

Oral Interview Selection Transcription

Approximate Time: 1 ½ hours

Subject: **The Life of Mr. Bill Gober**

Date: May 2, 2013

Interview conducted by Mr. Mickey J. Lollar

Mr. Gober: My name...my full name is Bill Gober. No middle initial. I was born at Red Bay, Alabama.

Mr. Lollar: Yes sir.

Mr. Gober: Franklin County...and what else?

Mr. Lollar: The date. Your birthday!

Mr. Gober: Oh! 6-7-28.

Mr. Lollar: Alright! 1928. Alright! My wife just as a point of connection...my wife is a Speech Therapist and she works in Red Bay.

Mr. Gober: Okay.

Mr. Lollar: She works at the...(interrupted)

Mr. Gober: Now I finished high school at Vina.

Mr. Lollar: Yes Sir.

Mr. Gober: But I was raised...I was born right outside of Red Bay.

Mr. Lollar: Okay. So you and Tammy Wynette were best buddies then?

Mr. Gober: I knew her. I wouldn't say we were buddies.

Mr. Lollar: Alright! (Laughing) I know that she...right now I believe her aunt is either in the long term facility there or but uh...they're very proud of their heritage there.

Mr. Gober: I've seen her several times.

Mr. Lollar: Okay, tell me if you would then...so then you went to Vina. Tell me then...tell me about your childhood...if you would.

Mr. Gober: I was raised on a farm close to Sparks Chapel. I don't know if you know where it is. It's close to that little Bear Creek Dam.

Mr. Lollar: Oh! Yes sir.

Mr. Gober: We use to farm the land the dam is sitting on. Above it, the water was the field.

Mr. Lollar: Okay.

Mr. Gober: And then my daddy bought a farm at Sparks Chapel...about two miles, three miles away. I went from about the seventh...seven years old...something like that but maybe a little less...through high school on that farm. And I plowed a mule and helped my dad. There was about five of us boys, two girls and we had a very good childhood life. We worked hard but we ate good. We... I played football, basketball at Vina. When I graduated, I was fortunate enough to get to drive a school bus. I was the first student-bus driver of Franklin County.

Mr. Lollar: Whoa! Congratulations!

Mr. Gober: Everybody thought I was going to be a farmer because I was a good agriculture student because I was raised on a farm and I knew what was going on. So I was just a good student. My agriculture teacher was Grover Marr...one of them. And Mr. Avery from Mississippi...Belmont was the... finished up my agriculture...three years. I graduated high school in 1948 with twenty boys and seven girls in the class.

Mr. Lollar: That's sort of heavy handed in one-way there! (Laughing)

Mr. Gober: Mrs. Weatherford was our homeroom teacher and she really bragged on us, how well took care of the girls in our class. They were like sisters to us.

Mr. Lollar: I could imagine.

Mr. Gober: They were...they was just very sweet girls and most dateable. I believe there were four of them...maybe five...yeah four raised on a farm like I was. And the other two... one of them was a policeman's daughter and one of them was a principal's daughter. So we had to be pretty good.

Mr. Lollar: Well sure! With principal on one side and police on the other! I would imagine...yeah (interrupted)

Mr. Gober: Our class was...I was a class ahead of them then I quit school in April and went incomplete for the whole year because I quit. So when I came back they wanted me to play...I was pretty good at basketball to be a little guy. We was fixin' to start football again because the team had been suspended at Vina because we had a boy to get killed in 1940 or 41. I forget which one it was. Then we discontinued football during the war...World War II. And then we was starting it back in...my class was the one that reinstated the football season back to Vina.

Mr. Lollar: Okay!

Mr. Gober: I played forty-six and forty-seven (inaudible). I was the quarterback. We was runnin' the Notre Dame box. You had a quarterback but he didn't call the signals. Halfback done all the passin' and everything. So I was the passer of the ball.

Mr. Lollar: Now, if you don't mind me asking, why did you decide to quit for that time?

Mr. Gober: I've asked myself that a thousand times and I don't have an answer to it. I just got tired of going to school.

Mr. Lollar: I understand that.

Mr. Gober: But, Mr. Grover Marr was the agriculture teacher and my daddy...I don't know where they had a pow wow...somewhere and I didn't hear it or what. But they decided that I was going to go back to school the next year. So I just dropped back into the class where the boys were at and the seven girls. Then Bill was determined to finish high school! There was no way I...I had to register for World War II because of my age. But I didn't have to go to war any. So I finished school in 1948 and that was a goal that I set that I was going to do.

Mr. Lollar: Okay. Alright, so you left in April?

Mr. Gober: April of 1947.

Mr. Lollar: So you stayed out?

Mr. Gober: I just quit school!

Mr. Lollar: And you stayed out an entire year?

Mr. Gober: Just from April to May when school...I just missed 6-8 weeks.

Mr. Lollar: Okay! Okay! All right, I didn't know if you had stayed out an entire...(interrupted)

Mr. Gober: No, no, no. two months.

Mr. Lollar: Then the pow wow happened and there you were and you finished. Good.

Mr. Gober: I got some teachers...they were very good to me when I came back. I took a test and I passed it. And when I graduated, you had to have sixteen units to graduate.

Mr. Lollar: Yes sir.

Mr. Gober: And Mr. Bill had nineteen and a half.

Mr. Lollar: All right! And off you went! Yeah! Good. Okay.

Mr. Gober: Now, that's sort of a pretty good teenage description of my life.

Mr. Lollar: Now, how old were you then?

Mr. Gober: Nineteen.

Mr. Lollar: When you decided to quit?

Mr. Gober: I was probably seventeen when I quit. I graduated when I was nineteen.

Mr. Lollar: Okay. Alright. So you stayed on track there. That's great that you had... I know you had a lot of people...but those two people that had the pow wow to help you get back in and to finish.

Mr. Gober: They didn't help me, they just told me.

Mr. Lollar: Oh! Well okay! I was being politically correct there. But okay they told you to finish. That's good!

Mr. Gober: When school started back that next year, Mr. Marr kept sending me word that he wanted me to come back to school. That we were going to get the football team started. And I laid out...school started on Thursday I didn't go Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. But Monday morning is when I got word from my dad...you're going to catch the school bus. Somewhere between there I think they had a pow wow. I didn't ever know but I think so. From how my dad described I was going to go back to school. Anyway, I went back and when I got off the bus, I was going back in the ninth grade. And when I got off the bus, Mr. Marr hollered at me and I walked out to the agriculture building. We were sitting there and he said "I'm glad to see you back in school. You're still playing hardball." About that time the bell rang. He just got up and said, "I'm going to enroll you. I had no choice. He went up to the principal's office and told him what he was going to do. He told a few other teachers to do the same. That's how I ended up with nineteen credits for the year that I quit.

Mr. Lollar: well, was your class close then? Because you talked about the girls being like sisters.

Mr. Gober: They were as close as a bunch of boys and seven girls could've been. We had a very good class.

Mr. Lollar: All right. Excellent! So now let me rewind. You were born in Red Bay, Alabama. You went to Vina High School. We're not best buddies with Tammy Wynette, but you knew her. All right, now mom and dad. What did they do for a living? If I may ask you.

Mr. Gober: They farmed. They were farmers from start to finish.

Mr. Lollar: Just solely farming? On a large scale to sell the food or...(interrupted)

Mr. Gober: No, we farmed cotton. Cotton was your money crop.

Mr. Lollar: Yes sir.

Mr. Gober: And the big crop was always cotton because it was the source of living...the money. But my Mother, she thought she had to have an acre in a garden or two...groceries for five boys and two girls. So she was the gardener!

Mr. Lollar: Okay. There's a big difference. Isn't there? Between gardening and farming. Now, she did the vegetables right? Did she do fruit?

Mr. Gober: Oh yeah! We had three peach orchards and two apple orchards. We had the whole works for a farm.

Mr. Lollar: Did she like flowers?

Mr. Gober: No, she wasn't a flower person. She had to tend to five boys and two girls. And the garden she didn't have much time for flowers.

Mr. Lollar: Did she have a favorite flower?

Mr. Gober: Probably roses. That's what she always decorated with.

Mr. Lollar: Now, with that gardening...with the fruit and vegetables. What was your favorite food?

Mr. Gober: Well, those peach orchids about two of them. And apples we had were delicious.

Mr. Lollar: Red or yellow or both?

Mr. Gober: We had both of them. They were sort of selective to the grocery store. But most of the trees we had...I just can't think of the name of them.

Mr. Lollar: That's okay! Now my dad told me he had problems with bowl worms.

Mr. Gober: Now that was a problem! We had to put out bowl worm stuff. A hand full on every stock.

Mr. Lollar: that's a lot of stocks of cotton!

Mr. Gober: It was!

Mr. Lollar: Now, did the children, you and your siblings did they do any of the picking?

Mr. Gober: We picked cotton...yeah. My daddy didn't hoe much on the farm, Very little hoeing. See back then; they hoed every row of cotton with a hoe. That was something I never did understand. Why they would plant a solid row of cotton then go chop it all down, all the way through. Thin it out. I just had a problem with it!

Mr. Lollar: Alright so you graduated high school the nineteenth. How long after that did you think about going into the military?

Mr. Gober: The next morning after I graduated on the eighth of May. I believe that's right. Like I told you I got to drive a school bus, and I was a pretty popular school bus driver. The next morning, four of us boys, my brother and two other class mates. We got on that bus and I drove it to Russellville. Each of us bought a ticket to Detroit, Michigan and we worked for a motor company.

Mr. Lollar: So, you got on the bus, you went up to Detroit, and how long after did you begin to work?

Mr. Gober: We got there Saturday and started work Monday evening. At the Lincoln and Mercury plant in Detroit, Michigan.

Mr. Lollar: So how long did you work there?

Mr. Gober: Since I was nineteen and had to register for World War II they reactivated the draft, and I got my draft. I came home to honor my draft and my dad had my draft called to head home. So I was going into the service. And one of my classmates was going to school down in Birmingham. And he got his draft called to go. We was at home and all five of us got together. Me and him and my brother...he had joined the Marine Corps down in Birmingham. And talked me into it which made my brother volunteer into the Marine Corps on his own. So we all ended up at Paris Island in September 1948.

Mr. Lollar: How long did you stay there?

Mr. Gober: Thirteen weeks. And then I went to the island of Guam in 1948. Had a ten day leave, and went back to Paris Island for a couple of days and left in January going to Guam.

Mr. Lollar: Had you at any point flown in a plane?

Mr. Gober: No.

Mr. Lollar: So going to Guam was your first experience?

Mr. Gober: Big time!

Mr. Lollar: Okay.

Mr. Gober: Whoa now. Wait a minute. We didn't go in a plane. We went in a train, we came right back through here in a train. From Paris Island all the way to San Francisco. Then about seventeen days on a ship to Guam.

Mr. Lollar: I just assumed you went in a plane. But you did not!

Mr. Gober: No they weren't that popular back then. My first flight on an airplane was when I came home from Korea. From California flew to St. Louis to Memphis and then caught a trail way bus to Florence.

Mr. Lollar: So you went a whole war then you flew!

Mr. Gober: I guess I was wanting to come home in a hurry. So everybody was board ship at that time. We had been through what they said was a hell of a situation. And we got to California where our people were taking applications to you.

Mr. Lollar: So when you got to Guam. What was going on in the world, politically with Korea?

Mr. Gober: Well the first the first thing with Korea come later. We had a storm come through in December. It blew our base away. It just destroyed it all. Typhoon Helen. I still remember it

Mr. Lollar: Yeah I bet! What about the life log?

Mr. Gober: There wasn't an injury in it. The First Marine was demolished. But everybody, it depended on what you did during that storm, was an MOS. I happened to be amphib.

Mr. Lollar: Oh! All right.

Mr. Gober: North Korea went from the twenty-fifth of June to September all the way into Pusan. A twenty mile radius around Pusan. Then, President Truman picked the Marines to make the inch on the landing.

Mr. Lollar: So, do you attribute part of that then to coming off World War II so closely?

Mr. Gober: Oh there's no question about it. I think every guy from World War II all the way to the Korean War. I think that was the big card for the recruiting.

Mr. Lollar: Now, so you go to Japan home of the expensive cow, from there you went to where?

Mr. Gober: We went from there to...I can't think of that little town we went to. Then we went to Inchon by ship.

Mr. Lollar: Okay so when you arrived there, when you left to do it. And Korea was in sight. What did you do?

Mr. Gober: Well I knew I had to get the job done.

Mr. Lollar: I love it! Now what about.... were you separated from your brother?

Mr. Gober: No, my brother was left in Guam.

Mr. Lollar: Oh.. Well I apologize.

Mr. Gober: He's two years younger than me. So he was still in the seventeen year olds.

Mr. Lollar: Now what about the men you served with?

Mr. Gober: A good friend of mine, him and my brother was at the same place in Guam.

Mr. Lollar: Now, how did you find the South Korean men?

Mr. Gober: Now those men couldn't do enough for us. Ya ever been to a hotel where they had a computer near the toilet?

Mr. Lollar: No! What purpose does that serve?

Mr. Gober: I really don't know.

Mr. Lollar: No sir. That's a first for me! So the South Korean people were very appreciative?

Mr. Gober: I don't know how to explain it! When we went to the streets, they would strive to try to shake our hands.

Mr. Lollar: I have considered taking a English teaching job in Seoul. Over the past couple of years. I've read that the people are very friendly.

Mr. Gober: They are very nice to us because we helped them get their country back!

Mr. Lollar: So when your job was finished. When you took care of business... where did you go?

Mr. Gober: See after they recaptured the North Korea, then the Chinese came in. So we got back to Japan.

Mr. Lollar: North Korea seems to be one big prison camp.

Mr. Gober: For the people. Yes. All of their money goes to the military. The Chinese had control. So they decide to split into the north and the south.

Mr. Lollar: So then, do you ever think that North Korea will ever threaten South Korea again?

Mr. Gober: Not unless the Chinese take their money away.

Mr. Lollar: When you were in Japan? How did you find the Japanese?

Mr. Gober: Well, you've got to be familiar with one man, MacArthur. The Japanese people thought everything he did was the right thing. So if you wanted to get in trouble... You did something bad to Japanese. He set up his occupation duty. We had to go to Tokyo. He'd come through and shake hands. But the Japanese people thought he was number one in all books.

Mr. Lollar: What do you think of the North Korean situation now? Between them and the United States?

Mr. Gober: North Korea isn't going to do nothing til China tells them too...