

## **CAROL RIGGS**

**Interview 277a**

**September 25, 2015, at her home, Lufkin, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, former (and the first) Director of the Texas Forestry Museum Carol Riggs reflects on her career. A biology major interested in palynology, she eventually made her way to the Texas Forest Service and then to the Texas Forestry Museum when they hired their first director. She reflects on the early days of the museum, the changes to the museum structure and programs, the influence of technology on the museum field as a whole and on the Texas Forestry Museum, and the volunteers and staff members who worked at the museum over the years. She comments on funding and fundraisers, including the gala and the sawmill suppers, working for grants from local foundations, and the evolution of the museum's exhibits and purpose.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today's date is September 25, 2015. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm with Carol Riggs today. We are in her home in Lufkin, or just outside of Lufkin, and we are going to do an oral history interview. Carol maybe just to get started, take us back to when and how you became director of the Forestry Museum.

**Carol Riggs (hereafter CR):** Okay, when I came to Lufkin in 1980, really my background is biology, and the only job that I could find that really was even remotely related was at the Texas Forest Service in the pest control department. And so I worked there for several years and got to know quite a few people in forestry and I was not really feeling like I had a lot of opportunities for advancement in that position, so I had started looking around and about that time they had decided to hire the first director at the Texas Forestry Museum and had been a volunteer, totally volunteer up to that point. So, I applied for the job and I bugged them until they gave it to me.

**JG:** In the bug department huh, so volunteer up to that time so you were the first paid person?

**CR:** Other than they would occasionally hire a college student in the summer to catch up on paperwork, but yes.

**JG:** Okay, so how...I guess I will ask a broader question. Describe what the museum was at the time you came, which in effect would be before you came, what was the Forestry Museum at that time?

**CR:** Well it was a collection of objects that had to do with forestry. Several people had kind of had a dream of having a forestry museum and had worked on it for awhile. Actually originally, it was suppose to be up on the campus of SFA [Stephen F. Austin] and that didn't pan out, and so eventually they decided to do one next to the Texas

Forestry Association building. But they had been collecting for about 20 years. Mr. Ed Wagoner who was the CEO of Texas Forestry Association had been collecting for quite some time and just with the idea of having some kind of a monument, I guess, to the forest industry in Texas. And so it was mainly just a cabinet collection of stuff. There was not a whole lot of interpretation at that time, but they had a good collection of things. It was a good start. It was not terribly well organized but that is why we had something to do.

**JG:** That is why they hired you.

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** What was the building like? Was it the building that I was familiar with? Describe it.

**CR:** The original building was, right now the museum is two large wings and kind of an upper wing and a lower wing with the central area and around that central area it has been expanded on both sides. Originally there was a circle which was kind of the office and the restrooms and then the lower wing only. They...it had gotten funding to build a second wing, and that is when they called me in. I started to work in July and the opening of that new wing was in September.

**JG:** Of the lower unit.

**CR:** Upper, the new upper wing.

**JG:** Okay.

**CR:** Opened two months later, so.

**JG:** So, it was already built.

**CR:** It was basically almost completed by the time I started, yes.

**JG:** So is that...the lower one, I guess at one time had the big wagon, the Martin wagon and the slip tongue.

**CR:** Right.

**JG:** And the new one you are talking about was where the steam engine was.

**CR:** Yes and the steam engine was actually put in place before they built the building around on that upper wing. The original wing opened in 1976 and then the second wing opened in 1986, and that is when I came onboard.

**JG:** You came in July?

**CR:** July of '86.

**JG:** I may get out of order, we may not strictly go chronologically, but we will kind of stay there for a little bit. So describe, you know, you came on board simultaneously or right before, I guess, the new wing opened so what was your first experience of, and I'm assuming visitors, this would be many visitor's first experiences there so just describe that. What was the reception of some of the visitors? How did you approach interpreting the museum to the public?

**CR:** Well that was obviously not something that happened all at once because we had to start over with a new wing. That was a new thing, and some of the things were moved over there, but then we gradually reinterpreted what was...I just learned as much as I could about forest history. At that point I knew people in the industry, but I really didn't know a whole lot personally about the history of the industry. So, that was the first thing I did was try to learn myself.

**JG:** So the history, you focused more on history than anything else.

**CR:** Primarily on the history yes. Those were the kinds of things that were in the museum at that time.

**JG:** And this is before Maxwell's Sawdust Empire was out?

**CR:** His came out right about I think that is where...

**JG:** I think that was '83.

**CR:** Yes, it was right after that came out that I started, so that was the first thing I did.

**JG:** Oh that is right you came in '86.

**CR:** Yes, that was the first thing I did.

**JG:** Okay, I'm sorry I got off there. Well I guess that was helpful.

**CR:** Very, very much so, yes.

**JG:** Did you ever meet Dr. Maxwell?

**CR:** Oh yes, I did, a number of times, yes.

**JG:** Oh you did, okay. I never did.

**CR:** A matter of fact that, I think it was that first fall when ETHA had a meeting, East Texas Historical Association, had a meeting, it was either that fall or the next fall, they asked me to do a presentation based on the Thompson Lumber photos. And that was

really... further forced me to really kind of learn what was going on. They have that great photo collection of the Thompsons there at the museum.

**JG:** Was that already there when you got there?

**CR:** That was already there. It had just come in about the time I got there, so we utilized that and we used that lots of times in the time I was there.

**JG:** Yes, right. What were some of the early challenges maybe as you came on board? You mentioned a little bit in general anyways, interpretation, but just talk a little bit more in detail about that.

**CR:** One of the things was that as I mentioned, it was entirely a volunteer museum up at that point. It was run by retired senior volunteers, RSVP, whatever that stands for, and it was open half a day, open from one to five, seven days a week. And once I came on board, then it was quite easy for volunteers to decide they couldn't make it in that day so I often found myself working seven days a week. (**JG:** Oh wow.) So that was one of the things we really had to do right away, is to somehow come up with funding to get someone to help run the museum on weekends, in particular so that I could concentrate on the interpretation and so forth. The museum had never really had a budget, just whatever money they could come up with, that is what they had to spend so we were almost starting from scratch.

**JG:** Was TFA [Texas Forestry Association] not giving any?

**CR:** Texas Forestry Association, they were keeping the checkbook and doing correspondence and so forth. They were doing everything like that from their office. So, very quickly after I came that was all handed over to me, so I was doing all of that. I was trying to learn what is a museum suppose to do, learn about the industry, learn about the history, and do the business part of it.

**JG:** Keep it staffed and keep it funded and pay bills and all that. So, it was all new as far as... from both sides, I guess really.

**CR:** There was a pretty good core of volunteers who would give tours, John Courtney being one of those was there from the very beginning, from the time the museum opened.

**JG:** Now was he still employed?

**CR:** He retired about the time the museum opened, so he was with the museum already and there were two or three other ones that I could call on to come give tours and that was very helpful to be able to free up some time for that.

**JG:** Did the tours just come, did people start calling or was that something you promoted? Did you have to promote?

**CR:** We promoted it some, but there were already some coming. At that time it was before all the gasoline prices went up and the schools didn't have as many restrictions about how many field trips they could take and so forth. There were a lot more tours actually coming at that time than they were later once all that came into.

**JG:** Do you remember how far maybe they were coming, like school districts?

**CR:** I really don't recall. I think there were occasionally ones outside of this area, but it was probably mainly Lufkin, Nacogdoches.

**JG:** Anything more on challenges? I know it's pretty significant what you had to do, try to limit it to just a few minutes of explanation. I'll give you a little time to think about that.

**CR:** Well obviously, figuring out what you wanted to interpret, what is the next project, and how are you going to fund that. And I have no skills in building things, so get volunteers to build things or do things.

**JG:** So was it like networking through the volunteers? And then how much did the board, just describe the board, who was it composed of and how many? You were talking in plural awhile ago like we, so I mean how much did the board... did they just say here is your job, Carol make the best of it, or how much interaction, help assistance, guidance?

**CR:** Initially there was not a whole lot of hands on by the board. Mr. Wagoner was an exception. That was his baby; the museum was really his baby so he was actually, TFA paid him some salary to kind of be an advisor for the first year, either six months or a year.

**JG:** So he wasn't paid before.

**CR:** Not as an advisor! He was at TFA [Texas Forestry Association] but he did it all on his own time really, he and his wife spent lots of evenings over at the museum doing, typing labels and just doing whatever. I know he put a lot into it. So, the board at that time, I can't remember whether it was 11 or 15, but it's always been half Texas Forestry Association and at that time half of them were from the Lufkin Kiwanis Club, because Kiwanis Club teamed up with TFA to get the museum started, to get the 501(c) 3 and get the initial funding and so forth to build the first museum. And that was primarily through Jack McMullen who was the Angelina Neches River Railroad, and was a member of Kiwanis, and so he got them onboard. So, that, eventually several years later we got to the point where half of the board was Texas Forestry Association and then half was at large. We always tried to include Kiwanis in that at large.

**JG:** Who did you interview with to get the job?

**CR:** Ron Hufford is who I interviewed with.

**JG:** Just one?

**CR:** Just one, yes.

**JG:** I was just curious if Mr. Wagoner or McMullen or any of those.

**CR:** I think he actually had invited someone else to come and they didn't show so he interviewed me anyway.

**JG:** Do you remember how many applicants there were?

**CR:** I never knew that. It was awhile before...I applied as soon as I heard that this opportunity was coming up and they weren't quite ready to hire at that point, so it was two or three months before I actually went over there after I interviewed, yes.

**JG:** Okay, now again some of this is going to be topical and some of it is chronological, so if I jump to something and you would rather back track or whatever just feel free to do so. There is no particular order. But you talked a little bit about funding, you know, finding the money to do the next project and things like that, so just talk a little bit about funding and how that worked.

**CR:** Initially, the Southland Papermill Foundation, Southland Foundation, was very instrumental in building the museum and in the second phase of that building, and they were pretty heavy contributors in the beginning. And Texas Forestry Association when I first came to the museum was giving a pretty substantial annual donation to the museum. That went away, once we kind of got on our feet they quit doing that, and the challenge was to broaden that base of support because it was never going to make it just with two major funders. It was not going to happen. And so we had to, there had never been a membership organization. It was one of the things we did. We just tried different kinds of fundraisers. We did a 10K run, you know, one year, just tried different things that we could to try to raise some money and things like that. The sawmill supper was very popular, it never made us a lot of money, but it was good PR because people enjoyed that and it got them to the museum. And so we tried to do as many things as we could to bring some money in, write grants for specific projects, but at the same time make the museum a little more well known in the community. Everything we did was kind of a combination of those things.

**JG:** This may be a question out of place, but look at...try to remember back at those first year or two your budget was compared, to when you left. Think about that, we are cramming a lot in between there, but just for some perspective. (**CR:** yes) What it was when you started, to what it was what you made of it?

**CR:** I would say probably initially we operated well under \$50,000.

**JG:** For everything?

**CR:** For everything.

**JG:** Utilities and everything.

**CR:** Utilities, insurance, everything.

**JG:** For a year, a whole year.

**CR:** Yes, and I honestly can't remember what the budget was, but I know it was five or six or seven times that by the time I left there. I honestly can't remember what we ended up with. It was a substantial increase, but we had increase in personnel. We hired an educator eventually through a grant for a single year, and then we had to fight every year for that, and then we got to where when the Kurth Foundation was founded, the E. L. Kurth Charitable Foundation was founded, they have been pretty much on board with helping supply, at least until the time I left, the education program, which was very, very helpful. So that left raising money for your front desk person, as well as your director.

**JG:** What about general operations, was there ever a donor that you could almost count on or get as close as you could hope to count on, for annual every year contributions?

**CR:** We had a couple of them who would be a four or five thousand dollars a year. This was an individual.

**JG:** Individual, meaning a person?

**CR:** A person, individual person. There are some smaller foundations that would come in pretty regular, five, ten, fifteen thousand dollars a year.

**JG:** To use how you wanted?

**CR:** Whatever we wrote the grant for.

**JG:** Did you ever have anybody, any organization or person come in and say, "hey I want this done and here is the money to do it?"

**CR:** Sort of yes.

**JG:** Okay.

**CR:** When Abitibi ended up with the Papermill, they apparently got into some legal issues with...what am I trying to say, their sewage. What am I trying to say there?

**JG:** Their wastewater?

**CR:** Their wastewater.

**JG:** The effluent.

**CR:** Yes, and part of their agreement to get out of those legal responsibilities was to pick someone in the community and give them some money, so we were approached to come up with a project for that. And that is when we actually ended up remodeling the museum to make room for that Papermill room because...I'm mixing things up. That is two totally different things. The money from Abitibi was used for some educational... online games and so forth, that we hired someone to come and do, and some traveling exhibits and so forth that was done with the Abitibi money. But it was a substantial amount of money. I think it was \$250,000 over a three year period. The Papermill room was when the people at it was Champion, at that time, felt like the company was going to be sold. They had a little Papermill museum there at the Papermill, just a small room that they had put their memorabilia in. They were concerned about what was going to happen to that, and so they came and offered us some money if we would supply a significant space to interpret the Papermill. That is how that came about. Once that happened, we were having some problems with leaking, so we went into big fundraising campaign to add money to that to be able to basically totally remodel the museum. And we added the gift shop and increased the library, not increase the library space, we had a bigger reception area. We took out the sky lights that were leaking and those kinds of things.

**JG:** Again we are jumping around. Talk about volunteers and maybe eventually get into specific people and name some names if you want to but you've already mentioned that it had pretty much been run by volunteers, so how did you keep that going, recruit additional people, just what was your approach to volunteerism?

**CR:** It was mainly people I knew and people that, quite a few people who had retired recently in some facet of the forest industry who had an interest in what was going on there, so I didn't necessarily know all those people, but I might have been referred to them by somebody else. But it was word of mouth, really, is how you got volunteers. Some of those volunteers would come every week to do tours and some would come once or twice a year to do special events. They were just the whole gamut of volunteers. I mentioned John Courtney, he was one of them. Charles Young was another retired forester that came in pretty regular for awhile. I'm sure there are others who were there a lot.

**JG:** How much of it was people just coming to you or verses people that you kind of wanted to actively recruit, if not the individual person, at least, "hey I need somebody to do this, this" and try to match up a person to a particular job?

**CR:** I think once we got a little better known and did more marketing, if you will, we started to have some people come to us for different things. Like we had people from the Master Gardeners came for awhile and wanted to do something with our grounds because we had an effort to at least one time to try to do native plants, and so they were interested in doing that. That is just one small aspect of that. They had people come in that wanted to fix things if they saw something that had a problem and they thought they could help us we had those kind of volunteers. Lots of volunteers for sawmill supper. That is where

actually eventually the RSVP [Retired Seniors Volunteer Program] did not start coming on a regular basis, but a lot of those people that continued in those fundraising activities were carryovers from the RSVP.

**JG:** Did the board, how many board members, besides coming to meetings and having input and things like that, were there ever any board members who did a lot of hands on and roll up their sleeves and work?

**CR:** Absolutely, yes and that's varied a whole lot. There was never 100% at any one time that were really active, other than in the administration, but there were some who spent a lot of time. Susie Shockley came on the board right after I left, but I know she spent a lot of time and I know Frank Shockley would come pretty often. Jo Pace would come pretty often, Donna Work from Texas Forest Service; we could call those volunteers in. A big source of our volunteers was Texas Forest Service. They were very, very supportive in any kind of education, or I called them numerable times to help come move something, because we needed lots of hands or unload a truck that was coming or whatever. They were always very good to call on.

**JG:** Well, I started to...well I'll write it down. Talk about technology a little bit. You mentioned the word online awhile ago which I was figuring was chronologically...

**CR:** Out of place, yes.

**JG:** ...from the beginning days, but and of course obviously that is what we are talking about is the internet, so I want you to talk about that specifically, but I also want to give you an opportunity to back up I mean with exhibits and things like that. Just talk about technology. What role does it play and did your views change over time? What role does technology play in museums in general and the Texas Forestry Museum?

**CR:** Let me start at the back and go the other way.

**JG:** Sure, sure.

**CR:** About the time I was retiring there was a lot of debate in the museum field about how much technology do you use in a museum, because it can be overwhelming. And if you've got a lot of things that are digital or whatever, those things break down and if there is nobody to fix them, then you've got nothing. So there were some museums that were going almost totally to digital displays or you know, whatever, all kinds of things they were doing. But, first of all we never had the funds to do a lot of that, but I think you have to do some of that because that is what the public is expecting, so you've got to do some of that. Back to the beginning just in general, we didn't have a computer at all. The Texas...

**JG:** So the books were truly the books, physical books?

**CR:** Yes, the Texas Forestry Association had gotten some computers and they were retiring, you've probably never heard of one, a display writer. It's just a word processing machine and everything was done on that. Now, the records that TFA had been helping keep in their office had been done on that, so there were already some records on there. But one of the very first grants that I wrote actually was to the Junior League to get our first computer and printer, so.

**JG:** Do you remember about what year that was?

**CR:** Two or three years, within a couple of years.

**JG:** Still in the eighties though, late eighties.

**CR:** Yes, yes, very much so.

**JG:** Is that when you went 100% Apple?

**CR:** I've been 100% Apple since the first Radio..., after the first Radio Shack we got here at home we've been Apple and that is what I knew.

**JG:** So your first computer at The Forestry Museum was Apple?

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** Why is that, I'm just curious?

**CR:** It's what I knew and also at that time, there were some...because my husband worked at Lufkin Industries, he was aware that they had a lot of Apples and MacIntosh computers there and he was aware of the database program with Filemaker Pro, which we used from the very beginning. Once we got that computer we started using Filemaker Pro and we converted all of our records, all of our volunteer records, all of our contribution records, all of our collection records, all of that we used Filemaker Pro for that. So, that had something to do with it as well.

**JG:** So you got a computer, and what was the justification for having a computer, the first one?

**CR:** Well it was about one tenth of the size of that display writer for one thing, and the office was very small so that was very important.

**JG:** So obviously to manage the records as best you could.

**CR:** Yes, right.

**JG:** Did you use it for letter writing and all that?

**CR:** Yes, everything.

**JG:** Now the printer you had, was it dot matrix or?

**CR:** I think the first printer probably was dot matrix. I really don't remember for sure. I wouldn't be surprised if that was what it was.

**JG:** Do you remember how long that first computer lasted before you felt you had to have another one to replace it? Or did you get one to replace it, or just say we need another computer and have two?

**CR:** Mainly it happened when we got additional personnel and had more people. But that was...of course I would get the new one and I would give the other one down, move the other one down.

**JG:** I was trying to remember, was there anybody else working there when I was there for that grant project?

**CR:** Joy Vickers, was working, probably when you started there, she was working just on the weekends and when we got more funding on that Sawmill Database grant I was able to hire her fulltime.

**JG:** I don't remember anybody else working there.

**CR:** She was working weekends and came in full time shortly after you left, so.

**JG:** Anything else about technology beyond what we've talked about already?

**CR:** Eventually we got the website.

**JG:** Talk about that. When did you start saying, "Hey the internet. We need to do something along these lines?" Do you remember? Do you remember when you first saw the internet?

**CR:** Drew Patterson did our first website, so about the time you were working with Drew, it was probably a year or two before that. Drew was an exhibits and technology person from Austin that I met through someone else in the museum field, so that would have been...when did you work with him?

**JG:** I can't remember when I first started working with him, maybe 2000.

**CR:** It would have been the late 1990's because we would have been up before then with the website.

**JG:** So you had a website in the late '90's?

**CR:** I believe so, yes.

**JG:** What were some of the thoughts when you were working with Drew or just your own thoughts what did you want the website to be? What role was it to play? Was it going to be something new, or just going to enhance or supplement what you were already doing?

**CR:** I think it was primarily an enhancement and a way to publicize what we had and what we did, to a wider audience. I think you are certainly aware there are all kinds of potential out there when you do a website. What you end up doing with it may not be what your thoughts started out, but it just seemed silly not to do one, because that was the way things were going.

**JG:** I guess by that time you already had the sawmill database and that was just another way to deliver that and things along those lines. Again I know we are jumping all around here, since we mentioned that, talk about... since we mentioned the database and I do want you to talk about that a little bit specifically, but along those lines were there any other grant or projects where you said, "hey this is really what's needed?" And describe kind of like what you were saying earlier, it's easy to come up with ideas but then you've got to find a way to pay for it and make it happen. So in that context, can you talk more about exhibits? You mentioned a little bit the Papermill exhibit, were there any other new exhibits, new things you wanted to try to do that was enough of a challenge, maybe that is memorable?

**CR:** Well when we, I guess when we remodeled, and that would have been the late 1990's, early 2000, I can't remember exactly when that happened. But when we did that that was obviously the opportunity, because everything was coming down, to put it back up differently. So that...

**JG:** So that is the configuration the museum is pretty much in now, is what you are talking about?

**CR:** Yes, it's been changed now, since I have left, but that is fine.

**JG:** But from one side, I meant, I remember you used to enter from the side where the train was (**CR:** yes) and go behind the Texas Forestry Association building and go in that way. But you are talking about when you moved the entrance to the other side.

**CR:** Right, even though we had tried to come up with a kind of a comprehensive plan of what the story is told in the museum, we really never quite got there. I don't know that we still didn't get to where we should have been, because you always make mistakes. You always in hindsight can look at something and think you could have done it differently, but that was the first time we really had sat down and kind of come up with what is the story line for this wing and that was... We did hire an exhibits person to come in and help us, not necessarily with the planning but with getting it all finished at the end. He did a lot.

**JG:** What were the main things that drove doing that? Why did you change the entrance from one to the other and make it bigger? What was going on?

**CR:** In the meantime, we did that at the time we were building the Papermill museum, we were adding the space for that Papermill museum. Prior to that, we had acquired the building next door, which is now used for the administration and education. It's an office building. Until we had that building it was very, very, very tight.

**JG:** And what was the previous use of that building?

**CR:** The U. S. Forest Service, the Angelina [National] Forest office was in that building, and when they all came together in the new building over on First Street, all their offices were moved over there together, that building was actually donated to us and we just had to do some renovation. There was no back entrance.

**JG:** So the U. S. Forest Service owned the building, or were they leasing it?

**CR:** No they were leasing it and the individual that owned it, Mr. Winston, donated that to us and we got some additional funding to help with that, with the renovation. But we decided that we really needed a better presence and to have an entrance that was not confused with Texas Forestry Association building would be very helpful and that is the reason.

**JG:** So tie in the new building and also convenient to have your own entrance and not share with somebody else?

**CR:** Yes, because even for years after that, people would go into the TFA office and want to know where the museum was because it was confusing. That was what we were trying to do there, was try to be a little more, not independent, but separate in the public's eye.

**JG:** Focus more on your identity, than shared, anything shared.

**CR:** Yes, that is right, yes.

**JG:** Talk about the nature trail and things like that.

**CR:** Okay another thing we were able to do, there was two or three acres behind the train that was part of the original property for the museum, but when we acquired that building next door, where the U. S. Forest Service office had been and started looking at the plat there were several lots right behind that building that had never been sold that was part of that subdivision in back of the museum. We were able to negotiate with the owners, I think the same person owned all three lots, and purchased those. There had been a small nature trail before that, but it wasn't very extensive, but that really allowed

us to do a lot more from an educational standpoint back there. Until the hurricane came through and knocked all the trees down, but...

**JG:** Selective... is that called selective harvesting? (laughter)

**CR:** That is correct. But that really enlarged the educational opportunities quite a bit when we added that.

**JG:** Talk about some of the exhibits, we've mentioned a few, but is there anything that stands out in your memory that you were most proud of, any funny stories connected with anyone, something you were most proud of. Did I not say that?

**CR:** You said that.

**JG:** I did say that, ok. Anything you were particularly fond of.

**CR:** Well I guess one of the, again I'm going to start backwards, I didn't finish this exhibit, I had done the research and found a lot of the photographs and everything that was going to go with it, but the CCC Exhibit on the CCC [Civilian Concentration Corps]. I think it was 75 years maybe was coming up, and had really found a lot of oral histories and things that could be used with that and that was all in planning about the time I retired. So that one was completed afterwards. I really enjoyed doing that.

**JG:** Did you get to meet people that were CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] people?

**CR:** A few yes, U. S. Forest Service, I don't know if they are still doing it or not, but at that time they were having an annual reunion of people locally.

**JG:** At Boykin Springs?

**CR:** The one I went to was not at Boykin Springs, but I think sometimes they were and yes I met a number of people there, but I think at Denton, someone had done a lot of oral histories with CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] so I was able to go up there and use some of that material. The other thing, the exhibit that I really enjoyed was our take off on the Lewis and Clark 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I had always wanted to do a mapping exhibit but that turned out to be a good fit to put those two together, and along with that, the Lewis and Clark Expedition we...I had run into someone at a meeting in Seattle who was an artist and her project when I talked to her was to take the Lewis and Clark plants that were discovered by the Lewis and Clark hand drawings and hand colored illustrations of those, so we were able to select some of those and bring those in as an adjunct to that exhibit. And then we had someone who did some pressed plants that were the same species that the Lewis and Clark. And what we did we tried to chose plants that were either also found in Texas, or had very close relatives in Texas, to make a connection to who we were here, pressed plants from those plants. Plants is my that is my favorite thing to do, so I was glad to do that.

**JG:** What is your favorite plant, or do you have – is that like what's your favorite child, who's your favorite kid?

**CR:** Actually, once we were finished with those they were put in the gift shop and I bought one of those and it happens to be a plant that I did a study on for class, plant anatomy, when I was in college, just happened to be the same one it is called wolf berry.

**JG:** Wolf Berry. Okay.

**CR:** So I've got that. I don't know why, it's just because I worked with it at one time.

**JG:** Sentimental attachment, huh?

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** Any particular plants we see around today that you are particularly fond of?

**CR:** I never...

**JG:** You have a favorite tree? You've got a big magnolia out there.

**CR:** We've got a big magnolia tree. We've got lots of pecans. We harvested lots of pecans this year, but that is the first time that has happened. I really like native plants. I like unusual things. I go out in my woods and dig things up and bring them in. I really enjoy just trying to get something to grow that I think ought to be growing around here. I like the gulf muhly. I didn't ever think I would like grasses but I've fallen in love with that.

**JG:** I like the little blue stems for some reason. I think they are really pretty when they're all tall and erect, and just the different colorations of the coloring and everything. You've got some turk caps with butterflies right there.

**CR:** Yes, it's huge.

**JG:** Like I said, I've jumped around so much I know I've left out a lot of important things. I want to give you an opportunity to talk about some people if you wanted to, but I wanted to ask you about, but in that context we were with Mr. Bill Gregory earlier and talking about some people and I had to remind him that I knew Mr. Jay Morrison through you and some of my best friends have been from the little bit of time I worked with you. You want to talk about any of those people, maybe Mr. Jay in particular.

**CR:** Mr. Jay was an old railroad guy, and he was, I can't remember when I first met him, but he just kind of would show up and you could ask him questions. He loved to bring photos and he liked to take field trips, so I probably saw as much of old sawmill country through him and John Courtney actually, as well because we ended up doing what we called a historic sawmill sites tours every year and John always led those, but he and I

would go out and kind of reconnoiter before he decided what he wanted to do. So, we saw some real interesting things.

**JG:** Tell for the recording what Mr. Jay told you your job was.

**CR:** Mr. Jay, after I had known him a few years, well actually would come in and he would say, "Okay your job when I get here is to quit working and talk to me." That is what we did!

**JG:** Was there a memorable first time you ever met him?

**CR:** I do not remember the first time I met him. Another person that was very similar to Mr. Jay that used to come in a lot was Howard Walker, who was kind of our local self appointed historian around town and he would come in just without any notice, just to talk. I always enjoyed talking to Mr. Walker.

**JG:** That was when your job description changed too, huh?

**CR:** Yes, absolutely!

**JG:** You mentioned Mr. Walker and I don't have it written down but I'm glad you mentioned that because I want to talk about some of your other projects that might have been connected with being Director of the Forestry Museum, and I guess number one that you're still very much involved with is the Historical Commission. Talk about when and how you got connected with that, the County Historical Commission is what we are talking about.

**CR:** I will be honest. I did not grow up with an interest in history and when I...

**JG:** You just didn't know it. Everybody has an interest in history, is what I always say, they just don't know it yet. Go ahead I'm sorry.

**CR:** ...but when I took the job, part of my job description was to be a member of the East Texas Historical Association, and that is kind of what got me started. Then the County Historical Commission found me.

**JG:** They told you what your job was too, huh? (Laughter)

**CR:** They told me what my job was too, yes, so I gradually began to appreciate, actually I think the complexity of history is one of the things that is really interesting is how interwoven things are, people and particularly around here when everybody is related to everybody, each other, the things you can find out. Anyway that is really how that got started and I tried to be active in East Texas Historical Association and really enjoyed going to those meetings. I learned a lot and that kind of got me interested, a much broader interest.

**JG:** And you served on the board there pretty quickly after.

**CR:** Sometime in there, yes.

**JG:** I remember if I'm not mistaken don't they always have the outgoing president give an annual address or something like that, and did you have to do that?

**CR:** I guess I did. I don't know I remember that. I've probably blocked that out somehow.

**JG:** But anyway, you mentioned the East Texas Historical Association. Talk a little bit about the County Historical Commission. Who got you, was it Mr. Walker that got you involved in that?

**CR:** Mr. Walker and Woody Gann and I think, Bob Bowman was on there when I first started so, amongst those and I just mainly honestly to begin with, just went and sat there because I didn't have anything to contribute I didn't think, but I learned a lot.

**JG:** What were those early meetings compared to past weeks? How would you describe that, because I only know what I know from my own experience? Well, just put things in context how many, you mentioned a few individuals but what was the scope of it, the size, how many commissioners were there, what were some of the projects you did, what was the attendance? Did y'all meet once a month, once a quarter?

**CR:** I think we met once a quarter to begin with, and they were just coming off the survey.

**JG:** Okay, that '86 survey.

**CR:** The 1986 survey, that would have been about the time I went on that Commission, and that was important. Seems to me like, not always, but often they would have a program, somebody come and talk about some aspect of history. Like I said, initially I went to meetings and I don't know that I can tell you what all... There was, like I remember Marie Sinclair [Davis] from Diboll was the one if there was a marker done, that she pretty much did the research for, did a lot of that. She was kind of the person to go to for markers.

**JG:** Marie Davis?

**CR:** Marie Davis, yes, yes.

**JG:** So she was pretty active and involved?

**CR:** Yes, very active.

**JG:** I know she was involved, certainly with the Diboll part of the survey that you talked about and that may be why we, now The History Center have the only photos, because she must have gotten the Historical Society to buy those from the state. Like I said, as I understand now even the state doesn't have that, which is kind of curious, but I don't know if curious is the right word. Anyways, so '86 being a sesquicentennial year, I can't remember exactly, but I'm pretty sure there were quite a few historical markers that were granted that year or that went up, maybe it was '87 before they were dedicated or something. Do you recall any particular, that being a celebratory year state-wide, do you remember any extra emphasis being placed on not just markers, but anything?

**CR:** I don't remember from the commission's standpoint. I remember there being a lot of publicity, but I don't know that this commission did a lot other than that survey. I really don't remember that.

**JG:** Okay. What was the first job they put you in with the commission as far as a committee or...I know you eventually became chair and was chair for a long time.

**CR:** Probably treasurer.

**JG:** Treasurer.

**CR:** Either secretary or treasurer. I don't remember. I wasn't chair of the marker committee or anything like that for quite awhile.

**JG:** Any particular things that stand out with your time with the Historical Commission so far? Well, I know some things may stand out. Sometimes I ask things without thinking what I'm asking. (laughter) I'm real bad about doing this, I ask questions I don't let the person answer, because I try to make it easy for them, and I don't like silence but sometimes I think I should make them suffer a little bit.

**CR:** I think just like any organization, the County Historical Commission has had its ups and downs. They had times when they were strong and they had times when they really aren't and it really depends on who is in it at the time. Just like anything it's a constant battle to keep people interested in what is going on, so I don't know that I remember anything in particular. Again, at the time when we were doing the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] exhibit I think was the time I was active and helping get the marker for the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] and the Forests of Texas and so, you know, I was able...in some ways I was able to use what I was doing in the museum and cross over with what we were doing in the Historical Commission. That is just one of those examples.

**JG:** Okay, I forgot what my next question was. Maybe it will come back to me. What about some of the awards and things the museum has won or recognition, notices? I know Sawmill Database got an award, I think that was pretty prestigious, the American Association of State and Local History Award. Talk about how that project came about. How was that conceived?

**CR:** I had been at the museum for several years, and again because I was told I would be active in the East Texas Historical Association, I attended meetings. That is when I really started talking to people and visitors who had come in and asked about a specific sawmill. You know, “my grandpa used to work at... what can you tell me about that sawmill?” And it became pretty clear to me that we really didn’t know a whole lot about individual...there were a few, the larger ones that you had a lot of information on.

**JG:** And again this is before internet and before the Handbook of Texas Online and things like that.

**CR:** Right, so I talked with several people, John Ippolito, who was an archeologist with U.S. Forest Service, was one of those people and in Liberty...

**JG:** Robert Schaadt.

**CR:** Robert Schaadt down at the...

**JG:** Did you already know Robert?

**CR:** I met him through ETHA [East Texas Historical Association]. I met him through ETHA and so he was kind of a latecomer to that conversation, but he was a part of that conversation when we really got going. We got some seed money actually through the U. S. Forest Service, they had some special program that they had that you could get, I think we got \$5,000 or something like that and we were able to match that someplace else with another grant to just do kind of a trial thing. We started out with 13 counties, just trying to simply verify as many sawmills that had been in existence, as much as you could find out about them, but mainly just to get the information we could on as many of the sawmills. I can’t remember how many we had after that 13, many more than we thought we would have.

**JG:** And we are talking about ’93 I guess, (**CR:** Yes, yes) and again this is really before, I know I wasn’t thinking about the internet at the time, but were you?

**CR:** No, no.

**JG:** It was right on the cusp of that though, really.

**CR:** Then we realized how many there were in those initial 13 counties. It was far more than we had ever anticipated. We were then able to go ahead and get additional money in, and expand that throughout the whole east Texas area. We ended up with well over 2,000 of those sawmills and over 300 rail lines, (**JG:** Railroads, yes) company owned railroads. And some of those there is nothing more than just a mention that they were there. That may be all you know.

**JG:** Is that how you heard of, first heard of, I know it's where I first met him, but a man by the name of W. T. Block? Was through maybe Robert Schaadt?

**CR:** Yes, through that and I know he was active in ETHA and whether I had a conversation with him. The other thing that was kind of...

**JG:** But he had, I don't know how many books published, as a result of basically I guess what I'm getting at...

**CR:** It was the impetus for him to publish, yes.

**JG:** He had been doing what he had been doing for decades, but at least this is my interpretation, you tell me if I'm wrong, but you know, your project of getting that going brought Mr. Block and the interest, the shared interest (**CR:** yes) and I think I know Bob Bowman published I don't know how many books that W. T. Block had already, he pretty much already had them written.

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** It was just taking them and publishing them.

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** I know when I was at Liberty, Robert Schaadt got his friends groups to publish one of his manuscripts on Sour Lake. Anyway, Mr. Block probably had a dozen or more books published beginning in '93 on...he published in fact I think he had written a few little books before that and I remember in the old library, when we had a meeting and he came down and shared what he had. I said something about you need to write a book or do this and he said, "oh I've written all the books I'm going to write." Every time a new book would come out in years after that I had to remind him of that. It wasn't long I said, "you've published more books since you told me you weren't writing any more books than you had then even before." So I thought that was a really good project and that is how I got my start more or less.

**CR:** Jonathan was our first employee yes, part time temporary or something like that.

**JG:** Got me out of the Brookshire Brothers warehouse, anyways.

**CR:** I think another neat thing that happened with that and it was because of the association with the East Texas Historical Association. At that time the Texas Historical Commission was starting their Historic Sites Atlas and I just happened to hear, overhear some of their reps talking to somebody at an ETHA meeting and just went up and introduced myself and told them what we were doing and that is how we...

**JG:** Here is 2000 items or whatever for your database, yes. And it's still a big part of the THC, Texas Historical Commission Atlas. Yes, that is right! Like I said I enjoyed it. I

was only there 8 or 9 months, but either looking back on it I thought I was there longer with all the stuff that happened and you got me a little fellowship, a research fellowship to go to Raleigh-Durham and I still remember that like it was almost yesterday in some regards. I think we were talking the other day about Cheryl Oakes, the librarian there and I think just recently retired at the Forest History Society, we were talking about. Anyway I think that was really good in a lot of ways. Any other projects or what was the award the American Association of State and Local History gave? Is that something that you filled out?

**CR:** They have an annual award and I can't remember if it was for a project. I honestly do not recall what the category was. It was an ongoing award that they did, then because of that we went and presented information about the database and that is actually where I met someone who had been on the Forest History Society board and in talking with him he had encouraged me to try to be a part of that to kind of broaden their base of people they serve. That is how that happened and came about.

**JG:** Then you eventually went on the board of the Forest History Society.

**CR:** On the board yes.

**JG:** And they're still at Duke University?

**CR:** Duke University.

**JG:** I know we've jumped around a lot. Anything I guess more along the line of the scope and the changes just looking back any really memorable, other than what we've already talked about, just things that stood out? Some fond memories you've had of working there or even not so fond memories?

**CR:** Well this is just a memory, I don't know if it was fond...

**JG:** You were there 20 years?

**CR:** Right at 20, 21.

**JG:** So '86 to 2007.

**CR:** Yes, 2007, 21 years.

**JG:** And again there were lots of changes that occurred during then not just with the museum, like I said we talked about technology, the internet and just so in that context.

**CR:** One of them, it's not a fond memory, but one of the memories I had is we knew we needed to expand even more our fundraising and that is when we came up with the Gala.

**JG:** Oh yes, I had that on there, but in my trifocals I missed it. (laughter) Talk about that.

**CR:** The very first year we were going to do that we really didn't know what we were doing. We were just doing the best we could, and that is when the hurricane came through, and the civic center, no 9/11 was the first thing that happened, 9/11 happened and we were scheduled for like two or three weeks later is when we were scheduled for the first gala. And do we cancel, what do we do? We finally decided we are going ahead, it's been three weeks, they've been home for three weeks and they're going to be ready to get out. That was a hard decision, particularly not ever having done it before. What is the right thing to do? But it turned out very good. Then there was one year when the hurricane came and the civic center was full of evacuees and so we had to cancel.

**JG:** That would have been '05 I guess, 2005. So the gala coincided with the Forestry Hall of Fame right?

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** So that was the first one, was 2001?

**CR:** I think it was 2001, I think I'm right about that.

**JG:** Yes, I think so. So the first Hall of Fame was the one that I did the inductions for six of the Foundation guys?

**CR:** Yes, yes, yes.

**JG:** I don't think there has been six or seven was it maybe. I don't remember. So talk about that, the concept for having a Hall of Fame. Is that something you had been thinking about for awhile? How did it come about?

**CR:** I really felt like that there needed to be a way to recognize people who had been significant in the industry. And I know some organizations do that and they choose people who bring in a lot of visitors so they can bring in money, or a lot of guests.

**JG:** You probably should have split and not had the six big ones be all at one time if that was the goal.

**CR:** Probably so, yes.

**JG:** Somebody was just talking to me the other day, he has done a lot of work with the Starks down there and everything from Orange and his wife, well anyways now they are residents at Pinecrest and so he was real impressed with the Forestry Museum and he was glad to see the Lutchers there and anyway we were talking about all that. And he was talking about the Starks and their foundations and all that. So like I said in that regard you

got all the big ones, the giants of their day as well as the continuing legacies of that. But anyway I shouldn't be doing that much talking.

**CR:** That is okay.

**JG:** Just talk a little bit more about that and maybe the decision of how people were selected. Did you have committees or who had the say?

**CR:** Initially we kind of did that in our board, but I don't know if it was that first year, but definitely by the second year we got a panel of like someone from A&M, someone from SFA, and just several people who would anonymously make selections based on...and we invited people to nominate. I don't think we did that the first year as a start up we just took the top ones.

**JG:** Just got the big ones.

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** Well and this was probably good too, and it was easy maybe to put them all there together, but I'm sure you thought if we don't do them all together, who goes first, who goes second and all that. How much of a factor was that?

**CR:** I think it was part of it, and yet we still probably missed some who should have been in that first but you can't have 10.

**JG:** Yes, I think I spoke 30 minutes and I've been to some since then and they are nowhere near that long. Anything else, I know I'm going to realize I forgot some things.

**CR:** Well you know I guess, it's kind of funny how this all came about really, because as I mentioned I was not feeling like I had a lot of opportunity for growth when I worked for the Texas Forest Service. I enjoyed the people I worked with, I liked the job. I just was ready to move on, and actually Jim had heard someone say...he had said, because I would come home and bitch and moan and he said, "You need to work at the Texas Forestry Museum." I said, "They don't have employees that is all volunteers." It was not a month later that we heard they were going to hire somebody, so it was just kind of...it fell into place exactly the right time for me and it's kind of like getting out of the warehouse for you.

**JG:** Well I think that was a funny way too. Mel, who I just knew from taken a few classes had run into Jill and told her, and she told me about the grant project. It was kind of the same way, what are you talking about. (laughter)

**CR:** Where did this come from, anyway?

**JG:** I guess in my regard it wasn't anything that was advertised and that is what you're saying about you. It came to you, more or less, almost.

**CR:** Yes and I talked to, at that time Jerry Benson was on the board and his wife Mary was a good friend of mine, and so I happened to see her at an event just a week or so later and she said, “oh yes they are looking.” So I put together a resume and went and talked to Mr. Hufford and he was someone I saw fairly frequently, so I bugged him.

**JG:** Now we are really going back, but we didn’t really establish it in the interview but talk a little bit more about your background before you came to the Forestry Museum. You had a degree in Biology you said?

**CR:** Yes, I had a degree in biology from Arizona State, a Bachelors’ degree from Arizona State University. I actually did not finish there, my husband got a job in California and I still lacked about five hours of finishing and ordinarily they don’t let you transfer hours back, but they agreed to let me do that, so I finished up my hours at UCLA and then went to work at UCLA right after that.

**JG:** Doing what?

**CR:** When I was at Arizona State University in the Botany department, I worked for a gentleman who was into palynology, which is fossil pollen, and they use that to date, age date sediments. They use it a lot in the oil industry. That is what that is primarily used for. It is very important in the oil industry. So, when I finished my one quarter at UCLA, that is all it took me to finish my hours to graduate, then I talked to him, this Dr. Ken Wright at Arizona State, and he told me about a friend of his who was working in the geology department at UCLA and that is this Dr. Shop. And Dr. Shop was one of the very first ones to get a NASA grant to get moon rocks from that first moon landing. What he was going to do was do all the analysis on them just like it was pollen, just the same analysis to see if there were any living organisms in there. So I was hired under that grant and he...with his grant he bought the very first scanning electron microscope on the campus of UCLA and so that is a lot of what I did was run that microscope to do all of these tests. Well what was neat about that, was since it was the only one on campus, he would allow other students in other departments to come in and use it on whatever project they were working on. So, I got to look at a lot of things through that.

**JG:** So what was the determination on the moon rocks?

**CR:** There were things in there, but there was nothing that could positively be identified as living, but there were some strange things in there.

**JG:** Does UCLA have moon rocks in its collection or just stuff NASA gave them?

**CR:** No it’s from NASA. After that landing, I mean I went to work right before that very first landing on the moon and we got them within a couple of months after that. That was my job was to process those and lots of other things.

**JG:** And you were born and raised in Arizona?

**CR:** Arizona is my home yes.

**JG:** What part of Arizona?

**CR:** We lived all over, yes.

**JG:** Any in the forested areas, the mountain forest?

**CR:** No, I'm a desert girl.

**JG:** A desert girl, okay.

**CR:** Anyway that was how I kind of, and then when I moved to Texas, I got a job at Exxon in their palynology lab processing their...

**JG:** Where was that?

**CR:** Houston, on Buffalo Speedway is their... anyway that is what I did, process rocks to pull the pollen out and do all that. So, I did that.

**JG:** Okay, well any last thoughts. You're looking at your watch. I know you need to go.

**CR:** Oh last thoughts. I don't know. I guess what I was trying that is I really think the job was made for me. I really do.

**JG:** And you made the Forestry Museum.

**CR:** I don't know about that, but I think I got it to a place where someone can take the next leap. I really do. And I'm proud of that.

**JG:** Well I think what the Forestry Museum became, and what it still is becoming is in large part to what you did. I think you did so much for so long, for so little, it's been so hard, you can't fill it. Anyway it's hard to replace somebody like that. Not replace, but to fill that because I know that is what you did.

**CR:** Well it was time for new ideas, and so it was time for me to leave and it was time for someone else to come in, so I think that is.

**JG:** One other thing if you have a moment, just talk about because you volunteer in so many different organizations and you give of your time and now that you are retired, you're still doing things. You're coming to The History Center, just if you don't mind what your approach to volunteerism, and giving in that regard?

**CR:** Well part of it has got to be stuff that I have fun doing, which The History Center is that, and then I think there are needs in the community. It was one of the reasons I was

very glad to go to the museum and not be at The Texas Forest Service because at the Texas Forest Service I was not in a position where I was encouraged to be active in the community. It was an important part of me wanting to do something different.

**JG:** And it helped that you had a job that was encouraging you to do that.

**CR:** Yes exactly, but I still think that is very important.

**JG:** Because you are still involved with Kiwanis right?

**CR:** Yes involved with Kiwanis, and I teach a class at the Mosaic Center twice a year when they have their class.

**JG:** What do you teach?

**CR:** I teach how to set boundaries. I think that is extremely important for that clientele. I do quite a bit at my church and that is just a big part of who I am.

**JG:** Well alright Carol, thank you very much. And, you are fixing to go to church I think for a project.

**CR:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay thank you again.

**END OF INTERVIEW**