

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Aubrey Dean Eversole**

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Transcript

PENA: Please tell me your name and date of birth.

EVERSOLE: A. D. Eversole, February 26, 1940.

PENA: Can you tell us Mr. Eversole have you always lived in Richmond.

EVERSOLE: No, I came here in 1974 from Damon, Texas. After I bought my barbershop I felt like I should live here. So I come to work here in 1960. So I've lived here from '74 until now.

PENA: What kind of work do you do?

EVERSOLE: I have a barbershop, McFarland's Barbershop, now it is the Richmond Barbershop on Morton Street. I've been there for fifty-two years now.



PENA: So you have been the one and only barbershop in Richmond.

EVERSOLE: In downtown. There's others places around—hair cutting places, but as far as downtown we're the only shop that's been here since back in 1800s.

PENA: It's been in that same place on Morton Street?

EVERSOLE: Yes.

PENA: Can you tell me about your connection with Mr. Joe Clyde Wessendorff.

EVERSOLE: First the hair cutting; I was his barber for fifty years. And other than that insurance, lumber yard. We did business with him all we could. Anything he was involved we felt good about doing business with him.

PENA: Well, that's a pretty personal commitment there with him as his barber. And then you used him in your personal life as well.

EVERSOLE: Right. He took over the payments on a trailer house, mobile home that I was living in, me and my wife, in our young married time. We were one month behind at CIT, and he picked up the notes. He fixed it where I could pay it off. So we've been dealing with him since 1960, really, besides the barber business—through the banking business.

PENA: What was it like to cut his hair?

EVERSOLE: Believe it or not, after all the time that I worked on Mr. Wessendorff I was still a little nervous when I did because of his position in the community. I just felt like—I was kind of nervous. I wanted to do so good to him in my business. But I loved it when he would say, "I hate to go out in public with one of your haircuts, A.D." But he always got his hair cut. [chuckles] He was just kidding of course, but it always made me feel good because I knew then that we were friends.

PENA: When he begin to kid with you? [Smiling]

EVERSOLE: Yeah, right when they joke with me then I know that we're friends.

PENA: When did you first meet him?

EVERSOLE: Well probably in just a few days because he would come in the barbershop on a regular basis to get a shine. We had a shine man the name Leonard Fields. They'd come in there to get a shine every couple of days it seemed like. Mr. Wessendorff wore those tall Lucchese boots that he had specially made in San Antonio. And he had a brown and black pair. And he'd take his old ones and work cattle in them and then he'd ask for the new ones. So he kept them shined up. I'd seen him just a few days before after I come there.

First time I ever went in Mr. Wessendorff's office, down on Morton Street and Third Street, we were living in a mobile home like I said, and I was wanting to get out of the mobile home, but I knew I couldn't afford to buy an expensive—build a brick house or anything. I'd seen that he had a little house for sale over here by the rice office. I don't know that street right off the Thompson Highway. It was for sale, and so I went over there to his office. I heard it was his. And I went in there nervous, of course. I approached him about buying this house for sale. And he looked right straight at me, and he said, "A.D. I'm not going to sell you that house." I said, "I thought it was for sale." He said, "It is." But he said, "You can do better than that." He said, "How about letting me build you a house." I said, "I can't afford that." He said, "Yes you can. I'll make it where you can afford it." So he built me a brick home in Damon. It's my first home. And I lived there for nine years, then he built me another house in Richmond. So he made it where I could afford it-- \$102.00 a month payments. [laughs]

PENA: What year was that?

EVERSOLE: That would have been in about '65 or '66.

PENA: So in 1965 or 1966 you paid ...

EVERSOLE: \$102 a month for a three bedroom brick home.

PENA: Oh my goodness.

EVERSOLE: He said, "I'll make it where you can afford it." And I didn't even know him hardly.

PENA: And that shows what good businessman...

EVERSOLE: And being associated with Mr. McFarland and Leonard didn't hurt anything either [laughs].

PENA: Who's Mr. McFarland?

EVERSOLE: That's was my boss that owned the shop. Mr. McFarland owned the barbershop. McFarland Barbershop is the name of it. When I bought it from him in '73 someone asked if I was going to put A.D.'s Barbershop. No, no, no. I was in Damon. We leave Damon rest there. It is a fine place to grow up. I said," No, I am not going to name it A.D.'s Barbershop, it's Richmond Barbershop. So I'm going to name Richmond Barbershop. [laughs]

PENA: Can you spell McFarland for me.

EVERSOLE: M_C_F_A_R_L_A_N_D

PENA: So he built two homes for you.

EVERSOLE: Yes, he built two homes for me, and bought a lot of cars, [laughs] a number of cars.

PENA: Oh, you bought cars from him?

EVERSOLE: Yes, financed through the bank. We always felt like we were definitely going to buy as long as Mr. Wessendorff was there. [laughs]

PENA: What was Mr. Wessendorff's bank?

EVERSOLE: Fort Bend National. It was down on Third and Morton.

PENA: So you looked to Mr. Wessendorff to help you with all of your personal...

EVERSOLE: I got lots of advice from him. I was a young country boy coming to town. Well I got lots of good advice from him.

PENA: Did you get that advice while he was sitting in the barber chair?

EVERSOLE: Most of it yes. That's where I was comfortable. But I didn't get into anything personal when people were in there. I'd catch him because he got a haircut and a shampoo at least every two weeks. So I had him pretty often. If I needed to ask him something kind of personal I wouldn't blast it out all over the barbershop. I'd kind of, "Mr. Wessendorff, what about this, what about that?"

PENA: Did you ask him anything else about how to invest your money or was it just stuff you needed to buy for yourself?

EVERSOLE: Right, not really. I always kind of felt like that Mr. Wessendorff knew that I was not going to get into a bind. I wasn't going to buy something and get them to finance it that I couldn't afford or couldn't pay for. I guess if I would have—he would probably volunteered to give some help if I would have needed some help financially—as far as just giving me some advice. I'm sure if I went down to buy an airplane he would have said, "Hey, A.D., that Bronco's okay." [laughs] That's kind of the way we did it. But he did give me a lot of advice about things—hunting. In fact, I used to shrimp. I loved to shrimp—drag a shrimp net. He would say, "Hey A.D., leave those shrimp in the water for the fish." [laughs]

PENA: I'm surprised he even liked fishing.

EVERSOLE: Yes, he was a fisherman.

PENA: Did he ever tell you any of his fish stories?

EVERSOLE: I heard of some of them. I never was a rod and reel fisherman. He was. He didn't like to use live bait. He would use artificial bait. And he told me, "A.D. you need to start fishing with your rod and reel. Use a silver and a gold spoon, either one of them." He said, "That's what I fish with all the time." And the mayor, Mr. Moore, said they would go fishing together, which they did many a time and brought some of their cronies. They'd be fishing with shrimp—live bait-- and Mr. Wessendorff would be fishing with artificial. They would kind of snicker at him; we're going to catch a fish.

Well he'd start catching them on his artificial. Well they'd say, "Joe, Joe you've got any more of those artificials back..." [laughter] There were stories in there that I wasn't really involved in because I didn't do a lot of rod and reel fishing.

PENA: But you overheard them.

EVERSOLE: Yes, that's right I heard a lot of things that I don't talk about. [laughter] They are not bad, but I just mean funny. Those guys were hilarious when they'd all be in the barbershop. I was very fortunate to know Mr. Wessendorff, Mr. Robinowitz, Mr. Moore. All those guys would come in here, and it was entertaining for a young country boy like me. [laughs]

PENA: I bet it was. You probably know some really good stories, really good stories. When Mr. Wessendorff was in the barbershop with all of his cronies did he ever talk about his World War II experiences?

EVERSOLE: No, no. If he did, I have never been much of a person to read about wars. No, I can't really recall, and I'm sorry I can't recall the stories about. But I know they did, but I really cannot say that I heard any of the war stories. I know that him and Mr. Moore and all them be in there and they'd be talking about it, but it just kind of drifted away from me. That part of it I did not get involved in.

PENA: Did you know anything about his businesses other than on a personal level. Did he ever talk business or do any kind of business while he was sitting in the barber chair.

EVERSOLE: I know the stories that there had been a million dollar deals made in the barber chairs, but again honestly I can't say that I ever heard them make—I'm sure I did, but I can't recall that. I really can't. They did, I felt like—they felt comfortable with me. They pretty well knew that A.D. wasn't going to say nothing. If it was something that really wasn't any of my business I could just kind of tune them out. That's probably why I don't remember. I could tune them out. They're talking and I'm cutting. I'm sorry but I can't really say that I heard any big cattle deals.

PENA: If you were to describe Mr. Wessendorff to someone who never met him before or knew nothing about him how would you describe him?

EVERSOLE: I'm going to say this. Mr. Wessendorff was a lucky man. The harder he worked the luckier he got. [laughs] You know what I mean? I mean that in that way. He worked so hard that he made his own luck. If you'd meet him on the street—and I know I have done this—he'd be in there talking, getting a shine, I'd be cutting somebody's hair that didn't know that I knew Mr. Wessendorff. After he'd leave I'd kind of stick out my chest a little bit. "Who's that A.D.?" "Oh you don't know Mr. Wessendorff?" "Well, no, no, I don't know him." And I said, "Well let me tell you." I said, "You see how he is dressed right there—that's the way you'd see him ninety percent of the time, in his khakis, his boots talking about cattle and everything."

And he'd said, "Well, I knew he was somebody." But he'd say, "Tell me about him." And I would. He goes to the office occasionally, to the insurance office, but he don't like to go down there. He'd rather go out to the farm because that's just the way he was. He tended to business at the lumberyard. He tended to business at the insurance. But when he was really happy was out on the farm in his old Bronco with his muddy wheels. [laughs] So that's kind of the way.

And I'd tell him he built me two houses and made sure that I got a loan for a couple of cars over the years. I'd buy every two-by-four I could from his lumberyard [laughs] because I just felt like paying him back. Then they would pick at me a little bit for more information. He was just a good person. He is just a good man. He loved everybody. That's about the way you describe him.

PENA: Do you feel like he was a friend to just about everybody.

EVERSOLE: I felt like he was my papa. You know when Mr. Moore passed I said, "Mr. Moore I lost my papa." And when Mr. Wendt passed on I said, "Mr. Wendt I lost my papa." Now I don't have no more papas. [laughs] Those guys were all so good to me--to me and my family.

PENA: Those were leaders in the community, weren't they?

EVERSOLE: They were so comfortable to be around. He did something for me.... [pauses] My grandchildren--when the first one was born I got a silver dollar from the 100 years between 1983 to 1883 for the kid. You know lots of people do that. And then when the next grandson was born I got one from--for him--a hundred years from the time he was born until then. So I had two. Well I got another grandson and so the guy I was getting them from--from Houston coin collector. It is not an expensive deal; it's very reasonable.

And so he was in there one day. And I said, "Now Mr. Al I need to get me another silver dollar, an 1895." He said, "That's going to be kind of hard. They're pretty rare." Mr. Wessendorff was in my chair [at the time], he was having problems with his talking. I was just working on him and I was talking to the man about the silver dollar. The man said, "I found one, but A.D. it is in terrible poor shape." He said, "They want fifty dollars for it. You barely can see the dates on it." I said, "Well go ahead and get it for me. At least I'll have one." Mr. Wessendorff was not even in the conversation, I was washing his hair or something.

The next day Mr. Wessendorff walks in and I thought I messed his hair up or something when he comes back the next day. He reached in his pocket and he pulled out a silver dollar -- laying in his hand. I picked it up and I looked at it and I said, "Oh that's one of those 1895." He nodded his head. He had that little vibrator to talk with. I picked it up and handed it back to him. He said, "That's for your grandson." Isn't that something?

PENA: Oh, he brought it for your grandson?

EVERSOLE: He said, "I got it out of my private collection."

PENA: He had a private collection of coins?

EVERSOLE: He said, "I got it out of my private collection." I'm sorry. [chokes up with emotion]

PENA: Oh that's alright.

EVERSOLE: Isn't that something. That was the biggest thing! [deeply emotional]

PENA: That's very emotional for you.

EVERSOLE: That is. That is.

PENA: That's a genuine friend.

EVERSOLE: Yeah, that is.

PENA: What a generous, generous man.

EVERSOLE: Isn't that something. And come to find out, that's a very rare coin.

PENA: Is it really?

EVERSOLE: We don't want to know the value of it. It doesn't make any difference. But that's quite a deal. It sure was.

PENA: But that was priceless to you.

EVERSOLE: I couldn't, I couldn't describe it.

PENA: That is a lovely story. It's a man with a...

EVERSOLE: It's the kind of person he was.

PENA: Yes.

EVERSOLE: That's the kind of man he was.

PENA: He's generous through and through.

EVERSOLE: He really was. And Mrs. Wessendorff, the few times I was around her, I just loved her to death. She was so nice to me. One night I know we were going out to Academy [store]. We were having one of real cold winters, and me and my wife were going out to Academy.

We saw Mrs. Wessendorff coming, and they were pushing her in a wheelchair. She had a man with her that worked for her and had two girls that worked for her. She had grocery carts stacked full of coats, corduroy coats. I said, "Mrs. Wessendorff what are you doing with all them coats?" She said, "My people are not going to get cold this winter." She had fifteen coats that she was going to give to all her employees. [laughs] So that was a little thing that was a big thing.

PENA: She had been shopping in Academy.

EVERSOLE: She went over there and bought all of her folks some coats. She said they are not going to get cold this winter. And I thought that was very big. She could have bought the store if she wanted to, but she was taking care of her people.

PENA: Do you any other stories about Mrs. Wessendorff? Did she ever come to the barbershop?

EVERSOLE: Yes, she did. She come in there when he first got out of the hospital from his first surgery. Mrs. Wessendorff called me and she said, "A.D. we are going to bring Joe down." Now I wouldn't dare call him by first name. She said, "We are going to bring Joe down. We want you to cut his hair and wash his hair for him." I said, "That's fine." So she said, "I'm going to come with him." Okay [laughter], and anyway so they did.

She brought one of her health workers there. She sat down. She said, "If you need any help A.D., she'll help you." And so I started working on him like I always did, and he was pretty hard to work on because he had a lot of surgeries on him, you know. I started working on him and she was watching me. She's pretty protective towards Mr. Joe. So she was watching me, and she said, "You need help A.D.? She'll help you." I said, "No." I said, "I might need help leaning him back in the chair when I get ready to rinse his hair out." So the girl helped me. Mrs. Wessendorff never come back. She never did come back. She found out that we know how to do it. [laughs] She wanted to be sure that we knew how to take care of Mr. Joe when he was having problems.

That's something that barbers do know because we work on a lot of people with problems. I always felt good about it because she trusted me. She trusted me to take care of Mr. Joe. Now if I would have messed up a little bit, she would have told me that too. [laughs]

PENA: You have to be proud of that because she was...

EVERSOLE: Yes, yes, I knew that Mrs. Wessendorff trusted me with Mr. Joe. That did make me feel good.

PENA: You had her approval.

EVERSOLE: Yeah.

PENA: That was something to have.

EVERSOLE: One time and that was it. Then I went to the house and worked on him and visited with her then. That was really the only time I was really as much around Mrs. Wessenforff. It's been a good friendship. There is a lot of people you know, everybody that he would come in contact with, they were treated fair.

PENA: Can you think of anything else that you would like to tell me about the Wessendorffs?

EVERSOLE: There's one that's a little complicated to tell. It involves my wife's older sister. This is before I even knew Mr. Wessendorff.

PENA: What is her name?

EVERSOLE: Faye Jeannette Ferguson. She went to Needville High School, very smart, made perfect grades. One of the girls that was pretty active in school got a five-hundred dollar scholarship that Mr. Wessendorff offered-- or however they do it--not my sister-in-law, but this other girl.

PENA: When was this?

EVERSOLE: In about 1955. This girl put in for a scholarship. Like I said she was very active; she was a drum major and everything. She stood out real good--Jeannette, she made straight "As" but she wasn't involved in a lot of the school stuff. They had ten children in the family, so she had to get on home. But anyway that's the story.

This girl turned it down because she decided she wasn't going to college. So somebody told Jeannette, "Why don't you put in for it." This was really before I knew them, much of the family.

PENA: Before you knew your wife's family.

EVERSOLE: Right. I knew of them, but my sweetie was not about this big then. [laughs]. So they said, "Jeannette why don't you put in for it." She did; they talked her into it. She got a letter from Mr. Wessendorff. They wanted to meet with her. So her and her daddy come up here. I just talked to Jeannette the other day. They come to the old lumberyard. Many time YOU [he is talking to the interviewer who grew up in Richmond] went in there holding your daddy's hand, I know.

PENA: Yes, I remember that building very well.

EVERSOLE: The old lumberyard with the wooden floors.

PENA: Yes sir, I loved that floor.

EVERSOLE: Anyway so they went there. Jeannette talked that she had the grades definitely. She got the scholarship. She went to a nursing school at the Catholic school in Houston. She became a registered nurse. She did not waste his five-hundred dollars. You know in '55 that was lot of money.

PENA: That was a great deal of money in 1955.

EVERSOLE: She went on to be the head of a nursing home in Angleton and retired from nursing just because of that five-hundred dollars. Later on she had to come up more, but can you imagine in '55 starting off at school with five-hundred dollars.

PENA: It would be really nice to know of all the scholarship that they have given out.

EVERSOLE: I thought that was something that really impressed me ...that was before we even knew him. Jeannette didn't never see him after that really. She sent him an appreciation and stuff, but we...

PENA: He began to touch her life before...

EVERSOLE: He really did. He touched our life before through my wife's sister, sure did. She didn't let him down because I tell you she went all the through the highest she could go in the nursing, and then went to running a nursing home, which you need to know the nursing to do that.

PENA: Sure. Well he certainly continues to impact our community doesn't he?

EVERSOLE: We're fixing to open up Wessendorff Park, next Wednesday. That's going to be quite a deal. That's in a perfect spot for him too, because that area he traveled going back and forth to the lumberyard. He would really be happy about that. He sure would. I shined his boots after Leonard passed on. I loved to shine them Lucchese boots. You could have an old pair of Lucchese boots and when get through with them—because I knew how to do it because Leonard showed me. When you get through with them they look like brand new. Leonard Fields you know, of course, that was their man there. When he would take Mr. Wessendorff's old boots in the back, and then he started the ones he would work cows in, the old ones. Leonard would put oil on them. He wouldn't shine the old ones. He would put oil on them. [laughs] He would take good care of them, and they took care of Leonard too. That was quite a deal.

PENA: Is there anything else you can think of that you would like to tell us?

EVERSOLE: I'd like to talk all day about Mr. Wessendorff, but...

PENA: Well you've told us some wonderful things. You have a different perspective than other people because you saw him in a very personal close-up way.

EVERSOLE: There's probably not hardly a day goes by that he's not mentioned and a lot of other people—Leonard, Mr. Moore. You know lot of people are, but Mr. Wessendorff his mentioned just about every day in that barbershop in some way, even if it's—see that sign there that says Wessendorff Park, or who owns that land down there on the left. "Oh that's Mr. Wessendorff's" He's mentioned in there and he's definitely won't ever be forgotten.

PENA: You have a picture of him in your barbershop.

EVERSOLE: Oh, yes ma'am, probably several of them. But I have a larger picture with him dressed up in his suit. Then I have some other pictures like in their hunting camp and stuff like that with all of them sitting in the chairs. Then I've got pictures—he come to my hunting camp at a barbeque. I'd invite him down because of the game wardens—he was real close to the game wardens. And another thing, my son is a game warden here. Mr. Wessendorff wrote a letter for him to the Parks and Wildlife. He wrote a nice letter for Barry that helped. [laughs] I'd had a lot of game wardens down there at my camp having a barbeque, so I'd invite a few of the landowners so they could just sit around and eat and barbeque and talk. Mr. Wessendorff was always there.



I've got pictures of him down there the camp, standing around just with all these game wardens just having a good time. That was a lot of fun. Of course, Buller was his main man, Marvin Buller, and he lived on Mr. Wessendorff's place. He lived out there on the farm—that little brick house on the right, the one out to the farm—Acres. That's where Mr. Buller lived.

PENA: He was a game warden?

EVERSOLE: Yes, he was a game warden. He'd retired already when he passed on. My son come here a few years ago.

PENA: Is that the way you'd like to remember Mr. Wessendorff is in his hunting clothes or his cowboy boots?

EVERSOLE: Oh yes, definitely. When he was coming in in his suit I knew he wasn't comfortable. [laughs] He did it because the business required it, but he wasn't comfortable in it. I guarantee you that. [laughs] Of course he could dress. When he dressed he looked sharp too. But we'd all rather have the greasy hat—the grease around the hat you know, and his khakis and maybe a little bit of cow pasture on his cuffs. [laughter] They'd liable to come in the barbershop with their spurs on back in the old days like in the '60s come right out of working cows with their spurs on. Leonard had to take their spurs off to clean their boots up. Mr. Wessendorff--you take me like I am. [laughs] I'd lay awake at night probably thinking of a hundred things I could tell you, but I know we don't have that much time.