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Interview with  
Sidney Freeborn  
July 2, 1972

Place of Interview: Fulton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

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Oral History Collection

Mr. and Mrs. Sidney M. Freeborn

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

Place of Interview: Fulton, Texas

Date: July 1, 1972

Dr. Stephens: This is an interview with Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Mills Freeborn, Box 143, Fulton, Texas 78358, on July 1, 1972. Mr. Freeborn, would you mention where you were born, something about your background, and then of your developing interests in Aransas County.

Mr. Freeborn: I was born in San Antonio on Avenue C that is now Broadway in 1885. And my father and mother came to San Antonio from New York, and he went to work with the \_\_\_\_\_ . . . it ended up Lockwood National Bank. Originally, it was . . . well, it's skipped my mind right now. It was . . . oh, there were three names on there, but it ended up the Lockwood National Bank. And we spent our summers down here from the time I was a baby. We came in the first year the railroad came in--in 1888. And Colonel Fulton gave a banquet in his mansion over there honoring the people that came in in the first year of the railroad. We were staying at the Shell Hotel, and he invited everybody from the Shell Hotel over there. The Shell

. . . that was about three or four miles north of Rockport. So my mother went to the banquet and had to take me because there was no babysitter so I, too, can say I attended the banquet in the Fulton Mansion. But we kept coming here every year after that, and I didn't remember, naturally, anything till up into the nineties. Then I started getting old enough to remember things. I know we used to go down to the Fulton cannery wharf over there, and we'd go out on there and fish. On the north side of the wharf they had these pens about twelve feet square with turtles in them. The pens were made with just posts down in the ground with three or four inches between each post so that the water could flow through it. The turtle pens were on the south side of the wharf, but we'd go out and fish on the north side. Well, when they stripped a turtle out of his shell, they'd just go throw the shells overboard, and the fish would come in and feed around the shells. And we'd go out on the wharf fishing, and . . .

Stephens: They were canning turtles at that time?

Freeborn: They were canning turtles, yes. He was the first turtle soup canner in the United States.

Stephens: Who was?

Freeborn: Fulton. That's the old . . . right there sat the mansion. He owned all that country over there.

Stephens: This was a family enterprise--the turtle canning plant?

Freeborn: Yes. Fulton was . . . buying cattle and selling the hides since most of the cattle, they didn't use the flesh at first. Well, afterwards they got to shipping the meat out, and now that part of it is a little bit before my time. I mean that's just hearsay that I've got on that.

Stephens: Okay. But they still had the turtles at that time though?

Freeborn: They had the turtles at that time, and they were working on them.

Stephens: Was this close to the Fulton Mansion, the canning plant?

Freeborn: The Fulton Mansion was there. The can . . . no, the . . . you know where Wilson's store is out there? Well, that was about . . . the canning factory was right, just about that . . . from there to the water. It was on up a little bit further, I think.

Stephens: Is that in the vicinity of the Casterline . . .

Freeborn: . . . yes . . .

Stephens: . . . seafood place?

Freeborn: Yes, That was right in next to it. Of course, they weren't there at that time.

Stephens: Yes, I know, but it was in that vicinity.

Freeborn: It was in that vicinity right there, you see--from

Casterline to . . . oh, what's the other one this side . . .

Stephens: Jackson?

Freeborn: Yes. But they wasn't there at that time.

Stephens: That was the Roquette and Wendell fish company.

Freeborn: It's there where the old outfit was.

Stephens: Now, they had a wharf running out into the water there?

Freeborn: They had a wharf; yes, they shipped from the wharf.

They shipped lots of beef away from there. And we'd go out there fishing, and I can remember when I was just about to remember good, my father and I was fishing out there, and we had passed up a little colored boy who was sitting there fishing. He had a little ol' Sweetbay limb for a pole and common cord for bait . . . for line. We headed on out with what we used to think was an expensive pole. It cost us about 75¢ to a dollar--a cane pole. My father had one about twenty feet long, and I was using one about twelve feet long. My father used an eighteen foot one, I guess. And we went on past this boy and sat down fishing. He was pulling off two fish to our one. (chuckle) My father said, "Now that's just a colored boy's luck." (chuckle) But the thing was he had a turtle shell that had been freshly killed, and he was fishing along side of that, and he was catching trout. We were out further; we

were on drier ones. And we saw him about two or three years, and the last year we stayed out there . . . no, it wasn't either . . . it was, well anyhow . . . yes, it was . . . we come in, and my father handed this little boy his pole. He said, "Son, I ain't got no more use for this, You take it." You could see every tooth in that boy's head when he looked at him. (chuckle) But we kept coming here until the Shell Motel closed. Now they had that big building I was talking about awhile ago. Then they had two two-story houses on the northeast corner of it. Well, the road went by them to the beach. You can see a row of trees there now. They had a row of rooms there--a two-story house about fourteen foot in width. That was about what the rooms were. It may have been . . . it may have been sixteen-foot rooms. I think they were fourteen-foot rooms, but they had six rooms downstairs and six rooms upstairs. That was just facing the water down there. That's all gone; it was gone for many years. But this land in front here and on down was fresh water, and the road you come on now, the beach road, there's no connection from the water this side of it to the other side to the bay water. And in time of storm the bay water would come over that little dike--it was just up about

three feet above the water--and fill this whole flat in here with salt water. And I'd come here when all down in front here where the low part is was full of dead fish, and, boy, believe me, the odor was fine! (chuckle) But that happened every time they had a storm. The water would come over that. Ordinarily, it was just filled with rain water from here--all this down here and all back to where they're building around here now; it's just rain water. That was that way till . . . way after the mansion was closed, and it closed in '95. And after that we stayed in town. The last year they were open, when we came in at night, they had a bus that they used to carry the people from the railroad station out to the hotel. It had seats that ran the full length of it, and it'd seat about six or eight people on each row of seats. It had a door in the back with steps to get in. They'd put our luggage up on top. So just as you left town . . . where it got its name, the beach road, the road followed the beach. There was no designated road. And there was a long flat in there that every high tide was covered with water. So there was no weeds or anything on it, and the cattle used to go down there and sleep at night. And we were coming out this night, and I think there



was about eight or ten of us in the . . . there was every bit of that many in the bus. Pitch dark--you couldn't see your hand before your face. An old cow was laying down, and the horses going down, they were used to going through the cattle. It veered off and the front wheels went over the cow. Well, that threw the bus up on a kilter. Everybody from their left hand side went over on the right hand side, and the bus went on over and landed in the dirt. Well, the driver up on top, he was alright. He'd hit the ground, but he held the horses. They was gentle horses, anyhow, and just stood there. So all of us untangled ourselves; nobody got badly hurt because we went over very slow--few little bruises. But we straightened the bus up and got everybody back in again and went on and got our luggage and everything. Well, it created quite a little excitement, but those were wild days.

Stephens: Yes. Do you remember a lot of the storms? Did you actually live through any here, or did you always get out before they hit?

Freeborn: Well, we didn't think anything of storms in those years. Nearly every summer there'd be a little storm.

Stephens: Did you go through them yourself here?

Freeborn: We just went through them.

Stephens: And which one did you remember as being the worst?

Freeborn: Oh, I've been through all of them since the '40's.

Stephens: You weren't here in the 1919 storm?

Freeborn: I left here just a few days, three or four days ahead of that.

Stephens: Ahead of it.

Freeborn: See, after the Shell Hotel closed down it was closed for a long time, and then about . . . somewheres after 1900, there was two men from Dallas came down--a Mr. Whitesall and a Colonel . . . the name skips me right now. They opened up a club here and used the old mansion as the Oakshore Club. So that ran for a few years and then we quit town, the Bay View Hotel, and came up and joined the club.

Stephens: You joined the Oakshore?

Freeborn: The Oakshore Club. So we spent our summers up there then, up until the 1919 storm. The Oakshore Club finally went out of business and Sorenson took over. That was James Sorenson's father--Andrew Sorenson--and he took the place and ran it up until the 1919 storm. We would . . . came down every summer, and there was a little house right where we are now that had three rooms to it, and we took that house every summer. It just had three rooms, a little four-foot porch on

the side of it, no cover to the porch. It had a hydrant there. Each room had a wash stand in it. You got your own water out of the hydrant. There was no mosquito bar, no protection from mosquitoes in the windows at all--no screens. We had that year after year, and it just . . . the funny part is how I'd come back to the same place year after year. Then after the storm there was two or three years there that there was no accommodations in Rockport. Then afterwards we got to going down to the Bay View, to the . . . oh, what was the name of those courts . . . down below Hunt's Courts, and we stayed there for a good many years, and then we got . . . came back up here. I was down at those courts, and the accommodations were so crude. The bathroom was just a long bathroom, slots in the floor where the water could roll through, and you'd go in and take a shower bath--no hot water, just cold water. So when we wanted a bath, we generally went out into the bay. But I got tired of that, and I bought a place up north of town, at Fulton up here. And Jim Sorenson was running these courts. And then he found out--we'd been barefooted boys together--and when he found out that I was going to move up there, he said, "Oh, Sid, don't do that." He says, "They'll steal

everything you've got when you're not here." He says, "Get a little bigger place and put some cottages on it for me, and I'll run them for you." And he says, "I can't get along with this man I'm working for." So then we started out to buy a place. We found a person who wanted to sell here and sell to us--\$8,000. You get up there to sign the check . . . no, he wanted \$16,000 for it. I don't know how many times that happened to us, and I could have bought the Fulton Mansion for \$8,000. So then I bought this place from where the white house is down there back up, and I started building houses in there. When Jim and I were riding along, I said, "Jim, what's the matter with this place?" He said, "Oh Sid, don't let anybody see you looking at it. They'll jump the price on you." So we went down then, and I wrote . . . I went to the courthouse and found out who owned it, and I wrote the people in . . . I don't know whether it was Mississippi or somewhere down in there. I've forgotten now. And I made them an offer on it, and they took me up. So I bought that and then started building houses. So where that pond . . . where those trees are right there, that pretty grove of trees, the Stretchberry runs a root underground--we took some of them thirty-five foot long with a growth going up into the trees every four feet . . . four inches! You couldn't

see through those trees, and I had seventeen men, eighteen men, working there for about seventeen days, and come out I built two houses and Mr. and Mrs. Sorenson lived in one and I lived in the other. And Jim says, "Sid, look there, look there! You can see the big house!" And that was after seventeen days with eighteen men working in there before you could see through there. Boy, that was a mess! But I built those two houses, ended up with twenty . . . somewhere around twenty-two houses there. We did fine when we had duck season, but when they stopped the duck season, it got down to where people'd come here from out of town and it'd cost them \$25-30 for every duck they killed. And originally, you could kill ten ducks. Well, that was alright, But when it got down to one or two ducks, and then you had to look at a book to see which kind of duck you were shooting, why, they just quit coming. Well, that left us without any good trade, so that we had to run the whole thing on what we made in three months in the summer. So we had a very fine clientele. We were jammed up every summer--waiting list to get in. Everybody was afraid to go anywhere else because if they left they couldn't get the house back again. And we were jammed up, but first to last we'd have to make

the whole year's money in three months. And we'd have to keep the whole crew going that we had working for us on those same basis that would work through the summer. That just ate us up. So I decided to go out of business, and Jimmy Sorenson, his mother was running a place for me, and his father was running it, the head of it, but when Jim died Jimmy's mother came on to run it. And I said to Jimmy one day, I'd borrowed a lot of money after one of the storms . . . I'd borrowed a lot of money from the bank. I owed the bank \$17,000. And I told Jimmy there one day, I said, "Well, I'm sorry that I put all that expensive drainage in from the sewage into the yard." I put in nearly \$4,000 worth of drainage in there, but I wish that I hadn't done it. And Jimmy says, "Why, Sid, if you want to quit that's all right because I've been wanting to build mama a home for a long time, but I wouldn't take it away from you." I said, "All right then, I'm closing up now." That was in July.

Stephens: Of what year now?

Freeborn: Oh . . . let's see. What year was that? I'd have to study . . .

Mrs.

Freeborn: They were here when I came in 1950. So it was after 1950.

Freeborn: The war was over, and Jimmy had come back. He'd been

wounded over in Africa. And he came back. Yes, it was after that, well, after he was back. Because he was . . .

Mrs.

Freeborn: He was already down in the bank.

Freeborn: Yes, he was already down in the bank. That's right! I can't remember just what year that . . .

Stephens: Well, that's fine. I thought maybe you might remember the year.

Freeborn: Well, it was around '55, I guess, or after '55. And when I closed down, oh boy, there was a bunch of clientele from San Antonio, real estate men, been staying with me for years. He said, "Wait a minute, Sid, Don't close up here. Let us straighten you out here. Let us take hold here." I said, "You fellows are old friends of mine, and I'm not selling you a gold brick." I said, "You've got to make all your money in three months to run you for a whole year. During the winter, all you've got is Saturday-night people. You'll have to carry your full crew all year round. I couldn't do it." So I closed down, and I sold seventeen houses for \$17,000 and paid what I owed the bank, and I was free. So that . . . yes, I built, I'd already built this big house next door here. I tore down the old Shell Hotel. That . . . I forget now, but the vandals

got in on me and they wrecked that. I bought that from some cement people from north of San Antonio somewhere. And I finally bought it from them, but I wasn't ready to use it. I didn't have the money right then to use it. And I just went on running the courts over there and let this place stay idle. The funny thing was that Jimmy Sorenson was born in the old Shell Hotel. That's when his mother and father were running the club. And I came out of our house one day and started to go to the breakfast room, and Jim hollered, "Sid, come here! Look what I've got! Come upstairs here!" He had a brand new baby up there. He was born that night so I think I was the first one that saw Jimmy after he was born--the first one outside the family.

Stephens: Well, Mr. Freeborn, do you remember the shipbuilding that went on in Rockport by the Heldenfels Brothers in 1919?

Freeborn: Yes. They . . . south of town had shipbuilding down there. And I forget what year it was, but a boiler blew up--blew that boiler way up . . . oh golly, it must have been two or three hundred yards from where the shipbuilding was. But that was . . . I don't remember when they went out of business.



Stephens: You didn't work for the shipyard, did you?

Freeborn: No, no. No, I just spent my summers here. I just came down to spend the summers . . . in this place. I did that up until the time that I built the houses here. I just spent my summers here.

Mrs.

Freeborn: He went to school in San Antonio--military school.

Freeborn: Yes, I went to . . .

Stephens: Oh, you went to military school.

Freeborn: Yes, I went to the West Texas Military Academy then. It's now the TMI. My two boys graduated from TMI. And my daughter, she graduated from The Lady of the Lake College.

Stephens: Did you go into the Army from TMI?

Freeborn: No, I went west. I went out on the border, and I was half way between Eagle Pass and Laredo in . . . oh, what's the name of that little town?

Stephens: Del Rio?

Freeborn: No, it's not on the border. Well, I was half way here between Eagle Pass and Laredo really.

Stephens: Oh, I see.

Freeborn: But . . .

Stephens: Uvalde? Cotulla? Carrizo Springs?

Freeborn: No, it was between Cotulla . . . Carrizo Springs was what I was trying to think of. And Asher Richardson, he had 200,000 acres over there. Asher Richardson

in San Antonio. Asher. Asher Richardson. And he did all his trading with the Lockwood National Bank then. So I hit him for a job, and he gave me a job riding fence. And now he says, "Sidney, I'm going to give you the same instructions that I'd give my own son." He said, "I want you to go around the fences." The ranch I was on was 35,000 acres, and there was one, two, three, four, five pastures. The river pasture, the one that went down close to the pasture to the river, that went down about half a mile to the Rio Grande, and I had to go around that every other day. Now, he says, "I want you to carry a Winchester and a six-shooter wherever you go." He says, "If you find anybody off of the road, shoot and ask questions afterwards." There was one road through from Carrizo Springs to Eagle Pass that went through the ranch. That was the only outlet we had in there. Well, thank goodness, I didn't have to shoot anybody. But that was the instructions that I was working under at that time. I know one day there we were sleeping on the porch at night, and I had . . . oh, I must have had six or eight fellows there helping us doctor winter calves in the summer. And we were in there eating supper, or getting ready to eat supper, and the dogs started barking, and

we heard a fellow hollering "Hello, hello!" I went out and called the dog. I said, "Come on in; that dog won't hurt you." So he came in and said "I'd like to get a drink of water." He said "I'm camped up here at the windmill, and the water there is so sulfury that I can't drink it." I said, "No, nobody can drink that water." I said, "Come on; I'll get you a drink." And I said, "We're just eating supper. We'll be glad to have you come eat." He said, "No, I don't want any supper." I said, "You might as well come on. We've got plenty of frijoles." I think I had some . . . I forget whether it was javelina meat or, I guess it was javelina meat, and plenty of biscuits, and we had milk because we had a lot of calves, cows, penned up with their sick calves. So he finally got up and looked around and looked in the doorway, and he came in. For a man that wasn't hungry, I wish you'd seen that man eat. Oh boy, he could stuff it away! So one of the boys offered to let him have one of his blankets, and we were sleeping on the porch. There was a room here and then the porch went down and it was open on two sides. And this fellow made his bed down at the end of the porch, and next morning just before daylight I was laying there studying, now which way to go the next morning, or that morning. It

was just breaking daylight and I saw this fellow up and get off the end of the porch. I didn't think anything about it. And then we got ready to eat breakfast and he wasn't anywhere around. We had one fellow there that could trail a man just like a dog would trail. He said, "Get on your horses boys," and we started out and went down through the horse trap. That was a half mile wide and two miles long. And he took that fellows trail; he'd lose it; he'd start circling and pick it up again and start circling again. He trailed it right on down through the center of that and he went on out into this other man's ranch. And he hadn't touched anything in our place so we went on about our business. At noon two rangers rode up, described this fellow, and wanted to know if we saw him. I said, "Yes, he spent the night here." He said, "My God, why didn't you hold him?" I'll say 5,000, but I think he said 10,000 reward on his head. (chuckle) He's gone over here to the Blocker Ranch. That's the Blocker that . . . oh, he ran in television for a long time--Dan Blocker.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Oh, you mean Hoss's place?

Freeborn: Yes. But I left there and went back to San Antonio.

Mrs.

Freeborn: He's dead now, isn't he?

Freeborn: Yes, he died just shortly. So I quit there. I got to thinking if my mother and father knew that I was packing a six-shooter wherever I went with instructions to shoot to kill, or if I had to kill somebody, it'd kill them, so I quit the job. And I come on back and I went to town. I worked in San Antonio for awhile, and then I got married and I was going to get a ranch north of San Antonio and I married Mrs. Schaffer's daughter, and we were going to get a ranch out . . . we kept going out into the different roads out from San Antonio and found one out on the Bandera Road that we came near buying out where right where it crossed the \_\_\_\_\_, And when Mrs. Schaffer found that we were going to go out there, why, she said, "Well, I'll give you a piece of land down there and you take the money that you're going to spend on that and build you a home." So she gave us 1,800 acres down there; also, a piece off the Schaffer Ranch. And that was raw country. So I started in there and I borrowed money and built a home. Well, we'll leave that alone and get back on this other. Well, no, I might as well tell that. I had to build a fence around it, build a home, and it was just a lucky thing I made an oil lease, and that helped me out a little.

Stephens: Now where was this exactly?

Freeborn: That was out on . . .

Stephens: . . . Orange Grove area.

Freeborn: Orange Grove territory. That's in Jim Wells County.

Mrs.

Freeborn: That's where they're sitting in the dining room with all the deer heads. [Looking at picture] That's a great place for hunting.

Freeborn: Oh, yes. That's in the house that I built.

Stephens: I see. And then you ranched there for awhile?

Freeborn: Yes, I ran that ranch. Well, my boys are out there . . . my boys are still there and my brother's out there now.

Stephens: How long were you a rancher there?

Freeborn: I was there up until . . . just recently.

Mrs.

Freeborn: After the house got built there . . . what's this house here? [Pointing to a house in a picture]. Is this the one tore down the old hotel?

Stephens: Mr. Freeborn, you remember the hurricane of 1942 in this area then. Would you tell about it, please?

Freeborn: Well, when we got word that the storm was coming in, I took my two boats out of the water and put them back of the house. And that was just at dinner time, and I told my wife to take the children and go on to San Antonio. Well, as I turned to walk away from where the boats were, there was . . . the skiff was laying

there crossways in front of this big tree, and I looked at it and there was two big limbs that went out that way and this skiff was crossways in it. I picked the nose of the skiff up, turned it around so it was in the center of those two big limbs, and went on. It didn't take, I guess, ten seconds to move that boat, and I went on and left it. Well, the next morning . . . we fought that storm all that night, and everybody that stayed there . . . I'd told everybody to leave the place, but there was a few that stayed there that was working in the shipyard down here. They have to stay there--didn't have any option--and in fact there was two or three people from town who came out and stayed there. But there was one fellow, I think from Houston, I tried to send him out. "No, he said, "I've been following these storms all my life and I think I'm going to see this one!" He says, "I've never, I've always been too late to see one of them." Well, everybody came over in the office and sat around in the office over there, and this fellow didn't. Along about midnight here he come in. He was in the second house from the bay down there, and he come across there, limbs flying out of the trees in all directions. And the lightning, it was just bright as day outside. He come on in and stayed in the room with us for a half

hour or more, and then he went out on the porch and went on. Well, the porch was on the southeast corner of the house, and the wind was out of the west. So he went out on this porch, was gone for five or ten minutes, and he come back in and sat around there for a little while, and in a little while he got up again and went out, and he come back in again. And about the third or fourth time he went out I went to see what he was doing. I went to the door and there he was going across the yard over to his house. And when he come back in I got up close to him, and, sure enough, he had whiskey on his breath.

Mrs.

Freeborn: You don't want to tell that, honey!

Freeborn: He didn't have enough whiskey to go around to the whole bunch, so he'd go over and get a drink and come back. This guy, he was so scared, at the time when it would wear off a little bit, he'd go get another nip and come back. But the next morning . . . a fellow by the name of Traylor had been staying there for years with us.

Stephens: Harry Traylor?

Freeborn: Yes. And he'd rather tell something bad and show you there was trouble than he would to tell you something nice. He said, "Sid, come look where your boats are!" Well, there was those trees blown over the boat. And



if you'll look at that picture, you'll see that that limb doesn't miss that boat six inches on either side. When it is cut away in the back, it's almost up against the tree. There wasn't a bit of paint scratched on that boat. Not a thing! And the other boat, the branches were over part of that and it wasn't hurt. And I claim that's a miracle! Because what made me ever move that boat around in front of those two limbs, nobody'll ever know. Well, I just when I started to walk past there, I didn't know . . . I didn't like the looks of that boat crossways underneath those two limbs. It wouldn't have been kindle wood left if I hadn't moved it.

Stephens: That's right! Were you here in the Celia storm of 1970?  
Mrs.

Freeborn: He was here in the 1919 storm. He worked over in Corpus in that storm.

Freeborn: No, not 1919. I left for San Antonio . . .  
Mrs.

Freeborn: Well, what was the storm over there that you worked over there . . .

Freeborn: Oh, I went over to police Corpus Christi in the '19 aftermath of the storm. See . . . when the war broke out, I volunteered and they turned me down for being underweight. I was over age, you see. I was up in the thirties, and they didn't want to take a man who was underweight. At that time they turned me down. So then a bunch of us, most of them were old West Texas

boys, formed Slayton Rifles. And . . . no, the Texas Cavalry. The Slayton Rifles were before, and I'd been in that and gone in 1900. But we made . . . we raised the Texas Cavalry, and they sent us up to Fort Stanley, and we were in Fort Stanley when the war was over. And after the war was over, I came out as a first sergeant, and all the officers were resigning. So . . . they wanted to make a first lieutenant out of me. "No," I said, "I want to get out of this thing." So I knew that the commissioned officers were able to get out, and I met a major on the street, and I asked if they made me a first lieutenant, would I have to buy a uniform before I could get out. He says, "Do you want to get out?" I said, "Yes, I want to get out." I said, "I ain't got no business fooling with that now." Well," he says, "I'm going to Austin tomorrow, and I'll get you out." So, instead of getting me out, they transferred me from A Company to B Company and furloughed me to the Reserves. Well, that was the same as being out. Well, just a few days after that the storm broke out. So they came to me, the man in charge then--the quarter officer--and said, "Friend, you'll go down to Corpus with us." He says, "We're heading for Corpus for police duty." And he says, "We've haven't got many men here that've had previous military training." I said, "Yes,

I'll go!" So they turned the ammunition over to me. And I had \_\_\_\_\_ . And then when we got into Corpus, the next day about noon . . . we traveled all night long getting down there. The trains, the tracks were all out. In fact, after we got from Sinton to Robstown, that back caved in. There was no more trains over that for, oh, some time. We just did get through. So then they came to me; I had to distribute ammunition to two or three companies during the night. And the first thing the next morning, they sent me down to police all the way from the hotel to the causeway. That's where all the damage was--right in that whole flat down there. And they had me . . . the headquarters was in the Masonic Temple building right across the street from the Artesian Ark, I think they called it. I was upstairs in that. I was nearly sixty hours without any sleep. And the outfit there didn't have anybody to relieve me. But I policed that whole thing, and believe me, we policed it. And I stayed there until there was just cleaning-up business, and it got all over it. One morning I was sitting at the desk . . . or it was night, rather, it was about midnight, and a fellow came in, brought a Negro man in, arrested--had come in town. And I put

him over on the end of . . . where the couch was, out of the way of everybody. And I had two majors, two fellows there that I had running the different beats every night, just going out and scouting. And one of them, he was great on jokes. He came in twisting his six shooter, "Where's that dadblamed black scoundrel that I've got to kill? I'm getting tired of killing! Somebody else's got to shoot him! I'm getting tired of it!" He went on down to where his bed was, way down at the end of the room. That Negro crawled around, crawled around and came down to where I was. He says, "General, is they that bad on niggers down here?" (chuckle) I said, "Boy, you just go on and go to sleep. That's a joking fellow, he was just joking." But that boy was scared to death! He had a right to be.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Was that storm bad? At that time? Was that a bad storm?

Freeborn: Oh, that was a terrible storm! That was the 1919 storm. That just wrecked all of Rockport, I mean, Corpus down there. Everything from Mesquite Street to . . . what street is that street going up there where the Masonic Building is? Well, anyhow, everything from there to the beach was piled up on top of the houses. That's a block from the courthouse. The courthouse was on one street, and this street I'm talking about is the next one. And that lumber was piled clean up on top of some

of those houses, those one-story houses. The whole flat out there was covered with boards.

Stephens: I see. Mr. Freeborn, do you remember anything about the Ku Klux Klan's operations in South Texas?

Freeborn: No. I heard of a little of it talking about it, but very little of it. I didn't catch anything at all about it.

Stephens: You didn't have any of your friends in the Klan?

Freeborn: No, no. I don't know anything about the Ku Klux Klan.

Stephens: Do you remember the Kool Koast Kamp that operated on Live Oak Peninsula?

Freeborn: The who?

Stephens: The Kool Koast Kamp--a tourist camp operated by the Klan . . . about a couple of miles north of here.

Freeborn: No.

Stephens: It was just below the present-day causeway--the Copano Bay Causeway.

Freeborn: I didn't know they had that.

Stephens: I see.

Freeborn: See, at that time I was only spending my summer here. So I just barely had . . . yes, I didn't spend any length of time down here until way up in the 50's.

Stephens: Do you remember anything about the slot machines that your fellow San Antonian operated?

Freeborn: The slot machines here . . . I forget the fellow's name now. They . . . just let me say that the man that was running the slot machines here in town, it seemed like everybody had it in for him. And they kept busting his signs down, and he says to me one day, he says, "Why is it they break all my signs and they don't break yours?" I said, "I don't know!! Maybe your slot machines are crooked!!" (chuckle)

Stephens: What did he say then?

Freeborn: He didn't say anything.

Stephens: Oh! Well, that was against the law. Why would the local law allow . . . I mean state law. Why would the local law allow it here?

Freeborn: I don't know why they did it.

Stephens: They were all the way along the coast. You know, down in Beaumont, Galveston, and Rockport. Did they have wide open gambling on Port Aransas within your memory?

Freeborn: I don't think they had anything over at Port Aransas because there was no way of getting there except by boat. There still isn't. Yes, they've got a causeway over there now.

Stephens: Yes, now. Well, they have a road down Mustang Island, too, from Corpus when it doesn't . . . when a storm doesn't wash it out. What about then the . . . when did those slot machines go out? Do you recall that?

Freeborn: Let's see, I started building over here . . . in '39.

They went out in the 40's here sometime--in the 40's.

Stephens: I see. Do you know why?

Freeborn: No.

Stephens: Within your memory, you have had experience with the Texas Rangers. You mentioned the ranching experience and then being in South Texas you would see them in other types of operation. What is your general impression of the Texas Rangers?

Freeborn: The state would have been nothing if it hadn't been for them. They're the finest bunch of men I ever contacted.

Stephens: Were they kind of rough and rowdy types?

Freeborn: No. No, they was just as gentlemanly as anybody I ever saw.

Stephens: But they are quite efficient in law enforcement?

Freeborn: They were efficient in every way.

Stephens: Does this mean cold-blooded?

Freeborn: No, I never knew of any cold-blooded . . .

Stephens: Well, I know, but steel nerves and cold-blooded and all that sort of thing would be necessary to be a good law enforcement officer.

Freeborn: Oh, sure. They didn't . . . they didn't give a man a chance to shoot him, that's all. They wouldn't go

and let them make targets out of them.

Stephens: I see. You did see them on the ranch, but you never have had the occasion to see them around San Antonio or Rockport when you were living there.

Freeborn: No. The only contact I ever had with them was when those two came to the ranch trying to catch this fellow. That's the only contact that I ever had with them. Now, I met two of them way up in 1915 . . . 1960. I went back out to the ranch that I'd been working on, and there was two of them there that was watching Mexico. And they were up on some table land there, and the scoundrels had found the arrowheads that I wanted to get and have never gotten. I'd rode past them time and again and saw them and didn't stop and pick them up. But this captain and sergeant were up there watching Mexico, and they picked up a lot of those arrowheads. Now evidently the San Ambrosia River ran right through the ranch from one side to the other, and this table land was over that river, and they could look over into Mexico. I know from the ranch house there--the San Pedro ranch house--on a clear day you could see mountains in Mexico from the ranch house ninety miles away.

Stephens: Clear air there.

Freeborn: Clear air.



Stephens: Well now, you said this was Carrizo Springs. Is that the Catarina Ranch country?

Freeborn: The Catarina? Well yes, it's in that ranch, in that district. But I was on the . . . the man I was working for, he had the San Pedro Ranch, and . . . the Oak Grove Ranch . . .

Stephens: This was the Mr. Richardson you mentioned?

Freeborn: Yes. Now, just to show what a man will do that butts into another man's business, after I left out there, real estate men got ahold of Asher Richardson and wanted to make a town. See, Cotulla to Carrizo Springs was 42 miles, I think, and they were raising onions all in through that country; they was just fresh raising onions. And they had to have a 42-mile wagon haul. Consequently, by the time they got to Cotulla or to a railroad station lots of those onions were bruised. So he got an idea that he was going to put a railroad out there. So he started the town of Asherton; it's there now. Papa told him, he says, "Mr. Richardson, you're a successful cowman. Don't fool with something you don't know anything about." He says, "You're not a real estate man." "Oh," he says, "I'm going to be a multimillionaire. Making this town here will make a multimillionaire of us." I think there was only

one or two of the family left, and the last I heard of it one of the girls . . . well, I guess she may be dead by now . . . was working in a soft drink stand on the road. That's what she was doing. He lost everything he had!

Stephens: That's coming down a long ways, isn't it?

Freeborn: Yes sir! Why, he was running cattle on 200,000 acres, but he lost it all just to be a rich man. And he was already a rich man.

Stephens: Well, that's . . .

Freeborn: That's butting into another man's business.

Stephens: Greed runs . . . it caused a person to run afoul when he's otherwise a success.

Freeborn: Yes.

Stephens: Well, do you . . .

Mrs.

Freeborn: We were here in the Celia Storm.

Stephens: You were?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes.

Stephens: You lived . . . you were staying in the house?

Mrs.

Freeborn: We were here in that storm, right here.

Stephens: Could you describe it?

Mrs.

Freeborn: The whole back . . . the tree just . . . we sat looking out the window, and a big branch just came . . . and whipped that fence right down, right in front of us.

Stephens: You're sitting about 200 yards from the bay, aren't you?

Freeborn: No, no. We're only about 400 feet from the bay.

Stephens: Is that all?

Freeborn: Yes.

Stephens: Oh! So you could just see the bay water rise up. Well, you couldn't see anything because it would be raining wouldn't it?

Freeborn: No, we couldn't see. We were looking out the south window. You see, the wind was coming here. We couldn't see out this way. We were looking out the south window and a big tree right there just took this great big limb off across my fence and one fell inside and took my telephone line out, but that's the only damage we had. My son's house over there, it blew a limb out of a tree and it hit his son's room and broke the window out. Now, when I built that house, I put my windows in about . . . twelve-inch squares I guess it is--maybe it was 10 by 12--just on that account. If it hadn't been for that, his boy would have been badly hurt. But it just busted that window out, and a little glass went onto the bed where he was asleep, and he wasn't hurt at all.

Stephens: Well, thank heaven!

Mrs.

Freeborn: Glass all over him.

Stephens: They didn't have the windows boarded up?

Mrs.

Freeborn: We saw the roof of that house in front just sweep right across over there and by the window of that big limb that came down just cut that fence just like a knife--like that.

Freeborn: Busted it right down.

Mrs.

Freeborn: You never saw anything like it--just like it was a knife, just went right down and sliced it!

Freeborn: Well, I'll tell you one thing. That house that my son is in is the strongest house in this part of the country. I tore that old Shell Hotel down that was built of lumber--rough heart. The wood was so hard there was one place--there wasn't but two big stumps right in front of the house--where that tree went up and hit the edge of the roof of the other house and busted a hole about that big in the edge, and the rain got in. That was the only mildewed place in that entire house, as old as it was. And the ants, termites, had come up all the way up that long post and was eating on that stuff and back down again. You could see where they had trails on that, but the lumber was so hard they couldn't bite it. They went up to that rotten wood, and that's the only . . . when I tore that house down, that's the only piece of wood that wasn't any

good that was right at the top of that. Now, my flooring is 13 by 3. That's the . . .

Stephens: Joists?

Freeborn: Joists. The . . . my studdings in the house are 4 by 6's and 6 by 6's. The entire house is closed with 1 by 4--really 1 by 5, I guess--flooring. That's what the walls are all covered. My floor in the house is an inch and a quarter flooring for the first floor. Then on top of that I've got three-quarter inch oak for the flooring. Now, that gives the studding in the house covered by flooring on both sides, and I put tarpaper in and then put in the flooring, and on top of that I put sheetrock. And that lumber was so hard that when they'd hit with a saw, it would sing just like it was hitting iron. But that was very hard. And then on the outside of the house, I made it fireproof by putting asbestos siding, and when the fellow put that on, he said, "Mr. Freeborn, I have bent more nails putting this side on in this house than I've bent in my entire life." But, boy, that lumber was hard. But I tore that building down. I talked to the contractor, and so I phoned over to Corpus to a wrecking firm, and I asked them, "Now, what will you wreck this house for me?" He says, "Mr. Freeborn, I'd like the job, but I'd have to, you'd have

to pay salaries from Corpus Christi over there. I'd have to bring my men over." He said, "You don't need any experience to do that. You just get you a few hands and one good carpenter and tear it down." I tore that whole house down for \$3,000.

Stephens: Fantastic!

Freeborn: I took every nail out of the wood and stacked the wood, and that's what I built that house out of.

Stephens: I see.

Freeborn: But that house is really built.

Stephens: Well, do you think the Celia Storm was worse than the 1919 Storm?

Freeborn: Well, I wasn't here in the 1919 Storm, but I figure it did more damage than the 1919 Storm did. I think the wind was higher because . . . well, there wasn't . . .

Mrs.

Freeborn: I thought you said you were in the 1919 Storm.

Freeborn: No, honey, I left here just a few days before the '19 Storm, but I policed Corpus Christi after the 1919 Storm.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Oh, I see.

Freeborn: That was my connection with the 1919 Storm.

Stephens: When you were a young person and coming down to Rockport, did you ever attend the . . . Professor Atwater's Natural History Museum?

Freeborn: No.

Stephens: Did you ever know anything about that . . . or hear?

Freeborn: No, I spent all my time fishing.

Stephens: I see. Always fishing.

Freeborn: When I came down . . . we came down and spent a month, a month and a half, every summer. I had some very exciting and very pleasant memories of the fishing here, and I did lots of fishing after I started building down here. I don't think there's a fish that swims that water that I haven't caught one what it's a variety of.

Stephens: Did you have a lot of other people from San Antonio fishing here, too, in the summer?

Freeborn: Oh yes!

Stephens: Was this the "in place" to come to?

Freeborn: Yes.

Stephens: The Aransas County area?

Freeborn: Yes.

Stephens: Well, what about tourism in general now? You've been in and around Rockport for 85 years. Would you comment then on that general subject of tourism?

Freeborn: Well, we had a fine clientele here, and we had people coming from all over to go duck shooting. We were full all winter with duck shooters, and . . .

Stephens: This was the Forest Park Cottages?

Freeborn: Forest Park Cottages. And the other people were the same way. They . . . I'm pretty sure they were full all summer. But . . . people that I had coming here, they were to go to other places afterwards, and I saw them and they said, "Yes, we're getting along pretty nice, but that ain't the Forest Park Cottages. We had the finest service in Forest Park Cottages than we ever had anywhere."

Stephens: Well, where did your people come from--San Antonio? Did they also come from Houston?

Freeborn: Houston, San Antonio, up across the border up into New Mexico.

Stephens: Mostly Texans?

Freeborn: Mostly all Texans.

Stephens: Did you ever get any from Chicago and places like that?

Freeborn: We had some in the wintertime doing a little duck shooting.

Stephens: When did the snowdiggers start coming down this way? And I understand they have a lot of persons from . . . well, retired persons now, who travel in the wintertime. But that hasn't always been the case because they haven't had travel facilities. Do you remember about when this started?

Freeborn: It started when they got the automobiles.

Stephens: Well, the roads weren't good enough for a long time.



Freeborn: For a long time the roads weren't . . .

Stephens: Was this mostly after the Second World War? Would you have much travel during the Depression?

Freeborn: Well, now there's a long space in there that I didn't come down. The wintertimes I don't know anything about, you see.

Stephens: Oh, I see.

Freeborn: But from . . . 1912 on, we kept getting better and better. As the roads got better it got better. We had people from up around Dallas come down here, and . . .

Stephens: By automobile rather than by train?

Freeborn: Come down by automobile. And, of course, like I said, the two men from Dallas, Whitesall and the other man, they bought lots of people, I guess, from Dallas down. But we'd been having them before that, and Holland was the other man--Whitesall and Holland--Colonel Holland.

Stephens: Oh, that was the man you were trying to think of awhile ago?

Freeborn: Yes. And . . .

Stephens: Whitesall?

Freeborn: Whitesall. I can't spell it.

Mrs.

Freeborn: You said when you were here . . . you couldn't even get over to Copano.

Freeborn: Oh, no. You had no way of getting out of here in time of a hurricane.

Mrs.

Freeborn: No roads going anywhere.

Stephens: Mr. Freeborn, you have been acquainted with the area and you remember some of the main hotels. You've spoken of the Shell Hotel which closed in 1895. What about some of the other hotels in the Rockport-Fulton area?

Freeborn: Well, I'll start down below Rockport with the Bayview Hotel and I've got a picture there of that. And then coming on up was the Orleans Hotel, and then across the street from this big hotel you've got a picture of there, that was the Orleans in that picture, you see. And I guess that was all of them.

Stephens: And then three or four miles north of town then, they had the Shell Hotel?

Freeborn: There was nothing up here except the Shell Hotel.

Stephens: That's what I was wondering.

Freeborn: There was not . . . there wasn't any buildings from there up here. You see, all down in front of where the . . . the ladies' club down there . . . right in town, that was all just shallow water out there. We used to kill ducks right out in front of that. You know coming out from town there's a little . . . it used to be a green house with a yellow roof. I don't know. It . . . is that still there, Grace?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Where?

Freeborn: O'Connor's house down there now, coming out from town.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes, that's out on the point.

Stephens: T. Noah Smith's?

Mrs.

Freeborn: That green house there.

Stephens: The one that flies the flags?

Freeborn: I don't know.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Just beyond the Woman's Club. That point that comes in where they're building the new shopping center.

Stephens: Oh, oh, yes. There.

Freeborn: Well, all out in front, see, there was no . . .

Mrs.

Freeborn: They're right on the beach.

Freeborn: There was . . . after . . . when you come out of town, right there in town you'll notice you got up and go over what used to be a railroad track.

Stephens: Yes.

Freeborn: Well, from there on there was nothing. There were a few houses on this side on the main street going out, but up the beach there was nothing, and out where the boats are tied up now and where the ski basin is and everything, that was just water, shallow water out there. And that's where we used to shoot ducks--out there right in the ski basin, I guess it was. I killed my limit many a time there. And then when I built up

here, I had a blind right out in front here that I'd sit out there and kill my ducks whenever I wanted to.

That was all open.

Mrs.

Freeborn: In Lamar there was nothing there, was there? There wasn't a Lamar at all.

Freeborn: Well, there was no way to get over to . . . no way to get over there.

Stephens: I see.

Freeborn: This nine-mile point out here was the end of the road.

Stephens: Yes.

Freeborn: There was one ranch house up on the hill up there where you go up and turn up now just before you get to 35. There used to be a ranch house, a two-story ranch house. I don't think that's there anymore. But there was a ranch house up there, and that's the only one anywheres around.

Stephens: Do you remember the Finish Saloon?

Freeborn: The who?

Stephens: The Finish Saloon that operated in Rockport. Do you remember any of the saloons?

Freeborn: Yes, there was . . . oh, there was a saloon right opposite the end of the wharf . . . was back of town.

Stephens: Hank's Saloon?

Freeborn: Hank's, yes. And then the other one, I think was the only other saloon here in town.

Stephens: Did you have any in Fulton?

Freeborn: No.

Stephens: When did the homes first start being built here?

Freeborn: In Fulton?

Stephens: Yes. When were they built?

Freeborn: Well, there was very few there when I started building here in '48 . . . in '38.

Stephens: '38.

Freeborn: There was very few houses up there.

Stephens: Well, when the Fulton Mansion was there, was that all in this general vicinity where we are right now?

Freeborn: Yes.

Stephens: Just the Fulton Mansion and their out buildings but . . .

Freeborn: Well, the Fulton Mansion's got all those trailer houses in front of it now.

Stephens: Yes, now. But in those days just the mansion up in that direction?

Freeborn: That's all there was out there.

Stephens: No other houses?

Freeborn: There was no homes around there.

Stephens: Well, what about W. S. Hall--the meatpacking man? I understand where O'Connor, Dennis O'Connor lives now,

that was the W. S. Hall home, and he was one of the big meatpackers in the late sixties and early seventies.

Freeborn: Well, that may have been. The next one I remember there was a lady from Kerrville had it. No, no, there was a doctor there first. Yes, because . . . they had ice cream there at the Oakshore Club. That's when Sorenson had it, and they had ice cream for Sunday dinner, and then it melted and Sorenson didn't know it, and the colored help they had froze it again for suppertime. And it was an ice cream that I didn't like and none of our family ate any of it except my cousin. He ate a little of it, and along about, oh, sometime after we went to bed, people come over and said, "Anybody sick at your house?" I said, "Yes, my cousin's sick." Well," he said, "everybody on the place is sick--ptomaine poisoning." And there was a doctor living in that house that O'Connor's in now. He came over here, and there's one lady had four children, I think, and he waited on everybody, and he charged her for four house calls, and she went up in the air. She thought it was something terrible. She was from Dallas, and there was some people from San Antonio. They had three daughters, two daughters; they got stuck. But everybody on the place was sick from that ice cream. Nobody got hurt though.

Stephens: Say, Mr. Freeborn, you have been acquainted with the persons who would be regarded as the leaders in the community here since 1888. Would you maybe mention some names and why you would regard these persons as significant individuals in the Rockport-Fulton area?

Freeborn: Well, I've got to do a lot of thinking on that to get the names right because . . . well, the main stores here in town . . . it's been so long since I've called any of them by name I can't get them. There was the Hoopers--Pat Hooper and his brother. They had a store there in town. And, of course, the Sorensens, they had the big store there. That was the biggest store in town. They had anything you wanted in there.

Mrs.

Freeborn: What about Bracht's?

Freeborn: Bracht's were there. They had right where that . . . the railroad track crosses the main street right now, they had that building--two-story building. And they had furniture, and afterwards they had a store in there.

Stephens: Which Bracht was that?

Freeborn: Oh, well, that would be Fred Bracht now, the oldest one out of that, but it was his parents that I'm talking about.

Stephens: Oh, his parents, I see.

Freeborn: Way back before his time, but I couldn't call them by name. Then . . .

Mrs.

Freeborn: How about Johnson's Drugstore? When did that come?

Freeborn: The Johnson's? I don't remember when they opened.

Stephens: Would you regard these persons as leaders of the community?

Freeborn: Yes. All those people that are here now have been handed those stores down, and they were the leaders. Now, the Baileys, there was about three or four families of Baileys here.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Did the Pictins have a store, honey? Or was that later? That was later wasn't it?

Freeborn: Yes, I think they came in later. I forget the people's name that had the lumber yard before them. It wasn't in that place; it was over a little ways. Oh, my mind's a blank on a lot of that.

Stephens: Well, we'll come back to that in a minute. Let me ask Mrs. Freeborn a question then. What is it that you particularly like about this community?

Mrs.

Freeborn: I like it very much. They're very friendly. I think it's one of the nicest places I've lived in, and I've been all over, you might say, practically around the world. My first husband was a commander in the Navy. He was lost on the Wasp when it went down. I've been to China.



Stephens: What was his name?  
Mrs.

Freeborn: August William Lentz, Jr. He was the captain of the Navy football team in '25. He was president of his class at Annapolis. He went to . . . he was a New Jersey man--Jersey City. He went to Stephens Prep; he went to Rutgers College, and he finally ended up at Annapolis. He was a good football player. And, of course, I was a Navy nurse. I was an Army nurse first, and I came to San Antonio as an Army . . . and joined the Army. I went back up to Boston. My home is in Amherst, Massachusetts. I went to school in Michigan, and then I joined the Army and from the Army I went to Boston to take special courses. I was going to Honolulu. I wanted to go into pediatrics, and I went to the Children's Hospital there, and while there the Navy contacted me and invited me to their hospital and interviewed me and wanted me to join the Navy. And I joined the Navy.

Stephens: When was that?  
Mrs.

Freeborn: That was in 1925, I think.

Stephens: That was the Army that you'd joined earlier?  
Mrs.

Freeborn: In 1923.

Stephens: Oh, you had! (chuckle)  
Mrs.

Freeborn: I'm old!

Stephens: Well, I didn't know the Army was taking women then.  
Mrs.

Stephens: Yes. And then I, as I say, I was in the Navy Hospital in Boston. That's out in Chelsy. And my husband was brought in. He had been injured playing football, and he had to have sacro-iliac joint operation. And while in bed, I became engaged to Mr. Lentz. He was Lieutenant Lentz then. And he had graduated from . . . he was captain of the Navy football team in 1925. He graduated in 1926, and he was brought in soon after that. Let's see, we were married in 1928, and from then on I traveled. You know how service people travel. We traveled to Panama. We were all over China and Japan, and in 1937 we were evacuated from China. We were in Sinkow at the time when the Japs came in, and they took over the school right across from the apartment where we were staying. I had a knock on the door to pack my things. I couldn't take the beautiful things that I had bought and I had to leave China by boat. But I got word that my rugs, Chinese rugs and things, were aboard a ship that would be in Honolulu. I came back to the States, and then we were around Boston, Virginia, and around different places--Maryland. While in Virginia, we decided we liked what was going on in Maryland and my husband flew all over Maryland, and we bought a farm, a 150-year-old house. So you

know how old it is now! And I sold that. Then in 1942 is when he was on the Wasp, and it went down in the Pacific. And some say that the Japanese captured him as a prisoner. And I heard that, but I don't know because we just got word that he was missing, then pronounced dead. He was a commander then. And friends from San Antonio came back up to Boston . . . or Maryland. I decided that after that I would take a job. I had a little boy twelve years old. He was twelve years old then when his daddy died, and I decided to send him up to Amherst, Massachusetts, where I went to school, with my brother. And he went up there and I took positions. I took in the rehabilitation school in Maryland, and then I took charge of the TB hospital. And then I decided . . . I had friends come from San Antonio that were living here in Rockport came up to visit me, and they talked to me. And I also heard from an Army doctor that I had known, a Doctor Gill, William Gill, in San Antonio. And I came back and I was going to take a position. I thought, "Well, I can't stay here. I'm going to sell my farm." And I had a man running it, but he wasn't just what we'd thought, you know, he would be like. So I came back to San Antonio, and then I went to the Woodman War Memorial Hospital, and

I was accepted there as the head nurse there, and I stayed there until it closed in 1956. And in the meantime, I came here in 1950 and bought a little pet house up at Laguna Vista. It's up there now; my son has it. He has two children, and he's with . . . my son is a purchasing agent from Shell Oil over in Houston, Texas. And they come down here. They spent their summers, when they can. The children, the two boys, one just graduated from Augusta Military School, and the other one went one year to A & M, and he didn't go last year. I hope he continues this year. And I love this Rockport. You can't take me . . . I like Amherst, Massachusetts. That's a beautiful town, but I read in the paper where they have 22,000 students at that college. When I went there, attended there, they had only about, you know . . . we were lucky if we had a thousand.

Stephens: Yes. Well, things change. Why do you like this area besides the friendly people? Do you like this sort of climate?

Mrs.

Freeborn: I love this climate. I like the water. Everywhere I've ever lived I've had water in front of me. And when I came here visiting, I thought it was just beautiful. And especially I liked up on the hill, and then I came down here. And I decided this was my place to stay.

Stephens: Well good.

Mrs.

Freeborn: I bought a little home, and I have met . . . I met all the older people, but they're most all gone, the people that I knew. At the Sea Guv, Mr. and Mrs. Mills, I knew them. And I knew the people in town-- Chester Johnson, you know, Mrs. Johnson, and the Ankels and the Hanways, all those people--all the older people that as I say, most all of them have gone.

Stephens: How long have you been Mrs. Freeborn?

Mrs.

Freeborn: I came to Mr. . . . Mrs. Sorenson called me, Jimmy Sorenson's wife, that Mrs. Freeborn was ill and if I would come in and help them out on duty. And so I came down. I think I talked to Mr. Freeborn, and I took the night shift. That was in 19 . . . what year was that, honey?

Freeborn: 1960.

Mrs.

Freeborn: 1960. And Mrs. Freeborn died in 19 . . . 1961. And it just happened that . . . and I married Mr. Freeborn in 1965.

Stephens: I see, So you have been living next door and then here since that time?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes. Just up the hill. I belong to the Episcopal Church and I met all the women there, and it just seemed that everybody was very nice and friendly here.

Stephens: That's how you became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs.

Emory Spencer, through the Episcopal Church?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes, and I met through the church the Spencers.

I met Mildred and Mr. Spencer and . . .

Stephens: The Sorensens there too.

Mrs.

Freeborn: . . . the Sorensens. All that crowd I met at the church.

Stephens: Yes, I see.

Mrs.

Freeborn: And I know them all well and we're very good friends.

I have been out to the Sorensens a lot because I used to go out there with . . . knew Mildred. We took art together at Simon Michaels. Mrs. Spencer and all of those girls. We all got together and took art lessons from Simon Michael.

Stephens: What year were you born?

Mrs.

Freeborn: In 1890. In Amherst, Massachusetts.

Stephens: What is your impression of the cultural advantages here now with the art studios, artists in residence, art festivals that we're having tomorrow, and . . .

Mrs.

Freeborn: Well, they're having as many things going on here and more attractive than the cities, I think.

Stephens: Why is it that Rockport hasn't really been discovered yet as such, that is, with flocks of people coming in? Do you think it will be developed soon?

Mrs.

Freeborn: I think it's developing. They like the climate. You couldn't ask for a nicer climate.

Stephens: Why do you suppose it hasn't developed so far--like Corpus or Victoria?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Well, I don't think . . . I don't think they want it that large. I think it's just a summer resort here. I don't think it'll ever develop that . . . I know there are a lot of people coming in. I read in the paper where about over a hundred families came in this past month.

Stephens: Permanent families?

Mrs,

Freeborn: Going to buy, yes. Because when I came here, they didn't have all that out by Copano and all over the Live Oaks and all that. They just . . . this little place that I bought up here, they were just building up the beach road, you know, continue up the beach road almost up . . . I think it's the next road beyond Dobkins Cottages--that little spot in there. It's called Laguna Vista. I don't know whether you know the Jarbos or not, Mr. and Mrs. Jarbo.

Stephens: Yes.

Mrs.

Freeborn: They were very good friends of mine.

Stephens: Is that the general area of Laguna Vista where they live?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes. I lived in that little green house right in the middle of the road with all the bougainvillea around it, right near the Jarbos and the Williams from . . . they're mostly people from Victoria.

Stephens: Yes. That live in that little area.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes. The Williams and Carews, you know.

Stephens: Did you find that to be a pattern that developed--that the people from Victoria would settle . . . would buy lots in that little area, and people from San Antonio in another little area would buy lots?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes, they all grouped together.

Stephens: Is that right?

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes. They're very fine people, They come down every summer.

Stephens: Well now, has that pattern continued? That is of persons from various towns buying lots close to each other.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Yes, I think. Yes.

Stephens: They're mostly summer homes types.

Mrs.

Freeborn: Up there in summer homes are all Victoria people there right now away . . .

Stephens: So in order to get away from it all they get away . . .

Mrs.

Stephens: My son's from Houston. (chuckle)

Stephens: . . . with their own people then. I see. Mr. Freeborn, you were here when they had various yellow fever scares and other reasons for keeping people out for . . .



because of epidemics. I understand a quarantine station existed in the bay area. Could you tell me about that please?

Freeborn: That quarantine station was on the boats coming in.

Stephens: On the boats, not on . . .

Freeborn: Not on the people.

Stephens: Well, somebody told me it was on Shell Island.

Freeborn: Well, they might call it that. It's a little . . . it's the end of Lydia Ann Island really. It's coming out from the lighthouse up there down to where you hit . . . well, it could be Shell Island because the shell banks go in there going over to Corpus.

Stephens: Or Shell . . . Shell Bank Island.

Freeborn: Shell Banks.

Stephens: Isn't there one by that name--Shell Bank Island?

Freeborn: Well, it could be a shell Bank Island, but that and Lydia Ann Island are all in there together.

Stephens: But at least there was a quarantine station on one of those islands?

Freeborn: On that point, yes. And you go right along aside of it going to Port Aransas now by boat. And there hasn't been a quarantine there for many years, but they had that . . . as I understand it, the boats that came in had to go through quarantine. But that's way back before my time. I don't know when it was going because . . .

Stephens: Oh, not within your . . . existence.

Freeborn: No, I don't know of anybody ever being quarantined there since then. It was just a . . . they kept a doctor there . . . I know when I was a little fellow . . . oh, I must have been six or seven years old, eight years old. We were over at Port Aransas. We were getting ready to come home, and my mother and six, four other, five other ladies, and my brother and myself went out to take our last bath in the morning. We were going to come back on the mail boat that afternoon. And we went out into the gulf and went past the first sandbar and went over to the second sandbar, and all of a sudden one of those women commenced screaming and said something had her by the foot and was pulling her out to deep water. Well, we all grabbed hands and headed for shore. Well now, I was small enough that when I reached . . . I was about to lose my little slipper, and I reached down for that. My mother had to drag me because it was practically over my head between the two sand . . . I was only about I guess six years old, maybe seven years old. And we got out on shore, and a stingaree had stung this lady in the instep. And it must have been an awful big one because it made an awful big hole. And she started screaming, and my big brother, four

years older than I was, he ran all the way from there over to Hatfield Hotel, that's the hotel over there now, and he ran over there to get the wagon. It had just front wheels and rear wheels and boards laid there that they carried people over to the beach and back. And he ran over and got that and got her back to the hotel, and they tried to get a doctor. Well, there was no telephones. They, I think, sent a sailboat down to the quarantine station; that doctor was gone. And came back and sent word over to Rockport, and I think that doctor was gone, but they didn't get a doctor until the next day, and that lady never quit screaming. And the old hotel in those days had this hallway and had a seven-foot wall with nothing over the top. And you lay at one end of the hall and talk to somebody at the far end of the hall. And she was screaming the whole time; nobody slept. And the next morning one of the men from the life saving station over there, he had gone out into the gulf and got clean gulf water. I don't remember whether he brought one or two bucketsful down, but now he fixed it hot as she could stand it and put her foot in that, and that's the first time that women stopped screaming was when she hit that hot, salt water.

Stephens: Now this was a life saving station?

Freeborn: Oh, there's a life saving station there now in Port Aransas.

Stephens: The Coast Guard?

Freeborn: Coast Guard, yes. Yes, they used to . . . right in front of the Hatfield Hotel they had a mast sticking up there with a crossarm on it, and they'd come down and have their drills--the life saving crew--and they'd put the cannon down and put the line in it and shoot it alongside that mast where they was shooting the rod, line, to pull a rope over \_\_\_\_\_.

Well, they used to butcher the cattle there that they had, and one day they brought a steer up there to kill it and it got away and it ran and ran and ran. They run it all over the island and finally caught it along about eleven o'clock. At twelve o'clock that day we had meat on the table, and one fellow at the table said, "That's the toughest piece of meat I ever put my teeth into!" It was plumb black. The fellow said, "That's the piece of meat you saw running around out there a half hour ago!" (chuckle) Oh, that was great days! There was a Bloodworth . . .

Stephens: This is one of the prominent people?

Freeborn: Yes. The Bloodworth had the fastest sailboat that ever sailed the bay out there. He had a raceboat and was

never beaten. And the . . . I called their names awhile ago . . . a lot of them still here . . . isn't that funny how your mind'll switch?

Stephens: Did the people here do sailboating as a sport?

Freeborn: And made a living out of it.

Stephens: Well, did they ever race them or just do it for fun?

Freeborn: The Bloodworth boat was the only raceboat we had here, but they had, every summer they'd have races here. And his boat was never beaten.

Stephens: What period of time was that?

Freeborn: Oh, as long as I can remember. From the time I was a little fellow way up til the 1919 Storm.

Stephens: I see. Would this be the local people or the vacationers?

Freeborn: They were local people, the Bloodworth. They . . . I think they built boats.

Mrs.

Freeborn: What about Travis Bailey?

Freeborn: The Baileys, he's always had boats, and his son right now used a sailboat. The Armstrongs, they had two boats. The Armstrongs had the . . . let's see \_\_\_\_\_ would call it the Seafox, and the other boat was the Alice, I think. And then the Deans, they had a schooner, very fine schooner. We used to rent that very often and go out towards Port Aransas and sometimes spend the night over there. And then \_\_\_\_\_,

he had the big ice house here in town and fish house. I think he was the first one that made his own ice, and he and his boys had a very fine schooner, a very fast schooner. I know we left Port Aransas one day way behind all the boats. They tied our ropes up so that we would be late leaving, and they were beginning to have motor boats in those days by that time. And the nearest boat to us was clean down to Lydia Ann lighthouse. And we struck out, pulled our skiff up on board to keep from sinking it, and poured the wind to it. The wind was almost behind us. It was our strongest, the side wind. We passed everything out there, motor boats and all, went in and was furling our sails by the time anybody else got in Rockport. We just run clean off from everybody. But Ben Sheldon, he was postmaster for years, and he was . . . got up a baseball team. I used to play with them when I came down in the summertime. He had his two boys and . . . you want the complete ballteam?

Stephens: Not necessarily, just the fact that you did have. . .

Freeborn: . . . we had a baseball team.

Stephens: . . . teams. Was this the sort of thing that young men did for passtime--organized baseball games and . . .

Freeborn: Yes, always just for fun.

Stephens: Just played for the fun of it.

Freeborn: Just played for the fun. We'd play the other towns around here.

Stephens: Now, would this be . . . what age group? What age group would it be?

Freeborn: Well, at that time . . .

Stephens: . . . high school age, or . . .

Freeborn: Yes, it was high school on up . . .

Stephens: . . . young men in their twenties, or what?

Freeborn: I guess the oldest man on there was under twenty-five.

Stephens: I see. So you would do this just on what, weekends?

Freeborn: Yes, just on . . . no, they'd play sometimes during the week.

Stephens: During the week?

Freeborn: Now, let's see. How old was I when I was playing for them? I was right around twenty--eighteen, nineteen, twenty--when I played with them.

Stephens: What other sports did you have then?

Freeborn: In here.

Stephens: Yes.

Freeborn: Nothing but fishing.

Stephens: Fishing. No croquet, golf, or anything like that?

Freeborn: No, we didn't know what golf was in those days. But that . . . I just happened to think about those names.