

(Tape 1 of 2)

An Oral History Tape Transcription

Of

Interviewer: Sarah Swofford

Interviewee: Bessie Jane Kilgore Busch

October 2, 1979

SS: Tuesday, October 2, 1979. My name is Sarah Swofford. I'm having an oral history conversation with Mrs. Bessie Jane Kilgore Busch in her home at 2303 Eaves Dr., Baytown, Texas.

SS: Now, Mrs. Busch, could you give me your full name?

BB: Bessie Jane Kilgore Busch.

SS: Ok. And I'd like to know a little bit about your family, your parents and – your parents' names? What were your parents' full names?

BB: My mother's name was Rosie Ann Wright Kilgore.

SS: And your father's name?

BB: Elmer Robert Kilgore.

SS: Elmer Robert?

BB: Robert.

SS: Kilgore.

BB: Kilgore, um-hmm.

SS: Ok. Now, um... They were born in Cedar Bayou?

BB: Uh, no...

SS: Your parents?

BB: Yes, my mother and father were born.

SS: Your mother and father?

BB: Yes.

SS: Now, who were your mother's parents?

BB: My mother's parents was – my grandmother was Elizabeth Ann Wright. And my grandfather was Thomas Wright. And he was 18 years old when he came over here from England. And he had two brothers: George Wright, and Will Wright. And, now where they landed, I don't know. But anyway, he came to Cedar Bayou, and finally settled. But – and my grandmother, she also is English, and she came, she was born on her Mississippi River on the way over here from England. And, um...

SS: You mean the Atlantic?

BB: Well, from England she was born on this ship

SS: Oh. I see.

BB: that came over from England.

SS: I see.

BB: And she was born on the Mississippi River coming over.

SS: Oh, I see. Coming over.

BB: um-hmm.

SS: Uh-huh. Now, what was her name? Your grandmother's?

BB: Elizabeth Ann Wright.

SS: Elizabeth Ann Wright.

BB: Well, her maiden name was Shepherd.

SS: Shepherd, that's right.

BB: Elizabeth Ann Shepherd.

SS: I see. Uh-huh.

BB: (Clears throat)

SS: Now, how about your father's people?

BB: Well, my father, um – my grandmother was Mary ... Mary Jane Hartman. Her maiden name. My grandfather's name was Joseph Kilgore. My grandmother is German, and my grandfather was Irish.

SS: Kilgore is an Irish name, I guess?

BB: Yes. Uh-huh. And, um... they had a big ranch and farm in Chambers County. They settled out in Chambers County bordering between I-10 and the Cove Road, all out in there. They owned a lot of other land, too. And...

SS: Now, you told me an interesting story about one of these grandparents about a ship? A street in Baytown?

BB: Well, it was my mother's mother. And when they developed rose-, developed this part of Baytown, why, you remember the street named Danubina?

SS: Uh-huh.

BB: Well, that was the name of the ship that she was born on. So they wanted to name one of the streets for the ship that she was born on. And that's where it got its name. I'm sure there are a lot of people wondering why they named a street that. (Laughs)

SS: Well, I had wondered that, too. I wondered what kind of name it was.

BB: Yes, uh-huh.

SS: And it was the name of some person, but...

BB: Yeah.

SS: Well, that's an interesting thing. Well, so your parents were born in Cedar Bayou. And you were born in Cedar Bayou?

BB: Oh, yes. I was born in Cedar Bayou. I was born right north of Roseland Park. I was born at my grandmother and grandfather's home.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And, um... Then I've lived in Cedar Bayou all my life with the exception of five years. When we were married, well, of course my husband was employed in Houston with the Banker's Trust Company, and I ... we moved to Houston – lived there five years, and then when he came back to Baytown, well then of course we moved back. And I've been living here ever since.

SS: Well, you're a real – that's what you call a real native, isn't? If you were born here, and ...[Inaudible]

BB: Well, yeah, I call myself a newcomer.

SS: Yeah.

(Laughter)

SS: Now, when I talked to you earlier, uh, you told me that – something about your father was killed early in your life, is that right?

BB: No, my father wasn't killed early in life.

SS: Oh.

BB: He lived to be 89.

SS: Well, maybe it was your grandfather. About – something about the Galveston Star?

BB: Oh, that was my father's brother.

SS: Oh, I see.

BB: Was – yes.

SS: I see.

BB: The older brother. And he was married, and had a family, and lived in Baytown – lived in Galveston. And during the 1900 storm they were all lost in the...

SS: The whole family?

BB: The whole family, yes.

SS: Oh. Well, that was a real tragedy.

BB: It was. Really. I never did know him, of course.

SS: Were any other – besides that family – any other of your relatives killed in that storm that you know of?

BB: No. They were the only ones that lived there at that time.

SS: Ok, I wondered a little bit about your childhood in Cedar Bayou. Some of your earliest memories of growing up here. What the – what it was like, the community. Um... Your people were farmers?

BB: Yes, my father was – he had quite a bit of property. He raised cattle, and he farmed just for his own use, you know.

SS: Good for the cattle.

BB: And he was a really – and he was ... first, after my mother and father told me this of course, and said that he worked for my grandfather, my mother's father. And they had a brickyard. And my father worked on this brickyard for years. And the brickyard was located just south of Roseland Park. And there may still be some old brick there yet today.

SS: Now this was a Kilgore?

BB: And his mother ... No, that was Wright.

SS: Oh, the Wright Family.

BB: That was my grandfather Wright. And Grandpa Wright's mother and father, they lived just up on the hill by the brickyard. Now, I never knew my great-, I never knew his father, but I do remember his mother. And she was just a tiny little old lady. And oh, just as far back as I can remember when we'd go down, she lived with – when I knew her she lived with my mother's mother and father. And I'd go down there, and she'd just follow me all around, you know. It's a wonder I wasn't spoiled, because I never was. (Laughs)

SS: Oh, no! (Laughs)

BB: And she ... she lived to be 99 years old.

SS: What ...

BB: And I have a little testament that she gave me. And it's very tiny, but it's something that I really treasure. And I wouldn't take anything for it.

SS: I'm sure. I think you showed it to me the other day.

BB: Yes, I showed it to you.

SS: It's a beautiful little thing. Now, this was your father's mother that you're telling me about?

BB: Um-hmm, Um-hmm.

SS: The one, uh, Mary Jane Hartman?

BB: My grandfather's – my grandfather's mother.

SS: Oh, your grandfather.

BB: Um-hmm.

SS: Now these – your grandparents lived near the brickyard? Uh...

BB: My great-grandparents.

SS: Great-grandparents lived near the brickyard. Where did you – where were you born? What part of...

BB: I was born right north of Roseland Park.

SS: North.

BB: I was born in Harris County. And...

SS: And is that where your family lived for a while?

BB: No, my family – my mother and father lived in Chambers County, but uh that's where I was born

SS: Oh, I see.

BB: at my grandmother's ...

SS: At your grandmother's house.

BB: See, we had no hospitals or anything here way back in those days. And ...

SS: She went there to be cared for while ...

BB: That's right.

SS: ... for your birth and...

BB: Um-hmm, that's right.

SS: Well, now tell me a little bit about your home with your parents. You said you lived in Chambers County?

BB: Yes, uh-huh.

SS: And you mentioned to me the other day that your home was in Chambers County, but the garage was in Harris.

BB: Yes! That's quite a story. You see, my father had quite a number of acres of land, and there were no roads, no highways around here at that time, and the – it was too far down to build a road down to where we lived. We lived close to the Cedar Bayou, the stream of Cedar Bayou. And so ... we built our garage in Harris County, and kept our car over there. Well, in later years, you know, when the cars became possible. And all of our groceries, our ice, everything had to be brought over in a skiff, then it had to be loaded onto a wheelbarrow, then it was wheeled up about two or three blocks from the bayou to our home.

SS: To your home.

BB: And I can feature doing that today.

SS: Well, I can, too. It'd be a little crowded.

BB: A little crowded.

(Laughter)

SS: Well, but...

BB: But back in my early days when I was just a little girl growing up, the only way we had of traveling was by horse and buggy.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And...

SS: You can remember going in the buggy with your grandparents?

BB: Oh, yes, I used to go with my – I've gone with my grandparents, I've gone with my own parents. That was the only way we had of going to church. We would have to cross over the bayou on a flatboat. And – see, we lived in Chambers County, and the church was in Harris County. And, uh, so we would have to go back and forth in our buggy, horse and buggy. At night we would just have a common kerosene lantern to light our way, you know.

SS: ...[Inaudible]

BB: Crossing the bayou.

SS: Uh-huh.

BB: And, uh... That was the only mode of travel. And then later on, why, my father had a boat, and we would go in a boat. Go to the grocery store in a boat, and go to church in a boat. And...

SS: Well, when you talk about a skiff, how – is that something you just poled across, or...?

BB: You use...

SS: You pulled yourself across?

BB: Yeah, we'd call it, "rowing a skiff."

SS: Uh-huh. Uh...

Unidentified elderly male voice: We had oars.

BB: Uh, we had oars, and you just sat on a seat, and you had oar locks that you put your oars in and pulled yourself across the bayou. And that's how I went to school; I had to cross that bayou twice a day. And walk about ... a mile and a half, two miles. Oh, further than that, when I first started to school I walked, I worked – walked to the Masonic Lodge.

SS: Oh.

BB: That's – yes.

SS: Now, how many? Two or three miles or four?

BB: Oh, I imagine it was about four miles, something like that. Four or five miles. And...

SS: That's where you started to school?

BB: No, that wasn't exactly where I started. Uh, you see ... we lived in Chambers County, and there were no roads over there, and you – when you went someplace you just had to go across someone's pasture.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And they all had cattle. And you'd go through a gate, and close the gate, and go on across their pasture, and go through another gate, and so on, you know. Well, we lived too far for me to go to

school, and the school over there was known as the Schilling School. And so, my father's mother and father lived in La Porte at that time. And, uh ... so, I went over and lived with them for two years.

SS: To go to school?

BB: That is, during the school term. And then, oh about every two or three weeks, why, I would get to come home. And my uncle, George Wright, he would pull across the bay there to Morgan's Point from Evergreen, and uh – to pick me up, and I then road back across. My father would meet me on horseback, and I'd get up behind him, and we'd come on then to Cedar Bayou.

SS: I bet that was a happy little girl getting on there.

BB: Oh, was it ever happy! But sometimes during the severe cold spells, why, we would come down to Morgan's Point from La Porte, and we'd get down there, and the tide would be too low for them to cross over.

SS: Oh.

BB: And then I would have to go back.

SS: Oh, no.

BB: And it'd be two or three weeks before I'd get to come again. And that, you know that was ...

SS: A real disappointment for a little girl.

BB: It was quite a disappointment.

SS: Well, now...

BB: But I said – I say now that I reversed my education. I went away to school when I first started. (Laughs)

SS: You started that way, and then...

BB: I started that way. (Laughs)

SS: Well, now how did you get to the – down to Morgan's Point? Did they take you in a buggy, or on horseback?

BB: On horseback, uh-huh. I'd ride behind...

SS: Uh-huh. And then your daddy could meet you on horseback?

BB: Well, uh... Now, you know, I don't really remember whether...

Unidentified elderly male voice: They did.

BB: ...I ever went in the buggy or not. I ... But there was, that's the only road we had was just across the pasture, and go on down to Evergreen. And we had the – I can remember it was so sandy, the road was – the little buggy road – and there was just thicket on each side. It was just cutout for a road to go down to where my uncle lived. And then he would take me on across the bay. But, um... Course, later on, why, Cedar Bayou Road, which is known as Cedar Bayou Road, now?

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: Well, that was put in and – course we're still using that, you know.

SS: And it's what follows the bayou, doesn't it?

BB: Yeah – no, it goes out to North Main, see?

SS: Oh, that one?

BB: Uh-huh. And goes on down.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: But back in the early days, there was just... no roads.

SS: Well, now after you – you went to school there for, what? Two or three years?

BB: Two years.

SS: Two years.

BB: And then I came back and went to school at the Masonic Lodge for a year and a half. And by that time they had what's known as Baytown Junior High out here at Cedar Bayou, and Cedar Bayou Junior High.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And it was a two-story brick building, and I can remember so vividly just like it was yesterday how at recess time, well the children would all grab their skates, and – see the upstairs wasn't used. They just built it for expansion.

SS: This was the Cedar Bayou School?

BB: The Cedar Bayou School. It was a, just a grade school and the high school. And so we would all go upstairs and skate.

SS: (Laughs)

BB: And we would just skate all recess time, and I don't know why they ever let us do that, but we did. (Laughs)

SS: Well, you had to have something for recreation.

BB: I guess so.

SS: Well, I wanted to go back just a little bit to the Masonic school. How many years were you there? Just...

BB: A year and a half.

SS: A year and a half.

BB: Um-hmm.

SS: I wonder how many, about how many students were there. Do you have any idea?

BB: Oh, I have no idea. Of course there wasn't very many because... not too many.

SS: Did you just have one teacher? Or do you remember?

BB: As far as I remember, I only had one teacher.

SS: Well, I mean the school. Do you know if the school had more than one teacher?

BB: The school? No, I don't. I don't remember how many teachers they had.

Unidentified Elderly Male Voice: We had more than one. Cause one person didn't decrease the ...[Inaudible]

BB: And, um... Uh, but...

SS: Well, let's see. I was wondering a little bit about, um... as you grew up in this sort of community, um ... did you have very much social life in the community?

BB: No social life whatever. Course, the young, most of the young people that – would dance, but I never did dance in my life. I never learned to dance. Neither did my husband. But most of our social life was around the church. And so as a young person, why, we would have play parties, and play drop the handkerchief and hide and seek, and all those little games that...

SS: Little games that children play.

BB: And we had what we – was equivalent to, um... oh, the old time dance. Square dance, you know? And ... but that's about all we had as far as social life. And...

SS: Well, people's lives then were really centered around their families more or less, weren't they?

BB: Yes, yes, they were. And sometimes, well, someone in the community would give a play party, and we would all go to that, you know. But it would be mostly at the church.

SS: I was wondering a little bit about life, you know, family life in those times. Course your family was fairly well-to-do as some people were – compared to other people during that time.

BB: Well, I don't...

SS: Did they work hard? Did...

BB: Did they ever work hard! My father worked on the shipyard, and he would go to work at seven o'clock in the morning, and get off just long enough to eat his lunch. We lived right near the shipyard. And then he would work till five o'clock. And then he would come home, and – come up to the house, is what we always said because we lived so near – and then there were hogs to feed, and of course my mother helped, too, with the chickens. And we had – and I milked in the evenings.

SS: Oh, you did?

BB: And I'd milk about three or four cows. And when the calves got too big to pull 'em off and tie 'em to the fence, well I'd drive the mother cow up close to the fence, and tie the calf to the fence, and then drive her away.

(Laughter)

BB: That was original. (Laughs)

SS: Uh-huh. (Laughs) Well, you have to be innovative, wouldn't you?

BB: But my father milked in the mornings. And...

SS: Um-hmm. Well, now I forgot to ask you: did you have brothers and sisters?

BB: I have one sister. She lives in Houston. Her name is Ethyl Schumacher, now. Ethyl Kilgore – she went...

SS: Was she older or younger than you?

BB: No, she's seven years younger than I am.

SS: Well, I guess she helped out with the chores, too? How everybody...

BB: Well, she kind of escaped all that. She never did milk, and ... (laughs).

SS: She was too young. (Laughs)

BB: Oh, she...

SS: Well, now, you mentioned that your father worked in the shipyards. Where were these shipyards located?

BB: The shipyard was in – on the banks of Cedar Bayou on Chambers County side.

SS: Oh.

BB: My uncle really owned the shipyard, but my father really – he drew all the plans and everything for tug boats and barges and things of that nature. But my uncle was really the owner. He bought two acres from my father and put in this shipyard. And that is really hard work.

SS: I imagine.

BB: And ...

SS: Were these ships built out of timber, or?

BB: Oh, yes.

SS: Well, did they use materials that they got here in this area? Or...

BB: No, they had to have it brought in, see?

SS: They brought it in?

BB: And, but they were large; it would take several men to carry one piece of timber to make a barge, you know. They were quite large.

SS: How long did that shipyard operate, do you know?

BB: Oh, I don't remember when he gave it up. But he went into the material yard business. You know where the – over on Market Street road there was a ... material yard over there that sold sand?

SS: Uh huh I remember that, Oh, I remember that.

BB: On Goose Creek?

SS: I remember that. Yeah, Goose Creek.

BB: Uh-huh. That was my uncle, my father's brother.

SS: Oh, I see.

BB: And we lived just across the bayou from each other, my father and my uncle.

SS: Um-hmm. Ok, and I guess ...

BB: And when I went to school I think I told you I had to cross the bayou twice a day in that skiff. And sometimes in the winter it was so cold when I would cross over, go to cross over in the mornings I would have to have a stick of some kind – a heavy piece of timber – to break the rope loose from the little tree that I had it tied to. You know, it was frozen

SS: It could be frozen?

BB: If it was rainy weather it'd be frozen to the tree. And we'd have to break it loose, and...

SS: Now, could you do this by yourself?

BB: Oh, yes.

SS: You just went down there, and got in the skiff and...?

BB: Oh, yes. Sure.

SS: Well, that's interesting.

BB: And ...

SS: That might not have seemed exciting to you at the time, but you can tell about it now.

BB: No, it was – it was real realistic, then. Realistic. (Laughs)

SS: I was gonna ask you too, um – most of the things you had at home like your clothing and – I guess, was that made? Did your mother do your sewing, or ...[Inaudible]

BB: Yes, she made all of – made our clothing. Um-hmm.

SS: And all the baking, of course, was done at home?

BB: Oh, yes. And cooked on a wood stove. But that's the best flavored food you ever ate.

(Laughter)

SS: I guess you grew you garden?

BB: Big iron pots, you know? And we had an artesian well.

SS: Oh, you did?

BB: No one ever had water piped into their homes. We would go out to the well and draw a bucket of water, bring it in, and use a dipper. And in later years we had a bathtub. We thought we were up (laughs) high cotton, then.

SS: I guess you did.

BB: And we would have to – we still didn't have water piped in the house, and I had to fill the water with buckets, fill the tub with buckets to bathe.

SS: Um-hmm. And heat the water?

BB: And heat the water on a wood stove.

SS: Um-hmm. Well, I guess the fact that there was an artesian well there was a factor in locating your house when it was built there?

Unidentified: No, we had to drill it.

BB: No, we had it drilled.

SS: Oh, I see.

BB: We drilled it, yes. Uh-huh.

SS: I thought it was a – just a natural ...[Inaudible]

BB: No, no. No.

Unidentified: Drew a big stream of water.

BB: Um-hmm. Um... Ok, well then you went to Cedar Bayou to school, and you graduated there, is that right?

BB: Yes. And ... I was, uh... valedictorian, salutatorian, even sang my own solo.

SS: (Laughs)

BB: Uh, how – the reason this came about, I was the only one in the class...

SS: So you really had it made.

BB: ... to graduate. So I had everything going my way. (Laughs)

SS: A graduating class of one?

BB: Yes. (Laughs)

SS: Now what – do you remember what year you graduated from Cedar Bayou?

BB: Uh ... 1918.

SS: 1918. The year the war was over.

BB: Um-hmm.

SS: Um-hmm. Now, what did you do after you graduated?

Unidentified: Fell in love with me.

(Laughter)

BB: You're not supposed to be on this. Uh... well... I just stayed at home

SS: Stayed at home?

BB: and helped my mother.

SS: Um-hmm. Helped with the sewing and cooking.

BB: Helped with the sewing, and – well, of course I didn't do much sewing in those days, but I would help with the housework, and we did of course our own yardwork and everything, and...

SS: Um-hmm. Well...

BB: ...chores around the place.

SS: By 1918, there were automobiles.

BB: Uh... yes.

SS: Did you have your automobile – did your family have an automobile during that time?

BB: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, we had an automobile.

SS: Did you ever go to Houston in your car?

BB: Uh... well... before the cars, before we had a car, they would go to Houston of course just about once a year.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And maybe just before Christmastime they would go to Houston. And they had a very good buggy horse. And they would drive to Houston. They'd leave about two o'clock in the morning, and they'd get to Houston by the time that the stores would open, see? But that's quite a ways to drive

SS: I should say.

BB: with a horse and buggy.

SS: Horse and buggy. Did they come back the same day?

BB: Oh, yes, they'd come back the same day. And – I would stay with my grandmother and grandfather Kilgore; they had moved back from La Porte in at that time, and I would spend the night with them, you see, while they...

SS: You mentioned they'd go to Houston for Christmas. Uh...

BB: To shop.

SS: Yeah. Can you sort of describe what a typical Christmas celebration was like in your family?

BB: Yes. We always had a Christmas tree, I always hung up my stocking, Santa Clause always found it and filled it full of fruit and little, little presents and things. And, course we would go out in the pasture and cut a cedar tree, and we would just have homemade decorations.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And the tree was always located by the fireplace.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And it was just really a joy.

SS: Did you ...

BB: And I can remember when I was just a little girl – course, at the church they had a great celebration on Christmas.

SS: I was gonna ask you about that.

BB: And they had Christmas tree. It reached from the floor to the ceiling. They could hardly get – it was a full-grown tree; they would always get a full-grown tree. And when – the presents weren't wrapped like we have today.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: They used a lot of shawls in those days.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And the dolls and everything was hung on the tree or tied on the tree someway. And the tree was decorated with gifts. They had – didn't have decorations.

SS: Those were the decorations: the gifts that people received?

BB: Those were the decorations, and it was real pretty.

SS: Oh, I guess.

BB: And then they'd always have fruit and candy to give to the children.

SS: And they'd have a Christmas program?

BB: And have a Christmas program, and all the little children would be in the program, of course.

SS: Well...

BB: It was a nice occasion.

SS: Then I guess you shared your Christmas dinner with all your family: grandparents and ...[Inaudible]

BB: Well, of course there wasn't very many that lived here at that time to share with. But...

SS: But sometimes?

BB: Yes, we would all have a Christmas dinner, and...

SS: Well, let's see now, we have gotten you out of school, and...

BB: (Laughs) Finally.

SS: ...you were at home, and it was pretty soon that you met your husband, then after that?

BB: Yes, it was – of course, we went to church at the same – to the same church, but didn't neither one of us pay attention to each other. Course I hadn't gotten to that age yet, and he was above me, so he was dating older girls, you see? So I just never really paid any attention to him till he came back from the war.

SS: Which was about 1919?

BB: Bout 19...uh, yes. About 1919. And then we went together for about – well, it was 1922 when we married. And...

SS: And his name was... We didn't get his name at the beginning of the... Your husband's name?

BB: Oh, William Thomas Busch.

SS: William Thomas Busch. Uh... Ok, and you were married, when? 1922?

BB: October 18, 1922.

SS: Ok. Um... Did you have a big wedding?

BB: Well, uh, we thought it was. The church was filled, and they were outside looking in the windows.

SS: (Laughs)

BB: (Laughs) So, course the church wasn't too large at that time. It was our old sanctuary at that time, and uh... Oh, I must tell you this. I can remember back before it was built, and it was a one – uh, just a straight church building – and the men all sat on one side. I remember that they sat on the left-hand side; it just had an aisle down the middle. And they sat on the left-hand side, and the women sat on the right-hand side. And on the men's side, there was just a little oily place all down on the walls.

(Laughter)

BB: That was quite unusual, I think.

SS: Well, now, did the children sit with their mothers, or – what'd they do with do with the children in there?

BB: Oh, they all sat with the parents in those days, you know.

SS: Well, but you said the men sat on one side, and the women sat on the other side.

BB: Well, I'm sure I sat with Mother. (Laughs)

SS: Yeah, probably so. Well, that's interesting. Were the sermons longer in those days than they are ...?

BB: They seemed to be. (Laughs)

SS: (Laughs) From that perspective they were longer.

BB: (Laughs)

SS: Ok, now after you and Mr. Busch married, um... you settled down in Cedar Bayou, right?

BB: No, no. We lived in Houston.

SS: First you went to Houston?

BB: Our home was in, uh... almost finished when we married; we built before we married.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: We also bought our furniture before we married.

SS: Oh.

BB: And, uh... my father owned a house right, owned a home that he bought when we – course we were moved to Houston. And so finally we got them to move to Houston, and they lived right next door to us. And then later on, well, my mother persuaded her parents to move, and they moved right next door to her, and there we were just all together.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And...

SS: Well, I'm looking here at your announcement of your marriage, and it says your address in Houston was 4539 Polk Avenue?

BB: That's right. And Polk Avenue, at that time, was not opened up...

(End of tape)

(Tape 2 of 2)

SS: Mrs. Busch, you were telling me about your home in Houston. How long did you live in Houston before you came back to Cedar Bayou?

BB: Oh, about five years. See, we married in 1922, and we moved back in '26.

SS: Uh-huh.

BB: That's about four years – for or five years.

SS: Ok, and now where did you live when you came back?

BB: We bought some acreage off of Kilgore Road. We bought 17 acres, and it fronted on the banks of Cedar Bayou.

SS: Did you build a house on this?

BB: Well, it had a house on it when we bought the property. But – and we lived in that about three or four years, and then we build our new home, and moved it up off of Kilgore Road; moved this frame building. And we lived there until 1951 in our home on the bayou.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: Then by that time we had built our home on Tri-City Beach Road. And we lived there 20 years, and then we bought this place.

SS: On Eaves Drive?

BB: On Eaves Drive. And...

SS: And how long have you...

BB: And that has been about five or six years ago. Well, '51 till now is more than five or six years, isn't it?

SS: (Laughs)

BB: No, no – '51 and we lived there 20 years.

SS: Um-hmm. That'd be till '71.

BB: '71. Uh-huh. That's about...

SS: And then soon after that you moved?

BB: Uh-huh and I've, we've been here ever since.

SS: Well, when you came back to Cedar Bayou and settled down, uh – course you were active in Cedar Bayou Church? Can you tell us about that?

BB: Oh, yes. Uh, from a little tot. From the time that I was old enough to say a little speech, why, I was always on the programs. And then when I became old enough to sing in the choir, why, I sang in the choir. And, uh, I sang solos, and sang solos for weddings.

SS: Oh.

BB: And sang solos for funerals all down through the years ever since then. Until, oh, a year or two ago. And my eyesight wasn't so good, so my doctor advised me to quit singing solos. I still sang in the choir. And I may go back to the choir. (Laughs)

SS: Well, why not?

BB: Well, uh ... see, Mr. Busch's health failed, and I quit the choir. And it was most inconvenient when lived on the bay because I had to go so far.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: Oh, I guess it was ...

Unidentified: Practice.

BB: ... uh, yeah, to practice

SS: Yeah, practice.

BB: on Wednesday evening.

SS: Choir practice.

BB: You know, and I'd have to go by myself. And it just... wasn't practical.

SS: Wasn't working out. I can see.

BB: So I just quit the choir for a while. And then finally some friends said well, they'd come and get me if I'd come back to the choir. So I did, and they'd come down and get me every Wednesday night. Take me home.

SS: Well, that was something you enjoyed.

BB: It was – I certainly appreciated it, too, because I loved the choir, and I loved to sing. Uh... but it's been... it's my life.

SS: Hmm.

Unidentified: While we were in Houston, we belonged to the First Methodist Church.

BB: Yeah we – when we lived in Houston, we put our membership in at First Methodist Church.

SS: At First Methodist Church?

BB: Um-hmm.

SS: I see.

Unidentified: I had my membership there.

BB: And he...

SS: Who was the minister

BB: Oh...

SS: at First Methodist? Do you remember?

BB: Yes.

SS: When you were there?

BB: Reverend Smith.

Unidentified: That was [Inaudible].

BB: He's bishop. He was formerly.

SS: A. Frank?

BB: A. Frank Smith.

SS: A. Frank Smith?

BB: Was our pastor.

Unidentified: He was pastor.

BB: I just thought he was the most wonderful pastor in the world, and he was good.

SS: Uh-huh.

BB: Really was.

SS: Well, uh, back to Cedar Bayou Church, I'm sure you were probably active in the women's organizations in the church?

BB: Oh, yes, I was. And uh, we would – I belonged to a circle.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And I never was president, I was – they tried to persuade me to be president, but I just felt like I just wasn't adequate to be president, so I just never did do that. But I was most of the time, I was Secretary of the Spiritual Life, is what I – my main office was.

Unidentified Elderly Male Voice: When we first moved back to Baytown I went to the bank and Took... [4:44]

(Tape cuts off)

SS: Now, Mrs. Busch, you told me earlier that you were a member of the Eastern Star?

BB: Oh, yes. I'm a 50 year member, and it's – oh, I don't know how many years past 50 it is, now. But I joined the Eastern Star when I was 18 years old, and that was as young as you could become a member. But my mother, in the earlier years – I was just a baby – she was, um... Matron.

SS: Oh. Worthy Matron?

BB: Worthy Matron at two different times. And she would take me and I told 'em the reason I made the 50 year membership so soon is because I started as a baby, see? (Laughs)

SS: You started out early!

BB: I started early. But anyway, uh, she – I would, she'd put me on a pallet down in front, and – while she was Matron, you know.

SS: Um-hmm. What...

BB: And she and her mother would come in the – what we, the gig belonged to my grandmother. That's just a two-wheel, it's not a buggy but it's just a two-wheel deal; just has one seat.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And that's how they would go to the Eastern Star.

SS: And take you?

BB: Yes. And...

SS: Now, did you...

BB: ... I played the organ; I was the organist most of the time in those years. Um... and...

SS: Was this the same chapter that your mother and grandmother had belonged to?

BB: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

SS: Is that the one at Cedar Bayou?

BB: It's still there, now. Uh, Cedar Bayou Chapter number 11.

SS: Chapter number 11.

BB: Um-hmm.

SS: Wonder when it was organized. Do you recall?

BB: Oh, I just wish I did know. But I don't know.

SS: A long time ago, though.

BB: But I think it's the oldest chapter in Texas, or next to the oldest chapter.

SS: Well, if your grandmother was a member, it had to be quite a while ago.

BB: Oh, yes. It was quite a – quite a long time.

SS: You mentioned that you played the organ, and you mentioned earlier that you sang in the choir. Where did you get your musical training? Is this something that you...?

BB: My voice is natural. And...

SS: Was your mother or father – did they have musical talent?

BB: Well, my mother would have if she could have developed it, you know.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: But back in those days, well they had to work too hard.

SS: Um-hmm. You'd have to...

BB: She used to sell eggs and ship 'em to Galveston on a boat, on the freight boat. And she would get two dozen for a quarter. She'd sell 'em two dozen for a quarter.

SS: Had to have a lot of hens to...

BB: (Laughs)

SS: ... to make money at that, didn't you? (Laughs)

Unidentified Elderly Male Voice: Then a quarter would buy lots of stuff.

BB: Yes, sure would.

SS: Yeah.

BB: Well, anyway ... those were the good ol' days.

SS: Yeah. Well, let's see, I guess we covered your Eastern Star career. That's something to be proud of.

BB: Well, I have...

SS: Not many people are members around.

BB: I have – I have filled the star point. I...

SS: Oh.

BB: Um-hmm.

SS: That's nice.

BB: But... I never did have a desire to be Matron.

SS: Well, I think it's something to be a member of a chapter that's as old as that one is.

BB: That's right. Um-hmm.

SS: That's...

BB: And we had an old – you know, back in those days the organ was a Bellows Organ, you know, you had to pump it with your feet, you know.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And that's how I learned to play.

SS: You just taught yourself? You didn't have a...

BB: I learned – no, I had...

SS: You didn't have a music teacher?

BB: Well, course I didn't start to taking music until I was up in my teens.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And I had an aunt, Mrs. John Kilgore that taught music. And I took music from her. Then later on there was a Mrs. Cooley when – after Baytown was developed – that lived in Baytown, and I would take from her. And I took voice from her a short time. I never did take much voice.

SS: Well, I wanted to go back a little bit here and talk something about Baytown and the oilfields. Course, you didn't live near the oilfields, but what do you recall about the oilfields? Or do you remember when the oil boom came?

BB: Yes, I do. It was in 19 ... eight – 1917 or 18. And, uh... Course like I told you earlier, there were no streets or anything at that time. And in muddy weather they would have to use oxen to pull the wagons, and to bring in their pipe and all of that, you see. And I can remember – I think the man was named Davis that owned this – these oxen. And he had this company that that was all they did was just do the trucking, you see. And it would take, oh... quite a few oxen to pull one, one load of pipe.

SS: Where did they unload this pipe?

BB: Well, they would take the – I don't really know. I don't know anything because I didn't live in...

SS: It came by boat, I guess. Some of them, ...[Inaudible]

BB: Well, yes. It had to come by boat; that was the only way it could come. Where it came from, I don't know that either. Whether it was Galveston or Houston. I imagine Galveston because... It could have come by Houston, though.

SS: Well, course the oilfields – that part of town was pretty rough, and I don't suppose you were in that part of town too much.

BB: No, I wasn't. See, I lived out here at Cedar Bayou, and...

SS: And that was really another community, a separate community?

BB: It was just something different. Something entirely separate.

SS: Can you remember when the first oil rigs began going up? That must have been something kind of different for this part of the country.

BB: Well... Course it was; it was exciting, you know, to know that they were drilling for oil.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And my – I have an aunt, you know I told you about Mrs. George Wright? Well, she owned quite a bit of property in there. And she ha, oh, a number of wells on her property. And, uh...

SS: Well, now did the Barbers Hill oilfield come in about this same time? Or do you recall?

BB: I don't think so.

SS: Was it after?

BB: I think it was somewhat later.

SS: Later than this?

BB: Yes, uh-huh. I don't know...

SS: There wasn't oil – they didn't drill for oil in Cedar Bayou at that time, did they?

BB: No, it never was drilled here in Cedar Bayou. There was some wells drilled on my father's, grandfather's land out in Chambers County, but it never did ... they never did find any oil on that.

SS: Um... Let's see, now you and Mr. Busch have been very generous with your gifts to the church, Cedar Bayou Church. Um... And he discussed this in my interview. Is there anything you'd like to add to that?

BB: Well, I think he pretty well covered it.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: They were in a building program at the time; I don't think Mr. Busch stated that. They were trying to – they had plans, and they were trying to get it all together, and so then we decided, well...

Unidentified Elderly Male Voice: But they wasn't able to do it.

BB: But they weren't able to do it. They couldn't raise the money, and so then that's how come us to come in and decide to do this. And it's been a joy. You have no idea how – what a pleasure it is to see that you have done something that has meant so much to the church.

SS: To so many people.

BB: To the community, so many people. Other organizations other than the church use it too, you know. And we have – it will seat 300 people, serve 300 people. Our kitchen is equipped to serve 300 people.

SS: That's a large crowd.

BB: Yes, it is. And, course this big – big room can be divided off. And we have sliding doors that you can divide 'em off into Sunday school rooms on Sundays and – then during the week you can all be thrown into one big room. And it – see, we were so crowded for space before that. We just had to do something. And the, the staff of the church was just so crowded, had no space, and so there was such a need. And it's – well, I said we owed it to the Lord because he blessed us, and made it possible for us to do it. And we were just glad to do it.

SS: Well, you know Cedar Bayou Church is really a source of pride to the whole community of Baytown because it's such a historic site, really.

BB: Well, it is historical, yes.

SS: It's not just for the members of your church

BB: No.

SS: but all the people in this community are proud of that church.

BB: Yes. That's right.

SS: And it's a place that...

Unidentified Elderly Male Voice: Can I say something without being recorded?

(Tape cuts off)

SS: Let's see, Mrs. Busch, you were telling me about the original building was gonna be moved to another site?

BB: Well, of course it isn't the original building, because the original building

Unidentified Elderly Male Voice: (Like to turn it off.)

BB: when this church was organized was a log building. And I think from that time you had the log building then they built two other sanctuaries. They kept enlarging, you know. And then the present one now – that's where I was baptized in, I was married in it, and it is going to be moved to – now what's this society that ... the park?

SS: The Bicentennial, the Baytown Bicentennial Park.

BB: Baytown Bicentennial Park.

SS: There by Lee College.

BB: And I – I think I'm right in stating that it's to be – it's gonna be made a chapel.

SS: Um-hmm.

BB: And to be used. And I don't know whether, what other use... I don't know.

Unidentified Elderly Male Voice: It can be used for any kind of worship purposes only.

SS: Well, that's – that's nice. That way...

Unidentified: Any denomination is welcome.

BB: And I hope it will eventually be moved there, and it can be.

SS: Well, I'm sure they'll go on with those plans. Well, you've had an interesting life, and I appreciate your taking the time to tell us about it.

BB: Well, I'm just glad to do it. I ... I haven't had such an exciting life, but I have had a happy life.

SS: Well, it certainly sounds that way.

BB: And, we've...

SS: It may sound more exciting.

BB: We'll be celebrating our 57th anniversary on October 18 of this year. So...

SS: Congratulations.

BB: I'm kind of excited about that.

SS: Oh, I can understand. Congratulations, and thank you so much.

BB: Well, you're just quite welcome.

(End of tape)

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