

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
(BUSINESS ARCHIVES PROJECT)
NUMBER

33

Interview with
MRS. ANNE DAVIS AND SON, DON DAVIS
October 7, 1979

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Terms of Use:

Approved:

Open
Donal S. Davis
Donal S. Davis
(Signature)

Date:

11-29-79

COPYRIGHT © 1979 THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Coordinator of the Oral History Collection or the University Archivist, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas 76203

Business Oral History Collection

Mrs. Ann Davis and Son, Don Davis

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: October 7, 1979

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is October 6, 1979. Today I am interviewing Mrs. Ann Davis who with her husband, Jack T. Davis, bought the Purity Bakery of Denton, Texas. Also we are interviewing her son, Don Davis, who is currently operating the Davis Purity Bakery with her.

Dr. Jenkins: Mrs. Davis, let's start by going back and getting your own family background, and then tell us about your husband's family background and kind of bring us up through your background, his background, your marriage and the starting of the Davis Purity Bakery.

Mrs. Anne Davis: My parents were born in Alabama. My mother was one of eight children. Her parents both died when the children were very young. So they were more or less scattered. My mother and a younger brother ended up in Plano, Texas. My mother worked for a prominent family there. Their names were the Haggards, and they still have their big

fine home in Plano today. While she was working there my father came to work there also, and that is where my parents met.

Jenkins: What kind of work were they doing for the Haggards?

Mrs. Davis: My mother was doing housework, and my father helped on the farm.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. It was a farm then?

Mrs. Davis: Well, they had a farm I suppose. Of course, now it is in town. But, yes, there was a large farm there.

Jenkins: I see, so the Haggards ran a farm, and your mother worked in the home.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: And your dad worked on the farm.

Mrs. Davis: That's right. My parents decided to get married. So they married, and they had some friends that lived in Abilene, Texas. So they decided to go to that part of the state to live. They went by covered wagon, I would say, to Abilene.

Jenkins: About what time?

Mrs. Davis: It was probably about 1910. Somewhere along there. So they settled on a rented farm west of Abilene, and they had one child, and he died in early infancy. And there was a second child, and I was born in 1918.

Jenkins: What date?

Mrs. Davis: April 10, 1918. And in about 1920 my father bought a farm

about three miles from where they lived, which is still there today.

Jenkins: Is it still in the family?

Mrs. Davis: Yes. And I still remember when we moved from the rented place to the home that my father had built. When we moved in, the walls were not finished, there was not wall paper on them, and a lot of the work was not done. But I still remember getting out of that wagon with a little rocking chair. And I was probably only about two years old then. So we lived there and my father farmed. And then in 1930 there was another child born, my sister Mary Ruth was born. She now lives in Dallas, Texas.

Jenkins: The house then was new as you moved into it.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you say that farm is still in the family?

Mrs. Davis: Yes. My brother, who is two years older than I am, still lives on the farm. And the house is in pretty good repair.

Jenkins: Is he still farming?

Mrs. Davis: He farmed until probably four or five years ago, and his health got real bad, so he had to rent the farm out.

Jenkins: You went through the depression on the farm, did you?

Mrs. Davis: Right.

Jenkins: What are some of your recollections of growing up on that farm, and the chores that you did, and any recollections that you have of being conscious of the depression and

going to school and such as that?

Mrs. Davis: I remember very well the depression. I was pretty young, but I knew that my daddy was really worried about something, and we didn't make very much cotton at all that year. So we would take a wagon and go up and down the roads and pick every hole of cotton that we could find, because he told us that he had to get every penny that he could you know, to pay on the farm. But we fared a lot better than the city people did, because we had plenty of good food to eat.

Jenkins: You had a garden?

Mrs. Davis: We had a garden, and we had meat and milk, eggs, butter. All the good things to eat. So we did not go hungry, but we didn't have much money.

Jenkins: You grew all that on the farm?

Mrs. Davis: Yes. And he managed somehow through the depression, and he didn't lose the farm. There were a lot of people that did lose their land during that time. But I always admired my father very much because he really tried real hard to hold on to everything during that time, but it was very hard.

Jenkins: Was he primarily a cotton farmer?

Mrs. Davis: Yes, mostly cotton and feed, at that time. And all the cotton was picked by hand.

Jenkins: Yes, I did some of that. Now he had animals on the farm?

Mrs. Davis: Yes, he used mules to pull his plow. And, of course, he had some cattle that he raised and he sold those, but primarily it was cotton.

Jenkins: The feed that he raised was mostly for his own animals?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: As a child growing up there, did you do all the things like feeding the chickens and picking cotton and all of those?

Mrs. Davis: I did just about everything there was to do.

Jenkins: Did you milk the cows?

Mrs. Davis: Yes, I have done that, too.

Jenkins: So you grew up on that farm out of what town?

Mrs. Davis: Abilene.

Jenkins: And where did you go to school?

Mrs. Davis: I went to grade school in a little town that was southwest of the farm, and then I went to high school in Abilene.

Jenkins: Do you remember the name of that town?

Mrs. Davis: Tye.

Jenkins: I have heard of Tye. Do you know whether it is still there?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: I think I have seen the highway signs.

Don Davis: It is right outside Dyess Air Force Base.

Jenkins: What are some of your recollections of what that school was like? Now you went to school in Tye through what grade?

Mrs. Davis: Probably through junior high school.

Jenkins: How big a town was Tye and how big was the school, and some of the recollections of that school?

Mrs. Davis: I remember the school because it was a great big two story building. The upstairs was an auditorium. It was pretty shackelty, and my father was always afraid to go to the plays or that type of thing. He was afraid it would fall in on him.

Jenkins: Was it a wooden building?

Mrs. Davis: Yes. And I think there were four rooms, four classrooms. And it was just a typical country school.

Jenkins: Well, did each room have a separate grade, or were some of the grades combined?

Mrs. Davis: There was several grades combined. I think probably the first four grades may have been in one room. Of course, we didn't have junior high then, but I think there were at least three or four grades in the first room that I was in.

Jenkins: Do you remember what kind of heating system you had in that school?

Mrs. Davis: We had great big old stoves, big old huge stoves, real tall. And they burned coal.

Jenkins: I wonder where the coal . . . you weren't conscious at the time where the coal was coming from, I suppose?

Mrs. Davis: No.

Jenkins: I wonder if it was Texas coal from down around Newcastle.

Mrs. Davis: I don't know.

Jenkins: Are there any other recollections of growing up in that school that you would want to tell us about? In Tye?

Mrs. Davis: It was a typical country school, we had a lot of fun. We had picnics, ballgames and knew everybody, more so than in a larger school.

Jenkins: Do you recall about how big Tye was at the time, the town?

Mrs. Davis: Well, this would be a wild guess. I would say two or three hundred people. That is strictly a guess. I don't remember, but it was very small.

Jenkins: And you went there then until you went on into what town to go to high school?

Mrs. Davis: Abilene.

Jenkins: Did you finish high school there?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Any recollections of high school that you want to record?

Mrs. Davis: Well, I remember that I had to get up at about four o'clock every morning in order to catch the bus that went to school in Abilene.

Jenkins: Oh, they were busing then.

Mrs. Davis: Yes. And we had dirt roads, and sometimes when it rained it was really a job to get to the paved road. So anytime we got stuck we got up really, really early to catch the bus.

Jenkins: You rode the bus then about how far?

Mrs. Davis: Well, I caught it at Tye, so we wandered around through the country. We probably went fifteen miles.

Jenkins: I see. You would catch the bus in the morning about what time? Do you recall?

Mrs. Davis: Probably about seven o'clock, maybe.

Jenkins: Then you would get home in the evening about what time?

Mrs. Davis: Well, probably five or five-thirty.

Jenkins: A long school day.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: You graduated then, from Abilene.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: About what year?

Mrs. Davis: It must have been about 1936.

Jenkins: And what did you do after you got out of high school?

Mrs. Davis: Well, I got married, I guess. That was about the only thing. For about a year I stayed around and really didn't do too much.

Jenkins: You lived at home, then, in Tye.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: And you were saying that you met your husband where?

Mrs. Davis: Well, I guess more or less at Tye or Merkel, the next little town down from Tye.

Jenkins: Your husband was raised where?

Mrs. Davis: In Merkel.

Jenkins: Let's go back and kind of get him up to that time from what you recall. Give us his background as you remember it.

Mrs. Davis: Well, he was born in Merkel, Texas about 1918.

Jenkins: Remind us again of his parents, what recollection you have of them.

Mrs. Davis: Well, his grandparents had lived in that area for a long, long time. His grandfather was pretty well known in that area, and his father was a postmaster at Merkel.

Jenkins: Now his grandfather was known as what?

Mrs. Davis: George T. Moore.

Jenkins: You said he was pretty well known. Was he a farmer or what?

Mrs. Davis: Well, yes, he owned quite a bit of land, and he was just generally kind of a big-shot.

Jenkins: Was he in politics?

Mrs. Davis: No.

Jenkins: But he was a big farmer, I suppose.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, do either one of you have recollections of your husband's tales of growing up and the kind of childhood and youth that he had?

Mrs. Davis: Yes, I think so. As I said his father was postmaster at one time, and he was also a school teacher. He taught at a little town south of Merkel. But his father died when he was twenty-six or twenty-eight. He died at a very young age. He had, I believe, an enlarged heart or something.

Don Davis: He had pneumonia, I believe.

Mrs. Davis: Yes, he died at a very early age, and there were three children. My husband was the oldest of three boys. And he left them pretty well provided, but through a lot of different things they ended up with not very much at all. They ended up with a farm east of Merkel, and that was just about their income, off of the farm. And they had a hard time, they really did. Because his mother had three boys and they were real young.

Don Davis: He was probably eight or nine when his daddy died. So they really had a hard time growing up.

Jenkins: He kind of became almost a daddy, I suppose, the man of the family.

Don Davis: Yes, he was.

Mrs. Davis: I would say he had a hard childhood, really.

Jenkins: Now he lived in Merkel?

Mrs. Davis: Well, he lived in Merkel part of the time. He lived with his grandmother a lot of the time when he went to school in Merkel.

Jenkins: I see. So he grew up in farming community and worked on farms himself.

Mrs. Davis: Right.

Jenkins: And he went to school in Merkel.

Mrs. Davis: Right.

Jenkins: What recollections do you have, the two of you, of his life up until you met him and you got married, other

growing up experiences that he had that you can recall.

Mrs. Davis: Well, I think that he just didn't have too good a childhood. When he was in high school he played football. That was good, but then after a certain time he more or less had to drop out of school to help keep the farm together.

Jenkins: Did he finish high school, then?

Mrs. Davis: No.

Jenkins: Do you know about what year he went through?

Mrs. Davis: I would guess about the tenth grade, and possibly the eleventh.

Jenkins: We had only eleven then as I recall. We didn't have the twelve years that we have now.

Mrs. Davis: Okay, it must have been the tenth then. I believe he lacked about one year.

Jenkins: And after high school what did he do? Do you know?

Mrs. Davis: Well, they moved to the farm, and he helped his mother on the farm because it was hard to get anyone that they could hire to farm.

Jenkins: Well, did you meet him while he was living on the farm near Merkel?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Was he farming when the two of you got married?

Mrs. Davis: Yes, he was at home farming. He was just like all other young people, you know.

Jenkins: If you lived at Tye and he lived at Merkel, how far apart are those two towns?

Mrs. Davis: Well, Merkel is about seven or eight miles directly west of Tye.

Jenkins: How did you two meet?

Mrs. Davis: Well, back then there was always parties around in the community. Someone always had a party every weekend around at their home. Just kind of a get together. And so that was about all the entertainment that young people had then.

Jenkins: Were you both out of school before you met?

Mrs. Davis: No, I was still going to school.

Jenkins: I see, so you met at a party.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: And you got married when and where?

Mrs. Davis: We married in Abilene in January of 1937, I believe.

Jenkins: Let's pick up at your marriage and bring you up to getting into the bakery business. Your recollection of your life together and the work and the kinds of things that he did before the two of you bought the bakery.

Mrs. Davis: Well, he did a lot of things that never were too important. They weren't a long thing, not for any period of time. I remember one thing. When they started building Camp Barclay, he helped build some of the barracks and things there.

Jenkins: Was that near Abilene?

Mrs. Davis: Yes. Camp Barkley is directly south of Tye. I guess about three or three and a half miles south of Tye.

Jenkins: Now that was built . . .

Don Davis: During World War II.

Mrs. Davis: And then he drove a bus from Abilene to Camp Barkley. He did that for quite a while. He took the soldiers from Abilene to the camp, back and forth. And then when he quit that he started working as a salesman for The Tastee Bread Company.

Jenkins: Do you know about what year that was, in the neighborhood of?

Mrs. Davis: I would say about 1940 or somewhere. That is kind of a guess.

Jenkins: Sure. That was his first experience with the baking business was with Tastee?

Mrs. Davis: Yes. And he stayed with that type of work. I can't remember if he worked for another company in Abilene or not, but he got a job . . . well, during that time he went into the service.

Jenkins: What branch of the service did he go into?

Mrs. Davis: Army.

Jenkins: Would you want to record something about how long he was in the service and where he went or any of that?

Mrs. Davis: He was probably in for about six months. The war ended

while he was in. He was stationed at Fort Hood and then he was sent to California, I believe Camp Cook. So then from Abilene we moved to a little town south of Fort Worth, and that is where he started working for Holsum Bread Company.

Jenkins: What town was that?

Mrs. Davis: Kennedale.

Jenkins: Kennedale. I have an uncle who lives there.

Mrs. Davis: Really? And so he was supervisor at Holsum Bread Company, and he really got kind of tired of working for someone else. So he always said that he wanted a business of his own.

Jenkins: What did he supervise? Salesman or inside the bakery or what?

Mrs. Davis: Route supervisor. He saw an ad in the paper one day, and there was a bakery for sale. And I guess he thought that was kind of a way to get out of working for somebody else. And the ad was Purity Bakery in Denton. So we came up to look at it, and so we bought it.

Jenkins: Give us your recollections of when you bought the bakery, where it was and some of the early problems of getting into a business that you probably hadn't had much experience with. He had delivered bread, but I bet he had never baked a great deal. So give us your recollections of the early beginnings of getting the business off the ground.

- Mrs. Davis: Well, the bakery was located at 227 West Hickory. It was a great big building with lots of room. And the man that we bought it from, Mr. Grant, stayed around for a while to teach us, you know, what he could about it, and the same employees that worked for him stayed on also.
- Jenkins: We were talking a while ago, you said this was about '53. And that bakery was a pretty old bakery when you bought it.
- Don Davis: Right.
- Jenkins: And you said that you, through Dr. Bridges book of Denton, that you had some knowledge of the history of that bakery before you bought it. Would you give us what recollections you have on it.
- Don Davis: From what I read it was founded in 1939, and it was one of the three leading industries in Denton at that time. Morrison Mill was one, Purity Bakery, and maybe the City of Denton. But the annual payroll was something like a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.
- Jenkins: From Purity Bakery?
- Don Davis: No, that was the three industries combined.
- Jenkins: Oh, I see.
- Don Davis: Which was kind of amusing to me.
- Jenkins: But Purity Bakery was one of the leading industries of the town at the time.
- Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: Did he describe the number of employees or anything like that at all?

Don Davis: I believe that listed the number of employees, but I don't recall. There wasn't a great number.

Jenkins: But that was in Dr. C. A. Bridges' book?

Don Davis: Right. History of Denton that he published.

Jenkins: History of Denton about two or three years ago. Okay. Let's go back then to getting started in the new business.

Mrs. Davis: Well, I guess one thing that you could certainly say was a lot of work and a lot of long hours. And of course you always run into a lot of problems.

Jenkins: Who did the baking?

Don Davis: I was one of them.

Jenkins: Oh, you started off baking. How old were you?

Don Davis: I was thirteen. I worked beside the old bakers making doughnuts and bread. They just showed me what they used. And I just kind of worked with them and learned.

Jenkins: They left employees there.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: And you started learning the business by watching them.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: And how long did it take you to start actually baking things to sell?

Don Davis: Oh, probably the first day.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Don Davis: Yes. They just more or less turned me loose, and would tell me, "Here, do this."

Jenkins: Okay, so when you bought the business you had an operating crew that stayed on with you, the bakers and such. Mr. Grant, was it, that you bought it from, he stayed on for a while to get you accustomed to running it. Tell us your recollections of those early years when, I suppose, your husband was commuting from Kennedale to Denton to run the business. For how long did you do that before you moved?

Mrs. Davis: Well, we bought the bakery in February, and so he more or less commuted every day until the time that school was out, which I guess must have been about May, and then we moved to Denton. And he would get up real, real early and leave and then it would be real, real late when he got home. And when we moved to Denton it wasn't quite that bad.

Jenkins: Where did you move to in Denton?

Mrs. Davis: We lived first on the corner of Avenue A and Eagle Drive.

Don Davis: That lot is still vacant. There used to be a big old house there that burned some time in the '60's, and that lot is still vacant.

Jenkins: The house that burned is where you lived?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: So the family came to Denton . . . It was less than a year that he commuted.

Don Davis: Right. Probably four months after we bought the bakery.

Jenkins: Do you have any recollection of how many people were working in the bakery when you bought it?

Don Davis: Oh, probably six to eight people.

Jenkins: And you learned to bake by watching.

Don Davis: Right. O.J.T. On the Job Training.

Jenkins: And your husband, I guess, with Mr. Grant there, was watching how a bakery is run and learning the ropes. What is your recollection of when Mr. Grant left and you really started running it strictly within the family?

Mrs. Davis: Well, I think by that time, considering that we still had some pretty good employees, I think everything was all right.

Jenkins: And Mr. Grant stayed on how long?

Mrs. Davis: Oh, possibly two or three weeks, don't you think?

Don Davis: Yes, probably not much longer than that.

Jenkins: So he didn't stay on as a paid employee for any length of time.

Don Davis: No. Just there to kind of initiate us and turn us loose.

Jenkins: Well, what is your recollection of how the business operated then? What kind of hours did you keep? What kinds of things did you bake? What was your market? Such as that.

- Don Davis: It is probably still basically the same as it is now. Just kind of cakes and bread and doughnuts and pastries. I would say back then we made more bread than we do now, because the market has changed. It is still about the same now.
- Jenkins: Has it always been strictly a local business? Have you ever delivered?
- Don Davis: Yes, we deliver now. We have restaurants and drive-in groceries that we sell doughnuts and pies to.
- Jenkins: You say it is considerably the same way that it has been all along.
- Don Davis: Pretty much.
- Jenkins: Let's go back and get both of your recollections of how you were operating then, where you were delivering it to, the kinds of deliveries you were making, the kinds of hours people have to put in at a bakery, the kinds of equipment that you have to have, and such as that.
- Mrs. Davis: Well, I remember that everything was just about made by hand. Doughnuts were rolled with a big rolling pin. Cookies were rolled with rolling pins. Pie crust, everything. There was no machinery to do that type of thing.
- Don Davis: Now we have sheeters and what you call a doughnut molding and table that rolls your dough out and cuts your doughnuts and picks your holes.
- Jenkins: I want to go through and see all that.

Don Davis: It would be interesting. I can remember changes. Of course the reason these changes have occurred is because you can't get enough dependable experienced help.

Jenkins: Let's go back and just kind of follow the years, then, and look at some of these changes. In equipment, let's just start with equipment. You said at first . . . well, surely you had some mixing equipment.

Don Davis: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What kinds of mixing equipment did you have from the beginning?

Don Davis: Oh, we still have some of the mixers that we used back then. Some of them are forty years old and are still going. But we have had to buy some new ones that develop your dough better. They mix it better.

Jenkins: Some of the old equipment is just as useful as it used to be?

Don Davis: Oh, yes. It is really better designed than the new equipment today. It is made out of heavier steel and is really designed better than what you can buy.

Jenkins: When you first started, what kind of commercial accounts did you have and what distances from Denton did you deliver?

Don Davis: We never have delivered outside of Denton. And it has basically been both colleges and restaurants and drive-in groceries.

Jenkins: What do you furnish to the colleges, for instance?

Don Davis: Now, just doughnuts. Well, that is probably all it has been over the years. TWU has had their bakery over the years and they made all of their bread and cakes. North Texas I think was more or less a competitive bid by the bread companies, so we never really got anything like that. We could never bid low enough.

Jenkins: Their dormitories, then.

Don Davis: Right, and to their kitchens and food service.

Jenkins: It was mostly doughnuts then, over the years.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, your other commercial accounts, bread accounts and such.

Don Davis: Well, we never have really got into bread wholesale. It has just been retail to draw, you know, people in to buy other items or people that just like bread.

Jenkins: So all of the bread that you sell, you sell right there out of the bakery. What are some of the things that you do wholesale out?

Don Davis: Doughnuts and pies. We sell doughnuts mostly to restaurants like E-Z Cheks and some of those drive-in groceries, and sell restaurants like Tom and Joe's and Denny's and some of those.

Jenkins: When you sell to those places, are you the only one who sells that to them, or do they have other people selling them the same items?

Don Davis: Oh, I think we basically are the only ones. Like some

frozen pies and dinner rolls and things like that, they can buy from other companies. But doughnuts, I think we are the only one.

Jenkins: Over the years, in terms of what is sold by people coming into the store and buying them and the things that are sold by your delivering them, what kind of balance have you had in terms of volume of sales? Is most of it drop-in business or is most of it the wholesale business?

Don Davis: Most of it is retail. We always try to keep it that way. The wholesale more or less balances your volume, which in a bakery you have to operate on a volume, and it kind of fills in your volume and keeps it constant. Certain times of year, like during the summer months, your volume will fall off so your wholesale helps maintain that.

Jenkins: Well, let's talk about that a little bit. Two things, one, fluctuations within a year, and two, the stability of the business over the long haul. Over the long haul, is this a pretty stable business? Do you have good years and bad years, depressions and peaks, or is it a pretty stable thing?

Don Davis: Oh, I think a lot of ups and downs. Competition has certainly been a big factor, I've seen a lot of that come and go, but business is seasonal. Like summer months, people don't eat as much, so sales go down. And then when you have cool weather people eat more. And then you have your wedding seasons in the summer months, to kind of augment

your other sales. And then around Thanksgiving and Christmas your other sales go up. Then you have a kind of first of the year slump when everybody . . .

Jenkins: Is full?

Don Davis: Yes. And jobs are tight and bad weather is a factor. Sales will go down because there is not as much money.

Jenkins: The major peaks of the year then are about what?

Don Davis: Probably November and December, and during the summer, maybe June?

Mrs. Davis: May is usually good, as far as weddings and end of school parties.

Don Davis: Your weddings will change. Like one year June will be a good wedding month and next year it won't. That kind of changes yearly.

Jenkins: But in between the peaks, you do have a pretty steady drop-in business.

Don Davis: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: And institutional business.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: And, what, around the first of the year, after the gorging of the holidays, and then in the summer, you say, other than the peak of weddings, is rather slow. Well, over the years has there been a great deal of fluctuation, or is it . . .

Don Davis: It pretty well runs in norm. You can look at each month in the past and pretty well predict what it is going to be.

But from time to time it won't always hold true, because the weather will be a big factor. If you have unseasonably warm weather, well, business is pretty lousy. That will vary it some.

Jenkins: As you look back over the years, both of you, do you remember any particularly bad or scary years and, if so, how do you account for it? And have there been some particularly outstandingly good years and, if so, how would you account for them? Or is it just so steady and stable that you don't have that?

Don Davis: No, I can remember, it was probably the year after we went into business, that they had a big drouth. Wasn't it '54? I remember business was pretty lean back then in the recession. And I can remember the last recession we had, wasn't it '73 or '74, it didn't affect us much, I don't think.

Mrs. Davis: Was that the year that sugar went so high? That was about '74?

Don Davis: I believe the recession was before that. The sugar crises really affected us, because every day when we would buy sugar it would be up as much as five dollars a hundred, and of course we had to pass those prices on. The customers were very price conscious and some of them were pretty rebellious. So it was kind of pretty difficult at that time.

Jenkins: How do you price? How do you go about affixing a price to

things?

Don Davis: Oh, usually I figure my ingredients cost, and then I have a factor of what my rent and my labor and everything else will run, or what it should run. It doesn't always stay that. And I just multiply times a percentage.

Jenkins: Do you graze around town and watch supermarket prices and other bakeries? Do you do that kind of thing?

Don Davis: No, I don't really pay that much attention to supermarkets. I don't feel like we are in the same ballgame, really. We go for quality instead of price. I make a quality product and command a little better price. But they do keep you in line, or should.

Jenkins: How does your quality differ from theirs? What do you do as an independent local bakery in terms of quality that you think the supermarkets don't do?

Don Davis: Well, they have guide lines set down by their companies, and they have to go by these. And I don't have anybody around but me and my mother to answer to. And we always have a motto, you know, "Make it better than anybody else." Go for quality, not quantity.

Jenkins: How does that quality differ in terms of ingredients or whatever there is that you do to things that can show?

Don Davis: You can certainly buy a different grade of ingredients, different grades of shortening, for example, and flour. And if you use mixes, you can buy mixes, you know, that

are superior to others. And there is a matter of putting it together. You have got to have your formulation balance. You have got to have the right amount of sugar, shortening and eggs and the right percentages.

Jenkins: One reason I asked, we wander around, and when we find a small bakery we will stop in and buy a loaf of bread and eat it as we drive down the road. And we have noticed that sometimes after a couple of hours that we have been driving down the road and the bread has been opened that it gets very crispy as you drive, and others it does not. Now what makes the difference there?

Don Davis: Probably two factors. The amount of ingredients and the quality of ingredients and the way it is put together. If they don't have knowledgeable people for bakers, well, they can have the best ingredients and still ruin it. If they don't get enough proof and bake it too much or not enough, well, that can ruin it.

Jenkins: At this point let's go back to the beginnings of Davis Purity Bakery and get your recollections of Jack T. Davis' involvement in that bakery and in the town during his lifetime. So let's go back to the beginnings of the bakery and get some recollections of how he ran it, your recollections of how he was involved in that business and in the community.

Don Davis: Well, he more or less knew how to do everything, and he could

do any of the baking. The best that I can remember he basically delivered, and I helped do the baking. Before school I would go in about four A.M. and work until about eight, and then go to school and come back after school.

Jenkins: When were the doors closed?

Don Davis: Oh, I believe we closed around five-thirty. This has basically been our hours over the years, about six A.M. until about five-thirty. But there is a lot of prep work that goes on before the doors are open.

Jenkins: So it is not unusual for someone to be there at four or five in the morning?

Don Davis: Well, right now we start production at three A.M. and open the doors at six A.M. So there is a lot of preparation going on before.

Jenkins: And that is the way it has always been?

Don Davis: It has always been that way.

Jenkins: So all of you have always kept long hours?

Don Davis: Right. And even after the doors are closed in the evening we may be doing book work or prep work for the next day or scrubbing pots and pans so somebody else won't have to do it.

Jenkins: What was his attitude toward credit business as you recall?

Don Davis: Mostly it was on a cash basis. We had a few people that we gave credit to, but it was mostly cash.

Jenkins: What about your institutional or commercial accounts? Did you do much credit there?

Don Davis: Yes. We did quite a bit of credit to them. For instance the universities were credit, and some of the other commercial accounts were credit, but individuals, mostly cash.

Jenkins: What about your recollection of how you operated and he operated in terms of buying? Were you extended credit when you bought or did they treat you pretty much the way you like to operate on a cash basis?

Don Davis: No, we have ample credit. We can buy anything that we need. Over the years we have established credit, and credit is no problem to us now.

Jenkins: So the individual accounts carry credit, when you buy your flour or all of those things. It is on what, thirty days?

Don Davis: Mostly thirty days.

Jenkins: What kinds of civic, church, local involvement do you recall Mr. Jack Davis being in over the years, whether it was just in Denton or wherever he was. Did he get very much involved in clubs and such?

Don Davis: About the only thing that I can remember is Odd Fellows. I am not sure whether he was in any of the baker's organizations.

Mrs. Davis: He wasn't involved in very much at all because it took all of his time in the bakery.

Don Davis: I was in the Lion's Club myself. I am an inactive member and have been for five years. I found that I just couldn't

be active in it and work the hours that I do getting up early. They had ballgames that required you to work concession stands, maybe until ten or ten-thirty at night. And when you get up at three or four in the morning you just can't really do it.

Jenkins: So typically over all these years the management of the bakery might put in how many hours a week? A day. Do you even stop and calculate?

Don Davis: If you get through in a ten hour day you are probably lucky. Some days it might be twelve, fourteen. A lot will depend on your help. If you have plenty of good help that will work with you and do what they should, well you can probably get by on ten hours.

Jenkins: And you are open five or six days?

Don Davis: Six days.

Jenkins: Same number of hours on Saturday as Monday?

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Your husband was with the business up until when?

Don Davis: In '65 he had a heart attack.

Jenkins: And did he have to leave the business immediately?

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: So he was no longer with the business after '65. Is that when you came back and started?

Don Davis: Yes, that's when I came back into the business.

Jenkins: Okay, let's go back now, Don, and pick up your early life

sketching again family background and when and where you were born, where you went to school, your early work in the business and when and why you came back and started in fulltime management, and then sketch the business as you have seen it from then.

Don Davis: I was born at Abilene, Texas, October 13, 1938. I believe I started school in Abilene the first grade through probably about the fifth or sixth. Then we moved to Kennedale and I went to the seventh grade, I believe. Then we moved to Denton, and I started in the eighth grade, I believe, at North Texas Lab School.

Jenkins: Let's get a little date perspective here again, although we got it once. You graduated from Denton High.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: But that was after you went to work for the bakery. So you went to work for the bakery at thirteen?

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: In about what year, although if we had a pencil we could figure it up.

Don Davis: Well, my father first bought it in 1953.

Jenkins: So you were there from the very beginning.

Don Davis: The first several months probably just on weekends.

Jenkins: Okay. Well, let's go back and get you through high school. You went to North Texas Demonstration School.

Don Davis: Through the ninth grade.

Jenkins: And then . . .

Don Davis: Denton High School.

Jenkins: Involved in athletics or clubs or anything like that?
You were working nights so . . .

Don Davis: I was a worker.

Jenkins: Okay, so you did graduate from Denton High?

Don Davis: Right. 1957.

Jenkins: Go back to thirteen and give us your learning experiences at the bakery, and your recollections of what was going on there then.

Don Davis: Okay, well, I worked alongside the regular bakers, and I learned to do anything in the bakery that anybody else could do. And I could do any of the baking, and before school I would go in and make doughnuts, probably until about eight o'clock and then go to school and then come back in the afternoon and do miscellaneous things. After school I would deliver cakes around the colleges. I remember back then we had a lot of birthday cakes that we would take to the universities.

Jenkins: You were a baker from almost the first. That is what you have done primarily.

Don Davis: Basically from . . .

Jenkins: From the beginning.

Don Davis: Until I went into service.

Jenkins: When did you go in service?

Don Davis: In October of 1957, when I graduated from high school.

Jenkins: Sketch what you did in service if you would.

Don Davis: Aircraft and engine mechanics.

Jenkins: From baker to . . .

Don Davis: Right. Of course, on my application--well, I hated bakery--so I didn't put anything on any of my tests, you know, that I had ever worked in a bakery. I knew I would wind up in food service or kitchen or someplace. At that time it was the last place that I wanted to go. So I went to aircraft and engine school, and that is what I did the four years in service.

Jenkins: Were you stationed in one place primarily?

Don Davis: No, I went to basic training in San Antonio, and then I went to the aircraft and engine school in Wichita Falls at Shepard Air Force Base. Then I went from there to Otis Air Force Base at Cape Cod, and I went from there to Saudi Arabia Dharon Air Field and stayed there thirteen months and went to Tucson, Arizona, Davis Monathan, and that is where I got out of the Air Force.

Jenkins: And you were in there how long?

Don Davis: Four years.

Jenkins: While you were in the bakery and growing up were you working with any machinery there? Did you learn to fix the machinery?

Don Davis: Oh, yes. I had a mechanical aptitude. Around a bakery you have to be pretty mechanical to keep things going

because if it breaks down you can't wait until you can get somebody from Dallas or somewhere to fix it. My father had me tinkering with cars, so I got a pretty good knowledge.

Jenkins: Is there much breakdown time in the bakery?

Don Davis: Well, not real frequently, that when you have a breakdown that can more or less put you out of business. As an example, I broke a piece off of a mixer yesterday, and I had to work on it a couple of hours to get it fixed. And if I had had to call someone from Dallas, it might have been next week. In the meantime I wouldn't be able to use this one mixer, but I have two others that I could use.

Jenkins: So if you have parts you can fix just about anything. Okay, let's go back and pick you up. You got out of high school. You went to the service, and you came back. And what did you do after you got out of service?

Don Davis: Well, I decided that I would try college a while. So I started at North Texas. I worked a while before I started to school.

Jenkins: In what?

Don Davis: The first job I had was a construction job. Then I worked at Dallas rebuilding aircraft engines and decided that wasn't what I wanted to do.

Jenkins: Who were you working for?

Don Davis: Dallas Airmotive. Then I decided that I wanted to go to

school so I started to school.

Jenkins: At North Texas?

Don Davis: Yes. Then I was working at a service station in the afternoons while I was going to school.

Jenkins: What were you majoring in?

Don Davis: Industrial Arts.

Jenkins: Did you have anything in mind, or did you just want to go to school?

Don Davis: Well, at that time I knew pretty well what I wanted to do. I was old enough, I guess I was twenty-two or so.

Jenkins: What did you have in mind? What were you going to do with an Industrial Arts degree?

Don Davis: Well, go into something similar to engineering. I always had in mind something like T.I. or Collins Radio. So about halfway through I went back into the bakery.

Jenkins: Halfway through North Texas.

Don Davis: Yes. When my father had a heart attack, well, I thought I would just go back and kind of hold it together for a while.

Jenkins: That is why you went back, though?

Don Davis: Yes. At that time it didn't sound too bad going back into the bakery business. I don't guess I really knew what I wanted to do for sure. I thought, well, that might be good to try.

Jenkins: You did indicate that while you were growing up doing that,

that you weren't really too wild about it.

Don Davis: No, I was going to get away from it.

Jenkins: But now you were reconsidering.

Don Davis: Yes. I was also minoring in business so I kind of had my mind on management, or possibly some type of business. I wasn't really sure. I didn't want to go into teaching or I didn't want to go into assembly line type work, so I guess everything just kind of fell into place at that time.

Jenkins: After you came back, after your father's heart attack, have you been with it fulltime ever since?

Don Davis: Yes, ever since.

Jenkins: Let's go back, then, and pick up with about where the business was, what was happening to it when you came back into it fulltime and bring us up to date in terms of changes of location, growth, changes of equipment, changes in the number of employees, problems. Just kind of give us the history as you have seen it since you have been there.

Don Davis: When I came back into it they had moved from the original location on Hickory Street to South Locust Street.

Jenkins: About when was that?

Don Davis: Oh, I am thinking about 1961 or 1962 when it was moved. So it was a smaller place. Well, I guess it was more or less the business cut back to what they could do. I

believe a couple of my brothers were helping at that time. At that time it was just strictly family business. I don't believe there was anybody else in it.

Jenkins: Go back and remind us of the family members that have been involved in it.

Don Davis: Okay. At one time or another all of us worked. There are two girls and three other brothers that have all worked.

Jenkins: Name all of them.

Don Davis: Barbara, the sister next to me, and Jerry and then Marilyn and David and Mike. They all worked over the years after I got out and went into the service.

Jenkins: Six children.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: So all of them have at one time or other been working in the bakery.

Don Davis: Right. I was still going to school during this time so I just kept working at it and finally graduated from college in '67. And we stayed at that location until we bought this other building that we have in '72.

Jenkins: So you started on Hickory near KDNT in what year?

Don Davis: 1953.

Jenkins: And you moved to South Locust . . .

Don Davis: In 1962.

Jenkins: Right across from the old hotel. And you moved from there

to your present location in . . .

Don Davis: '72.

Jenkins: Which is what address?

Don Davis: 700 West Hickory.

Jenkins: Do you remember any highlights of the building on South Locust. Anything in particular happening to the business during those years?

Don Davis: Oh, when I came back in, I was building the business back up and trying to expand. We were having a conflict with the people next door with parking. So Mr. Wilson had this building where we moved to now. He had retired and so he was wanting to sell it. So that was a good opportunity to get away from the conflict that we were having.

Jenkins: What was in your present building before you moved?

Don Davis: He had a bakery in it and before that it was an old grocery store.

Jenkins: Wilson's Bakery?

Don Davis: Yes. He had a bakery in it about fifteen or sixteen years. He had leased it to another guy and he lost all the business, which at this time I more or less picked his business up. So he was wanting to sell it. It was a good opportunity for me to get rid of him and to get another place to go.

Jenkins: How did you finance that? Was that much of a problem, buying him out?

Don Davis: No. He was happy to sell, I think.

Jenkins: He was retiring, I suppose?

Don Davis: Yes, more or less. He had sold most of his equipment, which I didn't want it or need it. Basically all I wanted was the building.

Jenkins: Did you have to do any financing of that, or did you operate out of cash flow?

Don Davis: He carried part of the note, and we paid some down and we paid it out over five years.

Jenkins: I see. So you still didn't have any long term debt.

Don Davis: No. That has always kind of been our philosophy to stay away from long term.

Jenkins: Did you own the building, the first building? Did you buy the building or just the business?

Don Davis: No, we leased.

Jenkins: And your second place you leased. And your present place?

Don Davis: We own.

Jenkins: You not only bought the business, but you bought the real estate.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: Okay. We have got you in your present location in about '72.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: So let's pick you up there. You said when you first went into the business you thought you had six or eight employees?

Don Davis: In 1953?

Jenkins: Yes.

Don Davis: Yes, something like that. Six or eight.

Jenkins: And when you moved to South Locust, about how many people did you have?

Don Davis: Well, at that time I wasn't in it. That was before my father got sick. I believe it was pretty much the family deal, wasn't it?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Hardly anyone outside the family working for you. Is that about it?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: But most of the family was, I guess. About how many family members were working then?

Mrs. Davis: Let's see. Jerry . . .

Don Davis: Barbara had gotten married while I was in the service, so she was out of it.

Mrs. Davis: Probably not more than three.

Jenkins: And now when you moved over to your present location, what did you start off with? Were you involved in that move?

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: How many employees did you start off with, including family, where you are now?

Don Davis: Probably two, and at that time my wife was helping me.

Well, for a while we ran two places. We ran one on South Locust and we ran this one where we are now. We tried running two of them and found that there were too many problems and not really enough business, either. So we were having a conflict with the landlord and people next door so we decided it was best to . . .

Jenkins: About how long did you try to run two of them?

Don Davis: Probably a year, give or take.

Jenkins: So when you did get to your present location, in terms of fulltime equivalent people, you were working about how many people, family and all?

Don Davis: Well, the only family now is me and Mother. My wife went to work in Dallas after that. Now we have nine employees, but they are not all fulltime. It would probably be equivalent to about five fulltime.

Jenkins: Including the family. So it is about comparable in the number of employees to what it was in the original location.

Don Davis: Probably pretty much the same. We have more equipment now. We can produce more than we could back then, but we don't have anywhere near as much room as we had when we originally started.

Jenkins: Well, let's look at that, and again, just to the best of your recollection. Over those years when you started off it was almost all hand work except for the mixing of the

batches. And as time went along equipment became more sophisticated. In terms of volume then, not just sales because we've got inflation to worry about there, but in terms of loaves of bread or cupcakes or simply volume of goods produced, how have you compared over the years? Are you bigger now than you have ever been?

Don Davis: I would say we are. I would say we probably produce twice as much as we did when we started. Wouldn't you say at least that?

Mrs. Davis: Well, I think probably some things we made more of when we first started.

Don Davis: Like bread. We made more back then.

Mrs. Davis: I think possibly pies. We made more pies then, don't you think?

Don Davis: Yes, probably those two items.

Jenkins: In terms of the ingredients that you use, you are probably using twice as many as you were regardless of what they go into.

Don Davis: Yes, poundagewise I would think we probably are doing about twice that. Of course I was young. I really didn't pay that much attention to a lot of those things. Like doughnuts, I know we make a lot more of those than we did. And cakes, probably a lot more. But maybe bread and pies not as many.

Jenkins: We have got you into your present location, and in terms of when you moved in '72 to your present location to now,

what if anything have been the major changes or differences in how you were operating then and now? Has it been pretty steady, stable operation? Have things changed very much?

Don Davis: When we moved from Locust to where we are now?

Jenkins: Yes.

Don Davis: Yes, there has definitely been a lot of changes. Like we had the sugar prices, and before that it was shortening, and before that it was flour. We have seen a lot of changes in ingredient prices. I can never remember changes like that when I was a kid. And shortages.

Jenkins: How did you cope with shortening and sugar and other temporary shortages? What are your recollections of those?

Don Davis: Well, every day and every week the prices were going up. There were times we didn't know whether to buy a bunch or try to chance it out. Your suppliers would say, "Well, it is going to stabilize this week." And the next week it would go up. So there were some things that we finally took a chance on and bought quite a bit of it, and it would rise.

Jenkins: Inflation . . .

Don Davis: Like sugar, we bought a bunch at fifty dollars and it finally peaked out at eighty-four. And every week they would say, "Well, it is going to break." It just kept

going up, up, so we did okay on that.

Jenkins: And you said you had a shortening shortage at one time.

Don Davis: One summer it went up pretty high. They would hold some of it off the market and say that you couldn't get it, and you would have to scurry around and buy it any place you could, and pay two prices. That finally leveled out and we didn't have any more problems. Sugar was probably the worst.

Jenkins: Were there any other major crises like that in terms of ingredients?

Don Davis: They did the same thing with flour. Everybody, I think, has kind of gotten wise to the oil people. They saw what they had pulled off, so they did the same thing on chocolate and pecans and raisins. Every year there is something you are short, so the price goes way up. When they get it high enough there's plenty of it.

Jenkins: When did you really start noticing the runaway increases in prices? I suppose you almost have to watch things every week. Do you change prices constantly?

Don Davis: Yes, we do.

Jenkins: Tell us about how you have seen that coming on, and how you coped with it, and what it means on a day to day basis.

Don Davis: Well, the prices have changed constantly since probably '73 or '74. Used to I would figure my prices maybe for my cost once or twice a year would be okay, but now you

almost have to do it weekly. But I don't have the time and I don't have the manpower, so a lot of times we just add a percent to everything to compensate, hopefully. Then we try to watch our income statement to see if everything is pretty much in line on that.

Jenkins: What kind of an accounting system do you keep to try to stay up with this and see what is happening?

Don Davis: We have an accountant that does an income statement for us monthly. That is kind of the way we keep up with it.

Jenkins: An outside accountant.

Don Davis: Yes. I did do that at one time. Things have changed so much that you can't stay up with it. The tax laws have changed. Too many changes I can't stay up with because I have too many personnel problems. I can pay somebody else to do it better than I can.

Jenkins: With all the hours that you do put in, and have always had to put in apparently, but in terms of coping as a small business, have you seen it become increasingly difficult then over the last seven or eight years, or had it started before then?

Don Davis: No, it is definitely getting more difficult to operate. I was thinking, when I was a kid that Daddy could tell somebody, "There is the door. Go." And now you can't fire somebody if you suspect they are stealing or know they are stealing because you can get a law suit on you

if you fire someone for stealing or whatever. The federal government is protecting these people, more or less. Every year there is something that comes down, new change from the IRS or on employees or some regulation that more or less ties your hands.

Jenkins: Have you actually, personally in your own business, run into a problem of getting rid of an employee and having this conflict yet?

Don Davis: I have had some situations where I could have run into some problems. I was reprimanded by the Texas Employment Commission one time, maybe more than that, for not hiring a minority, which I didn't feel he was qualified, and I didn't hire him.

Jenkins: They only reprimanded you?

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: How about getting rid of an employee? Have you run into any problem, actually had anything filed against you?

Don Davis: Yes, we have had unemployment filed against us. Oh, I have fired a bunch of them over the years. One boy, he was . . . oh, I gave him three or four chances. He would lay out from work, and be late when he did come, and when he got to work he was spaced out. Come to find out he was on drugs, and I fired him and he filed unemployment against me.

Jenkins: Compensation.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: But no one attempted to tell you that you shouldn't have fired him?

Don Davis: No. But I had to write an appeal to keep him from getting unemployment or he would.

Jenkins: But you say you also feel the threat of someone bringing charges. But so far that hasn't happened.

Don Davis: No. I have one situation now, an employee I should have fired several times, but there is a health reason involved, and you can't fire a person for that.

Jenkins: Unless it is injurious to your business.

Don Davis: Right. It has been in many instances.

Jenkins: But they can't prove it is injurious to your product, maybe.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: Are there other major problems that you see arising over the last few years in terms of the small business, and the difficulties of the small business person?

Don Davis: Oh, the government keeps putting more and more forms that you have to fill out. Every time you turn around they send you some kind of tax form or some forms you have to fill out, and it is not really relevant to you, but you still have to fill it out. Then you have OSHA.

Jenkins: Have you had some dealings with OSHA?

Don Davis: Not personally, but through the baker's organizations I belong to I have managed to stay away from them. They

have a lot of regulations, you know, that are threatening to you.

Jenkins: Does your insurance company kind of help you watch what you need to do?

Don Davis: No, not really. That is just up to the individual. This is where your baker's organizations come in, some of them. In Dallas and Fort Worth we all meet and we pass it on to one another if something happens.

Jenkins: So you are involved in baker's associations.

Don Davis: Definitely. All of the state and national organizations, I am a member of. That is where I get most of my ideas.

Jenkins: They provide literature which help, and meetings.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: That helps you keep up.

Don Davis: I go to at least two meetings a month. Ideas and products.

Jenkins: Where do they meet mostly?

Don Davis: Most of the time in Dallas. We have different work shops or whatever in the state. Some of those I don't get to go to.

Jenkins: Well, let's look at how you operate, how you spend your day. Are you still baking?

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: You are baking. Do you bake?

Mrs. Davis: No. I never baked.

Jenkins: Well, let's look at how the two of you spend a day at the

bakery.

Don Davis: Okay, I go in about five A.M. I have several other boys that come in at three and one comes in at four.

Jenkins: A.M.

Don Davis: Right. We are working on doughnuts at that time. We work on them until about seven-thirty or eight.

Jenkins: Is that a large percentage of your business, doughnuts?

Don Davis: Yes. Off-hand I don't recall what percent. It is probably thirty or forty percent.

Jenkins: So you spend a big part of the morning making doughnuts?

Don Davis: And then after that, well, we work on bread or pies and cakes. And then at the end usually cookies. By that time it is probably twelve-thirty or one. And then in the afternoons we do prep work.

Jenkins: What is that?

Don Davis: Oh, weigh out certain items for the next day or maybe make up danish, cut them out and put them in the freezer and bake them the next day. Then I may have to chase around and do miscellaneous things or talk to a prospective employee. I guess the afternoon for me is more prep work and some management.

Jenkins: So the mixing and the baking are all done between what hours in the morning?

Don Davis: About three until twelve. It is done early.

Jenkins: And you are in there baking, personally.

Don Davis: I would be more of the working type manager. I have my own duties, but I am also supervising four or five other employees.

Jenkins: And in the afternoon you still have the prep work. Are the same number of people involved in that?

Don Davis: No, most of those people have already gone. We have different people. Some of the salesgirls will have different duties like weighing flour or making up certain items. Some of them ice cakes, and brownies. Of course, during all this time they will be answering the phone, waiting on the front.

Jenkins: But someone is there at three o'clock in the morning?

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: And you arrive at five.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: And a lot of those people leave by noon or one o'clock.

Don Davis: Three leave about eight-thirty. They are students, so they only work about five to five and a half hours.

Jenkins: They leave at eight-thirty, what, in the morning?

Don Davis: In the morning.

Jenkins: Having been there since three.

Don Davis: Right. Then they go to school.

Jenkins: Then the other crew work until five-thirty?

Don Davis: Some, well, everybody just kinds of staggers.

Jenkins: Except you.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: You come in at five and leave about . . .?

Don Davis: I take a break about twelve-thirty, come home and eat, then go back about three.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Break it up some.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: But still your day is from about when until when?

Don Davis: Five until five or so. But then I bring bookwork home to do, like payroll and different things.

Jenkins: Now office work you do at home mostly.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: While you are there you are actively engaged in . . .

Don Davis: Production or some type of work.

Jenkins: How do you spend your days there?

Mrs. Davis: Well, I usually go in about eight-thirty. When I first get there I help wait on the front if I am needed, answer the telephone. And I go through the cake orders and see if we have enough cakes for the day or we need some more made. Then when things sort of get slowed down I start icing cakes and decorating cakes. And I work until I get them finished. Most of the time you get through usually about three, and sometimes you don't. When I get through there is always tickets to file, statements to send out, all those things, bills to pay and all that sort of thing.

Jenkins: You are the bookkeeper or office . . .

Mrs. Davis: I do that type of thing. And you have to check invoices and a whole lot of stuff like that. But then on the weekends we get real busy with weddings, and so you just work until you get through and that is about it.

Jenkins: How much of your business is special order like weddings or whatever else, every category that you might look at? Is that your big special order thing, is weddings?

Don Davis: Yes, that would be one of the biggest special orders. I don't know what percent of our business it would be, where people just actually ordered things special. It is, what, maybe twenty percent?

Mrs. Davis: I would say a big part of our decorating business is special orders.

Don Davis: Yes, it might be greater than that. Then a lot of it is just impulse.

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Don Davis: They come in and want it just like that.

Jenkins: But weddings are your big special order thing.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: Anniversaries? Valentine?

Don Davis: Yes, that's a big time.

Jenkins: Is that special order or do you really just . . .?

Don Davis: No, it would probably be more special order.

Jenkins: I mean individuals asking for . . .

Don Davis: We make up a lot of Valentine cakes and cookies. Most of it is special. If it is not ordered we are not going to make it up and have it left.

Jenkins: What kind of spoilage, throw-away. Do you have much of that kind of thing?

Don Davis: Yes, some doughnuts we do. Cakes we don't have much of a loss on it. It has more than one day shelf life. But pastries, yeast goods, sometimes we run pretty high on that.

Jenkins: What do you do with it?

Don Davis: Most of the time we donate it to the Cumberland Children's Home. Cakes we can pretty well control, but doughnuts we can't.

Jenkins: I went through an ice cream plant, and there are things that they can do with ice cream, they turn it into other kinds of ice cream. Do you have any kind of recycling device like that, or do all of your leftovers have to be got rid of?

Don Davis: Oh, you can mix some cake crumbs and things like that into other items, but not very many. I try to stay away from that.

Jenkins: So most of your leftovers, you donate?

Don Davis: Yes. We give it to the orphans' home.

Jenkins: Do you have a day-old section like some places do?

Don Davis: No. We did when we first started. My thinking that if

you start catering to that clientele, well, that is the kind that you will draw, that is coming in wanting day old merchandise instead of fresh. They will buy that over the fresh.

Jenkins: So you are sticking to the quality.

Don Davis: So I don't even put it up front. I keep it out of the front. I give it away to get rid of it. I don't start that type of clientele.

Jenkins: Okay, let's see, we have got your typical day and we have got your typical day. Let's go back a little bit and look at other local bakeries that you have known, and that are now in Denton. What kind of competition have you had in terms of local bakeries that you can remember? I remember a Crable Bakery. That is the only one that I can think of.

Don Davis: He is one of my best friends. He is retired now, but he is also working for Piggly Wiggly Bakery. He goes in and makes their bread and stuff. We have been friends ever since we came to Denton.

Jenkins: Was he here when you came?

Don Davis: Yes, he got here in 1930 or something like that.

Jenkins: He was on Hickory also?

Don Davis: Next to the First State. His wife was in bad health and they just finally closed it, and he went to work at Piggly Wiggly. But he was never really any competition to us. He made just strictly bread. We were always good friends. If I would run out of something I would call him up and

borrow some flour or something.

Jenkins: How long was he in business, do you have any idea?

Don Davis: Oh, in Denton . . .

Jenkins: You say you think he started in the late thirties?

Don Davis: Somewhere in there. He has probably been in the bakery business fifty years.

Jenkins: Somehow or other.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: I think I recall their being here. You don't remember when they closed down, about?

Don Davis: Yes, I remember.

Jenkins: What year was it?

Don Davis: It has been about three years ago? It was just about this same time, in October.

Mrs. Davis: Wasn't it about '75?

Don Davis: Probably. I helped him move some of his equipment.

Jenkins: Are there others that you recall that may not be around now, any other bakeries?

Don Davis: Oh, yes, there have been some I really didn't care to remember. They were rather unethical.

Mrs. Davis: Grady's Fine Pastries was in Denton when we first came here. They operated out of a little grocery store on North Locust Street, I believe.

Don Davis: That was where Leon McNatt's Used Car lot is. He was in there. They went broke. I think they moved to Lubbock or

Amarillo.

Jenkins: I will ask you to speak of unethical practices without having to speak of individuals. But before we get into that, are there other bakeries that you recall that we can record?

Don Davis: I can't recall any names offhand. There have been a lot of doughnut shops pop up.

Jenkins: Are there any others comparable to you today, as individual local bakeries?

Don Davis: Not retail. There are three supermarket bakeries and there is the Rudra, but they are not retail now. They are strictly wholesale restaurant and institution.

Jenkins: Okay, let's go back and speak of unethical practices without getting involved in . . .

Don Davis: Name calling?

Jenkins: Name calling. I am interested in what your feelings are.

Don Davis: Well, a lot of them would go around knocking your product. They would send their little stoolies into the restaurants or something to say something was wrong with your product, or they would call you up and order a cake or something and leave you stuck with it. And we had one guy that would phone up people and try to get wedding cake orders out from under us. He was so blatant as to say he was going to put us out of business. He was going to put everybody out of business. He wound up putting himself out. A lot of them just go around telling lies, just doing all

sorts of shady things.

Jenkins: So today Davis Purity Bakery is just about the only locally owned independent bakery in Denton.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: How do you get your name before the public? What kind of advertising, public relations, any of that, do you do?

Mrs. Davis: We have a contract with the Record Chronicle. We advertise with the North Texas Daily, and a little bit with the Denton Enterprise. And on occasion we get an ad to the Sanger paper, I believe the Sanger Courier? Something like that.

Don Davis: We also have a yellow page ad in the telephone book. And then most of the local police and fire and sheriff's posse, we usually make a little contributions to those, give them a complimentary ad or buy a ticket or something.

Jenkins: You say you advertise in the Sanger Courier, do you feel like you draw business from the smaller towns around?

Mrs. Davis: Well, we have quite a lot of cake customers from Sanger.

Don Davis: Probably wedding and birthday cakes.

Mrs. Davis: I am not sure how many come in just to buy other things, but I do know that we get quite a few special orders.

Jenkins: Are there bakeries in any of the smaller towns around Denton?

Mrs. Davis: I don't believe so.

Don Davis: Sanger used to have one, but I don't think so any more.

Jenkins: So you are pretty much the local bakery.

Don Davis: The only one that is willing to work hard.

Jenkins: Are there any other advertising media that you use?
Do you use the radio?

Don Davis: We never have advertised too much on the radio. We did, I think, when Daddy was running the bakery. I might have advertised a few times since I have been in it on the radio.

Jenkins: Do you have an advertising budget? Do you say you just spend so much?

Don Davis: Usually four or five percent of our sales.

Jenkins: Have you ever been involved in the union at your business?
No problems with the union. What kinds of problems do you have getting and keeping good employees? What kind of turnover and those things do you have?

Don Davis: It is very high. We have some that have been with us probably close to three years now. We have a certain number that stays with us. Two or three jobs we have a high turnover rate. Sometimes doughnut fryers are a problem. They don't like to get up early and can't make it to work. We have a big turnover on that. Sometimes cleanup boys are a problem, but we got some kids out of the high school work program that have been pretty good for that. But trying to keep help, good, reliable, dependable, competent help, is a problem.

Jenkins: How much of your help is, say, students?

Don Davis: I guess all of them would be. Well, let's see. It would be me and you and two others that are not students. So I guess five would be students.

Jenkins: So most of your help, then, is student.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: Which kind of brings with it a short termness anyway. Have you ever tried to get fulltime, older folks?

Don Davis: We are trying now. We are just not having any luck. In the past few years we had some good college students that would stay with two or four years, but the last two years the turnover rate has been tremendous. Even to get any to apply now is a problem. They are getting too many grants and don't have to work.

Jenkins: You say you get some high school students on, I forget . . .

Don Davis: They have lots of different programs. VICA and Co-op type of education.

Jenkins: Do you ever run across a student who seems interested maybe in learning the business and going into it in the long run?

Don Davis: Yes, occasionally we do. I can recall one who was a college student and he was kind of unstable. Well, he is still working in a bakery in Dallas, but he has jumped around. Right now we might possibly have one that would.

Jenkins: Here is part of what I am getting at. Do you see anybody getting ready to fill in the gap, or do you have a feeling

that if you went out of business tomorrow that there just may not be any more independent local bakeries in Denton. Is anybody getting ready to do this, or is it kind of becoming a lost thing?

Don Davis: Well, all of the bakers are having this problem attracting new people. The hours are hard, and the pay is not that great. You are competing against industry that can start employees at more than we can afford. We are just kind of getting some of the students and some of the rejects. It would be hard for us to start somebody, like Victor's, at four and four and a half an hour that doesn't know anything about the bakery business.

Jenkins: You have your degree. You got experience in several things and lots of experience in here. I am sure you have had opportunities to go with the big companies, and once that was what you were after. But it also looks like you are probably settled into this. I assume you now like it.

Don Davis: I better.

Jenkins: Why do you like to be in business for yourself rather than go out and get with the big companies and the things that may come with them? Why do you like this?

Don Davis: Sometimes I wonder. Well, I am my own boss for one thing. I don't have to answer to anyone. I don't have to play politics with anybody. I don't like that. Even though

I have to work much harder and have more responsibility,
I am basically my own boss.

Jenkins: But I assume also that you have an adequate income.
You have an awful nice place here. And that the financial reward is adequate, and the other rewards are far greater than you think that you could ever find anywhere else.

Don Davis: There is a certain amount of self satisfaction working for yourself. Financially I could probably make more per hour if I worked for somebody else.

Jenkins: Suppose some high school student in one of these programs got turned on by this. How much experience and how much investment would someone need to get started in the independent baking business? On a small but growing opportunity, in a town like Denton?

Don Davis: If he started out just making doughnuts he could start out without much of an investment. He would probably need a fryer and a glaze machine and a mixer and other miscellaneous things.

Jenkins: Could he pick up used equipment?

Don Davis: If he knew what he was doing.

Jenkins: How much could he get that for?

Don Davis: If he was knowledgeable he might find it for five or six thousand, but if he had to buy it new he would probably pay twelve or maybe fifteen. For a full time bakery like we have, if he had to go buy it new, he would probably be

looking at a hundred thousand.

Jenkins: At the level that you are?

Don Davis: If you are knowledgeable and lucky and find some guy that just went out of business, you might buy it all for twenty.

Jenkins: Is there room for another good independent bakery in Denton?

Don Davis: There probably would be if they were willing to work the hours that we do.

Jenkins: Recognizing what's involved, but still with a town this size, if someone wanted to, if someone did start off like that, are you likely to feel it in your business?

Don Davis: Oh, I'm sure we would. All through the years, anytime we've had competition we could certainly feel the effects.

Jenkins: When, for instance, and I know this is a different ball game. But when Winchell's comes in, when Dunkin' Donuts comes in, do you feel those?

Don Davis: Oh, to a certain point we felt it, but I don't think they're any competition to me now.

Jenkins: And the bakeries, delicatessans in the supermarket stores, do you feel those?

Don Davis: Oh, looking back, when some of them first opened, we definitely felt them, but I don't think we do now. I think our reputation, our clientele is established for quality, dependability.

Jenkins: You're forty-one, what do you see and want for the future

of your business?

Don Davis: Oh, tentatively I had plans to build on for a year, probably double our size that we are now and I certainly hope to work less hours. But the labor market the way it is I'm not so sure that will happen.

Jenkins: How would you hope to expand and work fewer hours yourself?

Don Davis: Have more equipment, more refrigeration where we could make up more stuff, a bigger oven. This is assuming I had the help. The way it has been recently, I probably couldn't find anybody right now.

Jenkins: With this new equipment and this expansion, would you require more people, do you think?

Don Davis: Yeah, it would probably require maybe one more. It would give us more room and we'd be more efficient.

Jenkins: Well, do you think you could double production?

Don Davis: Oh, probably not that much. Well, yeah, I could double it. If I had the employees I could.

Jenkins: But you think that with one more person you could . . .

Don Davis: Oh, probably twenty-five percent more.

Jenkins: With only one more person.

Don Davis: More room and more equipment.

Jenkins: So you would like to expand right there. Do you have any visions of opening up any other places?

Don Davis: You mean satellite type organizations?

Jenkins: Yes.

Don Davis: No, not in the future.

Jenkins: I mean would you like to eventually be a Mrs. Baird's?

Don Davis: No. (Laughter) I don't think I could get enough people to run it.

Jenkins: I mean is that something that you would like to happen?

Don Davis: Oh, certainly. If everything would fall in place I would like that. If the labor market was there and I could get the people, yeah, I'd like that type organization.

Jenkins: To expand your market.

Don Davis: I know the retail bakers are very big and stay . . .

Jenkins: So you wouldn't object to becoming big?

Don Davis: Oh, no.

Jenkins: If you could get the . . .

Don Davis: Right. If I had the labor market.

Jenkins: Well, is that you think, one of the biggest . . .

Don Davis: That is the biggest problem right now.

Jenkins: Is getting and keeping good labor. Is this company jointly owned?

Don Davis: It's a partnership.

Jenkins: The two of you.

Don Davis: Right.

Jenkins: Okay. And it's been in the family, then, since '53. To kind of summarize, what do you think is the primary basis for your company being in business this long, although some have gone out, and remaining the principal, local

independent bakery? Why have you been successful?

Why do you think this company has been as successful as it has?

Don Davis: Well, basically because we've been willing to work the long, hard, demanding hours and we've also strived to put out a quality product and to offer a variety. I think, probably, those three factors.

Jenkins: People apparently are willing to pay for quality. At least a bunch of them are. Anything that you'd like to add to that?

Mrs. Davis: No, I think that's basically the reason. I think that places that haven't made it have not been willing to stay there and work. One of us has to be there all the time, and you have to be willing to give as many hours as it takes.

Jenkins: How do you take a vacation?

Don Davis: (Laughter) We close one week in August and we close all legal holidays, and Christmas and New Year's we usually take the day after. Occasionally I take a few days off and go somewhere.

Jenkins: Generally, when ya'll are gone the business is closed.

Don Davis: Yes.

Jenkins: But occasionally one of you will take off a few days.

Don Davis: Yeah, not very often.

Jenkins: Not on a regular basis.

- Don Davis: No. In this type of business you've got to be there.
A lot of the competition here in the past, they envisioned that they were going to get in a bakery or donut shop and make a bunch of money and not work very hard, and pretty soon they weren't around.
- Jenkins: We've covered the ground that I have on my notes, but we want to be sure that you get into this story anything that you can think of that I haven't asked you. Is there anything that you'd like to add to this before we close?
- Mrs. Davis: The only thing I could say is even though it's been a lot of hard work I think it has a certain sense of satisfaction. I know that I work real hard on wedding cakes or something and if it makes someone real happy well I feel that I'm repaid. So I think you get a certain sense of satisfaction even though the work is hard.
- Jenkins: You get a lot of daily feedback don't you?
- Don Davis: Oh, yes.
- Jenkins: Tell us . . .
- Don Davis: We have a lot of happy mothers and brides that come back and tell us how much they liked their cake, how much it helped make their wedding a success and everything, so all of that's self satisfying. You feel much better when you go home and your feet hurt and your back hurts and you're mad at your help and everything. It certainly helps soothe some of the other problems.

Jenkins: And you see, every day, people responding to what you've done. It's not just going out on a truck and it's gone.

Don Davis: Yeah.

Jenkins: You really do see the results of your work.

Don Davis: Yeah, we do.

Mrs. Davis: Yeah, there's a lot of real appreciative people, and most customers are nice. There's some that are not. But as a general rule most customers are real nice, and if you do something really special for them and they call you and tell you how much they liked it and how much they appreciate it I think it makes awful hard work worthwhile. You forget about that pretty soon. And you see people through the years and I think it just kind of gives you a good feeling.

Jenkins: How long have you had some of your customers? How many years have some of your customers been with you?

Don Davis: Oh, ever since we've been in business. She makes a lot of their wedding cakes and pretty soon they have children and she makes all their birthday cakes. A lot of her customers, she can tell you every birthday cake she made for their kids. Every year they call and want her to decorate the cake for them.

Jenkins: Of course, a lot of your business is institutional, but of the people who you sell to, personally, do you have any idea what percentage of them are repeat, kind of

constant, regular customers?

Don Davis: It would be kind of an intangible, but I would imagine at least fifty percent is probably repeat, not including the institutional.

Jenkins: Do you ever lose a customer? Or have you ever known that you've lost a customer?

Mrs. Davis: Yes.

Don Davis: Certainly, we lose a lot. Well, I won't say a lot of customers. We certainly lose some and a lot of times just through something that our help has done. And sometimes maybe the products aren't up to par, but we always like to know about it. If there's anything we can do to rectify we certainly will. Of course, some people you couldn't please, no matter.

Jenkins: But is this very much of a percentage of people? Does this happen very often?

Don Davis: No, it's not very frequent. Of course, we've had a lot of grouches the last year or so. We've had so many price changes, people gripe about that, but as far as being unhappy with the product, we've had very few. The only advice I could give if anybody thinks about going into the bakery or food business is, don't be idealistic thinking that you're going to walk into it and let someone else do all the work and you take all the money. It doesn't work that way. If you aren't willing to stay in

there and work long hard hours. Well, you shouldn't go into a bakery or food type business being idealistic and thinking that you will go in and make a lot of money and not work hard, because if you aren't willing to work hard no one else will do it for you. You've got to stay there until everything's done and done right and you also have to be willing to be intimidated and insulted, like employees and customers, and you have to grin and kind of bear it and if you can't do these things the food business is the wrong type of business. It's got to be long hard work.

Jenkins: In spite of these things, for both of you this is very satisfying work.

Don Davis: Right. I was taught to work hard. I started when I was thirteen.

Jenkins: Anything else you want to add?

Mrs. Davis: I was taught to work hard on a farm and I sometimes think that maybe that was a good thing because through the years if I had been allergic to work I would have been in bad shape. (Laughter)

Jenkins: Everything was downhill from the cotton patch. (Laughter)

Don Davis: Get in out of the hot sun.

Jenkins: Okay, anything else? All right, if there is nothing more I thank you for a very interesting interview.