

**Oral History Interview of
Sammy Baugh**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
August 16, 1998
McLean, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Sports Interviews***

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The Sports History interviews encompass interviews conducted by members of the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library staff. They hope to document the evolution of sports and the role of sports in the social fabric of this region.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features former Texas Tech football player Sammy Baugh. Baugh recounts his career as a football player at both the collegiate and the pro level. Baugh discusses playing technique, training, injuries, and notable games.

Length of Interview: 02:07:57

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Keywords

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David Marshall (DM):

The date is August 16, 1998. This is David Marshall, interviewing Sammy Baugh at his Double Mountain Ranch between Aspermont and Rotan, and Jerry Johnson is also here to ask some questions as well.

[tape break]

Mr. Baugh, let's begin maybe, early on. Let me get some biographical information.

Sammy Baugh (SB):

All right.

DM:

I understand that you were born in Temple.

SB:

Born outside of Temple, six miles—I was born on a farm, six miles out of Temple. And I had a brother two years older than me and a sister two years younger, and we moved to Temple when my brother got old enough to go to school. Daddy got a job with the Santa Fe Railroad, and we moved to Temple, and I had grandfather—granddaddy on my mother's side. So my early years were all at Temple.

DM:

When were you born?

SB:

I was born March 17, 1914.

DM:

Now was your father a cotton farmer out there before he went and worked for the Santa Fe?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay because I had seen some reference to it—you didn't want to pick any more cotton, so you're a rancher. You don't have any farming here.

SB:

I used to hate that—it'd take me all day to take a sack of cotton, and I was a little thing—but I literally dragged that dang sack full and how it hurt my shoulders, you know later on, when I was playing football and passing football, and it was hot and you were tired and you'd think, Dang this is tough, you know, then you'd think about dragging that sack of—[laughs] and you're up and ready to go again because I always promised myself if I ever had an acre of land, I'd never plant a spot of cotton. (laughs) And I haven't.

DM:

Tell me a little bit about your momma and daddy—their names.

SB:

The Baughs—I guarantee they had some of the fanciest names I've ever heard of in my life. I don't know where in the hell they got those names, because we were poor [?]. My dad's family, when he was a boy—he had three brothers and three sisters. Had one brother—well, I'll start with Daddy, my daddy was James Valentine [?] Baugh, why is name would have been Valentine, I don't know, and one of his brother's name was Floyd Hulk [?] Baugh. We used to call him Uncle Hulk, and then we had an uncle who was Carry [?] Columbus Baugh, Uncle [inaudible]. And we had—my little brother's name was—[inaudible]

DM:

Quite a few uncles.

SB:

Oh yeah. We had seven uncles, and Cary Columbus, James Valentine, Floyd Hulk, all these [inaudible]. And I've always wondered, they must have a book—to have those names at some point that they had read. [inaudible] kids, every one of them had a—funny names. [inaudible] I've always, [inaudible] his name was Dr. O' [inaudible] Everyone called him Dr. [inaudible] That's the way all of those names were.

DM:

Did you know your granddaddy?

SB:

Never saw my granddaddy on my daddy's side. [inaudible]

DM:

What about your—

SB:

My grandmother—I did on my mother's side.

DM:

What about your mother—what was her name?

SB:

Catherine Lucinda.

DM:

Were they all from that area?

SB:

Yeah. Well, most of the Baughs came from Georgia, I think. And then I got a lot of kinfolks, Baughs in Georgia now. But a lot of them came from [inaudible].

DM:

So your dad went to work on the Santa Fe railroad in Temple. And you were about how old then?

SB:

Oh I must have been about five. My brother was two years older than me, and he was old enough to go to school, so—

DM:

And then you started school in Temple maybe the next year or so?

SB:

I started there two years—

DM:

And it was high school when you moved out to Sweetwater, your dad got transferred?

SB:

Uh, my first year in high school. I spent one whole year in Temple, my first year in high school I spent in Temple. And then—and you know, we had the smallest [?] football team they ever had. They had two junior highs in Temple. I went to Central Junior High, and then there was Lanier Junior High on the east side in Temple, and when I went into my first year of high school, the football team was made up of those two junior high graduates and two seniors. We had two seniors on the ball club and the rest of us were junior high boys. It was the—

DM:

It was one team, but it had people from three different schools?

SB:

Two different schools.

DM:

Two different schools.

SB:

Central and Lanier. Had two junior high teams. That was years ago, they only had three years in high school. So I spent one year at Temple and then daddy [inaudible] in Sweetwater, and that's how we got the last two years in Sweetwater High School.

DM:

Had you played football or baseball before playing for the school? Did y'all have any kind of league, like a peewee league today?

SB:

We played it on our own.

DM:

Just played out there on your own.

SB:

North, south, east, west, all had teams. I mean anything that you could think of, they had teams. Tops, marbles, anything like that—that kids used to play marbles—and tops—and always do football season during football—north side, south side. You played each side, and when you got [inaudible] boxing, each side of town. They had a marble champion, they had a boxing champion, on each side of town. And you'd had to—if you fight them, you had to eliminate two or three to win the west side, you know. And then each one would have a champion, and then they would meet. And then they'd work down to the last two teams. Then they did that for years [inaudible] and each football season, we had a football team, west side of Temple, they have one—everything you can think of, they had boys—

DM:

It was organized sports. Whatever—

SB:

Yeah. That's right. And we didn't have coaches, that's what was bad. If we had some coaches, we'd been a lot further along, but we didn't have—we just played the whole game—just the person who'd watch, he'd be calling the game—he'd be the referee, trying to keep us from fighting each other.

DM:

As you were growing up there in Temple, did you follow college football?

SB:

I never saw a college game, saw one college— my neighbor [inaudible] to Waco, to see Baylor and Texas play. And he [inaudible]

DM:

How old were you then?

SB:

I was just a boy, I don't know, ten or twelve. First time I'd been away from home. And Baylor had a good team that year—of all the players, the only damn player I could remember the name of was Pardoux [? 10:42] a center from Baylor. How I remembered that, I don't know. Pardoux, I just never had heard that name, and it stuck in my mind all through the years. Pardoux and they had a lot of [inaudible] and a bunch of [inaudible]. And they had a had a real good team, but the only man I could remember was Paul Door [?]. (laughs)

DM:

So as you started playing football at Temple, you didn't really have any college football heroes to speak of?

SB:

Sure didn't.

DM:

As far as you were aware, it was just a local interest.

SB:

Well, I think—they had a punter—one of those teams had a punter that was a hell of a punter, and I remember that as a kid. Maybe [inaudible] and he was a good punter, and I used to watch him run, and he was the only one I can remember that impressed me a lot.

DM:

When you were playing in those city leagues, do you remember the first time you picked up a football? Do you remember how you got into all that?

SB:

I got, well on the football team—I was an end. I played the end. And every—my first, about third grade, something like that, we had a woman football coach who played tag football.

DM:

You don't remember her name by any chance, do you?

SB:

Lord no. I thought about that so much, because she really was the one that got me really interested in football, because we'd go out there and divide up and get it even [inaudible], and we'd play that dang thing, and it was—that's all she probably knew.

DM:

Before you were into school football, did you all have any kinds of uniform of any type or any helmets? And it was all tag?

SB:

Oh, hell no. Tackle football. When you got bigger, you played tackle football. My first, when I was about the third grade, we used to play tag football because we just played it at recess. And then—I heard—wasn't out there long enough—but I've often tried to think of that woman's name, her name, because she was the first football coach that I had.

DM:

When did you start playing tackle football? In school, in school sports?

SB:

Yeah, from junior high, I played [inaudible].

DM:

Did they provide you a uniform and helmet?

SB:

Junior high, I remember we had a good junior high school my last year of junior high. We had a good team—the coach [inaudible] was talking to three of us boys, talking, and he said, you know, "We had a pretty good year, and if you three were back here next year, we'd probably be the best junior high team in Texas." One of the boys says [inaudible] (laughs). We all decided

that [inaudible] was going to play just stay there another year—so we going to be the best junior high team in Texas, because we had a lot of those junior high games. I still played end.

DM:

You were staying end? Offense and defense?

SB:

Yeah. So we flunked and then we get my mom busted by a [inaudible] board when she found that out that I'd flunked English. But we stayed there that extra year of junior high which really helped me because I wasn't really big anyway. And we beat everybody the next year in junior high—we beat all the junior high—we were undefeated. Cisco did the same thing I hear in this state. They had a junior high team that beat everybody in north Texas. So two undefeated teams, and they called us down there, and said they found out we beat everybody in central Texas. And that was called the State Junior High Football Championship play. They said get a bus to come out here, stay with people in the town, they put two boys to each family, and it won't cost much money—[inaudible], and sure enough after then, we came out to Cisco and stayed with families and that was really nice because everything was nice, and it didn't cost us nothing. I think we got beat. I don't remember much about the game, but I remember seeing [inaudible], but you know, later, a few years later out there at Sweetwater, I was playing baseball with a kid in the summer [?], that played in that football game—they went to ACC [Abilene Christian College, now University], McMurry, and Hardin Simmons now. So I'd run into somebody all the time that I was playing baseball—I'd see some of those kids, I thought I'd never see them again. And it turns out I was playing [inaudible] game look me up and tell me about when we played of all the damn districts.

DM:

I'm curious to know about your uniforms then—what kind of pads you had in that junior high play, what kind of helmet.

SB:

[inaudible]

DM:

Did you have any kind of hip pads, knee pads?

SB:

[inaudible]

DM:

How about shoulder pads?

SB:

They had these white shoulder pads, that's what I played in. Pro football—I had the pearly white should pads, put the straps on, I didn't want anything pulling on me. I wanted loose. And I always wanted it that way, and I don't like to be bound up tight up in here. Anything that keeps you throwing men down in position is not very good for you because a lot of time you have to—little side arm or pin you down the way you can to find that position—you don't want a damn pad keeping you from completing a pass or something. So I brought my own pads when I went into pro football—brought my own shoulder pads. They were light, they were [inaudible]. Plus I cut the straps off of them, first damn day. I didn't want something pulling on me, and they just kind of—I just threw [?] them around. But I never did use straps to tie them down. They just fly off, come off—shoulder pad might stick out through those [inaudible]. But I played the whole damn sixteen years with them. I wish I had brought those shoulder pads home. But I didn't bring one damn thing.

DM:

You don't have your helmet either?

SB:

I don't have anything.

DM:

You just wanted to get back to the ranch, huh?

SB:

That's right. I knew I was through playing, so I didn't need anything. But now, you know, people pay money for them. (laughs)

DM:

Yeah, they pay a lot of money. Yes they do. (all laughs). Did y'all wear leather helmets in junior high too?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Well then you went on to—oh and when you were playing end, now this was not a receiver position because there wasn't a lot of downfield pass then, right?

SB:

No, no.

DM:

So you protected the sweep pretty much?

SB:

I tried to (laughs). You know, I don't imagine we had very good coaches, and we weren't very good players to coach, and I'm [inaudible]. We had two good coaches over at junior high. We had one at our school, a real good one was over [inaudible] at the time. He later was coach at Temple, [inaudible]. I played baseball with him. [inaudible] But he was a good athlete and coach there at Temple.

Jerry Johnson (JJ):

Excuse me. Did your folks support you in all the athletics when you were playing baseball, football, when you were junior high and high school?

SB:

My daddy used to—we lived up high, west side of the Baptist Church. We were ten yards apart—the church and our house, and I used to have this theory that between that—especially baseball, up on that roof, just like [inaudible] the other side, and I'd have to run over there and get [inaudible]. They had some steps made of concrete that were kind of sunk right there, and I used to get in front of those with a baseball. You'd learn to hit that—see they weren't just straight across and curved, and you'd learn to hit that step right here on that curve—that's [inaudible]. In other words, when I'd [inaudible] to have to do with my right [inaudible] concrete where that ball [inaudible] back to me in the middle, and I used to play just by myself, and my daddy used to play catcher with me. [inaudible]

DM:

Did they make it to your games—baseball or football games?

SB:

Yeah. [inaudible]

DM:

Well tell me about when you headed out to Sweetwater, and you quarterbacked there at Sweetwater, didn't you?

SB:

I quarterbacked at Temple.

DM:

Oh did you?

SB:

I started quarterbacking at Temple. After I got into high school, we had the sorriest damn team at Temple, I guarantee you, the sorriest football team Temple ever had. We were [inaudible]—two seniors on the team, the rest of us were junior high boys. And I was playing in, and we'd played Waco the first ballgame. Waco beat us 60-0. Just ran over us, you know. And then we played Corsicana, they beat us about 55-0. And that—about the middle of the season, Bill Henderson—Bill Henderson was a great basketball coach who went to Baylor, and we got him fired that year [inaudible]. We had such a damn sorry football team that we got him fired. He went to Baylor later and he was the Baylor University basketball coach. He was the basketball coach.

DM:

Probably did him a favor, huh?

SB:

Well yeah, I used to tell him that, see. When they fired him, he went on to the school system at Waco and got with Baylor, and that was when I was at TCU, and we had some basketball—we had a hell of a basketball team. And my daddy fought to get a job at Temple—he went to some of the [inaudible], we stayed, my brother and I stayed with my grandmother the rest of that school year. So we stayed at school the rest of the year, and my daddy left after the summer and stayed with my grandmother. My brother—I think he had worked during [inaudible] because I only had three years of high school at that time. And I had two years left at Temple. And I didn't know it at that time, but they elected me captain of the football team to be coming up, the baseball team and the basketball team, and I could understand the baseball team, but basketball—I think they had a little go something was wrong because we had four or five boys better than I was at basketball at that time, and they elected me captain of the team because I wasn't smart enough to figure out they were trying to get me to where I would stay in Temple with my grandmother and stay and graduate from Temple. [inaudible] But that's probably [inaudible]. And with that basketball team, next year's team—they won the state championship—won a state championship.

DM:

Then you moved up to Temple, about what year would that have been. I'm sorry, Sweetwater.

SB:

Well '35 [?].

DM:

And you went out there as a quarterback?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Started playing as a quarterback?

SB:

Well, I just accidentally [inaudible]. Coach Henderson, after we lost about five games, he called me into his office. I told him, said, "What would you think if I moved you from end to wide receiver [?]?" I said, "Well I've always played end. If you want me to move, I'll move." He said, "Well I've been watching [inaudible] practice starts, you know you kick the ball better than anybody we got. You throw the ball better than anybody we've got. We haven't got another quarterback who can throw the ball. Maybe you can throw a little bit [inaudible]." I told him, "Whatever you want me to be, fine with me." And so I spent half a year at quarterback [?].

DM:

As quarterback at Temple, did you throw downfield passes, or was it pretty much mostly laterals and—

SB:

Oh it was downfield [inaudible] passing.

DM:

But you started your—

SB:

And often third and long throw. That's exactly when everybody played—third and long. But I didn't learn from him [inaudible] quarterback at Temple. Bill was a hell of a basketball coach—[inaudible], a really fine man. But he was a fine man. When he was coaching at Baylor, I was playing at TCU. I [inaudible] played basketball. I would always get him for that role, [inaudible] how lucky you are that we had a bad team at Temple, we got you fired, here you are coaching at Baylor (laughs). I used to laugh at him, but he was a fine man, and Temple [inaudible], we had a sorriest team Temple ever had in football.

DM:

Who was the coach?

Break in Recording

SB:

Okay you said Henning—H-e-n-n-i-n-g was the—

SB:

H-e-n-n-Henning—H-e-n-n-i-g-g.

DM:

i-g-g?

SB:

I think that's what it was.

DM:

The coach at Sweetwater.

SB:

Coach Hennigg—and I think he went to Iowa or Illinois or someplace to college. He was a lot better football coach than Temple had. And I started learning a little bit about football at Sweetwater because we had some damn good players. We had two running backs that were pretty tough boys. Had a boy [inaudible], good all around [inaudible], and got a scholarship to go to Texas University. He was a good quarterback, a good baseball player—he was just a good athlete. And we had a big running back that could run like a deer, but that weighed about 230 pounds. You have high school boys with him [inaudible]. But we had a good football team, especially my last year at Temple. We won our division, beat Abilene High and—

DM:

Now you're talking about your last year at Sweetwater?

SB:

Yeah yeah. And we beat Big Spring on the first playoff game, and then we had to play Amarillo—and Amarillo, we played in a snowstorm.

DM:

Oh really?

SB:

Yeah, a good football team, and they had beaten us, knocked us out. But they played for the state championship against Masonic Home. Rusty Russell was the coach of Masonic Home—a year or two after that [inaudible] and Rusty Russell's team, Masonic Home, beat Amarillo. So we had a good football team, but—

DM:

Did Coach Hennigg—was he able to develop you as a quarterback pretty well during that time? Did you feel like you went through a lot of improvement?

SB:

[inaudible] different things, and so he helped. Back in those days, I guarantee, nobody knew the passing game. They just run—third and long, that's when people threw. The rest of the time you ran that dang ball. And—

DM:

So it wasn't really until you came up with Dutch Meyers—that you started getting the passing game.

SB:

I didn't know a damn thing about the passing game until I got to TCU. And I guarantee you he was ahead of the other [inaudible] at the time.

JJ:

Dutch was?

SB:

You're damn right.

DM:

He was beyond.

SB:

I got into pro ball, I believe I—and they didn't know a damn thing about the short passing game. And I didn't know anything about the short passing game. Nobody that I knew, knew the short passing game or even thought about it. And when I was a freshman, we had a first meeting—

DM:

At TCU?

SB:

At TCU—and Dutch—we was in the room, we were supposed to be there at seven o'clock. And we were in the room waiting—Dutch hadn't showed up. And all we had on the blackboard was three S's [inaudible] Crazy [inaudible] guessing what the hell it meant. (laughs) But we didn't know what those three S's would stand for. And so Dutch comes in and gives us a little talk, and told us, said, "Y'all look at the blackboard. This is our main passing." And we drew back [inaudible] on the board, that first S—he put short, safe, sure.

DM:

Short, safe, and sure.

SB:

And they tried to explain a little bit, but we had never seen plays like that—so we didn't understand why or anything. So he told us, he said, "You'll be playing teams that are better than us. You'll be playing teams that got a running game that we can't stop. And if we try to play that kind of game, they'll beat the living hell out of us. Our main passing game is going to be a short passing game." Well that's the first time I ever heard the word short passing game in my life. And he—I don't know where he got this [inaudible] And I don't know, maybe somebody at the coaches [inaudible] knew the passing game, maybe Dutch and I [inaudible]. But that's the first time I had ever heard short, safe, and sure.

DM:

Was he a pretty innovative person that might have just come up with it on his own?

SB:

He might have come up with it on his own, I don't know. But I'd never heard of it. He says, "When you play someone—we're going to play some teams that are better than us—man to man they'd beat us. So we've got to do something that keep them from having the ball. If I'm going to play that kind of a team, what we're trying to do, control the ball, keep the ball away from them, make first downs, use up the clock, and if you can do that, you'll play a good ball game." And you know, since then, he's been proven right.

DM:

Sounds like modern strategy then.

SB:

Yeah, that's the first time I ever heard of it. He said, "What we want to do a lot of time on first down is to hit a seven yard pass or an eight yard pass, short pass. And then we've got three downs to pick up the first down. We don't want to throw long all the damn time. So we'll still have the long passes like everybody. Our main job with this is to keep the ball away from the

opponent and use up the clock. In other words, we make first down, first down, first down, first down, if we can do that, use up that clock, we'll play anybody a close ball." And if you stop and think about it, you know—if you can keep the ball away from somebody, you've got a good running game. If you can keep the ball to yourself and make a first down, use up the damn clock, they don't have the ball to score very damn much. And Dutch always taught me to punt the damn ball to the right or left corner.

DM:

Hoping it would bounce out near the end zone?

SB:

That's right. Bounce out right within—but then he said, "Anytime you can kick the ball around the ten yard line or the goal line, ten yard to kick it out six, seven, or eight, or nine yard line, that makes them come on back up there a long ways. Nobody likes to start on the inside the twelve yard line."

DM:

Don't allow punt return.

SB:

That's right. But I used to—he told us all that when I was a freshman, so I used to punt when school was out, and I was playing baseball—every week, I would find a day to punt the football. And that—I had another punter to work with, that was the easy thing—in other words, you set somebody up on that ten yard line down there, and if you can put it out within five yards [inaudible] past that or the fifteen yard pass, that makes a difference in a ball game, if you can keep them back on that twenty—make them start back on their end of the field. And I think I got to where I could kick the damn ball, right or left I could kick it and [inaudible] somewhere on the twenty yard line. And every now and then you'd hit a great one where got them on the one yard line, you know what I mean. If you've got a punter who can do that time and time again, shit he can save you a lot of worry. You know that son of a gun will go out somewhere inside that twenty, fifteen, ten, or five yard line. And you can do it consistently, you've got a good weapon. Nobody likes to start on their own five yard line, I guarantee you.

DM:

Where y'all spiraling that ball down there when you were punting it?

SB:

Uh huh. Yeah. Held the ball low, a lot of the punters hold the ball high in this day and time, and they punt high then. Southwest, with this wind, you play a lot of windy days out here at this

football season. And Dutch didn't want us holding the ball high. I'd rather hold it low, and [inaudible], and if you can work at it, you can get to where you can kick that ball [inaudible].

JJ:

Do you not still own the [inaudible] record club? Average?

SB:

I hold two of the whole damn league—two—

JJ:

Pass interception?

DM:

Percentage of passes completed? No, no, yards per pass.

SB:

When I punted, I hold the—one season—one season record, and another—

JJ:

Pass interception?

SB:

I'm talking about punting now. (all laughs)

JJ:

Okay.

SB:

I still hold two recordings in punting. One season and a career. I hold those two. But a punter was injured sometimes, I'd have to punt. [inaudible] See if you take a good punter, and you put him in Denver playing half his games, will be played in Denver, say. There may be other good punters in the league, but he plays half the games there in Denver, see. So he'll catch a day sometime where the wind and that light air that he will break all the records. I think all the field goal records someday will be broken by Denver kickers, because you can kick the damn ball fifteen or twenty yards farther than you can in Houston, I guarantee you. And they just haven't had the right personnel made, but sometime they'll have a punter who will play ball [inaudible]. [inaudible]. I look forward to breaking the field goal record [inaudible]. I think the field goal record is about sixty-two yards, and [inaudible], you could break that record. So I think all the kicking records will be held by Denver sometime.

DM:

You probably still hold some of the TCU records, too, don't you?

SB:

Well, I don't even know about TCU.

DM:

At TCU, what kind of short pass plays were y'all running? Patterns?

SB:

We were—was had good short pattern [inaudible] And when we played, played SMU my senior year at [inaudible], both of us [inaudible]. I think [inaudible]. The reason I did—they—defensive [inaudible] the way I'd never seen them before. And that [inaudible] four men want to take away the short pass. Sometime they'd punt down and back it down [inaudible]

JJ:

They were dropping linebackers and defensive ends—

SB:

Yeah, they'd—if you lined up their six men, and then two linebackers, and they would rush—a lot of time the tall lineman would come at you and maybe next time, one of them would drop off, and down the other side, come at you. But they wanted to stop the short passes [inaudible]. And they did a damn good job of it. If you have four men to contend with, you can divide them up there where three men, there's gaps in there that you can play a man and [inaudible] you see. But with four men in there, a lot of times, you—a gap isn't as big with four men instead of three on short pass. And I think I was throwing the ball too damn hard, because—

DM:

Trying to get it in the gap.

SB:

Get it in the gap quicker because three, see, the gaps are bigger. You put four in there, and that damn gap between that man and the next one has shortened up, see. And as he passes that first one, you try to get him right in the chest with the damn ball, and I think I was throwing too damn hard. We dropped nine passes that day.

DM:

They were alternating blitzes and hanging back in the linebacker area of the zone there?

SB:

But see, I'd never seen the damn defense. I don't know if that was special defense they'd had to stop the short pass or what it was, but they did a damn good job of it.

DM:

Their strategy was to keep TCU from passing that day.

SB:

Well, [inaudible] but I didn't realize I was throwing the ball as hard. But it makes you throw it hard because I've got—when he passes that first man, I don't know if I'm going to hit him, I've got to hit him before he gets to that next one. And I was throwing the ball too damn hard. And we never drop nine passes in the damn ball game.

DM:

Before the short passes, back when you were, for example, playing high school at Sweetwater, on third and long, did you throw a bomb? Or was the short pass unusual?

SB:

No, I didn't have any short passes when I was in high school. I don't think anybody did. I don't know of anybody knew to pass [inaudible] back when I was in high school. Nobody.

Everybody—third and long, you threw it. Everybody threw it. Well you know it, [inaudible] passing game, everything is so much better [inaudible]. You take Sweetwater, this coach that quit, he's a fine coach, he did the passing game [inaudible], and I see seven, eight quarterbacks that are better than I was in high school, by far—they have a good passing game, a good running game. I've seen some good teams, and he knows the passing game. Hell, when I was in high school, nobody I knew knew the passing game.

DM:

When you were in high school, were you well familiar with TCU football, or did you just come familiar when they started—did they make a strong effort to recruit you?

SB:

They didn't make a strong effort to recruit me. I wasn't that good, to be honest with you. But I played baseball—I played semi-pro baseball because Sweetwater didn't have a baseball team at the time, [inaudible] money they didn't have to have a baseball team. So I played semi-pro team at [inaudible]. And we played TCU two games. And Dutch talked to me, he was the baseball coach, Schmidt was the head football coach, the freshman coach, and [inaudible] baseball coach. And as we played in those two games, he talked to me about coming to TCU, and I told him that I didn't have any money, that I'd have to have a little help. Well hell, nobody had any money in those days [inaudible].

JJ:

What year was that?

SB:

'36. Oh my, that was '33, '33. But we didn't—they couldn't give scholarship like they do now. What they would do—I'm not saying they didn't give full scholarship to those three boys at Masonic Home, that lived in Fort Worth, worked at Masonic Home. They won the state championship, and we got three backs off that team—a boy named McCall, and a fullback Dokea [?] Roberts, and another halfback [inaudible]. But we got three of those boys, and we got a tackle that played in that state championship team. And they may have had full scholarships, I don't know. But most of us went through just like I did. They gave us a job. In other words, I cleaned the music room every night, I cleaned—that was my job to clean the music job. And I worked on the campus right there, they'd have a class for the next night—I'd want to go to campus, a lot of us worked on campus. And what they would do, they'd let you sign a note each semester—go in and you owed the school \$300, \$400, whatever. You signed a note, pay them, and got out and got a job. That's how most of our team went through school that way—sign a note, they'd pay, and then ask [inaudible]. I know the first year I played pro, I went through Tort Worth to see if it was over—I came back through Fort Worth to pay TCU what I owed them, then went on to Sweetwater.

DM:

Well what was it like to play in the Southwest Conference back then, in the 1930s? Was it extremely spirited, a lot of school competition?

SB:

Yeah, yeah, but I'll tell you what—you know they tried to make—and they still do in a way—that SMU and TCU are big rivals, and shit (laughs). I guarantee you—everybody in the Southwest Conference knows—who do you want to beat? Texas University is who they want to beat, I guarantee you (all laughs). They were just like us. Except we—SMU was like us—they wanted to beat—everybody wanted to beat Texas University because they have already got the best boys.

DM:

So when you were at TCU, Texas was probably the biggest rival you faced, and then SMU or A&M, which would come next?

SB:

The rest of them was just like us—everybody wanted to beat Texas University in the Southwest Conference. (laughs) And I used to kind of grin and laugh about how—TCU and SMU were big

rivals. Shit, they were just like us—they'd rather beat Texas University than beat TCU because we'd rather beat Texas than beat SMU. (laughs).

JJ:

How many times did you beat them when you were in school?

SB:

I think we beat them twice that year [inaudible].

DM:

Texas?

SB:

Yeah. I'll tell you the best team we played while I was at TCU—Santa Clara.

JJ:

Santa Clara, California?

SB:

Yeah. Santa Clara, they had a hell of a bunch of football players. They could run the ball, they could play defense, and they'd just [inaudible]. They went their first—Sugar Bowl game. We went to the second—TCU played in the second Sugar Bowl.

DM:

Against LSU? Is that the year you played LSU?

SB:

I guess LSU. And then Santa Clara I think would have been the third. And we beat Santa Clara three years in a row, but I guarantee you, they had the best football team every year, and we beat them.

DM:

What was the attitude toward Southwest Conference as opposed to other conferences in the country? Was the attitude that—hey Southwest Conference is the number one conference, or—?

SB:

No. we never thought we were number one. If you go back and check the record, though, I think our school won more damn games than anybody in any of the other damn conferences. There was about a ten year period in there where, you know David O'Brien, that bunch, they were freshman.

JJ:

Were they two behind you—two years?

SB:

Yeah. They were—they could whip our line when they were freshman. We knew damn well, we'd scrimmage them all the time, and we knew damn well that when they got to be juniors and seniors, they were going to be the best damn team in the country. And they were. They had the best damn team, they beat—they played in the Sugar Bowl and beat some team back in the east there, played them, and they won that and then they were national champions.

DM:

Didn't you quarterback in the very first Cotton Bowl? In 1936 I believe?

SB:

Yeah. We played in the first Cotton Bowl, played in the second Sugar Bowl, and—but still the best team we played the whole damn bunch was Santa Clara.

DM:

And the bowls originated, then, those two bowls at least, originated when you were in college?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

And you got a ring for having play in the first Cotton Bowl—that the people from Sweetwater—

SB:

Oh yeah, I got a ring that people in Sweetwater—I'd rather have it than the Hall of Fame ring.

DM:

Why did they give you that? Because you played in the first Cotton Bowl?

SB:

No, it was hometown people. That's why I like it—hell, that Hall of Fame ring, I could throw it away and never miss it. And I like that ring I got from Sweetwater people.

DM:

Because people pooled their money to give it to you.

SB:

That's right. That's right.

JJ:

There's probably a few of them showed up over there to watch you play while you was in school too.

SB:

Yeah, I imagine. But I think it's a pretty ring. That Hall of Fame ring, I can't wear it because that's chubbiest finger I've got; it's too big for the little finger and these others, it's won't go over my damn knuckles. I don't know—I guess when I measured, I measured right there, behind that knuckle. And I just put the damn thing to it—but I like the other ring—the Sweetwater ring. I like it.

DM:

How did you react to the news that the Southwest Conference was going to come to an end?

SB:

Well, I hated to see it, I really did. But they kind of brought it on themselves. You know, you start—when they started—just like SMU when they got killed for doing things—well every damn school in the conference was doing it probably.

DM:

Oh, the violations you mean?

SB:

Yeah, all those violations. But when you start telling all the damn people the things you accomplished, it came fast, that's all there is to it, because somebody was going to blow the whistle on them, and they did.

DM:

Who was doing that? Was that other coaching staff, or was that administration of other colleges?

SB:

I imagine it was coaching staff of the whole damn bunch, all the bigwigs were trying to back it. But they weren't the only one at that time doing that shit, there was a lot of schools doing that.

Break in Recording

JJ:

When you graduated, went into pro ball, who off of your team, the good team, went into pro ball about that time?

SB:

Well, William Wallace [?]. He was—Giants drafted him in the draft. And he was a big strong guy—cause everybody would use single [inaudible]. And there's three things a good end has to do, playing pro ball. He had to be a good defensive end, he had to be a good blocking end, and he was a good pass receiver too. He was an all-pro tight end, all there was to it. Those three things, that's what your ends had to—now a lot of them have two of them, but the third one not so good. But if you've got a guy that's good at all three of them, then you've got a chance of making all-pro. Because there's a lot of them had two—they could do two of those things real well, but they weren't—a lot of the good defensive ends weren't very good pass receivers. If you're a good blocking end, and you're a good defensive end, you know, defense, and still get open and catch a pass, you'll have a chance to make all-pro. That's all there is to it, because those three things, and a lot of them could do two things real well, and weak on the third one. But you take someone that could play defense well, block well, and good pass receiver, you got a chance to be an all-pro.

DM:

Back to TCU. Can you tell me a little bit about Dutch Meyers' training program. What kind of training did y'all—practice did y'all go through?

SB:

That's where we were weaker than the other school, but didn't have any—we didn't have any weight program. We didn't have any kind of program in those days. Hell, you just—you were on your own, as far as [inaudible]. Now, you take high school, they're bigger, stronger boys I've seen come out of high school this day and time that are bigger than TCU was when I was at TCU. See, they get them in programs early now, and they've got all kinds of programs taught, and they're just bigger, faster, and better.

DM:

How about in the pros, when you entered the pros in '37. Was there a weight training program there?

SB:

We didn't have it.

DM:

Still pretty much on your own.

SB:

[inaudible]

DM:

Did most of the players have their own types of individual programs?

SB:

I imagine they did, but I didn't—they didn't have any organized program at all. And then, you know—that's tough, because you win both ways. [inaudible] passing—half of my pro football, I played both ways, offense, defense, [inaudible], and now they all do that. They're bigger, they're faster, they've got boys on that line of scrimmage now that—they're big and they're strong and they're quick—you know, everything. I really think everything's better.

DM:

And on top of that they use them for just periods of time, and pull them back out, and stick them in when they need them.

SB:

The thing is, if you don't have to stay on the field, every time you walk off the field, after you run three plays and punt, then they're off the field and they're rested, they don't ever get tired like in my day—where you went both ways. Fourth quarter was the slowest quarter.

JJ:

Pit probably depended who won the fourth quarter.

SB:

That's right. Everybody was tired. You stay on that field for sixty minutes, you are going to be tired. That's all there is to it. And I'm surprised, really, that they play as hard as they play, but they played hard.

DM:

You really had to play heart and soul, though.

SB:

That's right. You always had to reach down and get a little bit more to stay in there. And now, I don't think they get tired now. Just [inaudible]. You're just talking about, I only go out there if I'm a defense man, I can put it all out in three plays, make a punt, and I'll go sit on the bench. In other words, I might even [inaudible] rested. All right the other team has it for a while, then you come back on the field. You get so much more rest than you used to. When you played both

ways, you didn't have that damn time to get your breath good and feel good. And the fourth quarter was a slow quarter because both teams were tired.

DM:

I think that's something that's interesting to people of my generation, when we look back to the older style of football, is that you know that it's not just someone going out to do a specialized job—that it was someone who put real effort and soul into—heart and soul into the game.

SB:

Well, that's the way it was, and that's why I like this football [inaudible] here. I'd love their playing, the way they play football. You know, you stay out there half a ballgame, you shouldn't be really tired, you know what I mean? You know defensive boys, when you stop them, you go over there sit on that bench with them. You come back on that field, you're recovered, you're ready to get your best.

DM:

You're always at your best.

SB:

In other words, you're not that tired. And I like [inaudible] I wish we had [inaudible].

DM:

And TCU, at TCU, it was the same thing, it played both ways—offense and defense?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Did you play defensive—safety, on defense?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay. Just like in the pros. Can you tell me a little bit about the first Cotton Bowl game? I can't remember who you played.

SB:

We played Marquette. Marquette had a real good ball club. They had two twin—I can't think of their damn name. But they looked like peas in the pod. But they were [inaudible] dangerously.

They could run that damn ball, and all during the game, every time I—one of these [inaudible] throw up a punch back, he was a safety. And he'd run by a big boy [inaudible] nobody'd tell Dutch, kick that ball and run it back for a touchdown. But that's—you've seen pictures, and he told us, "Don't kick the damn ball." So he'd run the damn ball back down [inaudible]. I see it happen all year long, and he kept on [inaudible]. He'd pass the buck, he'd tell us, "Tell Sam to kick that ball," and I'll run it back for a touchdown. (laughs) Sure enough, before the game was over—I kicked them all down the left side of it, and he caught it on about the eleven or twelve yard line. And that son of a bitch, he ran that son of a bitch right back over that field for a touchdown, he damn sure did. And I thought about that a lot. You know I didn't pay much attention to it, when Dutch was telling us how good he was, but [inaudible] he did this in the game, well he said he'd do it, he'd run it back for a touchdown.

DM:

Y'all won that game, though, didn't, you?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Now that was the first cotton bowl. Was the cotton bowl designed at that time to be a playoff between the best team in the Southwest Conference and then another team?

SB:

Well, you know, I don't really know. I don't know that much about the insides of it, the first damn game, and I don't really know that the—in other words, I don't remember whether we were as good as somebody else in the country. I think Arkansas had a damn good chance to play in that bowl, because seems like to me they had a good ball club.

DM:

Was that game really played up and publicized, being the first Cotton Bowl, and was there a lot of spirit behind it?

SB:

Yeah. Since it was the first one, you know, they didn't know exactly what—how people were going to receive it, but I imagine it was a pretty good crowd. I don't imagine it sold out, but in fact, I don't remember where we played, to tell you the truth.

DM:

What was your passing technique in college at TCU? Did you draw back over the ear—pass over the ear, or did you side arm, or just anything you had to do?

SB:

Anything I had to do. I never did things that the coaches wanted. I learned that if you go to play quarterback, you'd better learn to throw from any position running left, running right, running right, running left. You'd better get to work on that kind of stuff, on things that will happen in a ballgame—they're not drawing on the board, but you have to protect yourself. You may get outside here, the guy's running that way, and if you never had to throw to him, going away from you, see, you were going this way and he was going that way, you've got to practice that in practice. So I knew things on my own in practice. I'd run left, I'd run right, I'd do any damn thing, and the coaches never stopped me, so I kept doing it—because anybody can throw back—if he's got good protection, and he'll got a man on him, he can hit him. But it's harder than hell if you haven't practiced it, if you're running one way and he's running the opposite way—when you throw, you 've got to learn how far out there should I lead him, because he's going that way, and I'm going this way. Now if you're both going the same way, it's a lot easier. But it's when he's going away from you, and you're going away from him, that you've got to throw it every now and then that way, and if you don't practice it, you're not going to do it very well. So I'd do all the little damn things that coaches may have gotten pissed off, but I'd do them in practice. I remember one year I had a [inaudible], and I couldn't throw the fucking ball thirty, forty yards was as far as I could throw it. During practice, I never throw long during practice [inaudible], and anytime we would throw a long pass that I knew I couldn't throw the ball that far, I'd run out to the left or to the right, I'd stop and punt the ball. Well it must've been some sports writers in the god damn bleachers or somewhere, watching practice, because later on I read where I'd—they called it quick kick—that I'd run left and stop and punt the ball. Well hell, I was doing that just because I didn't want to have to throw the son of a bitch—I couldn't throw it that far, so I would run the pattern but I'd kick it to them. And they—they thought that was a called play.

But—

DM:

Some kind of new trick play.

SB:

I'd done it on my own, kick it sometimes, throw the damn ball. But I worked more on what happens in a ballgame. You know you get out there and practice and everything goes really well, but it doesn't happen that way in a ballgame all the time. There's always some son of a bitch that's on your tail, and you've got to be moving away from him, and you've got to learn to throw off balance a little bit. So I—when I was in practice, that's where I—anybody to go back, six, seven, eight yards there and plant your foot, step up and hit them [inaudible]. Everybody that plays football could do that. So I didn't work on the god damn stuff like that much. I'd work on that stuff that wasn't planned that way. And you know, I think it helped it, I really do because I got to where if the boy was going that way, and I had to leave the pocket and go to the right, I could do that on my own and find out how far I had to lead him and all that god damn stuff, and

that's why I could do it. And it didn't bother me a damn lick, I could go either way—if I find a man, I'm going to beat him.

DM:

Did you find yourself having to sidearm a fair amount?

SB:

A lot. I never worried about how you do it.

DM:

Did you ever throw under any defenders, coming in like this, throwing the side arm under—

SB:

Yeah, I think everybody does [inaudible] when you're throwing downfield [?].

DM:

Well I've heard that the nickname Slingin'—Slingin' Sammy Baugh—doesn't come from football but from baseball, is that right?

SB:

I don't really know.

DM:

Oh okay.

SB:

They gave—a sports writer gave me that when I was a freshman—I was a freshman when that first started that.

JJ:

What school was that?

SB:

College. And—

DM:

Well it must've been football then.

SB:

Well, see, I played baseball—

DM:

Oh yeah.

SB:

And football, and basketball. I played three sports there. And, but then at the end of my freshman year, I think, that's when that was started. And I don't know who—I don't know the man's name, but he was a sport's writer there in Fort Worth.

DM:

I guess that means he really zings that ball?

SB:

I don't know. I didn't pay much attention to that thing, and I don't sign that now. You know people come in here, wanting to get me to sign something for them. "Put Slingin' Sammy Baugh," hell no. I tell them I just put Sam Baugh because I found out early that I could write Sam Baugh twice—I can do two while I'm doing one Slingins'. So hell, I never do put Slingin' Sammy Baugh on there. But you know, that's what people want, and I just tell them, I just told them—I just put Sam Baugh.

DM:

What's the longest pass you ever threw, estimate?

SB:

I don't know—I don't have any idea.

JJ:

How far could you throw the ball—you know, not like to trying to just throw it—you ever remember—

SB:

I never did try it for a [inaudible] distance, never did.

JJ:

There's not a lot of people that can throw the ball over sixty yards.

SB:

There's not. Sixty yards is pretty good. Now some of these big strong quarterbacks, ahead of their time that could throw a long one—and that's about seventy-seven yards down.

JJ:

Sixty yards—

SB:

But sixty yards is a long pass if you stop and think about it. There's not many times you can hold a ball that long to throw a sixty yard pass (laughs)

DM:

Did y'all run bootlegs at TCU and at Washington?

SB:

Not—not there. We did, maybe one or two—but not very often.

JJ:

At TCU [inaudible] come with that spread offense, or were you still running a single wing.

SB:

We were running a single wing and what we called the double wing—double wing spread—now they call it the shotgun. But when you have two guys over here and two guys over there, and [inaudible] I got it, pretty—after the first year I got it pretty [inaudible] because hell, that passes better, much better than what we had [inaudible]. I got a lot of respect for [inaudible].

DM:

You transferred a lot of that knowledge to Washington too. Washington started—or under your quarterbacking, Washington became a passing game to a large extent, a passing team?

SB:

Well, in certain years, if you stay up there long enough, you're going to play on a good team, and the good teams where you got as good a team as anybody in the league, personnel wise. You'll be also what you're going to call a mediocre team—in other words they can knock the top team off some time. See there'll be about four teams in the league, used to be [inaudible] is Washington and the Giants in the East, Green Bay and the Bears in the West. For a few years there, of those four, two of them were going to be playing in the championship game. And it stayed that way until Philadelphia came up with a real fine football team in our division, and Detroit came up with a real good bunch when they had Bobby and that bunch up there, and they came up with a damn fine football team. But year in and year out, was Green Bay and the Bears in the West, Giants, and Washington in the East. And those four teams, two of them would go to the championship. Stayed that way for a number of years, then the other teams would [inaudible], four years before, they were losing boys and [inaudible] boys, so [inaudible] top team. That's mainly when I thought the best damn team in the league, I played in what I call a

mediocre team—beat about four teams over the [inaudible], they can beat them and every now and then, knock one of the four out. In other words, they weren't far behind, but I played on some bad teams too. And if you play long enough, you're going to get all of them there. And you're going to play on a real good team, you're going to play on a mediocre team, and you're going to play on some bad teams. And it is a lot more fun to play with a good bunch (laughs).

DM:

Well here you'd grown up in Temple, you'd lived in Sweetwater, then in Fort Worth, and then suddenly, you were All-American a couple of years at TCU, right? Last two years?

SB:

I don't know if I was ever All-American. You know it wasn't like it is now—they start pushing. Used to, like the Heisman trophy—I never heard of the Heisman trophy when I was in school—I didn't know what the hell it was. We didn't know much about teams that went East of the Mississippi River. We didn't give a damn about teams back in there because all we'd played was in our part of the country—southeast, but now you know, it's different teams.

DM:

And now when you left TCU, you were in the first round draft picks in pro teams, is that right? And then you were drafted by Washington Redskins, stayed there sixteen years, 37-52. Was that a whole new world to step into after having played college ball?

SB:

No.

DM:

Pretty similar?

SB:

I tell you what—I like what we did at TCU, passing wise. And I kind of liked [inaudible] for two years, I kind of liked TCU's stuff.

DM:

Well, you took a lot of that with you, though, to Washington, apparently. You still played the same style, you still ran short passes, and your rookie year y'all went to the championship against Chicago, that was '37—beat Chicago. I heard it said that that game, and maybe that entire season, changed pro football for all times because it introduced the value of the passing game.

SB:

Well I tell you [inaudible] but we played on the worst damn field I ever played on for that championship game, in the wintertime. It was an icy field.

DM:

It was Wrigley? You were at Wrigley?

SB:

Yeah. And you couldn't maneuver very well. You started one way, then you're liable to slip down, trying to stop to go back the other way, you know. And it was just one of those games that, I've never played in a game where I saw so much blood. That damn—they had played a high school game there, I think, a week before on that field. Some kind of a high school playoff game, and it had rained. And it was a muddy field, and it froze. And these little clods on that field froze and every time you hit that icy field, you'd slide, see, and everybody was bleeding—wherever you hit—there, a lot of time, you'd go over that little piece of mud that was frozen, and it would make a little old bloody streak on you. And everybody was bleeding. I've never—when we got in the dressing room and undressed, everybody was bleeding. Because you hit that damn stuff and you hit those little pebbles that was frozen, and they just slice you. It wasn't an injury, it was just enough to bring the blood. And it was a peculiar game, and I know [inaudible], he would—he broke to our line—he'd come right to me and they never had anybody blocking the safety. And when the game was over, I talked to him, and I asked him, "You know when you break through the line and you headed towards me. You know, nobody ever blocked me." He said, "No one was put on you because I was supposed to break through there and run over you." (laughs) And I beat him because wherever he broke, he would head right towards me. And he told me, he said, "I was supposed to run over you and get you out of the ballgame."

JJ:

Do you remember Beattie Feathers?

SB:

Yeah.

JJ:

Was Beattie Feathers in that game, on that team?

SB:

Gosh—

JJ:

He was Chicago, wasn't he?

SB:

Yeah, he was—Beattie Feathers was a good football player, and I guess he might have been there.

JJ:

Seemed like he played in that ball program [inaudible].

SB:

But Bronco was [inaudible]. that day and he was—I got to where to where I would try to tackle him, and I'd block—because on that icy field, his leg where he was one leg would go up, he'd liable to fall, see, because you couldn't get your balance back very good on the icy field. And I got to where I held on to where hell, I'd just block him, wouldn't try to take—

JJ:

But Leddy [?] wasn't going to dodge you any—

SB:

Hell no. (laughs) He would come to me every day, tell me—but you know, if they had had a little bit of a quarterback that could throw a little better, I don't think they would've gotten beaten.

JJ:

[inaudible]

SB:

[inaudible] wasn't there then. He came in two years later or one year later. Two years later, I think, if they'd had Lutten [?], they would have beaten us. They didn't have much passing game, and we threw for 400 something yards passing in that ball game.

DM:

Was that your record? Or your record was—your game record is what?

SB:

I don't remember—but we had a pretty good passing game by then.

DM:

Do you have one game where—maybe you remember which one it was—you got in the four hundreds—

Break in Recording

SB:

—and he said that—I don't remember what game it was, anyway, he said that one game I'd thrown, I'd completed seventeen out of the twenty-four—

DM:

That's right. That's the one I'm talking about.

SB:

Seventeen out of twenty-four. And that out of the twenty-four times you threw, that I'd averaged eighteen—

DM:

Or five, eight—

SB:

Yeah. Eighteen yards and something. And the other, on the completions, on the seventeen completions, I had averaged twenty-eight. So that was a pretty good day.

DM:

Do you think that's still a record?

SB:

Yeah, I don't remember what kind of weather it was or anything, but you know, you have those kind of days.

JJ:

Do you remember who you played?

DM:

Was that Boston—you were playing in Boston?

SB:

I don't remember who we played. It wasn't a very good team, probably. But I don't remember now who in the hell they were. And I didn't know that—those figures—that's the first time I'd heard of that [inaudible].

DM:

I think that's still a record.

SB:

It's just like a—I got a letter from a guy two years ago, and he said, "I'm a statistic nut." That's the way he started the letter. And he said, "I ran up on something that you might get a kick out of. I figured out what all the quarterbacks make in pro ball this day and time, [inaudible] best quarterbacks in the league. Did you ever stop to think that they make more—" Let's see how did he put it? "That they make more in one game than you made in sixteen years, football." Well you know I never thought about it that way, but it is a truth. They make more in one damn game than I made in sixteen years in football.

DM:

Your salary ranged from about \$8,000 to \$22,000 in those sixteen years. Somewhere in that area?

SB:

Around twenty. After the first year, I signed a three year contract for Washington, before I went home, and I signed the three year contract for \$12,00. Now that doesn't sound like very much, this day and time, but I found out that there were three boys on our team that were all-pro, Turk Edwards, a tackler, and Wayne Milner, an end, and Cliff Battles a running back, I'm going to show you how stupid some people can be back in those days. Cliff Battles, my first year up there, he literally [inaudible], and we won the championship. He was making \$2,750, I didn't know it at that time, but I found out the next year. He's making \$2,750 for this all-pro tackle, Turk Edwards, that what he was making. Wayne Milner, all-pro end—that's what he was making. And my first year up there, I made \$8,000. And I didn't want anybody to know, so I didn't ever say anything about it, but you didn't talk about it. I didn't know what anybody was making. I found out that the next year at training camp, Cliff Battles wanted \$3,000 instead of \$2,750. He wanted \$250 more. (all laugh) Yeah, and good old Marshall wouldn't give it to him, and the son of a bitch called the coach at Columbia, and went there as a [inaudible] coach. He lead the league in [inaudible], best goddamn football player we had. He was a good pass receiver, he could do everything, he was a great runner, God almighty.

JJ:

In comparison, what did land cost back in 19—in this part of the world.

SB:

Oh hell, it was cheap. This land, I imagine it sold for \$16 or \$17 an acre, something like that. I've forgotten for sure, but it was cheap. And I grew up not knowing what money was, but—

JJ:

It was because you didn't have any?

SB:

Never had any and didn't expect any. But you know, when I was talking contract with Marshall, he called me, and I would tell him yay or nay, I'd go talk to Dutch, I'd tell him to call me tomorrow night. So I'd go talk to Dutch. And the first contract they offered me was for \$5000. Well I called Dutch, and Dutch told me, "Well, you know that's pretty good. Coach [inaudible] making \$5000." Well, I hadn't thought about it that way. And I told him, "Well I'm satisfied with that, but I feel like I'd like to see if I could get him to go up just a little bit." Well Dutch said, "Well, if you can do that, maybe you can give him a figure, and he will split the difference." So I told him, "Well, I've been thinking about asking for \$8,000, and I didn't know if I could go that high, and maybe he'll split the difference." (all laughs) So Coach says, "That'll be fine." So he called me the next night, and I told him, "What would you think about \$8,000 instead of \$5,000." He thought a minute and said, "All right. You ready to sign?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "All right, \$8,000."

DM:

He didn't come down at all.

SB:

Nah. He didn't split the difference with me. Hell, I got more money than I expected to get.

JJ:

Did it make you feel like you should've asked for ten [thousand]? (laughs)

SB:

No, you know it didn't. You know, I've never had any money—you know coming out of those Depression days, I didn't know anybody that had any money. And so money, god damn a thousand dollars was a lot of money for me back then. And after we won the championship, he called me and told me before I went home to come by and sign a three year contract. Said, you come [inaudible]. Next morning I went down to the office, and he said, we got to talking, he said, "What would you want to sign a three year contract." I said, "Well you treated me awful good, I think first [inaudible], what do you think. [inaudible] He said, "Well what would you think for three years and \$12,000 a year." Well I found out what some of their boys were playing for, I told him, I said, "It sounds good to me, but I don't want anybody to know what I make." Because I found out that some god damn lineman was playing for \$500, \$400 a game, things like that, then the three all-pro people we had on the line that Cliff Battles, that back, shit they were all-pro, and they were just making \$2,750. So you know, I didn't want anybody to know what I was making, to be honest with you. I never told anybody, nobody talked about money—I didn't know what anybody was making. And when I found out what [inaudible] and Cliff Battles and Wayne Milner were making, well I didn't want them to know [inaudible]. Three year contract for \$12,000 cause that was a lot of money.

DM:

After that three years, then, you negotiated another contract. Was it a long term contract?
Another three year contract?

SB:

Well, what we talked was, and he wasn't going to send in what I really make. He didn't want in the office. And I would just sign a contract for a dollar, and he said, "I'll handle it." I'd rather have you in trouble with [inaudible], and I took that, I think, the rest of the time I was up there. And there was one year, probably around '49 I'd say, maybe '48, somewhere in there, we drafted Harry Gilmer out of Alabama, and Mr. Marshall called me in one night and said, "What are you doing tomorrow?" And I said, "Nothing." He said, "Come down to the office. I want to talk to you." So I went down there, and he said, "I want to talk to you before somebody else does. We've got this Harry Gilmer, he won't sign—he wants \$20,000 to sign. I want to tell you that's more than you're making." And I told him, like I said, "Well, I'm satisfied with what I'm making. You sign him. He's a good football player." You know, it didn't no more make any difference to me.

JJ:

What year was this?

SB:

That was around then—

JJ:

How many years had you been up there?

SB:

I had been there a good long while by then because Harry, I think it was in the late forties. Well I say late forties, it was around '45 maybe.

JJ:

Okay, after the war?

SB:

After the war. And Harry was a damn good quarterback at Alabama, set a lot of records. Turned out to be one of the best friends I ever had—we roomed together. And Marshall finally traded him to—he stayed with us for—I don't know three or four years I guess, and Detroit wanted him. And Marshall traded him to Detroit, I don't remember what the hell we got, probably some tackle that couldn't make a team up there. But he had LeBaron by that time. Then the LaBaron quarterback [inaudible].

JJ:

Yeah, went to college at Pacific.

SB:

Yeah, Marshall had him signed. So he traded Dillon [?] to Detroit, and Harry and I—we've been friends ever since we played there. A lot of times he'd play halfback if I was quarterback, and son of a bitch was tougher than a damn boot—he thought he would block any son of a bitch in the end that ever played football. And shit he was—he was a good tough football player. Harry Dillon [?]. That's the only person I know that was on a football team all his damn life. From second grade on up, he played football. And they—he either played or coached or worked for pro football team until he retired about two years ago. He and I—he spent the night with me, was going out to Phoenix, I think he was going to have a banquet out there, [inaudible] retire. And he had been connected with a football team, all, every year of his life.

DM:

His life revolved around football.

SB:

Yeah. See, I'd, hell half the time after you quit playing, you start coaching and scouting and all that damn—you can go to a football game every damn year until he retired. And that's the only man I know that did football all his damned life.

DM:

What year was it that you set records in passing, punting, and interceptions in pro?

SB:

That was in '43 or '44. One of them. I can't remember what year it was—which one. But it was in the middle forties.

DM:

What year was it that you took the team tot the championship again? Y'all won two championships.

SB:

Forty-two, I believe.

DM:

It wasn't the same year that you set those records?

SB:
[No].

DM:
Tell me about some of your injuries, that's kind of interesting to me—in the era of few pads and no face masks and leather helmet—what kind of injuries have you sustained?

SB:
I had all kinds of injuries. See they wouldn't—back in those days, if you've got a boy hurt in practice, you can't [inaudible] sports writers in Washington know about it. And I had a lot of injuries never reported. And one, two years I had a goddamn elbow that I had chips, got chipped up, and my throwing arm—and I couldn't—I just couldn't throw the ball real hard. But I [inaudible] newspaper, Marshall kept it quiet, and I didn't say anything to anybody, in fact I might have done—I could throw maybe thirty-five, forty yards pretty good. But if you had to really bust that ball down there, I couldn't do it.

DM:
Did you have to have surgery for that, or did it just heal up?

SB:
Well they tried to talk me into surgery, but I didn't feel much about that—because I had had that the year before, and it had got alright, and I hurt it again, and then they tried to keep—what they tried to do was keep it quiet—because if the opponents know I can't throw the ball—they'll going to play you different. But I could throw—I could throw all the shorts, the shorter stuff. But when you really had to let one go—

DM:
Was that from getting hit in the elbow or from throwing the ball so much and in such a way that you strained it and messed it up.

SB:
I got a feeling that I got it on defense somehow, and I don't know how. But we went both ways—and it's just like the year that I intercepted four passes in a ball game—

DM:
Yes, same ballgame that you threw four touchdowns.

SB:
Yeah. I wasn't that good of a safety, I knew it. But we had Wilbur Moore as quarterback out there. Dick Todd was on left of me, and Wilbur was on right of me, and I was playing safety.

And just like anybody else—the man's that calling the plays [inaudible] he's going to throw, he's going to throw at the weakest defensive back, and that's me playing safety, see. So he [inaudible] they were good [inaudible]. Took that on each side. So I got a lot of balls thrown at me. And that's why I had the opportunity. But those two good ones, they didn't have the opportunity, but they tried to beat me all the time, and I would let them say a damn thing. You've got somebody weaker, I'm going to throw it to the weak one. And I was the weakest one, ___, and I knew it.

DM:

How about injuries to your knees. Did you have any real problems with your knees?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Did you have defensive linemen, or anyone rushing you that would go for your knees intentionally, you think? Was that a—

SB:

I never know because people fall over you, you fall the wrong way, and then somebody—maybe you could fall in it, and you've got a leg sticking out. I'll tell you, I saw a boy get hurt last night—the showed his picture—boy, man just fell on it. So damn many things like that can happen.

DM:

How about to your face—not having a face mask, was that a real problem? Get banged up pretty bad, though, on the face?

SB:

Well, we were playing so much [inaudible] then than they do now. And they had an end, he was really a fine football player, but he'd come in and he'd hit me in the face—he'd make like he was [inaudible] in the bull, come down, and he had my face bleeding both sides, and our linemen, they got pissed off and they wanted to run what they called a bootsy [?] play. That's where everybody made you gain eight yards on first down. Then that's a good time to call a bootsy play.

DM:

What was a bootsy play?

SB:

Bootsy play was where everybody would get everybody else except that one son of a bitch over here who was playing dirty as hell, and everybody on the team runs over there fast. We just [inaudible] (laughs), and we'd be huddled and I'm bleeding, and they'd say, "Who did that." I said, "That end over here. That son of a bitch is giving me a fit." And they'd say, "Let's run a bootsy play on him." I'd say, "Nah." You know when you run a bootsy play, you've got to have the right yardage and the right down. In other words, you pick up seven or eight yards on the first down, then that's a good time to come back and run the bootsy play.

DM:

You can waste a play.

SB:

Waste a damn play, in other words. And I told them, "Nah. I'll take a time that I'll tell you let him come, don't touch him." And so I finally found the right time to do it, and I told them, "Let him come. They don't need to touch him." And I went back a huge—and that son of a bitch was coming just like [inaudible] and I [inaudible] hit him just like that. And that old head gear, I think what it did—it probably hit hard enough that the leather headgear cut off the blood from his brain, and he just stood there just like that—like a statue, and just fell flat on his belly. It scared the living hell out of me, I thought I had broken his damn back.

JJ:

That you killed him (all laughs)

SB:

Beause he just [babbles] and just fell flat on his belly. And you know, it scared the hell out of me. I thought I could have broken his neck or something, you know. but shit, he got up, didn't even take him off of the ball game. He came just as hard the next play (laughs)

DM:

Is that right? (laughs) did you end up doing the bootsy play on him?

SB:

No. he came just the same damn way.

DM:

Good night. (laughs)

SB:

But it did—it scared me, because that's the first time I've ever seen anybody just be knocked out and just fall flat, you know, just fall forward and flat on his belly because it scared me, I thought I could've broken his neck, you know. But if I had to do it all over, I wouldn't do it. But I thought that—if I could stop it a little that way, it might help.

DM:

Four years into your pro career, you bought this ranch out here, 1941?

SB:

Yeah.

DM:

Well how did you know about it, going back and forth from Sweetwater?

SB:

Well, no. I had never been up to these dang [inaudible]. We were living in Sweetwater, and I had a bought somebody's fifty acres out at Sweetwater Lake on the East Side. And that 750 acres, well it was around that lake on the east side, and I thought, you know sometime people will want to build houses out there, and at that time—around the lake, over a period of years, it's a pretty good investment, to have the land that joins that lake, you know the price goes up a little bit. So I thought—I had a few cattle, horses, but I knew I wanted a little bigger place. And I asked around, I talked to people, and Mr. Dennis up here, this was his ranch. He heard of me looking for—so he called me because his eight kids, eight boys and three—two girls I think, in their family. When their mother and daddy died, one of the boys live out here, and it was just a four room house. You know how men living in something—they don't take very good care of it. And it was a rundown house. We didn't have any electricity, didn't have any water, except for the cistern out here, and it was a terrible place to bring your wife. You know what I'm talking about? She was a preacher's daughter, never had lived in the country, never—have a privy sitting out there, you know. And it wasn't anything—electricity, hell, we didn't have anything. When we moved out here, I thought well she'll never stay. She won't stay. Well, she did. She stayed and she put up with this god damn stuff.

DM:

Well did she like it, or did she just put up with it?

SB:

Well, she put up with it. Let's put it that way. And we started having our children and she stayed, took care of my kids, raised them, you might say—because I was gone so much during those days. And you know, when we got the cistern for water, that's all you got—that damn, you

protect that water like it's gold. So when it got down below half full, we would quit bathing, grey water to bath in—that was the best water in the well—didn't have all those minerals in it, like all water does. And it was great to water to view, but when it got down below half full, we'd start guarding it, and not using it, so it got where we'd go down and buy it—we'd go down to our horse trough down here and bath. (laughs) Well, it was all right, you know in that way, but you didn't want to run out of water [inaudible]. And you're trying to keep it. You do without things, [inaudible] keep water. We'd have ice brought out and a man had a little run out through here, [inaudible] had his little—

[End of Recording]



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