

JOHN RALPH POULAND

Interview 267a

August 29, 2014, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas

Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, Diboll native John Ralph Pouland reminisces about growing up in Diboll, the changes in the forestry industry, and the growth of Diboll. He mentions the early independent loggers, using mules for logging in the woods, and the beginning of chainsaw logging. He talks about playing little league baseball, joining the football team at Diboll High School with Bobby Ramsey, and the family logging, trucking, retail and real estate businesses, including The Everything Store.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today's date is August 29, 2014. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm with John Ralph Pouland, we are at the History Center this morning. It's a Friday and we are going to do an oral history interview. John Ralph I guess just start off by telling us when and where you were born.

John Ralph Pouland (hereafter JRP): Okay, I was born in Lufkin in the old county hospital at 8-10-44.

JG: August 10th of '44. So you just had a birthday not too long ago, huh?

JRP: Yes.

JG: Who were your mom and dad?

JRP: Geraldine Martin Pouland and my daddy was Hileory Pouland.

JG: Okay, where were they living at the time you were born?

JRP: We lived over here by the old feed house by the commissary. When we sat on the front porch we were looking at the feed house. You know that is where the company brought in train car loads of feed for the oxen and the horses and mules they used in the woods. We lived right there.

JG: Talk a little bit about your father what he did for a living and maybe your mom and how they met and things like that.

JRP: Well they both went to school here at Diboll and he went in the service, World War II there right after he went in the service and when he got out of the service well he was logging too. He was a logger as well as my granddaddy was a logger and they logged together.

JG: And who was your granddad?

JRP: Isaac Hannah.

JG: And what was his background a little bit?

JRP: Well he come to Diboll from Wells. He worked for Mr. Rube Sessions as a youngster logging up there and in 1940 he came to Diboll to log for Henry Temple and stayed here ever since and we are about a four generation logger, my granddaddy, my dad, myself, and my son later. So, we have been here and worked for the company forever.

JG: So, even your grandfather was that contract logging?

JRP: Contract logging.

JG: Okay.

JRP: Back then you just had one truck, one pair of mules and a log cutter, flat head, yes. That is all the crew was.

JG: Talk a little bit more about that.

JRP: Well of course they were using cross cut saws. People that cut our logs back then were people like Laymon and Ira Gossett. They were well known log cutters. They would cut you plenty of wood and then we went from that to...from the mules to the old blue tractors we called them. They was old Ford tractors. We would put a belly pan on it and a cab on it where if you bumped a tree and dead limb fall out it wouldn't kill the man driving the tractor and, you had to get down and hook on the grabs and drag your log.

JG: Is that gasoline or diesel?

JRP: They were diesel then, they were diesel. And, then we went from that, of course my daddy got tired of logging and wanted to go on to highway trucking and he sold out to me when I was a senior, about '61. He said if you will go borrow some money from Charles Hanks you can buy me out. Well, there really wasn't much to buy out, one truck, had a six cylinder Chevrolet truck and one of those old blue tractors. So, that is the way I started out logging there, bought my daddy's stuff and my granddaddy and I continued on logging.

JG: So, how old were you then?

JRP: Well I was a senior. I was 16 and 17 years old.

JG: What is some of the early memories of where...the areas of where you were logging?

JRP: Well, we logged down in the Big Thicket a lot around Rye, Sour Lake, Saratoga.

JG: Rye, like R-y-e?

JRP: Yes, down out of Livingston.

JG: Okay.

JRP: And, then we even logged as far over as Magnolia out of Conroe.

JG: And, those were logs for here, for Diboll?

JRP: Yes. And, something I really remember when I first...before I even got my own logging stuff we logged where Kingwood is now, Temple bought that timber from, I don't know if it was Fostoria or King Ranch whoever owned that land, Temple bought that grade hardwood. We went down there, they had several contractors down there and I was not on my own business then I was just with my granddaddy and I must have been twelve or thirteen years old. And in the summer when school was out I would go down there and they camped out then, they didn't drive back and forth then like they do now.

JG: So, when you say camped out what do you mean?

JRP: Well they had, my granddaddy had an old school bus and he had, you know, beds in it and everything and a make shift camper. There wasn't any campers like we got now.

JG: Right, right.

JRP: And, we would just set up close to the job you know. If there was a lake there or anything but this particular time he sat up right south of the Cleveland Auction Barn. There is an old concrete pillar still there and we sat up by it and there was a tire shop there and he let him hook onto electricity where you would have a fan and all. Anyway, we were cutting that grade hardwood in there and I would ride on the back of the tractor, my grandfather was driving the tractor, he would back up to the log and I would jump down and I would hook the grabs on the logs and drag one log at the time. It was good big hardwood, drag them up there and put them on the truck.

JG: What species of wood, do you remember?

JRP: Well it was red oak, pin oak, post oak, just the same thing we got now. But there wasn't any housing in there. This was back in the fifties. We hauled those logs up there to Splendora and there was a railroad spur and back then you pulled up there and unloaded them on the railroad track and the train comes along and you load them on a car and they was hauling them to Pineland to make flooring. They had already shut the hardwood mill down at Diboll and all so that was, you know, of course I remember going to the mule lot and got a lot of pictures of it. Even if you wasn't logging on the weekend or rained out

you had to go out there and feed your mules and see if everything was okay, you know, water hadn't gotten up in the corral. You always made a corral right there on the water where they would have something to drink.

JG: How many mules did y'all have at that time?

JRP: We had four, they called that a chain gang when you had four mules but you could work them separate two and two but if you were in big timber you had four, you know, where they could handle it better. So, that was some of the early logging that I remember down there.

JG: How were y'all loading them on the trucks just with poles?

JRP: On a chain, skid poles and chains.

JG: Skid poles, ya'll didn't have a crane or anything.

JRP: And you unloaded them with one of these right here behind you.

JG: With a cant hook thing, yes.

JRP: You got to the tracks and you had a toggle on there and a toggle is a chain, once you got to the top of your stakes you threw that chain over, it had a ring on it and it had a big flat hook you put and then you laid another log or two on top and that tightened up your load where they wouldn't try to bust your stakes out and all.

JG: Did y'all pull them on trailers? Did y'all have trailers then?

JRP: Yes, we had single axle trailers. Then later on of course we went to tandem trailers but no brakes. We still hadn't never gotten into brakes. When I went into business we had six cylinder Chevrolet trucks with hydraulic brakes, no brakes on the trailer. Then once the D.O.T. [Department of Transportation] or whoever, the powers that be, said we had to have brakes well, everybody would carry their truck up to old Ewell Equipment in Lufkin. He would mount an air compressor on the motor where you could have air over hydraulic brake and we thought that was really a brake, you know, then because we was just used to hydraulics. Then they made us put brakes on one axle of the trailer so we did that and run there for a long time and then of course the law was that you had to have them on every axle and all that. By then, the bigger trucks was coming out with air on them from the factory and all that. But, you just didn't have any brakes. I mean you would have a hundred thousand pounds of logs on a single axle truck and a tandem trailer and you was just foot loose. You really couldn't stop it for awhile.

JG: What kind of speeds did y'all get up on the highway with pulling loads like that? I mean to safely run? Y'all didn't run seventy miles an hour did you?

JRP: No, we didn't run 70 but you know...

JG: Forty or fifty?

JRP: You would run 40 a lot of times and like out here we would be logging out 1818 down in the Hawkins pasture or something and Renfro Pasture and see, that was dirt road and there was several real soft places on that road and you would get stuck and trucks would try to go around you and they would get stuck and I mean, you know, it was just terrible to get from out there here you know to make you a couple of loads a day. Now, you would make seven or eight loads a day, you know, that close.

JG: With air conditioning.

JRP: Yes, I remember...and then once we graduated on up along about in the late fifties, fifty nine or sixty, well Arthur hired Spencer Knutson off the West coast and he came in here and he was logging supervisor or logging engineer or something and we went to...they went to wanting to cut double length logs, you know, forty foot instead of twenty foot logs where they could better use them at the mill you know, cut them up like they wanted. So, we made that transition there and of course we went to bigger trucks.

JG: Talk a little bit about that because I had talked with him about that years ago. How did y'all react to it?

JRP: Well we kind of bristled up because we didn't have nothing to do it with. He was used to West Coast where they had bigger equipment and all that. So, I remember when they started talking about all that and we cut some twenty foot logs just experimenting with it and went from twenties to forties the tractor wouldn't hardly budge one. It wasn't enough machine to pull it so, we went over to the office one day and Mr. Temple was there and we had a meeting, I don't know there was several loggers in there and he was explaining what he wanted to do. He wanted to make this transition and go to double length logs they called it and he said, he looked over there at Spencer [Knutson] and he said "Spencer don't somebody have a machine that will drag these logs?" And, Spencer said yes. He said "well get a hold of them and get them down here and sell these boys something." So, they called a fellow named Jim Prentice and he was in Canada, in Cancar Canada and they were building a tree farm there they called it.

JG: Is that P-r-e-n-t-i-c-e?

JRP: Prentice yes.

JG: Are they the ones that make all the equipment today?

JRP: No, no, this guy's name was Prentice that brought them down here.

JG: Oh okay.

JRP: I remember it like yesterday. They brought three of those on a flat car from Canada and we got one of them, Grady Felder got one and maybe Dee Hannah got one and they

were yellow in color and they articulated the middle but they were nothing like the skidders we have now, you know. They were little bitty light weight but, oh they would do a job. I mean they would drag a log and drag the bark off of it. So, when they got those down here we got one of those and I drove it two or three years because they cost so much money I didn't want nobody to drive it and tear it up. It cost \$13,000 then. I have still got my paper where I bought it. Well, I went to the bank whenever those things come in. Somebody asked Mr. Temple in that meeting that day said "what about financing on these things, the bank going to be able to handle that?" He said "oh I think so." So, when that thing came in we carried the bill of sale down there to the bank and man they run backwards, you know. They said "oh man we are used to buying a tractor for \$2500, we don't know nothing about this thing, may not work." So, then we went...Charles Hanks was the banker and he said "y'all need to go see Mr. Shands, the old man Shands."

JG: Jay's daddy?

JRP: Jay's granddaddy.

JG: Granddaddy, okay, granddaddy.

JRP: So, we went up to the bank carried the paper, showed it to him and they kept saying they couldn't do it, they wouldn't do it. So, it seemed like we came back and told Mr. Temple the banks don't want no part of these things, you know. He said "you go back to the bank and see if they don't want some of it." So, what he did he called up there and told them hey I want my people to have these so, they financed one and of course been financing them ever since, you know, but it scared them, that much money at one time and not knowing if it worked.

JG: Right, right.

JRP: So anyway we got, we started out with that tree farmer and then by that time Timberjack went to coming in here and they had a skidder and it was a good one and we switched out to Timberjack's. Then Caterpillar came out with one. I demoed the first cat they came out with, the first Cat skidder and it wasn't real good. They didn't have it perfected. We demoed it out around there about a week and they carried it back to Peoria and revamped it and come out with some other stuff, got ideas. We told them what it needed and they went back and came out later on then they had a real good skidder and we went to Caterpillar. Then John Deere comes along in later years, the last twenty years, they come along, they had a good skidder, got real good fuel mileage. So, a lot of people went John Deere, Timberjack, and then of course hydraulic loaders. Willard Grimes I believe was the contractor that bought the first hydraulic loader. It was a Hi-ho, and then when Barko comes out with a hydraulic loader, see that was what was the pain. Back in the old days we were hooking tongs. When your truck driver got backed under this old A-frame loader, stiff boom loader like you see right yonder, when he backed under the truck, beside the logs the truck driver got out and hooked the front end tong and then you had what you called the tongue hooker he would hook the other end. Well, when they

went to those mixed length logs you can see what a problem that would cause. Your tong lines would be, oh it would be a mess. We had eyes platted in them where if we were doing forty foot logs we could hook them up on a hook, slide hook. Then when we got sixty foot logs we could let them out and they wouldn't come up even, you know, one end would come up before the other. It was kind of a pain. So, hydraulic loader was a great thing.

JG: And that was because they could swivel and move around.

JRP: Yes, see a hydraulic loader comes out and you just reach out there and grab them throw them on a truck. Well, Willard Grimes bought a Hy-ho and then it wasn't long after that until Barko from Duluth, Minnesota, the factory was there, they came to Lufkin and James Jones had the dealership on them and I bought the first one they got in, the 250 Barko.

JG: And that is B-a-r-k-o.

JRP: B-a-r-k-o, and we'd run one of them things five or six years. They would last good.

JG: What about the Prentice that I've been seeing?

JRP: That is really the Cadillac then, once Prentice came out that was really the Cadillac loader.

JG: And that had nothing to do with the sales guy right?

JRP: Nothing to do with the sales guy, his name just happened to be Prentice but, he demoed those old skidders and stuff. But, anyway we bought the loader and bought three or four Barko's you know, and then once Prentice come along we went to buying some Prentice. Then we went to going to tandem trucks, you know, not a single axle a tandem truck where we could haul all these longer logs we would haul bigger loads. Tandem trailers, tandem trucks, diesel motors and back in the seventies I went down to Houston to Trucks of Texas and I bought...I guess I brought the first two Peterbilt's in here for logging and I bought two Peterbilt's down there, tandem with caterpillar engines and brought them in and from there on everybody went to going to diesel trucks. Even the company they didn't have diesels. They were hauling lumber out of here with little old Chevrolet trucks with a drag axle under them. It wouldn't even pull. It wasn't a live axle. They would haul to Detroit, they would go everywhere with those little old trucks. Then later on they got some diesel trucks.

JG: Talk a little bit about...you've talked some about the technology transition but maybe about like in those early days, late fifties or early sixties how many maybe contract loggers were out there or companies? Were they just family operations verses today and maybe the number of operations and what size those operations are?

JRP: Okay.

JG: You know, you mentioned the mom and pop kind of thing.

JRP: Okay, we had that one truck deal but once we got that bigger equipment we had to have more trucks in order to pay for that bigger equipment. So, everybody got on up and had three trucks or five trucks, basically the same people, you know, the Grimes's, the Hannah,s and Pouland's and Breazeale's, and the Duren's. I mean the same people we had they just got bigger.

JG: Everybody got bigger? So nobody left and no newcomers came in?

JRP: Nobody left, everybody got bigger and every now and then there would be a newcomer. See by then the Papermill was going to tree length wood. Prior to that they had four foot wood they was hauling four foot wood.

JG: Cord like, cord wood.

JRP: And, they finally went to bringing their wood in tree length.

JG: And we are talking about the Papermill?

JRP: Yes, the Papermill in Lufkin, Southland, yes.

JG: Now when did they transition to that, approximately?

JRP: Probably in the late sixties, early seventies they went to some tree length wood, experimenting.

JG: Okay. Now, did y'all haul some of that four foot stuff for the Papermill?

JRP: We never did, we never did fool with pulpwood, other than tree length pulpwood.

JG: Right, okay.

JRP: No they had their own crew, you know. What they had was a wood dealer like Mr. Mayberry was one and they had about four wood dealers, Jim Gordon Bell, and mostly it was black people had them a pulpwood truck and they would put four foot on one side and four foot on the other side, you know, made a total eight foot wide and they handled it by hand, everything was by hand. And, those people...

JG: You mean they would carry the four foot pieces on their shoulder?

JRP: On their shoulders, I mean, they would haul it to the Papermill and unload but Mr. Mayberry, a wood dealer we are talking about, all the money went through him. The Papermill didn't have to cut a check for every little old pulp wood truck that come in the

mill. They wanted a wood dealer to handle all that paperwork and then they would make one check to the wood dealer. So, that is the way that worked and you know, they would get a dollar a cord or something for handling all the paperwork.

JG: And, who was the main wood handler?

JRP: Well, Ted Mayberry had one territory. Jim Gordon Bell had it up around Wells and Shirley Daniels had one. There was five or six of them that were dealers, Mr. Gipson over around Apple Springs. They all done pretty well but it was a headache, you know, because they were always wanting to borrow money. You handled the paperwork and paid them and they would have to get a little money before Friday and it was a headache to do it. But, the Papermill didn't have to fool with each individual truck.

JG: Now did y'all do anything for the Evadale mill?

JRP: Oh yes, we hauled pulpwood down there.

JG: Even in the early days?

JRP: Well even before Temple owned it.

JG: Yes, that is what I meant.

JRP: When it was Eastex or whatever. Yes, I can remember hauling...

JG: Was that hardwood mostly?

JRP: No we hauled pine and see Temple would buy timber off their land, saw logs, big timber. And, I can remember a real good tract of timber I hauled one time down on Caney Creek at Chester [Texas] and of course we carried the big logs. But, now back then they painted the timber what they wanted to cut. The foresters would go through and they would squirt paint about eye level and paint at the ground.

JG: What color?

JRP: Blue, but that was the only thing you cut was the spotted trees. And, that wouldn't be but five or six trees to the acre. We would cover over lots of acres.

JG: You would only cut five or six?

JRP: You would cut five or six trees on an acre.

JG: Per acre.

JRP: And they would let the other grow and what they would do back then is cut the culls. They would go through and they would paint the culls and leave that good timber, you know, until the last and they would reseed and all that.

JG: Who owned the land?

JRP: Well Eastex owned that land down there at Chester but Temple would buy timber from them and back then in my early days Temple bought a lot of government timber and boy that was good timber, big timber. And, they was real picky about your logging you know.

JG: Did you get it from the Angelina and Davy Crockett?

JRP: Both of them.

JG: Both of them.

JRP: Yes.

JG: Did y'all go all the way to Sabine?

JRP: All the way, we went everywhere. We would haul to Pineland.

JG: Sam Houston too?

JRP: We would go to Sam Houston. We would go over around Pineland, we would carry those logs to Pineland. You know, we would carry the log to the closest mill which made sense, you know, cut down on the freight.

JG: About what time period did you stop camping out at the place of operations?

JRP: Oh let's see, probably in the late sixties, you know, had good enough equipment and all. See they was cutting out the railroad up at Palestine, they quit hauling them in by train. Prior to that time we would dump those logs on the rail up there around Maydell. We would bring them out of the woods from Palestine all back in them, we called them mountains, you know, they some big hills back in there.

JG: Yes, seven hundred feet or so, yes.

JRP: Yes, we would haul them out there and dump them on the track and a train would come along and load them up and haul them to Diboll. And, they would let us bring one load in the evening to get home, you know, so we would bring one load in, the last load in the afternoon we would bring to Diboll.

JG: But most of it was by train, y'all just took a load in so it wouldn't be a wasted trip.

JRP: Yes, and then later on they cut the train out and we hauled them all in from up there.

JG: Yes, okay.

JRP: And, we would make two and three loads per truck from up there.

JG: Is that when TSE [Texas South Eastern] stopped operating I guess back in December 31, of '69 or somewhere in there?

JRP: Yes, yes. They hauled them down through Boggy Slough and all, you know, through Rayville, that old rail come right down through there and went up there to the Fastrill camp, you know, there on 294. But then everything went to being hauled by truck and brought it in. They kind of stopped the rail stuff but prior to that they would dump logs off out there like you were going to the school now, the high school.

JG: Yes, Lumberjack Drive.

JRP: We would dump logs out there on the side...they had a little spur going out there across the highway and we would dump logs out there. They had logs scattered all over town for the winter because you didn't have any equipment to get in the woods when it got boggy.

JG: Is that where the Jordan girl lost her arm on Lumberjack Drive?

JRP: Well no, I think it was on the other side of my store there, that little spur that ran up to the mill.

JG: Okay, but they did have track that went out there.

JRP: Yes, they had tracks that went out there.

JG: Is Lumberjack Drive the old railroad route more or less?

JRP: Well, it's basically in that area right there. I don't know if it's the exact deal but I remember it being there.

JG: But, you remember the railroad tracks actually crossing the highway?

JRP: Oh yes, I remember dumping logs on it. As a kid I would go with those old truck drivers out there to dump a load of logs on it.

JG: What type...were there crossing arms on the highway across that railroad track or what was there?

JRP: You know I don't even remember. It wasn't much highway to it back then. See it was about '50 or '52 when they built the highway?

JG: Well it was a state highway...

JRP: See they had an old highway, they had old 35 there and I don't remember how they got across that if it had arms or what.

JG: You know we have got lots of photographs but we don't have any photographs of that area. And, we have had lots of people...I've wondered but we have had lots of other people wonder what type of protection they had because it was a state highway and a U. S. Highway.

JRP: Yes.

JG: And, had railroad tracks going across it.

JRP: I've never even thought about it and I sure don't remember it but, I tell you the logging has really changed. For so long we had big logs and nothing to get them and now you got something to get the logs but you got little logs.

JG: I noticed that coming in this morning the little old bitty pine poles.

JRP: Oh it is pitiful. We run over stuff like that, you know, but they get it all now.

JG: Did y'all ever log any in Boggy Slough?

JRP: Oh a lot of times, a lot of times.

JG: Pine?

JRP: Everybody was kind of scared to log out there, you know, because it was such a touchy deal you know, cutting trees in there where all the wheels hunted and was in there watching so they was real particular about it.

JG: What are some of the areas you logged in there?

JRP: I have been all over every tract in Boggy Slough, north and south end, at some time or another in a forty year period there my logging we were on just about every tract.

JG: What would be the biggest tract that ya'll cut, acreage wise?

JRP: You know the way this logging started out when we was small they called it a strip line. They would bring some tape out and they might have a 500 acre tract of timber here. And, they would go out there and they would run a strip down through here and they give us that and then they might give Breazeale this and Grimes this.

JG: Now how far each side of the strip would you go?

JRP: Well it wouldn't be big enough for nothing but it was enough to hold you awhile to work and they would just have everybody right there together and you would have what you called a strip of timber, from front to back. You had some close to the road and you had some at the back end running along.

JG: So you had your assignments?

JRP: You had your assignment.

JG: So, if you finished your assignment before the other guy what did you do?

JRP: Okay, if you finished that you moved around to another one. They would have some more marked off. And then you might have to pick up and move, you know, like we have hauled from Magnolia. I have hauled logs, believe it or not, from Mont Belvieu. They would buy timber down there around them rice fields in Mont Belvieu and haul a lot of timber out around Magnolia and all down there. And, then up around Palestine and up around there but then later on they began giving us big tracts, several thousand acres because we were big enough to get on over it and get out of there. Back then they were cutting about every five years they would go back in there and select cut again. That way they were on their land and nobody couldn't homestead it and all that because they were on their exercising their timber rights every five years or so.

JG: Right. So, what percentage would you say that was Temple business of your overall logging? Did it vary from decade to decade or...I mean did you log for anybody else beside Temple?

JRP: No, no, I never hauled a log for nobody else.

JG: Okay.

JRP: I worked for Temple all the time but, now some of the fellows would jump around, you know. They would go down to Carter and log awhile and maybe up to the Papermill, maybe they showed them a track they didn't like here they would just go to another one but I never did, I stayed right here all the time.

JG: You mentioned Spencer Knutson but who were some of the other people with the Temple Company that you worked with?

JRP: Okay in the early days when I first started there was people like Barney Breazeale, was an old one that was...they wasn't a schooled forester they were just a forester by, you know, they just learned it.

JG: Like Kenneth Nelson.

JRP: Kenneth Nelson and them and then we had Albert J. Wells, Richie Wells, and Emory Roach and those people were in the early days. And, later on before Spencer or after Spencer got here old Earnest Rowe, you probably know Earnest in Lufkin.

JG: Yes.

JRP: Earnest Rowe was one of the foresters down here in Spencer's time and then Elliott Weatherford, he came from Camden. His daddy had a background with old man Carter down there and Scarborough, they called him Little-one Scarborough [E. W. Scarborough], Dan Longacre, all of these fellows were foresters for a long time and then of course now they got a new bunch out of SFA [Stephen F. Austin] and stuff like that...but none of those first fellows had a degree or anything.

JG: Was Dave Kenley still involved?

JRP: You know I was thinking the other day, the last time I remember seeing Dave Kenley in the old commissary they had a big old freight elevator in there and if you wanted to go upstairs on the elevator you could go up by the ice house and Dave Kenley, I got on the elevator with him, and that was the last time I ever saw him. I never had any dealings with him or anything like that, just see him out at Boggy Slough punching cows or fooling around out there. I remember those old corals and stuff. I sat around Rayville where they loaded those cows on the train and stuff and shipping them.

JG: There is still a couple of dipping vats out there. One at Rayville it is all caved in but there is one at Walkerton that is still completely intact and it is all in the woods now, but were they doing any cattle dipping and stuff during your time?

JRP: No, not when I started logging no.

JG: I think in the '30s was when they were mainly doing all of that.

JRP: Yes, they made them do it didn't they?

JG: Yes, it was required.

JRP: For ticks.

JG: You couldn't ship them out of the county unless they had been dipped.

JRP: Yes, there is one of them old vats out here on my place, right by my place here on 1818. Yes, they had them pretty close together where people could dip.

JG: Well, we talked a good bit about logging and stuff and of course I know there is more stuff we could cover maybe in a future interview or something. We might come back a little later this morning and talk some more about that. But, let's kind of shift gears a little bit and just talk more about your personal life maybe just growing up, your home. What are some of your earliest memories of town, school, stuff like that?

JRP: Okay, well course like I say I was born and raised over there by the old feed house and that old house by the way is still standing today behind the Exxon Station down here.

JG: Okay.

JRP: They have painted it pink, some Spanish people own it and it is on the street right behind that Exxon that old house that is our old house.

JG: That is where you grew up?

JRP: Yes, then there was a house by us there the Rushing's lived in, Burlon Wilkerson's granddaddy.

JG: J. B. Rushing?

JRP: Jim Rushing.

JG: Jim, yes.

JRP: And, he was one of the first people I remember as a kid because he would play with us all the time and he worked on the train. And, my mother's daddy worked on that old train right there, Mr. Martin, John Martin. So, I remember those days over there and then later when we left over here in town we went out on 1818 where I live now on that ground out there. My granddaddy lived there forever. He bought that place from Sherwood Cryer, built the house and all. You know old Sherwood had Gilley's in Pasadena, Sherwood Cryer?

JG: Okay.

JRP: Woody Cryer is his folks and they left there in the forties and my granddaddy bought that place out there, so we moved out there and lived out there in the country most of my life. Then once I started to school, we moved right across from the office down here on Booker Street and bought a new house there. The company had built some houses and lived there during my school, going to school here at Diboll. I mean I remember dirt streets when I was growing up, that was dirt streets all over there around the commissary and stuff.

JG: Was cattle roaming free?

JRP: Cattle and hogs, you know, and what I started to tell you about that old feed house, you know feed would fall through the cracks. It was three or four feet off the ground and the feed would fall through the cracks and them animals would all want to go under there to pick up them scraps that was falling through.

JG: (laughter)

JRP: But, I've never been anywhere but here in Diboll. Then you know along about the time the mill burned, seeing that picture over there...

JG: In '68, I believe.

JRP: See, when the mill burned we didn't know what our logging was going to do because we were hauling to Diboll and we didn't know if we were going to have a job until they built it back or not, so I bought the Exxon Station back. My daddy was the first man to have that Exxon Station in '58 when they built it.

JG: How many gas stations were there in town?

JRP: Oh there were four or five, yes, there was a Texaco right across the street by the bank and the Sinclair up there was Gresham Temple. Benny Rector had it and the Gulf Station down here and yes, we had five or six.

JG: Your daddy got the Exxon Station.

JRP: But he had the new Exxon Station and of course, he worked a bunch of us boys around there. Back then you washed cars, you swept floor boards, and checked the batteries when they come in and done all that kind of stuff.

JG: Full service.

JRP: Service stuff yes. But anyway, when the mill burned...when was that in the seventies?

JG: I think '68.

JRP: In '68 I bought it back. It came up for sale and I bought it. I said, "well I can fill in with that if the logging goes bad." So, we bought it back and I kept it a few years and back then Don Wier and Harold Maxwell and a lot of the boys, we just kind of hang out up there at night, you know, and it was pretty slow, not a lot of traffic and we might pitch nickels at the line or you know, just sat around there and chew the fat.

JG: How late would you stay open?

JRP: Stay open until about nine o'clock, of course the Pine Bough was running then across the street and there would be people going in and out of there eating and all, but we had a big time. Then I sold it, seemed like I might have sold it to Glen Hines when I sold it. And, so then...

JG: Talk a little bit about that area, the Village Shopping Center and you know, you mentioned the Pine Bough.

JRP: Yes, when it went from the Commissary over there that was really something that Pine Bough and the bank.

JG: Talk a little bit about that.

JRP: Well I remember when I was a youngster there was not a bank and Jay Boren would go to Lufkin to get the money to pay off with, and bring it down to the commissary. And they would put cash money in an envelope with your name on it and give it to you. A fellow named Scoggins would pass out the money and people would go to the pay window.

JG: And when was payday?

JRP: Well really you could work that day and go by and get your money that evening if you needed to, but it was on Friday, regular payday. And...

JG: Did everybody go at the end of the day Friday or middle of the day or?

JRP: Yes, most of them would go at dinner. If they got a break at dinner they would go get that money quick as they could, you know.

JG: And wait in line?

JRP: Yes, they would be lined up. You've seen pictures of it in the old book, you know, about them lined up there getting it.

JG: Yes, and they would pay them in cash?

JRP: Yes, for a long time. And then of course the new bank, that was really something when we got a bank here over there across the street and all. Charles Hanks was the banker and Jim Curl worked in there and nobody had to go to Lufkin any more to do banking.

JG: So that was a pretty big deal huh?

JRP: Oh yes, big deal. And that Pine Bough was something else. I know you wasn't here, but they had really good food and had some black women back there cooking that really made good dumplings and people come from miles around on Sunday to eat dinner there. But anyway, after that while I was logging I sold the station, after we saw the logging was going to be alright I sold the station. After that I kind of saw the need, Sandra was in the real estate business then and we had bought her daddy's store building where we are now and he was retiring and he was city judge and he retired from the grocery business.

JP: And, just for the record say who her dad was.

JRP: Her daddy was Sherod Powell and he came here in 1942 with a store across the track, that old two story building across the railroad track over there. There were two or

three of those standing there side by side and Sandra's uncle got killed. The train ran over him, Mr. E. P. Burden, and he stepped out there.

JG: Here in Diboll?

JRP: Right there at that crossing. He came out there and one train was on the side track and he walked in front of it and the other one hit him. He was deaf and couldn't hear and it strewed him all up and down the track there, but anyway the lady called Sandra's daddy, kinfolks in Chester and said you need to come up here and help me run this store. Said "you know my husband got killed and I don't know that much about it, so come on up here." So, he come up here in '42.

JG: Did he have a store in Chester?

JRP: Yes, he had a store in Chester and he came on up here and she said she didn't want no part of the store, so she sold it to him. And that is the way Sandra's folks got here in the store business.

JG: How did y'all meet, you and Sandra?

JRP: Well, we went all through school together, every grade, and same age and everything. But her daddy had them grocery stores and then Mr. Temple, when they moved the new highway out here from old 35 where we are now, Mr. Temple sold him that land there where the store is [Pouland's Everything Store] and he built a grocery store there. And then Marvin Baker wanted to have a café. He was a builder, a home builder and he wanted a café and so Mr. Powell built him, where the insurance office is, that was a café and it was called 8 Bakers, Bobby's daddy, Marvin, so they had 8 Bakers Café there. We had another café in town and so I don't know how long they run it, several years and all the kids would go there and hang out after school and walk up there.

JG: What kind of food did they serve?

JRP: They had anything from hamburgers to lunches, just everything. Of course the Pine Bough I can remember early in the morning all the kids would stop off at the Pine Bough, walking to school, they would go in there and get them a coke and then walk on to school and we didn't have a closed campus then. At lunch we could all leave campus and go to the Dairy Queen [Kream]. We had...Jay Boren had a Dairy Queen [Kream] there and all and we could go up there and get a hot dog or whatever you wanted. It wasn't like now where they have to stay there.

JG: How long a lunch break did you get?

JRP: Thirty minutes.

JG: So, everybody just walked over there?

JRP: Yes, whoever had a car you would ride you know, but most of us was young and we would walk up there. And, it wasn't a cafeteria down here at the Junior High, right yonder, there wasn't a cafeteria in that school when they built it.

JG: And, that was the high school.

JRP: Yes, right there was the high school in later years. We had to walk from there over to the old campus behind Brookshire's to get to the lunch room. So, instead of going to the lunch room we would go to the Dairy Queen [Kream] or something you know. But...

JG: And it was Dairy Kream?

JRP: Kream with a K.

JG: With a K, okay. Talk a little bit about that and then eventually I want to ask you about Jay Boren.

JRP: Well Jay really watched after the kids around there you know, and they had car hops, you know, and they would come out and take your order at the car and go back and bring it back to you.

JG: Did they wear roller skates?

JRP: No, they didn't wear no skates.

JG: Probably didn't have a good enough pavement.

JRP: No, not a good pavement, but anyway it was a fun place and it was a hangout for all the kids and he later built a little old...when the pin ball machines come out and all that kind of stuff, well he built a little lean to room off to the side of that thing and he would...

JG: Did it have a level floor?

JRP: Yes, it had a level floor and some booths and all...

JG: For the pin ball. (laughing)

JRP: He did that like a private club.

JG: Oh!

JRP: You know for a dime you could join that little club or something, you know, he kept other undesirable people out by doing that. Of course you walked the line around there, you know, Jay didn't put up with no foolishness, no bad talk or nothing, you know. He was quit a character and we always got along and knew him well.

JG: We've heard stories.

JRP: Yes, Merle was his wife and she mostly run the café there and he was kind of the lawman. Of course we had another place to hang out too and that was Holcomb's Café. It is up there where P. & S. Trucking is. It was right where the Sonic is.

JG: Okay, and spell that.

JRP: Holcomb.

JG: H-o-l-c-o-m-b?

JRP: Yes, Press Holcomb had that thing and we called it the Greasy Spoon or the Bloody Bucket or something. It was just an old run down café.

JG: Was there lot's of fights there?

JRP: Yes, back then there was a lot of scuffling you know, but not a killing.

JG: But not at Jay's place?

JRP: No, no, there wasn't no trouble around there.

JG: (Laughter)

JRP: But, you would hang out at one or two of them, whichever one you wanted to hang out at, but that was the two places. Then down here where Polk's is on the south end of town old Drake had a store down there.

JG: By the cemetery, by the old Emporia Cemetery?

JRP: Yes, right there that was, Drake had a store there.

JG: That is near where KSPL was too, the radio station?

JRP: Yes, near that KSPL but that was a neat little old place and he cooked hamburgers and hot dogs and all in there and had a few groceries and stuff in there back then.

JG: Talk about the radio station.

JRP: Well the radio station was something. I still have some of the old newspapers when they had a program on there, "Catwalk with Wier". And Dede Camp worked in there and Wier in the radio station.

JG: And that is Don Wier.

JRP: Yes, Don Wier and Lanyon.

JG: Ward Lanyon?

JRP: Yes, and of course Murphy Martin was down there a little bit but anyhow.

JG: Talk about the music.

JRP: Oh they had...

JG: Did everybody listen to it?

JRP: Well Don played a lot of rock and roll and stuff that all the kids wanted in the afternoon he called it, "The Catwalk with Wier" and seemed like it was from 3 to 5 after school was out or something you know. But Mr. Temple didn't like that kind of music. He was a muzak man. He wanted to pipe that in the office, you know, real soft easy listening stuff, but old Wier was able to keep playing that because he was friends with Buddy and them I guess, and Chotsy and they liked it and the kids did, so they was able to keep it on there, you know.

JG: One of the old D.J's told me one night he was playing a record and it was one of the latest rock and roll records and it was late at night and Mr. Temple came in and he says, "son did you like that song that was just playing?" He said, "yes sir." He said, "good, you take that record home with you tonight." (laughter)

JRP: Yes, I imagine. (laughter)

JG: He didn't want it played on his radio station.

JRP: It was a pretty neat deal that station was.

JG: Back up a little bit and talk about when you were a young kid, talk about going to school, teachers you remember, and classmates.

JRP: Well back then the school was about three foot off the ground, those old original buildings that we went in and we would get under the building and play for recess, you know. We would crawl under them old buildings and play.

JG: Marbles or what?

JRP: Well we played marbles we played all kind of stuff. We would grind up bricks you know, rub two of them old bricks together and make gold dust we called it or something you know. Of course after we got up bigger, you know, around sixth or seventh grade we would sit around there and talk. They had benches out there under all those trees, you know, water fountain out there. I noticed that old concrete water fountain is still out there on the campus. We had that old gym over there was the only gym we had to play in then

and it was, well it was fun growing up here. Money wasn't an issue, nobody had any money but we had a lot of good times.

JG: What about some of the teachers you remember?

JRP: Well I remember all my old teachers, yes. I remember my first day of school, Mrs. Rodgers was my first grade teacher and I remember there wasn't no kindergarten.

JG: Was it Marguerite?

JRP: No Mrs. Rodgers.

JG: Yes, but what was her first name Marguerite Rodgers? Was it Bullock?

JRP: No, I can't remember her first name right now, but anyway, she taught here for thirty or forty years.

JG: There was a Rodgers.

JRP: Anyway, the first day of school I remember that since it wasn't no kindergarten, some of them kids were not weaned, you know. They would bring them and throw them out and them kids cried all day the first day of school.

JG: Brought what?

JRP: Bring their kids and throw them out and they wanted their momma, not the school teacher, and it was a mess the first day of school. You know they got over it after recess and they saw they could play a little and swing in the swings and stuff. Then went on up to the second grade and had Mrs. White was second grade teacher. Her husband had a grocery store over across the tracks over there, Laurie White. Then...

JG: I'm really jumping around here, talk about the Diboll Navy.

JRP: Oh yes, I was in on that.

JG: Were you the admiral?

JRP: Well no, my daddy and Joe Denman and Sherrell Fears and all that bunch and I have still got a lot of pictures in the paper that they did, you know, stories about it then. We would go down here and the women would all see us off down at the bridge and we would go down to Rockland and we would camp under the bridge that night, the Rockland bridge.

JG: The old highway 40, 69 highway bridge.

JRP: We would camp under that bridge and have us a camp fire and all and the next morning we would get up and we would go on to Dam B and the women would bring the

cars and trailers down there to load the boats up, so it was a two day deal and it was a fun deal, you know. Eddie Baggett went with us a few times. He had two motors on the back of his boat, that was really something then and one time he hit a log going down there and one of the motors jumped off you know, and the boat and all that kind of stuff.

JG: It fell off the boat?

JRP: Yes, someone was always breaking down. But, John Booker, Joe Denman, my daddy.

JG: Yes Trey went.

JRP: Yes, we all went down through there. One day we was going down there and it was pretty cool and this fellow named Robert Stewart, he was a blow pipe man.

JG: What was his last name?

JRP: Robert Stewart.

JG: Stewart, okay.

JRP: And, he had a blow...where Carl Pavlic's old grocery store used to be, he had a blow pipe business there. That is where Diboll Motors was at one time and he had a heck of a business there, and he always went with us. And he had a boat and all and he told me one day, we was going down there and two or three miles before we got down to Rockland he said, "I tell you what." He said, "if you will get out of this boat and ski on down there to the bridge," and it was cold, he said, "I'll give you that pair of water skis." And I wanted them bad because they had a rooster tail on the end of them. When you was skiing it would be throwing that water twenty foot and I wanted them things. So I slipped my britches off and got off out there in the water and they got me up and I skied all the way down there to that bridge and he gave me them skis, and I still got them. You know, we would stay all night and go on to B Dam the next day and the women would pick us up. We had a lot of fun. We went boating somewhere just about every weekend. Joe Denman and all of them really liked boating and my folks did.

JG: Just riding around or fishing?

JRP: No, we would go to Lake Murvaul and camp out.

JG: But I mean did you fish or just motor boat around?

JRP: We did fish. We would put out trot lines and catch a bunch of catfish and cook fish and Dam B was the hot place then. It was kind of new and we would go down there and camp out.

JG: This was before Rayburn came in?

JRP: Oh yes, that was the only lake around here and Murvaul was up there.

JG: Murvaul is pretty good ways away isn't it?

JRP: Yes.

JG: When did Livingston come in? Did y'all go to White Rock Creek or anything?

JRP: No, we never did go there because see we were all grown then and had quit boating by then by the time it put in.

JG: A few people went over White Rock Creek didn't they?

JRP: Oh yes, that was a good spot, we just had outgrown it.

JG: Okay, talk about school sports. What all sports did you play?

JRP: Well, I played everything. Back then you know on the football team we were 1-A and we didn't have enough boys to have an A team and a B team. And I played both ways. I played every minute of the game.

JG: And about what years would this have been?

JRP: Well that was in...started playing high school ball in '58, Bobby Ramsey's time.

JG: Okay.

JRP: When I was coming into high school Bobby and that bunch, Charles Havard, they were seniors and I was a freshman or sophomore, one.

JG: Bobby was a pretty good athlete wasn't he?

JRP: Bobby was a great athlete. And we come on and Bert Lindsey, well Irwin Dubose was a coach my first two years in high school and then Bert Lindsey come to town and Bert was a good coach and a hard working coach. We had a good team and well, I made all district offense and defense both a couple of years there, my junior and senior year. Then Bert didn't stay coaching but two or three years and he went to work for Stubby, selling Sabine Investment.

JG: Horace Stubblefield.

JRP: Yes, Horace Stubblefield, selling real estate and stuff and, but I always played ball and I started out playing little league when they had the first teams. We had four teams here. The parents, everybody got involved with that little league. The old little league field was here about where the bank is, and the old Miller stadium.

JG: Was right here wasn't it?

JRP: Yes, right in this area. But, something I think about quite often is something what we had for drinking water then, it was a big old box they had up on legs and it was a big old box, old timey ice box, and it had a bunch of coils in it running around in the bottom of it and they would come over here and lay a big block of ice on them coils and that water would be so cold it would hurt your teeth you know, laying on them coils.

JG: So, the water would go through the coils.

JRP: The water went through the coils and that ice was making it cold and oh it was good water. But see along then too, Mr. Schinke, you've heard them talking about Mr. Schinke?

JG: Yes.

JRP: He had a nursery right here beside the ball park and there was a nursery and flower shop there.

JG: What all kind of plants did he have?

JRP: He had everything in the world to landscape a yard with. He was a gardener and it was there and of course Miller stadium was there and it had two or three little league fields there and we played amongst ourselves and then we would play Chester, we would play Corrigan, Camden, everybody had a little league team and we would play amongst ourselves. We would play them and then they would get down to the All-Stars, you know, Lufkin and everybody and they would pick out All-Star teams and stuff like that.

JG: Was that by county?

JRP: I don't know how they did that, I really don't. I know, we had a lot of fun playing little league. I mean, we would be worn out by the time a game started at night. We was so excited we would get our ball and bat and put our suit on and we would go down there at one o'clock and wasn't going to play until five or six in the evening and we would be worn out by the time the game started, you know, from playing. It was a lot of fun, little league was. (laughter) Bobby played little league. His daddy was a big promoter of little league and sports.

JG: Any particular games stand out in your mind?

JRP: No, no.

JG: You didn't hit the cycle or anything did you in any game?

JRP: Oh I hit a lot of home runs. I was a pretty good hitter but...

JG: What position did you play?

JRP: Well, I pitched and I would catch some in little league, pitch and catch.

JG: What about football, what position?

JRP: I was fullback, I played fullback in football.

JG: On defense?

JRP: I played line backer on defense. And we were just 1-A then.

JG: Okay, kind of continuing on with school talk about, you know, after you got married and started having kids I guess, and then you were on the school board for awhile.

JRP: Yes.

JG: Talk a little bit about that. What prompted you to get on the school board and when was that?

JRP: Well, I don't know. See Sandra's daddy Mr. Powell was on the school board for years and years.

JG: He was chairman I think for a while wasn't he?

JRP: Yes for a long time. He was on the board in the old days and then we come along there and there wasn't any women on the school board back in those days. It seems to me like Dr. Hoot's wife, Ed Hoot's wife, run and she was the first woman on the school board.

JG: Yes, I think so.

JRP: And then Sandra got on the school board after that and she stayed nine years or so, then I got on there and I stayed about three terms. Oh, it was an eye opener you know and you always think you can take this money and do this and this money and do that, but you know there is restrictions on the money. You can't spend your lunch room money for athletics, and you know, so it's an eye opener for you to be on there.

JG: You didn't try to do that did you? (laughter)

JRP: No, no, no.

JG: Is there any big issues that came up during y'alls time on the board?

JRP: Yes, I was on the board when we first started getting computers.

JG: Now, what time period would that have been? The early '80s?

JRP: I guess it would have been early '80s but anyway, we had asked Mr. Temple and the Foundation to maybe get some help to have a computer program, technology and all that and he said, "well the only way I will do it is if y'all will go to Plano, they are supposed to have one of the best programs going, and go up there and look at their program and kind of pattern after it." So, we did and he gave us a good sum of money to get started in the computer stuff and technology, so we just took it from there.

JG: Was that through like a grant from the company or from him?

JRP: No, the Foundation gave us some money, the Temple Foundation.

JG: The T. L. L. Temple Foundation?

JRP: Yes, as well as they did other schools too, you know. They didn't just give us something.

JG: Did y'all get grants or anything from the state or the government?

JRP: Oh yes, we had a person that could write grants and all then and we would get a little money that way. Of course Mr. Powell always said, somebody said, "Mr. Powell" said, "what was the worst thing ever happened when you was on the school board?" He said, "well son probably the worst thing that ever happened that first money we ever took from the state" (laughter) because then they told you what to do from then on.

JG: From then on huh?

JRP: So, he was on the board before when you was just an independent school.

JG: Yes. Let's see here...oh let's see, talk about Diboll Day, Diboll Day memories or something like that.

JRP: Oh my goodness. I meant to bring you a picture and you need a copy of it. I was at the first Diboll Day. We had an old army jeep and Joe Denman had just come to town not long before, and my daddy and Joe Denman was in that old jeep the first Diboll Day and had a big old loud speaker about that big around.

JG: He is holding his hands up about three feet across.

JRP: Yes, and we would drive around and they would line up the parade, you know, in what order they wanted it in over there by the Methodist Church. And then at the parade that year my mother and about six other ladies at Diboll put on their old dresses and bonnets and had a little old trailer there about eight or ten foot long and they got old straight chairs they put in there and I got a picture of them in that and that old jeep pulling them through the parade, you know. Everybody tried to put something in it back then. It was a huge deal...and bands, there would be fifteen bands come. Mr. Temple

always liked bands for Diboll Day. But, they were all kind of exhibits, you know, these logs on trucks and wagons and log wagons and oh it was something else. I guess we was in it with some kind of float, we had some kind of float in it, back then it was every year.

JG: Yes, from '53 to '58, I believe it was every year.

JRP: Yes, we had some kind of float in it every year up until the last five or six years.

JG: You say we, you're talking about?

JRP: My family, somebody in my family, you know.

JG: The trucking or the store.

JRP: Well, the trucking or the store or I would have horses or mules and wagons. One year I pulled cannon through the parade for a guy. He wanted to hook a cannon on the back, old Eldridge Weaver, and I pulled his cannon through the parade for him. All kinds of stuff like that but mostly logs and lumber and you know on trucks. I used to always put a big load of logs in the parade.

JG: Sandra's been driving her little yellow Volkswagen occasionally.

JRP: Yes, and I guess one of the best ones we ever had...

JG: Pulling for Diboll or something like that.

JRP: ...yes, I don't know if you remember it or not but we jumped up the last few minutes about a week before Diboll Day and we said we wasn't going to be in it and then we said yes, we are so, I had a boy come by and build us a little old make shift house like an old timey house, about and 8x8.

JG: Was it boards or logs?

JRP: Boards.

JG: An old board house.

JRP: We sat it up on the trailer and we got an old wash bath tub like people used to bathe in, just an old tub, long tub and we put one of the boys in the bathtub and his wife was scrubbing his back with a deal and I had an old grinder there that you sharpen axes with. I was sitting on it sharpening an axe. My boy was splitting wood and stacking it and just stuff you would be doing and my mother and my mother in law, Sandra's mother, was washing on a rub board, had a wash pot with a fire under it. I've got all those pictures. I meant to bring them and show them to you but, we had a big time that year. We haven't been in it for a few years now.

JG: Talk about how Diboll Day has changed over the years.

JRP: Well they used to have more queens, you know, than they do now. Fiberboard would have one and this and that one would have one. It is not near as big a deal as it used to be when the company...the company really got involved, put a lot of money into it and let people work. They would let those people off work to sale tickets. They would go all over the country selling tickets and it was a big deal, a fun deal for everybody. It brought everybody together and oh Mr. Temple and Lottie and them they really got involved in it. Mr. Shepherd he was the biggest promoter I guess they ever had.

JG: Talk a little bit about him.

JRP: Well Sandra went to work for Mr. Shepherd. The way she got to work for Mr. Shepherd, Buddy's wife...

JG: That is C. H. Shepherd.

JRP: C. H. Shepherd.

JG: Shep as they called him.

JRP: ...Buddy's wife, April, was secretary over there for Mr. Shepherd and I guess when she got pregnant with a child they needed somebody to fill in. Well, Sandra was in the sales office so they put Sandra over there with Mr. Shepherd. Well she never did come back to work, so Sandra worked for Mr. Shepherd for several years. She said it was the best fellow she ever worked for, a lot better than me. (laughter) But, she really liked Mr. Shepherd and she worked over there at the Fiberboard Plant a few years and then she went into real estate. She has been in real estate forty something years. But she really enjoyed working for him.

JG: Now, do you ever get involved with the real estate side of it?

JRP: Not much, no.

JG: What all different businesses are ya'll in or have been in over the years?

JRP: Well I was going to talk a little bit about the store.

JG: Yes, The Everything Store.

JRP: I was logging and we had that big old vacant lot there behind Sandra's real estate office, which was Mr. Powell's old grocery store and I told her one day I said "I think I'm going to build a feed store and tire store back there." She said, "well I don't know about that." So, I called old J. O. Cheatham and showed him the ground and what I wanted to do and he come down there and put me up a metal building. And, my daughter was getting out of, she was graduating from high school so the kids wanted to do it too

so, we put the store in and stuff. She went on to SFA and Sandra would work in the morning. My daughter would go up there and open early and she would have a class starting about nine o'clock, well Sandra would cover for her until she got back. Andrea would get back from school that evening about two o'clock or whatever and she would take the store and run it from there and Sandra would do her real estate. Of course, she would do the real estate in the store too. We wasn't very busy when we first started, but it worked into something later years there. So, we have had that store there 32 or 33 years now and fixing flats on log trucks. I thought there would be a need for it because all those trucks coming in and they needed a place to get a flat fixed, or you know, a hose put on or whatever. So we did that, and you know, proud we did, been real tickled with it. It is kind of a hangout for the old people now, you know, the older people come up there and drink coffee every morning. They are sitting there when I get there in them rocking chairs. They come in and chew the fat for thirty minutes or an hour and then they are gone, you know.

JG: And, you call it the Round Table, or at least what Sandra's column calls it.

JRP: Yes, the Round Table. Woody always...and then Sandra got the idea of writing, you know, writing a little article, you know, the local gossip and news so she started writing a little old column, you know, about it and called it the Round Table News. A lot of people will call her and give her some news of what they have been doing and stuff.

JG: Has there been any challenges with the store or anything, changes as it occurred?

JRP: Well, it is harder to make it in a mom and pop business as you know with Wal-Mart and Lowe's and everybody putting in, you know, the big stores. People go there if they need a lot of stuff and they will just come by and pick up odds and ends, you know, to keep from going to town. We have put in a little line of hardware and electric supplies and plugs and all that stuff and switches. We got a little of everything there, guns. We used to really sell a lot of guns and stuff you know. When Temple was going, they would give the employees when they had been there five years they could get a little cheap gun, and when they been there ten or fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, they would get a gun you know, and when they got on up to about twenty-five or thirty years they could get a really nice gun, a Weatherby or something.

JG: Would they actually give them the gun or did they get to choose?

JRP: No, they would choose what they wanted. They would give them...

JG: A certain dollar amount or something?

JRP: ...a little book and a certain dollar amount and you can have this or that. They would come by there and pick the gun out and we would sell them the gun and do the paperwork. They put a silver...it come from sterling silver they would put a little silver deal on there with their name on it and their years of service on the gun. And it was really nice. People looked forward to it, they did.

JG: But that all kind of was phased out?

JRP: Oh yes, there is none of that anymore, you know, with the new company.

JG: Obviously I guess Academy is affecting some of that too with guns and ammo.

JRP: Oh yes, places like Academy and all that affected business.

JG: I saw the other day where Academy is now letting you order ammunition online. It will be delivered to your door.

JRP: Yes.

JG: Can you believe that?

JRP: Oh it is something.

JG: Delivered to your door!

JRP: But, it is hard for mom and pop businesses. That is why you see so many of them going out, you know just so much competition.

JG: Let's see what else I was going to ask you. Oh, about the Big Tin Barn, did you see any pick up in business when the Big Tin Barn went away?

JRP: Oh yes, yes that is what made us...

JG: Lot of hardware and stuff.

JRP: ...well that is what made us think we ought to sell a little hardware and stuff, you know, and we knocked out a wall and took in a little more space. And, yes, really miss the Big Tin Barn.

JG: Yes, you can't get a board or anything huh?

JRP: Well you have to go up to Robert Williams now, you know, on the old highway. Have you ever been up there?

JG: I don't think so.

JRP: On the old Diboll highway, he has got a place that is as big or bigger than the Tin Barn was. Home Builders he calls it.

JG: I don't know if I know where that is.

JRP: Yes, well you go up the old Diboll Highway and it will be on the left up there.

JG: A lumber yard?

JRP: Yes, a big old lumber yard. All the building contractors trade out there with him.

JG: How new is it?

JRP: Oh he has been there three or four years, maybe five.

JG: Oh okay, okay. I didn't even know that.

JRP: Yes, Robert was a builder you know, but you turn up there at Fleetwood Trucking and get over on the old highway and go north and it is just a little ways on the left. You ought to drive by and look at it.

JG: I don't know if I've noticed that. I haven't been there in awhile I guess. Let's see here...I made a few little notes here.

JRP: I tell you a little bit about my stock raising. You haven't asked me about that.

JG: Okay, talk about that.

JRP: I raised...

JG: I know you've got some mules and stuff.

JRP: ...for years I had 22 big Belgian mares and Percheron mares and a big jack and I raised these big mules and I carried them up to the Amish people, Tennessee and Missouri and all, and sell the mule colts up there. Now, these are big logging mules is what you get out of these big mares and so they still farm with them see, so that is where the market is for them. I fooled with that fifteen or twenty years; I raised a lot of mule colts, carried them up there and sold them to them. I always had a bunch of old wagons and stuff. I have probably got 25 wagons now and got three chuck wagons and a stage coach.

JG: Did you know Namon Calhoun?

JRP: Oh I knew him well.

JG: Did you learn some of the qualities about mules and stuff from him?

JRP: No, because my granddaddy was a mule man and John Hannah's daddy was a mule man. They were brothers.

JG: Where did the good mules come from at this time?

JRP: They come out of Missouri.

JG: Missouri.

JRP: They come from Missouri mules, yes.

JG: And why is that?

JRP: That is where they were raising them. That is where all the people was that had the big mares and stuff.

JG: I think in the old, old days a lot of them came from Tennessee, if I'm not mistaken.

JRP: Tennessee, they did, them jacks come from Tennessee.

JG: I know some of the research I've done on railroad construction and stuff, that was a big deal to get mules.

JRP: Yes, Missouri and Tennessee, they come from a guy named Reese, the Reese brothers up there, Hub Reese.

JG: There would even be letters about kind of the backgrounds of these mules, were they railroad work, or were they logging work and were they worn out.

JRP: Well they had mining mules that were real little and short and could go in a mine and they had big mules for logging and road work, pull Fresno plows and all that.

JG: Yes.

JRP: But something else...

JG: But that is all gone now too. I mean that was a whole way of life back then for that.

JRP: Yes, they built all them railroads, all them dumps the railroad dirt was handled with slip Fresno's.

JG: So, yawls mules came from Missouri.

JRP: They would come from Missouri back then. The Company bought all their mules up in Missouri and Tennessee.

JG: Okay, okay.

JRP: Something that I didn't tell you, but right here where your place is or right there where that school office is, Temple used to have a big corral there. An old mule got hurt out in the woods or something, you know, and they would bring them in there and they had this fence, this pecan orchard was fenced. See, they would turn them out of there,

they would doctor them and they would turn them out and let them heal up grazing that grass.

JG: In the park over here.

JRP: In the park, the pecan orchard we called it then.

JG: Where Old Orchard park is now.

JRP: I remember the first horse that I had as a youngster, they let my daddy, old Calhoun or some of them, let my daddy have a stall there at that old place where they kept them animals and I would come up there, you know, and get my horse out and ride him around all over town. But there was a big old corral there back in the fifties.

JG: Is there anything you want to talk about that we didn't cover about logging?

JRP: I don't guess. We pretty well covered it, you know. After me, my son logged for eight or ten years.

JG: So how big did your logging operation get at the peak?

JRP: Well, the most trucks we ever had was six I believe, six trucks and three or four skidders, two loaders, bulldozers. But something we didn't talk about in this time period when I was logging and I was getting ready to let my son have the logging. He didn't want to go to college, he wanted to log and so I was getting ready to let him have the logging and move into it, well I moved into highway trucks, you know, John and Sandra Trucking was the name of our business there. We hauled the finished products out of Temple to wherever.

JG: Lumber and panels?

JRP: Lumber and everything they made and we hauled it out of here and say we were going up to Detroit or something well, I picked up logging equipment like up here between here and Lufkin those skidders and loaders and stuff, I would pick those up when I dumped my lumber off up there and I would bring back a load of logging equipment. For years, we was in that and we had I don't know we had twenty five trucks or something.

JG: Where were you in the logging activities when the gas powered chain saw came in?

JRP: Well, I remember Lufkin had a chainsaw too.

JG: Lufkin Industries made one.

JRP: Lufkin Industries made one for awhile, but I remember the McCulloch. They were two man saws when they first came out to cut down them big trees; it was a two man saw. I remember them but...

JG: It just had a little pole or a piece on the end the guy would hold onto right?

JRP: Yes, but I was just a little kid then.

JG: Oh okay, that was before.

JRP: I remember them and I remember seeing them going out in the woods with my granddaddy and seeing them.

JG: So by the time you came in it was already all chain saws?

JRP: By the time I came in it was all chain saws, yes.

JG: And what were some of the chainsaws when you came into it as an adult?

JRP: Well, Husqvarna and Stihl were the two top saws and McCulloch, those three. And then Stihl and Husky kind of took it over for the professional.

JG: Now what about the Homelite? I know Homelite tried to make some there for awhile.

JRP: Well see, when they first started there was a gear drive saw and what I mean by that you could raise it up and you could count the teeth on the chain. It didn't turn. It was powered by gear. Well, later on they went to a centrifugal clutch and all and it would travel fourteen, oh I don't know, rpm's but it turned at a higher rpm. It cut with speed but in the old days it cut with a gear drive. It had a little gear box on the side of it.

JG: So, it was a slow rotation.

JRP: It was slow but it would cut but it was powerful but it wouldn't cut like these fast ones do now.

JG: That is how...

JRP: Thirteen to fourteen thousand rpm's is what they turn now.

JG: Yes, teeth with two cycles. Were they four cycle engines, those slow moving ones or were they two cycle also?

JRP: I think they were two cycle I believe.

JG: They were all two cycle.

JRP: Of course there again that is a little bit before my time in the woods when that was going on.

JG: But by the time you came along they were all two cycle and higher rpm's.

JRP: By the time I came along they were all two cycle, and high rpm, and you see people with McCulloch, Stihl and Husqvarna, that is about all you would see back then.

JG: Okay.

JRP: And now it is pretty well down to Husky and Stihl.

JG: Yes, Stihl is about the best?

JRP: Stihl is probably the best.

JG: I know they cost more.

JRP: Yes, Stihl is a good machine.

JG: Do y'all sell chainsaws there at the store?

JRP: Yes, we do. Of course we don't sell as many as we used to because logging is mechanized. They cut that tree down, they jerk it through a delimeter and you know, very little sawing.

JG: It is gone. No human hands touch anything until it's loaded at Home Depot.

JRP: Well it is because of insurance. You can't afford to use saws or you can't pay your insurance.

JG: Yes, and those big old trees, what is that called? They just kind of pinch them off at the bottom.

JRP: Shears.

JG: Shears.

JRP: Well when shears first came out it was a pincher but now it is a saw. It is about a fifty something inch saw round with carbide teeth on it.

JG: Circular saw blades.

JRP: Yes it turns real fast and it is that thick and when you run into that tree cut it on one side and go around to the other side and cut it and it has got an arm up there pushing

on it while you cut. So, you will make two cuts on a big tree or maybe three sometimes. Yes, there is some good equipment out there now.

JG: What is the sawmill here in Diboll, it was rebuilt I guess about '99 and I know it can't cut really big stuff.

JRP: Twenty inch.

JG: Twenty inch, somebody said twenty one.

JRP: That is about the biggest thing they will let you in with.

JG: Twenty inches, and that is not much at all.

JRP: In fact they will have to pull over there by the store sometime them trucks will come in and they will measure one and it will be two or three inches too big. They have got to cut a piece off.

JG: To make it shorter?

JRP: To make it twenty.

JG: Just make it shorter. What do they do with that cut off piece?

JRP: Well, it is random length log, see tree length. They are cutting tree length log. They don't care how long it is. They lay it up on the deck and then they decide what they want to whack it up in.

JG: But I meant the piece that is too big?

JRP: They put it in their tool box, they pick it up and lay it in their tool box and carry it with them.

JG: Oh okay.

JRP: Throw it out in the woods when they get back.

JG: Nobody leaves them laying around your store do they? (laughter)

JRP: Oh they do, there is some there right now I had to call a man about to come get.

JG: Y'all might do a pretty good business then right there by the scale huh? Those guys coming in and out, somebody needs to grab something or pick something up.

JRP: Well yes, it is pretty good location for that.

JG: What is the latest on...talk about the scale some, how that has changed over the years.

JRP: Well when I started logging...

JG: The way that works.

JRP: Yes, when I started logging they used a scale stick, a Doyle stick and they measured every log.

JG: Yes, a Doyle stick, and that is D-o-y-l-e, for the tape.

JRP: Yes, D-o-y-l-e, and when you pulled in there the scaler comes out and he measures every log.

JG: Every log.

JRP: And wrote it down on a book just like a grocery list. He wrote it in a little book and then you got paid on the scale and they scaled it by hand.

JG: Now that was how thick it was and how long it was and all that.

JRP: How long it is, yes. Well the weight business didn't come along until the long logs. When we went to hauling long logs and Knutson come to town we went to hauling long logs they went to trying to figure out how to just weigh them and be gone.

JG: Yes, just by pure weight.

JRP: So, what they did we went to hauling long logs and they went over to the mill and Kenneth Nelson was involved in it and everybody and they would lay those logs up there and they would weigh them and then they would lay them out and they would measure them up and then they would scale them with a stick.

JG: They would take the logs off the truck and do it?

JRP: They spent a lot of time figuring all this out and I still got some of the original sheets we had and it would tell you what a log had if it was 20 inch top or 10 inch top or planked and all that. But, anyway they fooled with that for a long time.

JG: That cost a lot of money.

JRP: Now in the midst I'm going to tell you something funny. Clyde Thompson was the man then, he was a bull hooker on the logging. Well, they decided to go to double length logs so loggers...

JG: Whole logs I think is what Spencer called it.

JRP: Well they were double length first, they went from twenties to forties and then they didn't talk about tree length for a few years.

JG: Oh okay.

JRP: So we went to forty foot logs, well the first thing we asked is how are we going to get paid. And, Clyde said, I don't remember what he said but we got our first check. Everybody went ahead and hauled double length logs that week. We got our first check. What they had did, they come up with the idea that they would just scale the top end of that log and just double it. Well you know how a tree tapers down narrow. Well the butt cut, the first cut will have more scale than both of them the way they was doing it. So, everybody kind of had to shut down there for awhile and Clyde wanted to know why it wasn't working. Said, "well we haven't ever got that scale right yet." He said, "but we are working on it." And we said, "yes, but it is working on our purse in the meantime." "Let's get the scales straightened out how we going to scale this, because that will not work." So we got over there with them and they cut a log in two and they already knew how it was going to do, they was just going to fox somebody. So, they cut that butt log off and they cut that first twenty foot log off and scaled it and it had more scale in that one log than that did when you measured it and doubled it at the top, where it tapers. So, they already knew that and they tried that every way in the world and they thought they was just going...they was bad to try to slip up on you in them days. Them old scalers, they would put their thumb on the stick, you know, when they would put it up there they would have their thumb and you would buy their thumb and all that kind of stuff.

JG: They had to do every single log huh?

JRP: They would do it, you know. They would measure every log and I'm telling you we stacked them up high, thirteen foot and they had to reach way up there.

JG: Man there is long lines today but I bet that made some huge lines.

JRP: Oh it was something else! Well where they weighed us then, we done that over there where the old hotel was.

JG: Yes.

JRP: So, we was off the highway. I never understood why they put them scales on the highway.

JG: It is terrible in the mornings.

JRP: And why they haven't already moved them.

JG: The north bounds can't get over.

JRP: They've rebuilt them a dozen times and why they don't move them across the railroad tracks by the mills. All they weigh is logs.

JG: And it's just the mill, I mean they are supposedly public scales, right but nobody else really uses them do they?

JRP: No, nobody. I don't know why they never did move them over there out of the way.

JG: You never even heard? Because it doesn't seem like a very good spot.

JRP: They just never thought of it.

JG: They have been there a long time though haven't they?

JRP: Oh yes, it's a very dangerous situation there.

JG: Oh yes, yes.

JRP: They have a wreck every now and then.

JG: I know in the morning's, man any time of the day, in the morning those north bound trucks can't get over and then somebody tries to let them and then the light goes and the other lane didn't let them so you get somebody trying to help and you just make more confusion.

JRP: And, too they come in there before daylight and park on the side of that road and somebody can run under them real easy, you know.

JG: Yes, hasn't there been talk about moving them here recently?

JRP: No, I haven't heard anything about it no.

JG: Alright, well John Ralph I think...I see something here about the Burke Lodge, if you want to talk about the Masonic lodge or anything like that.

JRP: Yes, I belong to 833.

JG: Okay.

JRP: I can remember the old lodge, you know, when it was over there in top of the old store but I was not able to go then. I wasn't old enough.

JG: How old do you need to be?

JRP: Twenty one then, it was twenty one and when I went in they already had the new building on the highway.

JG: I was going to talk about you mentioned John and Sandra Trucking. Is that still going? That is still going isn't it?

JRP: No, we sold out about four years ago.

JG: Oh okay.

JRP: All we do now is Sandra does the real estate.

JG: Real estate and the store.

JRP: And my daughter does the store.

JG: Well what do you do?

JRP: I just sit there and answer the phone. I'm the switchboard.

JG: The switchboard. So, you are semi-retired. Well you got J. R.'s Barn.

JRP: Well, I let my son and them have that.

JG: Oh alright.

JRP: Yes, they are doing that.

JG: And y'all don't get any of your fish from china huh?

JRP: No fish from china, all of it is from here, local.

JG: You and I were talking about that here while back.

JRP: Yes.

JG: Well, I think that covered most of what I had but I hope maybe.

JRP: Well if we think of anything else...yes.

JG: I know you've got lots of stories.

JRP: I know one thing, in listening to all your oral histories and stuff, of course, I knew Charlie Harber all my life, and old Charlie was a neat fellow. He saw a lot of things and of course my granddaddy was raised in Wells and they run hogs over in Boggy Slough. Back then they called it Diboll Pasture, you know.

JG: Yes.

JRP: Yes, back then and they had hogs in the woods and free ranging and they would go in there and get their hogs and stuff and once they decided to close it up and make a club out of it, you know, they would give them so many days in the winter to come and get their meat hogs out of there. They done that for three or four years, five years, and then they told them they had to stay out then. And they gathered all them hogs up and put them on the rail and sent them to Kansas somewhere back when Kenley had the grazing and all in there.

JG: I think what Mr. Harber told me what he remembered, of course he was just a kid, he was born in '20, but he was just a kid, but he said at some point when the company was trying to phase everybody there wasn't a pasture rider out they just kind of agreed upon a set amount, not like we will pay you a dollar per hog just bought their brand.

JRP: Bought their brand and bought their mark.

JG: Some would be worth more based on the approximation of how many hogs you had. I remember him talking about that.

JRP: That was a big thing then, the hogs you know, got their lard and all.

JG: Of course he has talked about the deer and at different times even in the early days they had an abundance of deer out there.

JRP: Yes.

JG: Of course in recent years it's been a deer factory the way they have managed it. It has mainly been a deer factory, but anyway...alright we will go ahead and stop it. I appreciate your time and maybe we will get this one transcribed and we will give it some time and probably think of some other stuff.

JRP: Okay.

JG: Thanks.

JRP: Alright!

END OF INTERVIEW