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September 22, 2021

Dr. Todd Moye  
Robnett Professor of U.S. History  
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Dear Dr. Moye.

It was a pleasure to meet you and learn about the Oral History Program at UNT.

With regard to “An Interview with Hoyt Baird” (dated February 14, 1980) and “An Interview with Vernon Baird” (dated February 28, 1980) by Floyd Jenkins as well as the accompanying biographies, The Ninnie L. Baird Special Collection at TCU has no problem with you using these documents for research. Please give attribution to TCU if these materials are utilized in any publication.

Sincerely,

  
Janet B. Quisenberry

Hoyt Baird interview: 1 to 101

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Appendix following

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Interview with  
W. HOYT BAIRD  
February 14, 1980

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

Mrs. Baird's Bakery  
W. Hoyt Baird

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Date: February 14, 1980

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is February 14, 1980. I am interviewing Mr. W. Hoyt Baird, chairman of the executive committee, Mrs. Baird's Bakeries, Fort Worth, Texas. Mr. Hoyt, let's first indicate that you have an excellent company publication here, a brief monograph called The Mrs. Baird's Story, which sketches the history of the company, and this will be in the Archives at North Texas. But let's start by getting you to go back and give your own knowledge of the family background, how the Bairds got to Texas, and kind of lead us up to getting into the bread business. We will have you emphasize some of your own memories of delivering bread in those early days.

Mr. Baird: Well, we moved to Texas from Tennessee in 1901. My father and mother lived in the small towns of Trenton and Obion, Tennessee, where my father was in the bakery

business, what they called a 'confectionery store, which is ice cream and milk shakes and things of that nature.

Jenkins: Now you don't remember any of that specifically I don't suppose, or do you?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Although you were very young.

Baird: Yes, I was four years old when we came from Tennessee. Papa decided he wanted to come to Texas and see what Texas looked like. So he came by himself to Fort Worth and looked around, and decided that he liked what he saw here. So he wrote Mama and told her to load up the kids and get on a train and come to Texas.

Jenkins: Now that was about what year?

Baird: That was 1901. When we first arrived here we lived out on East Belknap. And my father had been in the restaurant business in Tennessee, and he really liked that better than he did the bakery business. So shortly after we moved here we moved out on Exchange Avenue, and he ran a little restaurant on Exchange Avenue. We lived in what they called Rosen Heights at that time, on the north side. And he operated this little cafe on Exchange Avenue where the original Fort Worth Rodeo and Stockshow took place. That is where they used to have the rodeo every year, on Exchange Avenue.

Jenkins: I didn't realize that it didn't originate right where it is.

Baird: The two packing plants were operating at that time, Swift and Armour, on Exchange Avenue. Then we moved from there to across the street from the Santa Fe Depot.

Jenkins: You are talking about the cafe business moved.

Baird: Yes, we moved there, too.

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: We moved from Rosen Heights, and we lived next door to the Santa Fe Cafe. My dad operated the Santa Fe Cafe just across the street from the Santa Fe Depot.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in working for the cafe any?

Baird: No, not at that time.

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: Then we moved from there over on Daggett, and my father opened a bakery just next door to the corner of Daggett and Jennings Avenue.

Jenkins: A bakery?

Baird: Yes. He operated a retail bakery. And there was a drug-store on the corner, Dillon Drugstore. And he operated there at that time, and then we moved over <sup>to</sup> on 512 Hemp-hill. Mama baked bread for the family once or twice a week, and it used to be the custom in the old days, <sup>for</sup> people who made cakes and pies or bread that they were rather proud of, ~~they~~ would hand it over the fence to a neighbor. And she did that, and the people liked it and began to suggest to her that she bake some extra bread

the next time she baked and let them buy it. She was pretty thrifty, so she got where she would bake a few extra loaves. And I would come home from school, she would put it in a basket, and there would be about six one-pound loaves of bread in the basket, and she would have a clean flour sack that she had washed, and she would have that in the basket and she would put the bread in and cover it up. The basket would have a lid on it that just turned back.

Jenkins: Kind of like a picnic basket that we would think of.

Baird: Yes. And I would go around in the close neighborhood, and it didn't take very long to sell six loaves of bread.

Jenkins: What kind of stove did she use.

Baird: Just a regular kitchen stove. It was artificial gas.

Jenkins: Tell us about that artificial gas.

Baird: Well, for quite a long time in Fort Worth that was the gas that we used then. They called it artificial gas. We didn't have natural gas at that time.

Jenkins: Where did this artificial gas come from?

Baird: I can't answer that.

Jenkins: It was a city system?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: That was back in about, I would say 1905-1906, along in there. And finally in 1908 she began to bake extra

loaves of bread, and when I would get home from school she would put it in a basket and then I would go out and sell it. Well, she began to get calls from people saying that they would like to have a loaf of the bread. So it wasn't too long before we started delivering it on a bicycle, and that way we could cover a little more territory.

Jenkins: Before I forget it let's go back and get your birth date.

Baird: October 31, 1896.

Jenkins: Okay. So you started delivering on the bicycle?

Baird: Yes, and it wasn't very long before the demand just kept growing. We had an old Phaeton buggy. It was a two-wheeled buggy. And my dad took the body off of the chassis and then built a wooden panel body on that. And we had two horses. One was name<sup>d</sup> Ned and one was named Nellie. We hitched Ned up to this wagon and started delivering on the wagon. And, of course, we could cover a good deal more territory than we did with the bicycle.

Jenkins: Now you drove the wagon?

Baird: No, I didn't. We hired a neighbor, a Mr. Lipps, to drive the bread wagon for us. He was our salesman for some time while I was in school, and then I would relieve him some time when he was ill. And then in 1911 we moved out on Washington, on Cactus and Washington. I think they have changed the name of Cactus to Jefferson. Well, before we

did that, I will go back to this 512 Hemphill, I guess.  
She was baking this bread in the kitchen.

Jenkins: Now that is where she actually got into the business, was  
on Hemphill?

Baird: Yes. That was 1908. And we had a little house out in  
the backyard, and we remodeled that, refurbished it, and  
we bought another <sup>oven</sup> ~~stove~~ from the old Metropolitan Hotel.  
And it was called the sand oven. It was a metal oven,  
and it had walls and sand in between the walls to hold  
the heat. We could bake about forty loaves of bread a  
day on that. And so we got this wagon and started deliver-  
ing bread in the wagon. I think she bought this oven from  
the Metropolitan Hotel for \$75, and paid \$25 cash and  
paid the rest of it out in bread and rolls.

Jenkins: Is that right? ~~We were~~ <sup>we</sup> baking principally the same loaf  
of bread and rolls? What were the products at that early  
time?

Baird: Just bread.

Jenkins: But you said rolls? You would make rolls?

Baird: Later.

Jenkins: Oh, . . . So you started off simply making one loaf of  
bread?

Baird: Yes. That's right. Then in 1911 we moved out to Cactus  
and Washington, and ~~then~~ we had a little house in the  
backyard there so we took that and fixed it up and built

a little brick oven that opened into this ~~little~~ room, and the brick oven itself was outside. The door to the oven opened to the inside. And you used what you call the "peel" to put your bread into the oven. You have to mix your dough first, and then let it proof.

Jenkins: Proof. Which means?

Baird: Well, when you mix you have just got just a solid piece of dough. In order for it to have life in it you have got to proof it, let it relax. Then you punch it down.

Jenkins: Okay, all right.

Baird: And then you let it proof again.

Jenkins: Well, proof would be kind of rising, then.

Baird: That's right.

Jenkins: Okay.

Baird: Then you take it and cut it into pieces of dough for the size loaf of bread you are going to make, which at that time was a pound loaf of bread. And then you have to roll it up and leave it set on the table and let it proof again. And then after so many minutes, you take it and form it into the loaf of bread. And then after you form it into the loaf of bread you have to proof again, rise again.

Jenkins: Until it is proofing how many times?

Baird: Well, the dough is proofed once. Then you punch it and let it come back. And then you scale it off to make the

one pound loafs of bread.

Jenkins: Okay.

Baird: And then you roll that to what we call rounding. You take two pieces of dough and round them with your hands.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Baird: And then you line them up on the table and let them proof, and when they get light and fluffy, then you make them into a loaf of bread by hand. And then you place them in a pan, and they have to proof again, because each time you take the gas out of the dough by working it, and if you didn't do that, why, your loaf of bread would be heavy.

Jenkins: Now the peel oven, tell us what makes it called a peel oven.

Baird: Well, a peel is a long piece of board that has a tongue on the end of it.

Jenkins: Yes, and you slide the bread in and out.

Baird: You put the pound of bread on the peel and slide it in the oven. And let it bake, and then you run the peel in and take the bread out of the oven.

Jenkins: Okay. Let's pause and go back just a minute. You said your dad had run a bakery himself.

Baird: Yes. He had this bakery on Jennings Avenue and Dalion. He sold that and bought a restaurant downtown.

Jenkins: Was he baking or did he just own that bakery.

Baird: He owned it and did the baking himself.

Jenkins: So he was doing some baking.

Baird: Yes, that was before we moved out on Washington. That was while we were living on 512 Hemphill.

Jenkins: So that actually did precede your mother's selling bread?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: ..Oh, I see... Did she work in that bakery?

Baird: No, she was raising a family.

Jenkins: How big a family?

Baird: In the family in a few years after we came here there were eight of us, four boys and four girls.

Jenkins: Kind of reel those names off, if you would.

Baird: I will name them in order. Bess, and then Dewey, and Hoyt, and then <sup>ROLAND</sup> ~~Rollins~~, <sup>L</sup> ~~G~~lorine, Marjorie, C. B., and Ruth.

I believe that adds up to eight.

Jenkins: Did all of those children live to be grown?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Didn't lose any of them then.

Baird: No.

Jenkins: Back in those days a lot of infants died.

Baird: Well, we had two brothers that died in Tennessee before we left there.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. As infants?

Baird: Well, no, Erban was about ten years old and Omar was an infant.

Jenkins: So your mother had how many children?

Baird: Ten children.

Jenkins: And eight of them were in Texas.

Baird: Yes. Well, four of us were born in Tennessee, and then the other four were born in Fort Worth, after we came to Texas.

Jenkins: But you had eight Texans, anyway. Two died in Tennessee before you came. I was asking you about the peel oven and you had explained that before I interrupted you there.

Baird: Before we moved out on Washington, my father sold this bakery on Jennings Avenue, and he bought a little restaurant downtown on Main Street. And he called it Little Chicago and served meals down there, breakfast, lunch and dinner. And you could buy a full meal for 15¢.

Jenkins: A plate lunch.

Baird: That is hard to believe.

Jankins: Yes, it is.

Baird: That was in about 1908-1909, something like that. And Dewey, my oldest brother, used to go down and help him. And <sup>my oldest brother</sup> the youngsters were ~~and~~ in school, and then when we moved out on Washington I started driving the horse and wagon.

Jenkins: You then became the driver.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: And this was about what year?

Baird: Well, this was in 1911.

Jenkins: There are mentioned in the Mrs. Baird's Story some incidents of the horse and the customers and some of the colorful things that happened on the route. Can you relate a few of those to us? .

Baird: Ned was getting along in years, but when I would make my rounds I had a great big bell on the dashboard of the wagon. And I would take an S wrench when I stopped out in front of the house in this block and hit that bell two or three times, and the customers that I had there in that neighborhood would come out to the wagon. And Ned would take a little grass while I was waiting on the customers. Some of the neighbors once in a while, ~~some of the women~~, would complain about him eating the grass, and I would have to go around and check his head up. And then when I would get ready to go, Ned doesn't want to go. (Laughter) I'd have to take the check rein off in order to get him to leave. He had a habit of, when I'd close the doors ~~up~~, he'd take off and I'd catch him on the run. I'd hit the hub with my left foot and grab the handle on the dash board and pull myself into the cab and we'd be on our way to the next stop.

Jenkins: And did he know the stops?

Baird: Yep. Yeah, he sure did. He knew the route about as well as I did.

Jenkins: Now, there was something mentioned in there about selling coupons to customers.

Baird: Oh, we sold tickets. Round rickets about the size of a dollar, cardboard tickets. We sold twenty-four to the dollar. Bread was a nickel a loaf. So if you'd buy a dollar's worth of tickets you'd get four loaves of bread extra.

Jenkins: Now did you have a goodly percentage of your customers who did that?

Baird: Yeah. Quite a few.

Jenkins: But a lot of them just paid you daily, I suppose?

Baird: Yeah, I had a few charge accounts, I kept in a notebook ~~along~~. I'd keep track of these few charge accounts that I had.

Jenkins: How much bookkeeping was involved in those days?

Baird: Not very much. Very little.

Jenkins: How did you figure out whether you made any profit or not?

Baird: As well as I remember we just went by whether we had a little more money in the bank at the end of the month. (Laughter) We didn't even inventory. We were pretty busy making bread. Of course at this time, now, we started making cakes and pies.

Jenkins: Oh? What got you into that?

Baird: Well, the business kept growing so fast that we got this landlord out on Washington and Cactus to build us a building on the back of the lot. We had a deep lot and the other buildings we were using got to be too small. So he built us

a new building out there and built a sales room on the front of it. So Mama and Dewey were doing the baking, and she'd work in the shop until about 3:00 in the afternoon and then she'd go in and take a bath and change clothes and come back out and wait on the customers.

Jenkins: Let's be sure to get her name recorded here. The original Mrs. Baird. . .

Baird: Her name was, before she married, Ninnie Lilla Harrison. And she was known in the business as Mrs. Ninnie L. Baird. She was working in the shop with Dewey at that time and when they got this new building, then our retail business at the bakery began to grow. And then we started making a wide variety of bakery products, everything from cream puffs to doughnuts to cup cakes and cinnamon rolls, pies, just a full line. And I carried a full line of bakery products on the route, on the wagon. And we operated that wagon retail route, I covered quite a bit of Ft. Worth from about 7:00 in the morning to about 7:00 at night.

Jenkins: Give us some idea of what kind of area you were covering at that time.

Baird: I had everything on the south side, and that goes from what is now Vickery was <sup>then</sup> called Railroad Avenue, and that would be the north side, that would be the north boundary, not on the north side, the north <sup>is</sup> is north of the courthouse. But all the way from Railroad Avenue to what we called the

Boat Works, and that's out on Hickory. The Boat Works, known in those days, is now Texas Steel Company.

Jenkins: Now why was it the Boat Works?

Baird: I don't know. I guess making boats. (Laughter)

Jenkins: Oh, okay. Makes sense doesn't it?

Baird: ~~That was north and south and then, of course,~~ the west side of Ft. Worth was as far as maybe Fifth Avenue, something like that. But it didn't go too far west. Most of Arlington Heights, at that time was just empty space. And we didn't go any further east than South Main. People were living east of South Main, but that was as far as the territory we covered.

Jenkins: Now were you the only delivery man at that time?

Baird: I was the only salesman, yeah.

Jenkins: Okay, so that was the entire route at that time.

Baird: Yeah.

Jenkins: Let's remember we're stopping here with your covering the route and let me go back and get a little bit of background on Mrs. Ninnie Baird her self. Some of your recollections of her as mother, and as beginner of the business. Let's get some insights into her that we may not have in some of this literature. And some of her background, if you know any of it.

Baird: Well, a lot of times while she was baking bread she was also looking after youngsters.

Jenkins: Eight of them.

Baird: And she was a good mother. She was a fine woman. She was a good businesswoman and she was a great mother.

Jenkins: I notice this tribute given to her by the Texas Legislature?

Baird: Texas Senate.

Jenkins: Mentioning some of this background, and so I'd kind of like for you to elaborate a bit on that, if you would.

Baird: Well, she was a hard worker, and she was good, level-headed and got along with people well.

Jenkins: Did she get involved much in the sales at all, or did she strictly stay there and do the production?

Baird: Well, occasionally she rode with me on the route. You know, just to visit with the customers and just to kind of . . . she was just interested in seeing, you know, how people reacted to things.

Jenkins: What kind of boss was she?

Baird: Well, she was pretty persuasive. (Laughter)

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: Oh, she expected you to take care of your job and do your job right. She believed in making something good to eat. She worked hard at it and she was very particular about her ingredients that went into the breads and cakes at that time. She believed in quality and she believed in cleanliness and she was a good Christian

woman.

Jenkins: Did she get involved much in the church and other activities?

Baird: No, she didn't have time.

Jenkins: I'll bet she didn't.

Baird: She was pretty busy.

Jenkins: In addition to baking for the business, did she cook three meals a day at home?

Baird: Well, yeah. We had, ~~see~~, the four sisters and Bess, the oldest sister, was working downtown to help support the family.

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: And then the other sisters, they all had to do their share of the housework.

Jenkins: I see, they were trained as women were trained then.

Baird: Yeah, yeah. While some of the youngsters were rather small, young, she hired a woman to help her look after the youngsters. While we lived on Hemphill. And then after we moved out on Washington the sisters were all old enough to help, we didn't have to hire any help. Mama was working out in the bakery then, in the shop, and the girls took care of the house pretty well.

Jenkins: And Mrs. Ninnie Baird stayed active in the business for how long?

Baird: She stayed active in the business, I believe she retired in '59.

Jenkins: Oh, so she was active many years.

Baird: She died in '61. Her health began to get bad.

Jenkins: At what point did she stop baking bread personally?  
How did that develop?

Baird: Well, we operated on Washington until 1919, and in 1918 I went in the army, World War I. At that time <sup>ROLAND</sup> Rollin, a brother younger than I am, came into the shop and was helping Mama and Dewey with the baking. And so we had a meeting to decide what we were going to do with this retail route. It was a little hard to hire somebody to take care of that. And we made the decision to go into the wholesale business and then just operate retail at the shop. We had an ice man named Charlie <sup>LONG UTA</sup> Longus that delivered ice to us every day, so we hired him as our bread salesman and I left and went into the army. We made arrangements with Harry Adams, who was manager of the Sandegard Stores at that time. Customer-wise we had three wholesale customers; Sandegard down on Tenth and Houston; and had two telephone exchanges at that time, the Lamar exchange downtown on Throckmorton and Tenth, and Roadville Exchange on Roadville and Jennings Avenue. About 1917 I got this Ford. I took on these three wholesale accounts. I would come in from the retail, house-to-house delivery, it was about eleven o'clock, and load up for the three wholesale stops.

Jenkins: Were you still using horse-drawn?

Baird: No, this was when I had a Ford.

Jenkins: About when did you convert from horse-drawn to the Ford?

Baird: About 1917. I could make those three wholesale stops and then get back on the retail route after I got through with that. I didn't even stop for lunch, I'd just eat a pie or something on the route. And that would go on until five or six o'clock.

Jenkins: I was working towards when Mrs. Baird quit being the baker.

Baird: Well, after I got back out of the army January 1, 1919, we had established this wholesale business and the only retail business we had was at the bakery, at the shop.

Jenkins: Oh, people came in. Okay, no more delivery then.

Baird: Yeah; I've seen them lined up for two blocks at 4:30, 5:00 in the afternoon waiting for the bread to come out. We were selling bread faster than we could make it.

Jenkins: And it was still a nickel?

Baird: Yeah, ~~yeah~~. That was right after I got back out of the army and we decided we'd build our own building. Up to this time we had just rented. So we bought a lot on Sixth Avenue and Terrell and we built a brick building and as I remember it was about 30 feet wide and about 70 feet long and we bought a peel oven called Peterson Oven. And I think we spent all the money we had saved, buying

that lot and building that little brick building.

Jenkins: Now was this the first move away from home?

Baird: Yeah. This was the first time we owned our own business. Our own building. And we bought this oven on credit from the Peterson Oven Company.

Jenkins: This one was new, I guess.

Baird: Yeah, and this would bake about 400 to 450 loaves of bread at a time. And then, you see, when I left and went in the army, Sandeguard had built about fifteen little stores scattered over town. The first chain store operation, I guess, grocery store operation in Ft. Worth.

Jenkins: Any of that group left?

Baird: No. They carried the name Sandeguard. And then Turner and Dingy<sup>es</sup> also had a group of stores. Now they still operate a store on Seventh Avenue, Fort Worth.

Jenkins: Really?

Baird: Yes. The Dingy<sup>es</sup>'s are all dead, and a fellow by the name of Lloyd Halloran still runs that store. They had ten or twelve stores scattered around town, but their main store was downtown on Houston Street, upper Houston Street, and Sandeguard was on Tenth and Houston. And when we decided to put on this wholesale route we went and talked to Mr. Adams, who was general manager for Mr. Sandeguard and asked him if he would be interested

in taking our bread production and selling it through his stores. And we had been selling him downtown for a year or so, and he knew what the product would do, and he readily took it on. So we took care of our production capacity on this ~~Washington Baker~~, Washington Street Bakery, through his stores.

Jenkins: He took up most of the capacity then.

Baird: Yes, and what we had left we sold retail at the store.

Jenkins: Were you still producing just one kind of bread at that time?

Baird: No. Bread and cakes, pies, rolls. A full line of bakery products.

Jenkins: By then you really were full line.

Baird: We were just putting bread in the stores except in ~~the~~ downtown stores. We put cakes and everything in <sup>the</sup> downtown stores. ~~We~~ had kind of a delicatessen, and a lot of people came and ate their lunch there in the store.

Jenkins: Your mother was still the chief baker?

Baird: Dewey was the chief baker. Mama was helping Dewey then.

Jenkins: But she was still in the kitchen? ~~that~~

Baird: Yes. Then when we built this brick building, we added another route and took in the downtown area with that route. And then we had a retail shop on the corner of this little building. And we talked to her and told her we thought she had worked long enough and hard enough

that she ought to let us take care of it now. And we had a little difficulty talking her into retiring, too.

Jenkins: This was about what year?

Baird: This was about 1920-21. She would work in the shop and wait on the trade, and we decided that she didn't need to work any longer. We built her a brick home out on, well, it was called Stop 6. It was on the road to <sup>HANDLEY</sup> Hankey. We built a two story brick home, and we finally talked her into retiring.

Jenkins: That was retiring from . . .

Baird: From work in the shop. She still was head of the business.

Jenkins: That is what I figured.

Baird: And then when we incorporated in 1926 she was Chairman of the Board.

Jenkins: Did she operate mostly from her home or did she come down to the business?

Baird: Well, she would come down to the plant quite often. And when we would have meetings, she would sit in on the meetings.

Jenkins: So she remained active.

Baird: Active in the business until 1959.

Jenkins: All right, let's go back and kind of pick up the growth. In explaining when she got out of the kitchen you were pretty well following the chronology of the business there, so maybe we can just pick up there and kind of

grow from there.

Baird: Well, Dewey and <sup>ROLAND</sup> Rollin and I at that time were really running the business. Dewey and <sup>ROLAND</sup> Rollin were doing the baking, and I was in charge of sales. And these two routes were operated by a salesman then.

Jenkins: You were no longer on a route?

Baird: No.

Jenkins: You had become sales manager.

Baird: Yes. Dewey and <sup>ROLAND</sup> Rollin were doing the baking and I was looking after sales. And this is the way we operated for some time. ~~That~~ building ~~that~~ we built in 1919, and ~~we~~ opened in June of 1919. And by 1928 we had added to that building nine times. We had added nine additions to that one little building. And the last addition that we added onto it was in 1928, which was the same year that we built the plant in Dallas.

Jenkins: So you really were growing at that time.

Baird: Yes. We were kind of getting into a ten year cycle. Notice in going through the progress of the business that it seemed like it was every nine or ten years we made a move. For example, we built the Fort Worth and Houston plants and opened them in 1938, which was just ten years from the time we opened the Dallas plant. And the plant in Houston was, of course, a new plant. The Fort Worth plant we built as a bread plant, and we operated

the old plant as a cake plant, when we built the new plant on Summit and Vickery. <sup>1928</sup>

Jenkins: Now it produced only bread products.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: And the other plant was for cakes.

Baird: ~~Bread, rolls and buns.~~ And we produced cakes at the plant on Sixth Avenue and Terrell until we built this plant, the new plant here. <sup>1928</sup> In 1928 <sup>ROLAND</sup> Rollin decided he wanted to go to Dallas and build a new plant over there. So we got together and each of us put up a proportionate share of the cost of building the building in Dallas. It was built on Bryan and Carroll, and we opened it in 1928.

Jenkins: Do you have a recollection of what kind of investment was required for that plant?

Baird: Yes, I do. \$175,000.

Jenkins: Did the financing come strictly from within?

Baird: Yes, from Mama and C. B. Baird, the younger brother was then in the business--and we all put up so much money apiece, and Mama put in her share, too.

Jenkins: Did you go outside and borrow?

Baird: I think we did. I think we borrowed some money from <sup>A.</sup> Lincoln Life Insurance Company. I don't remember how much, but I remember we paid it off pretty quick. We borrowed it on the basis that we could pay it off

within so many years.

Jenkins: Now I believe you mentioned that each time, for awhile, that you started a new operation those became separate corporations.

Baird: This is right. We incorporated Mrs. Baird's Bakery in Fort Worth in 1926, and the officers and board of directors were Mrs. Baird, and D. C. Baird, and W. Hoyt Baird and ~~Rollin~~<sup>Edward</sup> Baird, and C. B. Baird. That was our board of directors. Of the first corporation.

Jenkins: Which was Fort Worth.

Baird: Mrs. Baird's Bakery, yes, in Fort Worth.

Jenkins: And then you opened in Dallas.

Baird: In 1928 when we got ready to open in Dallas, why, we incorporated Dallas as a separate corporation, Mrs. Baird's Bread Company. And the same officers, with Mama as Chairman of the Board. I believe Dewey was president, and we were secretaries and treasurers. Just the family were the officers, just members of the family.

Jenkins: And that was strictly a bread operation over in Dallas, was it?

Baird: Yes. Yes, we made the cakes in Fort Worth, and any cakes that we needed over there we would bake them in Fort Worth. At that particular time we didn't operate too much in the cake business, other than in Fort Worth and the Fort Worth territory. And in making Fort Worth,

we also made what we called country territory. That was the smaller towns outside of Fort Worth. And we covered towns like Hillsboro and Waxahachie, Weatherford and Decatur, Alvord and Bowie, and even into the Dallas area. We covered that territory out of the Fort Worth plant before we built the Dallas plant.

Jenkins: You, then, already had a substantial market before you built down there?

Baird: No, just a few suburban areas of Dallas. Not Dallas proper, no. No, it was a brand new market for us.  
~~Rollin~~ <sup>Edward</sup> took charge of the Dallas plant.

Jenkins: Did that grow rapidly in Dallas?

Baird: Yes. We started adding on to it in a year or two after we built it. Yes, it really met our expectations, maybe a little bit more so.

Jenkins: Let's remember that we are kind of stopping here to start with the Dallas plant, and come back to a little early Fort Worth history. What was the baking industry like in Fort Worth then? Were there considerable commercial bakeries around?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Who were some of the competitors?

Baird: There were three major bakeries. The three of them were Walker, and his brand name was Big Dandy . . .

Jenkins: Big Dandy Bread.

Baird: And he was a pretty good baker. He made a good loaf of bread. And he was the newest baker, other than us. We were small fry. We were bringing up the rear. We were just growing.

Jenkins: All of these at the time were. . . .

Baird: They had been in the business for some time.

Jenkins: Independent bakers, though.

Baird: Yes. Doherty was the second baker, I guess, and they were over on South Main. And Walker was downtown, and he built a new plant. I just don't recall exactly where. . . it was on Lamar and something. I forget where it was. There used to be a street named North Street, but he was just down in the southwest edge of *down* town.

Jenkins: But had he had his own . . .

Baird: He built a new building. He was a good operator, and he made a good loaf of bread. Our business was growing pretty fast at that time. Doherty was slipping. The other baker was Bruno Reich, and they had a little shop downtown. And they only made so many loaves of bread, and they allocated so much bread to each store.

Jenkins: They kind of refused to grow, or what?

Baird: No, they just didn't want to spend any more money to add on to their plant. And, of course, they eventually went out, as all of them did. Doherty went out and then

Walker sold out. Walker sold his business to a concern named Quality Bakers of America, and he took stock. And Quality Bakers of America at that time ~~just~~ finally went bankrupt. I hated to see Mr. Walker suffer like he did because he didn't get anything out of it.

Jenkins: Was that kind of the beginning then of the national bakers to penetrate and to start getting into the territory?

Baird: Well, there were some bakers operating in other parts of the country then that had more than one location, but we didn't have one down here. I guess the first one we had down here was Wonder.

Jenkins: When do you remember them first?

Baird: I don't remember too much about that. They operated in Dallas. They weren't in Fort Worth at that time. They still aren't. They operate routes over here, but they don't have a plant. They have a plant in Dallas.

Jenkins: You said all of these early ones faded out.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: How do you account for that?

Baird: I can give you the answer to that, because that was one thing that helped me to make up my mind what I was going to do as far as the future was concerned. They didn't build an organization, and when they got out of the picture the business went on the rocks.

Jenkins: You mean when the founders got out, there was simply

no one to carry on.

Baird: They just simply didn't organize the business so that it could go ahead and operate after he passed out of the picture. And that was one thing that helped convince me that we needed to build an organization so that regardless of what happened to any member of the family that the business would carry on. And, of course, there wasn't anything smart about that. That was just a natural thing to do.

Jenkins: Well, but some didn't naturally do it, apparently.

Baird: Some of them didn't do it. That's right. Those three didn't.

Jenkins: Were you becoming the predominant bakery?

Baird: We were growing pretty fast. And we had moved into second place by that time to Walker, and we gradually improved that situation pretty well.

Jenkins: By what time do you think you became the number one bakery in Fort Worth?

Baird: Oh, in the middle 20's.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. So by the mid-twenties Mrs. Baird's Bread had become the predominant bakery, number one anyway.

Baird: In Fort Worth.

Jenkins: In Fort Worth. Let's go back and reminisce a little bit about what the town of Fort Worth was like at the time and how you saw it growing and what that growth

was based on. Give us some recollections of Fort Worth as Hoyt Baird was growing up.

Baird: Fort Worth didn't have a spectacular growth. It grew rather steadily. I am thinking back in terms of population around 70,000.

Jenkins: Your earliest recollection.

Baird: It wasn't that big when we got here, but the first time I began to think about it as a city, the figure that I have in mind was in the 70,000's.

Jenkins: What is your recollection about how big it was when you came.

Baird: Well, it was pretty small because the downtown streets weren't even paved.

Jenkins: Okay, that is some of the stuff I want.

Baird: And we had horse drawn streetcars.

Jenkins: Okay, that is what I want to get at. Yes, give us some of those recollections and when the automobile first started. Some of those early recollections.

Baird: Automobiles as I recall, some of them had a crank on the side.

Jenkins: On the side?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: I don't remember that. That is a new one on me.

Baird: Yes, they sure did. I remember one brand name of an automobile, something like Schadt. If I am not mistaken

it cranked on the side.

Jenkins: I have never heard of that.

Baird: I think the first Ford cranked in the front. I remember the first Fords that came out, of course. I believe that the first bread wagon that we had, the truck, is either Chevrolet or Ford. I have forgot which it was now. And then later as we began to expand we went in- to Dodges. We still operate a lot of Dodge trucks.

Jenkins: So you had unpaved streets in downtown Fort Worth.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Horse drawn streetcars, and everything was predominantly horse drawn.

Baird: They had popcorn machines.

Jenkins: Yes, tell us about popcorn machines.

Baird: Well, one of my Dad's first ventures in Fort Worth was a popcorn machine on Seventh and Main. And the popcorn machine, as I remember it was quite a machine. It was all polished, you know, brass. You had to polish that to keep it shined, and it had a little clown on top of it.

Jenkins: It was really fancy then.

Baird: It <sup>blew</sup>~~blow~~ed a whistle, you know, and he popped the popcorn in the machine right there on the street.

Jenkins: And he could move that thing around.

Baird: Yes. I think a little later he got another machine and

let Dewey operate it. It was downtown.

Jenkins: And it probably was a money maker, too.

Baird: Well, he made money at whatever he went into and then he would sell it.

Jenkins: He was a starter then.

Baird: Yes, he would buy these little restaurants. He would fix them up and build up the trade and then he would sell it. And then he would go to Galveston for a couple of weeks, and then he would come back and start looking for another little restaurant to buy.

Jenkins: Well, we talked some about your mother. Are there tales that you would like to spin about your dad?

Baird: Well, I think he was just uncanny the way he could buy these little old restaurants and build them up and sell them.

Jenkins: His interest was in turning it over, improving it and turning it over.

Baird: He just didn't stay with it. That was a difference between him and Mama. Mama was pretty steady, and if she could get hold of a dollar she could save about 90¢ of it.

Jenkins: Well, did he get into any other ventures. You said he had popcorn machines, he was in the cafe business. He had a bakery. Do you remember any other ventures?

Baird: Oh, yes. He would make pies down at the Sanitary Restaurant, nickel pies, and he and Dewey would haul them out to the northside to the packing houses out there and sell them. I remember one time we had an exhibition out behind where Montgomery Ward is now on Seventh Street. They had a race track back behind there. And they were going to have a rail collision. Two engines. They built a track in this little race track. They had a little stadium there, and they put these engines at each end and turned them loose and they ran together. And I remember that Poppa took me with him out there, and he made sandwiches, and we sold sandwiches out there for this exhibition, the train wreck.

Jenkins: Were you there when it wrecked?

Baird: Yes, I remember because I had on a brand new pink silk tie. And when they turned those engines loose I jumped up on something and tried to climb the fence so that I could get up there and watch it. And I did see. I saw it and I pulled my tie on a nail.

Jenkins: Well, what is your recollection of the train wreck?

Baird: They ran together.

Jenkins: I know, but were there explosions and all this?

Baird: No, just a lot of steam.

Jenkins: I am recalling, I think it was in one of Ben Green's books. Are you familiar with Ben Green, an old

veterinarian?

Baird:

No.

Jenkins:

Anyway, somewhere someone described such an event down in maybe the Big Bend country, and they said when those things went together it just exploded and really did severe damage.

Baird:

These didn't go very far. They didn't get up too much steam or too much speed.

Jenkins:

But sold lots of cakes, I guess.

Baird:

He made sandwiches and things like that. He didn't stay with any of these things too long. His health was bad and he died in 1911.

Jenkins:

Oh, well about how old was he?

Baird:

45.

Jenkins:

Is that right. Just a young fellow then.

Baird:

Well, he had diabetes and they didn't have much cure for that in those days. That is what got him, I think.

Jenkins:

Any other recollections of early Fort Worth that you can help us with?

Baird:

Well, Seventh and Main at that time and for years to come was kind of the hub of downtown business. I can remember Burton and Keel's Drygoods Store was on the corner of Seventh and Main, and they were on the south side of Seventh. And I remember the Fort Worth National Bank built a skyscraper on the corner of Seventh and Main.

I don't remember what the business is now called. At one time Continental Insurance Company had the building, bought it. And then the Fort Worth National Bank built on the south side of Seventh and Main. On the south side of Seventh.

Jenkins: About what year, time was this?

Baird: Well, oh, this was back in, I guess, 1939 or '40, somewhere along in there.

Jenkins: Oh, coming out of the depression then. And banking was beginning to flourish at about that time.

Baird: There was a bank on the corner of Seventh and Houston, and there was a bank called the Farmers Mechanic, and I think they were on Seventh and Houston. And later the First National Bank built on Seventh and Houston along about the time the Fort Worth National was on Seventh and Main. And then the Fort Worth National just moved across the street, south, with a new building and I was on the board of the Fort Worth National Bank at that time. And then they built their new building where they are now over on the Throckmorton Street area.

Jenkins: Now you personally came to Fort Worth in what year?

Baird: 1901.

Jenkins: 1901, and you were about four years old at the time. What is your recollection of lighting and heating and such as that at that time in Fort Worth? You had the

artificial gas you said.

Baird: Not then. That came a little later.

Jenkins: Okay.

Baird: Yes, I think the gas company was called Fort Worth Gas Company, and they were down on Commerce Street. Their offices were somewhere between Seventh or Eighth or Ninth or along in there. And prior to that time, why, we used wood.

Jenkins: In Fort Worth?

Baird: Yes. And we used wood, of course, in baking in our first little bakery on Washington. We used wood.

Jenkins: That is what I was thinking. But you got gas not too long after that.

Baird: We had gas then. But we used wood, cord wood. You build a big fire box in a brick oven, and you build your fire in the fire box to heat the oven, and then you take the coals out.

Jenkins: Okay, let me see if I have got it then. She started baking in her own home oven which was gas.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: But when she started baking in the peel ovens. . . is that what we call it?

Baird: Yes, that was after the move on Washington.

Jenkins: Then you used wood in those.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, I have got it straight now. So wood was the fuel in the backyard oven.

Baird: Yes. Then when we built the building on Sixth Avenue and Terrell that was a gas-fired oven, and then we had natural gas.

Jenkins: What about lighting?

Baird: Well, I don't remember. I remember that you didn't have too much light. You had electricity, but your light bulbs didn't put out a whole lot of light.

Jenkins: But there was electricity. In your earliest recollection Fort Worth already had it.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Did you keep kerosene lamps also?

Baird: Yes. We used kerosene lamps quite a bit. It was pretty small when we first got here.

Jenkins: Yes, I expect it was.

Baird: I have seen it grow. It has had a pretty steady growth. It grew from 75,000 into 90,000 into 120,000.

Jenkins: And when you came here and for a long time after that, I guess, the stockyards was the principal industry of Fort Worth.

Baird: Yes, stockyards and railroads. Fort Worth at one time was the largest railroad center in the southwest. Maybe Kansas City or Chicago were the only ones ahead of them. If I am not mistaken we had 17 trunk lines into Fort Worth.

Jenkins: So Fort Worth I vaguely recall, had railroads before and outstripped Dallas considerably.

Baird: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Are there any other things about early Fort Worth, before we go pick up at the Dallas plant and grow from there, that you want to record?

Baird: Well, of course, from a sports angle Fort Worth had baseball teams that were home owned, and at one time I think Fort Worth won the Texas League pennant six consecutive years. And each year after the Texas League season was over and the Southern League Association was over they would have a post-season series. And Amon Carter, the publisher of the Star Telegram at that time, would get up this special train and we would go to Memphis or Mobile or whatever the southern town it was and we would play them a five-game series.

Jenkins: Now this is how far back, if you can recall?

Baird: Oh, I would have to guess.

Jenkins: When you were a kid?

Baird: Well, no, I was grown. Well, I went on some of the trips.

Jenkins: I mean do you recall that they had this team though even when you were a kid, or not?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: What was the name of that Fort Worth team? I used to know, but I . . .

Baird: The Fort Worth Cats.

Jenkins: Yes, right.

Baird: Panthers. Fort Worth was known as Panther City at one time.

Jenkins: Why was that?

Baird: Oh, they found a panther down on Main Street, I think, or something.

Jenkins: I see. So that is where they got the cats. I do remember the Fort Worth Cats vaguely, for some strange reason.

Baird: Jakey At~~ta~~<sup>z</sup> was manager of the Cats when they won the six consecutive titles. And Paul Gray was head of the baseball club, and W. C. Stripling, Jr. . . .

Jenkins: Of Striplings?

Baird: Yes, the Stripling family.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Baird: W. K. Stripling was president of the Fort Worth baseball club. And that was quite an event. Well, when we lived on Hemphill, you remember they had a fire in Fort Worth back in about 1905, 1908, somewhere along in there that started not too far from where we lived on Hemphill. And it destroyed a lot of residences in the area from South Main over to Jennings Avenue. I remember the Broadway Baptist Church and Broadway Presbyterian Church on Broadway between South Main and Jennings Avenue were destroyed. And the only thing that stopped

it from going farther was the T. P. reservation where Frank Kent Motor Company is?

Jenkins: Yeah.

Baird: Across from there was the T & P Depot. The T & P Depot is there now. The old T & P Depot was destroyed by fire. That was after we moved here.

Jenkins: Was that just started by a single residence fire, or do you remember how that started?

Baird: They think somebody started it. I knew the boy that they said started it.

Jenkins: But it was a major Chicago-fire type thing.

Baird: Yes, it was. It sure was. It covered a lot of territory.

Jenkins: Are there any other events of that era that you recall that you would like to record for us?

Baird: I remember we used to chase rabbits with greyhounds where T. C. U. is. I <sup>now</sup> only lived about two or three blocks from T. C. U. And that was all just open land at that time. Where Forest Park is.

Jenkins: Forest Park was there then?

Baird: No.

Jenkins: Where it is now.

Baird: Yes. We used to go swimming there in the river and chase rabbits and hunt.

Jenkins: The river was clean then, I suppose.

Baird: Yes, it was wild. All that was wild country out there.

Jenkins: Anything else about those early years before we pick up at the Dallas plant and kind of grow from there then.

Baird: We had rather rapid growth in Dallas. Then in 1936-37 we began to talk about expanding to Houston. And we decided that we would go down there and build a plant in Houston. Houston was growing at that time and is still growing. We got Dewey to move to Houston. We wanted a Baird in each town that we built a plant in to carry on the tradition of the Baird family. So we opened that plant in May of 1938. In the meantime, after we decided to build in Houston, I brought up the idea that I thought we were maybe overlooking something not having a new plant in Fort Worth. This is where we started, and this was where we were growing from. I thought we were neglecting our own backyard. So we got kind of wild and decided that we would build two of them the same year.

Jenkins: Houston and Fort Worth.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: How did you finance those?

Baird: We borrowed a little money from Capital Life Insurance Company in Denver, Colorado. I think we borrowed ~~at~~ \$100,000. A long term loan with the option of paying it off. And we paid it off. And we did the same thing in Fort Worth.

Jenkins: About how long do you recall that you took to pay it off?

Baird: Within five years.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: You just never really got tied up in long term debt?

Baird: Our business grew so fast, and of course in those days you didn't have all the things to worry with that you have today, government regulations and other things that slow you down.

Jenkins: In those earliest days you didn't have to pay much attention, did you have even local regulations concerning baking when you first started?

Baird: No, very little.

Jenkins: Do you recall when you had to start paying some attention to local or state or federal regulations?

Baird: No, I don't remember exactly the year. I think maybe when government regulations started, more or less back in Franklin D. Roosevelt's era.

Jenkins: You became conscious of having to . . .

Baird: Well, we got into a pretty severe panic, you know, when he was president . . . before he was president. He had to make some pretty drastic moves, and I think some of them were good.

Jenkins: I have a special time where I ask you to go and reminisce about the depression as a depression, but right now we will pick up again at the growth into Houston and the

growth in the expansion here - tell me again what year.

Baird: 1938.

Jenkins: Okay. So we are getting toward the tailend of the depression then, I suppose.

Baird: Yes, we opened the Houston plant in May of 1938 and then we opened the Fort Worth plant in July of 1938. And the Houston plant business grew rapidly. In less than a year's time we added on to that.

Jenkins: Now were you in that market before you built?

Baird: No.

Jenkins: That was a brand new market.

Baird: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: You weren't delivering at all into there.

Baird: Dallas was a brand new market.

Jenkins: When you went in over there?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: What was it like getting into, breaking into that market? Did you have any unusual problems?

Baird: No, we had some good bakery operators in there, and we just grew faster than we really expected to. We had a good loaf of bread.

Jenkins: Now at those times there wasn't much in the way of chain stores. Mostly what you were delivering to I suppose were. . . .

Baird: You had more independents then than you did chains, yes.

Jenkins: And you didn't have much trouble getting into any of those, as a new bakery.

Baird: No, we didn't. I remember distinctly when we had opened house in Houston. The people turned out to see the new plant, and people would come through there and we would mill around and get mixed with the crowd, and amazingly people would say, "I sure am glad you all are down here." And they would say, "We used your bread in Fort Worth," or "we used your bread in Dallas." And they said, "We sure are glad to see you down here." And, you know, it made you feel pretty good. That you were well accepted.

Jenkins: Known and accepted.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Who were your major competitors in those markets as you moved into them?

Baird: Well, at that time it was Fair Baking Company, and that is now what is Campbell-Taggart.

Jenkins: When you moved into Dallas?

Baird: No they were not there.

Jenkins: Who were your major competitors when you started in Dallas?

Baird: Oh, local operators.

Jenkins: Just local.

Baird: Schepps, the Schepps family.

Jenkins: Oh, they were in the baking business.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: The milk folks?

Baird: Julius Schepp and George Schepp.

Jenkins: What was their brand of bread? Do you remember?

Baird: Oh, I think they had Butternut or something like that.

Jenkins: Oh, yes, I remember Butternut.

Baird: And Cleburne, there used to be a Cleburne bakery over there.

Jenkins: Did they have a different brand?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Do you remember what it was?

Baird: No, I don't. It might have been them that had the Butternut and Buttercrust. Those were franchise names. You could buy that name from companies that owned a name.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Baird: Adolphus Bakery owned by Natheson, I believe, Natheson family. And American Bakeries bought out Schepps about the time we built the plant in Dallas. At that time it was Purity Bakeries.

Jenkins: Yes, I remember Purity Bakeries. I kind of grew up around Dallas.

Baird: Out of Chicago. And they had bought a bunch of plants over in the southeast and they changed the names of the American Bakeries. Their brand name was Tastee.

TASTE

Jenkins: Oh, that is the origin of <sup>TASTEE</sup>Tastee. Purity?

Baird: Yes. When we announced that we were going to build a plant in Dallas, George Schep~~S~~ announced that they were going to build a plant in Fort Worth. And that is the <sup>TASTEE</sup>Tastee plant. Well, they still operate, but all they are selling is just private labels, I think.

Jenkins: So were Wonder and Tastee both, though they were kind of national brands at that time?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: What about Houston? What were your major competitors?

Baird: <sup>Fair</sup>Fair Baking Company and Schott. The local independent operators are still there.

Jenkins: What brands?

Baird: Sunbeam.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Baird: <sup>GOLMAN</sup>And ~~Goldman~~ was a competitor in Dallas, too.

Jenkins: I remember ~~Goldman~~. Was ~~Goldman~~ their brand or did they have a . . .

Baird: They had Sunbeam.

Jenkins: Sunbeam. I remember ~~Goldman~~.

Baird: At one time it was ~~Goldman~~. There were two ~~Goldmans~~. There was Julius ~~Goldman~~ and . . . I don't know why I can't think of the other guy's name. I knew him better than I did any of them. Jake.

Jenkins: Jake ~~Goldman~~.

Baird: Yes, Jake Goldman.

Jenkins: Did you eventually become the predominant brand in those two cities?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: About how long did it take you? Do you remember?

Baird: Oh, I would say it took us a few years.

Jenkins: But you grew steadily after you went into each one of those.

Baird: Both of them, yes.

Jenkins: Let's go back now and kind of look specifically at the depression of the 1930's and see what the Baird Company was going through, but also kind of get you to kind of view the community as you saw it and the problems of that era. So graze the depression for us, both in terms of the company and as you saw the community. What was happening to growth of the company during the depression? Was it pretty steadily upward?

Baird: Well, I will tell you, the baking business would be one business that would be affected less. As a matter of fact, sometimes during the depression the bread business is better.

Jenkins: Why is that?

Baird: Well, it is a good product, and it is a good buy for your money.

Jenkins: Cheaper than you could make it at home.

Baird: Yes. I mean the bread price is, of course, like everything else now, it is high. Higher than we would like to

see it. We don't ever raise the price of our bread unless we just have to. But people will eat foods that don't cost them as much and has the nutrition. And, you know, you can eat two or three slices of bread with a meal, and if you want to eat three or four slices you don't have to eat much else. Bread is filling and your system handles it well. And so depressions really don't affect the baking business from the standpoint of volume. Your prices may be low, everything else is. But the demand for bread holds up pretty well.

Jenkins: So you actually were doing some of your biggest growth, weren't you during the depression?

Baird: Yes. We continued to grow.

Jenkins: You opened in Dallas during the depression.

Baird: It was '29 when it hit. So, yes, we were growing during the depression.

Jenkins: Dallas was opened in what year?

Baird: '28.

Jenkins: That was just before it really . . .

Baird: Just before it hit the bottom. '29 was the panic.

Jenkins: And you were growing here and there all during the depression.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: And consequently in '38 before it was all over you opened in Houston.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: So you were really experiencing growth during that time. I will later, in a summary, get how the number of employees were growing. We will just kind of graze on that. What about the community as you saw it during the depression? Kind of give us some of your recollections of how Fort Worth was faring during the depression, the people, your employees, just how Fort Worth weathered the depression.

Baird: I don't have any specific recollection of how it affected Fort Worth. It was tough going. Business was just rock bottom. And things were pretty tough. President Roosevelt closed the banks, and we had a little problem with people wanting to give you a check to pay their bills. And I remember distinctly that we held a meeting and we made a decision to take our customers' checks. I am talking about the groceries. They were having a hard time getting money, and it was a pretty important decision. But we had to make one, and we took the bull by the horns and went with it.

Jenkins: How did it turn out?

Baird: It turned out good.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Baird: Yes. We made the right decision, because the banks reopened and the checks were good and we didn't lose any

money on it. And we made a heck of a lot of good friends.

Jenkins: I bet you did.

Baird: We took a chance.

Jenkins: Well, there must have been other companies that made the decision not to take them.

Baird: A lot of them, not necessarily bankers, but there were a lot of companies that didn't take them.

Jenkins: But you came out well. Do you have any notion that you lost an appreciable amount over that decision, checks that didn't come through, or were most of them good.

Baird: They were good, yes.

Jenkins: No more than usual.

Baird: No, we didn't lose enough to amount to anything.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: On what was that decision made? What did you all talk about? How did you come to that decision?

Baird: Well, if you are in business, you have got three factors in your business. The first, of course, is the consumer. And when you operate a business you are going to have to made up your mind you are going to have to take care of that consumer or you are not going to be in business very long. Then your method of distribution to the consumer is the grocer. Then your next consideration is your employees. Now I don't rank them in that order, but they

are the three dominant factors, and important factors in the operation of a business and the success of a business. So we had customers who were in tight circumstances and difficulty. And we had to think of it in terms of what our customer needs. And our decision in the thing was influenced by the fact that these customers were good customers of ours and they had been nice to us in giving us an opportunity to serve them, and we felt like that we ought to do everything that we could to help them out in a tight situation.

Jenkins: Was it a blanket decision or were you selective in the ones that you . . . ?

Baird: Oh, we made a blanket decision, yes.

Jenkins: Take it from everyone.

Baird: This is one of the things that we do in operating our business. We try to be fair to all of our accounts. And we have a pretty good reputation in the business world with our customers. All of them. Of course, today you have more supermarkets than you do independents, but we stand pretty well. In other words we have the confidence of the people we do business with. We have the confidence of the people in the community in which we operate.

Jenkins: The Baird Corporation during the depression, then, didn't suffer a problem of financing to keep operating like some did. You pretty well operated on cash flow.

Baird: The bakery business is pretty much a cash business. It is on a two-week to thirty-day basis. But financing isn't a problem with the baking industry too much, unless you are expanding. And then you have to spend a lot of money at one time.

Jenkins: Then your impression of Forth Worth at the time . . . we have the stories of soup kitchens and bread lines and all of those things. Did you see much of that?

Baird: We had them, yes. The business of Fort Worth survived pretty well because most of the large institutions in Fort Worth at that time were home owned by solid responsible, local people. And we had several good banks. The three major banks in Fort Worth were the Fort Worth National, the First National, and the Continental National. And everything was pretty well taken care of. I don't recall any businesses in Fort Worth of any size or stature that went under.

Jenkins: So Fort Worth, all in all, came through the depression pretty well.

Baird: Yes, they did.

Jenkins: Well, let's pick up growth again. We did Houston, and you expanded here in Fort Worth. Let's kind of pick up chronologically there and see how expansion went from here, then. What, '38, I believe you picked up and you were saying that the next expansion was where and when?

Baird: In Abilene, in 1949.

Jenkins: What were the factors involved in deciding to go out there?

Baird: Well, out of the Fort Worth plant we were making the territory, everything between here and Abilene, and we had gone into Abilene with four or five routes. And Abilene was just a little bit far. When you get out 150 or 160 miles you are getting just a little bit too far to be able to handle it as you want to handle it and have your bread as fresh as you want it, and economically sound. And we had to have more capacity in the Fort Worth plant because we had reached capacity, and so we discussed the Abilene situation and took a pretty good look at it. And we had enough business to start off with a pretty good production poundage by taking it off of Fort Worth. And then that would relieve Fort Worth in order to take care of our business as we were growing here. So we opened the Abilene plant with a good percentage of poundage on the Fort Worth plant taken off and put into Abilene. And we felt like west Texas would grow. Abilene would grow some, but Abilene wouldn't be large enough to handle a plant the size that we built in there. We covered everything on west to Monahans out of Abilene.

Jenkins: Out of Abilene?

Baird: Yes. And south and southwest to San Angelo, back this way to Ranger. We were making all of that territory

except we didn't go past Abilene. We were making all the territory between here and Abilene, then north and northwest of here out of the Fort Worth plant.

Jenkins: How far north did you start operating out of Abilene?

Baird: Well, we went into Olney and Breckenridge and up as far as Aspermont, about 60 miles north of Abilene.

Jenkins: Now this was a separate corporation, Dallas was a separate corporation. Was Houston a separate corporation?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: How about Abilene?

Baird: No, what we did then that was when we merged the Mrs. Baird's Baking Company was the Houston Corporation. Mrs. Baird's Bread Company was the Dallas Corporation. So we merged the three corporations into one corporation, Mrs. Baird's Bakery, Inc.

Jenkins: Why did you decide to do that?

Baird: Well, the main reason we decided to do it because in order to build a new plant we individually took our own money, the five of us, four boys and Mama, and in order for us to have the money we had to declare it out in dividends. So you had a tax situation, and it was pretty hard to accumulate enough money. It was getting a little bit more expensive to build a building. For example, when we built the Fort Worth plant. When we built the Dallas plant we put \$175,000 in it in '28. Ten years

later we built a plant with approximately the same production capacity and the same kind of a building. Our buildings were pretty good buildings. We don't build any ramshack building, we build pretty good buildings.

Jenkins: Now you said \$175,000 total for the Dallas plant.

Baird: Yes. That included some cash to operate on. Houston, we put \$250,000 into it. And Fort Worth we put \$250,000 into it. Production capacity was comparable to the Dallas plant. So this is how much inflation that you get. It cost that much more to go into business.

Jenkins: And the Abilene plant then?

Baird: The abilene plant \$1,000,000.

Jenkins: About the same size again?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: And ten years later.

Baird: This is ten years later. Today to build a plant like that it would cost you \$8,000,000. And this is why you don't see many people building new bakeries. We are the only ones who haven't got enough sense to stay put, I guess.

Jenkins: So it was in '49 that you incorporated all of them.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Let's grow on from Abilene then.

Baird: Well, the next expansion was 1959.

Jenkins: Ten more years.

Baird: A ten year cycle. We purchased the Lubbock plant from,

I believe their brand name was Holsum. And also at the same time we purchased a plant at Victoria the same year. And their brand name was Holsum.

Jenkins: Was that the end of Holsum?

Baird: No, not necessarily. We kept the name on Holsum for a good while.

Jenkins: Did you buy their plant or did you buy their corporation?

Baird: <sup>941</sup> No, we just bought their <sup>single operation</sup> corporation.

Jenkins: But you kept the Holsum brand?

Baird: Yes, for a year or two.

Jenkins: And then dropped it?

Baird: Yes. We gradually changed over. You start making Holsum a little smaller and Mrs. Baird's a little bigger.

Jenkins: But that was the end of Holsum.

Baird: In that market, yes.

Jenkins: But they continued?

Baird: Well, the Holsum brand name is used all over the country.

Jenkins: I see. So you just bought out those two operations.

Baird: Yes, and of course we still have the Holsum name if we want to use it there.

Jenkins: But there still is a separate Holsum corporation today, is there?

Baird: No, it is a brand name. It is owned by W. E. Long Company. They will sell you the services and the name Holsum to use.

Jenkins: Okay. So these were two companies using the name, and you bought . . .

Baird: They were owned by different individuals.

Jenkins: And so that put you into two new locations.

Baird: Yes. That was getting pretty far north and west, and pretty far south in Victoria.

Jenkins: How about the financing of those?

Baird: Well, we just bought those and paid for them.

Jenkins: Cash flow. Didn't go into debt on those?

Baird: No.

Jenkins: Now, you really are scattered all over the state of Texas by now. What proportion of the state of Texas are you converging then by '59, after you got those?

Baird: Well, I can probably give you a little bit better example as of now.

Jenkins: Okay.

Baird: In 1960 we bought Waco and Austin. These, too, were Holsum plants, and they were owned by the same man. So he approached us and wanted to sell us Austin. So I asked him, "How about the Waco plant?" He was tickled to death when I said that because we had more business in Waco than he did. So we needed the production capacity down there. And Austin was a new market. We made Waco and all the surrounding territory out of Fort Worth.

Jenkins: But you weren't going into Austin at that time?

Baird: No, that was too far. So Austin was a new market for us.

Jenkins: Now, was that just an outright purchase?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: No debt?

Baird: No. Well, we accumulate some reserves in order to take advantage of the opportunity when it presents itself. You can't hold back too much cash unless you have got a program that you are going to use it for, because you are subject to a little extra tax on it by the revenue service.

Jenkins: Was Houston, then, the last one that you had to borrow money on. The rest of them you were reaching out . . .

Baird: We didn't have to borrow it. We did borrow it, yes. You don't want to be borrowing money just on short term. Now this plant, we borrowed money. We borrowed short term. We were a little more solid. When we were expanding into a different market, a new market, you want to be sure that you can weather the storm in case a storm develops.

Jenkins: So by '60 you were into the Austin area.

Baird: Yes. I would say that we probably, out of all of our plants we probably serve three-fourths of the people of Texas.

Jenkins: Presently.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Now after '60 what kind of expansion did you continue.

Baird: Well now, we missed one in here.

Jenkins: Okay.

Baird: In '53 the Dallas plant.

Jenkins: Another Dallas plant?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Another plant or an expansion?

Baird: No, we sold the old plant and built a new one. We built a new one and sold the old one.

Jenkins: Which is now the present plant?

Baird: Yes, on Mockingbird and Central. That was the largest one we built. At that time it was said that it was the largest completely automatic bread operation in the country.

Jenkins: Oh, in the whole United States.

Baird: Yes. Yes. It was a real nice plant.

Jenkins: What had been happening to the machinery of baking?

Baird: Well, it was gradually becoming more and more automated.

Jenkins: You started off in that kitchen . . .

Baird: Yes, by hand. Everything was by hand.

Jenkins: Even the wrapping of the bread was by hand.

Baird: That's right.

Jenkins: Now when did you first start labeling, putting a Mrs. Baird's label on bread?

Baird: In 1919.

Jenkins: Starting wrapping it with a brand on it.

Baird: Yes, we wrapped it by hand, with a hand machine. You put the loaf of bread down and pulled the wax wrapper up around it and then run it through a hot plate . . .

Jenkins: Oh, sealer.

Baird: And it had a couple of wings on it that would take and fold in on the wrapper on each end of the loaf. And the hot plate, it would melt that wax on the hot plate and seal after you took it off the hot plate.

Jenkins: Was that kind of the first machine handling of the product? That sealing operation?

Baird: Well, of course originally to start off with you mixed bread by hand in a trough. And then I guess your first automatic operation, machine operation, came in a mixer.

Jenkins: Okay. Do you have any idea when you first started using a mixer?

Baird: Yes. We started using a mixer ~~out of~~ Washington in, I would say about 1914 probably.

Jenkins: Did you buy a mixer or make a mixer?

Baird: No, we bought it. And they gradually improved those to where you got better and faster mixing. When they first started building mixers they operated pretty slowly, and now they are pretty fast. You can mix the dough in six or seven minutes.

Jenkins: And the ingredients are fed in automatically now.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: And not a whole lot of hand work done.

Baird: Very little. Very little hand work.

Jenkins: Okay, let's see now. We got the Dallas '53 thrown in, and then we are down in Austin, I believe. Was that the last expansion?

Baird: No, Dallas was the last one until this. Austin and Waco we bought in '60. Lubbock and Victoria we bought in '59. And we built a new plant in Dallas.

Jenkins: In?

Baird: In 1953.

Jenkins: Okay. So after Austin were there further expansions after that?

Baird: Well after we built the plant in Dallas, the next plant we bought was a pie plant in Abilene. Fried pies.

Jenkins: Whose was that? You bought one out?

Baird: Yes. Well, we were buying about 40% or 50% of their production. It was called Tip Top Pie Company. This man's health got a little bad, and he wasn't doing too well, and he had a good pie. He had an excellent crust. He had the best crust pie that I know of. We were going to have to get in the pie business because we were buying 40% of his production and selling it under his name, Tip Top. And so we made a deal with him and bought him out.

Jenkins: That was about what time?

Baird: In 1969. And then we kept his name on there until we got the pie like we wanted it and then we changed the

name to Mrs. Baird. In other words, we put fruit in it.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Baird: His crust was good.

Jenkins: It had great crust but he didn't put much in it.

Baird: Well, he put a little corn starch in it.

Jenkins: With sugar or something.

Baird: We took that out and put fruit in it.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Baird: Now we have an excellent fried pie. He has ~~got~~ the finest crust. You could eat the crust by itself. It tastes good.

Jenkins: You continued to use his formula on that then?

Baird: On his crust, yes. Well, we have improved it. But we didn't put Mrs. Baird's name on it until we got the pie quality that we wanted.

Jenkins: So by then you had a pie plant and a bread plant in Abilene?

Baird: Yes. That's right, ~~yes~~.

Jenkins: Just bring us on up then with any further expansions to today if you would.

Baird: Well, the next expansion was in '71 when we built the cake plant here *in Abilene*.

Jenkins: Here on this location.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Now that was in addition to . . .

Baird: Yes, we have ~~got~~ the bread plant on Summit and Vikery and

the cake plant.

Jenkins: But the cake plant was a new location entirely.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: What brought about the decision for that?

Baird: We were using the plant on Sixth Avenue and Terrell for the cake plant, and it just became an inefficient operation. We just added on to it so many times, and it was just practically worn out. And the cake business was growing, and we weren't able to take care of the business that was available to us. So we decided to build a cake plant and move our offices out here. We were short on space at the bread plant, too. And we were going to have to add on the bread plant, and there wasn't any way that we could add on to the bread plant and take care of it efficiently. So we decided that we would take that money and put it into this and just build a new cake plant and then move part of our production from the bread plant out here in the way of buns.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Baird: Along with the cake lines.

Jenkins: All of that expansion, did that continue to be internal funds?

Baird: Yes. We borrowed money in building this out here. But we were in a position to borrow on short term loans and pay it off as we went along.

Jenkins: I see. Pretty fast.

Baird: Well, we paid it off in several years.

Jenkins: Any further expansion just kind of bringing us up to 1980, really, is what we will do.

Baird: The last expansion we bought a plant in San Antonio.

Jenkins: When was that?

Baird: 1976.

Jenkins: How did that come about?

Baird: Well, a plant became available there, and San Antonio is a big market.

Jenkins: Had you been in that market?

Baird: No.

Jenkins: Another new market then. Now what plant was it that became available? How did that come about?

Baird: It was a Sunbeam plant. The fellow that bought it wasn't doing any good with it, and he wanted to get out of it, so we bought it.

Jenkins: Now, was Sunbeam a franchise brand.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: So that didn't do away with the Sunbeam brand. It was just like taking the Holsum.

Baird: Well, we owned it. We could use it.

Jenkins: But others still can use it. Like Holsum, it is a brand.

Baird: Yes, we've got that market. That belongs to this Quality Bakers of America, that I told you while ago that Walker

sold out to and took stock and went broke. Reorganized and today is a co-op, and they sell services to their clients, to their customers, the bakeries.

Jenkins: Is this a Texas . . . ?

Baird: No, no that was in New York, I believe. They sell the name Sunbeam, and they also sell any other services you want; bookkeeping, advertising, architecture, buy equipment, ingredients. They do the whole job for you if you want to pay the fee.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. So, in '76 you got down to San Antone, and you are in the major markets in Texas.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: You don't get to El Paso?

Baird: No.

Jenkins: Okay. How far west?

Baird: Well, Monahans, that's as far as we get.

Jenkins: You serve Wichita Falls.

Baird: Yes. We have a plant in Lubbock. We serve Amarillo and all the territory out there around Plainview, the panhandle and Amarillo, Borger, Dalhart . . . We go as far north as Dumas, Perryton.

Jenkins: And north, from Wichita Falls, through Dallas, Gainesville, Tyler, right on across.

Baird: Well, we make that out of Dallas.

Jenkins: And East Texas.

Baird: Some of East Texas, Lufkin, we make out of Houston.

Jenkins: So you cover East Texas.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: About the only thing that you're not, I guess in, is in that El Paso, that dip out there.

Baird: And the Rio Grande valley.

Jenkins: And there are not a whole lot of folks out there, except in El Paso.

Baird: Yeah, there are in El Paso, ~~yeah~~. El Paso is a big town.

Jenkins: Do you have any visions of getting into El Paso?

Baird: No, we're not thinking about it.

Jenkins: But you said, now, you cover about what percentage?

Baird: I said about three fourths.

Jenkins: Three fourths of the population of the State of Texas.

Baird: Yeah.

Jenkins: I believe it indicates, in the pamphlet, the "Mrs. Baird's Story", that Mrs. Baird's bread is the largest family owned bakery in the United States?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Is anyone close in size in terms of family bakers that you know of in the United States?

Baird: Not in this part of the country. Back in the northeast there are one or two organizations back there, I think, that would be close.

Jenkins: So most, an awful lot of the baking business, then, has

been bought up through the big chains.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Give us some idea of what is happening in the bakery business in terms of who owns them and the size. For instance, to what extent is what we used to call the "mom and pop" type operation still healthy?

Baird: There are not too many of the small, independent bakers left. Most of those independent bakers belong to a co-op situation like Quality Bakers or Sunbeam, W. E. Long Company, which is Holsum. They belong to a co-op of some kind, and they use the services of those companies to whatever extent they feel they need them in their business.

Jenkins: Now, in addition to record keeping and information and so on, do they also buy through those co-ops?

Baird: Yeah. To whatever extent they want to. They can have them buy everything for them if they want to, if they want it. And generally speaking they're pretty good operators.

Jenkins: How do they survive as small independent operators? What have they <sup>go</sup>going for them?

Baird: Well, they're independent operators and they're local and they're in markets where they're well established. Most of their competition would be from national chains. I think it is probably a good thing for an individual to be associated with these co-ops because they can do

some of the things for him that he's not an expert in, and I think it's been helpful to them.

Jenkins: I know we have at least one in Denton who doesn't even brand. Their primary retail outlet is people walk in and buy. Are there a good many of the small independents who still have branded products and ship them out, or are most of them just the kind of local walk-in retail type operation? Are you in touch with that?

Baird: Not too much. But there are quite a few retail bakeries scattered over the United States. They have an association, retail bakers' association, and in certain areas of the country there are quite a few retail bakeries.

Jenkins: The neighborhood type?

Baird: Yeah. You've got quite a few in Dallas.

Jenkins: You go there to buy whatever they've got to sell, they're strictly neighborhood type.

Baird: No, it's a wide variety of bread, cakes and also the supermarkets, a lot of them have in-store bakeries.

Jenkins: Have you seen that as any kind of threat to your business? That is, the in-store bakeries?

Baird: Well, of course, the more people that are selling bakery products, why, the more chance there is that some of it's going to grow and some of it's going to effect your business. But, generally speaking, in the supermarkets that have in-store bakeries we still do a pretty good job of selling bakery products in the stores.

- Jenkins: What is your opinion of the strength, I suppose, the condition of these small, independent bakery operations? Are they in pretty good condition for what they are?
- Baird: I'd say the present operators are in pretty good condition, because they wouldn't be there if they weren't. The weak ones have already gone out of the picture, and to my knowledge the people that I know that are members of the co-ops, are pretty good operators. I would say that they probably are in good condition.
- Jenkins: And I suppose they must be serving a market that wants them or they would be fading out.
- Baird: Well, as I told you while ago, they're local people and they're established in the market, and they've built a consumer acceptance for their product, and those that I know are pretty capable operators.
- Jenkins: And the future, in general, looks healthy for them.
- Baird: I think they can maintain their position.
- Jenkins: Give us some idea of how the number of employees of the Baird's bakeries has grown from the very beginning up until today.
- Baird: Well, to cover the whole picture in one little statement, I'd say from two or three to between 2,500 and 3,000 employees.
- Jenkins: Right today.
- Baird: Yes. Now that, of course, has grown from a standpoint

of a little bakery in a kitchen, when there were only one or two people involved, and then as we expanded and grew, the Fort Worth plant at one time, I recall, was running 250, 300 employees. And Dallas would probably have been somewhere in the neighborhood of 150 to 200 when it started. And today it is rather large. Houston would start off with 150, 200, and then just keep expanding. Then there's additional plants that we have built or bought, of course, have added to that and today it brings it up to that figure between 2,500 and 3,000 employees.

Jenkins: Now, in your distributions system, are all of the people who distribute your bread your own employees?

Baird: Yes, we don't have any distributors or agencies.

Jenkins: Tell us how the type of ownership of the Mrs. Baird's baking business has changed over the years. From the time Mama was baking in the kitchen until today.

Baird: The type of ownership?

Jenkins: Yeah, at first I guess it was just operated out of the home and it was a . . . I don't know what you'd call it, sole proprietorship, I suppose.

Baird: Yeah, that's what it would be, proprietorship, until 1926 when we incorporated Mrs. Baird's Bakery in Fort Worth. And the original directors were Mrs. Nennie Baird, D. C. Baird, R. W. Baird, W. Hoyt Baird, and C. B. Baird. The officers were, president, Mrs. Nennie

Baird; vice-president and general manager D. C. Baird; secretary W. Hoyt Baird; treasurer, R. W. Baird; assistant secretary, C. B. Baird.

Jenkins: At one time you indicated that you looked around Ft. Worth and saw that as founders of some of the bakeries were dying off, their business was dying off, too. You became conscious of the need to build an organization for a lasting business. Tell us what thoughts went through your mind and how that resulted in organization structure over the years.

Baird: Well, I think a business in going to be only as successful as the people involved in it are going to do their job. My philosophy in business is that you should have something that people want and need to start in business. In other words, if I'm going to be in the baking business, I can't succeed unless I make a good product, and I've got to make a product that people want. And I've got to make a quality product and I've got to give it to them fresh and I've got to give them service. I think if I'm going to build my business on that basis and on that philosophy I've got to sell that idea to the people who are associated with me in the operation of the business. So, in my book, I can't be successful unless I surround myself with People who are interested in the business just like I am. And I think I've got to sell them on that, on the

importance of that. So, looking back when I was a much younger man, I saw this happen to some business in Ft. Worth. That when the founder of the business moved out, that the business went on the rocks. So from that I got the idea to build and develop an organization. The founder of our business, of course, was our mother. And so we were taught by her the importance of making a good product and the importance of staying with your work. We were fortunate in having four of the boys that were interested in the business, and when they became old enough to want to carry on and expand the business. Then I think that, naturally, came about because of the family group. We had a little organization of our own. But we also realized the importance of getting Mr. Smith's and Mr. Jones' ideas about things too, rather than just Mr. Baird's things about things. So it sort of became an obsession with me, and I was determined to build a strong organization. If we had a man in the organization it didn't make any difference what his name was, if he had the ability and the application of that ability, then we needed him in the organization. So we make it a point to try to keep those people in the organization. We've got quite a few members of the Baird family in the business, but no member of the Baird family stays in a responsible position with the company unless he carries

his end of the load. Now he's not in there because his name is Baird, he's in there because he has the ability to get the job done. I'm completely sold on the importance of organization.

Jenkins: Let me go back and get you to focus on two or three things here. Now, in the beginning, Mama was the decision maker because ya'll were still kids. She probably didn't have an organization. She wasn't president of anything, she was just operating out of the house, but she was it, I suppose.

Baird: She was operating mainly to take care of her family. She wasn't thinking about building a big business.

Jenkins: Right. Let's kind of follow your career now. You delivered bread on foot, on a bicycle, rode the wagon and delivered first with an adult driver. Then you became a driver and salesman on a route, and then as that expanded you became sales manager. Kind of follow your own career, if you will, which will help us see the organization structure, maybe, up until you became chairman of the executive committee. So show us what was happening to Hoyt Baird in all of those years. Summarize it.

Baird: Well, when we started with our mother as head of the business, this was an inspiration to us. When we saw what she could do by herself, actually, she had the ability to inspire us to do a good job. As a matter of fact,

she had a little bit more than that. (Laughter) She could be a little bit persuasive if she had to.

Jenkins: Did she ever use the paddle?

Baird: Boy, she sure did. (Laughter) Well, the four boys involved in the business were all different. Dewey was production conscious and he could bake anything in the world. Even after he retired, he'd go home and make cream puffs or cupcakes or . . .

Jenkins: He just liked cooking.

Baird: Yeah, he's just an excellent baker. He knew how to put ingredients together and blend them so you got a good eating product out of it. My interests lie along the sales. I was, I guess, the first salesman for the company when I peddled the bread out of the basket. Roland was an analytical type with a lot of vision, and ambitious. He didn't like me to say so, but he was the best advertising man I ever saw. He knew how to present advertising to the people. And I think it was a tremendous asset to our business. C. B. was the younger brother and came along later in the game and he looked after the cake plant. And C. B. was an exceptional athlete and as level-headed as he could be. So we all had kind of different abilities and it was fortunate that we did, because we didn't clash anymore than normal.

Jenkins: let me go back now and I'm going to keep focusing on

you and I'm going to get you to talk about yourself here.  
Let's go back and get you. Where did you go to school?  
Right here in Ft. Worth?

Baird: In Ft. Worth, yeah.

Jenkins: I see. Did you walk to school? How far did you have to  
go to get to school?

Baird: Oh, different mileage because . . .

Jenkins: You moved around.

Baird: Yeah. I'd say from four or five, six, eight blocks up to  
a half a mile.

Jenkins: But you were always near a school. You walked to school  
I suppose?

Baird: Yeah.

Jenkins: Specifically, how many schools were there, as you recall  
when you first came here?

Baird: I don't know. I went to about four or five different  
schools.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Every time you moved.

Baird: We moved pretty often.

Jenkins: What about high school. What Ft. Worth high school did  
you go to?

Baird: Well, Paschal. Paschal was the Ft. Worth high school.  
It used to be the old Central high school. And the old  
Central high school is the Stafford-Lowden building, -  
Justin Boot Company, they occupy the old Stafford-Lowden

building and that was the old Central high school, and then they moved out on Jennings Avenue, that was Paschal.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. So you graduated from Paschal.

Baird: No, I didn't. I didn't go to high school.

Jenkins: Oh, well that's part of what I'm getting at. So you went through what grade in public school?

Baird: Through seventh grade.

Jenkins: Then what did you do?

Baird: Well, I was working.

Jenkins: Working for the bakery.

Baird: Yes. I didn't quit school because I wanted to. I quit school because I was needed to help take care of the family.

Jenkins: So you started working full time,

Baird: And so did the other people, my older sister was working. She was helping take care of the family. We had a rather large family.

Jenkins: Did any of you graduate from high school?

Baird: Yes, some of them did, yeah.

Jenkins: Did any of them go to college?

Baird: The first college graduate was Vernon, my son.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Baird: In the Baird family. Vernon's got a ring that I gave him when he graduated. He was the first Baird youngster to graduate from Rice, he graduated from Rice University.

Jenkins: I see. Well, I'll get him to talk about that. So you went to work full time at about thirteen?

Baird: Yeah.

Jenkins: Seventh grade.

Baird: Oh, yeah, I was younger than that.

Jenkins: And you went into the army in . . .

Baird: 1918.

Jenkins: '18. Could you just kind of hit highlights of that if you would?

Baird: Well, I was drafted. I went off of my route, it was the only route that we operated, to go in the army. And I went in in September, and during the time that I was in there was when they had that flu epidemic in World War I and it killed thousands of people. And I was in the army in San Antonio, Camp Travis. I was in the company they called the Depot Brigade, in those days, instead of reception center. This was where you went in and then were mustered out of there into the various branches of the army. I was only in a short time, so I stayed in the same company, Company 148. We had twelve hundred and some odd men in that company and during that epidemic there were only two hundred and fifty men left, the rest of them were in the hospital. It was a tragic thing. People just died like flies. I didn't have a bad case of it, I got out pretty easy. I was discharged on January

1, 1919.

- Jenkins: Did you ever leave the United States?
- Baird: No, I stayed in San Antonio. I had about four months.
- Jenkins: Then the war was over.
- Baird: I was there when the Armistice was signed.
- Jenkins: Before you ever had to leave San Antone. And then you came back to the bakery.
- Baird: I learned something about people in the army.
- Jenkins: Well, give us some of that.
- Baird: I knew some of these boys that went in the same time I did that were from Ft. Worth. I had been used to working. And I didn't know what the term "gold brick" meant, but I sure found out in the army. (Laughter) I saw a lot of gold bricking. It was an interesting experience. I learned something from it.
- Jenkins: They didn't put you to work baking bread, did they, by any chance?
- Baird: No, they don't ever put you working what you can do. They just put you in something else. (Laughter)
- Jenkins: I see.
- Baird: I learned several things in there. When an officer told you to do something, it didn't make any difference whether you knew how to do it or not, you better get it done. (Laughter) It was a real interesting experience.
- Jenkins: Well, any more of it that you would like to mention before we get you back in the business?

Baird: No, I don't think so.

Jenkins: Okay, well let's get you back, then, into the baking, and just kind of hit the highlights. You came back and started delivering as a route salesman?

Baird: No, that's when we built the new building.

Jenkins: Oh, you had been a full time route salesman before you went in?

Baird: Yeah, that's right.

Jenkins: And you picked up doing what when you got out of the army, now?

Baird: Well, I just went inside.

Jenkins: Became the sales manager.

Baird: Yeah, we had this wholesale route, you see, that we started when I left and went in the army. So we were still operating that one wholesale route. So I was inside wrapping bread and then help bake.

Jenkins: Doing whatever needed to be done.

Baird: Doing what was necessary, yes. And we decided to build this new building and put on another route and that kept me busy inside, then. I was still in the selling end of the game.

Jenkins: And you became sales manager you said about when?

Baird: Oh, shortly after we built that building and opened our business down there we added on two more routes. We had four routes, and I was in charge of sales.

Jenkins: I see. Regardless of what it was called, you were in charge of sales.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: You may not of even had a title at the time.

Baird: No, I don't think I had a title.

Jenkins: Well, summarize through the years the things that you did and right on up to becoming chairman of the executive committee. What functions had you performed over the years, and eventually becoming chairman of the executive committee.

Baird: Well, when we were operating just the one bakery in Fort Worth, Mama was the head of it, and then Dewey had charge of production. He did all the baking. I mean twelve, fifteen, eighteen hours a day. And <sup>Rollin</sup>~~Rollin~~ was helping him in the shop. C. B. was in school, and I was looking after the sales. And then this was the way we operated until we built the plant in Dallas.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Okay.

Baird: And then when we built the plant in Dallas, the plant operated on its own. In other words I had charge of the sales in Fort Worth. Dewey was still in Fort Worth looking after production. And after we incorporated he was president of Mrs. Baird's Bakery in Fort Worth. And then when <sup>Rollin</sup>~~Rollin~~ went to Dallas, Mama was still chairman of the Board over there. And they took care of their own sales

over there. <sup>ROLAND</sup> ~~Rollin~~ would talk to me about the sales and ask me to recommend a sales manager for him, and I hired a Fort Worth man for his sales manager.

Jenkins: They had their own organization then.

Baird: Yes. Which is the way our plants operate individually. Each man in on his own. Whenever they need assistance, they know where to get it.

Jenkins: But they are pretty well . . .

Baird: They are responsible for their operation, yes. We have overall policies, you know, that we go by, but each plant has its own manager and its own sales manager. Then we have a general sales manager who works with all of the plants. And after we built the Houston plant and Dewey moved down there, and then he became president of the Houston plant, <sup>ROLAND</sup> ~~Rollin~~ was president of the Dallas plant, and I was president of the Fort Worth plant. And then when we merged then we set up the corporate structure.

Jenkins: When you set up the corporate structure then was <sup>1948</sup> '54 and at that time, you became executive vice-president?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, and president in '56.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Chairman of the board in '60.

Baird: 1960.

Jenkins: At what time did you switch from having a chairman of the

board and having an executive committee?

Baird: We had an executive committee all the time.

Jenkins: I see. And you became chairman of the executive committee at what time?

Baird: 1969.

Jenkins: Okay. So that gives us '54<sup>48</sup>, '56, '60, '69.

Baird: Yes. Now we had an executive committee from the time we merged.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. But you say you no longer have a chairman of the board, you simply have a chairman of the executive committee.

Baird: We had a chairman of the board. William D. Baird was chairman of the board.

Jenkins: But do you have one now?

Baird: No. When Bill died we didn't elect a chairman of the board. We elected Vernon president and treasurer and chief executive officer.

Jenkins: I see. And simply you didn't have a chairman of the board.

Baird: That's right.

Jenkins: You had a chairman of the executive committee.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: So this has always been primarily a family business. Certainly from the extent of ownership it still is.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: And the principal officers have been Baird family.

Baird: Other than vice-presidents.

Jenkins: And there appeared to be plenty of Bairds coming on in the future. Do they appear to be interested in staying with the Baird Bakery?

Baird: Well, I think there are maybe somewhere around eight or ten in the business now. And I really am not in a position to say, I am not that close to the operation of the business now. Vernon can give you some information on that.

Jenkins: We will ask him.

Baird: He is closer to it, and he is with it every day, and he knows who they are grooming for certain jobs. So one thing that I don't want to see, that is, I don't want to see Bairds monopolize things unless they have ~~got~~ the ability to do the job. And I think that has been pretty well handed down to the younger generation.

Jenkins: And understanding it.

Baird: They understand where I stand on that, I think.

Jenkins: Now you have mentioned that you went through about the seventh grade, and that none of you went on to college. Well, what are your attitudes toward education in general, and maybe after that specifically concerning education for business.

Baird: Well, I think education is important, and you don't have

to give up because you didn't get it. There are more ways than one of getting an education.

Jenkins: I would like for you to speak to that.

Baird: You can learn if you want to in a lot of ways, but it is a little bit easier for you to accomplish the things that you want to do with an education. And I think it is more important today than it ever has been before, because the way things are going that we have seen happen in this old world you are just going to have to have an education to understand it I think. I would suggest to anybody that wants to move ahead and enjoy success to take advantage of every opportunity you can from an educational standpoint.

Jenkins: You didn't however, go to school very long compared to what people do today. Yet you obviously operate successfully and in a very successful business. How have you gotten educated? What are your sources of educating yourself?

Baird: Read.

Jenkins: What are your reading habits? What have been your reading habits?

Baird: I read business magazines and periodicals, and I read the paper, and I listen to T.V. I have learned a lot, I guess, from people. There is one thing I think is real important, Floyd. In operating a business, you are only

going to be as successful as your judgement is good in picking people to work with you. And when I say work with you I am talking about working with you, I am talking about people don't work for me they work with me. And together we can get the job done. And if you use good judgment in selecting of men that you surround yourself with, your chances for success are much greater. And nobody is an expert in all fields. Some things I might be able to do better than somebody else, and I have confidence in my ability to do that. In other things I have ~~got~~ sense enough to know that I don't know how to do them. So I will ask a janitor if necessary. In other words I believe in getting everybody's opinion, not just the top dogs. Get their opinion all the way down the line. I have seen it happen a number of times when we have been discussing a sales problem, and the manager couldn't come up with the answer to it. The sales manager couldn't come up with the answer to it. The supervisor couldn't come up with the answer to it. "Let's call in salesman, John Smith." We got the answer.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Baird: Yes. We got the guy on the firing line.

Jenkins: He knows what is going on.

Baird: Yes. And I think it is a good example of what you can do if you just are willing to do it. And I think working

with people over a period of years in all walks of life and all phases of your business is an education in itself.

Jenkins: Certainly you have plants scattered all over and it may be difficult to stay in very close personal contact with all of those plants very often, but in this plant, how close in touch do the operating executives stay with the folks on the assembly line? How close are they, do you think?

Baird: Not as close as you should. The bigger you get the tougher it is. That is one of the unfortunate things. You can't stay as close to your employees as you would like to.

Jenkins: How do you try to do that?

Baird: Oh, I think Vernon can answer that better than I can. And I think from that bracket I think they do. They try to do a job of staying close.

Jenkins: While you were in that closer position yourself, however.

Baird: I stayed close to them.

Jenkins: Saw them . . . went out into the plant and did all of that.

Baird: I sure did. I knew them and I knew their wife and I knew their kids. But you can't do it when it gets big. It slips away from you.

Jenkins: This obviously is primarily a family business, and in many family business people outside the family sometimes

think that they are severely limited in how far they can go. What kinds of opportunities do you think there are with Mrs. Baird's Bread?

Baird: I think what you have said is as true as it can be. And I can understand how an outsider can feel that. "What is the use of me doing my job. I can't go up because of a Baird standing in the way." And that just simply is not true. I just wish every employee that works for us knew how anxious we are for him to give us an opportunity to move him up. We can't operate a business without people. And if a Baird wants to come into this business we are glad to have him, but he has ~~got~~ to do his job just the same as anybody else, a Smith or a Jones or a Walker or whoever it is. He has ~~go~~ to do his job, and he has ~~get~~ to want to do it to stay. So if there was some way that I could pass along a message to them I would like to do it, but I don't know how you would do it. You can't see every one of them personally and tell them. But I think the people that have been here, like Mrs. Hughes mentioned. She knows, she was here a long time and she saw us grow, and she knows that we like to have people and we are interested in seeing that they do get promoted. So I think people here know that, but I don't think you can over-emphasize it.

Jenkins: You say that I should talk to Vernon about what is going

on right now in terms of selection, training and motivation methods, but let me get you to go back and kind of compare how you did things, what you were faced with then with what is happening now. For instance, as you were looking for managerial people what were you looking for?

Baird: Yes, that is a good question, because it is different today. Back in the days when I was active in the sales and in the operation of the business, we usually took sales managers and watched them pretty close. And our managers usually came from the salesmen.

Jenkins: Up through the ranks?

Baird: Yes. In those days that might have been alright. Evidently it worked.

Jenkins: You are still here.

Baird: But, well, there is one thing about any kind of business, Floyd, you have got to be interested in sales, I guarantee if you are going to be successful in business, because you are selling something all the time. And if you don't like people you can't be a very good salesman. Actually it was a little easier to make money in the baking business then than it is now, because you can put enough volume in your plant to offset a lot of inefficiencies.

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: And today that isn't true. Today your manager can come

from sales, but he also has got to be an operator. And too many times sales-conscious people are not too good at management. They know how to sell, but they don't know how to operate and organize and plan and program. So I would say today that your managers could come from any part of the business rather than <sup>Sales</sup>. it was almost 100% back in the old days to go the sales route.

Jenkins: You looked for a good salesman to become a good sales manager.

Baird: Yes, he started in at the sales department. You took a good salesman and made him a supervisor. Well, two times out of five it wouldn't work, because the guy could sell himself, but he couldn't do a job handling the other salesmen. So you have got to look at all sides of it now, and you ~~just~~ don't take it just from a sales angle like you did those days. Today's business operation is completely different from what it was 25 years ago. You have got to be an operator. You have ~~got~~ to know the thing all the way through.

Jenkins: The big picture.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: What about your non-managerial people? What were you looking for in those? People that you hired to go out and work on the line.

Baird: In production?

Jenkins: Yes. Anything in particular that you were looking for out of production line people, not managerial people?

Baird: Well, here again I think Vernon can answer that better than I can.

Jenkins: Back when you were doing it, what were you looking for?

Baird: Oh, somebody that would work. You wanted somebody honest, and ability and above all application of ability. A lot of people have ~~got~~ ability, but they just won't apply it.

Jenkins: Is it much different now, do you think, in finding people?

Baird: Oh, I really don't know. I just don't get close enough to it down there to know what personnel problems are.

Jenkins: I see. We'll put the bee on Vernon for that, then. Let's move into a section on advertising and public relations now. Is there such a thing, do you have such a thing as a philosophy of advertising and public relations that you want to speak to?

Baird: I do in advertising.

Jenkins: All right.

Baird: Tell the truth. Don't try to promote something that you can't produce. I think advertising can be an important part of your business. If you have ~~got~~ a good product I think you can do a little better job of selling. You let people know that you have ~~got~~ a good product. But I think by all means you have ~~got~~ to present it properly and you have ~~got~~ to be truthful about it.

Jenkins: Now Your advertising, from what I see, keeps that homey, personal touch. Do you use an agency?

Baird: Yes, Tracy-Lock Advertising Agency in Dallas has handled our advertising since back in the 1930's.

Jenkins: Have you used, what media? Television, obviously.

Baird: Television and radio, in-store merchandising and advertising mostly.

Jenkins: Newspapers?

Baird: Not too much. Newspapers, they are good. Today your advertising dollar is split up so many ways that it is pretty hard to do the job in all of them. So you have got to make up your mind which one is probably capable of doing the best job for you. And T.V. is pretty effective. It is expensive, but it is pretty effective. For our business. Now if you are advertising specific items at a specific price, and other things too, ~~that particularly~~ I think the newspaper is good. But our advertising in the newspaper, we don't advertise a price and we don't advertise a specific item. Mrs. Baird's Bread, just Mrs. Baird's Bread. Well, that builds up consumer acceptance and demand for Mrs. Baird's Bread. But if you say Mrs. Baird's cake then what kind of cake are you talking about? So Mrs. Baird's Cake doesn't create any appetite appeal as far as you are concerned, but Mrs. Baird's Chocolate Cupcake creamed filled might make you

a little hungry. And so advertising is a tricky game, and money can be wasted in it. A lot is.

Jenkins: The name is what you . . .

Baird: We are selling Mrs. Baird's.

Jenkins: And right now, and for a while, the historical approach is what you have been using. Is that pretty much the approach that you try to take?

Baird: Well, I think the advertising agency came up with the idea that people would say, "Is there really a Mrs. Baird?"

Jenkins: I see. And so there she is.

Baird: And so I think this was their way of trying to let the public know that there really is a Mrs. Baird. There was a Mrs. Baird and she started the business, and she is responsible for our philosophy of the baking business. And there is no way that you can ever get away from it as strong as it is with me, and I have sold it to my children and the boys in the business. Well, I think advertising can do a job of establishing confidence with the public and with the consumer. In our business where we don't advertise a specific item, we are doing what is known as institutional advertising, more or less. We are not trying to sell a specific product, and anything that we make with Mrs. Baird's name on it is going to be good because we have an absolute responsibility when we

put our name on there, that means we are responsible for it. And I don't think that holds true with the brand names that are available and that are used by a lot of people in food products. I would rather have my own name on it, and then I think that it helps establish confidence with the public.

Jenkins: I remember reading in the pamphlet that the time came in the baking industry when there was a quick rising process that became available and that your company made the decision to stick with the old fashioned way. What was that . . .

Baird: Yeast rising way.

Jenkins: Yes, the yeast rising way. Apparently, from what I gather, that is more expensive than the new way.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Why did you stick to that?

Baird: It takes more space in your building because you have to have a fermentation room, let your dough rise. It is the fermentation period. The think you were talking about was batterwhip, continuous mix. That is the Sunbeam label. They are the ones that really put it over bigger than anyone else. It doesn't really make a real good eating loaf of bread. It doesn't have the flavor. It doesn't have the eating quality that conventional methods of fermentation have. So in spite of the fact that there

probably is a little cheaper operation, and definitely you can save space in your building, we believe that the other is worth the difference, because when you eat whatever meal it is you want something that tastes good. You want something that has some flavor and eating quality. And I think our method of producing bread is much better than what is called the continuous mix or batterwhipped.

Jenkins: When I told a colleague that I was fixing to come down here and do this, he said, "I want you to be sure to ask him if they really do let it rise twice, still." And this apparently is a lengthy process, Byron was telling me.

Baird: Yes, four to four and a half hours from the time you mix the first part of the dough, which is called the sponge. Then the sponge has to set for a certain length of time and it goes back and then you put the rest of the ingredients into it and it is mixed again with the dough. It comes out as a dough and it has got to set again to ferment, because the ingredients you put into it have got to all work in there. And it takes about four and a half hours from the time it starts being mixed until it starts to what we call make-up<sup>.....</sup> equipment, which is making it into a loaf of bread.

Jenkins: Another thing, too, that he said be sure to ask. Does that bread really get out there as fast as you say that it does, into the store from the bakery? Byron was saying

you start most of your baking at night?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: And those trucks roll out of here early, and they really do get to those stores in a matter of a few hours.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Even the farthest distances that you go.

Baird: Yes, that's right.

Jenkins: Let's move into a section now about the extent of the family involvement, but more specifically your own personal involvement in civic, community, trade associations over the years. What kinds of community involvement have you had?

Baird: Well, some years back I was pretty active in the civic affairs, on the Chamber of Commerce, on the board and an officer in the Chamber of Commerce for a number of years. Back in the late 30's and 40's. I was on the board of the Fort Worth National Bank for 27 years, on the executive committee. I took part in all the Chamber of Commerce drives for membership. I was active enough in civic affairs that I had to learn to say "no". I got so involved with so many of them that I was losing a little time from my own business.

Jenkins: Well, let's at least list as many of those that you can think of. You probably have forgot a bunch of them.

Baird: I have, yes.

Jenkins: What are some of the organizations and things that you have been involved in over the years?

Baird: Well, I think the Chamber of Commerce, I was pretty active in that.

Jenkins: What other clubs?

Baird: Oh, I was very active in Colonial Country Club. My membership in Colonial is No. 7.

Jenkins: Really?

Baird: Marvin Leonard, of course, is the man who started and built Colonial Country Club.

Jenkins: Of Leonard's, the famous Leonard's Department Store?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: About when was that started?

Baird: Oh, golly, I have forgotten.

Jenkins: When did . . . When was No. 7?

Baird: I don't know. When he organized ~~the club~~ and built the club. I was No. 7 member.

Jenkins: You don't even remember when that was.

Baird: No, that was a long time ago.

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: But I was active in it. I was on the board of governors there for years.

Jenkins: Could that have been in the 30's?

Baird: Yes, 30's or 40's.

Jenkins: I see.

Baird: I served on the board, on the executive committee. I was an officer of the Colonial Country Club. I am a member of the Fort Worth Club. I am a member of the Exchange Club. From the standpoint of local community affairs that is about it, I think. I have been active in a whole lot of other things I don't even remember.

Jenkins: What trade associations have you been involved in?

Baird: Well, the American Bakers Association. I was active for years in that. On the board, on the executive committee, an officer. And also in the American Institute of Baking which is a scientific and research end of the baking industry. It is a very, very important part of the baking business. It is located in Manhattan, Kansas, now, and they work a lot with the University there at Manhattan, Kansas. I was a member of the board of governors there for years, and also an officer and served for a while as chairman of the American Institute of Baking.

Jenkins: I was wondering if you want to speak anymore to the functions of that institute. What does one get out of it by joining that association?

Baird: The American Institute of Baking? Well, it is a scientific and research organization.

Jenkins: Okay, I am sorry. I had forgot you had mentioned that.

Baird: They can do a job of combating food faddists because they can back it up with scientific facts.

Jenkins: Have a journal, I suppose.

Baird: When the baking industry wants to do something, why, we check with the American Institute of Baking to come up with the ideas and suggestions on what effect this is going to have on you.

Jenkins: Do they publish a journal?

Baird: No, just to the bakers.

Jenkins: Yes, but they do have a . . .

Baird: Well, I don't think it is what you would call a journal. I just think they give you a publication of some kind occasionally. But it is a fine organization. The American Bakers Association, of course, is a trade association. You meet twice a year, well, the board of governors meet; twice a year. The association meets once a year. They have a convention once a year. All the major bakers over the country belong to it. They have an exposition. I think Vernon is on that exposition committee. They have a showing of all the new bakery equipment and older equipment, too. They have a big showing in Atlantic City. In fact they are going to have it in Las Vegas next.

Jenkins: Any other organizations that you can remember over this long span of years that you would like to record? Local, state, or national or international.

Baird: No, I don't think so.

Jenkins: Okay, let's move on down here toward getting through then

perhaps. Now your present role in the company is chairman of the executive committee. What is the role of your executive committee?

Baird: Well, that is to review operations, financial and otherwise, and to discuss and establish overall policies for the operation of the company. Capital expenditures, improvements or expansion of plants, and a review of financial affairs.

Jenkins: Do you have regular meetings?

Baird: Yes. Quarterly and then we have . . .

Jenkins: On call.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay. Here is a company that has been around a long time, obviously successful. It appears to have a good, stable future. As you look back, what do you see as the reason for the strength and success of the Baird company?

Baird: Well, I think you start off with a good product. Obviously we must have had a good product or we couldn't have been successful. We have a good organization. We have ~~got~~ good people in all phases of the business. We have ~~got~~ good people heading it, working at it, interested in it. We have, I think, credibility with the consuming public. We give good service. We keep our product in good shape in the stores through freshness. I think those are probably the major reasons.

Jenkins: As other people have come into the business over the years, and as you have become chairman of the executive committee have you had much of a problem handing over leadership, turning it over to other people?

Baird: No I haven't. I haven't had that problem. I am 83 years old, and most people would be retired at that time, but my doctor told me not to retire, I wouldn't live very long.

Jenkins: I have a section on that. That is the last thing I ask you about.

Baird: I have had the pleasure of releasing responsibility to younger men. And being a family organization like it is, I am happy to say that I have had younger Bairds that are reaching for it. And when they showed that they were capable of accepting and handling the responsibility, it was a pleasure to turn it over to them. And I think as far as the future of the business is concerned it is in capable hands. And I think I could retire any time I wanted to from the standpoint of need. I don't want to retire because I wouldn't have anything else to do.

Jenkins: Well, that moves me into my last section, then, which I have down here. You said your doctor told you not to retire.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: How do you feel about retirement? I mean, you are 83, do you ever plan to retire?

Baird: Well, no, not as long as I feel like I am capable of contributing to the business. Anytime, and I think I would realize it when I did, anytime I became unable to make contributions to the company then I think I would retire.

Jenkins: But you like to come down here.

Baird: Oh, yes. This has been my life.

Jenkins: Do you come down here five days a week?

Baird: When I am in town I am here, yes.

Jenkins: When you are in town. You are out a lot maybe.

Baird: I am.

Jenkins: What doing?

Baird: Hunting, fishing and taking care of company business and entertaining our customers and guests.

Jenkins: You do some vacationing then.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: Do you take periods of time, or do you just kind of . . .

Baird: I take the summer.

Jenkins: I see. Fishing season.

Baird: I go six or eight weeks. I am there about six weeks in Wyoming trout fishing.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. Where particularly? Where do you fish up there? Any place in particular?

Baird: Oh, around Pinedale, Wyoming. It is over the southwestern corner of Wyoming.

Jenkins: I have been in <sup>Wy</sup>oming, but I am not sure I have been . . .

oh, yeah, around the Green River and the Dinosaur Park.

Baird: I have fished the Green River. But we don't fish up there very often, just the ~~big~~ streams.

Jenkins: We have camped right down on that in that part, that dinosaur thing.

Baird: Oh, did you.

Jenkins: Many years ago. Do you have hobbies?

Baird: Hunting and fishing. They are outdoor exercises and that is what I like. I played golf when I was younger. I didn't ever get to be as good as I wanted to be.

Jenkins: So in terms of retirement, as long as you feel able to come down and contribute you want to come down and contribute.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: You have no intention of just backing off and being through as long as you feel well enough to do it.

Baird: No, I don't see any need for it. I think the business could operate without me. I am not that egotistical. I think as long as I can participate and be of help occasionally, why, I think they will let me know if I get in the way.

Jenkins: Okay, I have covered my notes plus a lot more as we talked here. I want to be sure, though, that I don't skip something that you would like to include. So before we finish is there anything that you would like to add?

Baird: Well, I would like to say this. We have spent about four hours at this. I didn't realize that it had been that long so I must have enjoyed it.

Jenkins: Good, I certainly have, I tell you.

Baird: No, I feel like if one or two students would gain something from our interview here that would help them in moving along to something that they want to accomplish and would encourage them to work at it and would be helpful to them in becoming successful in some way, I think our time was well spent.

Jenkins: Well, I am quite sure that that will be true.

Baird: I have had the pleasure of raising five of our youngsters with Mrs. Baird, and naturally I am interested in young people. Anything that I can do to help a younger person accomplish something in life, I would feel like I had spent my time in something that had been worthwhile.

Jenkins: Very good. If there is nothing else then that you would like to add, then we will close the interview and see if we can line Vernon up and get him to talk a bit.

Baird: Okay.

Jenkins: Thank you very much.

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Interview with  
VERNON BAIRD  
February 28, 1980

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Interviewer: Floyd Jenkins

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## Business Oral History Collection

Mrs. Baird's Bakeries  
Vernon Baird

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Date: February 28, 1980

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is February 28, 1980. Continuing the Mrs. Baird's Bakeries interviews. Today I am interviewing Mr. Vernon Baird, president of Mrs. Baird's Bakeries, in their Fort Worth offices. Mr. Baird, let's start by going back and getting you to remember your earliest experiences in the bakery, your reminiscences of Mrs. Ninnie Baird, the family and really how you grew up in the baking business. What are some of your earliest recollections of the baking business, your knowledge of it?

Mr. Baird: I guess the earliest is remembering that Mother and Dad both worked. In order to keep me in tow, they used to chain me to the shipping desk while they helped turn out the orders that were needed.

Jenkins: Do you have any idea how old you were?

Baird: I sure don't.

Jenkins: It was way back there. What location?

Baird: Well, this was at the location of the plant on ~~Fifth~~ <sup>SIXTH</sup> Avenue and Terrell. I was born in '20 so it would have to be shortly after that. Early 20's.

Jenkins: I see. You just really grew up then around the bakery?

Baird: Well literally.

Jenkins: What are some of the things that you did as a kid around the bakery?

Baird: Well, I got in everybody's way I guess, was the main thing I did. One of the things that I always remember was, after we put two floors on the bakery we had the cake line upstairs and Mrs. Hornbeak, who was the mother of Bess Hornbeak, a clerk in our offices here in Fort Worth for almost fifty years, would hid <sup>me</sup> me under the conveyor belt when they were icing the angel food, and I would get one of the crippled angel foods and eat enough to make me sick. But she hid me because if my uncles or dad found me up there I would get a paddling. So she would hide me underneath the conveyor belt amidst the boxes.

Jenkins: This was before and after school, or just whenever you happened to get down there, I guess.

Baird: Just when I happened to be there.

Jenkins: When do you remeber that they put you to work doing some things?

Baird: Well, I was a helper on a bread route, I guess, from the

time I was eight or nine years old. I would help the man carry the bread in the stores, because the outside always interested me more than the inside; although I can remember standing on a box at the end of a wrapping machine and catching bread that was coming off the wrapper and loading it into boxes.

Jenkins: How much of the inside kind of work have you done?

Practically everything?

Baird: I worked some in practically all parts of the inside of the bakery; but not a great deal because every chance that I got I would get out into the territory and help on the bread routes.

Jenkins: Well, your main love, then, leaned toward selling.

Baird: I was much more interested in selling it than I was in making it.

Jenkins: When did you officially become an employee and have your own route, about? Do you have any idea?

Baird: I think my seniority dates from '42. Because of the technicalities, I didn't get credit for any of that time. I worked prior to that time, because I worked after school, on Saturdays and during the summers. But I think as far as my retirement is concerned, my official records are after I graduated from college.

Jenkins: You started to work back in the days when a lot of laws weren't very stringent and records weren't kept too much,

so you probably actually started to work as a teenager doing things around the place. Give us a little of the flavor of the founder, Mrs. Ninnie Baird, as you recall her, both as a grandmother and as an operator in the bakery.

Baird: Of course, this is the heritage that makes our company what it is. Grandmother was a very lovable person. On the other hand she was very strict in what she expected of children. So you knew how to behave when you went to her house. One of the fondest memories was the Christmas<sup>e</sup> before the family got so big. We would all go to Grandmother's house for Christmas. This was her children and their oldest children, in the days when she could still have them there, and everybody came out and had the Christmas tree. After we had had it at our own house then we would go to Grandmother's for the day, and everybody pitched in and helped serve the big Christmas dinner. And Lore<sup>e</sup> played the piano.

Jenkins; Lore<sup>e</sup> is who?

Baird: Mrs. Elmer Cummings, one of Grandmother's daughters.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. This lasted a good many years, did it?

Baird: Well, it seemed like it then, but now it was just a very few years, actually, because by then the family began to grow so much that it was impossible to get everybody together. But prior to 1928 when Rollin<sup>R. L. Rollin</sup>

Baird moved to Dallas, and then in 1938, of course,  
when we built our <sup>NEW</sup> plants in Houston and <sup>FT. WORTH</sup> ~~Abilene~~, we were  
all scattered by then. But the early 30's, late 20's  
were very memorable occasions for Christmas.

Jenkins: What about your relationships with her on a working basis.  
Did you have direct relationship with her?

Baird: No, I was too far down on the hog in those days.

Jenkins: So you didn't see much of her as a boss, I guess.

Baird: Well, yes, because in the later years, since I was one  
of those living in Fort Worth, occasionally she would call  
and want some help to do this and that or the other and  
I would send somebody out to help her do whatever she  
wanted to do because she always lived alone. She didn't  
want any other people helping her. Even when she became  
almost incapacitated due to a broken hip, every so often  
she would dismiss her nurses when she found out what  
they were charging, because she didn't think that she  
needed that help.

Jenkins: Was she frugal, then all of her life?

Baird: She was very frugal.

Jenkins: And expected others to be, I suppose.

Baird: She wated <sup>to</sup> be sure that she knew where her next meal  
was coming from.

Jenkins: Well, there came a time, obviously, when she was finan-  
cially quite secure, but she probably continued this

frugality.

- Baird: This changed nothing.
- Jenkins: Well, is that kind of a company, family tradition through the years? You might want to use another word besides frugality, but economy and efficiency. Kind of what I am getting at, to what extent were her attitudes carried over through the long history of the company?
- Baird: Well, I think they have been carried down rather extensively over the years. As contrasted with most companies, we have not grown geographically probably as much as some others have. She wanted to be sure that you could pay for whatever you bought. And that philosophy has continued until today.
- Jenkins: Mr. Hoyt gave me the impression that this was a very long tradition, that debt wasn't something the company went in for to a great extent. Considerably on a cash flow basis.
- Baird: That is what I say. In other words, her philosophy and the philosophy that has continued is that we know where we are going to be able to pay for something before we buy it.
- Jenkins: Now being in the family, you may not have heard from everyone about what kind of boss she was. But over the years what are your impressions of how people felt about her as an operator of the company?
- Baird: I had enough experience with her as a second echelon executive to know that you never could completely satisfy her.

She was very, very demanding, particularly as far as quality was concerned, and she expected it to be that way. On the other hand she was a very lovable and understanding person, ~~by~~ virtue of her beliefs that you could be a good businessman and a good Christian, too, ~~that~~ that simplified how you are supposed to operate.

Jenkins: She knew how folks were supposed to live.

Baird: You follow the Golden Rule, well, that is about all you had to do.

Jenkins: Well, let's go right on in, then, to this employee relations section and see what kind of impact, perhaps, it had on the kind of employee relations approach. Do you have such a thing as a general philosophy of employee relations based upon this history.

Baird: No, other than just a basic simple one, which is treat people the way you would like to be treated.

Jenkins: I get the feeling from reading some of your newsletters that in spite of the fact that it is now a big company there is still not only the attempt to get this feeling, but there still is a great deal of the family feeling among the employees. Are you close enough as president, do you see enough of them to really get feedback on this feeling?

Baird: I am not sure that I would truly get the feedback, but from what people tell you and from what you hear I feel

like that we have at least been partially successful in continuing this relationship with our people.

Jenkins: Before we get into the section on employee relations, if you would at least give us a brief sketch of your work and educational experience leading up to your tenured entry into the business. You were born when and where?

Baird: I was born in Fort Worth, April 5, 1920. And as I said, I am not sure that I ever held any other job than with Mrs. Baird's Bakeries. But I think one of the first checks that I remember drawing was for \$1.25. But as I said earlier, I have worked inside the shop in various areas, but the first love I had, of course, was working out in the territory delivering bread and cakes and this sort of thing. I did that from an early age as a helper.

Jenkins: What kind of equipment were you using?

Baird: We were using trucks in those days, but they weren't in very good shape. And most of the roads, if we left the city of Fort Worth, for example if we were going to Denton, we went out the old Sante Fe Railroad up through Ponder and that territory. And none of those roads were paved. In the winter time it took you longer than you thought to get all the way to Gainesville, for example.

Jenkins: Well, were they graveled or did you get stuck sometimes?

Baird: We got stuck several times. I can remember one route

that we started out in Haltom City, and made stops all the way from Haltom City to Gainesville. And made the city of Gainesville and all the way back. And I guess now we probably have twenty-five routes in that same territory.

Jenkins: And the trucks that you were driving then were what kind? Do you remember?

Baird: I believe the truck on that particular route was a Dodge. We did a lot of business with the old Steve Cook Dodge Company here in Fort Worth. But by virtue of Miss Charlie Noble, who had taken Dad with her at an early age to Colorado, and who was a teacher in the Fort Worth school system, I was convinced to go to Rice after I graduated from high school. And I graduated from Rice and then came back.

Jenkins: Now you studied what at Rice?

Baird: I have a liberal arts degree.

Jenkins: Well, at Rice, though, you must have got something rather technical here and there. Almost forced to, weren't you?

Baird: I had three years of chemical engineering and three years of economics and three years of history and three years of this and three years of that.

Jenkins: Did you do any business administration? Did you study business administration?

Baird: We didn't have a course, as such, down there. I had three years of accounting.

\* Something left out.  
THIS begins to talk  
about EDUCATION

Jenkins: Did they put you to work accounting when you got back here?

Baird: No. My first job when I came back from school was in the office, because the cake plant and the bread plant in Fort Worth had been separated at that time and I went back to work in the office of the cake plant, because it was just a short time then before I went on into the service.

Jenkins: I see. At least give us a sketch of that service. You went in when and what did you do and when did you get back, briefly.

Baird: I went in in '42 and got out in '45, and spent the entire time, with the exception of about 8 weeks in basic training enroute, ~~and~~ I went to work in the Supreme Headquarters, General Eisenhower's headquarters, in London, England, and spent the rest of my service days in SHAEF, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces.

Jenkins: And then you got out in . . .

Baird: '45.

Jenkins: And came directly back.

Baird: And came directly back to the bakery and went back to work.

Jenkins: As . . .

Baird: I am not even sure.

Jenkins: It kind of gets all jumbled up, I would think. Now you put emphasis on this being a family business built upon

team work. Give us some sketch of the growth and development of the organization structure and how it was built as you grew geographically and in size.

Baird: Well, Grandmother's four boys were the nucleus of the company. The oldest grandchild was my cousin, Bill. Bill was primarily a production man. When they built both the Fort Worth and the Houston plants in 1938, Bill was put in charge of the construction of the Fort Worth plant. The four boys had divided up their responsibilities. And even though at that time we had separate corporations for the three plants, the Fort Worth, the Dallas and the Houston operations, they collectively met together and worked out the basic strategies and policies that would be followed. But as we began to grow, of course we faced the decision as most family organizations do, shall we continue or shall we not. By this time in the late 40's after all of us had gotten back out of the service, that were in the service, this question again arose and we decided to expand. And Mr. Thomas, who was then president of Texas Electric, was very helpful in our decision to move our next plant to Abilene, which of course we opened in 1948. From this point in time Bill Baird went to Abilene to manage that operation, and my next brother, ~~ALLEN~~ Allen, went along with him as a production foreman. Subsequent to that, when we decided to build a new plant in

Dallas because Dallas was growing and we needed additional territory, Bill moved back to Dallas to construct that plant. Then as time moved along, the older brothers decided they wanted to slow down a little bit, so at some point in time Bill became president of the company. And we went on the board of directors, Bill and I and then ~~ALAN~~ <sup>ALLEN</sup> Alan and Clayton. And subsequently we moved ~~Carolyn~~ <sup>CARROLL</sup> Carolyn, Bob, several of the younger ones onto the board of directors until it became where it ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> today.

Jenkins: To what extent is the Baird Company run by Bairds, and to what extent are non-Bairds on your board and in the executive suite?

Baird: Well, to the extent of being run by non-Bairds, our plants are all operated by managers, and today three of our plants are run by a Baird. But, of course, this is usually just a training process for them to become acquainted with the overall problems of the business. From the standpoint of operating the company as a whole, we have an executive committee composed of, now: my father; ~~Alan~~ <sup>ALLEN</sup> Alan, who is a brother; Carroll, who is a brother; Clayton, who is Mr. D. C. Baird's third son; Byron, who is Mr. C. B.'s second son; and me. So we have an executive committee of six people, and the basic policies and decisions of the company are made at that level.

Jenkins: You do have plant managers, however, who aren't Bairds.

Baird: Yes, our plants basically are run by people who are not a Baird.

Jenkins: But you put them in sometimes as a training device.

Baird: Of course that usually is the ultimate that most of these people seek, is to become a manager of one of these plants.

Jenkins: Let's lead into this section on selection and development of your managers. What are you looking for when you are choosing people that you want to rise through the ranks and to really be running the place.

Baird: The first thing that we look for is somebody that really wants to get there. And this is a constant thing as far as the group that I mentioned awhile ago, as well as some of those that aren't on the executive committee, which would be Scott Baird who is a great-grandson. This is Bill's boy. Scott is the manager of the Waco plant, Arthur is manager of our Houston plant now. Arthur is my youngest brother. Byron now has recently assumed the job of manager of our Fort Worth cake plant, and the man who was in his position has now become general salesmanager for the company.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. So he is a non-Baird, and he is in the top *SALES* operating position.

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: What kinds of development do you look for in these people? Simply working on the job or do you attempt to select places to send them? Do you have internal training programs? What kind of training and development do you try to get for them, provide for them, put them into?

Baird: There are some specialized training courses in bakery management which we have tried to send a great many of the people that are at the manager level to.

Jenkins: Tell us a little about those, where they are and what they . . .

Baird: Well, this is a course offered by the American Institute of Baking which is now located in Manhattan, Kansas; but a great many of our people who have been to that went to it when it was located in Chicago. It provides a broad overview of business management as a total concept and then goes into a few more of the specifics with regards to bakery management. In other words it gets into some of the technical aspects of what our particular business is involved in.

Jenkins: Do you look for college trained people specifically or not?

Baird: No, as a matter of fact with the exception of some of the Bairds, a great many of our people have not been college trained, although at this point in time with possibly two exceptions, all of our managers do have

college degrees.

Jenkins: Do you promote pretty much from within or do you go out considerably to build managerial people?

Baird: We have strongly tried to promote from within. One of the reasons for that is that the Bairds have all come from within. But likewise we have done the same with people other than Bairds. The manager of our Dallas plant was a route salesman in Houston at one time. The young man that is general salesmanager was a route salesman in Dallas when he originally started out. When we did move out and buy some plants in 1959, the manager of our Lubbock plant came to us, and at the time we bought the plant he was office manager of that particular operation.

Jenkins: On your non-management people, I notice again from reading some of your news magazines that you apparently offer a very wide range of benefit programs. Would you speak to some of those things that you offer in the company?

Baird: We think that we have a very fine program of fringe benefits. Not the least of which are: pay for working during holiday periods, extra pay; very good vacation program; a hospitalization program that we think meets the needs of our people and that is well designed to take care of the catastrophic type of illnesses that people have. In other words when the illness or hospitalization gets up into the thousands of dollars, the entire cost is picked

up by us at that point in time prior to that. What it boils down to, an individual could pay up to a thousand dollars, and after that the cost is covered by the company. We provide a pension program that allows for retirement at 65 and early retirement at an earlier date provided they have achieved twenty years of service with the company.

Jenkins: The Founders Cup Award. Tell me a little about that. I was reading about that. What is it based on and what is it's purpose and so on?

Baird: Well, the Founder's Cup program was an award we came up with several years ago to enable the plants to compete against each other. And each year we set a set of goals in various operating areas, such as percent of selling cost, percent of wages, and the various factors that go into operations, not the least of which is employee turnover, accident rate, this sort of thing. And all of these are given points, and then the plant that achieves the highest total number of points for the year wins the Founder's Cup, and this is a rather large cup that is presented and comes in the possession of that plant for that year. If a plant would win it three consecutive years then the cup becomes theirs on a permanent basis.

Jenkins: Apparently there is a big award ceremony.

Baird: Yes, the rest of the plants have to pay for a dinner for

all of the employees of that particular plant. Our Waco plant did manage to win it three consecutive years, and they have the first Founder's Cup in their permanent possession.

Jenkins: What kind of accident rate do you have?

Baird: I don't know what the exact figures are on the accident rate. We know that our accident losses run considerably lower than our industry as a whole. Just as we work at sanitation, we work at safety.

Jenkins: Do you have a formal safety program?

Baird: We have a formal safety program, and we have a person on the corporate staff that spends his whole time trying to help us improve and eliminate accidents that we might have. In other words, you find what the trends are, where it is that you might be having accidents, and try to eliminate those.

Jenkins: Do you try to pull information from people on the line through any kind of suggestion system?

Baird: We have a safety committee set up in each plant, and the people that serve on that committee are employees. And during the period of time they are on the safety committee they wear the green cross on their helmet, and then they sit in and participate in the meeting that is held once a period, and they are charged with the responsibility of reporting anything that they feel is unsafe, no matter whether it is in their department or any other department.

And we get a very good feedback. Another thing that we do is in the driving area, anyone who drives company vehicles is awarded a safe-driving shirt emblem which is worn on their uniform signifying the number of years they have driven without an accident. Our recognition probably comes in two areas, the safe driving awards plus the emblems that they wear on their uniforms signifying the number of years of service they have had with the company.

Jenkins: To what extent do you have some really long tenured people in the company.

Baird: We have a considerable number. After a person has been in the baking business for I would say a year, they find they like it. So as a consequence our turnover beyond the first twelve months is almost nil.

Jenkins: What is it that seems to hold people to the baking business?

Baird: I guess the only thing is that it is a fascinating business. Something which to outsiders seems so mundane and routine and regular is never the same any two <sup>days</sup> hours. In the first place you are dealing with a product that is continually growing; with the yeast being added to the flour and water, the product we make never slows down in its growing process. Once it gets baked then it begins to start staling.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Baird: So it is never the same, and what appears from an outside

standpoint to be a very routine, mundane business is something which, you know, "everybody eats bread," you hear that. The truth of the matter is they don't. And our business necessitates us to contest everything. Our competitors, other food products, the weather, just about anything actually is in competition to what Mrs. Housewife is going to buy and consume. Of course the baking business actually really completes a complete business cycle every twenty-four hours. And so, contrasted with the normal manufacturing operation that might have a complete business cycle every six months, we have one every twenty-four hours.

Jenkins: Well, all of these variations that you were talking about that affect what the housewife is going to buy, does that make planning very difficult? Does your production then vary considerably, from week to week?

Baird: Well, it varies considerably from our standpoint. From an outsiders standpoint, ~~that~~ the business might fluctuate 1% from one week to the next or 2%, this is a wide variation. The next business might fluctuate 20% from one period to the next, and it would be normal.

Jenkins: Tell us, for instance, about the weather, how might that affect what people are buying?

Baird: Well, in effect the weather won't have that much affect on the business if you could take, let's just say, a

week's period of time. In other words, in that week they are going to buy and consume about the same amount of bread or other products. But in any one day there might be some variations on that, and of course with the shelf life of our product, being 24 or 48 or 72 hours, if you are there the wrong day then you have missed it.

Jenkins: You then may have a lot of returns on some of these things.

Baird: That is right.

Jenkins: What do you do with your returns.

Baird: These are disposed of through our thrift stores that we have established. And this is an integral part of the baking business today. So we have thrift stores located in several places around all of our major towns that will dispose of the product that has been brought back and did not sell through the grocery stores.

Jenkins: There appears to me to be a substantial price cut on that in the thrift store.

Baird: Well, there is quite a bit of difference between the price as sold through the grocery stores and what it is sold at in the thrift stores, because you are buying a product that is not the same freshness even though it is still perfectly good to eat.

Jenkins: I know. I use it. In fact I think the last time I was here two weeks ago Mr. Hoyt gave me some of the new sesame

seeded rolls, and I didn't realize they were new because the week before we had picked some up at the thrift store. Let's move into the section on advertising and public relations. What in general is the philosophy and the methods and the media that you use in advertising and public relations?

Baird: Well, basically the media, or a combination of different media, that we have determined will do the most effective job for selling our product and telling our story. This may not apply to the next company or to another business. But by testing over a period of years we have come up with the formula which we think does the most effective job, and that is what we are using today. Of course today our television spots that we use, and incidentally television is the most powerful advertising media that we have found, but we also combine it with radio. We are using the family story as a background, because another baker hasn't got the same story to tell that we have. And because so many people look at bread as a rather commonplace item, it may not be regarded as one brand being different from the others. We know there is a difference, and from our feedback that we have gotten from the public over a long period of time we are convinced the public knows the difference, too.

Jenkins: What do you think are the major differences? Certainly

you have a different rising method than a lot of them do.

Baird: I think probably the most basic difference that we have is that we are consistent. In other words by virtue of our inspection of the products that come out of all of our plants every day, we think we maintain a uniformity that is not excelled by anyone else in the business.

Jenkins: What kind of quality control do you have? Is it kind of continuous in every point in the line, or what?

Baird: Yes, it is. Our production superintendents must check their products that are coming out every day. And then in addition to that the managers of our plants all look at their bread every day, or look at the products that they turn out. In addition to that, the bread is scored twice a week by one of the Bairds.

Jenkins: What does that mean, scoring?

Baird: That means it is graded. With a maximum score of four, and not many people earn a four.

Jenkins: How do you score bread?

Baird: Well, you look at the various characteristics of it, the color, ~~to~~ the taste, the flavor, the symmetry. All of these are factors.

Jenkins: This reminds me. Back in the old days when we bought bread it had big holes all in it. Why doesn't bread have

big holes in it today?

Baird: Well, it is because we have learned the proper fermentation. A big hole just indicates probably that your fermentation wasn't correct.

Jenkins: And there was a lot of that back a good many years ago.

Baird: Yes. Part of that has to do with the makeup of the loaf  
of bread.

Jenkins: I guess that is about gone now, isn't it?

Baird: Well, I don't know what size hole you had reference to. If you are talking about hole  $3/8$  of an inch or something like that, you still see that.

Jenkins: Oh, really?

Baird: Occasionally you will see it in our bread. But this can come from a multitude of sources, everything from not being properly mixed to being overmixed.

Jenkins: You have apparently introduced some new items just recently, haven't you?

Baird: By that do you mean just in the last 60 days?

Jenkins: Yes.

Baird: We brought a new French roll on to the market.

Jenkins: How often do you experiment with a new product?

Baird: We constantly are experimenting with new items. As a company we have always been a little slow about bringing new items. Our eventual test panel happens to be the members of the executive committee, and once we can get

all of them to agree that a product is good enough that we think we can market it, then we will usually go to market with it.

Jenkins: What are some of the products that you have retained the longest pretty much in the same form?

Baird: Well, these would be our conventional white breads, both sandwich and round top; the wheat bread; wheat sandwich loaf; the brown and serve rolls have been on the market for many years.

Jenkins: How about cake type things?

Baird: Angel food cake, of course, has always been a good standby. The snack items, the chocolate cups, these sort of things are of long duration.

Jenkins: Is there anything much happening, substantial, in the move toward whole grains and this kind of thing? Is this affecting you much yet?

Baird: The advent of variety breads, as such, has been an on-coming thing. It has been going on for many years. There are quite a few varieties of bread on the market today, and principally all of these things actually just alter the flavor. Nutritionally they are all about the same.

Jenkins: I noticed that you have been prominent in the Mrs. Baird's commercials now for quite a while, and apparently you have a new commercial just out. How did you get into this and what seems to be the future for you?

Baird: In testing out advertising spots the agency, which is the Tracy-Lock<sup>e</sup> Company of Dallas who have been our advertising agency for over 50 years, felt that telling the family story was a way of selling that we were unique in. So they wanted to use a member of the family because that would, if done right, enhance the credibility of our ads. I think we came up with it because, well, a group at the agency wanted a voice. And without knowing who they were listening to, we had taped some recordings one day here at the plant and they chose the voice, and the voice happened to be mine. That is the way I got into it.

Jenkins: And you have made how many different . . . ?

Baird: Oh, I don't know. Eight or ten.

Jenkins: So as far as you can tell this is going to be the pattern.

Baird: Well, with some modifications. Naturally in advertising you are always going to change it a little bit. This one that we have just recently come out with, for example, has got more appetite appeal perhaps than some of the earlier ones.

Jenkins: The earlier ones tend towards. . .

Baird: On how it was made and so forth.

Jenkins: What are the major laws that you have to be particularly interested in concerning the industry?

Baird: I don't know that we really have basically any laws directed specifically at the baking industry. Naturally you have to

have clean plants, but since that is part and parcel of our operation, there is nothing there that hinders us because we want our plants to be cleaner probably than any government inspector would accept.

Jenkins: Do they make periodic inspections?

Baird: They make periodic inspections of all our plants.

Jenkins: How often?

Baird: Well, they don't have a set schedule, but we have our own.

We have outside people who specialize in this that do inspect our plants, and they do inspect on a regular basis.

We have two different companies that make inspections of our plants. In addition to this all of our managers must make their own personal inspections of their plants.

Jenkins: These inspections of your plants are things that you invite?

Baird: That is correct.

Jenkins: What kind of experience, if any, have you had with OSHA?

Baird: Not a great deal. We have had problems in the past with some of the things which we felt were nitpicking; but we have tried to cooperate with these people as best we can and yet stay within the realms of practical operation.

Jenkins: Does there seem to be any kind of a pattern to the OSHA inspections, as far as you can tell?

Baird: To some extent there might be. For example ladders are something they always look at, or railings. Primarily they are addressing themselves to areas where people might get

hurt is what it boils down to.

Jenkins: So you really haven't had any serious problems?

Baird: We don't feel like they have been serious.

Jenkins: About the EEOC, have you had any brushes with them?

Baird: We have had some problems. By that I mean we have had some investigations. To my knowledge every one has been resolved satisfactorily.

Jenkins: ~~What~~ are your feelings concerning the trend in government regulations in business?

Baird: I guess our biggest problem is going to have to do with labelling. There is a concerted effort on the part of a lot of people that feel that labelling of what is in the loaf of bread is important. I think this is good, except that people do not recognize <sup>the names</sup>, and in many cases it gives the impression that a loaf of bread or a cupcake is composed of a lot of chemicals. And the truth of the matter is, the whole entire world is chemical. But it does cut down on the flexibility of producing items from the standpoint of changing the labels, because if you want to experiment with an item and you do not have that particular ingredient in your product, it is difficult; or else you must change the wrapper so that the label designates that that product is in there.

Jenkins: In terms of cost, how expensive might these label restrictions turn out to be?

Baird: Well, for example, we are contemplating taking out one ingredient, which is what we call a dough conditioner, that we have used for many, many years. We have found that with the flours being what they are today, we can probably be better off without using this ingredient. Okay, if we have to go in and change our wrappers to show that we have taken that ingredient out, in addition to the time involved, it would probably cost us ten to twenty thousand dollars on our wrappers just to change that one ingredient. That one ingredient is less than 1% of the total weight of the bread.

Jenkins: How costly is getting the loaf of bread or the piece of cake into the hands of the customer in terms of transportation and packaging and so on?

Baird: This, of course, is one of the bigger costs in the baking industry. Combined, your ingredients and wrapping cost never run over 35% of our selling price of a product. And as a consequence it would be a much lower percentage of the actual price the consumer pays. But the selling and distribution cost would exceed the cost of putting the product out and putting it under a wrapper.

Jenkins: Has this cost relationship had a tendency to constantly go up?

Baird: Basically we find that the distribution cost is going up faster than the contents are.

Jenkins: Let me ask you a little bit about what you do here. Is there such a thing as a typical day for Vernon Baird, President?

Baird: No, I really don't have a typical day. Actually with our plants being run by their managers, then <sup>MY</sup> brother Carroll ~~that~~ looks after the day-to-day operations, if anything comes up that is unusual he takes care of that. These labor relations that Clayton takes care of, he can handle that. <sup>ALLEN</sup> Alan handles the equipment that we <sup>BUY</sup> get. So really I don't have an average day or a normal day. Whatever broadbased problem . . . in other words if it looks like the cost of flour is going to go up in the next 90 days, I may be addressing myself to basically what we should do, at what point and time that impact would hit us, and what we should do about it and so forth. So mine is more planning.

Jenkins: What are the things that you like most about the presidency of the Baird Company? Do you still have some major interests as opposed to some other interests?

Baird: I may have major interests, major enjoyment. And of course I guess the major enjoyment is being out in the grocery stores and actually talking to the housewives and selling. I never go into the grocery stores that I don't have the opportunity to sell at least three or four housewives on one of our products.

Jenkins: How much of that do you do?

Baird: As much as I can. That is the fun part of the business.

Jenkins: Well, tell us a little bit about that. I didn't know that. . . I have never run into you out there.

Baird: Well, all of our people do get into the stores and sell, because after all that is where our business is. Mrs. Housewife buying our product is really what it is all about. And unless you know what is going on out there you can't have a very good feel for the business. I go into a grocery store and look at the bakery department, and see if I think it is being merchandised as it should be, and see where we might be missing some sales opportunities.

Jenkins: And you talk to customers.

Baird: And as I said I never miss an opportunity to try to sell a loaf of bread or a cupcake or whatever it might be. Fortunately I am still successful.

Jenkins: You talk to the store people?

Baird: Talk to the store personnel. You do get a lot of information from them.

Jenkins: How widely geographically do you go?

Baird: Wherever I am. In other words whatever town I am in.

Jenkins: Oh, so you have all kinds of reasons for travelling all over, and while you are there you get into these things.

Baird: Yes, in other words if I go out to any of our plants, then a part of the time is spent in the grocery stores in that market.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. So you still get to do the thing that you love best.

Baird: Not very much of it, but I get to do it.

Jenkins: I see. You spend a lot of time on the road, then.

Baird: No, lately I haven't spent as much time. With Carroll being responsible for the day-to-day operations of the plants I don't have to be in the plants as frequently as I did.

Jenkins: Now I realize that it is difficult to know, being in the spot that you are, but how close do you still feel that you are to the people on the assembly line? Do you still see them?

Baird: I can still call a lot of them by name.

Jenkins: So you do get down into the plant?

Baird: Yes.

Jenkins: You know people, and they . . .

Baird: This is a part of our business, that we know the people that work for us.

Jenkins: Even in other plants?

Baird: Even in the other plants.

Jenkins: You do get around plants pretty often.

Baird: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: You walk through them and see folks, and you read the company magazines. I think I have mentioned this before. This is not just the Baird family, there is still an attempt to have this family feeling even though it is pretty

big.

Baird: We work real hard at that.

Jenkins: What are some of the advantages as you have experienced of a family business, and what are some of the disadvantages of a family controlled business, working with family?

Baird: Well, I guess the advantage is that family members usually have more than a passing interest in what takes place. Some of the disadvantages might be that you probably have more bosses that you come in contact with more frequently than you might do otherwise. But by virtue of the way our family works, and those people that are in the business that are drawing a paycheck out of it, have to perform regardless of their name. That is the big asset that we have. Of course, we have defied all the academic criteria about family organizations, because we now have some of the fifth generation in the business.

Jenkins: I wanted to speak to that some. What do you see as the future of the Baird family business? Are there still plenty of Bairds coming on? Do you want it to remain and intend for it to remain a family business?

Baird: It is our intentions that it continue to be a family business. The heritage of a lady who did nothing more than . . . I once said, "Grandmother, why did you do this?" She said, "I did what any other mother would do. I just took care of my children." And that heritage is the thing

that we treasure the most. That is the backbone of this business, and we see no reason for it to change.

Jenkins: Mrs. Baird's Bread has been around for a very long time, and it is very strong in the market. What are the reasons for the survival and strength of the Baird Baking Company?

Baird: I think just the thing that we have been talking about. In other words we have got a product with our name on it, we try to make it as good as we know how every day, and the public appreciates that and rewards us by buying our product.

Jenkins: As you sit in the president's chair, some people get very far removed from an organization. Do you ever feel that you are very far removed from the organization, in terms of communication upward? Are people pretty free to tell you what they think?

Baird: Oh, I am sure that I don't get the feedback that I used to. I try to, but by virtue of the demands of any kind of business after it gets to be larger and the number of people that you have got, you can't have the closeness that you would like to have. All we can do is strive to that end.

Jenkins: But you do seem to be striving very hard. You are out there where the people are, and you are trying to communicate, you are available, they see you.

Baird: That is right.

Jenkins: Making yourselves available. I would like to get into another section here now. Over the years what kinds of involvement have you had in community, trade associations, state, local and even national level?

Baird: Well, we have maintained basically a very low profile of participation. And that is simply because, you know, there are usually two sides of every question even among charitable organizations, both sides eat bread, so . . . But personally I have participated and been a member of the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce for many years. Probably my most notable outstanding contribution has been 18 years on the State Board of Education, from which I retired last year.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Baird: As far as trade associations are concerned, members of the family have been president of our state Bakery Association. My brother, <sup>Alice</sup> Alan, is presently vice-chairman of the American Institute of Baking, which is the educational arm of the industry. I am a vice-chairman of the National American Bakers Association. And I will be chairman in 1980.

Jenkins: What are the functions of that association?

Baird: In our case it is the industry association and tries to work toward the betterment and promotion of the industry.

Jenkins: Do they have publications, journals?

Baird: We don't have a trade journal as such, no. There are trade

journals that are published by independent publishers pertaining to the baking industry but not by the association itself.

Jenkins: What do you see, what visions and plans do you have for the future of the company? Directions, whatever.

Baird: Badically we are in the business of providing basic foods for the public, a real good basic food, not just something that will sell for the time being. The plant where we are right now, the cake plant here in Fort Worth, was designed to serve about a five state area. Fortunately we put a lot of capacity in it that really didn't necessitate us leaving the state of Texas, so to do much of what we were talking about we would have to expand this bakery; but when we designed it and built it it was with the idea of supplying five states, but the Texas market took it up.

Jenkins: Do you have any desire to go out side the state of Texas?

Baird: We have the desire, and actually have some tentative plans; but since our philosophy has been more to go for depth of market rather than breadth of market, we are more interested and concerned in taking care of the markets we have first and then expand. The way we built, our business is going out on the fringes and gradually taking on additional territory. Last year we put on three additional routes up in the extreme Panhandle; Dalhart, Dumas and Perryton. This was out on the fringe of the territory. We were already serving Amarillo, and it was a pretty long haul from Lubbock

where the products would be made for that market. But fortunately the people kept asking that we bring our products up there, and we opened that territory last year. We have done this over a long period of time. We have just gradually taken on territory contiguous to that to which we were already serving.

Jenkins: I think Mr. Hoyt mentioned about what percentage of the Texas population you are reaching.

Baird: We are reaching most of the state of Texas with the exception of the deep valley, the El Paso area and the Beaumont area.

Jenkins: I believe in the Mrs. Baird's Story pamphlet it indicates that Mrs. Baird's is the largest family owned bakery in the United States. Give us some idea of just how big you are compared to other bakeries and what your market penetration is.

Baird: Well, of course, the story that you read was some years back, and in areas that have had possibly as much growth populationwise as we have, because there are several other bakers around the country now that possibly could be in the same area of size as we are. I don't know what their specific dollar sales are, and of course they don't know what we are. But just in comparing notes, I would say there are three or four around the country that are probably in the same area in range of size.

Jenkins: Now you are talking about regardless of ownership.

Baird: No, I am talking about family organizations. The baking business, see, is basically a family business. Even the largest of the companies, which is now a subsidiary of I.T.T., was at one time a family business.

Jenkins: So, speak to the future of that or the trend if you would. Now I know that there are still lots of little mom-and-pop retail bakeries, some of those left around.

Baird: Not in the commercial bakery end, these's not any of those left. As a matter of fact there are really very few single bakery operations that are left in the United States.

Jenkins: Well, do you have many of those in even Fort Worth? Are you conscious of any?

Baird: No, there is none in Fort Worth.

Jenkins: We have one in Denton.

Baird: Well, what we are talking about is a commercial baker.

Jenkins: No, that is right. But there still are a few retail . . .

Baird: The retail baker now is a different side of the business. What we are talking about are bakeries that produce primarily to serve the institutional or the restaurant type business and the grocery stores.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. Do you in any way keep track of these little retail type bakeries?

Baird: No, we don't, because retail business is an adjunct or just

a different part of the baking business.

Jenkins: You are not conscious of what is really happening to those, whether they are surviving very much or . . .

Baird: No, we keep up with it. And because of the type of business that it is, it is probably going down as rapidly as the commercial wholesale bakers, if not even probably faster.

Jenkins: Is the move for giant corporations buying up bakeries happening pretty fast?

Baird: No, the big companies are not buying up any more bakeries. Of course, most of them are under some kind of a court order that they can't buy any more.

Jenkins: So this is rather limited?

Baird: There apparently now is a lawsuit going on right now in Washington, as far as I.T.T. is concerned, in that area.

Jenkins: Give us a little rundown on who owns the baking business in the United States, how is it owned?

Baird: Well, of course, if you take the entire industry, which would include the retail bakers; the commercial wholesale bakers; the frozen aspect of the baking business, the Sara Lee type of thing; the Riches, which provide in-store bakeries with frozen products that they finish on, then it is in quite a few hands. If you talk about commercial wholesale bakers: I.T.T. Continental, of course, is the largest; Campbell-Taggart is right close behind them as the second largest; then, and I haven't seen the latest

*FLOWERS*

annual report, American Bakeries and ~~Flour~~ Industries over in the southeast would be two others that are in that category; Interstate Brands, which is owned by D.P.F. would be next in line; and from there it goes to the regional bakers. <sup>*HEILMAN*</sup> ~~Highland~~ Brewery Company now owns, I think, seven plants, seven bakeries.

Jenkins: And the little "mon-and-pop" as I call them, retail . . .

Baird: Well, the retail business is a completely different business. And in most cases it is run by the individual who is a baker himself and actually gets in and makes it himself.

Jenkins: How about speaking a little bit to your ideas and attitudes towards formal education for business. What are your thoughts?

Baird: I think this day and age that the leaders are going to have to have a formal education. It gives them the ability to learn in capsule form much of the trials and errors that have been made by some of those of us who didn't have as much academic experience. By that I mean the academic, formalized training, whether it be in an institution of higher learning or it be done by various and sundry seminars that specialize more in specifics, this is a necessary thing this day and time for people to become good, competent managers. It still doesn't take the place of hard work and attention to your job.

Jenkins: Do you find any tendency for new college graduates to not be willing to start at a place where they need to get experience?

Baird: There are not many positions in the baking industry when you start out. It is elbow grease, and as a consequence quite a few of these young people would rather wear a white collar. So, yes, just by the nature of our work we are not over run with applicants that have a college degree. We have quite a few people in the organization that have completed at least four years of schooling, but they didn't come here seeking a career because they were trained in that area.

Jenkins: Do you have any kind of review system to spot potential managers?

Baird: I mentioned earlier <sup>ALLEN</sup> ~~Alan~~, Carroll, Clayton and myself are all in the plants. And when I say "in the plants" we are at the locations, which means that we will be thrown in contact not only with the department heads in that plant but the individual workers. We constantly are looking. In addition to that the people that we have going out, our advertising manager, our production service personnel, our sales service personnel; whenever they go into the territory one of the things that they are always on the lookout for is one of the younger individuals that perhaps may be overlooked. In addition to that we have a formal review made

each year by each manager that shows his organizational chart, who is filling the individual jobs, who they have that is their choice to fill that job, including their own job, in case something should happen to them, and whether or not that person is to be trained, or potential.

Jenkins: You say you do send some people to seminars at various places, but if someone is working here and wants to continue formal education, in what ways, if any, do you encourage that?

Baird: We will work with them to try to arrange their schedule so that they will be able to go ahead with their schooling. We have a young man who just came back with us that originally worked here in the evenings, working in our computer room while he was a student at T.W.C. He was getting a degree in business, and when he finished his degree then we hired him as an auditor. And he audited here, and then the glamour of more dollars stirred his enthusiasm, and then he left us for greener pastures. Of course, he found that those greener pastures had some weeds in them. But in the subsequent course of events he had gone ahead and gotten his C.P.A. degree, and so when he came back with us, he not only had a college degree, but he also had his C.P.A. certificate in addition.

Jenkins: Is the computer making a considerable impact on the baking business?

Baird: Oh, it gets blamed for everything that happens.

Jenkins: So you have a good bit of computerization here?

Baird: No, relatively speaking, no.

Jenkins: On the lines?

Baird: No, none of our production. None of our production is computerized. The computers are strictly data processing.

Jenkins: What kind of reading habits do you have?

Baird: I guess very poor. I take all of the trade journals. I take Harvard Business Review, Fortune, Business Week, Wall Street Journal. Well, I read the daily newspapers when I get up in the morning. I usually get up between 5:30 and 6:00 and have my coffee and read the Fort Worth and Dallas papers if I am in town. If not, I do the same thing when I am out on the road.

Jenkins: That probably is the most typical part of your day then is getting up at 5:30 in the morning.

Baird: That part is fairly typical.

Jenkins: Do you have any pleasure reading that you do?

Baird: I don't do any pleasure reading because by the time you get through all of those things, there is enough pleasure in that. I take Outdoor Life, Parks and Wildlife Magazine, and read some about raising exotic animals and hunting.

Jenkins: Do you have any hobbies?

Baird: The baking business.

Jenkins: The baking business. Do you ever go hunting?

Baird: I do quite a bit of hunting. Unfortunately, except for customers that we take down to our ranch where we have not only white tailed deer but also the exotics plus tanks for fishing . . . Several years ago when Dad and I became the only two of the Bairds' here locally, and since flour buying is a part and parcel of the things that we look after, I could go hunting anytime he wasn't. But unfortunately, he likes to hunt so well that left me with very little time.

Jenkins: I noticed that he gets out a lot. You are the flour buyer?

Baird: No, I don't buy the flour, but I watch it.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. What kinds of vacation time do you take?

Baird: Very little. I have the ability to relax any time I want to.

Jenkins: That is a blessing.

Baird: I don't carry problems with me.

Jenkins: Well, tell us a little about that then. How do you manage that?

Baird: Well, it is real simple. A long time ago somebody told me, he said, "If there is a problem that you can do something about, do it. If you can't do anything about it, don't worry about it."

Jenkins: That sounds good.

Baird: And it can be done.

Jenkins: Well, do you take things home with you much?

Baird: I take a briefcase home every evening because there is usually something in case I get some time. It is not "must do" work. I take things home in the evening that, if I have the spare time and I want to look at something. It may have nothing to do with what is going on right then.

Jenkins: But you don't have a tendency to take your work home.

Baird: I don't take the office home with me. I take work home every night.

Jenkins: But a lot of times you don't do it, I suppose.

Baird: If I don't feel like doing it, it is nothing that has to be done before I get back in the morning.

Jenkins: Do you take time off occasionally and just say, "Let's go somewhere." What kinds of time off do you take, if any? When have you taken what you would call a vacation?

Baird: I really haven't taken one in a long time.

Jenkins: Is this by choice? I mean you really enjoy this so much, or you just don't have time to take a vacation?

Baird: Oh, I guess I enjoy it. I have gotten in a rut.

Jenkins: Well, apparently, you enjoy coming down here and doing what you are doing, then.

Baird: I enjoy the business. And by virtue of being where I am, any part of the business has an interest.

Jenkins: You kind of vacation as you wander through the stores, and all those things.

Baird: Why, sure.

Jenkins: Well, how do you look toward retirement?

Baird: I don't intend to retire.

Jenkins: Tell us a little bit about that.

Baird: Our family has a history of longevity. There is a  
~~difference between retiring and delegating responsibilities~~  
of the business.

Jenkins: So actually as long as you are able to get up on your  
feet, you expect to come down here and have some  
impact on what is going on.

Baird: Right.

Jenkins: And you have no intention of retiring and getting away  
and forgetting the business. As you came up through the  
company and became president in a family-owned company,  
how do you remember how well, how easily the strings  
were handed over to you in terms of your own develop-  
ment?

Baird: Well, when I came up we had no formal program of training  
and so forth. Contrast this with, say, brother Carroll,  
where we laid out a long range plan of specific jobs  
that he would be involved in in the company. I think  
most of the jobs I got was because I got them by default.  
I was the only one there that could handle it at that  
particular time. As the years have gone by, of course,  
we have changed that. But in the old days it was "throw

him in and if he swims out he ought to be a pretty good hand". There is no doubt in our minds who is still the boss.

Jenkins: In terms of an older generation giving way to a new one, did you find the reins being turned over easily or not? Transition.

Baird: We always felt they restricted us too much, and they probably thought they gave us too much freedom.

Jenkins: As you view the future, how do you feel?

Baird: I guess in a like way, except I am on the other side of the fence now. I think some of our managers feel like they have all the freedom that they want to operate in their various areas. Others probably feel like they are restricted. We have certain basic policies, but actually they are more philosophy than they are policy. We try not to restrict them with a big handbook of written rules, but they still have to pay their bills. They still have to try to make a profit. A few things like that, but . . . And they have to make the kind of loaf of bread that we want made. We are pretty strict on that.

Jenkins: As you look back over a lifetime of the baking business, kind of summarize a little bit what you have seen happening and your role in Mrs. Baird's Bakeries over all these years.

Baird: Well, of course we have seen the family organization grow, prosper and survive, contrary to the historical happening as far as the family organization is concerned. For one reason or another, and in many cases just strictly financial, family organizations sell out in order to take care of the tax situations they might have. Fortunately, I guess, we have seen fit to go the other route. We have seen fit to carry on the heritage that our grandmother started the business with, and there have been enough members of the family that have agreed with this thinking that we have been able to continue it. We have been able to continue it with people who have actually worked in the business. So as a consequence, at this point and time we feel like we are dealing from strength. We have the members of the family that are interested in the business that are working at it. We have most of the areas of the business pretty well covered not only in their present positions but people that are coming up under them. Be they a Baird or not, they are people that have had the experience and can help us in making this business a viable business and a growing business. We probably can't compete with some of the glamour businesses. We certainly can't in this day and age compete with the energy businesses that are coming along. But as far as feeding the public with a basic food, we

think we are as good or better than anybody else in the country, and we intend to continue this.

Jenkins: I have covered the things on my outline plus others, but we want to be sure that we haven't left out something that you can think of that you would like to add. Is there anything that you would like to add before we finish the interview?

Baird: No, not really. I have a very strong feeling, a very great pride in the ability of our company to have survived all the trials and tribulations that we have come through. In retrospect there are ten thousand things that could have been done differently and done much better, but at the point <sup>in</sup> and time that we did do them, at the point <sup>in</sup> and time that we made those decisions, we thought that was the best thing to be done at that particular time. We do not intend to slow down on our planning and programming for the future. All of us are pretty well in accord on where we are going. You wouldn't see it reduced to writing like perhaps the academicians would say you are supposed to do; but on the other hand, and this is a little side thing, ~~but~~ we were negotiating to buy a bakery one time and I had to be gone out of the state for a couple of weeks. And so I told the people that we were negotiating with that while I was gone just contact one of my brothers. And when I got back this fellow made the

comment, he said, "Well, really, I didn't even know you were gone." He said, "I picked up the phone and talked to your brother, and it was just the same as if I had talked to you." He said, "You all think exactly alike. There were no laps<sup>e</sup>in negotiation or anything." But you know we have lived together. So on basics we think alike.

Jenkins: And when something needs to be done most any one of you . . .

Baird: Most any one of us could step in and take over. And I think this is one of the great virtues of the company.

Jenkins: Anything else you would like to add?

Baird: No, I believe that pretty well covers it to the best of my knowledge.

Jenkins: Okay, then we will close the interview, and I thank you.

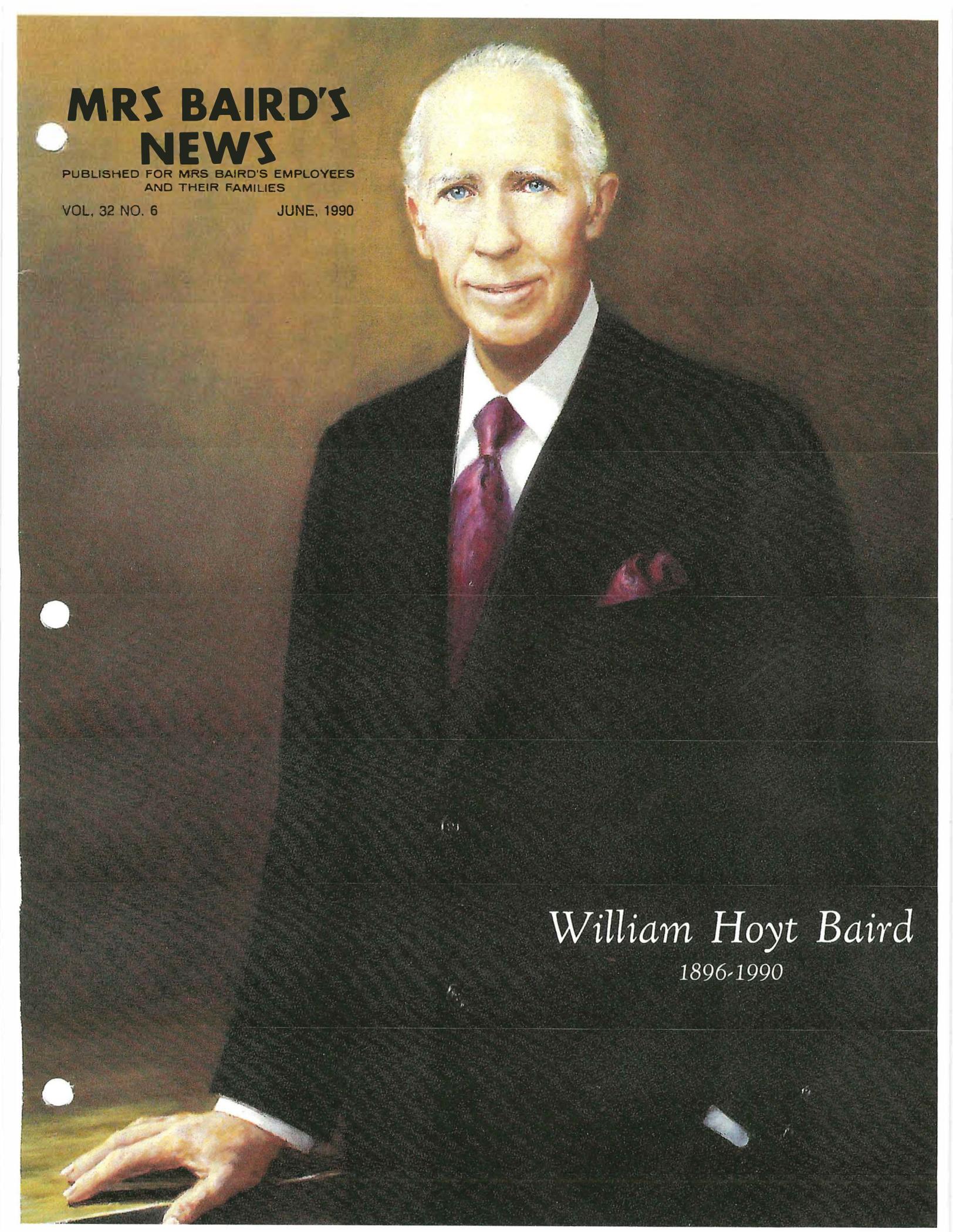
A P P E N D I X

# MRS BAIRD'S NEWS

PUBLISHED FOR MRS BAIRD'S EMPLOYEES  
AND THEIR FAMILIES

VOL. 32 NO. 6

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A formal portrait of an elderly man with white hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a maroon tie. He is standing with his hands resting on a dark surface. The background is a dark, textured wall.

*William Hoyt Baird*

1896-1990

# Rememberances

## William Hoyt Baird

1896-1990

*W. Hoyt Baird, son of Mrs. Ninnie L. Baird, passed away Friday, June 8, 1990. He was 93 years old. Mr. Baird is survived by his five children; Betty Garrett of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, Vernon and Allen Baird of Fort Worth, Carroll Baird of Dallas, Arthur Baird of Houston, 15 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral services were held at University Baptist Church in Fort Worth on Monday, June 11. Pallbearers were Mr. Baird's grandsons; Bill Baird, Mike Baird, Steve Baird, James Baird, Jerry Baird, Lee Baird, Kirk Baird, Arthur Baird, Jr., and Baird Garrett. The family requests memorials be made to the Cook-Fort Worth Children's Medical Center or the Ninnie L. Baird Fund at the American Institute of Baking.*

W. Hoyt Baird, son of Mrs Baird's Bakeries founder Mrs. Ninnie L. Baird, was born on October 31, 1896, in Obion, Tennessee. His father, William Allen Baird, came to Texas in 1901 to look around, liked what he saw in Fort Worth, and wrote home, calling his family to Texas. Hoyt Baird never forgot that long train ride. "It was a little rough," he recalled.

Until 1908, Mrs. Ninnie Baird's greatest satisfaction in baking bread came from having healthy children and the admiration of her neighbors. However, when her husband's health began to decline, she began to sell her fresh, homemade bread as a means of supporting her eight children. The hard work of Mrs. Baird and her children was followed by success, and as Hoyt Baird remembered, "it was the people that named our bread 'Mrs Baird's Bread.'"

At first her four sons delivered the still-warm bread on foot; then they switched to bicycles. As the business grew, it became necessary for a better means of distribution, so the family buggy was converted into a sales wagon. Hoyt Baird drove the wagon and thus became, at the age of 12, the first sales representative for Mrs Baird's Bakeries.

Ned, the family horse, knew all the stops as well as Hoyt did. "He could make the route without me. I didn't need to worry about stopping at the wrong house." Hoyt Baird enjoyed telling humorous stories of his early days in sales. "As soon as I shut the door at the back of the wagon, Ned was on his way, and I was on the run!" Mr. Baird remained Mrs Baird's one-man sales force until 1918, when he was drafted into the army and took his first trip away from home.

By the time Mr. Baird returned home in 1919, the business had outgrown Mrs. Baird's kitchen oven, so the first bakery was built. That bakery was enlarged nine times during the following decade. As the expansion continued, Mrs. Baird's children encouraged her to take a supervisory position in the company, while they became responsible for the day-to-day operations. According to Hoyt Baird, they "wouldn't have gone on with the expansion if Mama hadn't gone along with us. . . She was a strong and courageous woman."

"Mr. Hoyt," as he was affectionately known, had a wonderful repertoire of stories about the growth of Mrs Baird's, from the days when he delivered bread on foot and was constantly flogged by one customer's pet goose to the company's 80th birthday. The emphasis of his stories has always been on quality. Mr. Hoyt once said of his mother: "She helped me understand the idea that if you did something good, you could accomplish something with it. We were taught to make a loaf of bread good every day — not just every other day. . . If it

*The excellent salesman that he was, Hoyt Baird had a very loyal consumer at the Baird Game Lease.*



## W. Hoyt Baird

### Obituary

W. Hoyt Baird, son of the founder of Mrs Baird's Bakeries, died after a brief illness Friday, June 8, at his home in Fort Worth. He was 93 years old.

Funeral services will be held in the Watson Chapel of the University Baptist Church at 11 am on Monday, June 11. Services will be officiated by the Reverend Randell Everitt. Interment will be in Greenwood Memorial Park. Robertson Mueller Harper-8th Avenue is handling the arrangements.

Mr. Baird was born in Obion, Tennessee and moved to Fort Worth in 1901. He was the first salesman for Mrs Baird's Bakeries, delivering the bread on foot that had been baked by his mother and carefully packed in a basket. The basket became a bicycle; the bicycle became a horse and wagon, and the horse and wagon became a fleet of over 700 trucks delivering fresh bread and cakes to the people of Texas.

In addition to his duties as head of Mrs Baird's Bakeries, he had served the baking industry as Chairman of the American Institute of Baking Board of Trustees and on the Board of the American Bakers Association. He served as an Officer and member of the Board of Directors of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, as an Officer and Director of Colonial Country Club, a member of the Exchange Club, and a member of the Fort Worth Club. He had been a director of the Fort Worth National Bank and later became a member of the Board of

Texas American Bancshares. He was a member of the Moslah Temple and a 32nd Degree Mason.

Mr. Baird was an ardent hunter and fisherman. One of the highlights of his civic career was hosting a group of children from the Lena Pope Home on their first deer hunt.

Another thing that Mr. Baird was responsible for was the fond memory of a visit to Santa Claus at Summit and Vickery in Fort Worth, and he always was a special host to the special education classes of the Fort Worth School District, headed up by Miss Jo Kelly.

The family suggests memorials be made to either the Cook-Fort Worth Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth or the Ninnie L. Baird Fund at the American Institute of Baking in Manhattan, Kansas, or their favorite charity.

Survivors are his five children: Betty Garrett of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, Vernon Baird and Allen Baird, both of Fort Worth, Carroll Baird of Dallas, Arthur Baird of Houston, 15 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

## BIOGRAPHY: WILLIAM HOYT BAIRD

W. Hoyt Baird, son of Mrs Baird's Bakeries founder Mrs. Ninnie L. Baird, was born on October 31, 1896, in Obion, Tennessee. His father, William Allen Baird, came to Texas in 1901 to look around, liked what he saw in Fort Worth, and wrote home, calling his family to Texas. Hoyt Baird never forgot that long train ride. "It was a little rough," he recalled.

Until 1908, Mrs. Ninnie Baird's greatest satisfaction in baking bread came from having healthy children and the admiration of her neighbors. However, when her husband's health began to decline, she began to sell her fresh, homemade bread as a means of supporting her eight children. The hard work of Mrs. Baird and her children was followed by success, and as Hoyt Baird remembered, "It was the people that named our bread 'Mrs Baird's Bread.'"

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On July 19, 1919, Mr. Baird married Flossie M. Rushing. The couple met in the Spring of 1919, when Flossie came to work for Mrs Baird's first retail store in Fort Worth.

Mrs Baird's opened its first out-of-town plant in Dallas in 1929, and from there the business took off again, making it necessary to add on to existing plants, build new ones and hire more employees. Additional plants were added in Fort Worth and Houston in 1938 and Abilene in 1949. In 1949, the company's four bakeries were joined to form Mrs Baird's Bakeries, Inc. Hoyt Baird became Executive Vice President of the new corporation.

Mr. Baird was elected President in 1956, and he became Chairman of the Board in 1963. By 1969, five more bakeries had opened in Texas, and Mr. Baird was elected Chairman of the Executive Committee.

Mrs. Ninnie Baird said many times during her life that her greatest source of pride was not her baking, but her children. Mr. Hoyt Baird felt that same sense of pride as he watched the Baird family maintain Mrs. Baird's standards of excellence over eight decades and five generations.



# Mrs. Baird's Bakery

Quality Bread and Pastry

No. 14527

Fort Worth, Texas

192

Pay to the Order of

March 31 1925

*W. A. Baird*  
**PAY TO THE ORDER OF W. A. BAIRD FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

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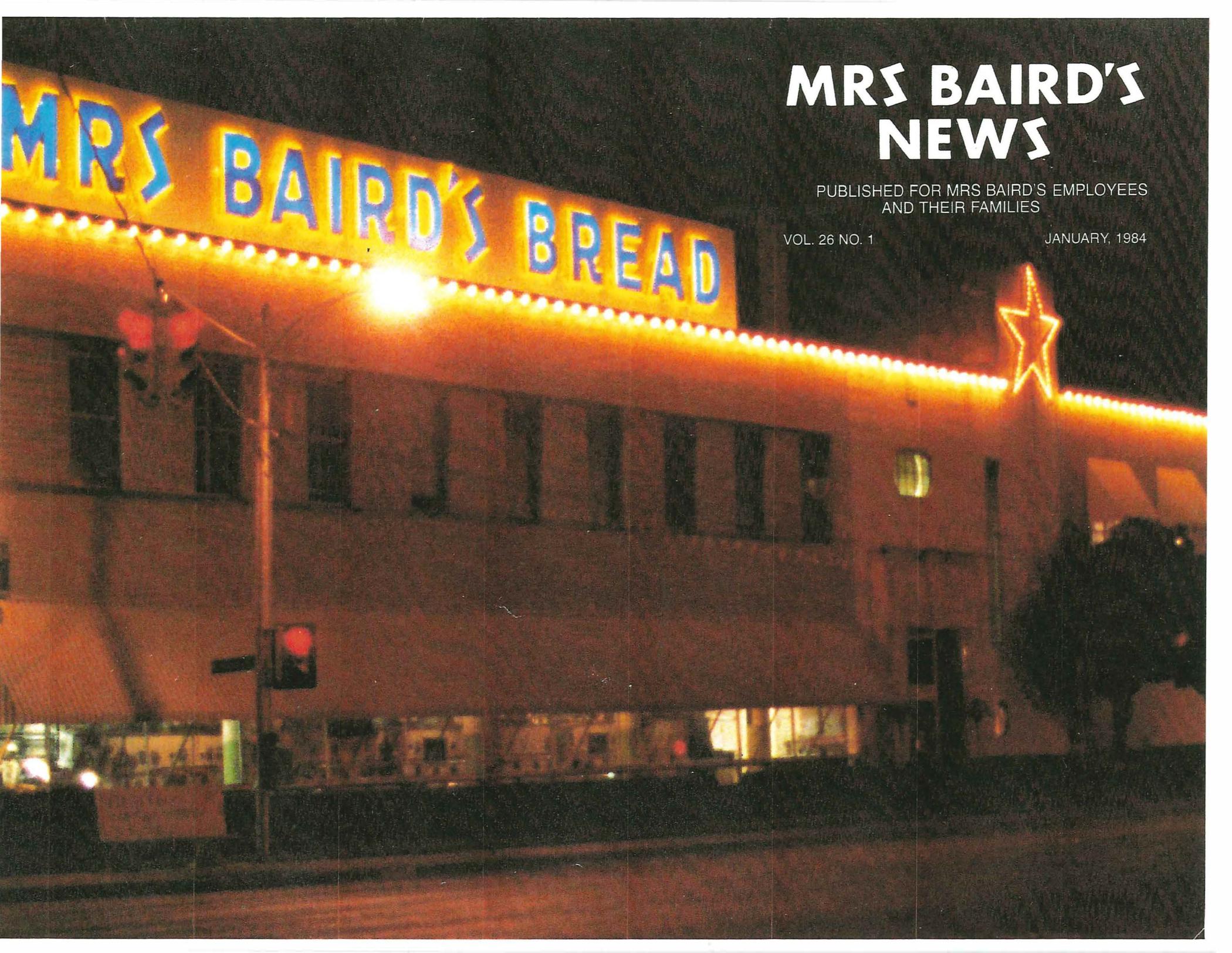
*75.00*

To The Farmers & Mechanics National Bank  
On the ~~Fort Worth National Bank~~  
37-7 Fort Worth, Texas

Mrs. Baird's Bakery

BY

*R. C. Baird*



# MRS BAIRD'S NEWS

PUBLISHED FOR MRS BAIRD'S EMPLOYEES  
AND THEIR FAMILIES

VOL. 26 NO. 1

JANUARY, 1984

# Visiting with “Mr. Hoyt”

photos by Arthur Gillespie, Jr.

*From the day this business began back in 1908, in his mother’s Fort Worth kitchen at 512 Hemphill Street, Mr. Hoyt Baird — or “Mr. Hoyt” as he is affectionately known — has been a primary force in the success of this family-owned bakery.*

*Today, the 87-year-old chairman of Mrs Baird’s Executive Committee is as remarkable as ever. He still remembers every detail of the company’s history — as if it all happened yesterday. Having started at the age of 12 as this company’s first salesman, Mr. Baird later served as sales manager, Fort Worth General*

*Manager, Executive Vice President, President, and Chairman of the Board.*

*In addition, the bakery is where he met his wife Flossie, who began working in 1918 in Mrs Baird’s first retail store. Their July 19, 1919 marriage continues today after 64½ years, 5 children, 15 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren. Ironically, the most recent addition to the growing family — great granddaughter Virginia Mae Baird — was born October 31, 1983, on Hoyt Baird’s 87th birthday.*

with them, and they’d see a devil’s food cake or something they wanted. The mother would say she couldn’t use such a large cake, so I’d cut it in half and sell her half.”

“You’ve got to take care of your customers according to their needs, desires and wants — not your own. You’ve got to make products the way they like them, and sometimes that’s hard. So you make up your mind about which aspect of the business you’re going to be in. If you can’t make a product the right way, then you shouldn’t try to sell it.”

## Emphasizing Quality

“My mother was a woman who taught us the importance of quality. Personal supervision is the key to the consistently good quality products Mrs Baird’s Bakeries produce. Our family was taught to make a loaf of bread good every day — not just every other day.”

“My mother was a person who didn’t give up, and she didn’t give up on us either! When she said do something, that’s what she meant! You can look at her picture and see the determination and courage in her face.”

“She helped me understand the idea that if you did something good, you could accomplish something with it. And what an accomplishment she made!

Her combined philosophies of quality product and top service have been passed on to the four generations of Baird family members who have continued to work in the bakery business. In the process, it has become the largest family-owned bakery in the country.

## Dodging Roosters and Gossip

Mr. Hoyt Baird has a wonderful repertoire of stories about the first 75 years of Mrs Baird’s Bakeries. He remembers dodging a game rooster that always met him at one customer’s home, and waiting for the neighborhood ladies to finish gossiping so he and his horse Ned could get on with their route!

“As soon as I’d slam the back doors of that wagon shut, that horse would take off. It would take me a few steps to catch up with him, and then I’d grab the handle on the dashboard and vault myself up into the wagon while Ned kept right on going.”

While he might have had to hurry to catch up with Ned in those days, many people would have a hard time catching up with “Mr. Hoyt” today. An avid trout fisherman and quail hunter, he remembers everything from crossing the Mississippi River with his family en route from Tennessee to Texas

in 1901, through his first Colorado camping trip in 1916 and his recent fishing trip in Wyoming this past summer.

The importance of freshness and a good loaf of bread was learned while delivering bread on foot, and later by bike and family buggy. “In those days, all I had to do was say I was selling Mrs. Baird’s homemade bread and lift up the two ends of my bread basket. That aroma was pretty hard to beat!”

Prior to establishing Mrs Baird’s wholesale business in 1918, Mr. Baird vividly recalls “loading up the wagon and driving downtown to serve Sandegard’s big grocery store at Tenth and Houston. People would come in there for lunch and buy a one-pound loaf of Mrs Baird’s Bread for a nickel.”

## Taking Care of Customers

“Manning my bakery on wheels taught me the importance of service. Customers would bring their youngsters

"I place an awful lot of emphasis on Mrs. Baird and the type woman she was," her son continues. "Her ideals and her character inspired success and inspired us all to work for success. The rest of the members of our family try to do the same thing today, by setting an example of hard and honest work for all employees."

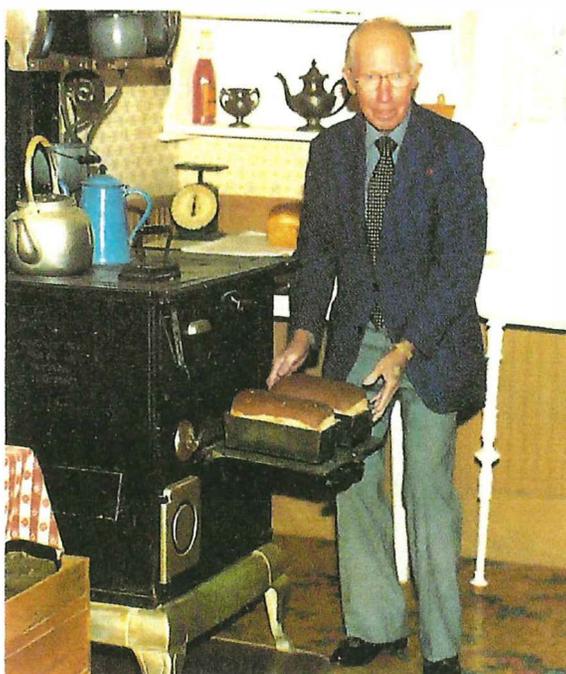
### Employees — the Real Key

"This is a business that requires long hours and hard work. There is no way to build a business, operate it successfully, and grow without good people. It's the people you surround yourself with that make the business work. You can't do it yourself. Our employees are the real key to the continuing success of this business, and we try to treat them like we'd like to be treated."

"You know, when a woman like my mother had the courage to start something like this, and when she had the courage to let it grow, the rest of us can't afford to let it stop. She set the example, and my one desire in business is to see this company go on and continue to be a success."

"Nothing comes ahead of this business, for her sake as much as anything. She's the inspiration, and we all do it for our families, too. I've spent my life building and developing this organization, and that philosophy isn't just held by me. It's one we all share, and others will carry it on."

"My mother had a lot to do with the success of this business, not only by starting a quality bakery with good service, but also by having such a large family. She kept us to-



*Mr. Hoyt Baird, son of our Founder, Ninnie L. Baird, reminisces in the replica of the first kitchen where his mother started her business. This replica is located in the Fort Worth Cake Plant.*

gether, and as the business expanded, there were enough family members to give us room to move out into new areas."

### Fascinated by Selling

With 75 years of experience selling Mrs Baird's Bread, "Mr. Hoyt" is obviously our resident expert on sales. He considers the following to be the keys to successful selling:

"First you start with a good product. If you don't have that, you have no business starting a business. A good, quality product has got to be consistently good every day. And the most important thing in selling a good loaf of bread is to be sure it's fresh."

"That leads to the second important aspect of successful sales — service. Without good service, you can't keep the loaf fresh."

The Chairman of Mrs Baird's Executive Committee also cites two fundamental sales principles: "Know your product" and "Be truthful — about your product and everything else."

"Selling is fascinating. You meet people all the time, so you've got to be a good judge of people."

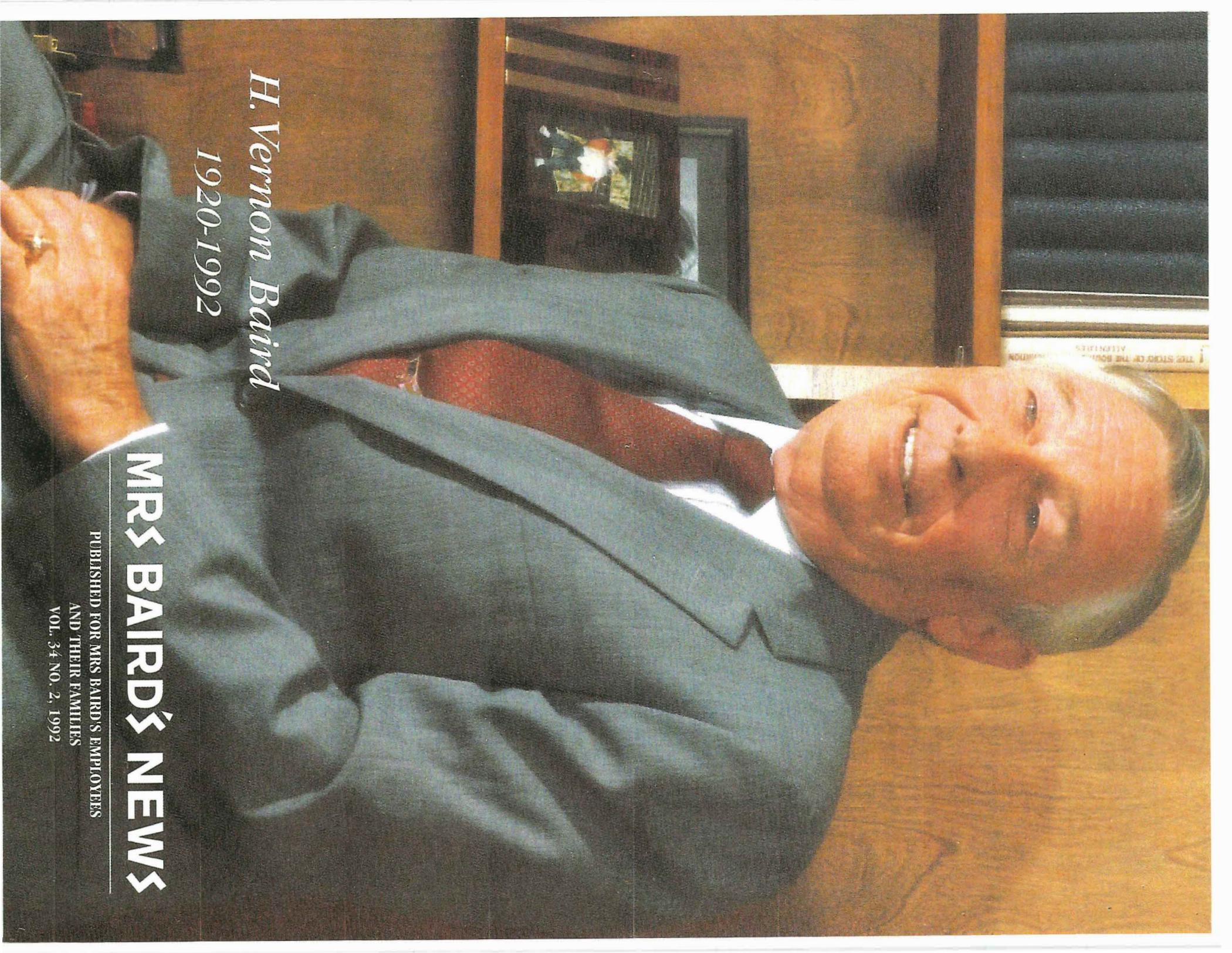
How did Mr. Baird learn to sell? "By experience. No one taught me. But people must like and respect you. You've got to earn their confidence and trust. And, of course, I've always had a good, quality product to sell."

Still driving to work every day, the 87-year old head of the Baird family admits he can't think of a thing he wants to do that he hasn't already done. "I've lived a pretty full life, and been fortunate to enjoy good health."

"Of course, I've eaten plenty of bread over the years, too. If anyone starts to criticize bread, I remind them my mother lived to the age of 92, and I'm 87. We've both eaten our share of bread, and that ought to tell them something!"



— Janie Loveless



*H. Vernon Baird*  
1920-1992

# MRS BAIRD'S NEWS

PUBLISHED FOR MRS BAIRD'S EMPLOYEES  
AND THEIR FAMILIES  
VOL. 34 NO. 2, 1992

# In Remembrance of Vernon Baird

## 1920-1992

*Vernon Baird, grandson of Mrs. Ninnie L. Baird, passed away Thursday, January 9, 1992. Mr. Baird is survived by his wife, Marcy, his four children, Janet Baird Quisenberry of Dallas, Jim Baird of Houston, Jerry Baird and Judy Baird Johnson both of Fort Worth, eight grandchildren, brothers Allen Baird of Fort Worth, Carroll Baird of Dallas and Arthur Baird of Houston, and a sister, Betty Baird Garrett of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Funeral services were held at Ridgela Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth on Saturday, January 11. Pallbearers were Scott Baird, Byron Baird, Cy B. Baird, Jr., Baird Tripp, Clayton Baird and Clay Cummins. Honorary pallbearers were J. C. Pace, James B. Williams, Whitfield Collins, O. Paul Leonard, Jr., Buzz Kemble, John Phillips, Jack Henckels and Alan Roberts. The family requests that memorials be made to Cook-Fort Worth Children's Medical Center or the Texas Boys Choir.*

Mr. Vernon Baird was a native of Fort Worth and the grandson of the founder of Mrs Baird's Bakeries, Mrs. Ninnie L. Baird. Devoted to the baking business, Vernon Baird was instrumental in the success and growth of the family company, which is now the largest family-owned and operated bakery in the country and the leading bread baker in Texas. Mr. Baird passed away in his home January 9 at the age of 71.

### *A Family Tradition*

When Vernon Baird was asked when he started in the baking business, he replied that he was born into it. Mr. Baird held many jobs throughout his years with the company, from helper on a bread truck to bread wrapper to salesman.

He began working in the Fort Worth bread plant while still a school boy. He later attended Rice University, graduating in 1942. Following war time service with the U.S. Army, where he served on the staff of General Eisenhower, he returned to the bakery to serve in a number of capacities.

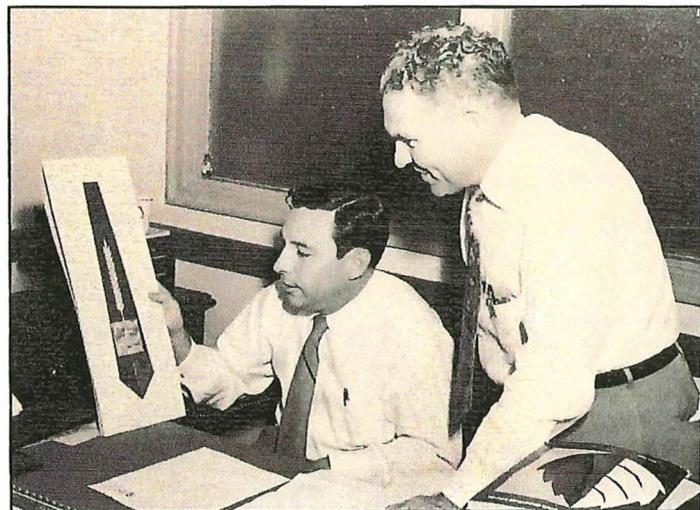
He worked in sales, served as Fleet Superintendent, later as Office Manager, as Assistant Manager, and then as General Manager of the Fort Worth bread plant. In 1963 he was elected Executive Vice President of Mrs Baird's Bakeries, and he was elected President in November, 1969.

No matter what position he held in the company, he never missed an opportunity to walk through the bakeries and visit with the employees who affectionately called him "Mr. Vernon". Even when he became President, he made his way through the bakery every day, so he could keep in daily contact with the people who made his business work. They, too, were his family.

In 1978 Mr. Baird was elected Chairman of the Board. He was succeeded as Chairman by Clayton Baird when he assumed the responsibilities of Treasurer and Chairman of the Executive Committee in 1989.

### *Dedicated to the Industry*

His knowledge of the bakery business was recognized by industry leaders outside the family. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the American Bakers Association, Vice Chairman of the Association for three years, and in 1980, Chairman of the ABA. In November of 1980, he was elected Chairman of the Wheat Industry Council, a national organization furthering research and education on the nutritional value of wheat-based foods.



*Vernon Baird and Fort Worth Sales Manager Morris Walker working on Mrs Baird's "Our Best for You" advertising campaign in the late 1940's.*



Vernon Baird received Father of the Year Award in 1981 for his contributions to family life.

### A Devotion to the Family

Once described as “a strong-willed Texan with a fierce loyalty to family”, Vernon Baird dedicated his life to his company, his children, and his community, all of which meant family to him. He and his wife, Marcy, raised four children, two of whom have followed their father into the family business. Janet Baird Quisenberry is the Director of Advertising and Packaging, while Jerry Baird is Director of Information Services. His son, Jim Baird, is an attorney in Houston and Judy Baird Johnson is a registered nurse in Fort Worth.

Vernon is also survived by his brothers Allen Baird, Carroll Baird and Arthur Baird, a sister Betty Baird Garrett and eight grandchildren.

Civically active, Mr. Baird was a member of the State Board of Education for 17 years. He also was a member of the Board of Texas American Bancshares, Board of Southwest Live Stock and Exposition, member of the Exchange Club and served on the Board of Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce and the United Way.

### A Local Celebrity

If all of his customers felt as though they knew him, perhaps it was because he appeared in their living rooms every year for 18 years as the spokesperson in television commercials for Mrs Baird’s Bread. It was his way of staying in touch with the people who showed their appreciation for his commitment to quality and freshness by buying his family’s bread. He once expressed his feelings for his customers by saying, “We still deliver Mrs Baird’s Bread fresh to our neighbors, the neighborhood’s just gotten a little bigger, that’s all.” His legacy is continued by his family, who, together with employees and friends, mourn the passing of a great family man, friend and neighbor.

*“We still deliver Mrs Baird’s Bread fresh to our neighbors, the neighborhood’s just gotten a little bigger, that’s all.”*

*- Vernon Baird*



1975



1978



1981



1983



1988

*For 18 years Vernon Baird visited us in our living rooms as spokesperson for Mrs Baird’s Bread.*

