

(Tape 1 of 3)

An Oral History Tape Transcription

Of

Interviewer: Sarah Swofford

Interviewee: Mr. William T. Busch

Thursday, September 13, 1979

SS: Thursday, September 13, 1979. My name is Sarah Swofford. I'm having an oral history interview with Mr. William T. Busch in his home at 2303 Eaves Drive, Baytown, Texas.

SS: Ok, Mr. Busch, what is your full name?

WB: William T. Thomas Busch.

SS: William Thomas Busch. OK, and you were born, when?

WB: February 20, 1893.

SS: February the twentieth?

WB: Twentieth.

SS: 1893.

WB: 1893.

SS: Uh, where were you born, Mr. Busch?

WB: At Cedar Bayou in Chambers County side of Cedar Bayou in a, on a ranch and farm.

SS: On a ranch and farm?

WB: Hmm. Both.

SS: Now, your parents were, uh... Who were your parents?

WB: J.W. and Mary Jane Kelley Busch.

SS: Ok. J... What did the J stand for in your father's name?

WB: Jim. James.

SS: Oh, James? James W. Busch.

WB: James W. William – his name was William. James William.

SS: James William. I guess that's where you...

WB: And I'm named – I'm named after my grandfather on my father's side.

SS: I see. And then your mother's name was...

WB: Mary Jane.

SS: Mary Jane.

WB: And before she married, she was Kelley.

SS: Mary Jane Kelley.

WB: Busch.

SS: Ok. Uh, where did your parents come from when they came to this area?

WB: They were born – they were both born at Cedar Bayou.

SS: Oh, they were born at Cedar Bayou?

WB: Cedar Bayou. My grandfather on my father's side, and grandmother, came from Germany.

SS: To this – did they come directly to this area?

WB: Cedar Bayou. Came up the bayou front, and they had built 'em a home between Cedar Bayou and one of these towns. Baytown, see?

SS: Do you think they came to Galveston?

WB: Oh, yeah.

SS: And came up that way and came down?

WB: The only way they would come.

SS: And settled at Cedar Bayou?

WB: Settled at Cedar Bayou.

SS: About when was that?

WB: And he had a large family of sons and daughters.

SS: Do you have any idea about when that was that they came to this country?

WB: No. No, I don't.

SS: Ok.

(Tape cuts off)

SS: Now, Mr. Busch, while we had the tape recorder off, you were gonna tell me about your parents?  
...[Inaudible].

WB: No, my grandparents.

SS: Your grandparents? Ok.

WB: I know they're different.

SS: Go ahead.

WB: My grandparents on my father's side – course they came from Germany direct to Cedar Bayou. And they could speak, and write, and read German. And they subscribed for a German newspaper. But none of their children were taught to read, or write, or speak German in the home.

SS: They spoke English, then with their children?

WB: They spoke English. It seemed like they – my grandparents – wanted a new life, and wanted to forget their old country.

SS: To leave that all ...[Inaudible].

WB: So far as their children was concerned.

SS: Uh-huh. Now, what did they do after they got here?

WB: Oh, they had a farm, raised cattle.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Just like all country people do.

SS: Um-hmm. Did they have any close neighbors, do you suppose? Or...

WB: No, I don't think so. The neighbors in those days would live miles apart.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: But they met usually at the church. Or the Masonic Lodge, which was built some several years later by the residents.

SS: Is this Cedar Bayou Methodist Church?

WB: Cedar Bayou Methodist Church.

SS: That was your grandparents were – they were members of that church?

WB: Yeah, not my grandparents – I don't know. No.

SS: Just your parents?

WB: It wasn't – in that time, there wasn't no church here.

SS: Um-hmm. I see.

WB: Church came later.

SS: But your parents were both members of that church?

WB: My parents were.

SS: Your parents were.

WB: Oh, yeah.

SS: I see. Ok, well how about – what are some of your earliest recollections of ... you know, Cedar Bayou? What it was like to you as a child?

WB: Well, there was one large, uh ... store. And handled everything, you see? Groceries, feed, tools, dry goods, and everything

SS: General Mercantile items?

WB: General Mercantile Store. And they owned a boat, and through that boat it went to Galveston by sails; they didn't have motors at that time. They were all sails boat. And it had a – it went to Galveston and brought the products for needs in the store for resale to the store once a week.

SS: You can remember ...

WB: It left on a Monday, came back on a Wednesday afternoon. And I remember well the owner of that boat was a partner in the store. They called him W.O. Ilfree's brother and brother, John Ilfree. And Mr. Ilfree always made it back in time to go to prayer meeting; they built the church at that time. I remember.

SS: And they had prayer meeting on Wednesday night?

WB: They had prayer meeting on Wednesday night.

SS: Now, that's ...

WB: He never missed it.

SS: W.O. Ilfree and his brother, John?

WB: John.

SS: Ilfree.

WB: John was the one to run the store, W.O. ran the boat next part. Look after buying in Galveston.

SS: You can remember seeing these sailboats go up...

WB: They couldn't go to Houston with a sailboat, because the Buffalo Bayou was narrow, and too much timber on each side, and they had no wind to make the sails move your boat.

SS: So Galveston was really the big city, then?

WB: Galveston was the place to purchase the supplies.

SS: ...[Inaudible] Now, how did you – where did you go to school?

WB: Cedar Bayou. On, in the Mason – on the one, the ground floor, it's a school – Masonic Lodge, which is a two-story building. Lodge is upstairs, and the first floor dedicated to the school.

SS: All...

WB: And...

SS: All the grades?

WB: All the grades. We were separated by a cloth partition that would just move on a curtain.

SS: How many teachers did they have?

WB: They usually had about three.

SS: Do you remember how old you were when you started to school?

WB: I think I was seven. At that time, you had to be seven to... I started over in Chambers County where we lived at that time in a little one-room schoolhouse called Schilling School after Dr. Schilling.

SS: The Schilling School?

WB: Schilling. The old resident doctor here, the only doctor in this area this side of the San Jacinto River.

SS: Um-hmm. Uh...

WB: Country, Country doctor.

SS: What kind of subjects did they teach to you there?

WB: Oh ...

SS: Was it the three R's?

WB: Reading, writing and arithmetic.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: Algebra, and – a little of everything.

SS: All kind of things.

WB: And then we took – high school grades were merged in with the other grades before I finished. We had no high school at that time.

SS: Now, when you finished school there, uh, ...[Inaudible].

WB: I went to work as a clerk at Ilfree Mercantile Store. At that time the Ilfree brothers, John and W.O., had sold out to the brother who worked in the store with him. Had three brothers. And Ed Ilfree, he bought 'em out. And I worked for him for three years as a clerk.

SS: Now, that's Ed Ilfree?

WB: Ed Ilfree. Edward Ilfree.

SS: Edward Ilfree. Ok.

WB: He took over the store, and his two brothers then moved to Houston.

SS: To go back a little bit about your home and family, um...

WB: We are – my father and the Ilfree's are first cousins.

SS: Oh, is that right?

WB: But all came from the Busch side, German side.

SS: Now, did you have brothers and sisters?

WB: Oh, yeah. There's six. Six.

SS: Who were your brothers and sisters?

WB: Edna, the first one was named Edna Busch; and Corah Busch; Eileen Busch; and W.T. Busch. Then about 10 – 10 or 11 years later, they had two more – my parents had two more boys a year apart, 11-months apart. The oldest one was Murray Busch, who's deceased. Died with cancer. And my, Glynn Busch died with, uh ...

Unidentified: Emphysema.

WB: Encasema (Emphysema)

SS: What was the last one's name?

WB: Glynn.

SS: Oh, Glynn.

WB: Died with Encasema (Emphysema).

SS: Uh-huh.

WB: Fell dead ... in the kitchen.

SS: Now, these other sisters, brothers and sisters are – are they still alive? Edna?

WB: Only one is. Cora Fayle Busch – I mean Cora Busch Fayle. She married a Fayle, Herbert Fayle, and she is the father, the mother of Dr. Fayle.

SS: Oh. Really? And she lives, uh...

WB: She lives in her old home in Baytown.

SS: In Baytown.

WB: Right in this old part of Baytown. Residential part of Baytown.

SS: Now, were there...

WB: And she's – she's about 94 or six, I don't know which – years old. And she's blind, but she's bedridden. Been bedridden for two years. But she still recognizes voices.

SS: Um-hmm. Um, were there any other relatives of yours that lived nearby besides your parents and your brothers and sisters ...[Inaudible]?

WB: Oh, I had some first cousins; lots of 'em.

SS: They came to this area also?

WB: Well, yeah. Oh, yeah. They all sprang from one family on both from my mother's side were came to Cedar Bayou years ago, my mother's family. And the same with my father's family. We all grew up in Cedar Bayou as beginners.

SS: Well...

WB: Just very few people lived here.

SS: What can you remember about the social life that, say, your parents had and you had as a child? As a young man? You know, what – were there parties, or anything?

WB: Not ... not much. As a young man, as a boy, I liked to fish when my mother was working in the garden close to the little stream of water connected with Cedar Bayou Stream.

SS: That's where you learned to like fishing?

WB: I liked fishing from a kid.

SS: Uh-huh. Did you catch many? (Laughs)

WB: Every once in a while I would, yes. I'd catch a mess.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: While she was working in the garden. She liked garden work.

SS: I guess you were involved with the church? You said you had prayer meetings.

WB: But after I grew up – after I got old enough to attend church, my mother saw that I attended Sunday school every Sunday.

SS: You think...

WB: And also attended prayer meetings two years before that. And I joined the Methodist Church when I was 11 years old. That was in 1904.

SS: Well, that's something. At Cedar Bayou Methodist Church?

WB: Cedar Bayou Methodist Church.

SS: ...[Inaudible].

WB: I guess I've belonged to that Cedar Bayou Methodist Church longer than any other living church member. Cause most of 'em my age is deceased. There's one classmate of mine still living. That's Annie – she was, name was Annie Parker. She married Perdinal Fisher. She's Annie, Annie Perdinal Fisher now. And he's deceased. She has one daughter. She's married to Johnny Jennings over in – he's a rice farmer, cattle owner over in Chambers County.

SS: Ok, now you mentioned that you worked at – for the Ilfree's after you quit, got out of ...

WB: Three, three years.

SS: Um-hmm. For three years?

WB: And...

SS: And what did you do after that?

WB: I saved my money. As mother told me, said if you want to go to school, which I told 'em my plan was to go to school, college. And I wanted to be an accountant, banking and financier with banking. And I saved up enough money to attend Massey Business College in Houston. That was the highest rated business college in Houston.

SS: Now, what was the name of the...

WB: Massey. M-A-S-S-E-Y.

SS: Massey Business College.

WB: Headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama.

SS: I guess your experience in the store is what got you interested in banking?



WB: Then when I... Well, I just wanted to do that. I don't know why.

SS: You just always...

WB: Then we had no bank in Cedar Bayou. But I did, I wanted to be a banker.

SS: Maybe you wanted to start one?

WB: I wanted to be an accountant, first.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: A banker needs to be an accountant. I think.

SS: So you went to Massey Business College, and uh...

WB: And graduated from that.

SS: And graduated. Three years...

WB: Then I went to work for six month for the railroad freight lines in Galveston. But I didn't like that; that wasn't part of my life's work I could feel it.

SS: What did you do for the freight lines?

WB: Then I came back to Houston and back to Business College, went back there and took the practice up, and before I – till I got a job. And they got a call from Hutchinson and Mitchell clothing, men's clothing firm on Main Street that they needed a bookkeeper accountant. And ... and I took care of that petition without any trouble.

SS: And what was the name, the Hutchinson and ...

WB: And Mitchell.

SS: Mitchell. Alright.

WB: Clothing and furnishings store for men only. It was one of the largest stores on Main Street. And I stayed there three years till when the war broke out, World War I, and it was getting time for me to register. So I went and I registered my first cousin and myself. Ray Kelley, we enlisted in the navy at the same day, and we checked-out together and went to California, San Francisco.

SS: When was this? Do you have any idea what year?

WB: 1917.

SS: 1917. And you enlisted in the navy along with your cousin?

WB: Yeah, both of us. We didn't want to be conscripted.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: We didn't want the army life, but we wanted to be a part of the navy. We wanted to serve the country, but we wanted to pick our service. And we did. And we went out there, and it was a really neat school. Was a full-up training school. And, so then they transferred us.

SS: Where was the training school?

WB: At San Francisco.

SS: Oh, San Francisco.

WB: In California. At Goat, what they called Goat Island.

SS: Goat Island?

WB: That's right out in the middle of San Francisco Bay.

SS: I know where that is. Right.

WB: And that was headquarters for the training.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And ... so ... then we were transferred as probably to get into training school in New Port, Rhode Island. That was a base, naval base then. So we transferred over there on the Leaster Pullman service. Everything went with it but the sailors; they sat in first class.

SS: Um-hmm. And you went from San Francisco to Rhode Island, then?

WB: Rhode Island. Through Canada, then into Rhode Island.

SS: Through Canada?

WB: Yeah. Down this straight cut. And, um, then we stayed there, and there was no room in the training class. We were just doing guard duty and so forth. Took military trainings: marching, athletics, and so forth. But we wasn't trained go out and do the ...[Inaudible]. And then they had opened up a branch, and they read a script – the commanding officer did – to all the sailors that was combined in a mass bunch and that they opened up naval avinition (aviation?)

SS: Naval ...[Inaudible].

WB: And they were calling for men in the navy that hadn't got their regular training yet. That they could transfer over to the aviation if they chose to do so. And they gave the raise in pay that would be open for them to learn. And the learning – and this base was in Newport ... no, not Newport, uh, Bayshore, Long Island.

SS: Bayshore, Long Island.

WB: Short distance out of New York City on Long Island. And ... I went there, and I chose and I cut and chose to be a mechanic, engine mechanic, naval avinition (aviation) engine mechanic. I'm sure we went to that school they were conducting on that base, and we graduated from that as a second-class rating mechanic. Then we...

WB: How long did that take to get that?

WB: Oh, about a month and maybe a little over. And then we worked in the machine shop over on motors that had service in the air. And then they would take 'em out, and send 'em to the shop and be overhauled. We'd disassemble them. All parts. See what was worn, replace something if it needed

replacing, and reassemble it, and put it on a test stand. And it had to test so many hours, so many revolutions per minute before they'd put it back in a plane. And I tested, too. I was the top tester.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: So we were promoted truck-time to first class. Then later, we were – when the war was over, we was transferred to Brunswick, Georgia.

SS: Where?

WB: Brunswick, Georgia.

SS: How?

WB: Where they started building a new aviation station.

SS: Brunsford?

WB: Brunswick, Georgia.

Unidentified: Brunswick.

SS: Brunswick. Ok.

WB: And we were promoted soon as we got there to chief mechanic. And ... that's the highest-paid, non-commissioned office there is in the service.

SS: Chief mechanic?

WB: No, chief – chief mechanic, yeah, is the highest-paid, non-commissioned officer at in any branch of the naval service. And...

SS: Well, you people were pretty important to 'em, I imagine.

WB: Well, we didn't work much then; we were overseers.

SS: Oh.

WB: Just verify they did it right.

SS: You just checked to be sure the work was being done right.

WB: That's right. And ... we were making pretty good money, and the social life of Brunswick was very good. There was a lot of college girls back from vacation school.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: And we had – we rented a room, corner room in a nice two-story home of the superintendent of schools.

SS: Oh.

WB: And we were invited to all the festivities.

SS: I guess so.

WB: And...

SS: Well, that was a little different from living in Cedar Bayou, wasn't it?

WB: Then one day as I was walking by the commander's office of the station, the door was open. He said, "Mr. Busch, come in. I want to talk to ya."

WB: I didn't know what I'd committed that he'd want to talk to me about.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: There's something wrong, perhaps. And he said, "Sit down, I just want to talk to ya." He said, "I need," said, "I see from the ... from your (inaudible) [22:30] record that you were an accountant in the – before you entered the navy."

WB: I said, 'Yes, I was.'

WB: He said, "I've got a job I want you to do. I can't force you to do it, because you are not registered as yeoman, bookkeeper in the navy. But you are an accountant in your civilian life, so that's good enough for me. I want you to head committee to audit these books that we've had since we started this station. And those records were sent to me completed and filled-out. And I want you to do that. Now, I'll give you a first-class yeoman – that's an office reference – in the navy. And a second-class yeoman to work with you, but you'll be a – you'll be at the head of it.

SS: Be in charge of it.

WB: Be in charge.

SS: And you were to audit the books for that station, then?

WB: That station. Go back to Washington, the records would. And I said, 'Well,'

WB: And he said, "I can't force you to because you are not a yeoman. You don't belong in that department, you're a mechanic leading. But being as you are – being as you are an accountant that's friendly and light, [23:48] you can do the job. That's what we want."

WB: And he said, "I can't compel you to, but I'll appreciate it very much if you'll volunteer to do that." Said, "We can't make you do something you're not trained to do in the navy."

WB: And he said, I said, 'Well, under one condition I'll be glad to do that.'

WB: He said, "What condition is that?"

WB: I said, 'When I take that audit, put those papers back on your desk for your signature's go to working, you'll have your secretary to write me out a release from the service as a civilian.'

WB: He says, "I'll be glad to do that." Said, "We don't need all the men, anyway. War is over," and said, "In my opinion was got more than we need."

WB: And I said, 'Well,' I said this little story. I said, 'My cousin is here with me, and we both have the same residence. We enlisted together in Houston. It'd be so nice if we could go back together to our parents in Cedar Bayou.'

WB: And he said, "Well, have him come see me."

WB: And I went on and thanked him. I went out, and told my cousin about it, and he speeded up to the, his office. And he got his words too. So we both came back the same time landing in Houston and I finally got the decision

SS: You were again.

WB: And our father was at the Southern Pacific Railroad station to pick us up. We went back to Cedar Bayou.

SS: When was that? About what year was that?

WB: That was 1919.

SS: 1919?

WB: Yeah, 1919.

SS: Well, how did you feel about coming back to civilian life?

WB: That's what I wanted.

SS: You were glad you were back?

WB: I wanted to do my service and get back. I could have gone on to pilot, but I didn't choose to be still.

SS: Had things changed very much when you got home?

WB: Not much, no. Not at that time. See, I was only in two month – two years. In two-year's time Houston hadn't changed much, and – that I could see. And ... so we both came back together. And instead of me going back to the store as a bookkeeper, Jesse Jones needed a replacement for the man that was leaving. I called on that office of Bankers Mortgage Company, and the next day they hired me.

SS: Now, what was the name of the company?

WB: Bankers Mortgage Company.

SS: Oh, Bankers...

WB: It was owned by Jessie Jones.

SS: Bankers Mortgage.

WB: That was his mortgage business state and loan company investment. And I worked there ... six years. Two years before I married. And then I came back to Cedar Bayou, taked over a bank here, State Bank. In Baytown.

SS: How did you meet your wife?

WB: I met her at Masonic Lodge all-day barbeque picnic.

SS: Masonic?

WB: Yeah, the Masonic Lodge.

SS: Masonic picnic?

WB: Cedar Bayou.

SS: At Cedar Bayou?

WB: Yeah.

SS: But, now she had lived here all of her life.

WB: Oh, yes.

SS: How did you meet her?

WB: When I left, she was a small girl; I'm seven, a little over seven and-a-half years older than she is. So when I left here as a young man, she was a little girl. Wasn't – didn't interest me at that time. Didn't even remember.

SS: (Laughs) She grew up in the meantime.

WB: When I came back, she grew up and I found out.

SS: (Laughs)

SS: Now, when were you married?

WB: We were married in the 18th of October, 1922.

SS: October 18th.

WB: 1922.

SS: And where?

WB: Cedar Bayou Methodist Church.

SS: At Cedar Bayou Church. Did you have a big wedding?

WB: And my friends and officers of the Jesse Jones interest both National Bank of Commerce and Bankers Mortgage Company came down to the Busch's house, and celebrated our wedding at Cedar Bayou.

SS: Your friends from ...

WB: The officers, you know.

SS: The officers of the bank?

WB: Of that, those two banks.

SS: Oh, I see.

WB: See, Jesse Jones owned for 12 years both of 'em.

SS: And, now when you left his bank ... let's see, that was the Bankers Mortgage Company in Houston, you came here.

WB: To take over the command and run the First – it was the State Bank. But we... came.

SS: What was it called?

WB: It was the Guarantee State Bank. But we...

SS: Guarantee?

WB: Guarantee. It was broke, and they didn't know it.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: So we reorganized it. Created a new capital, called it the Security State Bank.

SS: It became the Security State Bank?

WB: Yeah. Then later, we took our national charter and became the First National Bank.

SS: Then became the First National. Ok, but that was later on, wasn't it?

WB: That was later on, yes.

SS: Ok. Uh, how about your early years?

WB: My early years

SS: Working?

WB: before Baytown, before the 1917 Goose Creek oilfield came in, there was just four or five residents living in that oilfield in here.

(End of tape)

-----

**(Tape 2 of 3)**

SS: Now, Mr. Busch, when the tape stopped we were talking about the oilfields in the area?

WB: In the oilfields about 1917, they had a blow-out the first well. And there wasn't any Pelly, Baytown, Goose Creek, or nothing. No, just a few families and all rice prairies.

SS: Just prairie and some houses?

WB: Prairie, scattered farms, and ranches. Cattle.

SS: And cattle?

WB: Cattle.

SS: Mostly cattle?

WB: That was their occupation.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: That's the way they made their livelihood.

SS: Well, how did that change things when that well was put in?

WB: Well, then ... at first they started to paying big prices for the land, leasing and so forth. That brought more people in. And they first started living in tents. Down in the oilfield ditches where they could – wasn't any oil being drilled, well being drilled at that time. People would live in tents, and go to work in there.

SS: Now, where was this tent city?

WB: In the...

SS: What area?

WB: In – on the farthest edges of the Goose Creek Oilfield.

SS: Oh, I see. Was that on the banks of Goose Creek? Or ...

WB: No, it's on the banks of Goose Creek on the banks of the bay shore.

SS: Cedar Bayou?

WB: No, it's called...

SS: Or the bay?

WB: A bay, the little bay they made in there. And ... so then Pelly struck up. And they – Mr. Pelly had lived in Pelly. He just had a farm, too. He wasn't an old settler. He owned a good deal of land there. And they started the town of Pelly. Then later, R.S. Sterling bought a big block of land from Price Pruett, and started the City of Baytown. I mean, it's Goose Creek.

SS: Well, now... I thought they ran...

WB: Not Baytown, Goose Creek.

SS: He bought the land from who?

WB: Price Pruett.

SS: Price Pruett?

WB: He was a rancher. He didn't farm, he just had ...[Inaudible] cattle.

(Long pause)

SS: And that started the town of Goose Creek?

WB: Goose Creek. They surveyed it out, and made a little town site tribute. And that was the development of Goose Creek. And it grew faster than anything else.

SS: Now, all this was happening about the time you were in the service, right?

WB: Yes. Yes, I wasn't here then. I was away.

SS: So, when you came back, well everything had ...

WB: Well, it changed.

SS: Change had started.



WB: Oh, yeah.

SS: And the towns were being settled, and ...

WB: Cause the oilfield came in about the same time I was leaving for service. The war broke out.

SS: Well, what about the...

WB: And the conscription was going to be taken for everybody else that proceeded gonna be conscripted. Most of 'em be facing the army. Not the navy. The navy wasn't conscripting it.

SS: You had to volunteer for the navy?

WB: Had to volunteer for navy. Had to sign for four years, too.

SS: Well, now, they started these towns because of the oilfields. How does the Humble Refinery...

WB: That brought the people in.

SS: ...[Inaudible]

WB: Then after that, Sterling bought all that land part of it, and it's been increasing by purchase by the Humble Company. And Sterling started the first refinery: Sterling's Humble Oil and Refining Company it was called. And he was President of it. And that started Baytown. The town of Baytown.

SS: Now, you... Go ahead.

WB: And the land he bought, the land that the Humble Oil and Refinery Company, Exxon, owns now was a solid rice farm.

SS: A rice farm?

WB: A rice farm. Planted rice. Practically all the way to Crosby. That was – was no more cotton farmers mostly, very little. They turned to rice farming.

SS: And this was land that was owned by Mr. Pruett?

WB: No, Pruett didn't own that land. He owned the land this side of Goose Creek side of the Goose Creek Stream. He had no land on the old Baytown side.

SS: Well, let's go back to you now after you came to Baytown with the bank, Guarantee State Bank, and you made some changes and it became Security State Bank.

WB: Yeah.

SS: Right? Now...

WB: And then the First National.

SS: Now, about what time was this when this became the Security State Bank? Do you know?

WB: Well, I'm not particular remember the dates of the changes, but I came back here in 1926.

SS: So this was after 1926, though?

WB: Oh, yes.

SS: And can you tell me something about your career here during that time?

WB: Well...

SS: What was your life like as a young married man? You had married by that time, hadn't you?

WB: Oh, yes. We'd bought 17 acres of land turning on Cedar Bayou, which we built out with those big, plain, two-story framed house on it, but it's pretty much rundown – had to be now – but we lived in it for two or three years. Then we built a nice brick home fronting on the waterfront.

SS: Near that same...

WB: We moved that house up on the high – across the highway. They called it ... Kilgore Road, I believe.

SS: That was the highway, then?

WB: Yeah.

Unidentified Female Voice: It was just a road.

WB: Huh?

SS: Is that the same road that we call Kilgore Road, now?

WB: That's the same, yeah.

SS: The same one?

WB: Same thing.

SS: That was the main thoroughfare in those days?

WB: That's right. So we lived, we built our house. I sold it at a big profit, and we moved up into the two-story home. We remodeled that and added to it – lived there two years. Then we moved down on a location close to the mouth of Cedar Bayou fronting on Galveston Bay at the point of a big kind of a hill like, and downward trim to the water's edge. We built a rock house, very nice looking and a scenic sight to show people when you pass by. We had seven and-a-half acres.

SS: This all must have been about – was this after the Depression? Or before the Depression?

WB: That was after the Depression.

SS: It was after '29?

WB: I was living on Cedar Bayou front, waterfront during the Depression. And I built a home during the Depression.

SS: Well, did the Depression seem to effect the economy of Baytown very much?

WB: Oh, yes. ...[Inaudible]

SS: What was it like?

WB: Well, I was in the midst of the banking business in the Depression. But it didn't bother the bank at all.

SS: So your bank really wasn't affected too much by it?

WB: No, no.

SS: Do you think that was because of the oil in this area?

WB: No, just more people living here. And we had Humble Oil, and they began to employ lots of people, see? And Pelly had sold his interest in Humble Oil for a large sum of money, and – to Standard Oil Company in New Jersey, which is now Exxon. And they multiplied the size of the refinery, added to it different chemical plants, and a still building. Still buying more property.

SS: Well, were there many people in Baytown affected by the Depression?

WB: Well, everybody was.

SS: Times were harder.

WB: And every – we built our home, new home, brick home on Cedar Bayou park. Labor was – oh, you could get plenty of labor. Any price.

SS: People were...

WB: It didn't make no difference whether union, or non-union, or what. They wanted a job. So...

SS: So you lived there on the bayou, then, till...

WB: Quite a while, yeah.

SS: Now, was all this about 19... 40? When did they start that?

WB: In 19 – well, the Stock Market crash was 1929, but it didn't affect my bank at all. I had, I've sold none of the collateral, secured various stocks, you know. Humble collateral that the Humble men put up, borrowed money, put the stock up as collateral. I didn't sell anybody's stock that I secured; it didn't panic me. And... So it worked out fine.

SS: Well, you probably used a little better judgement than a lot of bankers did in those days.

WB: A lot of 'em sold it.

SS: I'm sure they did.

WB: With the - all of their stock, pleading with 'em not to sell it. But I did the opposite. I went to Mr. Blaffer, the Treasurer of the Humble Oil and Refining Company and a member of the board of directors, to...

SS: Now, what was his name?

WB: Blaffer, R.L. Blaffer. B-L-A-F-F-E-R. Whom I knew scantily, not very well. But being with Jesse Jones in Houston, I'd gotten acquainted with so many men in high places. And I knew Mr. Blaffer. I went down, told my story, I said, 'I'm telling you this: you may not agree with me, but your top men and your average man you have had some Humble stocks had been awarded to him as a bonus each year. And they've used that stock if they need money to pledge it to borrow some of their money. And you know the bank involved here, we can't take care of their loan if the property is under par value. We've got to do something about it. And I don't want to be forced to tell 'em, your top men and the other men at the

top to collect their loan. I don't need the money.' And I said, 'I would like to ask you to do something that you probably might give it some thought. That is to give us unconditional guarantee, and I'll give you a list of all the, your colleagues that owe us money, and how much, and how much stocks there for you owed. And if you guarantee that by a written guarantee from Humble Oil in Refinery Company that that stock loan that you feel it's protected, and that will satisfy the Bank Department, I'm sure.'

WB: And he said, "Well, I agree with you. A savory the idea. Personally, I'll be glad to do it. But I have to get some takers from the board of directors. I'll call a meeting. We'll take action on that."

WB: And in one day's time I had approval, and he sent me down a guarantee. Then I sent him back the names of all of 'em that owed me a stock and how much. But they...

SS: Now, this was a guarantee that ...

WB: Guaranteeing 'em that they would protect the bank against the – any losses, now, because of that stock if I'd hold it till the stock went back up.

SS: Yeah. Because of the stock you held the collateral?

WB: That's right.

SS: I see.

WB: The loans I already had, not any future loans. If I had any future loans, it'd be made on the future prices of stock.

SS: But these are the ones you already had?

WB: It was alright when I made it, but the 1929 crash caught everybody in the whole United States. Not just Baytown. So that's how I got by it.

SS: And this helped to stabilize your business, then?

WB: Well, it helped me save my customers. That's the main thing.

SS: Sure. Well, when did this begin, when did things begin to get better? About...

WB: About 1933 or four, somewhere in there, 1935. It began to diverse itself.

SS: Now, was your bank affected very much by the new federal laws? There were a lot of banking laws that were made about that time.

WB: Yeah, that's right. It didn't hurt me.

SS: Did you welcome those?

WB: It didn't make any difference in how...

SS: It didn't make any difference?

WB: I run the bank about the same way, anyway.

SS: (Laughs) Well, I'm looking here at your scrapbook, and I see here is a letter from Jesse Jones that said he wants to congratulate you upon your election to the presidency of the First National.

WB: First... That's right. When I first came down here to take over the bank, I was the acting President, but I was elected. They made me a Vice President, and I had one of their offers with their consent I had to do to take the name as President of the bank if I was running it. I told them that was just the object, I was gonna run it. So ... I had the first man was Mr. W.W. Miller, also of Jesse Jones' Bankers Mortgage Vice President. And he accidentally cleaning his pistol and shot himself he ...[Inaudible]. And then Mr. W.W. Moore accepted presidency of the bank on my request, invitation. Then later on I purchased, he thought, Mr. Miller's stock. And later on, I bought Mr. Moore's stock. And that's when I...

SS: You became President?

WB: I became President. But I was acting President all the time, see? I was...

SS: But that made it official.

WB: That made it official, that's all. I thought I was too young. Didn't have any gray hairs on my temples.

SS: Did you know Mr. Jones personally?

WB: Personally.

SS: Jesse Jones?

WB: Very, very well. And incidentally, his college education is consistently exactly the same as mine when he took that college training in Dallas, Texas, before he came to Houston. He studied to be an accountant, banking and financier. And he really did more of the financier.

SS: How did you meet him?

WB: Oh, he had his office in Bankers Mortgage at that time I went there.

SS: The bank?

WB: Bankers Mortgage Company.

SS: Ok.

WB: They owned their own building alongside the Commerce Building. Separate building, 10-story office building. And he had his main office right there in just a glass wall partitioning. I got to know him very well, and he actually knew several things that I did. So then I became a great friend of Jesse Jones. And very long he offered me a Senior Vice President of National Bank of Commerce if I would resign as President of Baytown.

SS: Now, after you were president of the First National Bank, he offered you...

WB: But I had too much at stake here in Baytown. My wife and my wife's sister lived, and I didn't think I could handle that being the vice president, a senior vice president at the second office from the presidency. You understand? There would be another vice president under me. I didn't think that might work too good – me being still a young banker.

SS: So you stayed here with the First National Bank?

WB: I thanked 'em, thanked Mr. Jones, ...[Inaudible] and I came, I didn't make the move. But I was forever – up until Mr. Jones' death – a very personal friend of his. I'd go to him with any question, he'd listen to me. I didn't need an appointment.

SS: I see here in your scrapbook a new building of Baytown bank is open. Can you tell me, is that the First National Bank?

WB: First National Bank. That's right. We moved it after I became President, we needed more room. We was growing very rapidly, and we built the First National Bank was the prettiest bank in Baytown. All stone, all marble inside.

SS: And where was it located?

WB: It was located in the middle of the block part of the west. But the town, now, has gone way west.

SS: Now, this is on Texas Avenue?

WB: That's on Texas Avenue.

SS: And it was in the middle of the 100 block?

WB: Middle of the block, one block west of where the bank was located. On...

SS: Oh, the First Bank was located over there.

WB: First Bank there, yeah.

SS: Well, what stands on that side right now?

WB: There's not much – Baytown is getting to be a ghost town. It's all moving off, moving on 146 our way. On Garth Road, Decker Drive, North Main, it's just scattered, now.

SS: But this bank building, the new bank for the First National, is this the one that's ...[Inaudible].

WB: Well, the ones I sold the bank to – when I retired I sold it – they later sold it; they couldn't own two bank buildings. And they sold it to the Citizen Bank; they were crowded across the street. Now, they occupy it as part-time for the business customers, I think. And they got part of it leased out to a title company.

SS: But you were – this First National Bank, is that where the building is across the street from the Brunson Theater, now?

WB: That's where...

SS: That was the new bank building?

WB: That was the new bank I built. We had an opening day, and there's some pictures in there. The office of the National Bank of Commerce and officers of the Bankers Mortgage Company visited us on that day.

SS: And this is at the corner of Texas and ...

WB: Well, it's middle of the block.

Unidentified Female Voice: No, it's not.

WB: Yeah, I believe it's on the corner, yeah. Corner of Texas and...

Unidentified: Defee.

WB: Defee.

SS: Ok.

(Long Pause)

WB: At the...

SS: How long did you remain President of the bank?

WB: Till 19 ... I was 72 years old when I retired, and that was 1964.

SS: And here I see a clipping Wednesday, January 15, 1964, this article was taken out of a paper.

WB: That's right.

SS: And that's when you – is that when you retired?

WB: That's when I retired. I didn't retire from everything. I've done a lot of civic work in Baytown.

SS: Well, yeah, I wanted to talk to you about that. Do you belong to any civic organizations?

WB: I was a – I'm a past President of the Chamber of Commerce. I've been president of the, I was pres-, I was the manager – I mean, I was the head of the highway department, chairman of the highway department some 30 years in Baytown.

SS: Was that for the Chamber of Commerce?

WB: Yeah.

SS: The Highway Committee?

WB: Highway Committee. That's when we got all the new highways and brought the tunnel.

SS: Well, tell me about the tunnel.

WB: The tunnel...

SS: Now you were very instrumental in ...

WB: Before I announced it and before I announced my ambition to raise a campaign to build a tunnel, I went up to Jesse Jones' office, and talked to him, and I laid it on the ground floor what I thought would help both sides, the Houston Ship Channel and fancy new ship channels, too, at the same time who had us crossing at the far end of the channel. And he agreed with me. And the next day, the Chronicle came out with a large editorial. I don't know who wrote it, but Jesse Jones owned the Chronicle, you know?

SS: That was his newspaper.

WB: That's his newspaper. And it's still in his –

SS: His estate.

WB: Under his estate. And... so... And then I came out and made the announcement before our board of directors of Chamber of Commerce, and we got busy on it. Get to town. I got to work on that and went to help with that on the committee.

SS: How did you go about getting that? Was this a bond election?

WB: Oh, no. I solicited help from the state. Our State Highway Commission. And I was elected Director of Texas Good Roads Association shortly after working on highways. They asked me would I be a director in that organization. That's the fundraising organization for the Highway Commission to spend.

SS: I see.

WB: Most states had nice ones.

SS: How long did it take to get this accomplished? From the time you got the idea.

WB: I just couldn't tell ya. Not too long.

SS: A number of years?

WB: I had the help of the Houston Post, Governor Hobby was Governor at that time, and I didn't call on Governor Hobby because he was away all the time in Austin. But he knew what was going on.

SS: So with the help of Mr. Jones and his newspaper, and the Highway Commission, and your...

WB: And the Houston Post helped, and the paper in Baytown did its part.

SS: Daily – that was the Baytown Sun?

WB: Baytown, Baytown Sun. We all worked together.

SS: And, let's see, when was this tunnel built?

WB: There's a picture there of inspection of the tunnel before it was opened, before it was finished. You can see me there at the groundbreaking; Governor Hobby made the speech. And he gave me full credit for the securing the tunnel in that piece.

SS: I've heard that – I've heard you referred to before as the father of the tunnel.

WB: (Laughs) Right.

SS: Ok, about when did they open that tunnel? Do you remember?

WB: I couldn't tell you exactly. There's a date there on those cuttings, I'm sure.

SS: I think it was about 1955 maybe or something like that.

WB: Something like that. But there's a picture in there showing the name is showing me having a hold of the stool.

SS: Um-hmm. Alright, now you did some other civic work. You were involved with the Lions Club?

WB: I organized the Lions Club.

SS: You organized it?



WB: I organized it. With the help of the paid executives from headquarters of Lions International. I guess Chicago or somewhere up there.

SS: Uh-huh, the national headquarters.

WB: He was... The national association sent a man down here. And he came to my bank just as my helper. Went to crawfishing one my friends and merchants in Houston who knew me, Mr. Harry Jewart.

SS: Ok this was – do you know when this was about when?

WB: Oh, I don't know – 1930?

SS: In the '30's?

WB: '33, I think it was. 1933.

SS: Was there a lot of interest? You know, getting people to join?

WB: Yes, I ... we canvased over, we got permission to visit the Humble offices from Humble Company. And we got lots of members from out of Humble. They became active. And a lot of the merchants in town became members of the Lions Club.

SS: Where did you meet when you had your first meeting?

WB: In the first ground floor of the Grace Methodist Church before they built their new building.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: It was behind the Sterling Library.

SS: Yeah.

WB: It was the Grace Methodist Church.

SS: I remember. Was that on Pierce Street?

WB: Yeah.

SS: Yeah, I remember that.

WB: On Pierce. Two-story building. It was on the first-floor in the back was their dining room and kitchen and so forth. We met there – the ladies furnished our meals each week. But then they built a new building, sold that to the bank. It's now the Citizen's Bank, and they built a new building over there on Pruett. And they didn't make any arrangements for taking care of body like the Lions Club.

SS: Now, you were involved with other highway projects ...[Inaudible].

WB: Well, I initiated the idea of a highway from Houston north of Baytown to Port Arthur, Texas. In order to get from Houston or Baytown to Port Arthur, you had to go Highway 90 on up to Beaumont, and then take a side road, county road south to Port Arthur. An awful hard way.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And the roads were bad. And I wanted a road directly to Port Arthur. I got the help from the Chamber of Commerce of Port Arthur through one of their bankers, Mr. Reithle of the First National Bank in Port Arthur. I visited him.

SS: Mr. Reithle?

WB: R-E-I-T-H-L-E, Reithle. He's dead now. And the Chamber of Commerce of Port Arthur, they worked from that end, and the Commissioner's Court and County Judge of Anahuac worked on it, and they give us splendid cooperation from that. And also the Chamber of Commerce of Houston helped us. But I was leader of it, then. When we had our opening celebration when they finished the road 19 – it was Highway 73. It was three years before it became Highway 10 from Beaumont, on. From Beaumont out is still 73 to Port Arthur, and it's still...

SS: But it was known then as Highway 73?

WB: Yeah, that's right.

SS: Well, now were you...

WB: We had our opening out on North Main and 73. And a lot of people were gathered there to celebrate. All the highway commissioners, county and the highway engineer, Steven Greer, and all the rest of 'em. And a bunch from the Texas Good Roads Association came, and practically everybody who could from Baytown.

SS: Well, that was a big event.

WB: Big event.

SS: You had to go all the way around.

WB: And I presided over that. We got ready to cut the ribbon opening the highway officially, which I was gonna do, but the Chamber of Commerce management forgot to bring scissors.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: So I had to stall around, called on different ones to make their talks and so forth, whatever they had to say, until we got the scissors back.

SS: While they ran to get a pair of scissors?

WB: Yeah, they got, they ran to get a good pair of scissors. When I was ready to cut 'em. (Laughs)

SS: Now, were you instrumental in the bridge? The San Jacinto Bridge? The new bridge that went across the San Jacinto River? Did you have anything to do with that?

WB: No, no I didn't. That's strictly a state – I mean a national highway. Highway 10 caused that to be built. We had the old steel trestle bridge, you know, cross the San Jacinto River. Right south of the present crossing. That was Market Street Road. I had a hand in Market Street Road.

SS: Ok.

WB: And I had some hand in coordinating the bond issue to be voted by the ... the commissioner's court at a luncheon in Houston. When the...

(End of tape.)

---

**(Tape 3 of 3)**

SS: The date is October 2, 1979. This is volume two of the oral history conversation with Mr. William T. Busch, which was begun on September 13, 1979. My name is Sarah Swofford.

SS: Now, Mr. Busch, when we finished the last tape that we were doing of you, you were talking about the bond issue that was started for the Houston docks and getting war supplies?

WB: For the Federal Highway

SS: Uh-huh.

WB: that's side of the City of Houston to the big acres of timberland leading down to these Clinton docks where the ships were docking for overseas shipping to the front lines of the American soldiers and, and they were trying to get the bond issue, and they were – the commissioner's court was split. Some didn't want to ask to raise taxes to support the bond issue.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And others wanted it regardless of taxes because they thought that it was needed to help win the war.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: So after numerous discussions most of the crowd that was there including both the papers' editors of both papers – Houston newspaper – that, I believe it was a county judge asked, said, "Mr. Busch, we haven't heard from you on this issue. Do you have something to say? Would you like to?"

WB: I said, 'Yes, I would.'

WB: So I got up, and I agreed with the fact that some of the commissioners didn't want to do anything that raised taxes, cause that was a bad thing before an election to raise taxes.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And I agreed with him that was what it cost for them to be thinking in that direction keeping taxes down. But I said, 'There's another issue I think more valuable than that. That is to build this highway regardless of raising taxes,' and I said, 'You commissioners who are against the bond issue, I think you can look your real estate owners clear in the eye, and tell 'em it's necessary to get this road built so we can supply our boys overseas with the things that they need by this truck route, wide paved highway for heavy trucks that carry the volume of freight needed overseas shipment. And they would be glad – because nearly every person in your taxing limits have a maybe a son, or a cousin, or a relative of some sort, or a friend's boy in the, overseas in the service. And they will look upon that very friendly cause they will want to end this war as quick as possible. And they would be glad to vote a little higher taxes and pay the taxes in order to get their boys back home.'

WB: And one commissioner got up and said, "I want to change my vote; I want to vote for it."

WB: And another one said, "Let's make it unanimous. Let's all stand and vote yes."

WB: And they did.

SS: And it carried?

WB: It carried, yes. And the bond issue was put before the people. They overwhelmingly voted for it.

SS: And as a result, we got a...

WB: We got that highway built. It was called Federal Highway. It's being used now. Very valuable.

SS: That's Federal Road that crosses Interstate 10?

WB: Federal Road. It's called Federal Road, it crosses I-10, goes down and connects with I think 59 and 45.

SS: And goes down to the ship channel.

WB: A little way. It goes down to Clinton docks.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: That's the first docks on the Houston Ship Channel for big ships to load and unload.

SS: Um-hmm. Well, that's something to be proud of; I'm sure you are. One thing I wanted to ask you about getting back to Baytown was about the development of Roseland Oaks and Roseland Park.

WB: Yes.

SS: Now, you had a hand in that, too, didn't you?

WB: I did. My wife's mother owned all that land. Been given to her by her father before he died.

SS: Now this was – what family name was this?

WB: His name was Thomas Wright. My wife's grandfather, my mother-in-law's father.

SS: Thomas Wright?

WB: Thomas Wright.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And he had – when his other, when he was in early days, he took a big hand in developing some of his property he owned from Main Street on down to Cedar Bayou Stream. He owned all that.

SS: Was Wright Boulevard named for him?

WB: No, that's named for his brother. They divided the tract

SS: I see.

WB: before either one of 'em died.

SS: Uh-huh.

WB: And that went to Mr. Bull Wright, his brother. And the south half of that tract when to Mr. Thomas Wright, my wife's grandfather.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Which was then deeded – he deeded to his daughter, and ...

SS: His daughter was – his two daughters?

WB: Deeded to his two daughters – no, they divided that land, and my grand-, my wife's mother got the south half, and my wife's aunt had two daughters to Thomas Wright. And she got the north half of the Thomas Wright tract.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And so the south half belonged to wife's mother, and she looked for me to handle all the business of the family, both of 'em. My wife's husband and her mother both looked to me because I was a banker, and I was supposed to know

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: what's good and what isn't.

SS: And so what did you do with it, then? In handling the property.

WB: I recommended to her to – before she deeded to anybody, she still owned it – I recommended that she give 24 acres fronting on the waterfront coming up high where it was above high water.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Overflow where they could build a swimming pool and necessary prepared buildings that were to go with it. And, so she agreed to do that. So we gave it to the city under very high restrictions how it's gonna be – how it can be planned, and so forth. One condition was they had to build a swimming pool on it, which was included in a previous bond issue, but they never had built it. Anyway, in the first place they didn't own a park in Baytown.

SS: So this pool then would be a municipal pool for the city?

WB: First, it would be a municipal pool.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And a municipal owned park.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And they gladly accepted it, the title, under that condition. And they did build it.

SS: Do you remember about when was this?

WB: I don't remember.

SS: Um...

WB: It's during my time of banking.

SS: Yeah, probably late ...

WB: The early part of Baytown.

SS: Yeah, late '40's or early '50's probably?

WB: And then she had the rest of that land from the west end of that park clear on up to Tri-City Beach Road.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: It was a heavy, wooded tract of land. Beautiful tract.

BB: You mean 146.

WB: Honey, don't.

BB: Ok.

WB: She's wrong.

SS: Yeah, ok. Tri-City Beach Road to...

WB: Tri-City Beach Road is the boundary line of Roseland Oaks.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And ... I couldn't get any developer in Baytown interested in the price I was asking for it per acre, priced in the manner of which I wanted it to be developed as a subdivision to help Baytown. Something we hadn't had before in Baytown: a highly-classified and restricted subdivision they could build only nice homes a certain size and a certain material, so forth. Had to have so many square feet or more. And ... so I tried to sell it to a developer in Baytown, one of the best developers. He didn't think there's enough of people here with that kind of money they'd want to spend on that high price home or that size lot. I wanted the lot to be very large where each home would have a, plenty of room around it. Wouldn't be crowded. And, but they would have to pay more money for it, of course, that would be in the price of the lot. And they didn't think that would work to accept, and they wouldn't go with me. So one day I was ... a young man from Houston came in, a developer in Houston. Had built out several subdivisions, but none of that size and class.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: But he wanted me to come up there and look at his projects, and I did. And they were nice, neat homes and so forth. So I told him what I wanted this land to be highly developed, and I thought there was enough of wealthy people in Baytown be glad to own a home, build a home in that and ready to pay the price. And he agreed with me, and we made a deal. And I sold it to him on time payment. With a separate contract designating how he was gonna divide the money on the sale of each lot. So he gave half to me – I was handling it – to be placed on the credits of his note. The other half was his to keep on developing the property.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And I didn't put out any money for development, I just sold it to him on time. He had enough funds himself to put in the necessary sewage and everything went with a first-class subdivision, build the streets and so forth, and have 'em paved.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And ... so, when he got it about two-thirds sold, he finished paying the loan off. And I signed a release of the lend against the rest of the property. He had it rectory free. So in order to show his appreciation for my help and my plan of developing it, he said, "I want to give you a corner lot, wooded lot, one of the best. It's not sold yet. And it's in my gratitude and appreciation of your help and how well this addition went over."

WB: Well, some of the women almost fell out of themselves. They wanted to buy the same lot, same corner.

SS: (Laughs)

WB: But... It just went over fine. There was no time it was all developed.

SS: And that was how they developed Roseland Oaks.

WB: And we – I told them I wanted it named after my wife's first name, Rosie.

BB: Your – my mother's name.

WB: I mean my – not my wife, my mother – well, my wife's mother's first name. And her name was Rosie, so they called it Roseland Park. Roseland Subdivision, beg my pardon.

BB: Roseland...

WB: Roseland Oaks, I'll get it right as to what – Roseland Oaks.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Cause it was, had an immense amount of oak trees.

SS: And this was named for – her full name was...

WB: Rosie.

SS: Rosie.

BB: Anne.

SS: Anne ... Wright?

BB: Kilgore.

WB: Kilgore.

SS: Kilgore.

WB: She was married to him see cause she had two daughters.

SS: Her name was Wright before she married?

WB: Yes.

SS: And then she married a Kilgore.

WB: And then my wife's sister and my wife signed an irrevocable power of attorney to me.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Authorizing me to execute property and instruments in their name so I wouldn't have to be getting them to bothered it with. I handled it all myself under power of attorney from them.

SS: Well, I believe their trust was well invested, don't you? (Laughs) You did alright with it, didn't you?

WB: Yeah, we made some money.

SS: You did? Well, that's nice. Well...

WB: That's the first fine subdivision they had.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And the next one is 12 years later. They developed Country Club Oaks. And restrictions in that was – wasn't quite as high as Roseland Oaks, but it was nice.

SS: Well, Roseland...

WB: It had a nice park, nice golf club went with it.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Tennis court, and a bathing pool. Public bathing pool.

SS: Roseland Oaks...

WB: For members only.

SS: ... really, the first addition for really luxury homes in Baytown.

WB: That's right. That's right. It opened the way. I saw what Houston had.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And then copied, you might say, River Oaks in Houston, only on a little bit smaller scale.

SS: Well, I wanted to talk to you a little bit about Cedar Bayou Church. Now, you told me earlier that your grandparents and your parents, and your wife's grandparents and parents were members of Cedar Bayou Church?

WB: Oh, yes. All the...

SS: And you, in turn. Um... Tell me a little bit about growing up in the church and some of the things you've done for the church.

WB: Well, I was a ... a Chairman of the Board of Trustees when we built our present sanctuary.

SS: Board of Stewards?

WB: No, Board of Trustees.

SS: Board of Trustees.

WB: Trustees of the church manage the ground material and everything.



SS: I see.

WB: Board of Stewards were then called tend to the official business of between the church and the pastor, but that goes on.

SS: I see. That's a different thing. Uh-huh.

WB: Operation of the church, but not property.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: That comes under the Board of Trustees.

SS: I see.

WB: So I handled all the finances part of the building of that sanctuary, which we're now using. And I think it's one of the first in Baytown, and the acoustics is just...

SS: Beautiful.

WB: Wonderful. No kickback whatever in the ceiling part. Some of these sanctuaries you go into now of churches do have a kickback.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: You're trying to hear yourself talking back at you.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Noise.

SS: Kind of an echo?

WB: Echo.

SS: Uh-huh.

WB: And...

SS: When – about when was that sanctuary built? Do you remember?

(Long pause)

WB: Not exactly, and I can't recall the date.

SS: Uh-huh.

WB: I'm not very good at keeping up with dates.

SS: Well, that's an old, old church. The original building.

WB: But it's not an old sanctuary.

SS: Yeah.

BB: The present sanctuary is the one he's talking about.

SS: Yeah. Yeah, well I understood that. I ...

WB: And then later on, they had – I arranged their loan, how they paid out with a life insurance company of Dallas. And the terms were very easy and the interest rate was five percent, and... everybody was pleased.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Then later on during the administration of our pastor at a later date, Reverend Roy Felder, who was the pastor from Beaumont church, he was sent to Cedar Bayou. And in the old sanctuary – I mean, it's in the sanctuary – we had a pipe organ, but it was an electric.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: I didn't like it. Had no pipes visible, and they were in a little enclosed so the outlet, so the noise is muted to come through to the sanctuary. But that wasn't – I asked him one day how would, I said, 'How would you like a new organ?'

WB: He said, "What? A new organ?"

WB: And I said, 'Yes, I mean a new – you played the pipe organ. And visible pipes.'

WB: He said, "That would be wonderful."

WB: I said, 'Well, that's what I intend to do.'

WB: So we had a pipe organist special, he had a doctor's degree in pipe organ music. His parents and him himself were members of our church, but he'd been traveling over Europe and playing the pipe organ in some of the large cathedrals over in Europe. And he met this German over in Europe that worked in a German organ company that makes nothing but fine organs. So he came over to America, and put a branch pipe organ company in New Jersey. Through this connection of this young man whose parents were members of our church, he got in touch with him, told him we were interested in buying a pipe organ from him. So he made an appointment with me to meet us, and we had a pipe organ committee appointed, including wife and myself, to pass on this organ. And, course financially I handled the whole deal.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And I bought the best organ that he made in America.

SS: Oh. My.

WB: It was run by electric, like most organs did.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: It's operated by what they call trapper. T-R-A-P-P-E-R. Trapper.

SS: Trapper?

WB: Trapper, this...

BB: Tracker, isn't it? T-R...

WB: Tracker?

BB: Tracker.

WB: It might be Tracker.

SS: Tracker, ok.

WB: Tracker. It doesn't use electricity to make the music.

BB: Oh, yes it does.

WB: The – well, it makes the music so you can operate the keys

BB: Yes.

WB: but the music is made through

BB: Pipes.

WB: made through your pipes.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And they're operated through that tapper contraption.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Something new to me, but anyway. That...

SS: And this man custom designed the organ for your – for you.

WB: Custom designed the organ, he took the dimensions of the sanctuary, and the acoustics and everything. That organ was shipped down here in parts, crated. He assemble it in our – we had to remodel the whole front of the sanctuary to accommodate that large number of pipes. It filled the whole front of the sanctuary. And we have one of the best organs – in fact, it sounds just like the First Methodist Church of Houston organ when you hear it play. It's not as quite as large in pipes, but the sound of it is just so pretty.

SS: I'll bet that was a happy congregation the day that they first... put on a concert.

WB: Yeah. It's still a happy congregation.

SS: Did you have a concert to – when the organ was installed?

WB: Yes, we've had that.

SS: Uh-huh.

WB: Yes. That young man that put us in touch with this fella, he gave a concert. Which we asked him to do, and he did.

SS: Well now you've given some other generous gifts to Cedar Bayou Church, too.

WB: Well, yes we ...

SS: Haven't you?

WB: I asked the same pastor a year, next year later, I said, 'How would you like to have a continuation from our sanctuary on down including a kitchen and a large family serving room, what you might call a large dining room, but much larger than that. And it'd seat 300 people at tables at one time. There's nothing in Baytown can accommodate that large as I know of.'

WB: And he said, "That would be great."

WB: So we appointed a building committee, and we started to work on it. And we hired an architect, drew the plans, went through it, and ... wasn't long, we had the present building. And the pastor's office: all the furniture is custom-made. And he has a room joining his study, pastor's study, to interview people who want to talk to him about the...

SS: Sort of counseling?

WB: Counseling.

SS: Counseling room?

WB: Counseling room is right.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And it's a pretty large room for a family. We bought all the furniture. We had a noted interior decorator in Houston come down, and select all the furniture. She purchased it wherever she could make the best price and get the best price for the church. And I paid that – I wasn't supposed – I didn't promise to pay for furnishing it, but the pastor came to me one day, said, "Mr. Busch," said, "I'm afraid we'll have trouble raising enough money to buy the furniture that should be placed in this nice building. If you could just trustee yourself and go a little farther, and do that, it would sure be appreciated by me and this congregation, I'm sure."

WB: I said, 'I'll be glad to do that.'

WB: At first I talked to my wife, and she consented. Course, half of the money belongs to her, too.

SS: Um-hmm. He knew you pretty well, didn't he?

(Laughter)

WB: And we have a, one of the most beautiful churches this side of Houston. Anywhere.

SS: Well, that church as I understand it is probably one of the oldest Protestant churches in Texas, isn't it?

WB: It's about the third or fourth oldest. I don't know which it is, now. I think it's third. I think there's three other churches in Texas dates back older than it is.

SS: Well, I'm sure it gives you a lot of – a good feeling to have contributed so generously to a church.

WB: That's right. You keep it up to date, that's the main thing.

SS: uh hum

WB: Our forefathers, they built it out of logs. Drew it out of the woods around there. Log building.

SS: Can you remember the date of the dedication to the family?

BB: No, the date of the organization of the church itself.

SS: Oh, the original organize – when the church was originally organized?

WB: 1844.

BB: Four.

SS: 1844?

WB: Yeah. 1844.

SS: That was right after the war with Mexico. Pretty soon after that.

WB: Yeah. I think so. And... there wasn't too many people in that area to build a church.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: They were all farmers or something.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And so they managed by building it out of logs. They had two log churches: one a bit larger than the other one. And as the congregation grew, they still wasn't in position – they had no sawmills, no lumberyards here. No lumber mills. So the lumber to build the church, and they built a framed church later on was shipped from New Orleans by boat.

SS: Can you remember your parents talking about the church, you know the ... church when they were.

WB: Not vivid, not too much. My only...[26:13]

SS: You sort of grew up in that environment, didn't you?

WB: I grew up in that environment as a boy.

SS: Accepted, yeah. Uh-huh.

WB: As a little boy.

SS: Uh-huh.

WB: That all happened before my memory, see?

SS: Before your time, right. Uh-huh. Well, let's see... There were a couple of things that I wanted to check with you after we listened to the first tape there were some things that we – two or three things we wanted to correct. One of 'em was, you mentioned that Mr. Blaffer in one of your business deals was with the Humble Company and his position was...

WB: Treasurer.

SS: He was treasurer of the Humble Company?

WB: Not president.

SS: Not president, but treasurer. And also wanted to get your wife's full name. I think we forgot to do that.

WB: Bessie Jane.

SS: Bessie Jane...

WB: Um-hmm.

BB: Kilgore.

SS: Kilgore.

WB: Kilgore Busch.

BB: Well, it wasn't Busch, yet. (Laughs)

SS: Yeah. That came later. Busch came later. And then one other thing was the company you went to work for that was Mr. Jesse Jones' company is now known as Banker's Mortgage, but at the time you went to work...

WB: It was Banker's Trust Company.

SS: Banker's Trust Company. in ...[Inaudible].

WB: He bought it from two brothers who owned it. When they sold it, they took the money and established the Guardian Trust Company.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: Which is now, it consolidated, took over the W.T. Cottar Bank, National Bank on Main Street.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: He was the leading lumber dealer, see? Cottar.

SS: Um-hmm.

WB: And he owned his own bank. And they made a consolidation, and they called it the Bank of the Southwest. And it says now, the Bank of the Southwest, which used to be Guardian Trust. Course I imagine the two men that formed it have been deceased for a number of years.

SS: Well... I want to thank you, Mr. Busch, for your contribution in our efforts to collect this history for Baytown. And ... I – was there anything else you wanted to add?

WB: I think not.

SS: Well, thank you very much.

WB: Except I'm enjoying my idle days.

SS: That's fine. Thank you very much.

(End of tape.)

-----  
Transcribed by Amanda Smoke: 5/14/2018