lost. I need one of you and I can start off even because it takes two to beat it." But it's hard to get people to go vote. They say mine don't count but it does count. It does count. It's a full time job being a commissioner and representing the people. In fact in my time the people had a lot of wants, and just don't raise their taxes. Don't raise my taxes! That was their theme, don't raise my taxes. I know when I built this house in 1962 and this is the gospel truth, Grove Café down here that is where everybody met during those years.

JG: The what café?

LR: The Grove.

JG: G-r-o-v-e?

LR: Yes, across from the court house.

JG: Okay.

LR: That is where everybody met and eat lunch you know and all and we built this house here and they said, “well looks like the county is doing pretty good they have done built you a house.” This is the very words I told them there in the café. I said, “well if it will make y’all happy I’ll put a sign out there saying property of precinct one.” I never heard anymore about it. They thought I had done got enough money to build me a house.

JG: Yes, been commissioner for one year.

LR: Yes, one year.

JG: Where did you live before building here on the highway?

LR: Well I lived down in Groveton here. I had rented a house here in Groveton but I had worked on a ranch out here for three years. I had come back to Groveton and worked on the Harding ranch.

JG: Spell that.

LR: Harding, H-a-r-d-i-n-g.

JG: Okay.

LR: Harding Ranch.

JG: Harding Ranch.

LR: I came back out there in 1958 and worked out there 3 years. I was out there when I was running for commissioner and I was making \$200 a month out there, \$50 a week and a place to stay.

JG: So you ran cattle or worked cattle?

LR: For him.

JG: For Harding?

LR: Yes, for Harding. I had my cattle down at Carlisle. He was paying me \$50 a week and I told him I was going to run for commissioner and he tried to talk me out of it. He said there is no way Lynn, you are too young. You can’t be elected commissioner in Groveton, says that is an old man’s job, they elect old people. I stayed out there for 3 years while I run and got elected in July, I believe. The run off was in July of ’60 and then I stayed there until December, well I moved to town in September and Hardwell, one of my friends, he stayed there 21 years after I left there, that I grew up with in Carlisle. I stayed out there and worked for him for \$8 a day until the first of the year and took over the commissioner job then. But we moved to Clute and I worked for Austin Bridge Company for about a year down there.

JG: Clute?

LR: Clute.

JG: C-l-u-t-e?

LR: Yes, I worked for Austin Bridge Company at the Dow Chemical Plant for a year and then I came back up here, but then we built this house here in 1962. It's been...my wife didn't want to come back to Groveton but I wanted to run for commissioner again because I felt like that is the job I could do to help the people. I had people work for me run against me. I had a guy worked for me, grew up with for ten years, good motor grader operator and he come in one morning and give me the keys and said, "I'm going to run against you." I said, "you can't be elected." He said, "yes I can." I said, "no, you can't be elected. You've worked for me for ten years, you've done a good job, no complaints whatsoever but I took all the credit for what you've done building good roads." And he didn't hardly get nowhere. In a county this small your friends are the ones to run against you and they got kinfolks too though, so it's been something. We helped the court of Trinity County, helped a lot of people and we worked for nothing to try to keep the taxes down and now the appraisal district, when it come in they wasn't going to be too big but it keeps a growing on account of when lake Livingston come in there was a lot more houses to appraise, you know. But the appraisal district in every county cost a lot of money and you got to have a lot of taxes just to pay what they are doing, you know. But it's more equal with the way they are doing it than the way we did it because we just kept it down real low for the tax payers of the county and that is the way we operated it. We was depending on the Forest Service, the government's timber check, our automobile registration and ladder road money is what we were depending on to run the county. We tried to work three or four men all the time and sometimes we couldn't even work that many but we kept everything going and the main thing to serve the people. It's hard to keep the people happy though. (laughter) Hard to keep them happy and not give them what they want because you know what? This day and time people don't know what they want and that is the truth. It's been good for the county, the people has the opportunity to vote and that is a good part about our government you know. If you don't like what a commissioner is doing, a judge, a sheriff or whatever you have the opportunity to vote him out. That is the best way to have county government. It's kind of hard being a commissioner and getting the feel of your new commissioners. When they change they come in there and want to do everything you know. They kind of have their own agenda and sometimes it's not good for the county and sometimes it is.

JG: Were any of the other precincts did they have any long term commissioners? I imagine you were the longest one in your time?

LR: My uncle was the oldest.

JG: Right, but did y'all overlap?

LR: No.

JG: No, he was before your time. But I mean during your time?

LR: No, he was there when I was there.

JG: Oh okay.

LR: We served on the court together for 20 years.

JG: Okay, okay.

LR: My uncle and nephew.

JG: Thirty-six terms but you overlapped?

LR: Overlapped the terms.

JG: Twenty of them overlapped.

LR: Twenty of them overlapped so we were there together.

JG: Did y'all pretty much vote the same way?

LR: No, no.

JG: No?

LR: We would get aggravated at one another sometime, sure would. We had our job to do and they had theirs but he was a great leader and a great commissioner, but he wasn't around the courthouse. He was out in the country. He was at Possum Walk, farm people, country folks, but it's hard to work with some of them you know. But our county judge was there when I was there, Judge Price, and he stayed there several terms. I've done forgot how many, but his brother came on the court, Dean Price from Trinity. He was elected and there was two brothers on the court for several years and an uncle and nephew on the court for several years. We was on there about sixteen years together or something like that. Time just went on but everybody was different you know. We was serving different people, different attitudes. But all I can say about Trinity County Court, we all most of the time worked real good. In the beginning of my term we didn't have an agenda. We would go out to the court house on Monday morning and we stayed there until four o'clock. If people had any complaints they came into the court. We didn't know what was going on, just different people off the streets or wherever they may be from complaining about the taxes or the roads or the cows or something else you know. We stayed there all day and didn't have no reporter there or nothing, for years. Then we finally got a reporter coming to our court meetings.

JG: For the newspaper?

LR: Newspaper.

JG: Okay.

LR: I mean we were there for years without even a court meeting, I mean a reporter or anything.

JG: What newspaper?

LR: Groveton newspaper, and sometimes Lufkin would come, in later years they would come but mostly Groveton, the Groveton News. But I mean there was years that nobody came but then after several years, a few terms, we got to where we had an agenda and a person that wanted to meet before the court, which made it a lot better. We would take care of our agenda and then we would go home. But prior to that we would go to Grove Café and eat dinner every court day, come back to the court and stay there until four o'clock.

JG: And just be available?

LR: Just be available all that time. But when we got our agenda a person had to be on the agenda to make a talk, you know, that worked out. When the other judge was gone...

JG: So y'all met every Monday once a week?

LR: No, once a month.

JG: Once a month, okay.

LR: Once a month. I think they meet twice a month now.

JG: Yes, I think Angelina County does twice a month.

LR: Trinity meets twice a month. I served as acting judge when our judge was gone. I was acting judge during those years when Price was there. He was out, he was a lawyer and he was out a lot of time so I would serve there but the only thing about being a judge you didn't have no vote. You couldn't vote.

JG: Only to break a tie.

LR: Break a tie is the only way you can vote, yes. But, we have come a long way in county government from what we was when I started. They got computers, back when I started it was all on ledgers and done with pencil and papers. All your bills and everything was on pencil and papers. We finally got an auditor; the state forced us to get an auditor which was a good thing for Trinity County. We had a good auditor there and I liked him and everybody got along good with him. He done a good job, smart, but he wouldn't go to school. They had a law elected on the commissioners you had to go to

school so many hours and he wouldn't go to the auditor school so they replaced him. The judges, the district judges hired him and fired him. We don't have anything to do with that.

JG: Well Mr. Reynolds I sure appreciate you visiting with me today. We've gone about an hour and forty five minutes or so.

LR: That is hard to believe. I got some pictures I want to show you of our court.

JG: Okay, you want me to stop this now or you think that will jog your memory of some people? Okay.

LR: When we started out at commissioner's court one thing we did the court date we all dressed up in suits. My wife seen that I had nice clothes to wear.

JG: Yes, you got a suit and a coat and tie on.

LR: Yes.

JG: Everybody is.

LR: Yes, they did.

JG: Yes, and I guess that is your uncle. I see another photograph there of a Reynolds.

LR: Yes.

JG: And Price, and Davis.

LR: And Paul Etheridge from Trinity.

JG: Etheridge, yes.

LR: That was took after I was on the court about three or four years.

JG: Three or four years, okay.

LR: Most of them people look old to some people and they said I looked too young to be commissioner.

JG: Yes, that is neat.

LR: I got a bunch of pictures here that I took down through the years.

JG: Okay.

LR: There is when I was first elected.

JG: Okay. You got your hat huh?

LR: There is my retirement party.

JG: Okay, that is in the court house there.

LR: Yes, there is where they...

JG: There is your cake. That is a big cake.

LR: Yes, that may be the same picture there. There is my daughter here on this side and my son over here on this side.

JG: Okay. And that is at your retirement huh?

LR: Yes, here is a picture, that was took during my uncles retirement. That is all my employees there.

JG: Okay.

LR: That is my employees. That is where I was making a talk...there is some retirement pictures.

JG: Precinct One commissioner for 36 years.

LR: Yes, there is the employees I had when I retired and this guy is commissioner now. He worked for me for 14 years, Tiger Worsham.

JG: Tiger Worsham, okay.

LR: That is he and I presenting a plaque to me, the same thing there.

JG: Did he come to you for some counseling?

LR: Yes, yes.

JG: In those early years?

LR: Yes, some of my family at the retirement deal. I don't know why I didn't take some. They gave me a Stetson hat for retirement.

JG: That is nice. There is Phil Graham.

LR: Yes. There is me and Charles Wilson shaking hands after he was getting ready to retire.

JG: Yes, getting in the car.

LR: There are some more pictures I've taken. I was a road hand.

JG: Putting in a culvert huh?

LR: Yes, I put in tank cars.

JG: So these were culverts made from railroad tank cars huh?

LR: Yes.

JG: Ya'll did that quite a bit huh?

LR: Yes, done away with bridges.

JG: Where did y'all get the tank cars from?

LR: Longview I think is where they came from. There is a picture where the Lion's Club recognized me.

JG: I imagine all the counties did that.

LG: Oh yes, we done away with all the bridges we could.

JG: But, I meant a lot of the counties made culverts from those tank cars.

LR: Oh yes, they did.

JG: Were there plenty of them to go to?

LR: Oh yes. Here is the commissioners I worked with on the last.

JG: Okay, and who were they?

LR: This is, he just got defeated Cecil Webb.

JG: Webb, okay.

LR: That is Dean Price.

JG: Okay.

LR: And that is the County Judge Evans, Mark Evans.

JG: Evans, Mark Evans, no I've heard the name.

LR: He got defeated too.

JG: Okay.

LR: And, that is Wayne Odom.

JG: Odom.

LR: Out of Apple Springs.

JG: So he is kin to Harold, Harold Odom?

LR: Yes, and that is me there. These two here never dressed up or nothing. Wherever they was at that is the way they dressed. Back in the early days we wouldn't have done that.

JG: Yes, had a coat and a tie huh?

LR: Yes, had a coat and tie. There is me and...

JG: Oh yes, Peyton Walters.

LR: Yes, Peyton Walters. We grew up at Onalaska together. I've knew him all my life.

JG: Yes, yes, I meant to ask you about him.

LR: Yes, he was a good guy, yes.

JG: Now he was the judge wasn't he?

LR: Yes, he was judge of Polk County for a long time and then he got to be Charles Wilson's main man.

JG: Yes.

LR: And here is a retirement party for this guy that worked for me for 20 years and this here was his 36 year retirement deal. We retired the same time. There is Dan Dominey, County Judge, congratulating Clifton when he retired.

JG: You said Dominey?

LR: Yes, Dan Dominey, he was county judge. Here is Buford Kennedy at Buford's retirement.

JG: Okay.

LR: He died a little while after that with cancer.

JG: Oh no.

LR: We had went out on a pheasant hunt out at Brushy Creek.

JG: Yes, a pheasant.

LR: There is a deer I killed out at Brushy Creek.

JG: Is that an automatic?

LR: Yes, a 30-0-06.

JG: Browning or Remington?

LR: Remington, 30-0-06, that is what I used. I'm introducing my sweetheart to the Lion's Club. Here is a picture of getting ready for a broom sale. I was on the Broom Sale of the Lion's Club for ten years.

JG: Now is all the work done on the courthouse now?

LR: Yes.

JG: It is finished?

LR: Yes, it is nice.

JG: It's just down the road. I'll have to go by there and check that out.

LR: Well I'll go with you.

Mrs. Reynolds: Our daughter works there.

JG: Oh does she, okay.

LR: This guy here has been chairman over the precinct down at Carlisle here for years and they gave him a birthday deal and I made a little talk on that. He worked for me, he and I run together for commissioner and I hired him after that. There is the way you stay elected commissioner. (laughter)

JG: (laughter) You are not kissing the babies, you're kissing the ladies. (laughter)

LR: That is the way you stay elected. They sent him a plaque deal there for the service he did. There is all the ladies I was with during that time.

JG: Drink a lot of punch huh?

LR: I mean and there is our court room and me sitting over here in the corner.

JG: Now this is an earlier one. This is the early sixties.

LR: That is when I first started.

JG: Boy y'all were right there on top of each other weren't you?

LR: I mean.

JG: Had you a little horseshoe there.

LR: We got it smaller than that now though.

JG: Oh really?

LR: Yes. I had a picture of that.

JG: So y'all had this. I guess that was the barrier nobody could get...

LR: No one could get around it. That is where people talk. They get up there and they talk.

JG: You wouldn't want them to get right in front of you maybe.

LR: This is a deal they sent me from DETCOG.

JG: Yes, well that is neat. You had a good career huh?

LR: Yes, the Lord has blessed me.

JG: Well I'll go ahead and turn this off then. Again, I just want to thank you and I appreciate you very much.

LR: You know Peyton Walters, like I said, he and I grew up together down at Onalaska.

JG: Okay, Mr. Reynolds we turned the recorder back on. He was wanting to talk a little bit about landfills. So, go ahead.

LR: Back early when I was beginning my county commissioners job the people had a bad habit of throwing their garbage in the bar ditches.

JG: Bar ditches just for the recording would be where they dig out mud and dirt for the roads.

LR: Yes, a lot of the branches that had bridges across them would drive up on the bridges and throw their garbage off into the creek and the bridges and had a lot of problems with ice boxes and household stuff and beds and stuff they would throw off.

JG: Just dump it.

LR: Just dump it and use it for dumping ground. It got to be a problem and the landfills; I helped the city of Groveton a lot during those years. In my precinct, the people would bring their garbage to the Groveton city dump and dump it and I would go out there and dig holes and trenches and everything and bury all the garbage and try to help them out and the communities at different places, they had their own little dump. I would go out and push it back and bury all of it. It kind of got to be really a problem so I decided that I would try to build a landfill of my own for precinct one voters. And I got with St. Regis Paper Company and Mr. Wadsworth was over the land management during this time and he agreed to let precinct one have four acres of land and they come out and surveyed it out and I hired a crew and put a fence around his four acres. It's seven miles out of Groveton and seven miles from Sebastopol on 355 and I dug, took a dozer, a front end loader, and dug out trenches 12 foot deep and about 10 or 12 foot wide and I would go cut timbers and put along the trenches where people could back up without backing over out into the ditch. And, the people of my precinct started dumping their garbage there and suddenly people in the city or wherever would dump their garbage there.

JG: Was it free or did you charge?

LR: It was free of charge. Everything was free, just a service for the people of precinct one and other counties number three and number four they did the same thing during that time.

JG: So each precinct had its own landfill?

LR: Yes, but Trinity didn't have one. They used the City of Trinity because most of his precinct was in the city limits area there, but we started that and when they would fill up one trench and get it half way full I would take a front end loader and get in there and walk it down. We couldn't burn the garbage we had to walk it down and cover it up in layers and...

JG: What do you mean walk it down?

LR: Just mash it down, all the garbage would walk it down and give us more room in there.

JG: Just roll over it with the dozers.

LR: With the dozers. We had smooth track loaders then we could just walk it down, mash it down and then we would put a little dirt over the top of it and then have another one.

JG: Dig another trench.

LR: No, have it there. We would divide it out when it would get about half full we would walk it out and fill it and then we would have one and fill it up then we would fill it completely over with the dirt we took out of it and we would dig another one in the front of it. I started at the back of the four acres and we would dig another trench in front of it and we would do the same thing on it. We was getting along real good on those trenches and then somebody come along and throw a match in there. A lot of people was unhappy about that but it saved us from having to cover it up too often when it started some of them burning it but we let it go down and we would walk it down and it was just a regular job. Every so often we would send a dozer in there to walk it down and cover the dirt up.

JG: Was it open all the time? Anybody could come at any time?

LR: It was open all the time.

JG: Did you ever have any people that were abusing it?

LR: Yes.

JG: Abusing the privileges?

LR: When I took in part of Trinity over there with city management the manager over there started sending, they had big dump trucks, dumpsters, and they could bring them over there and dump them in there and I finally got that stopped because they were filling them up with those big trucks you know. But I couldn't complain too much but anyway he stopped it. They had a place to dump it but it finally worked on down until they felt like the water level was getting to where it was going to mess up the water level. EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] came in there and wanted to stop it. So through Walter Diggles with DETCOG and a bunch of judges and commissioners we went to Washington, D. C. and we flew up there and going up to the EPA office there they had a lot of people laying along the streets and they had a lot of garbage alongside their streets there in Washington, D. C., kind of at the back of the capitol there and we went in there and I made a talk before those people in Washington, D. C. that if they would come to Trinity County, fly that down here, I would pay for the hotel deal and buy their lunch while they were here if they would come and inspect my landfill. Because I told them my landfill and the front of it was cleaner than what they had on the streets of Washington, D. C. And that is the gospel truth, but we had a good talk there and they said they would see what they could do and low and behold it rocked on they gave us approvment we

could continue to keep our landfills open. So I kept it open another two or three years after that meeting we went to Washington up there, so I felt like through the help of DETCOG and their backing and the people that went to Washington, it was about a half a dozen of us went up there, that we did some good. It finally come along that we had to cover it up and close the gate. We had a gate across there then. We had to close the gate and stop people from dumping there. Then they come along with pickup for Trinity County and all the county got dumpsters. What do they call it out of Livingston? But anyway they had a pick-up garbage after that and...

JG: Contract it out.

LR: Contract it out yes. People come around and picked it up and they would haul it to the City of Groveton and in turn I continued to help the City of Groveton with the landfill because it was in my precinct you know. But through the commissioners and the people that we went to see in Washington, D. C. we went to the chambers of Graham and visited his office there and he was real good. We met with some representative, Ralph Hall from Rockwall which was our first president of Deep East Texas...I mean of the State Commissioners Association. A fact of business he is still the congressman from Rockwall today. But, we had the help and we was working with people and they kind of worked with us and being a small county we had to try to use everything we could to try to serve the people of our county and that is what I worked at down through these 36 years.

JG: All right, well thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW