

JAMES SIMMS

Interview 261a

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Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, former Diboll Mayor and officer at First Bank and Trust reminisces about his years in Diboll. He talks about his growing up years in Diboll and Hull-Daisetta, joining the military, and returning to Diboll to work and get an education. Mr. Simms discusses his over 40 year tenure at the bank and his time on the Diboll City Council and as mayor. Topics include water rights for the city, differences in the banking industry, city relationships with Temple-Inland, and changes in the town since the 1960's.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is September 11, 2013. My name is Jonathan Gerland, we are at The History Center today and I'm with Mr. James P. Simms, two m's, and we are going to do an oral history interview today. Mr. Simms maybe just to get started maybe just tell me when and where you were born and maybe a little bit about your parents.

James Simms (hereafter JS): All right, I was born in Angelina County in Lufkin, the youngest of eight kids. I was the only one that was born in a hospital and I was born in the old Angelina County hospital. The structure is still in existence but it is a nursing home now and we moved to Diboll when I was just a few days old.

JG: Where was your family living at the time you were born?

JS: Up around Redland, Clawson, Allen Town, in that area, north Angelina County. My father was born in 1893.

JG: Same year that Southern Pine Lumber Company was founded.

JS: Right, and he and his family, he was the oldest of his family, moved over here from Louisiana when he was eight years old and he and my grandfather built a log cabin which stood up until just recently a few years ago.

JG: And what was his name, your father's name?

JS: His name was John Thomas, John Thomas Simms.

JG: John Thomas Simms, okay, and your grandfather's name?

JS: My grandfather's name on his side was Billy. He actually had five or six names but they called him, it was James Billy, James William and that is where I got my name from, James, from him.

JG: And what was their occupation? How did they make a living?

JS: My grandfather was a blacksmith more or less and my father worked for Temple for many years, came to work here in 1944, which is when I was born and worked here until he died in 1969.

JG: In '69. What did he do for the company?

JS: He worked in the woods as...well they called them swampers I believe it was. He cut trees with a crosscut saw and at his age and everything he never really got to use the power saws when they came into existence and all. But, he more or less trimmed the limbs off of the logs after they were cut, to smooth them down and everything and then they...sometimes he drove the mules that drug the logs to the site where they loaded them and everything. He also...he would do anything to make a dollar to try to support his eight kids. You know, back in those days you didn't make very much money and after he got out of the woods, they would go to the woods before daylight and get home a little earlier, then he would work part time for the company still, either feeding and tending to the mules that handled the logs and or any other little side work that he could do.

JG: By the time you were born did you have older brothers employed yet?

JS: I had three older brothers and four older sisters. Out of the whole bunch a couple of my brothers worked a very short time for the company, just a short time and then they went into the military, married girls from other states and wound up living in other states. My sisters all pretty much moved away also. My oldest sister came back to the Diboll area in 1958 or so and worked for the company for a few years then before she moved to California. I'm basically the only one that stayed.

JG: The youngest one huh?

JS: Yes.

JG: So, they were living in the Redland area when you were born and then just a few days after you were born they moved to Diboll.

JS: Just a very few days, yes.

JG: Okay, did you...what are some of your earliest memories of Diboll? Was it school or can you remember things, just what are some of your earliest memories growing up?

JS: Well there are really so many, you know. I remember the three room houses that we all lived in. No matter how large your family was you lived in a three room house, and there are still some of those in existence over in the Lakeview area. A lot of them have been remodeled, but I remember our yard didn't have any dirt in it, I mean any grass. It was mostly dirt because you had chickens and some places even had hog pens that had

hogs in them. Everybody was a good neighbor and helped everybody with everything. I remember the dirt streets, all the streets were dirt, which in years later when I became mayor that was one thing I wanted, to insure that Diboll didn't have any dirt streets. And, I...we moved back and forth to a little town called Hull Daisetta when I was maybe five, six and seven years old because Temple had a logging camp up there and...

JG: It is near the Liberty-Hardin County line isn't it?

JS: Right, lots of time when it got too wet down here and everything they would take certain families and move them up there and they had moved some of these little houses, some of these little Red Town houses up there and had a little community. It was a little community there and we moved back and forth there. I started to school actually in Hull Daisetta school district.

JG: What do you remember about that?

JS: I remember walking...it sounds like Abraham Lincoln but, I walked about two miles to school, you know.

JG: Were your older brothers and sisters going to school there too?

JS: Two of them were but the rest of them were old enough that they had already left home.

JG: Oh okay.

JS: I remember the first day of school my mother was sick and my family couldn't go with me, no member of my family went with me to school and when the first bell rang at that school I came home because I thought it was over with and it was actually recess.

JG: You had enough huh?

JS: Enough was enough and everything. But I remember they had a good football team, they always had a good football team, but it was just a quaint little town. It was just like Diboll except it was actually smaller than Diboll.

JG: Yes, I imagine it was a good bit smaller.

JS: In Diboll, back to Diboll, we moved back and forth like I said three or four times but when I was in the second grade we came back and never moved out again. Temple actually cut off all their little outreaches at that time.

JG: That would have been about what '49, '50 or '51 somewhere in there?

JS: Somewhere around '51 or '52.

JG: When the Hull operation was going on?

JS: I was born in '54.

JG: Do you remember, I know you were quite young, but do you remember, I guess you would have went to school with some of the other Southern Pine Lumber Company employee children too?

JS: Oh yes, I sure did.

JG: Do you remember, but I'm sure there were also other children there that didn't work for the company since that was already an existing school, do you remember much about that, anything about the other children?

JS: The only children that their family might not have worked for the company was very few, and if there were, they were farmers. They grew cotton and all kinds of stuff back in those days. I actually picked cotton when I was a young boy.

JG: Down there?

JS: Not here in Diboll. But, down in Hull Daisetta. The only ones that went to, they were either hometown folks or Temple folk and there weren't very many. There are some of those families still around, some of those people are still around.

JG: Do you remember anything about the housing down there? What type of houses did you live in there? Were they portable houses?

JS: No, they were actually the same houses that were in Red Town here, those three room houses. They actually moved them down there. They moved us down there in the back of log trucks, that they put pins on. I actually rode on the back of a log truck where the trailer hooks onto the truck in that little area back there, my brother and myself rode back there. But they would load you up, and you had your own little house down there, and you kept the one that you had here, so you had one to come back to and everything.

JG: So, it was very temporary kind of set up.

JS: Just a temporary type set up, like I said, it had its own little community.

JG: Do you remember anything about your mom? How did she go along with not being stable, here and there?

JS: Well you know, mothers did that real well and everything; up until I was about twelve or thirteen years old we lived in one of those little houses and all it had was three rooms and one light bulb in each room and one faucet in the kitchen. There was no hot water. You had a wood stove that you cooked on and a wood heater that you warmed by and she was up before daylight getting my father off to the woods. She was taking care of the kids that were at home. There was always a brother or sister that usually had moved off that had problems or something and came back and stayed with us for awhile, so we always had a full house.

JG: Tell me about Diboll schools, when you moved back and started attending the Diboll schools what are some of your memories of going to school, grade school?

JS: I remember, well actually I lived up north of where Pouland's Feed Store is now and the school was actually behind where Brookshire Brothers is now so, I had a pretty good little walk there too you know, rain, snow, sleet or hail. My father nor my mother never drove a vehicle in their life. We never owned a vehicle or car of any kind so my father walked everywhere he went. Most of the people worked for Temple Inland knew him by the nickname of Uncle Johnny. That is what they all called him.

JG: Uncle Johnny?

JS: Uncle Johnny, there goes Uncle Johnny walking down the road. I remember hearing that many times. But the school in Diboll was all a big old white wooden frame buildings and everything. I remember the little community water fountains that had four or five faucets at them you know, go get a drink of water there. The little bathrooms or restrooms were off to the side that is where you went to the restroom. I remember that the school always had some kind of activity. They had carnivals at Halloween where you had to pick a king and queen and all kinds of stuff, kind of like we did Diboll Day later on and everything but the school would pick one from out of each grade. I remember the old picture shows was pretty close, the picture show itself was pretty close to the school. I remember the Tonk restaurant. There was a barber shop next to it, beauty shop, barber shop. I remember one time, you know back in those days a kid could do anything and not be feared of some pervert kidnapping him or something like that. I went to the movie many times when I was seven and eight years old by myself at night. I remember one time I went to sleep in the theater and when I woke up everybody was gone and the theater was locked and I crawled out a window and went home. (laughter) But, you know, the schools were heated with radiators. There was one big room where they had built a big fire. I forget what it was called but it radiated steam out to all the classrooms and the classrooms had radiators in them and that is how you stayed warm.

JG: Talk a little bit about what you did to sort of supplement your family income as a child. I'm ultimately leading you into the shoe shine, train vs. bus story to Lufkin.

JS: Okay.

JG: But anyway if you could talk a little bit about some of that, some of your entrepreneurship maybe.

JS: I'm going to say it was before we moved out from the red house and we moved out of it when I was in the fourth grade, so I'm going to say I was in the second or third grade I built me a shoeshine box. I made me a shoeshine box and I would come down to the Village in Diboll in front of the drug store and some of the places and I would shine shoes for a dime. And, word got out and I went over to the big office and I would actually go into some of the offices of the people there and shine their shoes and charge them a dime. I don't remember who it was, I want to say it was Calvin Lawrence told me I was too cheap and I ought to be charging a quarter and of course when I charged a dime most of the time people would give me a quarter anyway. But I did raise my prices to a quarter.

JG: You didn't get as many tips then did you?

JS: No, because a quarter was pretty good money back in them days, but then I didn't make a whole lot of money but I did make a little bit of money.

JG: Did you ever shine, if you knew who he was then, Mr. Temple's shoes?

JS: I don't remember that. I do remember an interesting story about him I'll tell you later on.

JG: But, this was over at what we call the old commissary by the railroad tracks?

JS: Yes, the old commissary that is where you did everything.

JG: Talk a little bit about what your memories of just that scene if you will. Take somebody back that wasn't there, and just describe what was there with the railroad being right there. I'm sure it was a hustling, bustling place, certainly to most of my generation it was a vacant building so, in that context just kind of describe, especially from the eyes of a youngster. What did all that mean to you? What was that?

JS: Let me hit you one other thing right quick about the shoe shine. I found out you could ride the bus to Lufkin for fifteen cents and I would actually get on the bus by myself, take my shoeshine kit and go up to the square in Lufkin on the corner of what they called Spit and Whittle across from the court house...

JG: Spit and Whittle, yes.

JS: ...and I'd shine shoes up there and catch the bus and ride home. Well later on, I found out the train only cost fourteen cents, well that was a penny saved, you know, that was a stick of gum, a piece of candy or something back in them days, so I actually rode the train up there and it started out at the old train depot which was right next to the big commissary and it is a shame that wasn't preserved because that old train depot was something to see. The commissary was just where you did everything. There was a

payroll window where you picked up your payroll, there was a furniture store, there was a grocery store, there was actually an ice house which made the big blocks of ice because back in those days' people didn't have refrigerators they had ice boxes. Two of my brothers actually delivered the ice around to the people's houses from the ice houses and everything. They would cut the blocks and bring them by your house and put them in your wooden icebox and when you needed some other ice you just let them know.

JG: How were those ice boxes insulated?

JS: Most of them had sawdust inside.

JG: Okay that is what I was wondering.

JS: Inside the walls. They were wooden on the outside and maybe a porcelain like on the inside if I can remember right.

JG: Yes, sawdust.

JS: And, I can remember the first refrigerator, electric refrigerator that we bought, which was after we moved from the Red Town house and everything. It was an International Harvester refrigerator instead of a Whirlpool or GE, something like that. It was an International Harvester.

JG: So you just set up shop there on the porch or outside off the steps or where would you shine your shoes?

JS: I just walked around to their offices.

JG: Oh, you went in their offices, okay. So, you weren't necessarily sitting outside waiting for them.

JS: Most of my shoe shining was done in the Village here in Diboll and everything.

JG: Talk a little bit about I guess the segregated society of the town in those days.

JS: Well, back in those days it was a whole different ballgame. It really didn't affect people, it seemed to me, like in Diboll that much. I had some good friends that, you know, were blacks.

JG: What year did you graduate from high school?

JS: In '67.

JG: '67.

JS: But before that, when I was talking about Hull Daisetta actually we were segregated, you know. There was white folks lived here and black folks that lived here and it was sectioned off so to speak from each other, but we played together. We played marbles, we played washers. People these days don't even know what those things are and everything. There used to be a section crew up on the side of the highway up where Pouland's is right now and it has five or six train houses that they've converted to houses that people lived in, old cars but people lived in them and it was the section crew that maintained them, Southern Pacific. Some of those people still live in Diboll, the Kings came from that.

JG: I think Margie Harrell's family was from those too, just north of where Pouland's is.

JS: Of course that was on my way to school so I met those folks and we played with each other just day to day and everything. It was kind of bad because, like I said, it didn't affect Diboll that much but we all seemed to be Dibollians, but you still had everything there was a white restroom there was a black restroom. There was a white entrance there was a black entrance. The theater...

JG: Yes, talk about the theater.

JS: ...the theaters the blacks sat in the balcony and the whites sat on the floor, but I don't recall in my mind ever really thinking of black and white, even after I got older and everything. I do remember I left Diboll in 1967 and actually the school was integrated after that and I played football in high school and the Temple Tigers were the black team and the Diboll Lumberjacks was the white team. But, my junior and senior year I can remember that the coaches we had the black team would come over and sit in the end zone and watch us play football, you know. I remember one time we asked one of our coaches if we could scrimmage the black team and just a little short scrimmage and the coach of that time of the black team said "you don't want to do that" and our coach said "why" and he said "because you don't want us to hurt you."

JG: Now, you graduated in '67 or '66?

JS: Oh I'm sorry I graduated in '63. I graduated in '63. I had that all wrong.

JG: Okay, that is what I was thinking, you said '67.

JS: '67 is when I came back.

JG: Okay, I'm glad we clarified that because the '66 football season is when those seniors came over. That was Louis's class, Louis Landers, graduated in '66.

JS: Right, right, everything was '63.

JG: Okay, good. So, but that issue did come up about scrimmaging against each other huh?

JS: Yes, and he said basically that they were too tough for us and they were tough.

JG: Do you remember who the coach was? Would it have been Walter Allen's son?

JS: I want to say there was a Ross involved and also an Allen but I want to say Ross sticks in my mind more and I may be wrong.

JG: Do you remember Mr. Jeffero, Algenon Jeffero?

JS: Yes, I do.

JG: I guess he was over there then too huh?

JS: He is still alive.

JG: Oh yes sir.

JS: He later in later years became a real good customer of mine at the bank. We had a pretty close relationship.

JG: Did anybody from the white community actually go watch some of their sporting events, baseball games or football?

JS: We did, a bunch of us boys did. In fact actually one time they were playing a ballgame and we cut the lights off on them.

JG: Uh-oh, now why did you do that?

JS: Just you know...

JG: Was that basketball?

JS: Well no football, okay.

JG: Football, you turned the lights out, okay.

JS: One of the Dewberry boys came back to Diboll a few years back and is living here now, but I can remember there was a Jerry Dewberry and I can't remember the other ones name. They were really good ball players. In fact, one of them had a chance to play pro ball on that team when I was a senior back in '63 but he didn't make it. Albert Delco, he is dead now, but a lot of those old...he stayed around Diboll all his life. I can't remember any other ones but I do remember the Dewberry boys because they impressed me. They were good ball players.

JG: So, when you went off as you said what was your reason for leaving?

JS: I graduated in the later part of May 1963 and I was an eighteen year old kid that thought I...and I had been working at the Fiberboard Plant for a couple of years before I left making a dollar an hour and you know, we took our lunch to work over there and I worked in a particular hard position, very hard position, hot and hard. And, the lunch room was at the far end of the plant and you only got twenty minutes for lunch so you couldn't go all the way up to the lunchroom to eat so we just walked outside by the steam asphalt plant and ate our lunch out there and I would smell that asphalt and that is also where we went to the restroom, you know, because we couldn't go to the restrooms, and maybe some of this stuff shouldn't be on there, but that is how it happened. And I would eat my scrambled egg sandwich and smell that asphalt and whatever and I said you know, there is got to be a better world out here somewhere. So, when I graduated I went to work back in my old position, I worked for two weeks and I said no I'm leaving, I'm going to get away from this one horse sawmill town and never come back. And, that was my exact words and I left and joined the military.

JG: What branch of service?

JS: I was in the Navy from 1963 to 1967. I came back in 1967 and I couldn't wait to get back to Diboll. I ate my words. You hear about it all the time but I did when I got off that Continental Trailways Bus in the Village square coming back I literally kissed the ground. I could not wait to get back. The sixties were pretty bad times in the military and everything.

JG: Vietnam and everything going on too.

JS: Lot of things going on, lot of things going on.

JG: So, what did you do when you came back?

JS: First I went to work at the Plywood Plant. It is ironic because when I left I was making a dollar an hour and when I came back and started to work at the Plywood Plant, which was a new plant that they had built here in Diboll.

JG: Yes, it was built while you were gone.

JS: Right, and actually my future wife's father was brought here by Temple Inland to help run that plant and that is how she came to Diboll from California. But, I went to work there and I was making \$2.35 an hour. I was actually making more money than my father was making and he was still working for Temple as a night watchman, watching at that time. Of course he was 70 years old. Then I realized I didn't really want to do that so, I applied for my GI Bill and started Angelina College when it opened. I was in the first graduating college from...crew from Angelina College, the first class and I was the first student from Diboll to graduate because my name was S-I and the next one was S-M, a Smith. (laughter) But,

JG: Did you work while you went to college?

JS: I worked for the Western Auto Store, Mr. Arlie Conner. He was a real good person. His son graduated with me and we were good friends, real good friends, still are. Mr. Conner has passed away now but I worked at the Western Auto Store for him for a couple of years while I got my Associates Degree.

JG: Talk a little bit about Western Auto. That is a business that we see and hear a lot about for that time period but, of course it's long gone.

JS: Faded away, yes.

JG: Talk a little bit about that. What all did Western Auto sell and what did y'all do?

JS: Western Auto carried just about everything, you know. It was an auto parts house, you could buy bicycles there, you could buy spark plugs, you could buy couches, just anything, lawn furniture.

JG: Almost like a Wal-mart huh?

JS: Actually it was more than a Wal-Mart because we financed our own items for people. We would put them on monthly payouts for them and you knew everybody and everybody knew you.

JG: So, pretty successful and almost everybody in town did business there?

JS: Yes, because Mr. Conner was a very reputable, honest man and everything and most folks knew that about Arlie Conner. And, also back then Lufkin wasn't the thriving place it is now and a lot of folks still didn't drive to Lufkin to do their shopping. Diboll had lots of things to buy, to shop from, back in those days. Western Auto Store, grocery store, more than one grocery store.

JG: Right.

JS: All kind of things. You could shop local back in those days and you could walk if you had to. You could walk to the stores and everything and later on it got so easy to drive to Lufkin and do it all under one roof at a mall and everything. I'm sure one of the downfalls that Diboll had as far as businesses go.

JG: Talk a little bit about what were some of the businesses that were there, like the Village area and all those things, and in that context of what you were saying about people didn't have to go somewhere else to do business.

JS: At one time there was a large grocery store right next to the Western Auto Store and there was also a Drug Store by the Western Auto Store and then there was another drug store not 400 feet down the road, you know. Also, the bank was located in that area, the Pine Bough Restaurant was in that area. The Timberland Theater was located over there.

JG: Were you able to go into the Pine Bough much?

JS: We would save our money and on Sundays we would go up there and try to associate with the bigwigs after they got out of church, you know. Three or four of us boys would go up there and buy us a hamburger and sit there and look at the people, but it was a thriving place, you know, basically it was company owned too. The people that done the cooking and everything was on the company payroll you know, so...

JG: The movie theater was there too, right? They had moved it over there?

JS: Right next to it.

JG: Were you able to go to the movies as much there as you were the other place?

JS: Well actually I used to sweep out the movie to get tickets to go. The ladies that run the movie would let me sweep it out, me and couple of other boys would clean it up and then past the movie theater there was a jewelry store at one time and then a washateria. Going back to the Western Auto Store on, if you are looking at it, on one side of it was the drug store and then there was a little road and an old wooden building which later became a library. That was the start of our library, and then the post office which later became the Free Press's first office, and then there was a department store that sold clothes and everything. State Farm Insurance had a little place over there and there was a little music store over there and there was a Five and Dime, Variety Store, we called it, and then there was the old Dairy Kream. That pretty much covered the whole Village there, except for the old Texaco Station and garage.

JG: Do you have memories of the Dairy Kream?

JS: Oh yes, everybody had memories of the Dairy Kream.

JG: Anything you care to share?

JS: Well, there is good things and bad things but ninety percent of them is good things. Most of us, my junior and senior classes, there wasn't but one or two kids that had cars. The rest of us just walked everywhere we went. We walked to the Dairy Kream, but some of the older boys came back later while they were still working and car hops, but the Dairy Kream was a unique place. You met girls, you met boys, you played pinball machines, put a nickel in the jukebox and played your favorite song.

JG: Was it mostly locally patronized or were there many travelers just going up and down the highway that would stop there?

JS: Oh yes...but people would stop because it was right on 59 and it was lit up and everything but it was mostly local people all the time. It was locally owned by some people. One of the harshest things, and you know history is full of good things and it's full of bad things, and that I ever saw was at the Dairy Kream and it gets back to our

integration thing that we talked about earlier. If you would like me to I'll go into detail; if you don't, I won't.

JG: Well, yes for the sake of historical preservation, yes, just tell us what your experiences were.

JS: We were sitting there one day and a black man walked up and I would say this was 1959, '58 or '59, and walked up to the window and wanted to use the restroom.

JG: So, you would have been about fifteen, sixteen years old?

JS: Fifteen or sixteen years old.

JG: Okay.

JS: And, they didn't have a public restroom at the Dairy Kream. There was a Texaco filling station and it had a public restroom. It had a black restroom and a white restroom so, and you know, integration was being talked about and everything but it wasn't a hot subject and he wanted to use the restroom and you could tell he had been drinking. They told him he couldn't use the restroom because they didn't have a public restroom and they told him where one was and he insisted on going in there. Anyway, to make a long story short the guy that owned the restroom, the Dairy Kream, I'm sorry, was at the time was Constable you might call him.

JG: Was it Jay Boren?

JS: Jay Boren. His wife called him on his two-way radio and told him what was going on and he came to that Dairy Kream and he beat that poor guy half to death. That was a terrible thing for kids to see and it really impressed me later on, when the black and white situation came up, as far as how I felt about some of it, you know. I didn't care about being black and I didn't care about being white, you know. When I was in Angelina College I wrote a little paper, we had to write for English and the title of it was "Mexican American, African American, White Americans, What about just plain old Americans?" because that is what I think we all should be just plain old Americans. But, anyway, next?

JG: Okay, let's see where are we? We've been pretty much been more or less chronological but just to clarify there was a restroom at Dairy Kream but it wasn't a public restroom?

JS: Just for the employees.

JG: Just for employees, because it was pretty small building wasn't it?

JS: Yes, it was real small. It wasn't as long as these two office spaces here are but it was a little bit wider but not much wider.

JG: So inside how many tables were there for people to sit?

JS: You know later on is when they added the addition for the tables and stuff. First off was just a little building about like this.

JG: Just kind of like Sonic?

JS: Yes.

JG: Like a drive up.

JS: Yes, just a drive up, then they added the little side and put, I would say five or six tables and a jukebox and a couple of pinball machines in it and that is all it was.

JG: So, this incident you just described was it when they did have tables or before?

JS: Yes.

JG: Oh it was when they had the tables and stuff. What... 'cause I've heard things about the Dairy Kream as well but, I guess my question is, were blacks, regardless of the restroom issue, were blacks allowed to come inside and eat or were they have to...?

JS: I'm assuming they could have but I never saw any. There was a black window on the back side and I forgot to tell you about that. There were two windows in the front that you could get service from the outside and then there was one on the side that was for the blacks and then there was a door, screen door that went to the inside. To the best of my knowledge I never saw any blacks in there.

JG: So, this man coming in wanting to use the restroom was just him being...

JS: He went up to the front window, one of the white windows.

JG: Oh okay, okay.

JS: The lady explained to him, her name was Myrtle, Myrtle Boren, she was Jay Boren's wife, that it wasn't available and told him where he could find one.

JG: But he could have come inside?

JS: He could have come inside to where the tables were but there wasn't any restrooms or anything.

JG: Right, right, but he didn't come inside. He went to the window.

JS: No, actually like I said he was intoxicated. He may not have even noticed that door. He was trying to get his point across.

JG: I don't know, this might be getting away from the chronology but...

JS: One more interesting thing about the Dairy Kream. You could take a quarter and buy a ten cent chili dog and you could buy a nickel coke and you could buy a nickel ice cream cone and still have a nickel left to play the jukebox.

JG: All on a quarter.

JS: All on a quarter. But, you could do the same thing going to the old picture show, the old show. It used to cost a dime to go to the Saturday afternoon matinee but for quarter back in them days you could get a chili dog, an ice cream cone and a coke and have a nickel for the jukebox or the pinball machine.

JG: That is pretty good.

JS: Yes. Now, you see why I charged a quarter for shining shoes. (laughter)

JG: Yes, that is what I was equating it to was for the price of a shoeshine you could do all that.

JS: Yes.

JG: Let's talk, since we are talking about money let's talk about the bank. How did you get involved working for the bank?

JS: I had an old football coach named Bert Lindsey and when he came to Diboll as a football coach he was...he taught us things about football that we never were really taught, you know. Back in the old days you put a uniform on and you went out and played ball, but Bert taught you how to do things on offense and do things on defense. He put us on a program to lift weights (you need me to stop).

JG: No go ahead, you're good.

JS: Conditioning exercises, you know things we never saw or heard of. I was a junior when he got here, I'm sorry I was a sophomore. My junior year was the first year Diboll ever had a winning football team and it was myself as a junior and ten seniors that was on the winning football team and it was because of the things Bert integrated into the football program. But, anyway I tell you all that to tell you that later on when I was working at Western Auto as soon as I got my Associate Degree I was still working there when he offered me a job working for Sabine Investments. He had been trying to get me to go to work for him and that was when the Sam Rayburn Lake area was just really opening up and Sabine Investment, which was a subsidiary of Temple-Inland, was building all kinds of lake lots and selling all kind of properties on the lake and selling mobile homes. They had a little mobile home place right next to their office, you know, where they sold mobile homes. And, you could make some money selling that stuff if you got on commission and everything so, he finally talked me into going to work for

him and I worked for Sabine for like two and a half months and when I sold a mobile home or something I helped the people arrange their financing and we had several people we did our financing through but one of them was Diboll State Bank. And since it was local I tried to give as much of the business to Diboll State Bank as I could and I talked to Mr. Elliott and Mr. Burt there at the bank and sold them lots of paperwork to the bank. Well, they had an opening come up and they offered me the job at the bank to be a loan officer so to speak and everything. Had no experience whatsoever, to me a banker was something above and beyond out there, you know, they wore suits and ties. But anyway, I took the job in 1971 and went to work with the bank.

JG: And that was with an Associate's Degree?

JS: With an Associate's Degree and nothing to do in financing, but you know, everybody knew me in town, everybody in town knew me and I knew everybody so it worked out. It was an asset for both of us. It was an asset for the bank in the fact that everybody knew me and I think knew my character also.

JG: Were there other loan officers?

JS: Well, there were three men and I want to say twelve or fifteen ladies that worked at the bank at that time. Mr. Elliot, Joe Elliot was the president, Felton Burt was the vice-president, and I was the assistant vice-president when I went to work at the bank. We did the loaning, you know, it didn't matter who, whichever one of us was available when you came in for a loan and everything. But, it's ironic to what it's turned into, how it's grown and everything.

JG: What would be a typical day, and I know people have asked me that and I don't know how I would answer that, but in the seventies working at the bank? What would be a typical day's work? How would the day go?

JS: Well back then you weren't as governed by the laws and everything as you are now and it was a whole different world inside and outside the bank, you know, as far as people kind of like talking about shining shoes when I could freely go around town and do what I wanted to without fear of anything. The same way in the bank, you might be making a loan to somebody at ten o'clock and at eleven o'clock you may be filling in for one of the girls that was a teller working out of her drawer while she went to lunch or something, you know, and you didn't have to worry about somebody thinking you were going to steal some money or something. Everybody worked together, but a typical day at the bank, it wasn't just making loans, you know, people would come in to open accounts or people would come in and ask you questions about various things. Back then, we would make a loan for fifty dollars, you know, a hundred dollars, and it wasn't nothing to make a hundred dollar loan, you know.

JG: So that was fairly common then?

JS: Yes, fifty and a hundred dollars was pretty common.

JG: What kind of collateral would they put up for a hundred dollar loan?

JS: You didn't really use collateral back in them days. It was your knowledge of your customer. I actually can't remember ever doing credit reports, researching a person's credit history until much later in my banking career. The first few years of it you were just dealing with local people. It wasn't somebody coming down from Lufkin trying to do business with you because they had already done all the business they could in Lufkin and trying to do something else. It was just local people and local bankers filling local needs so to speak and everything.

JG: So, as a loan officer you would have dealt with making the loan, but did you sort of police the loan as well, make sure of payments?

JS: I actually did it all. I made the loan to the customer, I actually typed up the loan, all the paperwork. I did all the paperwork, got them to sign all the loans.

JG: Make sure they made their payments?

JS: If I was filling a fifty or hundred dollar loan, I would go get the hundred dollars out of the drawer and give it to them without fear of compromising the cash flow deal and then it was my responsibility to make sure they paid it back and everything. Very, very few problems back in those days. My daddy always said a man is as good as his word, he's only as good as his word and basically in my early stages of banking that is what I based my loans on, was a person's word. I don't recall ever having many problems at all, later on it was a whole different ballgame.

JG: Talk a little bit about that, because you've made some obvious comparisons to the early seventies and of course you just retired a couple of months ago and I know there have been lots of changes, but talk a little bit more about that, just the changes that you experienced in the banking world over the last 40 something years.

JS: Forty-two.

JG: Forty-two years, you hit on some of them. Just the fact of a local community's needs, needing fifty dollars, hundred dollars and how did that change to who you were making loans to say ten years after that or twenty years after that. And how the consumer changed and how the banking world changed.

JS: I went to work in 1971, September 13th of 1971 and so I'm sure that you may not have experienced it, but you've heard of it and saw it, in the early 80's, '81 and '82, which was about ten years later is when we had a recession, kind of like we just went through four years ago and everything. At one time there in early 1980's we were paying 18% interest on savings accounts and charging 21% on loans because of the way everything went. Well, that is when we always had banking regulators, regulations and everything, but they really started regulating things back in those days, you know. And they got their hands in the pot and it has been going that way ever since and because of

all the problems that was incurred you started being more, you were scrutinizing your loan portfolio a whole lot more and everything. And,= of course modern stuff came along, all the stuff that you could get credit reports on people and see how long they had been on their job and actually see what their income was and they filled out the application they would put that on there. If they listed their credit references back in the old days if you felt uncomfortable about somebody and they listed Village Furniture store as a credit reference, you would call Village Furniture store and ask, "How does this person pay his bills?" Well, after the 80's got like they did, credit bureaus really came on the scene and everything where you could call the credit bureau and get a full credit report on this person, finding out everything. How long they had been employed, where they were employed, if they ever had any past due loans with anybody, if they didn't pay their phone bill, just everything could be documented so to speak and all, and it gave you a basis for making the loan or turning the loan down. Then as it went on forward to that, of course the advent of computers and things of that nature, you just push a button and you could see everything a person ever did in their whole life history, so to speak.

JG: I want to get to the computers maybe, but before we do, you mentioned in the early days, you know, making loans you didn't really have to do much background checks or anything like that other than just your knowledge of the community, was there a limit you had that you wouldn't...I mean how would...did it work if someone came in for much more than a hundred dollars and wanted a bigger loan, at what point did you have to get permission from say Mr. Elliott or Mr. Burt or somebody like that?

JS: Mr. Elliott was the one that he pretty much ran the whole show. If you had any questions in your own mind, you would sit down and talk with Joe about it and everything. But he never did...the only thing that he would ever do as far as placing any type of limits on us, he didn't want the customer to be overloaded because, you know, a person will take all you will give them if you're giving away stuff and to a certain extent that is what we were doing. We were giving them money but they were telling us they were going to pay it back.

JG: Do you remember what the interest rate was in those early days?

JS: You know I don't...I know we were paying five percent on a \$25 Christmas savings club. If a person wanted to save a little money until Christmastime they could come in every week and put fifty cents or a dollar into what we called a passbook savings account and that was paying like 5% and I want to say we were charging like 8% back then. There wasn't a big margin back then, but most of it you know, the Texas laws had a certain rate structure that you could do and on those small loans they had a minimum at maturity, fear of interest that you could charge. To give you an example of that, if I loaned a hundred dollars for 180 days, 6 months, would be \$7.50. That was the minimum and the maximum I could charge on that loan, you know, it wasn't based on actually a percentage rate, 18% or 10% or something like that. It was just a flat fee. Same thing on the smaller loans, fifty dollar loans it would be \$5.00, just a flat fee. It wasn't expressed as a rate like on a loan sheet today, you know, you've got your expressed interest rate,

annual percentage rate and you have to express it. Back then you didn't express it, you just put minimum at maturity five dollars or something like that.

JG: Who were the bank's customers and I guess part of what I'm getting at too, is in answering that talk about the integration of the bank even? When did you start seeing more of the black community doing business with the bank?

JS: I saw it my whole tenure, but you know and that is something that has amazed me also. That is a good point because I just retired a couple of three months ago, we never really had and still don't have as far as a borrowing customer with the black community. I mean we have got some but the young ones I haven't...my black customers were probably 60, 70 years old, the older ones, the Sam Colemans and people like that. The young community never saw them, once in awhile you will get one. I've often thought to myself, well how are they surviving? How are they financing their cars? And in a way I was afraid for them. I was afraid maybe they wouldn't qualify with the bank based on the rules and regulations and our own policies so to speak, so they would go to a car dealership or wherever and the dealerships would know they couldn't do something else and they would take advantage of them. And not just the blacks but a lot of the white folks also, and I do think that to a certain extent that did go on and is still going on, for whatever that is worth.

JG: Well, and like you said part of it too is you describing...you and I have had these conversations before, I know when I was a kid in the late 70's, early 80's I mowed yards and I was getting \$5 a yard. I could put that \$5 in there and I was getting seven, eight, percent interest, and you know we've got a lot more money here at The History Center that we put in that bank over there and we can't even get half of one percent.

JS: Can't get half of one percent. How do you think I feel? I've retired and that is what my income is based on.

JG: Just from the perspective of my own personal memories, you know, the point I'm making I guess, is that I had a bank account when I was 8, 9 years old and I could see when I got that little printout statement once a quarter, I'd make several dollars in interest and we don't make several dollars in interest with what my wife and I now have in our life savings.

JS: Absolutely.

JG: So, I guess part of it this younger generation as you've mentioned, would be my son who is fifteen, you know, we don't have a bank account for him today other than we just set money aside for him, but what is in it if you just got a little bit of money? He is not going to see what I remember seeing, "hey I put my money in the bank and I'm getting some return on letting the bank have my money." Whereas we are not even seeing that with the money we have.

JS: But there is still a benefit to him to open him an account in his name and the reasoning for that, is when he does start borrowing money, if you've got a little savings account that has got his name and his social security number on it, checking account that has got his name and his social security number on it, even though you are the parents and you are the primary signers or users, when he does go to borrow money that is going to show up on his credit report that we talked about awhile ago. They can check into it and it shows that he, even though it was you, had the incentive to put a little money away for a rainy day. He was able to manage a checking account because a lot of times on a credit report they look at a checking account and see how many insufficient charges has he had on this and everything. So, initiative saving for a rainy day, he can do that and have common sense to take care of his checking account, you know. Am I going to make him a loan? He didn't have any credit for me to look at, but I looked at this stuff and I think this is a good guy. I think I'll just go ahead and make him a loan.

JG: Yes, but I mean, you know, the interest rate is the main thing, you know, it is just not what it used to be.

JS: You tell me! Like I said I don't have a retirement, all I have is what I've saved and everything and my wife didn't have retirement where she worked, so we are living off of our savings, whatever we were able to put back.

JG: You said like in the early '80's it was like 18% interest, golly!

JS: Absolutely! In fact when I cleaned out my desk I found some of those old interest rate sheets and everything and it just blew my mind. I remembered them but it kind of refreshed me on some of them.

JG: Yes, I was over there the other day and the banks got their new ones up there on the counters and it is just ridiculous. It's not even worth the amount of effort to publish it.

JS: Well, and I guess I'm talking about...

JG: It is like a penny, you know if it costs more to make a penny than what the penny is worth... (laughter)

JS: What I can't understand about it, is they are not paying nothing, and it's not just the banks, it's the savings and loans, the credit unions and everything, but they are still charging the same thing they charged, as far as loans go. In some cases you can get smaller loans and smaller interest rates, but the standard guy who is borrowing money to buy his kids some school clothes and stuff like that, he is still going to pay eight, ten and twelve percent interest and yet you are not paying but a half or quarter percent so to speak and everything.

JG: We have a credit card through the bank. When did the bank start doing credit cards?

JS: In 1989...

JG: Because that could be part of it too maybe, people are starting to charge stuff.

JS: Well in 1989 when the banks were really having all the trouble, when all the savings and loans went down the tube, every bank in Angelina County except Diboll State Bank either went broke or lost their charter or somebody bought, them except for Diboll State Bank. Diboll State Bank bought one of the banks that was being closed by FDIC, which was the old People's Bank out on Hwy 94. Now that is our bank, so we bought a bank instead of banks buying us. All your big savings and loans, Home Savings and Loan in Lufkin, Lufkin Federal Savings and Loan, the old Republic Bank, Texas National Bank, Lufkin National Bank, they have all done name changes and everything because other people bought them, but Diboll State Bank didn't.

JG: Why is that you think?

JS: Because we were as strong as Garrett snuff so to speak. We didn't have much money, but what we had was strong. We didn't have a bad loan portfolio. And another thing is because we were small. The savings and loans in Lufkin had started financing shopping malls in Amarillo, Texas or Albuquerque, New Mexico, they were getting too big for their britches, so to speak and everything, and literally that is what happened and we didn't.

JG: So, more conservative.

JS: We were more of a consumer oriented bank. We loaned to the little guy that paid his bills every month and we were able to keep the lights on because of that. We didn't loan to the guy that said, okay I want to borrow two million dollars, but I don't want to make my first payment for a year because I am going to build this and I won't have my capitol coming in until that time. So, you put that on hold and you charge him interest and everything, but in the mean time you haven't got those funds coming and going every month. But also we didn't have two million dollars to loan back in them days, you know. When I first went to work at the bank, we were like a 4 million dollar bank and it is my understanding now we are almost a billion dollar bank, so it blows my mind. But anyway back to what we were talking about which was?

JG: Well, we were just looking kind of in general how the banking world changed and how that affected.

JS: Oh the credit cards, I'm sorry.

JG: Yes, the credit cards.

JS: Okay, in 1989 we bought People's Bank and they were issuing credit cards, actually they didn't print them in the back room, they had a franchise agreement with MasterCard and Visa and everything that they would get the customer and send in the applications and put whether it was approved or disapproved, but we bought them and we didn't issue credit cards right then, we let them continue to issue them and just a year or so later the

Diboll State Bank started issuing them. And at that time or somewhere around that time we changed our name to First Bank & Trust East Texas and the reason for that was, I was never told, but I always felt like it was because it was an umbrella type name, you know, that people in Lufkin might not want to do business with Diboll State Bank but they might want to do business with First Bank & Trust East Texas. And so, since we had bought that bank in Lufkin, the business opportunity was there. We have since opened three other branches in Lufkin and everything.

JG: Banks all over the place.

JS: Branches all over the place. We got 18 or 19 branches now, you know, and it was an umbrella name change, is the way I looked at it and I feel like that is really what it was.

JG: Talk about the computers, when the computers, just from someone working there at the bank and how did the computers revolutionize the banking world? Do you have any particular memories of implementation of computers?

JS: Well I tell you I am totally and thoroughly computer illiterate. I do not have a computer at my home. The only computer I ever worked on or used was at the bank. But you know, that was supposed to have taken place of all the paper work and everything and the typing. Actually there is more paperwork involved in a loan today than it was back in the day before computers. The only real thing that the computers did, it gave you access to the customer's accounts and things of that nature. You could pull up all their business, look at what all the repository relationship was with you, all their loan relationships and everything. When I first went to work at the bank, my worksheet consisted of a 5x7 piece of paper that I put the customer's name on, what the collateral was if it was collateralized, or unsecured if it wasn't collateralized, I put the loan amount, how much interest it was and if he had it on a twelve month payment, what the rate was divided by twelve and what his payment was. I actually looked that up in a book to get the interest rate rather than figuring everything. When I left the bank three months ago...

JG: The book that had the charts and everything.

JS: Yes, it had all the rate structures in it, you know, if were borrowing it for 8% for ten years, twenty years.

JG: Yes, you could look it up in a book. That was your database.

JS: Yes, when I left the bank three months ago it was a yellow sheet 12 feet by almost 2 foot long front and back that you filled in all the details, then you give it to somebody. Oh, and when I took the other little sheet I looked at that and I typed a note up on a manual typewriter, three pages, one for me, one for the customer and one for his file, carbon copies, he signed two places and that was it. Nowadays you give the big yellow worksheet to a girl, she puts it in the computer and it spits out like 20 copies of everything, front and back you know. So, it didn't stop the paperwork yet, it may. But it did give you so much accessibility to everything. You know, you could actually get

online and do the credit report yourself with the credit bureau, just anything you wanted to do you could look it up and get backgrounds on people and stuff. I'm sure on the operation side of the bank, in fact I know it has, it has just made tremendous strides on that because back in the old days we did everything by hand, you know, we filed checks by hand and nowadays they don't even make copies of the checks anymore unless the customer request it or they have a certain kind of account that does provide them with copies of the checks and everything but as far as the original checks they are not out there anymore. Copies are available, you know.

JG: Yes, I remember a few years ago when they started the imaging when we would get our bank statements, you know, I still like to see the actual check, I mean the image. If you can't have the actual check at least the image. I guess that is the implementation of banks communicating all over the world. How all that is imaged and kept up and connected with the data networks.

JS: It is all out there and the thing of it is it is all out there if a person has got the will to... it's all out there for everybody to see, one way or another.

JG: Let's talk a little bit about you with the city and your service on the council and mayor. What, how and why did you do that? How did you get involved? What made you want to run for city council and when was that? Kind of describe the scene, the era.

JS: It was in...I don't know the exact date but I was on the city council for 33 years so it had to be somewhere in, and I got off in 2006 I believe it was, so it had to be somewhere in the early seventies. To tell you the truth, we had a cable company back then, the first cable company that came to Diboll for television. Everybody had outdoor antennas until that time and then this cable company came to town and they installed cable lines and started sending people access to the cable like we still have that today. The reception was terrible, it was horrible, you know. You might be out, get a month's bill for the regular amount but you might have been out and not being able to see your TV for two weeks out of that month and I just really didn't like that. I thought there was better service available out there and of course it was all governed by the city council at that time. They approved the company coming in, they approved the rate structures and just about everything. But I couldn't get the city council to do anything about them. The whole town was in an uproar. We wrote letters to Paul Durham at the Free Press and blah-blah-blah, and nobody would do anything.

JG: Who was the mayor then?

JS: Clyde Thompson.

JG: Do you remember who some of the councilmen were?

JS: Clyde Thompson, Calvin Lawrence, Nolan Hall, Bee Nogle, and there was somebody else.

JG: Was Sam Coleman?

JS: No, no, Sam came later.

JG: Much later, okay. Well that is okay.

JS: Sam came after me.

JG: Just wanted you to kind of set the stage.

JS: But anyway I couldn't get them to do anything so I decided I would run for city council and if I get on there, I'd take care of it all, you know. Not realizing that when you do get on there, it's different from behind...

JG: There is more than just the cable isn't it. (laughter)

JS: ...it's different from behind the table than it is from in front of the table. But anyway I got elected and I actually ran against Joe Elliott, my boss, and beat him.

JG: How did that go?

JS: It was alright, Joe is alright, Joe was a good guy. I got there and stayed there. I was pretty outspoken character. I made the then mayor, like I said Clyde Thompson, almost swallow his false teeth several times. I took Mr. Hall's place. He decided not to run and his position was available and I took his place.

JG: Besides the cable, that is what was important to you, but once you got on the council what were some of the other issues that took your time and attention in those early days? This would be early seventies.

JS: Well, it gets back to the same basic thing as working for the bank, you know, everybody knew me and my accessibility to the public and all. I was real active. I never missed a football game or a basketball game. I was active in the Lions Club, active in the quarterback club and everything. My wife used to say she would send me to the store to get an onion and it would take an hour and a half because I was always stopping to talk to people or people were talking to me. But when I got on there, there was several things that I had wanted to do and saw, even until the day I retired, I would drive around Diboll at least once a week to see things that needed to be done or were out of place that should be done. There were still several streets in town, you know, I read an article one time that said all the streets in Diboll were paved by the time it was incorporated and that is not true, you know. There were several streets in town that I wanted to get taken care of. Arrington Street from Westchester Street, that is where the golf pro shop used to be for the first nine holes, well Arrington Street on out was just a pig trail that went out to what is now Lumberjack Drive. Eddins and Holubec Street behind the particleboard plant, that was all dirt streets and everything and there were numerous little pig trails over across the tracks that were just little dirt alleys and everything and people's houses fronted on these

streets. I got that taken care of, got every street in Diboll, made sure it was paved. In fact, the street behind the big office was not paved and everything. Anything in the city limits was paved. I made sure of that. I was...the volunteer fire department and the police station was something I really took to heart. If we were going to have the men that were volunteering to put out fires in our town, they needed to be equipped properly and I made sure that...I say I, it was me and the city council, I had a real good council, we made sure they were properly equipped. Same thing with the police department, we made sure they were properly equipped and everything and to this day we've got one of the best volunteer fire departments in the state of Texas, as far as equipment goes and everything, just everything in general.

JG: So, how long were you on the council before you decided to run for mayor?

JS: Mr. Thompson, when he got off, Mr. C. H. Shepherd, which was a fine, fine, fine, fellow, ran for mayor. Oh, he was on the council, he was one of the other council members, he ran. I sat right next to him. I was mayor pro-tem, most of my whole tenure as a council member was I served as mayor pro-tem before I became mayor and I sat next to Mr. Shepherd, and his health started failing and he started to develop Alzheimer's or dementia or something and lots of times he would lean over and ask me certain things, what was said and things but when he came up for reelection I wouldn't run against him because he was such a good guy. He was Mr. Diboll. I mean, he really was as far as the Booster Club and Diboll Day goes, back in them days. So, he come to me, come to my house one day and he told me he was going to go ahead and resign and everything and he wanted to make sure that I would get the position. Well, I was mayor pro-tem so it was just kind of an automatic deal that I got to serve out his term and he wanted me to run, and I did after I served out his year. He had one year left, I believe, and I served it out and then I ran.

JG: You mentioned the Booster Club so this might be as good a time as any. Talk a little bit about your work with the Booster Club and Diboll Day itself and just what all Diboll Day was about.

JS: Diboll Day was...I can remember the first one. I was in a pie eating contest. In fact, Louis showed me a picture of me in that pie eating contest. You know, to be a Dibollian you don't have to be born and raised in Diboll. I wasn't born in Diboll, but I was raised in Diboll. We have a lot of influx of people that came to work for Temple-Inland either in the main offices or in the plants and everything that weren't actually from Diboll, but they became Dibollians because of the way they got involved in Diboll, either in the Booster Club or just in the community as a whole. And you really, you couldn't really get involved with the community as a whole unless you were part of the Booster Club, so the Booster Club funded several things and it was all based on the fact that they would take the town and divide it into four sections and I think at one time it was six sections when I was younger. Then, each one of those sections would compete against each other as far as raising funds. They would pick a girl to run for the queen. You would see a banker dressed in a suit and tie standing on the street corner next to a guy who worked at the sawmill in his overalls trying to sell you a chance on a gun, you know. Everybody

worked together. That's what made Diboll so great is the people. The people made Diboll and we were so fortunate to have people in those days that ran the company so to speak, that owned the company, that were big bosses in the company, the Temple's, Arthur Temple, Joe Carter Denman. The superintendents even in the mills and all the office personnel in the administrative side of the company, everybody just worked together to try to make Diboll a success and everything and it hurts to see what has happened today. But the Booster Club provided funds for the Little Leagues, it's helped with the swimming pools, it has helped Diboll, the city of Diboll as a whole, come up with various projects and everything. The city might turn to the Booster Club and or the Foundation, you know, and they would help.

JG: I'm not quite finished with the Booster Club but if you can think of anymore things to say, you know, we are kind of at the point now where we've got a lot of overlap, but you mentioned the Company and of course the company was always a big part of Diboll Day and founded the Booster Club...

JS: Absolutely!

JG: ...and Diboll Day itself, but talk about, because of your unique situation or your unique place in the city council, being the mayor of a town whose roots began, the town founded by a company, it was a company town for many, many, years, it wasn't until 1962 that the city even incorporated. In fact, earlier than that, well it was the company that wanted the town to incorporate, and there was an unsuccessful election in '60 and that is a story in and of itself, but in essence just that relationship of your experiences and how it changed, of a city government working with Temple, you know, Southern Pine Lumber company, Temple Industries, Temple-Eastex and then Temple-Inland and obviously there has been change. But anything you care to share about that just comparing or contrasting or looking at those early days how it evolved, how it worked?

JS: Well, a lot of people are not going to believe this, but I was mayor for 21 years and during that 21 years Arthur Temple was alive, Mr. Temple never called me or came by my office and said you need to do this, or the city needs to do this, or we need to do this. He never tried to dictate or give me any direction. I've always been proud of that because it makes me think that he thought I was doing a pretty good job. Now, that being said, that don't mean that the company didn't come in and step up and belly up to the bar so to speak on the projects that we had. The civic center, the city wound up taking it over but the company initiated that and most of it was done by donations. The golf course, when I first got on the council the golf course was a losing proposition. It lost money every year. We never asked for it, but we never had to ask for it. That is the thing. Back in those days you didn't have to ask the company. If they saw something, because most of them participated in Diboll, that is what we were talking about awhile ago, everybody was a Dibollian so to speak.

JG: Well, the civic center was a Booster Club project, I mean that is how it was handled right?

JS: Right, basically.

JG: And the golf course?

JS: The golf course was encouraged by Temple for us to have a golf course, you know, as a draw for people, other folks to maybe come into our town. And, it's worked to a certain extent. It really has worked, but at the first off it was a losing proposition. They subsidized it, you know, we never had to go say, "hey we lost \$100,000, we need a \$100,000." They would say "how is it going?" and we would say, "Well we are losing money, we are trying to build some new golf cart paths and everything." "Well how much is it going to cost?" "Well, it's going to cost \$25,000." "Well here is \$25,000."

JG: Even years ago, we are talking a long time ago the company even bailed the schools out at times, you know.

JS: Yes, but as far as our real infrastructure and things of that nature they never had to, we had such a good tax base back in those days. We had several mills and franchise tax was pretty healthy back in those days. We don't have all that now days.

JG: Right. How did the relationship with the Booster Club and the Diboll Day fundraising how did that come into play with the city's tax base? What was needed to raise revenue since Booster Club funds a lot of things that cities of Diboll's size would have a hard time paying for otherwise? Again, what other city of 5,000 people has an 18 hole golf course, the civic center and things like that? How did that come into play? Especially, was that ever discussed?

JS: Not really. The Booster Club, when they turned over the civic center to us we were responsible for the operational cost of it and everything and in all reality and everything the later part that I saw, basically the only thing the Booster Club really did was help with the Little League program, the summer youth program, and at one time the summer youth program was a lot bigger than what it is now. It wasn't just Little League baseball. It was all sizes of baseball but it was also kind of like, I don't want to say a boy's and girl's club but it was every day. During the summertime they had some people that taught little kids, took care of the little kids, played games with them and that nature and the Booster Club did that. Booster Club helped fund the swimming pools when Diboll had swimming pools, which was not too far back, and everything. They helped on that but, most of the time it was just various things if something come up and people needed some money for a specific project, individuals I'm talking about, whether it was city or school or what they would go to the Booster Club and see if they could get it funded. Back when it all first started out Southern Pine Lumber Company or Temple Lumber Company they bought, they gave us the grand prizes and stuff. The Booster Club didn't have to go buy a car to sell chances on. At one time we for Diboll Day gave away a 14x80 mobile home that Temple gave us when they were building mobile homes up at Creative.

JG: Y'all didn't have to pay any money from the Booster Club funds it was all just out right.

JS: No, cars and stuff like that, pick-ups.

JG: Little or no expense then to the prizes. When did that start to change?

JS: I would say in the 80's but, it was a big thing back then. We didn't just sell tickets in Diboll. The company would turn loose employees on company time, which means they would pay them while they were doing this, and you know, we would get two or three people from out of the mills and a couple of people out of the offices and myself or Felton, we couldn't both go at the same time, and maybe one or two girls out of the back and everything we would all load up and we might go to Nacogdoches and sell tickets up there on the street corners or Livingston, or Cleveland or Pineland even and everything. Back at one time it was every year, it wasn't every two years and Lufkin, just everywhere. For six weeks there it was a real competition between everybody and everybody expected it in Angelina County. Everybody looked forward to it. We had some big crowds.

JG: So, how did the tax base decline? When and how did that start happening?

JS: It really started happening when Lufkin started growing like it did on the south side of Lufkin. I can remember where J. C. Penney's is now when that was a goat farm. When you drove into Lufkin that was a big farm out there and a big pond right beside the road going into Lufkin and then the shopping malls started coming in and everything starts growing south. Crown Colony came into being.

JG: Another Temple company project.

JS: Right, and it was...it hurt Diboll, Crown Colony did because since it was a Temple project and everything, a lot of the people, executives and or operations personnel that went to work for Temple in the big office and everything, you know, they wanted to impress the company so they bought a house in Crown Colony instead of buying a house in South Meadows or building a house in South Meadows. So, to a certain extent Crown Colony in my belief did hurt Diboll. Plus, the whole country started being based on transportation. Everybody had their own transportation. Everybody had their own car. Like I said awhile ago, we didn't have a vehicle but every family had a car and most of them had two cars and you just jump in a car and drive ten miles to Lufkin and do all your shopping and everything up there, especially with the advent of the malls. You can just go into a shopping mall and just get everything you wanted right there under the roof. Diboll started losing a lot of businesses because of that and still does because of that and that cut down on your tax bases. Then when the company started cutting down on the mills they had, one time they had a mobile home plant, they had Temple Associates which was a building contracting company, they had Temple Associates Engineers, which was a big engineering firm. We had Tex-Lam which made the big laminating structures for churches and things of that nature. Box Factory which made boxes for ammunition for the military use, Handle Factory which made the handles for brooms and all that, Plywood Plant, Fiberboard Plant, Sawmill, and there is others. But, all that was part of the tax base and all that had franchise tax on it and things of that nature and of

course everything they would go out and buy a big piece of equipment for one of those things that was taxable too so, it all added up. Now we got a sawmill and a fiberboard plant.

JG: And particleboard, I guess.

JS: And particleboard, I'm sorry. We had a creosote plant that made creosote poles and all that so, as all that stuff got phased out so did the tax base for Diboll, all the little businesses that were here the little mom and pop stuff it just...Wal-mart killed a lot of little towns to a certain extent, south side of Lufkin killed a lot of Diboll.

JG: What about working with the company on projects? I know one of the issues everybody has got is water. Of course, you mentioned the golf course and I know a golf course uses a lot of water and of course the company, those plants use a lot of water and of course the city needs to have water because it's city water now, so what about that? And of course I'm hitting on the water issues but anything you care to share about that?

JS: Oh! That all started...

JG: I know what we read in the newspapers a few years back, you know.

JS: I guess the last five years I was on the council that is when water issues came up. We realized we were going to need water in the future and everything. Where were we going to get it? How were we going to do it? Options out there were either, maybe piping it out of the river and building a plant to make it suitable for drinking or Eason Lake, which was a Temple owned piece of property on the Northwest side of town.

JG: That would be wells I guess, in Eason Lake, not the lake itself, but the wells.

JS: Right, they actually had, and they may still have it out there they had one well that they had dug a test well, water well, and it was still running water and had been running water for years, you know. They just let it run, but you know, the cost was what was going to kill us because we were going to have to pipe it and we were going to have to build sub-stations, and we were going to have to build lift stations and we were going to have to take all the salt out of it or whatever. We got into discussions with the company about that and the company had done a lot of hand changing at the top at that time and they gave us some figures as to what they would charge us and things of that nature and it was just almost prohibitive but we pretty much decided that was the only way we were going to be able to go. My personal opinion on it, was if the powers that be were the old powers that be, it wouldn't have cost us a penny. They would have said, rather than what it cost us as far as putting the pipelines in but as far as...they were going to charge us for water usage, how many gallons... you pump two hundred thousand gallons out of here it is going to cost you this, it's going to cost you that. I don't believe the old Temple executives would have charged us anything for that based on some of the stuff that I had saw in the past, because they did so much back in those days. They donated the land for the high school when they found out the soil out at the other place was bad they said here.

Lots of things like that I have forgotten about or I will think about after I leave here today. But when I left that was still a topic of discussion and also talked about buying water from Lufkin. I was concerned about that because I felt like if it ever got real bad and a real drought, you know, the first thing they are going to do is take care of their own people and cut off the outside folks so to speak. I wanted us to be independent, whichever way we went, I wanted us to be independent, but I think they did, after I left, wound up, in fact I know they did, go to buying water from Lufkin and everything.

JG: Of course Lufkin wound up with all the water rights that the Abitibi Paper Mill so they got plenty of water.

JS: They've got plenty of water and it shouldn't be a problem. See, they didn't have that when I was putting my negative input in there and everything.

JG: Right.

JS: Had they had that at that time I wouldn't have felt near as bad about it and everything. It's kind of like the red lights. I wasn't for the red light cameras either.

JG: Another thing that certainly impacted Diboll's recent history has been and again where the company had been involved was the bringing in the Mexican labor where there was an active effort to do just that. What was that all about?

JS: Well, when I was a kid growing up I want to say there was like three Spanish families in Diboll, maybe four and then when...and to the best of my knowledge this was happening when I was gone off during the mid sixties or so is when this took place, maybe later, maybe before, but my thoughts on it were at that time it was hard work in the sawmill. It was hard work in the Fiberboard plants, hard physical work. Hard work in the woods cutting logs, transporting logs and everything, and later on they went to contractors and had more people doing it on their own rather than their own employees, but as far as the mill goes it was bad, tough hard work. Angelina County had an abundance of jobs at that time, not just Temple's jobs but Champion Paper Mill, Lufkin Foundry, Lufkin Industries, all these other places, you know, and actually most of those places paid more money an hour than Temple-Inland did. Most of the people lived in those areas anyway so, why would they want to drive to Diboll and make less money when they could get a job up there? I guess what I'm saying the job availability was out there other than just Diboll so, Temple had to do something to kind of offset that and it is my understanding, I've never discussed it with anybody, but it is my understanding that they actually did go to the valley so to speak and everything and try to recruit Spanish labor coming up here and they did.

JG: So, they weren't paying high enough to get local labor and so they had to bring in labor that would work for the cheaper price?

JS: I think to a certain extent that was it now, I'm not accusing them of being...I'm just saying, like I went to work there in 1967 for \$2.45 cents an hour. I could have went to

work at the Paper Mill and probably made \$4.00 an hour, but not everybody got to go to work at the Paper Mill. They were lined up out there so to speak.

JG: Right, right.

JS: You know, I really think it was because there was so much job availability out there that they had to do something. They had to keep their plants running. They had to keep their businesses going so they didn't have no alternative but to seek outside help.

JG: Did any of that...I know on the school side of it, you know, it made the newspapers as far as an influx of new students, you know, the schools needing to provide adequate number of teachers in classrooms and that kind of thing...did any of that factor into decisions that the city would have had to look at? Any kind of...how would it affect a city's budget or public utilities?

JS: Well, it didn't really affect us that much because the housing availability was out there.

JG: Did the population really grow that much? How much did the population grow?

JS: It got up to 5500 while I was in office and I think it's down below 5 [5,000] now, but I can remember when it was 4200 sometime during my tenure so, it did grow. I can remember just recently at the bank when I was working at the bank used to you would look out in the lobby and you'd see twenty five or thirty people out there and you would walk out there and say hello to everybody and the last time I looked and saw twenty five or thirty people I didn't know but two of them, you know, and most of them were Spanish folks, you know. So, we do have quite a large Spanish population. I notice that also when I drive around town I would see a lot of the houses, Spanish folks are just everywhere, but it's not just here it is in a lot of areas. Not just in our state but in every state and not just in border towns and everything. I read about them in Mississippi and wherever. The guy in wherever up there that had the three girls hostage, he was Spanish.

JG: I'm just trying to think. I think we've pretty much covered everything in a big picture way. Anything that jogs your memory when we were talking that you care to share that I have failed to ask you about or anything that comes to your mind? I would like to leave it open and you know, you and I both may think of things to follow up on and at some point we could do a follow up interview at some point.

JS: That is fine. That would be fine.

JG: That way we might...it is hard to compress someone's life into an hour, hour and a half interview. (laughter)

JS: Oh shoot yes, sixty nine years, I was just 69 yesterday.

JG: Oh okay, well happy belated birthday! So, yes just any reflections you have that we didn't cover today and seeing all the changes that you experienced and was in some ways a part of.

JS: Well there is just so many things, just little tidbit things that meant something but they wouldn't mean anything on that recorder, you know, so to speak, but the only thing that really gets me is there has been so many good people that I've saw come and go. I mean just good stout, strong faith...

JG: You want to mention any names?

JS: No, because I would leave out someone.

JG: You'd leave out someone, okay.

JS: What little I was and or am it is because of the people of Diboll. The faith they had in me or the trust they had in me as a banker, their faith as a mayor, you know, I would attribute everything to the people. I never had an opponent as a mayor.

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

JS: But one time, one opponent and I got six hundred and something votes and he got 30 and he was mad about something so he got all of his relatives out to vote. But, you know...

JG: Well, that is how you got on huh? (laughter)

JS: Absolutely, but he was mad at me!

JG: Mad at you huh?

JS: And, like I said awhile ago it is a different ballgame. I was mad about the cable from the other side of the table but when you get on the side of the table where you've got to take care of everybody it is a different picture, you know. The guy calls you and he wants you to fix the pot hole in front of his house and he don't care about everybody else when you say well I'm going to work on fixing the whole street. He wants you to fix his pot hole, but you can't do that you've got to fix the street.

JG: And how do you weigh that against somebody else's concern that might be more of a safety issue than just convenience or something.

JS: Right, right.

JG: Any other issues that came to mind, that came up. I didn't really do my homework to see what were the big issues that came up?

JS: No.

JG: What about, you may not have been on the council but, '73 is when Time and Temple Industries merged.

JS: I was there then.

JG: You were on the council then? Just talk on the street do you remember anything about that, you know, people's concerns at the particular time when that was coming out?

JS: You're talking a long time ago but, actually the people were concerned naturally because they felt like we wouldn't, the company as they knew it wasn't going to have the control it had. You kind of touched on it for a short segment there at one time, but you know back in the fifties Mr. Temple, Arthur Temple, and that is another thing, Mr. Temple and Mrs. Temple, he was encouraging people in the fifties to get out on their own, to own their own house if they could. They would sell them those shotgun houses or they would sell them some of these other houses that they had built and try to make them more independent instead of more dependent on the company. You know, back in those days if my father got hurt on the job or not necessarily on the job, but had to go to a hospital that the Lufkin facilities couldn't handle, to Houston or somewhere, the company put him in an ambulance and took him to Houston or wherever. They took care of their people, but they wanted them to be as independent as they could. Arthur really encouraged that and you know that is what they were afraid they were going to lose when they started merging with these other companies and everything. That is another thing about Mr. Temple or Arthur Temple I always said that when I was talking about him I called him Arthur but when I was talking to him I called him Mr. Temple.

JG: Yes.

JS: And, that was out of love and respect and everybody in Diboll felt that from Mr. Temple. You know, you had tremendous love for him and you had tremendous respect for him. I can remember when I was a senior in high school and we were selling ads for the annual, you know you'd go around to all the businesses and sell ads, so it was me and three other seniors selling ads and we went to Temple, to Mr. Temple's office and was going to sell him an ad for the thing and he wasn't in his office, but they let us go on into his office and have a seat. Well, naturally he wasn't there so I get behind his desk you know, and I got my feet propped up on his desk and he has got his box of cigars there, you know, and I get me one of those cigars and I'm sitting there and I start to say something and he said "Mr. Simms could I help you." And, of course I just melted into a puddle and everything, but I sold him a full page ad.

JG: Did he let you keep the cigar?

JS: You know, I don't know if you know it and this may not need to be put on there but later on he tried to quit smoking them and everything and he started chewing them and he

would have one that wouldn't be but a half inch sticking out but when he pulled it out to talk to you it looked like a big old tree. (laughter)

JG: Yes, he has got his cigar in the statue we have out there. He always had those cigars.

JS: But, that was the thing with merging with Time and stuff like that is that on the street the people were afraid that there would be some loss of control and, the same thing today that is going on, loss of control.

JG: Well and I think one of the major differences in that deal like that and of course we all know how the spin-off with Temple Inland came about where if you look at it from the Temple side they got everything that they sold back plus they got more than they even sold with Inlands acquisition. Inland had far more than Temple had but they got that, the new company got it and then more land. When Time merged Temple Industries with Eastex Pulp and Paper, Eastex Pulp and Paper had more timber than Temple did. So, like you said it was a big deal but the differences are is that money changed hands but it didn't all go in the pockets where some of these recent deals aren't really mergers at all.

JS: Right.

JG: We could all argue that but a lot of money went into pockets and people walked away.

JS: Absolutely.

JG: Whereas the deals when Mr. Temple was around the people stayed. That was part of the deal, we are going to sell you the company but we are coming with it. You are buying the people as well, you are buying...I'm getting a seat on the board and Denman and others are going to have a seat on the board. That is part of the deal. If you don't agree to it then the deal is off. Whereas these recent deals everyone has gotten golden parachutes and everybody walks away with a lot of money. Part of that is just the change in the way business is done.

JS: It's all tied to one word nowadays, pure greed. That is what is wrong with the world. That is the biggest problem in the world is the greed. You know, even all the upheaval in the far-East and everything is because somebody is greedy and wants to have it all and doesn't care about what happens to the people under them. It is all greed.

JG: And then that shift that you had between an ownership class and the management class; when the owners made decisions it was based upon that they actually owned the company and so they had that heritage, that history, the connection to the past but also the connection to the present and the future. Whereas when you turn it over to managers it is only about right then and if you don't meet these numbers we will get somebody else to manage it. So, now you've got a management class making decisions and those decisions are based purely on numbers and the money and you know, that all started initially in '69 when the company went public. Now you got people owning the company that had

nothing to do with anything up until that point. So, anyways, well I sure appreciate it and with that unless you have anything else we will stop it.

JS: That is it!

JG: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW