

FARMERS BRANCH  
HISTORICAL PARK  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION  
2.2017

INTERVIEW WITH

MR. BILL MARCOM

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Place of Interview: Dallas, TX

Interviewer: Dara Jones

Date: April 12, 2017

[Track 1]

[Reading from a paper]

Well, today is the twelfth of April 2017 and I'm going to start talking about myself. My name is James William Marcom better known as Bill. I was born on April the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1924 to — across from the street from the transit center. The doctor who delivered me was Dr. Jay Frank who had lived a few houses up the street from us. Jay Frank, my brother, was named after Dr. Frank. I attended this — grade school located in Farmers Branch. Dad was the president of the school board so I had an easy time in school. Dad made out the teachers checks and I would take and deliver them. And I remember some of the teachers received only sixty to eighty dollars a month. During dad's tenure, Farmers Branch was going to build a high school across the street from the grade school, what is now known as Pepper Park. They had purchased the steel for the frame and the bathroom equipment and the war started and the project was never started.

When I reached the sixth grade, my teacher, Mrs. Lee took me and entered me into the Junior Red Cross. In fact, she asked mom if she could adopt me. 'Course that didn't happen. She grew me to being a president of the Junior Red Cross. During a meeting in Dallas at a Junior Red Cross meeting, I gave a speech and Mr. Goettinger who was a member of the Tiche Goettinger family, went and told Mrs. Lee he was going to do something for me one day. And I guess he did. When they chose the representative to represent Dallas at the Junior Red Cross meeting in Chicago, I was one of the chosen. One of our chaperones was Dr. Edwin Walker, Doak Walker's dad. Doak Walker was an outstanding football player for SMU and later for the Detroit Lions. I graduated from grade school as the salutatorian with Kathy [PHONIC] Tracey as the valedictorian. After grade school, I attended Carrollton High School and graduated in 1941.

In the summer of 1941, I was hanging around Putnam store in Farmers Branch when my first grade teacher, Ms. Ressie Thompson drove up. And she said, "Bill, are you going to college?" Here, my family couldn't afford to send me to college, so I said, "I don't think so". So she said, "You meet me here on Tuesday at twelve o'clock. I'm going to take you to Denton and get you a job." She did. She knew Momma Gross who had a boarding house directly across the street from the campus, who gave me a job helping to cook, serving meals, washing dishes and any of the other things the cook wanted me to do. This paid my room and board. The tuition was paid by Mrs. Rush, who was the principal of Farmers Branch grade school. The tuition was thirty three dollars a semester and the school furnished the books. The school was North Texas State Teachers College, now the University of North Texas. I hitchhiked home every Friday night and hit the road back on Sunday afternoon. Mom would give me fifty cents a week and when I'd get home, I'd have forty-five cents of it left. I would use the nickel to ride the bus, which it called the Red Goose, from the college to the Highway 77 to hitchhike home.

One Sunday afternoon, when I arrived back at college, I heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Things started happening. Joe, Jess, Bud, Roy Lee had now entered the service.

Jess was in the Navy and he also went to the south Pacific. Bud was in the army and he was sent to North Africa with General Patton force. And Roy Lee was in the Air Corps and he went to Italy. Later in the year, the Navy recruiters came to campus and I got an application for the Navy B5 program which was an a-aviation cadet. I brought the application home because my parent had to sign it because I was only seventeen. I wasn't eighteen yet. My mom was out back washing on a rub board. I told her what I wanted to do and she said, "Well, Bill if that's what you want to do, I'll sign it." Which she did. I sent in my application and was tested and put on a waiting list. I stayed in school. The waiting list was long because they let me complete that year plus another year before calling me in. Now during this time they would call you in for physicals and I had to have my teeth fixed and have my tonsils taken out. To remove tonsils at that time cost forty dollars, but the Jones clinic said, "If you are going into the service, we'll do it for twenty."

So in September of 1943, I was called up and sent to the University of Texas for about five months. Here you're taught by college professors— science, math and so forth. Also we started learning Morse code and signal lights. After finish the navy school at the University of Texas, I was sent to TCU. Here we started flying UPF7s which was a biplane. Also we continued our other subjects. I was at TCU five or six months and after that they sent us to the University Georgia in Athens, Georgia. Here we conditioned ourself [sic] on flying dynamics, math and now physical training.

While at University of Georgia the Navy decided they had enough pilots and at primary Flight School, they were failing about fifty percent of the people. So, Davis gave us a choice. Get out of the service and be drafted, become an air crewman, continue with flight training, if you had two years of college you could go to midshipman school and become a naval officer. This is what I chose.

So here we go again. The ones who chose midships [sic] school all were full and we had to wait. So they sent us to pre-midshipman school at Asbury Park, New Jersey. The Navy had taken over several large hotels toward the boardwalk and made them into schools. Stayed here several months and we were all shipped to Fort Skylar [PHONC] New York to midshipman school. Fort Skylar near New York City between east river and Long Island Sound. We took liberty in New York City when we were afforded it.

I was at Fort Skylar about six months and graduated and received my commission as an ensign in the U.S. Navy. Now guess what, the Navy need more pilots, so I started back flying as an ensign. As I was nearing completion of the flight training at Ottumwa, Iowa, I had a desire to get to sea. I wanted to transfer to the PT boat squadron, so I resigned fr—my flight training status. My instructor would not sign my release, saying I was too good of a pilot to resign. After some discussion, another instructor signed my papers. However, I was not sent to the PT squadron. I was sent to another school. Seemed like I was going to be a professional student. This is the way the Lord had planned my life. The school I went to, sent me to combat information school at St. Simon Island, Georgia. It was a control center aboard ship. One aircraft carrier—it directed fighters to intercept incoming unknown planes. Also it started ever— task force aircraft. When I finished school, the Navy had just started a program to counteract the Kamikazes. These were Japanese planes coming in low in the water and the radar couldn't detect them until they

got in and it was too late. I was assigned as a pilot director officer aboard one of these aircraft. We could fly about a hundred miles from the carrier, relay our radar picture to the carrier and we would also direct fighters to the intercepted Japanese planes. Just at the time I was to be deployed – the Far East, the war was over. After some time, I was mustered out of the service and returned home.

I entered SMU and later started a washateria in Farmers Branch. Then, Korean War broke out and the Navy recalled me to active duty. At the time of discharge and being a naval officer you would be on call for ten years after your release from service. I fell into that category. Here we go again. Instead of being sent to Korea area, I was sent aboard the U.S.S. Franklin D. Roosevelt (CV33) and sailed off to the Mediterranean Sea. After two or three years at sea, I was transferred to the naval air station at Atlantic City. At Naval – Atlantic City, I was attached to all weather fighter squadron. Here we trained pilots in intercept techniques. The squadron was a VC4. I was stationed at Atlantic City when I called Marie Weaver to come up from Dallas to marry me. We were married by the mayor of Pleasantville, New Jersey, a city just outside of the navy base near Atlantic City.

After duty at NAS Atlantic City, I was transferred to CIC School at Glenview, Illinois where I was electronic instructor teaching classes to naval officers. After tour Glenview, Illinois I was transferred to the Officers Electronics School at Memphis, Tennessee. This was about a fifty week courses at the electronics school: theory, troubleshooting, maintenance, electronic gear including radar, radio, navigation equipment – eight hours a day five days a week. While I was in school the Navy got an electronic countermeasure plane shot down over Shanghai, China by the Chi-Comms [sic]. This incident was disturbing, however I knew if the Chinese came within range of our coast, we would do the same. I had worked with Air Force on this and that's what they would do to protect our coast. However I got an order to – BW(16) in Hawaii as Electronic Maintenance Officer. However, when I arrived, one of my instructors at the electronic school was occupying the position. So, I took a job as a CIC officer aboard a Con-Ed WV2 radar plane. After a while, the squadron was decommissioned and I was transferred to replace electronic countermeasures personnel that was shot down by the Japanese plane. After some mission I was grounded because too much albumen in my blood. I had never experienced a blood problem before or after. It is perfect now. The Lord is still at work in my life.

Back when I was in Officers Electronics School Memphis Tennessee all reserve off — naval officers on duty got a letter saying that only ten percent of the reserve officers would be able to stay in long enough to retire. I immediately sent a letter to the U.S. Army inquiring about military service. I got a letter back asking to review my record. I signed a waiver for them to do so. I soon received a letter saying that I was qualified in all respects and to fill out the application. I did and mailed it back. The application required that the Navy off – to release me. I wrote to the Navy for a release. I was stationed in Hawaii when I did this communication. Then I was transferred to Japan. While in Japan and being grounded due to blood abnormalty [sic], I received a letter on Friday from the Army stating I had to have my application completed or they would have

to take my name off the list. Would you believe the Lord working? The next day I received a letter from the Navy stating they would release me if the army would pick me up. I returned the letter to the army and got orders back to the United States. Landed in San Francisco. One night I was released from the Navy. Midnight the next morning, I was sworn as a captain in the presidio. This transfer of service was a miracle.

Now as a captain, I was sent to another school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. After school started, duty at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. I worked in the Weapons Test Division. Work was engines and testing various electronics systems. After I worked for WTD for some time, I was transferred to a trib [PHONIC] unit. I was assigned as operation officer of the Ninety-Third Signal Battalion. The Battalion did not have its spot for executive officers so I was second in command of about eleven hundred men. After a time the U.S. thought that the Russians were going to invade Germany at the Fulda Gap. The 93<sup>rd</sup> Signal was deployed to Hagenow, Germany and made a defense stand. I tell everybody that the Russians heard that I was coming and they h —backed out. After a time, I was made Battalion commander. The person commanding, transferred to the sigl — [unintelligible] crew.

After spending about three years in Germany, I was transferred to Sandia Base Albuquerque, New Mexico where I worked in nuclear weapon testing. Testing was done at the Nevada test site which is north of Las Vegas. Now I would fly to the weapons test site on Monday morning and work all week and fly back to Albuquerque on Friday night. While working in the test division, I was sent to Amchitka Island in the Aleutian chain in Alaska for a nuclear test. While stationed at WTD Albuquerque, Iowa, I was allowed to retire. I retired on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1967. Before retiring, I had applied for a job with northern division of United Technology Norwalk, Connecticut. I was offered a job and moved to Norwalk, Connecticut. After a year in Norwalk the family wanted to move back to Texas, so I resigned my position at Norden. After I resigned, I was contacted by management and asked if I would like a job at General Dynamics Fort Worth. I readily accept the offer and we moved back to 12235 Brisbane Avenue Farmers Branch. I commuted to Fort Worth daily about fifty miles each way. I was head of a team of about sixty technicians. I conducted projects with General Dynamics working on the F111D project. Norden provided a display for the cockpit for the pilot.

After about five years the project ended and I was transferred back to Norden home office. Again, at this time, I resigned and came home to Farmers Branch. During retirement, I decided to go int – out into a business where I could – would work with my family. First we mowed lake property at – for the Corp of Engineers. We started to mow for the highway for the State of Texas. We did this for several years. I told people I did not make any money, but I saved a lot of money by keeping the two boys busy and out of jail. After a time, Aunt Perry had died. I gave Mark the equipment. He contracted with the state. Mark mowed for about four years and said he's burned out, sold the equipment and moved to North Carolina to work for a friend.

[Track 1 ends]

[Track 2]

DJ: I'd love to ask you some more questions if you've got some energy?

BM: Yeah.

DJ: Okay. Well, um, I like getting your background like that and kind of hearing your military story and your work history. Um, let me think. Well, you were born in Farmers Branch.

BM: That's Farmers Branch, right.

DJ: We'd love to hear about, um, maybe start with your family.

BM: Okay, just a minute.

DJ: Talk about your – your – your, uh – and if you just want to not . . .

BM: Talk about – okay let me see.

DJ: Your parents. Uh, when they were born if you know it. And – and your siblings.

BM: Okay.

DJ: And then we'll maybe talk about daily life. Uh, I understand one of your siblings had a gas station that's in Farmers Branch?

BM: Yeah. Did you have a nickname growing up? Yeah, my name is – nickname is Bill. I guess I took it after William. Now some of my best friends when I was a kid was that David Junior Moore, Leonard Putnam, Roy Lee Smith, Calvin- Calvin Davis, John Fisher, William G – William Lee Moore, and a lot more that I can't think of right now.

Did you have any pets growing up? Yeah, I had a – I had a dog. And we called him Bogie. He was a good dog. I've had him about six years and I was being transferred, so I gave him to my brother who was a dairy farmer, and he lived with him until he died.

DJ: Now, tell me a little bit about your – did your brother have a dairy there in Farmers Branch?

BM: Well it was in Coppel.

DJ: Coppel? Now, can you tell us a little bit about the dairy?

BM: Yeah. My brother, bas- out of – my mother had six boys. The one, uh – the first one was Jess, whose name is Alva Edgar. The second was Bud, was Alga Floyd, then BC was named Benjamin Cleve, and his name was – they called it BC. Then had Roy Lee.

Then me, then there's J. Frank. Uh, we were all raised – born and raised in Farmers Branch. And when the U.S. went to war in Germany, all my brothers were in service but my brother BC who was the dairy farmer. He had a dairy in Coppell and when he – he finally moved it to Lewisville and before he died, he sold out. And Jess, my brother Jess, He was in the Navy. He became a carpenter and he contracted on houses - built homes.

DJ: Was that in Farmers Branch or somewhere else?

BM: Well he – he lived in Farmers Branch, but he built homes in Dallas area. And Bud worked for a dairy, delivering milk. And Roy Lee owned a service station – the Gulf Service Station in Farmers Branch.

DJ: Now, could you talk a little bit about the service station?

BM: Yeah. Well my dad owned some property where I-35 came in through from Denton down to Dallas, and they took some of Dad's property and Dad had a service station built up on his property next to the highway. And Roy Lee and my brother, he ran it. And a story about him. He – he drank a little bit on the beer, so he'd go down to – down to Letot and had hamburgers, and drank a little beer. And one night he did that, and he came home to the service station to get some more gas, and he was going back. And his wife, Ruby, she didn't want him to go back. She on a bunch of – had on high-heeled shoes, so she took the shoes, knocked the headlights out. So, that – that was kind of funny to me. But they got along real well. Ruby was a great girl. She always made ice cream on Sunday. Homemade with the freezer, and she always asked me up. Because Roy Lee would not eat anything – any leftovers. So, I had a lot of meals with Ruby. And Jess married, uh, a lady – his first wife, and they had a child. And while Jess was in the Pacific, she died. And after the war, Jess married Pauline Marcom, and they had two children. So, Jess had two children, a boy and a girl, two boys and a girl. One boy by his first wife, and two by and boy and a girl by Pauline. Now Roy Lee had, uh, two children. He had a boy named Rusty and another named Junior. Junior was a horse trainer and Rusty worked for his dad in service station, also they had a mowing contract with the state. And BC was the dairy farmer, and he had quite a few cows and I know he'd take the milk down to – Metzger's – down to Dallas in five-gallon cans. And I remember there in Farmers Branch used to hang around the depot there back in 1930. And the depot had two units. They had a unit for the white people, and on the back of that, they had a peop- a room for the Blacks. And also, they had a room for the storage of – of equipment that comes into the train station. So, we used to sit there on the steps out there and watch the cars go by, because Denton Drive was the only way to Dallas at that time. So, we had a lot of friends that stayed there. And let's see what . . .

DJ: Where does the train go?

BM: Oh the train went from Dallas to Denton. MK – MKT – Missouri, Kansas and Texas.

DJ: Okay. Can you describe a trip on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas train?

BM: Well it was a freight train.

DJ: Oh, okay. All right.

BM: It was a freight train. Also on the line.

DJ: You said depot, I was thinking the train depot.

BM: Well uh, during the day, they had Interurbans run from Denton to Dallas. And they would stop at Farmers Branch and pick up the passengers and also bring them back. In fact.

DJ: What's about getting up, because you're all wired up.

BM: Okay.

DJ: You want me to unplug you?

BM: No, just give me this thing right here. This thing – maybe I can reach it.

DJ: I'll get it. Yeah, if you want to describe a train trip that would be – just even going down into Dallas. You know, what did the train look like? What kind of people were riding it?

BM: Yeah. I have a picture here of the train station in Farmers Branch, and these four ladies here were going to Dallas. One of them is Ressie Thompson. She's the lady that took me to Denton and got me the job to go to the college. One is Mary Reeder, and one is Alva- uh Coonrod girl, and they would catch the Interurban and go – and go to Dallas to work. So, had quite a few people riding the Interurban at that time.

DJ: So, this was in the 1930s, did you say?

BM: No, this was about the 1930s. About 1930s, because I was about 6 years old.

DJ: Okay, so those folks went – when they were riding it, how – what year was that?

BM: Pardon me?

DJ: The people that you were – the picture people.

BM: Yeah.

DJ: What year were they riding the train?

BM: About 1930.

DJ: Okay, 1930.

BM: Yeah. Mhm. Then at night the train would come through – a freight train would come through Farmers Branch and stop and drop off all the – uh - equipment for this area, for the Farmers Branch area, and also, they would load the milk on and deliver it, I

guess, to Denton at the time. Or maybe back – take it back to Dallas. But that was every night.

DJ: Now was the milk, was it being cooled, or was it just sitting out room temperature?

BM: No, they'd put ice in it. You have all that milk and they'd put ice in it and they'd fill it up and so – stay cool until it gets back to the – where it gets sent to.

DJ: Now where did you get ice from?

BM: Pardon me?

DJ: Where did you get ice from?

BM: Well, I don't know, the dairies that brought the milk there put the ice in it. Okay.

DJ: Okay. All right.

BM: Yeah. See what else I got. Let's see. My nickname. Now, the stories in Farmers Branch at that time around 1930 was – was Putnam's Grocery Store, and Sheehan had a drug store there next to it on the old Denton Road. And over the drug store, the Sheehan Drug Store, was a Masonic Lodge on the second floor. Now, across the railroad, which is now Valley View, used to be Keenan Bridge, was Ms. Corbett, who had a grocery store. And also, next to Ms. Corbett, Roy Raspberry had a barber shop, and next to that the Gravelys had a hardware store, feed store. Then just north of – on highway – the Old Denton Highway just north of the drug store, they had a garage, which became – it was – came Fred Marsh's Garage. And then on the east side of the railroad, they had a gin, cotton gin. And out by the cotton gin there, they had stables where they brought cows that just setting off – sending off by train to be slaughtered. Also at the – at the cotton gin, they baled this cotton and put it out in rows, and us boys would go up there and run on it, you know. Or jump on it. Spent a lot of time doing that.

DJ: Now where was your parents' house located?

BM: Okay, my parents' house was located on what – what finally became a street named Rossford. And we had – we – I was raised up in a three-room house. We had two bedrooms and one kitchen with six boys. That's pretty close. Pretty close. But we always got along okay. And my dad, he worked for the county. He, uh, he was a supervisor of making – of making roads. Of course, at that time they were gravelling them. They weren't paving them. They were just gravelling them and cutting roads into the area. And my mom, she worked at the house, and during the harvesting time, she would take us to the field and pick cotton. Also, my mom took in washings – clothes and drying them, on a – on a line. Drying line. And my mama name was Rebecca Jane Tims. She came from Little Rock – Lone Oak Arkansas to Texas, and my dad was named Balam Alva Marcom. He came from Tennessee. He came to Texas about 1885. Because the property his dad owned in Tennessee was being taken over by the TVA authorities, so he had a lot of friends in Texas in the Farmers Branch area, so he moved down here and bought a lot of property down here. Now, I've met – I've met my grandmother on my father's side, but I

never did meet my grandfather, because he died. About the time – Daddy said about the time he reached Farmers Branch, and he’s buried up in the Keenan Cemetery up there at Farmers Branch, so I was up there one day with Daddy, and I was asking about – I said is your dad buried here? He said yeah, Bill, but I don’t know where. Because at that time they’d just take them up, men in the community would go up and dig a grave and they’d just put them in and covered them up. So, there’s a lot of grave sites there at the Keenan Cemetery– they don’t know who’s buried there. So, now my mom, as it came from Arkansas, her mother had died. Her dad moved down into Texas, because he had some friends, family down here that helped him take care of the five girls he had. He didn’t have any boys. And, Mom was – then after he got down here, he married Susie Little, and, uh, my mom didn’t get away – get along with her very well, so one day she was out picking cotton and Daddy came through the cotton patch there and saw Mom, he said Beck – he said get on the back of this horse, we’re going to get married. So, Mama dropped her sack and jumped on the back of the horse and she and Daddy went off and got married. Now, Daddy was quite a bit older than her. As that – take it Mama wasn’t about 14 years old when she married, but it was a good marriage. They got along well. No problems. Raised five boys all of them was functional. It was a functional family. All of them got along well with each other. If anybody got into trouble– any financial – each one was helping each other. So, it turned out to be a good family. Both Mama and Dad were really hard workers.

DJ: So, did you have any extended family, like aunts and uncles down there?

BM: Yeah, I had – had uh, on my Mama’s side, I knew all her sisters. Aunt Jewel, she didn’t – her name is Jewel Beckner, she married Owen Beckner, and she had another sister named Lizzy. I didn’t know her husband. I knew Lizzy. And she had – she had a half-sister named Alva Cartwright. I knew Alva. Because when Mom and Dad got down here, and his wife had died, he – he met Susie and they got married and had a – had a child named Alva Tims, but later she married and became Alva Cartwright.

DJ: Now did they live down here, or somewhere?

BM: Yeah, they lived here at – she lived here until she died oh probably 10 years ago, Alva did. And let’s see.

DJ: Now family get – family gatherings during holidays, what was that like?

BM: I only remember, well when I was younger, they – families all used to get together and have – eat together. Mostly outside. They’d have it in the trees and stuff. Family reunion, but after Mom died that stopped everything. But . . .

DJ: What kind of stuff did you do at a family reunion?

BM: Pardon me?

DJ: What did you do at a family reunion? What kind of food did you have?

BM: Roasted chicken and roast beef and watermelon, cantaloupe, and, uh, and potato salad, lettuce, tomato salad, Jell-o.

DJ: Who cooked?

BM: Ice cream. All of 'em. You know people involved in it. They would bring certain items. Just like a church. We have at the church. The church furnishes the meat and the drinks and all the other people they come and they bring something. You'd have a nice meal. Which we did last Sunday at the church.

DJ: So, when your greater family got together, let's say when you were younger. What did the kids do?

BM: Yeah, I was – when I was younger, say about 10, 11 years old, yeah.

DJ: What did the kids do for fun? What kind of games did they do?

BM: Well, one time we were getting together and I was only 4 years old at the time, and on our property, we rented the property out to the county, Dallas County Road Bridge Gang. Had about – they had about 3 acres, I guess, there and they had a gas truck out there, so we – the boys dug a hole in the ground and we were going to make a furnace you know. So, my cousin, Booger Beckner, he went out to the gas tank – or truck and got some gas out of it, and he started pouring it on the fire and it blazed up and caught the glass he threw it at - to me and my brother Roy Lee, and so they had to take us to Parkland. I was down there about two days, I guess. And – and finally I came home. And got a – got – burnt my hand, burnt my side of my face, my ear, my left arm and my left leg. Roy Lee it burned him just a little bit. I was burnt – I was burnt more. I know at the time – I can remember the time back when I got burned, I started running to the house, and Mama came out and saw and we had a big water tank there we fed the cattle with, the cows that we had, and she dumped me in that thing and put out the fire. And, uh, Buster Butts, he lived right across the road from us, he had a car. So, he took us in the car and took us to Parkland Hospital. I think the going rate down then, at that time, was about 50 cents a day, so – of course that time money was kind of scarce, it was hard to get by. Kind of -. Now, on the property that we own right now, where the Bentley (the retirement home where Bill lives) is, I used to, when I was about a 15-year-old kid used to work this property on a thrashing machine. On a thrashing machine, they'd go out and cut the – cut the grain and put it in bundles and put the bundles in shocks. And the thrasher would come in and we'd load the bundles on a wagon and take it up to the thrasher and thrash the grain out. But now they got combines that does this thing. You don't have to shock the grain anymore. Which makes it very easy. Then in a – my work ethic was when Mama would take us to the field, we'd always work. I'd pick cotton, chop corn, that's about it, I guess. Between the two items. I know we had a – had a farm west of Farmers Branch. Had – I believe, it was 22 acres there. Had two houses on it. And had a big orchard of plums and peaches and had a grape vineyard, also. And Mama would go down and plant food – she would can like tomatoes and beans and what am I going to say – spinach and stuff like that. So, she would can and we had – where we lived there in Farmers Branch, we had a cellar. And in the cellar we had these, a lot of shelves

there that Mama would put the food that she cooked and canned down there. Then when it would come to storm, we'd all go gather in the cellar. All but Daddy. Daddy never would go to the cellar. But all – we – as we were the only one who had a storm house around that area, so all the – all the community, well on that street, would come down to get in the storm house.

DJ: So, can you remember any particularly scary storms?

BM: Yeah, I remember one night it stormed and it'd liked to pull the door off. The men had a chain on the door and it – it pulled the door and it's hard for them to keep the door on. That's about the biggest thing that I saw. That I can remember.

DJ: Was there light down there, or . . .? Or did you – did you use flashlights or kerosene lamps?

BM: Well we had kerosene lamps. We didn't have flashlights at that time. So . . .

DJ: So, when you grew up, did you have electricity?

BM: Well we did later. When I grew up we had lamps.

DJ: Well can you talk about what that's like?

BM: Then later on, uh, they had – they came out with electricity and we wired our house for electricity. Also, we had it – at one time we had a phone put in and one night Mama was using it and lightning struck and it got her – hit her you know. So, we had the phone taken out and never did have a phone put in until later in life. When the war started, we had a phone put in.

DJ: So, what was it like, um when you would come home and it would get dark and you were using kerosene lamps and there was no electricity?

BM: Well . . .

DJ: Since people don't do that today.

BM: No that's right. I know when I came home to study, I had a lamp a kerosene lamp on the table and I'd study over there – also at the time, Mama would help me with my studies. But that was about every night.

DJ: Now what about – what did you do for heat?

BM: Well we had heat – we had – the boys would bring in the wood – we'd go into the woods, my brothers would, and cut wood, and I know when my mother's dad died, he had 50 cords of wood cut down in a – in the bottoms of Trinity River, so the boys would go out and cut the wood and bring it in and saw it up. And, uh, at night they'd bring the wood in and in the morning, you'd have to get up and take some paper or some kindling or something, and start the fire. Had one big stove there in the house, and that was the

only stove for fire that we had. Other than that, we had a cook stove, which was kerosene that Mama cooked on. But that's about the heat – we had a lot of covers. Mama made quilts all the time. She's always down on the floor making quilts, and we had plenty of cover. That's good. My mama was really a worker. She really worked hard. I realize now that women really have a hard time you know as head of the family. Especially, to have children. And I don't know what this world would be if it didn't have women in it. Because I know a lot of these churches would have been folded a long time ago if there wasn't women in the church to keep it together. And just realized having to take care of a bunch of children and also cook the meals and wash the dishes and make the beds and stuff like that, that's very difficult. Here we think it's difficult out working, but just take – I know, I didn't realize until later in life, and I know when I was in the service, I'd come in and I'd ask my wife, I'd said honey did you clean this house today? Because the kids would have toys all over it, you know. And she said I wish you'd ask me how many times. I didn't realize at that time now difficult it would be to take care of all those children. But I guess later is better than never to understand what they did and appreciate them more.

DJ: Amen. Well—.

[End of Audio]

[Track 3]

DJ: Can you talk about the city of Farmers Branch?

BM: Okay.

DJ: What – you know comparing it to what it is now, think about what Farmer's Branch used to be - tell me how many people do you think lived there?

BM: Okay.

DJ: And, uh, you know . . .

BM: Well, you know when I was born, there was probably about 5-600 people in Farmers Branch. As I said, I didn't count these outlying people, but just the streets of Farmers Branch. And it had – as I said before, they had Putnam's Grocery, and they had Corbett's – Ms. Corbett's Grocery, and had a drug store. Had a – two service stations, Raymond Millaway Service Station and uh, and there was Meyer's—what's his name? Fred Marsh, I'm sorry, service station. It had a barber shop. It had a hardware store. Had a cotton gin, and had a blacksmith shop. It had an ice house. And that was about all they had. Had a post office. Normally it was in the grocery store. So, then when I went to school there was only about 15 or 20 in the class. And the classes, I know it went first, second, third, fourth, fifth, but when it was sixth and seventh they held it in the same room. So, in sixth grade and they taught sixth and seventh also. Then when you went to high school you had four years of high school. So, takes about 11 years to finish school.

DJ: Can you talk about the Farmers Branch on Saturday night when everybody – did you have like a night where everybody came to town and visited? Did you have anything like that?

BM: I don't think Saturday night was any better. I know on – Wally Davis, he used to live down south of Farmers Branch. He used to come up to the store there, and – and us kids would get some rocks and take off his hub caps and put them in – in the hub cap so when he drove off it would make a noise. And I don't remember anything about Saturday night being any different. Because I never did get out on Saturday night. I do remember on Christmas that, uh, my dad would go to the grocery store and bring back a lot of fruit and stuff, and we just sat around the fire and eat it. It wasn't much money to buy gifts at that time, but I know my dad and mother were very generous to other people, too, you know. I know one time I was in Tennessee looking for the graveyard there, where Daddy's two brothers were buried, I ran over to the guy, I was driving down this gravel road, and saw this guy walking along, and I picked him up. I had Texas license plates on my car, and he said, uh, are you folks from Texas? And I said yeah. He said, well I used to live in Texas, myself. I said whereabouts. And he said Farmers Branch. I said well that's where I'm from. He said well what's your name? I said, Bill Marcom. And he said well I remember your mother well. She used to bring us a Christmas basket every Christmas. They were sharecroppers who lived over on the creek and here Mama was taking them a Christmas present. And I know my dad used to be down at my brother's service station. Somebody come in and didn't have any money, and Daddy would tell the – gas tank filled up for them. Then I remember one night Ms. Davis, who owned a lot of property south of Farmers Branch there, came up and wanted Daddy to go on a note with her for \$25. And my mother came in from the kitchen and said Balam said – I wish you wouldn't go on that note, because me and my boys, you always have to pay them off. Me and my boys have to pick cotton to pay for them. And so, Dad said, well Ms. Davis, the way Beck feels about it, I guess I better not sign it. So, dad was always going on people's notes and always trying to help people. I guess that's – that's the—. Well, all the Marcoms were generous people. Helping other people. I guess that's why we never had any money. Always gave it away. But anyway, that's life. Enjoy it. Like myself, I'd rather give people stuff to get – than get stuff myself. I don't – I don't like people to give me gifts for some reason. Like when my birthday was just recently – I told them okay, I don't want a thing. Please don't get me anything, because I. They took me up on it. Just took me to dinner. So, that's – that's great. I know several times; my oldest daughter was – asked me to move in with them. They have a big home out here, and I said no. I don't want to be a bother by that you know. I don't want to bother you, rather. So, I don't want to be a burden to anybody. Like before I – you know when I get so I can't get along myself, I want to go ahead and die, like I have a stroke and have to have somebody feed me. No, that's not for me. I don't want to be a burden to anybody. But, I signed up to be a donor, maybe if I die somebody else will be able to live longer. So, that's the way things goes.

DJ: Mhm.

BM: I know my son, my oldest son, he had liver cancer. And he was on the list, and one morning, I think 2 or 3 o'clock he got a call from Baylor Hospital said come on we

got a liver for you. So, he went out and had a liver transplant. And he lived about 10 years after that. And later he got lung cancer because he smoked. That's something I never did do, smoke. He got lung cancer and it went to his brain. And he died at 59 years old. So, I know a lot of people like to smoke, but I think it's bad for your health. And also, drinking. I think drinking is a bad, too. Or bad for you. Because you do things you wouldn't do normally. And also, right now, texting is bad. It's just like a church at New Braunfels got 13 people killed some guy in a pickup texting. Maybe texting should – it's against the law to text. Of course that wouldn't keep them from doing it. So . . .

DJ: That's true. Talk about church in Farmers Branch.

BM: Okay.

DJ: Tell me where you went and what that was like.

BM: Okay, the church in Farmers Branch. We, uh, the Methodist minister here is named Brother Berkner and he was very active with us boys. So, when I first started – started going to the Methodist church. My father was a Methodist. And started going to the Methodist church. Then my teach– Sunday School teacher was Mary Good. In fact, they named– over at the Cemetery, there's Mary Good – gave a lot of money to the Keenan Cemetery down here. So, she was my first Sunday school teacher. Then the boys got to going over to the Baptist Church, because said a lot of girls over there, and they'd have their party. So, then I started going to the Baptist Church. And, uh, Brother Ramsey was – was a preacher over there. And, uh, but I never did accept Christ until I got up later in life. Anyway, I lived a Christian life, but I didn't – I didn't profess it. So, they have a picture down at the church, now, when I was 9 years old, a picture of the people that had Summer school, you know. And the – all the kids here, I bet they had 100 kids going to that – going to summer school there. Vacation Bible School. That's what they called it. Vacation Bible School. But now, I bet you couldn't get 10 people there. I guess the television and all these ball games they're having now is really taking the kids away from church, which is bad. And a long time ago, the preacher would get up and preach hell fire and damnation. Well you don't see that much anymore. I – I kind of like that at – it tells me what I'm doing wrong and what – what I'm doing good. So, you don't see that much anymore. And a lot of the preachers they get up and talk about one subject at one minute and the next time they talk about something else. And being hard of hearing, you know. It's hard to follow, so. But anyway, I keep going to church and going – go to prayer meeting every Wednesday night and keep active in it, because I know that's what the Lord wants me to do.

Now my mother was a Baptist. And, uh, I remember when I was going to Sunday School, she'd give me all 3-4 cents for the offering. That was way back when money was tight. And I stopped by the Jim Smith Grocery Store to get me some Tootsie Rolls -not Tootsie Rolls, what do they call them? Anyway candy. Get me some candy and maybe give a couple of cents to the church, which wasn't right, but that's what I did. Now they're called, chocolate soldiers, that's what it is. That's what candy was. Little chocolate packs. So, later in life, when I was in the military in Atlantic City, or Naval Air station, I got the – going to church there, then I gave my life to the Lord and accepted him as my savior

and – and trying to live a Christian life ever since. Which has been good for me. He really, he really kept me out of a lot of trouble. Really. I tell you they say trust in the Lord and leave the consequences to him. That's what you do. If you have any problem, take it to the Lord and leave it. Don't think about it anymore. Just leave it with him. Now, my wife was a Baptist when I married her. So, she was a good Christian. She taught Sunday school a lot of places we went. And she taught it when we was in Arizona, also, and when we went to college in Omaha, University of Omaha, which is now the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I graduated up there, and got my degree there. Of course, it only took me 19 years to get my college degree, but I finally got it. But, I like Churchill, what he said, "Never give up. Never, never, never." So, that's the way I live each day of my life, never giving up. I know a lot of times I want to just stay in bed, I said no you gotta get up and get out of here. So, that's the best thing to do. Don't have a pity party, just get up – live with it. What's wrong with you.

DJ: Well we, I can't think of anything else? Can you think of anything?

BM: Now the different churches I belonged to, one I joined was the – they were northern Baptists. Then I was transferred to – to, uh, Omaha, Nebraska. There I got into southern Baptists.

DJ: Now what's the difference?

BM: Well it's the way they take care of the missionaries. Now the southern Baptists, what they do, they put all the money in one pot, and missionaries money paid for that. Now, the northern Baptists, they, each church provides for a missionary. That's the way that they do it. That's my feeling. Then also one time I – I remember I was in Chicago. I had a – I joined a Swedish Covenant Baptist Church. So, I've been at Swedish Covenant, northern Baptist, southern Baptist, and right now I'm southern Baptist.

DJ: Now, I'm just thinking, you know when they tell me to give you a call, they didn't really have any questions, per se. They just said when anything comes up about Farmers Branch, ask Bill.

BM: Okay. Yeah.

DJ: So, why do you think people would say, "Ask Bill?"

BM: Ask me. [laugh] Well, oh you talking about the city here?

DJ: Yeah.

BM: Well, when I was raised up we didn't have – we didn't have any of the fire department. And later on they – I guess after war they came up with the voluntary fire department. And I know my brothers joined that. Then, uh . . .

DJ: Well can you tell a little more about that? Maybe some details? Do you know anything, kinds of things that they did? And what did they wear? And what time did they have to jump out of bed to go put out a fire? Those kind of stories.

BM: Well at that time only had – only had one fire wagon. Fire truck. And I think they finally built the building up there across from the Methodist church on Valley View and I forget the name of that other street – Goodland I think. Goodland. Yeah. And finally, they just went up there. They said – what was that Mayor's name? The street there is named after him. Dodson. Yeah, the first – who started the city was Mayor Dodson. That's when they first got a city council and started to beg – uh – coordinated – incorporated. Incorporated. Yeah.

DJ: Do you remember when that happened?

BM: No, I – I think – I think I might have been gone at that time.

DJ: Okay. So, what difference did you see after it got incorporated?

BM: Yeah, they incorporated, and then they got – got – police. Had police and – and then they – they improved, got more fire wagons. And fire trucks. And a bit more fire stations.

DJ: So, did your brothers ever tell you any fireman stories?

BM: No.

DJ: Okay.

BM: I know my, uh, mother's sister, half-sister's boy, became fire chief there. Bubba Yeager– that'd be Bud Yeager. And, uh . . .

DJ: What year was that?

BM: Golly, I don't know. See I didn't come back here until '68. So, there wasn't much going on during that – at that time. Of course, I came back on leave about every – every year, but it's – it's the only place I'd go for leave. Come back home. My wife lived in Corsicana, so . . .

DJ: So, what else would somebody ask you about Farmers Branch that you – maybe we don't know.

BM: Let's see here. (Reading a question from a book he had) Just what have been some of the greatest perks of being a father? [laugh] Well the love of your children is one thing. Nothing better than love. They love you. Which my children always did. I never had any trouble with my children. Personal trouble. Sometimes they get in a little trouble, the boys would. But they always worked it out. We got along fine. And what did it teach me? Patience. When you deal with children, you have got to have patience. Because you get angry, you just aggravate the situation. Do it with patience.

DJ: Now what other fa- you know you mentioned Dodson. Do you remember some of the other folks? Like the – um some of the names?

BM: Why sure, I knew Bob Phipps a long time. I've known him for . . .

DJ: What was he like?

BM: He was a good man. Yeah. I think Bob first worked at the paint company. Then I think he got into selling insurance, I believe. Then he became mayor. Then he retired out of that, and then he came back, yeah. Oh, I used to know you know a long time ago used to know all the people on the city council, you know, but now Farmers Branch has grown so fast, that I [CROSSTALK]

DJ: Interested about way back when.

BM: Bob Phelps is about the only one I know down there now. Yeah. In fact, my dad was on the city council at one time.

DJ: Now what – did he ever discuss with you the kind of things they worked on?

BM: No. Nn-nn.

DJ: So, can you talk a little bit about your brother's gas station? Can you maybe describe the gas pump, which would be different from today?

BM: Yeah, I will. Well, when they put the highway in, I-35, which now I-35, they, uh, they didn't have any service road at that time. And what they do, they could just come off the highway, and my brother had – he graveled out there between the highway and his station, and they'd come in there and buy gas, you know. And, uh, of course, at that time, when he first started, you know gas was pretty cheap, but he probably didn't make over 3 cents a gallon at it at that time, but I probably now they make a lot more than that per gallon. Like you bought it for 10 cents, well you sold it for 13 something like that. Of course, now, gas is high. I know my, uh, daughter and her husband, they work for the Degolyer – Degolyer- MacNaughton – they deal in oil – oil fields and stuff like that. You know. I think my daughter deals in finding the capacity of certain oil wells, certain oil fields, stuff like that. She's my oldest daughter. And my youngest daughter is a nurse. She's a – was a registered nurse then she went on and got her degree, so she's a BSN. Bachelors of Science and Nursing. And she works now at the UT Southwest. My oldest daughter still works for Degolyer- MacNaughton. She's been there 36 years. So . . . But they both doing well. So, and they are always looking after me, so that's one good thing. If I've been – have any trouble anything with my health, I just call Margie and she's over here just like that. In fact, now, she – when I moved out and gave the house to her, she didn't want that. Take it – take title of it. So, the other day she came over she said Dad I think I'll take title of it. I said that's good. That's good. I want you to take title of it. You know. Here' I'm 93 years old and just you and Mary Jane. Mary Jane doesn't want it. So, I want you to have it. I said I told you that a long time ago when I moved out. She says okay. So, she's in the process of getting the title changed from me to her. So . . .

DJ: Well anything else you can think of?

BM: Huh?

DJ: I can't really think of any other questions. So, can you think of anything?

BM: No.

DJ: Something we haven't talked about? Especially you know since this is going to go in the archives?

BM: I know we did this some time ago, I think about 10 years ago or so. Talked to – that would be me and Dalton Chamber, but Dalton has passed away now.

[End of Audio]