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Interview with
C. S. TURBEVILLE
June 17, 1981

Place of Interview: Gainesville, Texas
Interviewer: Floyd Jenkins
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Business Oral History Collection

C. S. Turbeville

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Gainesville, Texas

Date: June 17, 1981

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is June 17, 1981. I am talking to Clarence S. (Turby) Turbeville who is one of the founders of the Bomber Bait Company. We are doing the interview in Mr. Turbeville's office of the Bomber Bait Company in Gainesville, Texas.

Dr. Jenkins: Let's start this thing off by getting you to go back and give us some of your family background.

Mr. Turbeville: You are asking for a family background, and my family really has a little history to it. I have a cousin that was studying geneology in TCU, and he was taking his masters degree. He did a rundown on our family tree for his masters degree. And my name, of course, is Turbeville, but apparently our name was originally D'Iberville. And where we came from, there were three brothers from France, and they were colonizers. Each had a ship, and they came over to the United States with a boatload of people.

Jenkins: Have you got any dates in mind?

Turbeville: No, I don't have any idea.

Jenkins: No century even in mind?

Turbeville: It was in the 18th century. 1720 or '30 or somewhere in there, a long time before the Revolution. And they came over here, and one of the boats stopped in South Carolina. There is a town in South Carolina now named Turbeville. One of the boats stopped there, the other two came on into the Gulf. One stopped somewhere between Mobile and New Orleans, somewhere in there. Of course it was all new then. I don't know where it was exactly. And there are a lot of Turbevilles' all down in that country. Another one came on and went up the Mississippi River to Tennessee. And that is where my folks came from, is from the one that went to Tennessee. My father came from Tennessee. He moved to Texas when he was probably 3 or 4 years old. They came down here in a covered wagon.

Jenkins: Did he tell you much about that? Of course he can't remember much about that.

Turbeville: He didn't remember much about it either. They were real poor. They didn't have anything, and settled on some poor little farm. There were 12 kids, and my father was next to the oldest. I think he left home when he was 12 years old and went to work.

Jenkins: Where did they . . .

Turbeville: Somewhere around Fort Worth, Hanley or Bedford, somewhere in that area.

Jenkins: What did they start doing?

Turbeville: Farming. And he left home.

Jenkins: Your dad's name?

Turbeville: F. H. Turbeville. He went to work for a drugstore in Celina, Texas, I believe. He went to Celina and went to work for a drugstore, and he started to school. He didn't start to school until he was, I think, 22 years old. He went to school in the first grade when he was 22 years old.

Jenkins: In Celina?

Turbeville: In Celina. And, of course, he didn't last long in the first grade. He went on, and I don't think he got over about the 6th or 7th grade, which was a pretty good education then.

Jenkins: Do you know about when he was born?

Turbeville: He would be about 100 years old now if he was alive. A hundred years from now would be about 1880, somewhere in that area of 1880.

Jenkins: He was born in Tennessee?

Turbeville: In Tennessee.

Jenkins: Now he went to work in that drugstore when he was about 12, you say?

Turbeville: Yes. When he was about 12, yes. Just a delivery boy or

something. He had him a job, and he began saving his money.

Jenkins: Never went back to the farm?

Turbeville: No, never went back to the farm. My father was in the music business.

Jenkins: How did he get into that?

Turbeville: The way he got into the music business he wanted to get into some kind of business himself, and he saved his money. He didn't spend any money, just making what a delivery boy in a drugstore would make. But he got to where he was clerking in there. Then he bought a piano, and he had a wagon. And he would take that piano and go through the country and sell it. He was still working at the drugstore, and he would save the profit that he made and then take the principle and buy him another piano. Pretty soon he had enough to where he could buy two pianos, and then enough to buy three pianos. Then he opened up a little store. Now I don't know the circumstances, why he moved to west Texas, but he moved to Ballinger.

Jenkins: Do you know anything about your mother's background?

Turbeville: Well, a little. She was born in Ballinger, and her mother was born in Brownwood. I am not sure where her father was born, somewhere in Texas though. He was a lawyer. He

was a Harvard graduate. His name was M. C. Smith. He was a trial lawyer, he liked these trials. He was always a defense lawyer. He never prosecuted anybody. I guess his greatest accomplishment, as far as our government is concerned, is he wrote the first law that established an independent school district in Texas. He wrote that law.

Jenkins: Your mother's name was . . .

Turbeville: Hermia Smith. And she had a sister that was a school teacher. She taught school in Ballinger longer than any teacher has ever taught school in Texas. 57 years, I believe, she taught school. She was a graduate from the University of Chicago, That is my aunt, She died just a couple of years ago.

Jenkins: What was her name?

Turbeville: Mariott, She never married. She was an old maid. It was kind of a legend in west Texas, her teaching so long. That is as far as I know about my parents.

Jenkins: When did she retire, do you have any idea?

Turbeville: I think she was about 78 when she retired.

Jenkins: How old was she when she died?

Turbeville: 85, I think.

Jenkins: Your parents then met in . . .

Turbeville: In Ballinger.

Jenkins: Your dad stayed in the music business?

Turbeville: Yes. They moved to Gainesville and opened up a music store, and I was born in Winters, which is a little town about 15 miles from Ballinger. That was where he had his music store then.

Jenkins: So he was completely in the music business by then.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: That was his profession.

Turbeville: And we moved to Gainesville and had a store and had one room in the back of the store. We lived in that one room and had the music store in the front.

Jenkins: Now you were born . . .

Turbeville: In Winters, May 14, 1912. I was about 18 months old when we moved to Gainesville.

Jenkins: So your life really . . .

Turbeville: Started here.

Jenkins: Have you been here ever since?

Turbeville: Ever since.

Jenkins: Well, tell us a little bit about growing up in Gainesville. Give us a little history of your schooling and so on.

Turbeville: We lived in that one room behind our store building . . .

Jenkins: Where was that?

Turbeville: It was up on California Street. We still own the building.

Jenkins: Is it leased now or something?

Turbeville: Yes, I have got that rented. Of course, I grew up an uneventful life. All I liked to do was hunt and fish and play football a little bit.

Jenkins: Did you work in that music store?

Turbeville: Not much. A little bit. Just a little bit to start with. My father bought a house when I was about 6 years old so I could have a place to play, a yard and everything. And I still live in that house now.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Turbeville: Yes. We built a new house, but it is the same location.

Jenkins: So you never did get into farming.

Turbeville: No, I was a city boy. I was a country-town boy.

Jenkins: What is your earliest recollection of the size of Gainesville?

Turbeville: About the size it is now. It was about 10,000. It has always been a pretty good town. It is a lot older town than Fort Worth or Dallas, and why it didn't grow instead of them, I don't know. It had a better location, better water, on the main line of the Sante Fe, and two main highways east and west, north and south.

Jenkins: But it has long been about this size, hasn't it?

Turbeville: I think it is about 15,000 now. It hasn't grown very much. It is just beginning to grow. It is questionable whether that is good for the community or not.

Jenkins: I will ask you about that later. So you grew up hunting and fishing.

Turbeville: Yes, I really did. The first bass I ever caught I caught in a little lake out north of town. I was seven years old.

Jenkins: Is that lake still there?

Turbeville: Yes, it is still there. I bet you I could go within ten feet of the exact spot where my plug hit.

Jenkins: Is it a stock tank?

Turbeville: No, it is a little club lake. It is about a six or seven acre lake. North Lake they call it. It was just a club lake, and they charged you to fish there back in those days. That was a long time ago. That was before they had any big lakes around here anywhere. I always liked to fish. Mother would take me 6 or 7 miles up the creek and let me out. And I would fly fish all the way back to Gainesville. When I was 9 or 10 years old I could always swim real good.

Jenkins: Fly fishing for what?

Turbeville: Bass and perch, whatever would bite. I didn't care what.

Jenkins: Not many people fly fish in this part of the country, though, do they?

Turbeville: Not any more. They used to. That creek used to be real good fishing. These great big goggle eyed perch and a lot of bass in it, channel cat, catch all of them on flies.

Jenkins: Do you still fly fish around here?

Turbeville: Not much. I don't do that any more. You get all sophisticated with big motors and big boats, and you kind of lose sight of the basics sometimes.

Jenkins: Now you were one of how many children?

Turbeville: One of one,

Jenkins: So you were it.

Turbeville: I was it, yes. I think when I was born they saw me and said, "No more."

Jenkins: I have read lots of stories of kids just growing up in the wild. You were really kind of a wild, woodsy kid then.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you have any chores, jobs around much?

Turbeville: Yes, I worked for a couple of summers in a bank, just bookkeeping in a bank in the summertime.

Jenkins: While you were in school?

Turbeville: While I was in high school, yes. Oh, I did work out on a thrashing machine some, baled hay some, all the things that you do in the summertime, a summertime job. While I was going to school I didn't work or anything.

Jenkins: About how old were you when you first started hiring out? Do you remember?

Turbeville: Oh, I think I went to work for the bank when I was 15 or 16.

Jenkins: Had you done some of this farm work before that?

Turbeville: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: How old were you when you first started that?

Turbeville: 12, I guess.

Jenkins: Even though you lived in town, at that time an awful lot of people had gardens, cows.

Turbeville: Yes, we used to have a cow.

Jenkins: Did you have a garden?

Turbeville: Yes, we had a garden.

Jenkins: Pig?

Turbeville: No, just a cow.

Jenkins: Did you milk?

Turbeville: Yes, sure.

Jenkins: Chickens?

Turbeville: No chickens. We were right in the middle of town, but we did have a cow. There weren't any dairies much then. To get milk you had to milk your own cow.

Jenkins: You went to school right here in Gainesville. You went through how much?

Turbeville: High school. I went to the University of Texas.

Jenkins: When did you get out of high school?

Turbeville: 1930.

Jenkins: You missed part of the depression by going to school, did you?

Turbeville: No! I didn't miss it, I guarantee you it was tough. It really was.

Jenkins: Well, did you get into sports or anything in high school?

Turbeville: Yes, I played football. That was about the only organized sport at that time.

Jenkins: How much football?

Turbeville: I played three years in high school.

Jenkins: What position did you play?

Turbeville: Running back. They called it a half back then.

Jenkins: You graduated from high school in '30 and went down to the University of Texas.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: What were your intentions?

Turbeville: That is another story. I always said when I was a little kid that I was going to make my living somehow off of fishing. And I decided I was going to enter the U. S. School of Forestry. They had a school in Colorado College which is now the University of Colorado in Boulder, but then it was called Colorado College. There was a government school there. So I went up to enroll. I got in the car and drove up there. You know, you didn't do things in quite as sophisticated manner as you do now. I was just going to go to school up there so I went up there.

Jenkins: Did you go to the University there.

Turbeville: No, I didn't. I went up there, and they had moved the school to Wisconsin. They had moved the school that summer to the University of Wisconsin.

Jenkins: So right out of high school you went up there to do this.

Turbeville: Yes. So I turned around and came back to Austin. I went to the University of Texas.

Jenkins: What did you have in mind when you went down there?

Turbeville: I really didn't know. I was just going to study business administration.

Jenkins: You were just going to school.

Turbeville: Yes, I was just going to school and get an education.

Jenkins: Now did your folks go to school much?

Turbeville: No, My mother had. My mother graduated from Kidkee. Kidkee is now Austin College in Sherman.

Jenkins: That does ring a bell. Well, did they kind of expect you to go to school or did you want to go to school?

Turbeville: A little of both.

Jenkins: You didn't mind it, then.

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: You went down there to study business.

Turbeville: Well, that is what I did study. I really went down there just to get a major in business administration. But at that time you had to have a bunch of old routine bookkeeping that I couldn't stand and a bunch of other stuff. My major was in economics, and I took a minor in government. I had a double minor. I had the same number of credits in government and business administration. So then I came back home after I got out of school.

Jenkins: Did you finish down there?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Got your bachelors degree.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in anything besides going to school down there?

Turbeville: I played football as a freshman, and I got hurt. I couldn't play after I got hurt.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in any clubs or anything like that?

Turbeville: No. Fraternities, no, I never did.

Jenkins: Did you work while you were down there?

Turbeville: Yes. I was a lifeguard for two years at Barton Springs. Do you know where Barton Springs is? I was lifeguard out there for two years. And that is where I kind of paid my way.

Jenkins: Was that during the time of J. Frank Dobie?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you run across him?

Turbeville: It was in the 30's, '31 or '32.

Jenkins: Did you run across him at all?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: You knew of him though, I suppose?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: He was down at the University of Texas, I suppose.

Turbeville: I remember the name.

Jenkins: I think that was one of his hangouts, or something.

Turbeville: Barton Springs? Cold, clear water.

Jenkins: Well, did you get involved in any other jobs while you were down there?

Turbeville: No, except in the summertime. I was lifeguard at Barton Springs for two years, and the next two years I got a job driving a bus from Gainesville to Wichita Falls. And I would kind of make some money to go back to school.

Jenkins: What bus company?

Turbeville: It was the Gainesville to Wichita Falls bus line then. Then they sold out to Red Ball, who in turn sold out to Trailways. But it was the only bus line that there was. It was a franchise from Gainesville to Wichita Falls. No paved roads; mud, not even gravel roads.

Jenkins: So a lot of times you couldn't get there.

Turbeville: Two trips a day, I would make two trips a day.

Jenkins: When it rained you didn't do that.

Turbeville: We would try.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you get stuck much?

Turbeville: No, really not much. It was kind of sandy, it was awful slick. Then when I got out of school I didn't know what I was going to do. It was the middle of the depression.

Jenkins: You got out in '34?

Turbeville: '34, I believe, yes. And there was a little country school, a one teacher school, teaching all the grades. There wasn't any work anywhere. So I said, "Well, I will go out there and apply for a job teaching school."

Jenkins: Where was that?

Turbeville: Leo, I believe. It is a little old community.

Jenkins: Near here?

Turbeville: Yes, 15 miles.

Jenkins: Is it still there?

Turbeville: Yes, except it is consolidated. You know all of these little old schools have consolidated.

Jenkins: Is it still called the Leo Community?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: I am not familiar with it.

Turbeville: Yes, it is still called the Leo community.

Jenkins: Which direction?

Turbeville: Southwest.

Jenkins: Is it near anything else?

Turbeville: Not really. Kind of near Era, kind of near Forrestburg. It is kind of between here and Forrestburg. Greenwood, that area is in there. And anyway, they interviewed me, and they interviewed another old boy that lived out there. He had gone to a local junior college here one year, which was in our High School, it was still in

the high school. I knew him pretty good. He wasn't very smart. And he got the job over me, and I said, "Well, that ends that."

Jenkins: Was that Cooke County he had been to?

Turbeville: It wasn't Cooke County then. It was just Gainesville Junior College. It was in the high school building.

Jenkins: The origin of Cooke County Junior College?

Turbeville: Yes, that is where it started. And I decided I didn't want to do that anymore when I saw how much politics was involved. My daddy kept wanting me to come into the store. I didn't want to get into the music business. So we talked about it. We put in fishing tackle, which was my love. And we put in appliances. We did that for a year or two, and then right about this time REA came along. Well, we got into the appliance business just right. Nobody had electric refrigerators, electric ranges, electric radios, everything. And we were just wide open, it was a wide open market. And that is where we really took off.

Jenkins: So you got right out of the University of Texas, came back home and went into the music business with your dad and expanded his store into what?

Turbeville: Appliances and sporting goods. And just about the time we began getting a little bit of a saturation point with the electric appliances, here butane gas systems

came along. So we jumped right in the middle of that. And we installed practically every butane gas system that was installed in this whole area in here. I ended up with a fleet of, I think, two transports and five bobtails running, and we operated in nine counties in southern Oklahoma and north Texas. Quite an operation.

Jenkins: This was the part that you built.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: So this became your business.

Turbeville: Yes. We ran it in conjunction with the business. My father was getting up in years then.

Jenkins: But you developed this part of the business.

Turbeville: Yes, right.

Jenkins: What were you doing? Were you delivering and everything?

Turbeville: Whatever it took I would do it.

Jenkins: How many people were working in the store?

Turbeville: Oh, just in the store we had a salesman and a bookkeeper and my father and me. But we had some truckdrivers and people that would install butane systems and deliver. My daddy and I did all of the delivering. Back in those days you didn't hire anybody. You did all of the work yourself.

Jenkins: And you said you were covering nine counties. How long did it take you to develop that big?

Turbeville: From about 1938 until '45, when we sold out. Bomber was the reason we sold out. I agreed to stay there a year and run it for the people we sold to.

Jenkins: Who did you sell to?

Turbeville: Greenwood Butane. They operated out of Denton. Allen Butane Company. Allen and Greenwood were partners.

Jenkins: Yes, I know of Allen Butane.

Turbeville: By this time we were making Bomber Baits in the garage. A friend of mine that I fished with a lot, we got to fooling around making baits.

Jenkins: All of this time you were still going out pleasure fishing.

Turbeville: Oh, yes. Fish every time I got a chance. I would drive a truck to the plant, and I would always carry a motor on the catwalk of my truck. And I had a boat sitting on Lake Murray. I would stop and fish an hour or two.

Jenkins: Do you mind telling us how much that business sold for?

Turbeville: We sold that at that time, I think, for about \$45,000.

Jenkins: Now did you dad keep the music business?

Turbeville: Yes, he continued in it.

Jenkins: And you didn't sell . . .

Turbeville: No, he kept the music business. We sold all the butane gas part.

Jenkins: But the sporting goods you . . .

Turbeville: No, I got out of that because I didn't have the time.

Jenkins: Okay, so now you are completely out of all of that business.

Turbeville: Yes, I am completely out of it, and running the butane gas business one year, and in Bomber Bait where I have been out ever since.

Jenkins: Tell us where the germ of Bomber Bait get started.

Turbeville: Well, you know it is always better to be lucky than good. In a way we just were kind of lucky. We were always fooling around making baits. Again, this was during the war, and you couldn't buy anything. And Ike Walker, who was my partner . . .

Jenkins: Ike Walker, fishing partner?

Turbeville: Yes. And he was in the tire recapping business. People couldn't afford to buy new tires, so he was recapping them. He had a lot of whittling time, and he would sit there and whittle. I would hang around, and he would hang around the store. And he had time, and I would hang around there some. We finally came up just by changing up, trial and error more than anything else, with what turned out to be Bomber Bait.

Jenkins: You are talking about whittling.

Turbeville: Yes. Yes, that was whittling.

Jenkins: What did you use to make the first baits with, really?
A piece of wood, a knife and what else?

Turbeville: A piece of wood, a knife, a back off of an old cook stove. Used a tinsnip to cut off the lip there, a paperclip for a puller, and used picture hanging eyes, and then tear up old baits to get hooks. You couldn't buy any hooks.

Jenkins: Now were you doing this primarily for your own benefit?

Turbeville: Yes, just to fish with. We would go up to Murray and go fishing, and we would just catch the doggonest fish you ever saw. And we would come in, and we would hide what we were fishing with and put on something that was conventional. We didn't want anybody to know what we were fishing with. And then pretty soon my friends here began to know what we were doing, and we began making them some baits, just for our friends, you know. And pretty soon, well, we had so many friends we had to start charging a little bit for them. And then after we started charging, the dealers wanted them. We began selling a few dealers, and began hiring some people.

Jenkins: There is a spot in there that I am curious about. You sold this business out, and before you got an income from Bomber Baits how were you living?

Turbeville: From my salary from this business. They were paying me a salary.

Jenkins: This was during that year.

Turbeville: Yes. We were going before then. That is why we sold out so I could devote my full time to Bomber Baits.

Jenkins: So actually the Bomber Bait business was building while you were still . . .

Turbeville: While I was still doing that other, right.

Jenkins: Kind of smooth us into that, and give us some dates and things.

Turbeville: I think I sold out in the latter part of 1944. I believe that was when I sold out. And just before 1946, the latter part of 1945, I was free to devote my full time. And then we got busy and got some automatic machinery.

Jenkins: Physically let's go back, though, to the very beginning. First you just whittled these out for your own personal use. Then you started . . .

Turbeville: We started doing it. Ike had a garage behind his house. We would go back there, and he had a little old hand lathe. He would put a square block of wood in there. At that time we didn't know very much, but we did know enough that the right kind of wood to make fishing lures out of was northern white cedar. And the only place it grows, you can't buy it anywhere, is in the upper peninsula of Michigan, in commercial quantities. But this is the kind of material that all of your light poles were made out of, because it won't rot. It is strong

and it is light, but it won't rot. And so about that time they began creosoting the poles because the wood began getting expensive and hard to get. They would just take a pine pole and creosote impregnate it, you know. And they were taking those down and putting up these creosote poles. They would give us all of the poles they took down. And we would cut them up, block them up, and that is what we were making our baits out of.

Jenkins: It wasn't costing you anything?

Turbeville: No. They gave them to us. We swapped them a few baits for them.

Jenkins: So the end of the natural wood light pole. This was just northern . . .

Turbeville: White cedar.

Jenkins: White cedar non-treated?

Turbeville: Yes, non-treated.

Jenkins: And in the 40's, you say it was, the creosoted pine came along?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, I wasn't conscious of that. That is interesting. But this thing started in a garage.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: The first commercial part of it.

Turbeville: That's right, in a garage. The first ones that we made that we sold we made, just he and I.

Jenkins: Just the two of you.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, work us along from there, how you grew.

Turbeville: After we began trying to find some automatic lathes. No two of our baits looked alike, you know, when you just turn them out by hand. It didn't matter what they looked like, they all fished about the same, because we would use the basic same shape and the same principle.

Jenkins: What were you selling them for at first?

Turbeville: A dollar apiece.

Jenkins: How many could you make a day by hand?

Turbeville: Oh, it was not how many we could, it was how many we would. How many we wanted to.

Jenkins: You were just piddling.

Turbeville: Yes, we were just piddling. We were making, maybe, 30 or 40 a day.

Jenkins: Not bad wages for then, though.

Turbeville: Yes, that's right. And, of course, we would fish with half of them. They run real deep, and you would lose a lot of them. And when we got some automatic machinery, we found an old German that had moved over here from Germany or something, and he was kind of a machinery

designer. And he designed us some kind of a semi-automatic lathe to turn our baits out.

Jenkins: What was his name, do you remember?

Turbeville: I couldn't recall to save my life. That has been a long time.

Jenkins: He designed your equipment for you?

Turbeville: Yes, one lathe. And then Mr. Walker is a pretty good engineer himself. And he took the mistakes that one had in it, and he built some more that didn't have the mistakes. We are still using them.

Jenkins: Oh, really? Ike?

Turbeville: Ike Walker, yes.

Jenkins: He was an engineer also.

Turbeville: Yes. He was my partner.

Jenkins: So you are still using some of those first lathes?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: When did you really start feeling that you were growing? What kind of distribution system did you start with?

Jenkins: Of course, it started in Dallas, the first jobber we sold, and then it began to spread.

Jenkins: Did you sell just retail locally?

Turbeville: No, we started selling to jobbers. You see, I had some contacts. Because of my fishing tackle business I knew a lot of the fishing tackle wholesalers. And I went to

them. There to start with we couldn't get any hooks or anything. And a place like Cullum and Boren would get in some hooks. Well, they would send us the hooks, and we would put those hooks on baits to send to them. It was kind of . . .

Jenkins: Brother-in-law.

Turbeville: Yes, brother-in-law stuff. And that is really how we got started. Then it began to spread, and we began to advertise a little bit. We began kicking up our production. In fact we have about three girls right now that started with us, are still working with us.

Jenkins: And they came on in about . . .

Turbeville: '46 or '47. Ms. Case up there. She has been here since '47. She came to work in August of '47.

Jenkins: Well, let's kind of watch it grow in terms of sales, geography, and personnel.

Turbeville: Well, I can't give you any growth figures, but there has never been a year since we've been in business that that year hasn't been a better year than the year before. We have never had a decline in business. We financed ourself internally. We had never borrowed a penny until we got so big that you had to finance the jobbers, give them dating programs. Then we had to finance the dating program for three or four months.

Jenkins: What kind of money did the two of you put into this thing at the very beginning?

Turbeville: Nothing. Nothing, really.

Jenkins: You just started.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: And you say over the years you financed very little.

Turbeville: Well, until recently. In 1968 we sold out to Van Ellis.

Jenkins: We will pick that up later.

Turbeville: That is when we started our big financing.

Jenkins: But before you sold out . . .

Turbeville: We didn't do any financing. We financed ourselves except for about three months every year. I think the most we ever owed at one time, until we sold out, was about \$8,000 or \$9,000.

Jenkins: Now you said except about three months every year. What was happening there?

Turbeville: Dating programs. Usually in the fishing tackle industry it is helpful to a manufacturer to take orders and ship to wholesalers all fall, and they don't have to pay for it until April because that is when they are going to start selling. So we get it out of our inventory. We know that they are going to want to buy, and we can more intelligently get the correct colors and everything. And so all this production that we were doing we didn't get any money from

them until April, you see. And so we would have to start borrowing money on about the first or middle of January or first of February. We would get paid off in April when our dating came due. Then we would pay off the bank.

Jenkins: All that was very short term.

Turbeville: Short term and not over \$8,000 or \$10,000.

Jenkins: You expanded out of that garage now. Where did you go?

Turbeville: When we left that garage we got one room in the back of an automotive place up here. We got one room in the back of that.

Jenkins: And rented.

Turbeville: Just rented it. And then we rented upstairs over a theater on California Street, not the one that is there, but another one that was there. And we rented upstairs over that, and then we bought this in 1950,

Jenkins: You built?

Turbeville: We bought the building. Of course, a lot of it has been built on,

Jenkins: Did you borrow for this?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: How about to renovate? You had to do some renovating.

Turbeville: Yes, but we financed it internally.

Jenkins: Is that right? You have always been very healthy financially,

then.

Turbeville: Yes. We have always financed it internally until we sold out.

Jenkins: Let's follow up to the time of selling out. Let's go back and think in terms of what kinds of expansion geographically. You said you don't want to give any sales figures. I understand that. But if you can give me some kind of an idea of what kind of growth in terms of volume, physical facilities, number of employees, for instance. Those things.

Turbeville: We increased our number of employees. When we first started out we would hire ten or fifteen people or twenty people, and we would keep them as long as we were busy. We would lay them off in the summertime, because we couldn't afford to pay them. That is when our business is over with. Then we would hire them back again. And then finally we got financed enough, and we had learned enough . . . We were having to learn the business at the same time. We finally got to where we didn't have to lay anybody off much. We just kept gradually increasing it, and we built up an inventory and we had more stable working conditions.

Jenkins: None of you had any experience in this kind of thing.

Turbeville: No. Nobody had had any experience in manufacturing at

all.

Jenkins: Is that right? No one around to even look at, was there? What kind of competition? I mean who else was making baits in this part of the country, even?

Turbeville: Well, two or three people would copy us, but they didn't really . . .

Jenkins: When you started.

Turbeville: There wasn't anything in this part of the country. They were all Heddon and Creek Chub and all the big boys up north. We were the pioneers in this area down here.

Jenkins: Are you still pretty much it down here in this part of the country?

Turbeville: Yes, basically so.

Jenkins: Who else is down here?

Turbeville: There is Whopper Stopper in Sherman, has copied us. They are not a real big factor.

Jenkins: Have there been any people who work for you that went off and tried to start something?

Turbeville: No, strangely they haven't. They really haven't.

Jenkins: You say you have got several employees who have been with you from the start.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Are a lot of your employees longtime?

Turbeville: Yes, we have a lot over 20 years.

Jenkins: People just don't come and go, then.

Turbeville: No. We try to pick our people. We like them, and we think they like us.

Jenkins: How many people do you have working here now?

Turbeville: Of course, we have this plant here, and we have another plant in Mexico now. And then we have another place in Vernon that does some work for us. It is a rehabilitation center there. They have people that are capable of doing some kind of work that we have done.

Jenkins: Let's take them one at a time and just kind of see how big they are.

Turbeville: All right. We have also a lot of home workers. We have found out that that works real good for us, piece work.

Jenkins: Tell us about that.

Turbeville: We have got about 25 home workers. We have got about 50 in-plant workers here. We have about 40 in-plant workers in Mexico. And we probably have the equivalent of 10 or 15 in Vernon.

Jenkins: Now do you have some home workers in Mexico?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: In Vernon?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: Your home workers here . . .

Turbeville: That is strictly piece work.

Jenkins: Can you calculate about how many fulltime workers that would be?

Turbeville: Most of them work fulltime.

Jenkins: Oh, they put in 8 hours.

Turbeville: They put in 40 hours a week, most of them do.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Those are all fulltime.

Turbeville: A few of them don't, but most of them do.

Jenkins: So totally you said you had in-plant about 50 and about 25 home workers.

Turbeville: About 75 total in Gainesville, and we have got about 40 in Mexico.

Jenkins: Now was the Mexico operation here before you sold out?

Turbeville: No. We put it in after we sold out.

Jenkins: And Vernon was after you sold out.

Turbeville: After, yes.

Jenkins: We will wait on that.

Turbeville: It was all right here.

Jenkins: We will wait on that. Let's work you up until the time that you sold out.

Turbeville: We were national. At the time we sold out we sold in every state. We sold in Mexico and Canada.

Jenkins: What kind of distributorship did you have set up?

Turbeville: Our sales organization consists of manufacturer representatives. We have one group that has charge of the sales in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. We will have another group that has the southeast, and another group that has the far west, etc.

Jenkins: Now are they selling only Bomber Bait?

Turbeville: No. They have similar but noncompetitive items. Rods, reels, tackle boxes, line, whatever.

Jenkins: Do you have any salesmen at all who handle strictly Bomber Baits?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: Have you ever?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: So you have always operated through manufacturing reps.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: I see. What kind of advertising have you done?

Turbeville: Mostly magazines.

Jenkins: What kind of magazines?

Turbeville: Outdoor magazines. Almost 100% outdoor magazines. Field and Stream, Outdoor Life, Fishing Facts, Western Outdoors, Western Bass, Bass Master Magazine, Florida Sportsman, Texas Sportsman.

Jenkins: Do you care to speak to advertising budget at all?

Turbeville: This year our advertising budget will be close to \$80,000.

Jenkins: How does that compare to ten years ago?

Turbeville: Advertising costs more, and we are doing more of it, too.

Jenkins: It is kind of keeping up with sales, I suppose.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Work us up then to when and why you sold out and what has been happening. So let's work up to the time you sold out.

Turbeville: Van Ellis had been a good friend of ours. I had known him a long time. And his father-in-law was G. C. Morton, who had Morton Potato Chips. Van was president of that company. They sold out to General Mills. And he stayed there for a period of time, I don't know how long. Then he left. He was wanting something to do, and we just got to talking. He wanted to buy us out, and we talked about it, and we sold out to him. And we have run it just like we have always run it.

Jenkins: So just different ownership, but the running of the thing . . .

Turbeville: It all belongs to him now. And we, really, have done a lot of things that we wouldn't have done without him, because he is wealthy, and he didn't mind gambling some money that we wouldn't have. We expanded under him a lot faster.

Jenkins: Before you sold out what kind of organization structure?

Was it a partnership?

Turbeville: A partnership.

Jenkins: How many partners?

Turbeville: Two.

Jenkins: Just the two of you, okay. How did ya'll divide up the honors on the thing? Who was president?

Turbeville: Whoever was gone fishing got to be president. So you could brag about "I'm president of Bomber Bait Company." If he had gone fishing you could brag about somebody else.

Jenkins: So you really didn't . . .

Turbeville: No. We were country folks.

Jenkins: You just ran it.

Turbeville: Yes, we just ran it. Ike and I have been partners, I guess, since 1942 or '43, whenever we started. And I don't guess either one of us ever had a cross word or a cross feeling toward each other. We have been real close.

Jenkins: Was your family involved in running it much?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: Just the two of you, and none of your family.

Turbeville: No family, no.

Jenkins: Did you have reason for doing that, or . . .

Turbeville: No, it just worked out that way.

Jenkins: So by the time you sold, you say in '68, you were national,

Turbeville: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Were you international?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: How international?

Turbeville: We sold in Africa, Mexico, Central America, Canada.
We sell a lot in Japan, but I don't think we started
selling in Japan until after we sold out.

Jenkins: Of course when you started you didn't have a rank.
You were at the bottom of the heap. By '68 when you
were still partners, how did you rank then?

Turbeville: We were among the top.

Jenkins: Top how many?

Turbeville: Top of all of them. I mean there might be one or two
probably bigger than we are.

Jenkins: You were right up there at the top in the whole country.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Regardless of rank.

Turbeville: No statistics, just kind of a guess.

Jenkins: So you sold out in '68. What kind of an organization did
they set up then?

Turbeville: Corporation.

Jenkins: It was a corporation.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: And you stayed on.

Turbeville: I stayed on. Mr. Walker stayed on. We are both still on. He is really semi-retired. He goes to the Valley all winter. He is 78 years old now. And he goes to the Valley all winter. He is here now.

Jenkins: Now you stayed on as what?

Turbeville: I just ran it.

Jenkins: Well, did they give you a title, general manager or something?

Turbeville: Yes, I guess. Vice president or general manager or something.

Jenkins: Who is president, Mr. Ellis?

Turbeville: Mr. Ellis, yes.

Jenkins: But he is not on the premises. He watches it from afar. So he is president, and you are vice president and general manager. What other officers?

Turbeville: Ms. Case is the secretary-treasurer. And Johnny Morton is a vice president. That fellow you met, Barry Stegal, we brought him, and he is vice president in charge of marketing now. He has been here a little less than three years.

Jenkins: Now what were some of the major changes or new directions then that the company took when it was sold?

Turbeville: Well, we built a bigger plant. Put in a little more sophisticated machinery that was costly. And when we did

that then we were able to do some things that we hadn't been able to do. We converted to plastic. We got a machinist up here. He actually didn't work for us. In a way he did, but in a way he didn't. He was on the payroll about half the time. And then we got into plastics, and then we got a little learning there, and then we got that pretty well underway.

Jenkins: What about marketing? Did it change in the advertising?

Turbeville: No, just kept on running like we had always done.

Jenkins: Who designs the baits?

Turbeville: Mr. Walker mostly. We collaborate on it, but he does most of the physical work. We talk about what we ought to have. He is an artist. He really is.

Jenkins: How fast do designs come and go? You say you still really have got the Bomber?

Turbeville: Oh, you bet. Sure.

Jenkins: How many different kinds, how many different baits? Do you make everything that you sell?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: And it is all baits? You don't get into reels and things?

Turbeville: No, just lures.

Jenkins: Strictly baits. How many different baits, lures?

Turbeville: Colors and models or . . .

Jenkins: Any way that you want to describe it.

Turbeville: We have over 2,000 different colors and models. We will probably have 20 different baits that are big sellers, and then all of those come in different colors.

Jenkins: I see. So this would be about 20 models and then variations of color,

Turbeville: I just pulled that figure out of the sky. It might be a little short.

Jenkins: Do those come and go? Do you discard some?

Turbeville: Not much. A little bit. Once in a while but not much.

Jenkins: You add new ones. How often might you add a new one?

Turbeville: We try to bring out a new bait every year or so, maybe a couple of baits a year.

Jenkins: What do you think of when you start developing a bait? What are you after?

Turbeville: A lot of things you are after. You want to make a shallow running striper bait, it has to be fairly large. It has certain things it has got to have. And we know how we want a bait to wiggle, and we go to work and try to make it have that performance in the water. Once we get it then we go to work and . . .

Jenkins: Who tests the bait out?

Turbeville: Do you mean fishing?

Jenkins: Yes.

Turbeville: Mr. Walker and I.

Jenkins: You still do a lot of research in the water.

Turbeville: Oh, yes. You bet. That is what we like to call it and charge it off.

Jenkins: Why, sure, it is research.

Turbeville: It really is.

Jenkins: Sure it is. So you and he are both doing research.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: How far do you go to research? Mostly local waters?

Turbeville: No . . .

Jenkins: Do you do salt water baits?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Is there much difference?

Turbeville: Oh, a lot of difference in the baits. In the way they are made, the structure.

Jenkins: Does there have to be a material difference because of the salt water?

Turbeville: It should be, but sometimes you can't. It depends on what you want in a bait. There is a material you can use in salt water fishing, for a toothy fish, they won't bite through; but you can't do some of the things finish-wise with it that you can do with the others. So we try to have them both. We have a material that can be clear that you can put reflectors on the inside of, and a clear lip and everything, that is a little softer material. It

will tear up a little easier than the other.

Jenkins: You started off selling the original Bomber for \$1.

What is your price range now, retail?

Turbeville: \$4.25 is retail for the Bomber. Most of our baits are comparable baits.

Jenkins: You don't have a wide range then.

Turbeville: Well, yes, we have got some higher than that, but that is not our big sellers. Our big sellers, as far as hard baits are concerned, our big sellers are \$4.25.

Jenkins: What is your highest price?

Turbeville: \$6.00.

Jenkins: You are talking retail?

Turbeville: A big bait like that. That is salt water bait, or striper bait.

Jenkins: I see. So since '68 things didn't change much in terms of organization.

Turbeville: Not really.

Jenkins: Same folks here.

Turbeville: Same folks here.

Jenkins: Bigger facilities.

Turbeville: Bigger facilities, more production, more people.

Jenkins: More equipment, etc.

Turbeville: Yes. After Van bought us out, it is kind of interesting, the labor union tried to come in here on us. And we had

a whole bunch of people, we had so many people, all in here. Hanging out the doors, really. And the union organizer came in here, and they tried to create a hate campaign. Got them all hating Van Ellis. Said, "Here you are all working for nothing. He is taking all of this money and putting it in his pocket." Van had never taken a penny out of the business. Not a penny.

Jenkins: When was this union attempt?

Turbeville: '72 or '73. Shortly after they bought us out.

Jenkins: How did they come out?

Turbeville: They lost the election. I already had Mexico on my mind because labor was getting so high. And so as soon as all of that started, I told Van I was going to go down and see what was involved in putting a plant in Mexico. And I went down there, and I did so.

Jenkins: Tell us about that development.

Turbeville: It is just one of those border plants, right across the river from Del Rio in Ciudad Acuna.

Jenkins: Have you run into any particular problems?

Turbeville: No problems whatsoever. We hired a man that we had known a long time. He is real capable. We brought him in here for a year. We sent him down when we got the plant ready. We sent him down and one of our premier painters

to train the Mexicans, and you can't tell the difference in them.

Jenkins: The manager down there is from this area?

Turbeville: Yes. We brought him in for a year, and then sent him down there.

Jenkins: How much management do you have down there?

Turbeville: Quite a bit. There is quite a bit of management. We do everything the same as we do here.

Jenkins: A little smaller, but not much.

Turbeville: No. Not much.

Jenkins: Do you have most of your managers from this area?

Turbeville: Yes. They are all from around here. I guess they all are from Gainesville, except this last one we hired, Barry Stegal. He was from Dallas.

Jenkins: Now the advantages. Why did you go down there, and what are the advantages to having that operation in Mexico?

Turbeville: Well, two things. One of them you have got a lot cheaper labor down there. And another thing you have got your plants split where if they decided to strike you or something where you couldn't run, we could just keep going down there. And this is the main reason, I think, they beat the union. They didn't believe that we had put a plant down there, the union didn't. They sent one of the girls that works here down there to find out for sure

whether it was just a story we were talking about.

Jenkins: Now you started that plant in Mexico in what year?

Turbeville: I think it was '73 or '74 when it opened up ready to go.

Jenkins: How big did you start that plant? Has it grown substantially?

Turbeville: Not really.

Jenkins: It is about the size it was when you started it.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you build the plant or did you buy . . .

Turbeville: No, we just rented a building. We are fixing to build a new one down there now. I am going down there next week, and we are going to try to build.

Jenkins: Things are looking up down there.

Turbeville: Oh, you bet.

Jenkins: You haven't had any particular problems down there?

Turbeville: No. We wanted to get the feel of things for five or six years, seeing that there weren't going to be problems develop that we could foresee.

Jenkins: Is your turnover any different there than it is here?

Turbeville: We really don't have much turnover problems in either place.

Jenkins: Things are very stable down there.

Turbeville: We are the only plant that is in Mexico that is not union.

Jenkins: Have they tried?

Turbeville: No, they really haven't tried. When I went down there I said, "They are not slaves, they are not animals. We are going to treat them exactly the same as we treat our people in Gainesville. They are going to get their break twice a day. They are going to be respected. They are going to be taken care of. They are going to be part of our family just like they are here."

Jenkins: They just haven't . . .

Turbeville: No, they don't want a union. The union walks in there, but they don't want to join the union because they would have to pay them dues, and they wouldn't get any benefits from it. We pay them more than the union companies pay them.

Jenkins: What kinds of employee benefits do you offer here, and how does that compare to the Mexico plant?

Turbeville: The benefits here, we have hospitalization, medical and doctor and hospitalization. We have dental insurance that is all paid for. We pay all of it. The company pays all of it. We have no retirement or anything, but we do have all of these medical benefits. In Mexico it is not necessary, because the social security in Mexico, which we pay to the government, it is socialized, you see, and the social security takes care of all their medical problems in Mexico, hospital and doctor and everything.

We pay that, but we don't pay it to the insurance company. We pay it to the Mexican government because it is socialized.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea how the cost compares?

Turbeville: The cost is less in Mexico.

Jenkins: You take care of it there as well as anyone else takes care of it.

Turbeville: Yes, absolutely. And here we give them ten paid holidays a year. And if they work here a year they get a week's paid vacation. If they work here two years they get two weeks paid vacation. Up to ten they get three weeks, and twenty they get four weeks.

Jenkins: Do you have anything comparable to that in Mexico?

Turbeville: No. It is so socialized down there that everybody takes a vacation the same time. They take a vacation from about the 15th of December until January 1st, the Christmas holidays.

Jenkins: You mean the whole country does?

Turbeville: The whole country, yes. That is customary in Mexico. They have a lot of different customs.

Jenkins: How is the Vernon operation coming out?

Turbeville: They came down here hunting work that their people could do. They had a lot of people there. They had doctors

and lawyers, intelligent people. They just can't cope with the outside world.

Jenkins: Now what institution is this you are talking about?

Turbeville: It is a state institution, a rehabilitation hospital. And they have a workshop. A lot of the people are capable of doing some work and want something to do and need something to do. They get so bored with nothing to do and no income. We tried them a little bit, and it worked real well. We have given them quite a bit of work to do.

Jenkins: Describe that operation, if you will, how you do work with them.

Turbeville: They have a supervisor there. We had him up here, and we trained him to do some of the things that we have to do. And those things that they were allowed to do they come pick up the raw materials and do whatever they have to do to them and bring them back once a week.

Jenkins: Do you have to furnish them any kind of equipment?

Turbeville: Yes, we furnish whatever kind of equipment is necessary.

Jenkins: Do they do comparable things?

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: With lathes?

Turbeville: No, no. They don't use lathes. It is mostly wire bending, putting hooks on baits. No painting.

Jenkins: No painting.

Turbeville: It is mostly assembly work. They set up boxes for us.

Jenkins: So equipment is not . . .

Turbeville: No, it is not a big factor at all.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea what proportion of your total work is done by that operation?

Turbeville: Oh, it is a small proportion, 5% maybe.

Jenkins: Do you pay them by the hour?

Turbeville: Contract. They contract to work so much a piece.

Jenkins: Oh, and someone down there decides . . .

Turbeville: Yes. Who gets what, yes. It is a contract with the center, is what it is. They have people that are on drugs and on alcohol and everything that they are trying to bring out of it. And also they are training them to work. A lot of them are young kids that have really never worked. They teach them what work means, and then when they get out of the center they can go off and maybe get a job and understand what is expected of them. It is kind of a training program. It helps us, and it helps them, too.

Jenkins: I don't suppose you have had anyone come out of that program and come to work for you here, have you?

Turbeville: We had one boy that worked a little while, and he went some place else. He didn't stay very long. He wasn't a

very good boy. In fact he is in jail now.

Jenkins: Your managers, you say, have been with you a long time. You just don't have a great deal of turnover.

Turbeville: We really don't have much turnover, no.

Jenkins: When you are looking for managers, what do you look for?

Turbeville: Well, we really have never looked for any. They have come from the evolutionary process, yes. They have come to work here, and then they showed skills.

Jenkins: You don't go out and hire managers.

Turbeville: No, we never have.

Jenkins: You have grown them.

Turbeville: Yes, we have grown them. That is exactly right.

Jenkins: How do they evolve, what do you look for when you are tapping somebody for management?

Turbeville: Well, I never have looked for anybody.

Jenkins: I mean but you apparently occasionally select somebody.

Turbeville: Well, actually we don't have very many men. Of course, we hire girls in the office. And we have one girl back there, and she has worked here a long time and knows the ropes and everything. And we kind of put her in charge of supervising everybody in the back on assembly.

Jenkins: But in terms of selection and training, it just happened.

Turbeville: Yes, that's right. They just came to work here, and it

worked out, and they stayed and are capable of doing more than just the routine work.

Jenkins: Have you ever felt any need for any kind of selection and training program?

Turbeville: No. Where are you going to get any training to do what we do? We are the only ones that know how to do it.

Jenkins: That's right. But at the same time, apparently you say they stay with you a long time, they develop very well, and you are happy enough with what you are doing.

Turbeville: Sure. The only person, I guess, we brought in from outside is Barry Stegal. He was a Garcia salesman. And at that time Garcia represented Bomber Bait. And he sold more of our products than anybody else. Then we needed somebody to come in behind me and learn the operation of the business a little bit more, and I couldn't think of anybody that was more qualified to do it, more knowledgeable of fishing, and everything than Barry was. And so that is where he came from. That is the only top side person we have hired.

Jenkins: Do bait companies get involved in contests or things like that?

Turbeville: We try not to.

Jenkins: So you are really not interested in doing that?

Turbeville: No, You are talking about sponsoring fishing tournaments

and such.

Jenkins: Yes.

Turbeville: You start that you open a Pandora's box that there is no end to.

Jenkins: You don't like that.

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: Are you forced ever to get involved?

Turbeville: Seldom. Occasionally, but seldom. It has to be a real special situation before we get involved in it anywhere.

Jenkins: Like what?

Turbeville: If somebody who is a real good customer puts on a tournament or something and kind of puts the bite on you, you will have to kind of help them once in a while. But your general tournaments, we don't do it.

Jenkins: But there is no such thing as keeping track of whose baits catch more fish, I suppose.

Turbeville: Not really.

Jenkins: I see. You told me about advertising. How about public relations? Now this is the main plant. Do you get involved much in public relations?

Turbeville: The main thing we do is give lures to our sales representatives, that is maybe 70 people all over the United States. They set up their own promotional people. If they have got a friend who is a good fisherman,

why, they will furnish him baits. And we participate in the cost with them.

Jenkins: What about local public relations? Do you get much involved in baseball and all that kind of thing?

Turbeville: No, no more than any other civic situation. We sponsor a little league baseball team. We give to the Boys Club. We give to the high school football, whatever it is.

Jenkins: Are you one of the biggest employers in Gainesville?

Turbeville: Oh, no. We are probably the third.

Jenkins: Well, that is way up there. Who else are the biggest employers?

Turbeville: National Supply is the biggest. Arco Steel, that is big. And then Weber Aircraft is big here. They hire several thousand people.

Jenkins: You are a local business.

Turbeville: Yes, we are just local.

Jenkins: These folks are not local.

Turbeville: No, they are not local. I guess we are probably the biggest local.

Jenkins: Biggest local employer and have been, I suppose, for quite a while.

Turbeville: Yes, probably. I expect so.

Jenkins: Are there any particular laws that are troublesome to the

bait company or peculiar to bait companies?

Turbeville: Not really.

Jenkins: Do you have any run-ins with OSHA?

Turbeville: They have checked us three or four times, and we have come out smelling like a rose.

Jenkins: Just routine checks? You have never been reported?

Turbeville: We got reported by an employee one time, and they came in here and couldn't find anything. They had some kind of rash or something. They thought that our paint was doing it. They reported it to OSHA.

Jenkins: So you have got a clean slate with OSHA.

Turbeville: Yes, we really do.

Jenkins: How about EEOC? Have you ever had any involvement with them?

Turbeville: No, never. We are checked occasionally by Internal Revenue and have never had any problems there. We are checked occasionally by excise tax people. All of our sales are taxed to the extent of 10%, excise tax. For every \$100 that we sell, we have to pay \$10 excise tax. We get checked on that occasionally. We are a clean operation. We don't have any problems with anybody.

Jenkins: Do you get involved, either the company or personally, in conservation programs and . . .

Turbeville: No, not really. There is really not anything worthwhile particularly. That is hard.

Jenkins: Clubs and organizations.

Turbeville: Not really.

Jenkins: You personally, nor the company, get involved in that.

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: Your present role, the best you can figure it out, is vice president and general manager.

Turbeville: I just kind of run it, I guess. After we had sold out for six or eight months, why, I went down and said, "Van, dadgumit, here you have had this thing for six or eight months, and you haven't told me anything that you want done or anything that we are doing that you don't want done." Van said, "I don't know anything about the bait business. Run it." That is about all there was to it.

Jenkins: That is interesting. I would like to follow that up a little bit because I have interviewed several where someone else has come in and bought them out, and especially if it is a national company, and . . .

Turbeville: Has ruined the business.

Jenkins: And since you have got almost a free rein, you are the only one to blame.

Turbeville: I have got too much of a free rein.

Jenkins: If it goes sour you can blame yourself.

Turbeville: Everything that goes bad is my fault. It really is.

Jenkins: What is your age?

Turbeville: 69.

Jenkins: First let's look at what visions you have and plans for the future of the Bomber Bait Company. What do you see ahead?

Turbeville: I don't see anything except better things for us. We keep some new stuff on the steam all the time.

Jenkins: Do you have any plans or thoughts or visions of expanding geographically, going into new production areas?

Turbeville: Not really.

Jenkins: You are already international, you say. Since it was sold, apparently, there has been additional expansion.

Turbeville: Mexico is the main addition.

Jenkins: How about sales?

Turbeville: Well, our sales have probably doubled since 1968.

Jenkins: Internationally. You told us how international you were before '68.

Turbeville: I expect Japan is the only thing we have added. We are selling everywhere else that we did before.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea of what proportion of your total sales is continental U.S., and the rest of it is across . . .

Turbeville: 95%. We don't export a whole lot.

Jenkins: Are you looking for expansion there much?

Turbeville: Not really. You get into all sorts of problems when you

don't have any sort of sales organization. You don't know who you are selling to or anything. And what we have started doing, and it is working real good, is there are some local exporters. And we sell to the exporters who in turn export. So we don't know where they go.

Jenkins: Now this company you started in '42, '44, somewhere in there, and it is getting on toward 40 years old. And it has really been the primary business of your life.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: You were relatively young when you started.

Turbeville: Right.

Jenkins: It is obviously successful, if you are still one of the very biggest in the country. How do you account for the success of the company and you?

Turbeville: Product, good business policies. That is the two things primarily, I think.

Jenkins: Well, what kind of good business policies?

Turbeville: Well, fair to everyone. Honest operation. No under-the-counter dealings. No hanky-panky. When I tell somebody something, I think they are sure that is the way it is.

Jenkins: Is there plenty of opportunity for under-the-counter and hanky-panky?

Turbeville: Well, you better know it.

Jenkins: Like what?

Turbeville: Extra discounts. "If you will buy so much," or "I will get out and push this for you if you will pay me a little money," and all that sort of stuff.

Jenkins: You just don't do that.

Turbeville: No. We didn't do it in Mexico. That is where you run into that. In Mexico I told them, "No payoffs."

Jenkins: You think that you can manage in the foreign market without that.

Turbeville: Again, we don't manage much in foreign markets. We sell mostly to exporters.

Jenkins: I see. They take care of that.

Turbeville: Whatever they do with the merchandise we don't know.

Jenkins: In Mexico with your production facilities . . .

Turbeville: They have all sorts of opportunities to palm. We got delayed on coming out with merchandise, and parts going in there and everything, until they found out we weren't going to pay them anyway. And then everything smoothed out. If you had ever started it, there would be no end to it.

Jenkins: Well, apparently, some people feel that you can't get by without doing that, but you found that you could.

Turbeville: Yes, I think so. That's right.

Jenkins: You grew up in Gainesville and have done all of your

lifetime business here. To what extent have you got involved in civic or community activities?

Turbeville: My greatest accomplishment, that I am kind of proud of, is little league baseball. When my kids got old enough to play little league baseball, why, they didn't have anything. They had one little old field that was just dimly lit. And I tell you the City Council and the city manager hated to see me coming.

Jenkins: When was this, about?

Turbeville: In the early 60's, I guess. And when I got out of it, why, we had 9 fenced and lighted little league fields.

Jenkins: Is that right? So you kind of . . .

Turbeville: When you came into town did you see that?

Jenkins: Yes.

Turbeville: I did all of that, I really did. I wore out cars dragging the fields. I got one of the commissioners out here to haul in the right kind of dirt. I would get out there and drag it with a rail and smooth it and survey it.

Jenkins: So you didn't just give them trouble, you were out there working.

Turbeville: Sure, and they knew it.

Jenkins: Now who backs that financially?

Turbeville: Merchants.

Jenkins: Does the city or the county in any way . . .

Turbeville: Now this is why the city hated to see me, they had to put up the lights and build the fences, build the backstops. That is what I was after them on. They had the facilities there, I mean the area, the land.

Jenkins: Any other?

Turbeville: This is the main thing, the main thing that I have done.

Jenkins: Well, have you belonged to the Chamber of Commerce?

Turbeville: Oh, yes, we belong to the Chamber of Commerce. I used to belong to the Rotary Club, but I hated to go down there and sing "Oh, Rotary, Oh, Rotary" every morning. If you missed a meeting they would call you, and you would have to go to Whitesboro or Denton or something to make it up. That just wasn't my can of corn. I didn't like to be that regimented. I never did get in any kind of politics.

Jenkins: Are there trade organizations in the lure business?

Turbeville: The big one is the American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association.

Jenkins: Have you been involved?

Turbeville: Yes, we belong to that. We have a national show every year.

Jenkins: Have you ever personally got involved in it's operation?

Turbeville: No, not in it's operation, no. That is some more unnecessary . . .

Jenkins: It would take away from your fishing time.

Turbeville: It durn sure does. All that is to build up somebody's ego. It doesn't accomplish anything very much.

Jenkins: What about your reading habits? Do you have any particular ones besides keeping up with the Field and Stream type things?

Turbeville: Oh, I just read a little bit on magazines. I don't read very much any more.

Jenkins: Did you ever?

Turbeville: Not really.

Jenkins: You do, I am sure, keep up with . . .

Turbeville: Yes, with what is going on. As far as just sitting there and reading all of the stories, no.

Jenkins: Do you read anything else besides that?

Turbeville: Not much.

Jenkins: Read the paper, I suppose.

Turbeville: Read the paper, the stock market, the sports page. You don't ever need to read the paper. The television has already told you what the news is by the time the paper comes out.

Jenkins: Have you ever got involved in any other kinds of businesses on the side?

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: This has been it.

Turbeville: This is it, yes. None.

Jenkins: You say you watch the stock market. Do you play it some?

Turbeville: Yes, if you call it playing it. I invest a little bit in it. I don't trade stocks or anything.

Jenkins: But you never actually invested in a company and got involved with it in any way.

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: This has been it.

Turbeville: The whole can of corn.

Jenkins: You say you are 69. How do you feel about retirement? How do you look upon it?

Turbeville: The way I look at retirement is about six feet deep.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Turbeville: I don't see why anybody wants to retire if they can contribute anything. As long as they are healthy and their mind is good. When you get to where it isn't, then you need to retire. As long as you can contribute . . .

Jenkins: Especially as long as you can do research,

Turbeville: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: Not a bad combination. So I assume, then, so long as you feel that you . . .

Turbeville: As long as I am healthy I will stay here as long as they want me. It is just that simple. All I want to do is go fishing once in a while.

Jenkins: But I assume you wouldn't want to be able to fish all of the time.

Turbeville: No.

Jenkins: You like coming down here, is what I am talking about.

Turbeville: Oh, sure. It is a little pride in what you have built up, and you want to see it in it's continuity as much as you can.

Jenkins: I assume you have no ownership.

Turbeville: Not a penny.

Jenkins: But you still have strong personal feelings.

Turbeville: I don't realize that it is not mine. I mean the way I operate it. I don't know of a thing I would do different if I did own it.

Jenkins: Well, we are to that point where I indicate that I have asked all of my questions. But this is your interview, and we want to be sure that we get into it everything that you want. Is there anything that you can think of that I didn't ask that you would like to respond to before we finish?

Turbeville: There are only 3 things that I haven't touched on like we should, Ike Walker, Mrs. Case, and without those two

I doubt that this business would have been anything like the success it has been. They might could have done without me, but I certainly could not have done it without those two people, because they are the most important people in my business life.

Jenkins: Now you have spoken about Ike Walker.

Turbeville: And Mrs. Case has dedicated her life. She came to work here when she was 16 years old as a bookkeeper. And she runs this business. Without those two people this business would have had a hard time. Because I don't have the skills that Ike has to make and develop new items all the time. I don't have the skills that she has to do all of the detail and routine work that has to be necessary.

Jenkins: She has been here that long, and Ike walker you say is 78,

Turbeville: She is 49.

Jenkins: Well, she has got a long time.

Turbeville: Oh, yes, she is young. She is just a kid.

Jenkins: She went to work as a kid.

Turbeville: Mrs. Case went through five children, and she didn't miss very much time working here when she was having kids and when she would come back to work. She really didn't. And the other thing is Van Ellis. He is one of the greatest

people I ever knew. He really is. And he is the one that owns the business. And I have never asked for a thing that he hasn't said, "I think we should do it. Use your own judgement." And I don't think that I have ever asked for a thing that he thought I was wrong in asking for it. I don't ask for much.

Jenkins: Now you say that he has never taken money out of the business.

Turbeville: That's right.

Jenkins: You said that before it was bought out that you did very little financing. Has there been much after?

Turbeville: Oh, yes, there has been a lot of financing since then, because we have expanded so fast. You see, we were expanding real slow. And we have expanded a lot faster because of his financial strength. We wouldn't afford to risk building debts, but he didn't care. He told us, "Blow and go."

Jenkins: Would you indicate how much business has improved since Van Ellis bought the company?

Turbeville: More than doubled.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Turbeville: Oh, yes. We couldn't have run it up that fast.

Jenkins: And the future looks just as bright?

Turbeville: Brighter than ever. It really does.

Jenkins: And I think you indicated that right now you are one of the very biggest.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: Sitting right here in Gainesville, Texas.

Turbeville: Yes.

Jenkins: You may be the biggest.

Turbeville: Could be. Could be.

Jenkins: You just really don't know.

Turbeville: There is no way of really knowing, but I know we get our share of the business. And we are fixing to get more of it.

Jenkins: How many companies make up really the bulk of the bait business?

Turbeville: I think the biggest three in the United States is Bomber, Rebel and Bagley.

Jenkins: Would you even have the wildest guess of what portion of the market they total?

Turbeville: No, I really don't.

Jenkins: But they make up the high, substantial . . .

Turbeville: We are the three biggest in the United States.

Jenkins: Do the others kind of come and go or are they pretty stable?

Turbeville: They really do. The lure business is real strange. There is really not a company that is a major factor in the lure business that isn't run by the people that started it.

Jenkins: Is that right? So it is very much a family type business.

Turbeville: Heddon, they had the world by the string. They are no factor at all any more.

Jenkins: Did they sell out?

Turbeville: Several times.

Jenkins: Oh, it is just a name.

Turbeville: It used to be the place with James Heddon and his son running it, it was the beautiful rod company. Beautiful lure company. Beautiful everything,

Jenkins: And you say now they are . . .

Turbeville: No factor at all.

Jenkins: So the strong ones are founders,

Turbeville: The strong ones are founders, exactly.

Jenkins: Still in charge. Are there many little garage operators?

Turbeville: Yes, a lot of them,

Jenkins: Coming and going all of the time.

Turbeville: A lot of them around every lake. There are a lot of things that they can make without very much know-how.

Jenkins: How do you look upon those? Do you think that is healthy or does that bother you, or how do you think about those?

Turbeville: Well, it costs us some sales. All that they sell, why, we don't sell. It doesn't bother us. We get our share. If it was just one of them it wouldn't make any difference,

but when you have got little ones everywhere . . .
You see, they will get out and make a little bait.
And they are good fishermen, and they will get out
and catch a bunch of fish and promote the camps
around the lake. And that is where they . . .

Jenkins: Well, as a businessman, as, I assume, a free enter-
prise man, do you like to see those guys out there
doing that?

Turbeville: Very few of them have anything original. Most of them
copy something that somebody else has designed and
created. They are not a benefit to the industry, I
don't think. A lot of them don't pay excise tax. They
sell stuff and put the money in their pocket and no way
to check them. That's really not healthy. Once in a
while somebody will come up with a new innovative idea,
and it will blow and go.

Jenkins: Do the big companies like you ever buy a bait?

Turbeville: We never have. Some of them have, but we have never
bought a bait company.

Jenkins: Do you ever buy a bait, a design?

Turbeville: No, we never have. We have a lot of them sent to us, but
we either have already got the same idea already under-
way, or in our baits. A lot of people think they have de-
signed a new bait when they put a different color or

something on it. We don't really get anything very innovative.

Jenkins: I see. Is there really a great deal to what you put on the end of that line in terms of what you are going to catch?

Turbeville: You bet. It makes a tremendous amount of difference.

Jenkins: Color, movement.

Turbeville: Color, movement, depth, type of fishing. It really does. It makes a lot of difference.

Jenkins: What about sound? Have you got into the sound business?

Turbeville: You bet. We have a test tank out here. We run samples of every day's run. We go out there and run it. We have an underwater microphone. We know what every bait sounds like under the water. We know what they look like in the water.

Jenkins: This is what sound the bait makes running through the water.

Turbeville: Right.

Jenkins: You haven't got involved in creating sound?

Turbeville: Electronic sound? No. We never will.

Jenkins: Why?

Turbeville: It is something that I don't think is practical. They have had things like that for years.

Jenkins: What about smell? Have you ever got involved in putting

smell on them?

Turbeville: No, Smell, I am sure, would have something to do, but we never have gotten involved in that. You might catch cat fish.

Jenkins: Well, when you personally go fishing do you always use lures, or do you go in for live bait?

Turbeville: No, I always use lures.

Jenkins: You mean you don't ever get nasty, old, smelly bait.

Turbeville: Never. The only thing I ever do is I take the grand-kids over to a little lake where there are some perch and go worm fishing.

Jenkins: For perch?

Turbeville: Yes, perch, that is about it.

Jenkins: Well, can you go catfish fishing with a lure?

Turbeville: Not really. You catch a few occasionally, but it is the exception rather than the rule.

Jenkins: When you want to go catfishing you probably do have to get involved in other baits.

Turbeville: Oh, yes. That is somebody else's can of corn. They have got all sort of catfish bait.

Jenkins: You are a bass fisherman.

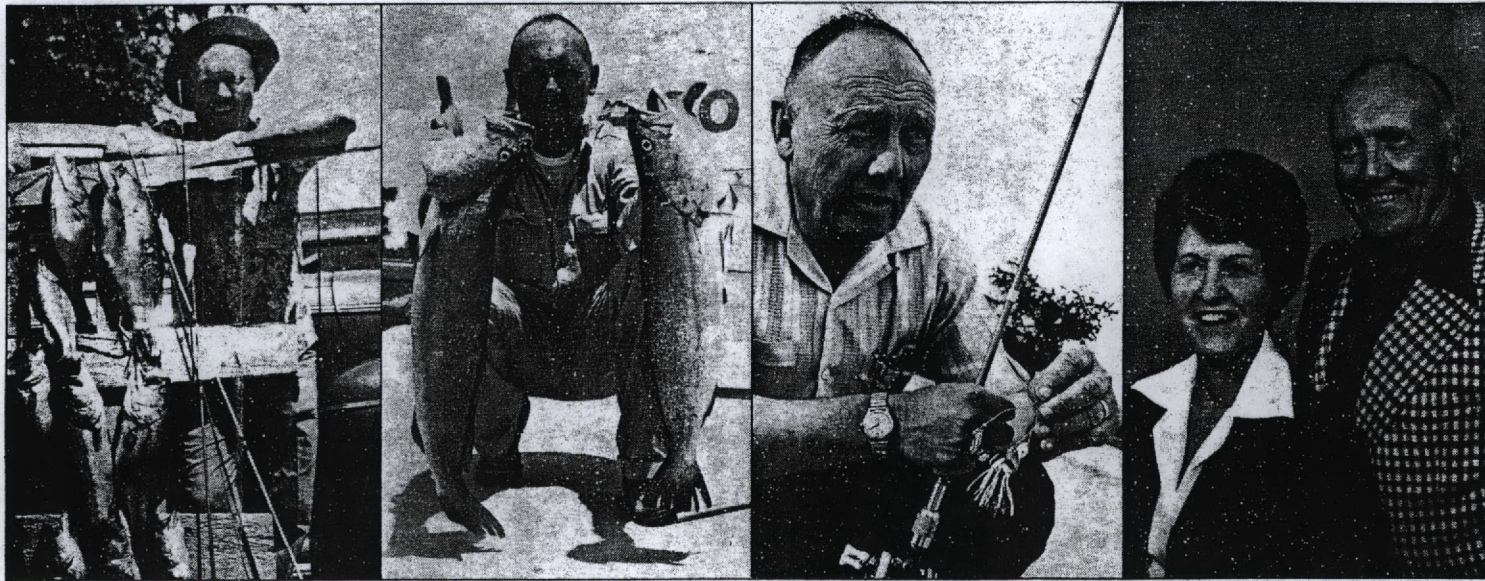
Turbeville: That's right. Hard lure, Hard lure , spinner baits, such as that, Crank baits, and spinner baits, and top water, that is our main thing.

Jenkins: Okay, is there anything else that you would like to
 add?

Turbeville: I can't think of a thing.

Jenkins: If you can't think of anything else, we will stop it
 at this point, and I thank you very much.

A P P E N D I X



A TRIBUTE TO CLARENCE TURBEVILLE, THE BOMBER BAIT MAN. CONGRATULATIONS!

In the springtime month of May in 1912 a great fisherman was born—Clarence “Turby” Turbeville. His love of fishing lead him into whittling out a funny looking lure that he named “Bomber”. The bait started catching lots of fish and other fishermen found out about it. After much pressure to sell his design to other fishermen, he and his partner, Ike Walker, started what is now known as Bomber Bait Company. Over 40 years have passed and Bomber Bait Company is still run by the same management headed by Clarence “Turby” Turbeville. The noticeable difference is over 40,000,000 baits have been sold and more than 20 baits are articulately designed and marketed nationally today. Not

From
Van Ellis
and the Directors and Shareholders

bad for a bait company who's total assets in 1940 were \$1,500.00 and today over \$2,000,000.00. Clarence “Turby” Turbeville has revolutionized the bait manufacturing business. His design ability, management techniques, good humor and honest dealings have led him to become the undisputed leader in the bait manufacturing business. Some of the baits which “Turby” has designed and manufactured are the original Bomber (which is still a best seller after 40 years), the Water Dog, Bushwhacker, Spin Stick, Jerk Bait, Slab Spoon, Gumpy Jigs, Speed Shad, Pin

Fish, Spinner Minnow, Model A's, Paddle Whacker and Long A.

Bomber has had a continued growth pattern every year since World War II, and the Bass have declared war against the Bomber Bait ever since it splashed down for the first time in the 1940's. This message is a tribute to a great businessman and bait manufacturer, “Clarence ‘Turby’ Turbeville”, and his fine management team at Bomber. Fine employees such as Jean Case, Barry Stegall, Ike Walker and others have helped make Bomber synonymous with great fishing throughout the world.

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