

"GARLAND PERSPECTIVE"
INTERVIEW WITH ROLAND ERWIN COOMER

OCTOBER 14, 1987

- HAYSLIP: Hello, my name is Mike Hayslip and I am your host for today's segment of Garland Perspectives, a series of interviews with some of those special folks that have aided so much in Garland's growth and development in the first half of the twentieth century. This series is sponsored by the Garland Sesquicentennial Commission in celebration of our state's 150th anniversary. Our special guest here today in the Storer Cable Studio is Mr. Roland Erwin Coomer, a native son born in Garland, he tells me, a little earlier near the intersection of First Street and Avenue F approximately in Garland. His parents were Charlie and Pearl Coomer, who lived in Garland, and his grandparents the Fred Coomer's came to the Duck Creek predecessor of Garland in late 1800's and formed in the area which is east of the present site of the new power plant. In 1927, he married Ann Pearl Shugart. She is the daughter of Earl B. and Maude Shugart who farmed about 160 acres located where the Intercontinental Plant and Williams Stadium is now located. Mr. Coomer has always worked in Garland. He tells me he worked at two soda fountains initially, both at Handley's Drug and later at Brown's Drug before turning to his major life's work which was in the area of finance. Mr. Coomer was Cashier and Director of what is now Republic Bank Garland. He was an Organizing Director and later served as President and Chairman of the Board of Garland Federal Savings and Loan, now First Garland Savings and established the Coomer Insurance Agency in 1947 which later became the Butler/Coomer Agency when the Coomer's son-in-law Doug Butler joined the firm. Mr. Coomer is former President of the Garland Rotary Club and a Past Master of the Garland Masonic Lodge 441. He served about seven terms on the Garland City Council and is well known in the community. Before her retirement, Mrs. Coomer was active in business affairs and was associated with the late Carl M. Brown in his Ford Agency, his insurance agency, and the development of Garland Heights Addition which is bounded by Walnut Street, Glenbrook and Sylvan Drive and in both the commercial and residential development of the Casa Linda Shopping Center. Mr. and Mrs. Coomer had one daughter, Jerri Butler of Garland and three grandchildren, Brad, Brenda and Jeff Butler. Is this information correct Mr. Coomer?
- COOMER: That's correct.
- HAYSLIP: Good. Will you tell me why, looking back on it, you think your family came to or stayed in Garland all these years?
- COOMER: Well, I think they found it was a place that they liked, their roots were here and they had no reason for ever wanting to leave. It was a good town, we had good people and they preferred to stay in a community of that type.
- HAYSLIP: Do you feel like we still have that sort of thing?
- COOMER: We do.
- HAYSLIP: You must, because you are still here. What is your earliest recollection of Garland?
- COOMER: Well, I can recall the business area on the south side of what is now west

Garland. From Sixth Street on west were all frame business houses. All frame buildings.

HAYSLIP: Did they have frame sidewalks as well?

COOMER: Frame sidewalks as well. If any at all.

HAYSLIP: And, you remember those. You went to school in Garland?

COOMER: Yes, Uh-huh I did.

HAYSLIP: And, you I think told me that you attended school up on the central site bounded by Eighth Street, Avenue D and Avenue A.

COOMER: That's right.

HAYSLIP: You were telling me earlier about some of your recollections of teachers and things you studied up there in those days.

COOMER: Yeah. The teacher that impressed me most was Mrs. Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins was our seventh grade teacher, she later married a gentleman who was connected to the Texas Power and Light Company and they moved to Chicago. It so happened that when an attempt was made on President Roosevelt's life in Chicago, she was wounded in that particular incident, not seriously, but she was wounded. One of the bullets did hit her and wounded her slightly.

HAYSLIP: She survived school teaching, but not politics.

COOMER: That's right.

HAYSLIP: What do you remember during those years being a teenager in Garland as the things you did with your time? What were your recreation, leisure and social activities in those years?

COOMER: Well, mostly parties in homes. We did have a few of what we called Barn Dances where we would dress up in overalls and things like that and have the dances. But, mostly in the homes where the mother and father of that particular child would invite us into their homes and have parties and games and things like that. And, of course it was mostly some dancing, we had music and we had some dancing.

HAYSLIP: How was the music provided?

COOMER: Phonographs

HAYSLIP: Most teenagers in this day and time or many of them go to parties in their own car and some borrow their parent's cars. How did you arrive at these social parties?

COOMER: Well, our town was so small at that time that it wasn't too much trouble to walk to them. They were close enough that we could walk.

HAYSLIP: Do you remember a curfew or any time you had to be home after one of these activities?

COOMER: No, we had no problem in those days with curfews. We knew we were supposed to be in at a certain time and knew that we would have to be up early the next morning to go to work and we just got home on time.

HAYSLIP: That solved the problem. I believe you told me that you were affiliated with the Boy Scouts.

COOMER: Yes, I was.

HAYSLIP: Can you tell us a little bit about that?

COOMER: Well, we went on trips quite often. Oscar Skipwith was our Scout Master and Oscar took us on trips and we were very active. We had a group of mighty fine young men in the Scouts at the time, and I'm sure they still are today, but Oscar Skipwith with was a leader and he knew how to handle boys and he just always took us on trips that were very interesting and informative as far as our learning abilities were concerned.

HAYSLIP: You later became a Scout Master didn't you?

COOMER: No, I was never a Master, just a Boy Scout. Oscar stayed on as Scout Master for a long, long time. He was very active in the field.

HAYSLIP: Where else did you go for entertainment in those days? What else was available to you?

COOMER: Not much in the way of entertainment in Garland. Now, we did go into Dallas occasionally and around Christmas time go around in the various places and those that could sing would sing Christmas Carols. I didn't join in too much on that. But, those were some of the things that we did back then.

HAYSLIP: How did you get back and forth to Dallas in those days?

COOMER: A Jitney.

HAYSLIP: Ah, the Jitney. Tell us something about that.

COOMER: Well, the fellow that had one of the Jitney routes, they were old cars some of them open, no tops on them.

HAYSLIP: That made it easier to get more people in them.

COOMER: They would take you right to where you wanted to go.

HAYSLIP: What did it cost? About.

COOMER: I'd say around 50¢. Probably 50¢.

HAYSLIP: That was when 50¢ meant something.

COOMER: Yea, it was, that's right. But Jitney was our main source of getting to and from Dallas where people didn't have their own cars. That was what I always had to use was the Jitney when I went into Dallas.

HAYSLIP: O.K. I believe you were a Rotarian. What other service or civic clubs do you remember back then in the early days in the 20's and 30's in Garland?

COOMER: I think the Rotary Club was the first club that was organized here. Later, the Lions, Kiwanis, but the Rotary was the only one in which I participated.

HAYSLIP: Hasn't Garland always had some sort of a Chamber of Commerce or business men?

COOMER: Oh yes, they have. Mr. George Alexander, Sr. and Mr. Walter Gulley kept the Chamber of Commerce active and had regular meetings and those meetings were held in the second story or on the second floor of where Baker's Hardware and Furniture is now.

HAYSLIP: That would be on the south side of the square?

COOMER: On the south side. Uh-huh.

HAYSLIP: So that's what we had for a Performing Arts Center or a Meeting Hall.

COOMER: That's right. That's where they held the Chamber of Commerce meetings and always had a very entertaining program and Mr. Gulley and Mr. Alexander were very, very active in keeping that movement alive.

HAYSLIP: Your interests throughout most of your adult life has been in financial areas, banking, mortgage, finance or insurance. You went to work in what was then the State National Bank, did you not?

COOMER: That's right.

HAYSLIP: What do you remember were your duties in those days?

COOMER: I was a runner. Doing any old odd jobs that came up.

HAYSLIP: You must have run well, you stayed there a long time.

COOMER: We had an old gentleman who was janitor there, Mr. Ely Erwin, and when he'd get sick well we would get out brooms and mops and we'd do his job while he was ill. Anything that came up in the bank that needed to be done, we did it.

HAYSLIP: Mr. Coomer, banking in those days in a small town I judge was terribly different than what Garland banker's find things today, wouldn't you agree?

COOMER: That's right. We closed our doors, but we didn't lock them at 4:00 in the afternoon. We didn't Jock them until we were ready to go home.

HAYSLIP: Is this what you'd call banker's hours?

COOMER: Well, I guess you would. But, we just closed the doors at 4:00, then the regulations came restricting the hours that we could work some of our employees and we had to start locking our doors. Of course, that was very upsetting to some of our customers until we explained the reason for our having to do it.

HAYSLIP: You blamed it on the government.

COOMER: Well, it was their regulation that caused us to do it. That's right.

HAYSLIP: Mr. Coomer, a bank in Garland in those days unlike today was primarily serving customers with agricultural orientation.

COOMER: Absolutely.

HAYSLIP: So that in those days it was a matter of lending to somebody who might or might not make a crop depending on the rain.

COOMER: The farmer and farming is the only business that I know of that the farmer can go broke every year and stay in business.

HAYSLIP: If he holds the land.

COOMER: If he holds the land. On January 1st they'd line up there for their arrangements for their money for the coming year. And, as I say it's the only business I know of that a person can go broke every year and stay in business.

HAYSLIP: What do you remember about crop prices and what we used to call panics I think say back in the 1920's before the depression?

COOMER: Well cotton got down so cheap around five and six cents a pound that Mr. Davis, the late Mr. Allen Davis, Sr. told the farmers that if they would take their cotton down to the compress and bring a compress receipt up there the bank would pay for their ginning and picking and we would let them have a little

money to live on, but not sell the cotton. We would hold the compress receipt and then when the market came back they still had an opportunity to sell it for some profit.

HAYSLIP: Would this be in the early twenties?

COOMER: Well, this was, yes, uh-huh.

HAYSLIP: So, the bank took the position to hold.

COOMER: Absolutely, Mr. Davis knew they couldn't pay their loans with the prices like they were.

HAYSLIP: What would the alternative have been?

COOMER: Well, they would just hold them, they couldn't pay much more than the picking and the ginning. They couldn't put anything on their notes. So, Mr. Davis suggested that they just bring the compress receipts in and we would advance them the money to pay the ginning and the picking and give them a little money to live on until the market, sooner or later it would have to come back.

HAYSLIP: He hoped.

Coomer: He Knew it.

HAYSLIP: You were in the bank I believe at the time of the stock market crash of 1929. What do you recall about that?

COOMER: Well, I was elected Cashier in April, 1929 and six months later, October 29, was when the crash came. Of course, it was unbelievable the things that were happening, especially up in the New York area where the Wall Street and stock houses were located. People were committing suicide, they were jumping out windows, they were just doing everything. The small thing I guess on our part, Mr. Davis was to show our faith in the economy and he suggested that we all put some money in a pot and buy some General Motors stock, and we did.

HAYSLIP: Now, who's we all?

COOMER: All of us in the bank. The employees in the bank. I think, as I recall the price of General Motors stock about the time the crash occurred was around \$90.00 a share and I think it had gone down to around \$30.00. I think we were able to buy it at \$30.00. He just did it as a gesture to show our faith in the economy and that sooner or later it would recover.

HAYSLIP: Things did get a little worse though.

COOMER: Oh yes, it did. In fact, it got so bad in 1932 that some of them said we were going to look back on 1932 as it being a good year. It was so bad.

HAYSLIP: We read a lot today about banks and about Savings and Loans and I believe you were in the bank at the time the government became so concerned they just closed them all.

COOMER: That's right. President Roosevelt after he took office decided there were so many banks failing over the country, especially the small state banks and some national banks. There was no way the examiners could get around and determine which ones were solvent and which ones were not. So, Mr. Roosevelt came up with the idea of closing all of them and then letting them reopen as they prove they were solvent and ready to carry on there.

HAYSLIP: At that time Garland had only one bank.

COOMER: Only one bank, that's right the State National Bank.

HAYSLIP: And so the one bank in town was closed.

COOMER: That's right. When time came and it was announced in Washington that they were going to allow the Dallas banks to reopen, Mr. Davis contacted Hatton Summers who was our representative in Garland at that time and he used his influence in arranging for our bank to open simultaneously with the Dallas banks so it wouldn't look like and our people wouldn't feel like our bank wasn't a good bank.

HAYSLIP: That was very important I take it.

COOMER: Oh you bet it was important. He contacted Hatton Summers and Mr. Summers used his influence and arranged for us to reopen simultaneously with the Dallas banks.

HAYSLIP: O.K. What do you remember specifically about the bank, how must it feel to work for a place and be told that you were closing your doors? Do you recall?

COOMER: Well, it's a scary feeling, I'll tell you. Because, not even those of us in the bank were able to cash a check or anything. If we had money in our accounts we could not cash a check for any money any more than anybody outside, any of the other customers. It was really a scary time. I remember however, later that it was easier to make loans when we did start some recovery. It was easier to make loans during those years, the hard years than it was during the more prosperous time because people didn't expect it. When they came in and you told them that's what you could let them have it was easier to make them loans than it was back when things were more prosperous.

HAYSLIP: Now, you were associated with another type of loan as well and that is the mortgage loans, you were a charter director of Garland Federal Savings, I believe.

COOMER: That's right.

HAYSLIP: You looked not only at short term credit but you had experience with mortgage loans. Could you tell us something about the founding of that savings and loan?

COOMER: Well, they previously had a Building and Loan Association in Garland and after that was liquidated a few of us got together and decided that Garland needed some type of financing for people who wanted to build homes or buy homes.

HAYSLIP: Long term.

COOMER: Long term loans. The banks didn't go over five years at the most for real estate loans.

HAYSLIP: Now we're in 1936.

COOMER: Yeah. That's right. Our loans we started out at 20 - 25 years on them and we borrowed I believe \$25,000 to get started, to have some money to start making loans. We always had a very conservative board, in fact we were criticized a few times for being too conservative. But, we weren't trying to be the biggest; we wanted to be the best.

HAYSLIP: And, it's still there.

COOMER: It's still there.

HAYSLIP: The Building and Loan you referred to in Garland that was earlier.

COOMER: Yes. Mr. Davis was President of that and Ben Alexander was Secretary. And, unfortunately something with Ben's health kept him from performing his duties

and Mr. Davis just had to take over the whole operation of the thing. Bless his heart, he just struggled with that and also his job there in the bank. So, they liquidated that. Now, we bought some loans from them when we started this new association.

HAYSLIP: When you say liquidated, could you explain to me?

COOMER: Well, they more or less just sold everything they could.

HAYSLIP: They sold all the loans?

COOMER: Sold all the loans, uh-huh. We bought a few loans from them and other people did. I don't believe anybody took any serious losses. But, when we started ours we bought a few loans or existing loans.

HAYSLIP: You were during those years on the City Council. That must have been an interesting time in city government.

COOMER: Yes. Of course, in 1922 was when we put our power plant in and the first bond issue that Garland issued was for water, water bonds and I won't call his name, but they opened a second bank in Garland at that time where the Hickman Bank had been and the President of that bank sent out circulars and said he was going to make a talk from the west side of the square at a certain time and he opposed this bond issue. He said the town was too small we would never be able to pay back the \$100,000.

HAYSLIP: Now, the bond issue was for the water system.

COOMER: The water system strictly.

HAYSLIP: Now, at that time we were on wells.

COOMER: That's right, and when a house caught fire you just stood and watched it burn. But, anyway this man, the president of that bank made the talk and opposed the bond issue and said the town was too small, it would never be able to repay the \$100,000. Later, he and his wife became two of the most wealthy people in town. Our people like Mr. Davis and Mr. Jones, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Powell people like that voted the bond issue in anyway.

HAYSLIP: It's interesting we now complain about rates and then we are trying to have the water itself. You were there through a lot of the growth of the City electric plant as well.

COOMER: Yeah. Our group from Garland went down to talk to Mr. Carpenter about rates for pumping water. And, for some reason he just more or less ignored them. He just didn't seem to respect them, their presence or anything else and it upset them to the point that on the way home they decided to borrow the money and buy a generator and put in their own system.

HAYSLIP: That's very unusual isn't it? For a private citizen to borrow money on behalf of the City.

COOMER: I should think so, it was about six of them and they borrowed it from the National Bank of Commerce. Mr. George Miller was Cashier and Tiste Adou was President. Mr. Adou's father had founded that bank and they were our principal correspondent, so they went down to Mr. Miller and they borrowed \$25,000 and bought that first engine and that's the way it started.

HAYSLIP: I believe later on there was a good bit of competition between those two.

COOMER: Yes. At one time Texas Power and light had most of the business and there's another thing I'd like to mention to you is that Mr. Carl Brown more or less

appointed himself in the capacity of City Manager and took a petition around and everybody signed it agreeing to use Garland Power and Light service.

HAYSLIP: That was quite a show of support wasn't it?

COOMER: The bank was the first place he went because he felt like if the people in the bank signed it, it would make it easier for him to get signatures from other people in town. And, I would imagine Mr. Davis's name was right at the top of the list and I think mine is fairly close, but they got people to agree to change over from TP&L to Garland Power and Light and then from there on we had a rather tough fight with TP&L. They, at one time went on a flat rate basis of \$1.00 a month regardless of how much you used.

HAYSLIP: You'd like to have that today. Right.

COOMER: Yea. That would be fine. But, our people were loyal and they stuck to our local home owned utilities and in those days we collected very little ad valorem taxes. The proceeds from the power plant paid most of the City's indebtedness and things like that. We collected very little from ad valorem taxes.

HAYSLIP: One of the other things that we are always talking about in Garland is transportation of roads and means of transportation. What do you remember about transportation, other than the Jitney that you mentioned?

COOMER: Well, of course we only had one main road into Dallas and that was down pretty much like the south Garland Road is now. Close to Reinhardt and down through that area down there, but of course it was just a hard surfaced road, and the country roads were all not too passable when there was mud. Sometimes they were too muddy to travel on. We had just the one main road into Dallas and I think it was just called Garland Road.

HAYSLIP: You could take a train, of course. COOMER: Oh yeah, a train. That's right.

HAYSLIP: And, a Jitney was the closest thing to public transportation.

COOMER: That's right.

HAYSLIP: Then, at one time I believe there was a movement to get a rail service. We've talked a lot about that in the last few years.

COOMER: The Interurban. Yeah, they tried to promote a deal on bringing the Interurban on through Garland on to Greenville, I believe.

HAYSLIP: Do you remember anywhere near the year that was? Are we talking in the 20's or...?

COOMER: I believe it was prior to the 20's.

HAYSLIP: At that time we were having the same discussion we just had with Dallas Area Rapid Transit by the rail route.

COOMER: That's right.

HAYSLIP: Almost 70 years before. What happened with the Interurban?

COOMER: It folded up. It just went bankrupt.

HAYSLIP: Let's hope that doesn't happen with the other. In terms of major events in Garland, you married about the same year as the tornado or cyclone.

COOMER: Yeah, that's right. In 1927, January 19, 1927. And the tornado was in May, 1927.

HAYSLIP: What do you recall about that?

COOMER: Well, at that time Annie and I were living with her mother out on the farm and my mother and father and family were living in town and we didn't know about it until Mrs. Shugart's oldest son, Clyde came out to the farm to tell us what had happened in town.

HAYSLIP: About what time of day did that happen?

COOMER: It happened I believe it was after midnight, Mike. It was during the night. Well, it had started earlier, it was on a Sunday I believe. The thundering and heavy lightning and all started earlier in the night. But, I think the tornado part of it, now it could have been before midnight, I'm not positive about that, but we had gotten up and gone to the storm house Mrs. Shugart's, Annie and I.

HAYSLIP: Do I understand you to say that you already had a storm cellar?

COOMER: Yes, Mrs. Shugart had one out there, uh-huh.

HAYSLIP: Was it very common to have storm cellars?

COOMER: Oh yes, very.

HAYSLIP: Did it become more common after the tornado?

COOMER: Yes, Gene Malone even had one up on Malcolm Street.

HAYSLIP: It was a brisk business.

COOMER: It sure was. Everybody came to those things in town. Gene's storm house just filled up when they had bad clouds up there, it was Malcolm then and it's State Street now. Yes, it was very common back in those days for people to have storm cellars. Mrs. Shugart had one and we had gone back to bed, the tornado evidently had risen and passed over her house and we didn't know anything about the damage until her son Clyde came out there to tell us what had happened in town.

HAYSLIP: What was the effect of that in the next few days on the town? Of course, it was very destructive, but how did the people respond?

COOMER: Well, they just cooperated 100%. In fact, the people in Dallas called Mr. [A. R.] Davis [President, State National Bank] and ask them how they could help out there and Mr. Davis expressed his appreciation but, he told them he thought we would be able to handle it pretty well ourselves, and we did.

HAYSLIP: You have mentioned several people that were influential to you, this Mrs. Jenkins your seventh grade teacher and Mr. Skipwith the Boy Scout Master, thinking on down through the years are there any other people that really stand out and why to you?

COOMER: Yes, there are three men. I'll name them in this order, Mr. R. E. Alexander, the late Mr. A. R. Davis, Sr. and the late Carl M. Brown. Those are the three men that did more for me and *my* life than any three I can recall. The reason I'm naming Mr. Alexander first is that he stopped me on the street and ask me if I had been over to the bank to apply for that job opening over there. And, I told him I didn't know anything about it and he said you get your little so and so over there and apply for that job. They are considering you and one other young man here in town. He said "you get over there". Well, I did and I got the job. Now, then Mr. Devis was just a second father to me and Mr. Carl Brown was a third fat her. Annie had two father's, she had her own and Mr. Carl Brown. I had three, Brown, Mr. A.R. Davis. They are the men that were most influential in my life.

HAYSLIP: What are the biggest changes you've seen since those days as we wrap up here? I want to give you an opportunity to make some observations here and give us some of your ideas and opinions. In Garland, what are some of the bigger changes you've seen?

COOMER: One thing that I noticed more than anything else is the fact that people don't devote as much time to their jobs and to their work as we did back in those days.

HAYSLIP: You mean a bigger percentage of leisure?

COOMER: Well, their hours are considerably fewer than the ones we put in back in those days. I might say this, maybe because of my few little jobs that I had before I went to work in the bank were in close proximity to the bank. I didn't even know they knew I was alive and evidently they had noticed I was willing to work. And, that's one thing I have always done, and I think everybody should, just to give their employer a good days work and earn what they are being paid. The town, of course has just grown so rapidly and that is just hard to specify any particular observation of what has happened except just watched it grow.

HAYSLIP: You lead me to my next question. Why do you think that Garland being about the same age as Rowlett, Sachse, Wylie and others, grew to be the size it is?

COOMER: The slogan of teamwork works and I think that was the whole answer. I think the businessmen downtown all worked together and they did everything they could to bring industries in and the first thing of course we brought in was the hat factory the one of any importance. Of course, we had the pickle factory here before.

HAYSLIP: Now, we're in approximately 1939?

COOMER: 1939, the minute we found out I was on the Council at that time and then when we found out that Byer Rolnick was considering moving to Garland and we just camped on Mr. Byer's doorstep out there on Audelia Road until we got them to agree to come. We made a few concessions, but the millions of dollars that have been paid in payroll has compensated for those few concessions we made to them on taxes and utility rates and things like that.

HAYSLIP: So, the Council was involved in business development.

COOMER: That's right. There were instances where we had for instance Emsco, they were trying to buy that property from Mr. E. R. Byer out there and they didn't want to pay him what he was asking. Mr. Davis had a list of about twelve or fifteen of us and this happened about three or four times. He would go around and each one of us would contribute about \$500.00. We'd make up this difference in what they were willing to pay and what Mr. Byer was willing to take. The last thing I contributed \$500.00 on was the sub court house and the bond issue was not sufficient to buy the land and build the building. So, Mr. Davis with his little list came around and we all dug down in our pockets.

HAYSLIP: It got to where you wanted to run and hide...

COOMER: No, no we didn't. I didn't own any property downtown, but I knew it would be good for the old part of Garland. I've always been in favor of doing everything that could be done fairly for the business around that square of Garland. Those were the men or the members of the Chamber of Commerce had bought the 20 acres for Southern Aircraft to come to Garland.

HAYSLIP: Can we pause just a moment? The Chamber of Commerce bought 20 acres for

Southern Aircraft?

COOMER: Yes

HAYSLIP: That is now Intercontinental?

COOMER: That's right. Uh-huh.

HAYSLIP: So, we had a situation where Chamber members contributed and bought land in order to attract an industry.

COOMER: That's right. For a long time in approving the residential areas that were being developed we would not allow any commercial business in it at all because we felt like the businessmen downtown had sacrificed to bring those industries into town and we didn't want somebody else coming in and taking the gravy. We would not for a long time approve, but of course now we have to, but for a long time we would not approve any kind of shopping center, or commercial business at all, in Garland Groves, Garland Heights or any of those little residential areas that were developed.

HAYSLIP: I always wondered why they're not there.

COOMER: That's the reason. We felt like the businessmen downtown were entitled to the business because they were the ones that sacrificed and dug down in their pockets to buy these properties and bring these industries into town.

HAYSLIP: What are the things your proudest of? You've had a lot of good years here.

COOMER: Well, I guess the turning point and you think back to the turning point in your life. I guess the proudest thing was the day I went to work for the State National Bank of Garland. That has meant more to me than anything else in my life. It was a turning point in my life. And, you look back and you think of those things you wonder where you would be and what you would be doing and what you would have done had you not gone into that particular business.

HAYSLIP: As you see that as Republic Bank Garland you can see some of the growth in that area.

COOMER: That's right. That's right.

HAYSLIP: We're gonna show here in a bit a display that you brought to us, I think will be interesting and a lot of people don't know that money was ever issued with the name of a bank in Garland or with the signature of any bank officer of Garland and you've brought these notes to show us. Can you tell us what it feels like to have your signature on money, currency?

COOMER: Yes. Well, I can't tell you how proud it makes me feel or not, Mike, but I feel very honored. Very honored.

HAYSLIP: How were those notes issued?

COOMER: Now when the small bus came out, it was in 1929, then the large bills, the large size bill what we call blanket bills they were phased out and these new ones came in and Mr. Davis and I got the big bills from the engraving department in Washington. We had to stamp the cashier and president's name on them. But, then when they changed the size, Mr. Davis and I signed our signatures and these were engraved on the bills.

HAYSLIP: So, these notes were issued out of the mint, but with the name of member banks. National banks.

COOMER: That's right. You could have equal to your paid in capital in circulation. We had

100,000 in circulation in fives, tens and twenties. And, when we got the last shipment, we knew it was the last shipment, I asked Mr. Davis if I could keep three sheets of it, he said "sure, just put your check in for \$90.00 and that's all you need to do".

HAYSUP: Is that the reason you have three grandchildren so that each of them can have a sheet?

COOMER: Well, I guess that might be.

HAYSLIP: The numbers worked out.

COOMER: Yeah. It worked out fine. But, anyway I kept three sheets of it. That's the way we got them from Washington from the engraving department. We had a big knife we cut them after we got them to put into circulation. But, these have never been cut. They're just like they came from Washington.

HAYSLIP: So, your signature is on there as cashier of the bank and Davis's as president.

COOMER: That's right.

HAYSLIP: Have you got any regrets?

COOMER: No, none that I recall.

HAYSLIP: Well, that's commendable. What sort of advice would you have for younger people in Garland today or contemplating moving to Garland, you've seen so much and what you've got to say is of great value?

COOMER: Well, I tell you education has always been upper most in my mind. I didn't have an opportunity to go on and get the education that I would like to have had. What I would say to the young people today is to strive as hard as possible to get a good education. Stay away from drugs and alcohol and to not let what they might term as their friends influence them to participate in either because those kind of friends are not worth having anyway. And, I would recommend that they stay away from drugs and alcohol and to concentrate on getting a good high school education. College education is fine if you can afford it, but if you can't if you get a good solid and complete high school education along with some common sense it will get you through in my opinion.

HAYSLIP: Mr. Coomer, in closing I want to thank you very much for driving out here and talking with us. I remember you all my life, so I can't recall the date we met, but I can't recall ever not knowing you. I have appreciated through the years very much your attitude and what you've contributed here and thank you for your generosity in sharing some of these recollections with us on behalf of the Garland Sesquicentennial Committee and thank the audience very much for joining us.

COOMER: I appreciate the opportunity, Mike and thank you very much for inviting me.

END OF TAPE