

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **George (B. I.) Webb**

Interview Date: 02/13/2010

Interviewers: Chuck Kelly and Bruce Kelly

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: Telephone interview at his home in Salley, SC

22 Pages



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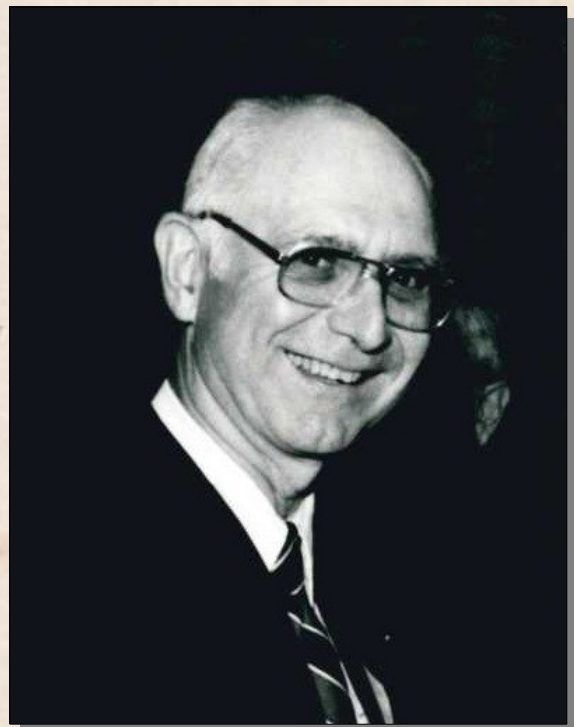
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Transcript

KELLY, B: B. I., this is Bruce. I want to ask you a question as we get started. Your name is George. How did you get the name B. I.?

WEBB: Well, I didn't know my name was George until I moved to South Carolina (all laugh).

WEBB: DuPont hired me. I reported to the workplace on the 20th of June, 1960. I walked into my boss's office, and I was JUST fixin' to say, "I'm B. I. Webb" and he looked at me and he stuck his hand out, and he says, "I'm I. B. Laughton". I've been George Webb ever since.

My REAL name is George Louis. B. I. was my nickname.

KELLY, C: How did you get that? Did your parents give it to you?

WEBB: I don't know HOW I got there. I'm serious. I've been called B. I. all my life.

KELLY, C: Yeah, yeah. That's all we ever heard of. We didn't know you any other way.

WEBB: All my report cards have George L. B. I. Webb.

KELLY, C: Is that right?

WEBB: Yeah, always B. I. in there, you know?

KELLY, C: (laughing) It must mean something!

WEBB: Yeah. I got baptized in the Methodist church. I'm kneeling at the altar and the preacher says—I'm sixteen years old—he says, "I baptize thee George Louis—hold your head up higher a little, B. I.". (EVERYONE CRACKS UP.)

KELLY, C: Hey, it may not be official!

WEBB: That's right! I got married. My wife sent out these invitations, you know? Charlotte Jones marrying George Webb. So my uncle in Dallas calls my mother. "We have somebody in the family named George Webb?" (laughs)



Known as "B. I. Webb" his whole life, even family members were unfamiliar with his given name, George.

When I answer the phone or somebody says, “B. I.?”. I say, “Uh oh, my past is up on the other side!” Now, ALL my kinfolk and my wife’s folk in Virginia and the Carolina's, call me B. I.

KELLY, B: George, were you born in Sugar Land?

WEBB: No, I was born in Houston at Memorial Hospital. My parents were living in Houston.

KELLY, B: What brought them to Sugar Land?

WEBB: My daddy went to work for the county in '38 I believe. We lived in Missouri City. Then he got a job in Sugar Land. There used to be an OLD John Deere—

KELLY, C: Oh, yeah!

WEBB: Okay, that was his—he was running that. He was in charge of transportation. The trucks and everything. And the farm—repair of the farm implements, and all that.

KELLY, B: B. I., they’re about ready to tear that building down. I went in it last week. There are some things stored in it. One of the things is a big wooden cooler that was in the refinery property.

WEBB: Daddy’s office was in the, uh, northeast corner. It faced east and west. It was a brick building with a lot of windows in it.

KELLY, B: How old were you when you came to Sugar Land?

WEBB: I was six years old.

KELLY, B: Did you start school immediately?

WEBB: I did. We came in the summer of '39. I even got vaccinated in Sugar Land—smallpox. Dr. Slaughter vaccinated me. We lived with my aunt and uncle, Joe Bob Hughes’s mother and daddy, on Main Street, right across from the Methodist Church. We eventually moved to 413 Fourth Street, which was a brick house, on the left. Then, Mother and I eventually moved across the street to a wooden house, at 412. Then, when I went in the service, Mama moved out on Brooks Street.

KELLY, B: What happened to your father?

WEBB: He left. (laughs) He went in the service in '42 and he and Mother got divorced in '43.

KELLY, B: I remember your mother well, when she lived over on Brooks Street. She worked for the Industries, didn't she?

WEBB: Yes. She worked for Mr. Krehmeier. She worked at the Credit and Collection Department. She ended up working for Rufus Phillips.

KELLY, B: So that brings us to Mr. Krehmeier, who with your father, chartered the Sugar Land Fishing Club.

WEBB: I guess it was the Alkire Fishing Club. Or the Alcorn—I don't remember what it was. It was A. F. C. I remember that. It included Brooks Lake, and it seems like it started at Coburn Dam and went all the way to Blair Dam. It also included Big Horseshoe Lake. You know where Big Horseshoe Lake is? If you go down Highway 6, and you were to take a right to go to the old Humble Camp? Just before you take a right, to your left was a BIG pasture.

KELLY, C: Oooh, I've duck-hunted in there. Yeah.

WEBB: In the middle of that pasture was Horseshoe Lake and then a little lake on the other side of it. And THAT was in the fishing club. Now whether Dam One was in the fishing club, I don't know. But they NEVER patrolled it. I think it was twelve or twenty-five dollars a year. Daddy had a membership. After Daddy left, Mother worked for Mr. Krehmeier, so Mr. Krehmeier gave me a free membership.

Mr. Willey was the game warden. I can't remember his first name, I wasn't on a first-name basis with him, you know. They had boats for the members up there on Highway 90 right in front of Eldridge Drive, by KPRC Road. Where it crosses over—that road crosses between the lakes. They probably keep five or six boats there for the members. Then they had four or five boats at the docks on Brooks's Lake.

During that period of time, in the early '40s, Texas had a fishing law. You couldn't keep bass or crappie until after the 1st of May. This gave them the time to spawn. And you couldn't fish for 'em or keep 'em. You could fish for bream and perch, but not bass. I don't know when that law went out of the books, but I remember you couldn't do that.

ALSO, the company allowed you to hunt on that property. What you had to do was go to somebody and get a permit. Mr. Willey was the game warden and also Mr. Coburn was. And Mr. Coburn rode the pasture every day, so he knew what was going on.

KELLY, B: Did the Sugar Land Industries sponsor this club? How did that work? Do you know?

WEBB: Yeah, yeah. That's who sponsored it. Somebody in Sugar Land sponsored it. It belonged to Sugar Land.

KELLY, B: Did they stock the lakes?

WEBB: I don't remember them ever stocking the lakes. They may have. But when we grew up and started duck huntin' out all through there we would HIDE the boats. We walked to a certain point-- we wanted to cross the lake-- we knew where the boats were, in the reeds, you know. That'd make Mr. Willey madder'n three A Ls, you know?

And he'd chew us out. "Where them boats?" He'd always want to know where the boats were, you know? He'd make us go get 'em. We'd have to go get 'em and bring 'em back. Then we'd hide 'em next week.

KELLY, B: Tell us about some of the people you fished and hunted with.

WEBB: Well, Pete Coburn and I hunted together all the time. Gilbert Kadlecek and I hunted together a lot.

KELLY, C: They were your neighbors?

WEBB: Yep. Gilbert was next door. And of course, Pete lived out at the "Farm". But Pete and I hunted together all the time. My junior year, I believe it was, we had a new principal, named Bailey, and he came in and he gave us all a talk, you know, first day of school. Then he asked everybody in there, "Who likes to duck hunt?" We raised our hands. He said, "Y'all stay here". He dismissed everybody else. He says, "Now, boys, let me tell you something. If you maintain a B average," he says, "and you have a study hall first period or last period, I will let you go duck huntin'. IF you give me half the ducks."

KELLY, C: Well, when y'all brought your guns to school, did he keep 'em in his office? He didn't let you carry 'em into the classroom—you had to leave 'em—

WEBB: Oh, no! We'd take 'em in the office. We left our guns in his office. Yeah, we'd go to school with guns! I'd walk to school with my shotgun. Walk into his office,—you know, break it open, show him it wasn't loaded, put it in the corner and lay my shells on his desk.

At 2 o'clock when we got out, I'd run in there and grab it and take off for the flats out there, we called it. In the morning I might keep my shotgun and go out and hunt, and come back. Get in about 8:30, quarter to nine, put my ducks and everything in there, and go to class.

KELLY, C: You didn't miss 1st period?

WEBB: Yeah. 1st period was study hall. I had permission to miss that, you know.

KELLY, B: What did your schoolmates think about that privilege?

WEBB: Well they thought it was GREAT. They went, too!

KELLYS: (laughing)

WEBB: Earl Blaschke was with me, Pete Coburn and Ronald Miller. When we had our 50th high school reunion, he said, "The only thing I can remember about you is that you could kill a limit of ducks before 1st period." (EVERYBODY laughs!!) Duck huntin' was just FABULOUS in Sugar Land at that time.

KELLY, B: Where would you go?

WEBB: You walk right straight in front of the grammar school, cross the bridge, down to the highway and Pookie Dierks lived across the street. We drove to the left and-- right across that pasture. Little Horseshoe still exists, doesn't it? Across it to Brush Lake. Sometimes we'd walk even to Big Horseshoe.

KELLY, C: That's pretty far, yeah.

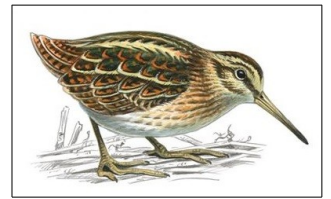
WEBB: Yeah. The beacon was the 'Pure Cane' sign on the refinery. That 'Imperial Pure Cane Sugar' was the beacon. You could see that sign forever. So you never got lost.

KELLY, B: What other things did you hunt, besides duck?

WEBB: We hunted ducks and jack snipe. Then there were a few geese. Every now and then you would hear some geese. And we'd hunt DOVE, in September, because all the water was still low and they would use that for waterin' holes. They'd come across that pecan orchard, man, by the hundreds, comin' back to those water holes.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The jack snipe/jacksnipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*) is a small stocky wader. It is the smallest snipe, and the only member of the genus *Lymnocyptes*. Features such as its sternum make it quite distinct from other snipes or woodcocks.

Wikipedia



There were a lot of quail, but your uncle Harold and Uncle Raymond were BIG quail hunters. There was a man named Seger. Mr. Seger was a BIG quail hunter and he had bird dogs. He named his bird dogs the awfulest names you could ever think of. One of them was Turd. The other one was Bitch. I'm serious now!

KELLY, C: (still laughing) No, I believe it!

WEBB: He was a character!

KELLY, C: My grandfather worked for him.

WEBB: He was a character, man. But he was a good bird hunter.

KELLY, C: Tell us about the discovery you made when you were crawling along the ground one day.

WEBB: Oh!

KELLY, C: Was it you or was it somebody else?

WEBB: No, that was somebody else.

WEBB: Yeah, that was right where Eldridge Road comes into Highway 90. Right across the highway there, is the road that goes across the lake. Okay? To the left of there was a weed field. And the Eldridge house—was up there. It's gone now. And this guy's sneakin' up on some ducks, in the weeds, you know? And he looks over there on the right and there's a lady lying there. She's been dead three or four weeks. MAN, he stood up --

KELLY, C: Scared him, huh!

WEBB: Yeah, scared the devil out of him! I never did hear anymore about it, but we heard about what happened. They went out there and picked her up and all that. But after that, when I sneaked up on ducks, I was always real WARY. (laughing)

KELLY, C: Well, you know, George Salmon said his father discovered a body, out at Oyster Creek.

WEBB: Oh, yeah, yeah! Oh, his daddy and I used to fish together where the DeWalt Road from Stafford across the Oyster Creek Bridge—that Oyster Creek Bridge. You know where I'm talking about?

KELLY, C: Oh, yeah, I do.

KELLY, B: Quail Valley Middle School is right there now, yeah.

WEBB: Oh, okay. Well, there was a bridge across Oyster Creek, okay. Well, Pop and I were fishin' there one day, and we come in, you know. He paddled back in and I said, "Why we quittin' fishin', Pop?" He says, "It's gettin' late." I said, "Damn, take off them sunglasses. It ain't THAT late." "Oh", he says, "It is kinda light, isn't it?"

About a week later he was there by himself and he went under the bridge, up the creek, and he cast against the bank. He hanged somethin'. And he's pullin' and pullin'—finally pulls REAL hard and this big fat black lady rolls over in the water. He said he cut the line and came out of there like he had a motor on that boat. (laughs)

KELLY, C: Oh, I bet! I know. You know, it's gotta shock 'em—shock you.

KELLY, B: Were there any hunting accidents that you remember?

WEBB: Yeah, in '45 or '46. First of all, let me tell you. When you went out Brooks Street, like you're going to Highway 6? There's a lake on both sides, right? Okay. Before you get to that lake, on the left was a BIG nursery. It was called Teas Nursery. We used to rabbit hunt out there all the time. They let us do it. The man that ran it lived across the road. We'd go out there at night and sit on fenders, you know. Ride around and shoot rabbits. Well, I think it was '44 or '45 or '46. A friend of mine named Laverne Bartosh. You may know his oldest brother. He was about thirteen years old. A bunch of them went out there and they were rabbit hunting, and they were sittin' around in a circle. And a boy named Frank Topolanek was sittin' next to Laverne, on his right. Frank was thumbin' that shotgun hammer when it went off and shot Laverne in the groin. Before they could get him to the highway, he was dead.

KELLY, C: REALLY! Bled to death?

WEBB: Yeah, he bled to death. That was the only hunting accident that I can remember.

KELLY, C: Well, B. I., I just published a 1946 copy of the *Gator Splash*, and it's the last of the year, and the seniors give their stories. J. T. Farrell talks about the time Wilbur Muehr shot him.

WEBB: Yeah, he shot him. J. T. was full of bird shot for a long time. I didn't run around with them. They were MUCH older than I was. But I remember the incident now that you say it. J. T. told me, years later, he still pulls birdshot out of his—

KELLY, C: Butt? (laughing)

WEBB: You know Pete and I hunted a lot together. Now let me tell you what happened. Pete and I went in the service in '53. We knew we were goin' in the service, so when duck season ended in January '53, we figured we'd continue until we went in to the service. So we would sneak around ALL the lakes, you know. And we'd sneak up on ducks. And we wouldn't shoot but one time. One time apiece. 'Cause if you shoot one time, somebody says, "Where's that comin' from?" You shoot the second time, "THERE it is!"

KELLY, C: (laughing) RIGHT!

WEBB: (laughing) We killed ducks right through, probably March!

KELLY, C: If they couldn't find you, you could still shoot 'em, huh!

WEBB: That's right! One time Pete and I were laying on Big Horseshoe Lake and these ducks were comin' in, you know? And it was February—somethin' like that. We were waitin' til a BIG bunch got in front of us. And all of a sudden, they ALL took off. We stayed there til DARK because we didn't know WHO scared those ducks. We lay there til dark. The next afternoon we rode BY there at the same time and the ducks took off again. I told Pete, I says, "Nobody scared those ducks. They leave that time every afternoon!" (laughs)

KELLY, C: (laughing) Did y'all shoot teal or were they all mallards?

WEBB: There were teal, mallards — the world was full of coot or Pull Doos. We called them Pull-Doos then. And there were blue-bills — we called them butterballs — and then we had a lot of pintails, gadwalls, baldpates. We had everything but Canadian geese. At that time, I think there were about 50,000 left in the world. Now they are overrunning the world. The Katy Prairie was full of snow geese and blue geese. I remember one time, seeing one Canadian goose fly over Sugar Land lakes. That was it. The hunting was just excellent.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Poule d' eau*, as the coot is called in southern Louisiana, is the French name for the American Coot. The bird is duck-like, though it doesn't have webbed feet.

--Wikipedia



KELLY, B: What other wildlife did you see around Sugar Land?

WEBB: We'd see plenty of squirrels. But the squirrels mainly were at the Humble camp. Quail hunting was good around Sugar Land, but you had to go with Mr. Seger. He had the dogs.

Your uncle Harold told me that he and Raymond used to hunt down in the Valley, because Mr. Kempner liked quail. He would give them everything they needed to hunt on his big property down in the Valley. They would go down there and hunt and bring him birds.

KELLY, C.: Really!

WEBB: Yeah. That's what Harold told me.

KELLY, B: Did you ever see any bobcat or wild boar or anything like that?

WEBB: NO. Never saw a deer. Never saw a wild hog. I don't believe I ever saw a bobcat (wondering tone in his voice). Of course there weren't any coyotes then. If you wanted coyotes, you had to go to El Paso. Now if you want coyotes, you go outside! (laughing)

In about 1950, we hunted a lot on Old River Lake. You know what I'm talking about? If you go straight out Brooks Street and you cross Highway 6, and you kept going straight, you would hit the levee. Okay. You turn left down the levee road, you'd go to Humble camp. Okay. Now, you go straight down that road, when you hit the levee and took a left, if you would go about 100 yards, you'd take a right. You'd go down to Old River. That was Sugar Land's side. On the other side of the fence was the Humble Oil man.

KELLY, B: So Old River was an old oxbow kind of thing.

WEBB: Oxbow lake—that's what it was. Still there. I've googled it and looked at it.

WEBB: One time I was with George Salmon, Eugene 'Popeye' DeBlanc, Pete Coburn and I think maybe Duane Phillips and our boat sunk. Rotted. So we figured we'd go to Alcorn Lake and get one. So we went out to Alcorn Lake and got one one night and put it in the back of George Salmon's panel truck. We took it down to Old River. Sometime that night we mixed about three different gallons of paint, and we painted it. What we didn't realize was, that they had branded AFC on the bottom. Mr. Willey found it. Turned it over and took it home. Mr. Coburn, Mr. DuBlaw, Mr. Rossman and about four other people chewed our butts out, for stealing that boat. (laughing)

KELLY, C: You were mentioning to me that you used to fish with your dad and Mr. Pirtle out at Foster Farms.

WEBB: Yeah, we fished at Blakely Farm. It was a BIG round lake. Daddy and I, and Coach Arnold and Mr. Pirtle, fished out there. I would go with 'em. It was EXCELLENT bass fishing. Of course that's all they really fished for except crappie.

Later on, I fished with Harold a lot. Harold, luckily, got interested in fishin'. That's when he cost me that rifle! (laughing)

KELLY, C: (laughing) We still got it.

WEBB: Yeah, I know it! Keep it for me. Just keep it for me.

KELLY, C: All right. We will! I'll leave it to you.

KELLY, B: Describe Blakely Farm to me.

WEBB: The only thing I can remember about Blakely Farm was, it had a round lake. And the lake was full of brush, like Huisache or something, you know. You went through a gate. It's somewhere southwest of Fulshear or west of Fulshear.

KELLY, B: Is it on the river?

WEBB: I think it was a river, 'cause one time we went to the river and Daddy showed me the locks that opened the water from the Brazos to go to the rice fields.

KELLY, C: Just west of the intersection of 359 and the Fulshear highway?

WEBB: Yeah, you know where that big high school is out there? It's west of there, somewhere.

KELLY, B: Do you remember the old Sugar Land railroad that run up through to Foster Farms?

KELLY, C: The Moses lived out at Foster Farms. Dorothy Moses' parents.

WEBB: Yeah, yeah. He moved—and then he moved to Sugar Land and they lived across from Brooks's Lake.

KELLY, B: That's right. Where old Captain Brooks used to live.

WEBB: Mr. Coburn lived at Brooks Lake. He lived on the end of Brooks Lake, right on Oyster Creek.

KELLY, B: Yeah, we used to call it Coburn's Dam.

WEBB: That would've been a good name for it. When you go out Brooks Street, like I say, there's a lake on both sides. If you take a left and drive down to the end of there, where Brooks Lake continues on to your right, there was a landing right there. There was a pier right there. Brooks Lake was in the Alcorn Fishing Club. When I left Sugar Land and went in the service, the Alcorn Fishing Club was still in existence. And I went in '53.

KELLY, B: I was born in '52, so it must've still been in existence about '56-'57.

KELLY, C: I got to go once, with my dad and Uncle Harold and Aunt Louise. We went white perch fishing, out in Brooks Lake, and used their boat. We went at night. We had a lantern. Put it up and we didn't catch anything. I was probably five or six years old. It was about '55-'56.

WEBB: Let me tell you, they used to fish at night for white perch. Do you know where the Old River is, in the bend of Highway 90 before you get to Richmond? On the left there? Man, they used to fish EVERY NIGHT in that lake for white perch. With all the neon, I mean, looked like a CITY out there!

KELLY, C: Las Vegas?!

WEBB: YEAH, it DID! If you take a right, you go to Katy. If you took a left, there was a big fried chicken place—Bill Williams fried chicken.

KELLY, C: Yep, exactly.

WEBB: People fished in that old lake, right there. Now, let me tell you the sad thing of Sugar Land, okay? The Club ran from the Coburn Dam, I guess you would say, to Blair Dam. We used to fish on the outfall of Blair Dam. From Blair Dam to the ocean—to the Gulf—Oyster Creek is natural.

KELLY, C: Yeah.

WEBB: Okay. Sometime in the 19—late 40s, Sugar Land sold all that land down there to a man named Frost. Now Frost was a jewel. I put that into quotes, “jewel”. The first thing he did, was he filled that dam full of barbed wire!

KELLY, C: Really?!

WEBB: He threw all kinds of barbed wire and trash in that dam, so you could not fish there. Now, what people never challenged him on, and I know this for a fact, from South Carolina—that in ANY running water in the state can be fished. Nobody ever challenged Frost on that.

KELLY, C.: Is that right?

WEBB: Yep. In other words, you could walk down that dam, on the south side, and fish in there, because the dam was running over to your north. Then there was Oyster Creek and people used to fish there all the time. But when Frost took over, he stopped it. If you could’ve pushed your boat in there, you could go down the creek, legally. As long as you didn’t get on somebody’s property. But nobody ever challenged him. They should have put him in jail for putting all that barbed wire and trash in that creek. But he filled it up, man. You couldn’t put a hook in there. It STILL may be there.

KELLY, B: Did you ever go frog-gigging?

WEBB: OH, MAN. I was raised on frog legs. The thing I learned from Gilbert Kadlecsek’s daddy was, that the back and the front legs were just as good as the real legs. (laughing) They ate the whole frog.

KELLY, C: They’re just not as big, are they?

WEBB: That’s right! Just as good, but not as big. We used to bullfrog Brush Lake. It’s hard for me to tell you where Brush Lake is. Do you know where Mr. James lived? There’s a road that’s east of there, going south. It crosses over and makes a little horseshoe. You follow me?

EDITOR'S NOTE: **Gigging** is the practice of hunting fish or small game with a gig or similar multi-pronged spear. Commonly harvested wildlife include freshwater suckers, saltwater flounder, and small game, such as frogs. A gig can refer to any long pole which has been tipped with a multi-pronged spear. The gig pole ranges in length from 8 to 14 feet for fish gigs and 5 to 8 feet for frog gigs. A gig typically has three or four barbed tines similar to a trident; however gigs can be made with any number of tines.



Wikipedia

WEBB: That's right! Just as good, but not as big. We used to bullfrog Brush Lake. It's hard for me to tell you where Brush Lake is. Do you know where Mr. James lived? There's a road that's east of there, going south. It crosses over and makes a little horseshoe. You follow me?

KELLY, C: I'm trying to orient it to the map you gave me. Isn't it on the map that you drew? I think you labeled it.

WEBB: Yeah. Brush Lake is east of that road and there was a bridge. Brush Lake was east of there. It's in between there and Dulles Road. It was called Biltmore Pasture. It was a beautiful pasture full of oaks and pecan trees. Sugar Land let you pick up pecans on halves. You had to give half to Mr. Coburn. He controlled the pecan picking-up.

KELLY: Pete's dad.

WEBB: Yeah.

KELLY, B: Did you ever go out to Low Water Bridge and fish?

WEBB: That was going toward Grand Central? Yeah. It was EXCELLENT bream fishing. It was behind Mr. Moses' house. You took a left, right there at Mr. Moses' house, and went to Grand Central and you had to cross Low Water Bridge. I've seen water OVER it. I've seen water over it. But it was excellent fishin', both bream and Daddy caught a lot of bass down in there, on the bank.



B. I. Webb with a string of fish he caught at one of several fishing holes he favored.

KELLY, B: In a 1956 Herald-Coaster article, there's a black man named Joe Rabbit Lewis. Does he sound familiar to you?

WEBB: No, there was a man named Williams and, of course, Curly Thomas worked in the drug store. There was a man named Williams, and he was the only man I ever knew who could go in that pecan orchard with nothin' and come out with five or six rabbits. He didn't even take a GUN, you know. He lived in the Quarters; had twelve children. Swore none of them were his. They all looked like him. Every night he'd get drunk and Curtis Hall [Constable] would go over there and beat the hell out of him and get him to straighten up, you know? That's the way it was, you know? I knew him, but he was a heck of a hunter! Curly Thomas, I knew him real well, and then Mark Stevens and a man named White. Mark Stevens and White were two of the biggest blacks I EVER saw, and the strongest boys I ever saw. Mr. Joe Janacek worked 'em. Mr. Joe would work 'em out of the machine shop. Did you ever know Joe Janacek?

KELLY, C: The name sounds familiar, but I don't know the man.

WEBB: He lived on 3rd Street. He was funny, man. Called them black-asses all the time. "Get your black ass up there", you know" One day, I was working in the machine shop, right after I got out of high school. One of them asked him, says, "Mr. Joe, what are you gonna do when all of us black-asses DIE? When we run out?" "Hell, we ain't gonna run out, we got a hatcher in the Quarters—don't worry about that." (laughs)

Mark and White, man they could lift 5-600 pounds apiece. If they couldn't pick it up, 'specially on Monday morning, then Joe would go into a rage! "Ahh, y'all been drunk all weekend. Just layin' around ALL weekend. That's what you all DO, you know, on weekends. Now you can't pick up NUTHIN' on Monday." You know, they're trying to lift 300-3,000 pounds and he'd get mad at them if they couldn't do it.

But anyway, let me tell you what a great reputation I HAD, okay? My mother told me this, when she moved to South Carolina. She said, "You remember the black man named Mark Stevens?"

She says, "He came to me one time and asked me," says, "Miz Webb, what ever happened to your son?" I told him, "Right now, he's an engineer in South Carolina, for DuPont." "He's WHAT!?" Mother told him again. "Well, Miz Webb, I didn't think that boy would amount to anything." (everybody laughs.)

Well, you know why I left Sugar Land! With a reputation like that, man, you don't need to stand around.

KELLY, B: Did you ever hunt with any black men?

WEBB: No, I didn't. I'm trying to think. I DID in South Carolina, but I can't remember any in Sugar Land. But now, two of them saved my life. On January 1st, 1946, I was out in the lake south of the highway, okay? The Schumann men I was hunting with were Robert and William. They were about half a mile away from me. There was a very strong wind and it was 12 degrees and I fell in the lake. I walked out of there and I was—all of a sudden I went into—I guess you call it hypothermia today. These two black men were rabbit hunting and they found me. They built a fire and they warmed me up and they finally got hold of Robert and William to come pick me up. I was eleven years old at the time. That was really my downfall, because they took me home, put me in the bathtub, ran this hot water and gave me a hot toddy. Been drinking ever since! (all laugh) That's a true story, you know! Them two men saved my life.

KELLY: Do you know who they were?

WEBB: No, I don't. I really don't. I wish I did. I think one of them was named Williams.

KELLY, B: So that means that the black men were allowed to hunt on the Sugar Land properties?

WEBB: Oh, yeah. But they mostly were rabbit hunters. There was no season on rabbits. They weren't bird hunters. I don't remember any of them really duck hunting. They could hunt. There wasn't anything said they couldn't hunt. If those guys hadn't have been out there I probably wouldn't have made it.

KELLY, B: Did you ever fish or hunt out at Blood Lake, on the prison farm? Do you know where I'm talking about?

WEBB: Yes, you go out Rat Row [Imperial Boulevard/tin can alley] and you hit a dirt road out there that goes north and south.

KELLY, B: Uh huh. That was Flanagan Road.

WEBB: Okay. There's some lakes out there. Earl Blaschke and I used to hunt ducks out there. The captain at the new unit let us hunt out there. I also hunted at Harlem III, which was the trustee farm, right near Gannoway Lake. There was a trustee farm there that had eleven men; ten blacks and one white. It was segregated. The white man lived with the hogs and the ten black men lived in one room, together.

They had one guard and one captain. The guard's son, last name Moore, was in my grade. But I used to go out there, walk out there from Sugar Land, in the morning, eat breakfast with the convicts, lay my shotgun against the wall, and then go hunt. I mean, I walked in there with the convicts, with my shotgun!

KELLY, C: (laughing) Everybody was pretty trusting, back in those days, weren't they?

WEBB: Yeah. Now, Earl Blaschke and I hunted on, what I guess you call Blood Lake. On Unit Lake. And it was FOGGY. We were out there huntin', and the ducks were flyin' and I took a shot. I hear this holler. There's a convict across the lake and we peppered him. We couldn't SEE him.

One morning, Earl and I are out there huntin', and we come back, and we get—I'll tell you when it was. It was '51. We came back to the house, and I couldn't find my shotgun. GOOOLLLLLLYYY, I left it leaning against the car! We rode back out there, and there it was, laying in the grass, on that lake. But after I went in the service, we never hunted there any more.

Now, Mr. Schumann had some lakes out there, that were EXCELLENT huntin'. He leased ONE of them to Mr. Guenther, who then turned it over to Jimmy Couvillion. That was their private huntin'. Now on the OTHER end of that, there was another lake that Robert Schumann and I hunted on. It was just as good as the one that Mr. Guenther and them had. Man, that was some FABULOUS duck huntin' out there.

KELLY, C: Tell Bruce about going to buy shells from Mr. Guenther.

WEBB: OH. You'd go up to Mr. Guenther and you'd say, "Mr. Guenther, I want some .22 shells." "I don't have any." I says, "But there they ARE." "Son, them are cartridges, they are NOT shells. I got SHOTGUN shells back here and I got rifle cartridges. Now when you learn how to pronounce them, I'll sell them to you." (laughs)

KELLY, C: He was a crusty old guy, wasn't he!

WEBB: Yeah. He called me to his house one day. He said, "I ought give you something." And he gave me a reloading kit for a .38-55 Ballard. I still have it. He told me, said, "I don't have any children. My father was a marksman, a competitive shooter around Vogel Valley and Schulenberg and those areas. This is his book. And he gave me this book of all the matches his daddy went to, and what sights were on his rifle. How many yards he shot, what he scored that day. It went from Vogel Valley, 1894, to 1907, I believe.

KELLY, C: Is that right! Was he in the military or was he just a private citizen?

WEBB: He was a private citizen. He was shootin' a .38-55 Ballard. I've still got some of his reloading equipment, here at the house. But I GAVE that magazine to Herbert Shelton's wife. I believe she was kin to him.

KELLY, C: Oh really? The Nortons.

WEBB: I gave it to SOMEBODY that was his niece. That's been about ten years ago.

WEBB: There was a 'Gunther' and a 'Genther' (pronounced differently) family. They were brothers. Don't call 'Genther' 'Gunther', and vice versa.

KELLY, C: (laughing) There was a disagreement?

WEBB: Oh yeah. Mr. 'Genther' was—he was 'Genther'. His brother was 'Gunther'. I've heard people call him Mr. Gunther. "I am 'Genther', my brother is 'Gunther'".

KELLY, C: (laughing)

WEBB: I mean, he'd tell you real quick. He'd been a millwright. He knew a man who toured America for Winchester. He was one of the crack shots of the '40s and '50s. He'd come through Sugar Land and put on demonstrations. But he came to Sugar Land to see Mr. 'Genther'. I saw him one time. Mr. 'Genther' was a very nice gentleman but he didn't have any children. But 'Gunther' did.

KELLY, C: Yes. In fact, his children, Skeet and Muffet, were friends of my dad's. She was called Muffet, but I think her name was Margaret.

WEBB: Last I heard was that, when Skeet got out of high school, he went to New York City. He was in the Broadway line or something. He never came back as far as I know.

KELLY, C: No, I never met him. But I met Muffet before she died, at the 1999 Gator reunion. I met her and her husband, Stanley Gideon.

WEBB: I remember Stanley. I saw him at one of the reunions. I thought the world of him.

KELLY, C: He was a character. He told me some funny stories.

WEBB: Oh, yeah, he was nuts. Is he still living?

KELLY, C: Well, I don't know. I was gonna try to find out, because I think we ought to talk with him. He was on that '38 team, if you remember.

WEBB: Yeah, he was.

KELLY, C: Your cousin, Joe Bob, is not alive, is that correct?

WEBB: Yeah, Joe Bob died about two years ago. He lived about a hundred miles from me. I found out about a year later that he had died. But, Joe Bob, except for myself and Buddy Blair, had nothin' to do with any of his family. I never have understood that. When he left Sugar Land, he left Sugar Land. I keep in touch with his daughter. She's 65. He had two daughters, by Dorothy. I still keep in touch with one of his daughters. But she didn't know he was dead.

He was probably one of the best looking boys ever went to Sugar Land High School. Mama used to say, "That's his problem." Too good looking, you know? Women can't leave him alone. When he left Sugar Land, he left Sugar Land. He retired a full colonel in the Air Force.

KELLY, B: I have another question for you. I know that Mr. Matladge, the druggist, was a BIG hunter in his early days. He used to carry a shotgun in his Model T back in the '19s and '20s. Did you ever see him hunt around Sugar Land?

WEBB: No. The only thing I saw Matladge do was spy on me to see if that girl put too much ice cream in my milk shake! He RAN that drug store. The girls, you know, would fix us milk shakes. When we went in there, you know, if it was your girlfriend fixing your milk shake, you always got two or three extra dips of ice cream in there, and it was real THICK. Matladge would COUNT 'em. (laughing)

You sent me this picture of Sugar Land in which you're lookin' SOUTH. It's an aerial photo. If you look in that picture, Cleveland Lake is finished and the bridge is there. We were discussing the dredge boat in Cleveland Lake.

KELLY, C: That's the oldest photo I've ever seen. I've never seen one older than that. An aerial view, now.

WEBB: I fished on the dredge boat. When the water went down, you could walk ON the dredge boat.

KELLY, C: Is that right?!

WEBB: Yep. When the water went up, all you could see was the mast.

KELLY, C: Did it sink or did they just leave it- abandon it?

WEBB: I think they scuttled it.

KELLY, B: I'll tell you the story. Captain Alkire was the guy that ran it. Mr. Eldridge had differences with him, and Eldridge had it scuttled because he didn't want Alkire to have anything to do with it.

WEBB: Oh, okay. That wouldn't surprise me! I knew a black fellow in the char house in '51 named Chittowee. That was his name. I don't know what his REAL name was.

He told me, he says, "Cap'n", "I knew Mr. Eldridge as a young man." And he said, "He used to invite all of them Yankees down here." Said, "They'd arrive in these horses and carriages," said, "They'd walk home." Said, "He'd get their money." (laughing) He said, "They'd either take the train or walk home." He was telling me about Eldridge, you know?

Then he told me about running into Bonnie and Clyde. He was pumping gas for somebody around Victoria. He said, one afternoon, said, this car drove up and he was filling it up with gas, and this man and woman are in there—and they said, "Where's your boss?" And a man said, "I am." And they said, "Come here." He walked up there and the lady says, "Now, we're not going to pay for this gas. We're gonna give this black man a dollar. Or this colored man a dollar." They said, "We're gonna be back in about three weeks, and IF you take it away from him, we're gonna kill you. You understand what we're tellin' you?" "Yeah, yeah." In about three weeks, they came back by there and asked me if I still had my dollar and I told them "Yes," and they left. And that was Bonnie and Clyde!

Do y'all remember Mr. Travis?

KELLY, B: YES! Old man Travis.

WEBB: Yeah, Colonel Travis. Well, he got that from his son. His son was a Colonel. But anyway, my daddy and Mr. Travis were the best of friends. After Daddy and Mother divorced, Travis kind of looked after me, you know? He would invite me out to his house to fish. He had an excellent white perch drop out there. You'd catch all the white perch you wanted right there. Mr. Travis was very influential too, in the Alcorn Fishing Club. He had this place out there, and I think Mr. James built out there.

KELLY, B: One of the Muehrs built out there.

WEBB: A man named Harris lived out there. Then Cooper, I think. I know the James' did. That was the rich people of Sugar Land that lived out there, you know?

KELLY, B: Did you know the Weths?

WEBB: Yeah. I saw him get cold-cocked right there in Sugar Land.

KELLY, B: Why?

WEBB: He was a World War I ace in Germany. He was very pro Nazi. He was very pro Hitler. He was bragging on Hitler all the time. One day, I was in the grocery store, evidently it was after Pearl Harbor and he bragged on Hitler and somebody knocked him flat. They said he never bragged on Hitler after that.

KELLY, B: Bet not!

WEBB: I'm serious now! I don't know who hit him, but somebody hit him.

KELLY, C: One last thing. I've been just looking at pictures of KPRC, the studio, in his house. If it turned into his house, it couldn't have been a studio. You either have a house or a studio.

WEBB: Okay, let me tell you what I know about it. I think it was Beverly or Betty Jean told me that they used to go out there. He had a swimming pool. But no one else was ever allowed out there. No one that I EVER knew went to that house. I delivered papers, for Ray Anhaizer, the Houston Chronicle. I made one of his paper routes. I used to have to go ALL the way down Lakeview, hit Eldridge Road, take a right, Junior Wirtz, Dr. Wirtz's place, I left one there and Weth. And Mr. Fowler. Those were the three papers I HAD to deliver WAY out there. That was tough against the wind, you know?

Weth lived back in there somewhere. He did not mix with anybody. The only time I ever saw him is when he walked through Sugar Land. He was Chief Engineer, I think. But now, the BEST man was Tony Sanchez. Tony Sanchez and Mr. Paul Schumann used to take me to watch the Buffaloes play.

Yeah. They loved baseball. But Tony Sanchez was the funniest, richest man in Sugar Land. EVERY day he would walk through that barber shop and he'd get out his coin purse. He'd get a quarter and he'd flip Johnny and Tony Ruffino for this quarter. If he won, he would dance. If he lost, you would have thought somebody was taking him to the poorhouse. (laughs)

KELLY, B: Quarters meant a lot to him, huh!

WEBB: I mean, that was EVERY day, they flipped. For a quarter! It was FUNNY, man. Tony would put on a show. But he was VERY intelligent. He was a CUBAN.

KELLY, C: That's right! You know, he's in that paper that I posted. It does say that he came from Cuba. He's a Spaniard, actually.

KELLY, B: Maybe that's why he got to go in the barbershop and the other Hispanics didn't.

WEBB: Oh, that's right. I mean, he didn't look Spanish. He was as white as we are. He had no Spanish features.

KELLY, B: I remember my grandfather saying that Tony Sanchez had bought a lot of City Service oil stock, and that's how he made his money.

WEBB: Could have been. He and Paul Schumann were real good friends. I lived with Tony's mother-in-law in Stafford. We rented from them. They were Provanzos. When I lived there in '38.

KELLY, C: Well, thanks B. I. for talking to us.

WEBB: You bet!

Interview ends