

(Tape 1 of 2)

An Oral History Tape Transcription

Of

Interviewer: Martha Mayo

Interviewee: tran

February 24, 1986

MM: ...Municipal Library. I'm having an oral history conversation with Mrs. Louise Travis.

MM: Now, can you tell me, tell me who you – what your maiden name was.

LT: Uh, I was a Deveraux. My parents were Frank and Vera Deveraux. And, uh, they had lived here since in the early 1900's. Both of them. And I was born in 1916 on the banks of Cedar Bayou. And, uh, in a small house along the banks of the bayou. Because Dad worked on the boat. Running the boat from here to Houston and to Galveston. He used to – uh, it was more or less a produce boat that he carried produce from this area to Houston and to Galveston. Now some of the boats carried brick and timber. But he did not; he carried produce mostly.

MM: Like, what – what sort of things did they grow? What were their ... [1:16]

LT: Well, they grew all kinds of garden vegetables such as beans, and potatoes, and turnips, and greens and that sort of thing. They grew all of those. And, uh, they took them into Houston and sold them. And, uh, then the, uh, men in the family would hunt and send rabbits, and squirrels, and ducks, and things of that sort into Houston. Now, for some reason, uh, pigs, and you know, hogs, and, and cattle: I don't remember it being sent much.

MM: Oh.

LT: But it was more, uh, small game.

MM: Game. Uh-huh.

LT: Um-hmm. That was sent in.

MM: Now, where did you say the boat docked? You – well, where was the boat docked?

LT: It docked at what they called the foot of Main Street, which was about where Main Street goes across Buffalo Bayou now. And, uh, they went all the way there, and they docked at the foot of Main Street. And the, uh, merchants would come to the boat and do their purchasing.

MM: Right off of it?

LT: Right off of the boat. Uh-huh. And then, uh, Daddy always had a, uh, list of things that people down here wanted him to buy and bring to him. He, uh, traded with the, uh, Battlesteins, and the Sakowitz, and, and the Zindlers and people that had been in Houston for years and years, and they had stores there. And he used to, uh, buy produce or whatever anybody wanted he brought it back.

MM: Oh.

LT: Not so much, uh, staple goods, uh, like food goods. Because there were stores here. But, uh, and, and I don't know how they got all their produce. I really don't.

MM: How the stores here got it?

LT: Uh-huh. Uh, because, like I say, mostly the things that he brought – now, maybe some other of the boats brought big produce.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: But, uh, the things Daddy brought was usually, uh, somebody'd want, uh, a little bit of sugar, or a little bit of flour. Or maybe they'd say, "I want a bolt of material."

MM: And he had to choose for them?

LT: He had to choose for them. Or, um ...

MM: A lot of responsibility.

LT: ... I, I need, I need a hat. My hat number is a size is so-and-so. Bring me a hat.

MM: Oh.

LT: Or overalls, or something like that. You know, he'd bring that sort of thing to them.

MM: Oh.

LT: And, um ... uh, he, he really was a liaison between people here and up there.

MM: But now where did his boat ...

LT: Docked, uh ...

MM: Cedar Bayou

LT: right there close to the Methodist Church at Cedar Bayou. Uh, it was called Ilfree Landing. It's right where the curve of Ferry Road meets, uh, Cedar Bayou Road. And that was, uh – there was a lot of wharfs along there. There was even one down closer to the church. And there were a number of, uh, stores down in that area. There was a barber shop down there.

MM: Oh. Now, who owned the barber shop?

LT: Hmmm. I wish you hadn't asked me.

MM: Oh.

(Laughter)

MM: That's the first time anybody's mentioned a barber shop.

LT: Uh-huh. But, uh, I have a picture, uh, down at the church, uh, of the barber shop. One time when it flooded, well, they took pictures, and there was this, uh, building. Slaughter. Slaughter.

MM: Oh.

LT: Was, uh, the name of the people that owned the place where the barber shop – now, whether he did the barbering, I don't know. But he owned the store. And then the McClain's had a store. The Ilfree's had a store. And the Fisher's had a store. And, uh, the, uh, post office originally was in the Fisher Store.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And then later, when the Fishers went out of business, it moved over to the Ilfree Store. And for years and years it was in this little building right beside Fisher's Store – I mean, uh, Ilfree's Store.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh, that little building was later moved up on Kilgore Road, and that was this little Cedar Bayou Post Office that served for years and years.

MM: Oh.

LT: Here. Ms. Himes, you know –

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: had the little post office for years and years.

MM: Same building, though?

LT: Same building. Um-hmm.

MM: Oh.

LT: Um-hmm. I worked in the post office for years. Uh, I never was post mistress, but I, uh, the – during World War II, the woman who was post mistress had a chance to get on with Humble.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And somebody had to run the post office.

MM: Yes.

LT: She, she went to work there, and so I worked there for – I guess maybe eight or nine months until they got someone who would be appointed permanently.

MM: Oh.

LT: And so, uh – but it was a nice little meeting place.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: For the people of the community.

MM: I guess it was.

LT: It really was.

MM: [Inaudible]

LT: Uh-huh. Everybody'd go there to get their mail, and – and the most interesting part about it was when, in the spring, when the baby chickens came in.

MM: Through the mail?

LT: Through the mail.

MM: Oh! (Laughs)

LT: Through the mail. They'd come in – now, most people knew about when their chickens would come.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And they'd watch. And when the mail came, well, they were there to get 'em. And we hoped they would be, because otherwise those peeping chickens just drove us up the wall.

MM: (Laughs) I bet.

LT: But, we had ...

MM: Just big boxes of ...

LT: Big boxes of baby chickens.

MM: ... of baby chicks.

LT: And I have been known to keep 'em overnight, which was really bad. Because, you know ...

MM: Did you bring 'em home with you? Or ...

LT: No, no.

MM: You just ...

LT: I, I'd put food and water for 'em there. And, and have to keep 'em overnight.

MM: Oh.

LT: But mostly people knew when they were expected in, and they were there to pick 'em up.

MM: To get them. Oh.

LT: But, uh ... the ship trade was very important for years and years. Now after we began getting roads from here to Houston, and when cars became more prevalent ...

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: Well, then people began going in and getting things, and they didn't depend on the ships so much.

MM: Bet there was a lot of traffic on the bayou when you were little.

LT: A lot of traffic on the – uh-huh. When I was a child.

MM: What about the hand fer-, or is, was there a hand ferry? Someone was talking about it there.

LT: Yes, there was a hand ferry right there. Right there where that – where those wharfs were. And, uh, it for years and years was used. And, uh, you would drive on the ferry, or you would get on the ferry, and then pull this cable or rope. At one time, it was rope.

MM: Oh.

LT: A heavy rope that they used.

MM: That would ...

LT: Across there. And, oh listen: they had a, had a wooden thing that looked about like a monkey wrench.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And that's what they pulled themselves – they would fasten it on there, and then pull back like that.

MM: Oh!

LT: On it. And that pulled them across. Gave you a little leverage, you know.

MM: Yes. Uh-huh.

LT: And then didn't hurt your hands. But I've seen them do that many a time.

MM: Oh.

LT: And, uh ... horses came across that way. And, uh, but the first time I ever drove across it, oh, I was ... oh, I guess maybe 11 when I drove across it the first time. I started driving when I was nine.

MM: Oh, my!

LT: Then you didn't have to have a license, you know.

MM: Yes.

LT: And I started driving when I was nine. And, uh, but I was about 11, and I had people who lived on the other side of the bayou. And I went to see them regularly. And so I would always have to park the car on this side. Get on the ferry, go across, and walk to the house. And, uh, so one day the man who ran the ferry says, "I believe you could drive on there."

MM: You know where you're going.

LT: Says, "I see you driving." And he says, "You could drive on there as well as anybody." He says, "Let's catch a time when there's no one else on here."

LT: And, uh, so he helped me to drive on the first time. You know, showed me how to get on. And he says, "Now, I'll hold it, and you drive on."

LT: And I did. And I parked in the middle of the ferry.

(Laughter)

LT: And we got to the other side, and I drove off. And from then on, I drove on and off that ferry just like everybody else.

MM: I bet you were too little to, to work the ferry, I guess.

LT: Oh, yes. I – I never did pull it when I was small like that.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: However, I got out and helped 'em many a time, and there was many a child who had the fun of getting out and helping to pull it across.

MM: Oh. That is interesting.

LT: It is. It was a lot of fun.

MM: I bet it ...

LT: And we hated to see it go. I ...

MM: Yes, when did it – when did it shut down?

LT: Well, it ... I can't remember exactly, but it must have been in the, uh ... maybe the '50's.

MM: Oh.

LT: That it, it was no longer ...

MM: Fairly recently.

LT: Uh-huh. Um... You know, people on that side really didn't want to do away with it. Because that was their closest means of getting across the bayou.

MM: I guess it was.

LT: They had to go either all the way down to the mouth of the bayou, and go across the bascule bridge, or go all the way around, and come across up here like you were going by Mobay, and up that way.

MM: Yes. Uh-huh.

LT: And at that time, that road was not paved. You know, it was mud road.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And in the wintertime, it was something else. You just didn't get there every time.

MM: Oh.

LT: So really, it was a – it was a big help to them to have the ferry.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT : And they didn't – they fought losing the ferry for years and years. And the, uh, county operated it for years. Paid for a man to operate it.

MM: But there was a man there ...

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: to run it?

LT: During the daytime hours.

MM: I see.

LT: But at night, if you wanted to go across there, you were on your own. You had to do it yourself.

MM: Hmm, that could be scary!

LT: Well, uh, it wasn't to people who did it regularly. You know, you got used to it.

MM: But people did go off of it?

LT: Yes. Yes, I've known people to ... to, to run off of it. Now, they had a heavy chain on each end.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And when you would land on one side, you put up – you know, you take down the chain on the side where you drive on.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And the other side was up. So that if you were not driving too fast, the chain would stop a car. But sometimes you had to get up so much momentum getting on the ferry –

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: That sometimes people didn't stop like they ought to. And then, too, sometimes someone would forget to put up the chain.

MM: Oh! (Laughs)

LT: And so we have, have had people to run off into the bayou.

MM: Yes.

LT: And we've lost some lives there. But, uh – and it wasn't a common thing.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: But it did happen.

MM: Uh-huh. Well, were there many children driving? At the age you drove?

LT: Uh ... well, there were some. There surely were. Course, now, I was – I had so many people to help me do it. I had an uncle and a grandfather who lived with me, and both of them drove.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh, by the time I was big enough to sit in somebody's lap, well I sat in their lap and steered. So I knew how to do that. I had to wait till my legs were long enough to touch the (laughs) the peddles.

(Laughter)

LT: And one of the things that was necessary for me to learn before they would allow me to take the car.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Was how to change a tire, and simple things about the motor that could go wrong. How to put water in, how to put gasoline – that sort of thing. I had to learn all that before I was allowed to take the car by myself.

MM: But at the age of nine, you took it by yourself and drove places?

LT: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And when I was 13, I drove from here to Rockport.

MM: Oh! (Laughs)

LT: When I was 13.

MM: Thirteen!

LT: And right now, I wouldn't think a 13 year old had sense enough to ...

MM: Ride a bicycle.

LT: That's right!

MM: (Laughs) That's ... Oh!

LT: But, uh, it seemed like – I don't know, maybe you had to mature a little more –

MM: Maybe so.

LT: then with some things. You had, you had to grow up pretty fast with some things when you ...

MM: I guess so.

LT: And I was curious. I always wanted to learn everything. Wanted to learn how to do it, and ... and I had somebody to show me, and that helped. And I can remember when we first had to have driver's license. And, you know, all you had to do was to have 50 cents, and go to the county courthouse, and fill out a form. And ...

MM: No test.

LT: No test. You just got it for 50 cents.

MM: (Laughs)

LT: And so, I got my first license that way.

MM: Oh. Now, where was the county courthouse? Where did you have to go to do that?

LT: Well, at that time was after I was out of high school. And I was teaching school in Grimes County. And I went to Anderson –

MM: Oh, yeah.

LT: to the courthouse at Anderson.

MM: Oh. Oh, ok.

LT: I got my first license in (laughs) in Anderson.

MM: Well, where was, where was the county – was there a county courthouse on this side of the county?

LT: Oh, uh ... uh-huh. Houston. Um-hmm.

MM: But there wasn't anything east of Houston?

LT: No. Uh-uh. Uh-uh.

MM: You had to clear over there to do your business?

LT: If you went to court, you went to Houston.

MM: Oh!

LT: Um-hmm. Uh, Chambers County – of course – was always Anahuac.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh, Houston. But, uh... originally Harrisburg, you know, was the capital.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: But then, uh, Harrisburg – Houston outgrew Harrisburg in a little while, and it became the county seat. And ...

MM: Well, what about law enforcement? Was that ... well, what was?

LT: Well, mostly we had constables.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And, uh, there was a constable in this, uh, area who kept law and order.

MM: Just one – one person?

LT: One. And he usually had a deputy or two.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: But, uh – uh, it wasn't a big problem.

MM: That's – it must not have been.

LT: It was not.

MM: [Inaudible]

LT: Um-mm.

MM: Do you remember any crime, or ...

LT: Yes, uh, there were – there were some. But it was something that you talked about for months because it didn't happen every day.

MM: Real rare.

LT: Um-hmm. And, uh, I've heard people tell about how terrible it was in the oilfield.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: But, uh, as far as I was concerned, I didn't know about many of the things that went on in the oilfield. Now, people – men got drunk on payday, you know. And they might shoot up the town. But, uh, they'd shoot in the air cause they were having fun.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: They weren't, they weren't shooting at somebody.

MM: Yeah.

LT: (Laughs) And, uh, that sort of thing, but... Law wasn't really – law enforcement was not a big problem as far as I knew.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: At that time.

MM: Well, now Cedar Bayou was – stayed pretty much apart from the oilfield.

LT: Oh, yes.

MM: So that was very separate, wasn't it?

LT: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

MM: How far?

LT: Well, uh ... I don't know. It always seemed like it was about six, seven miles to town.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, um ... we, we did a great deal of our shopping there – our, our big shopping. Like, if we wanted to go to the drugstore, we had to go to Goose Creek after, after they began putting things in like – and, and the bank.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And there was a meat market. But just for ordinary groceries, well, we had local grocery stores.

MM: Uh-huh. Like, you know, like Ilfree's and Wellman?

LT: Yes, uh-huh.

MM: Those were just grocery stores? Or did they sell ...

LT: They had, uh, merch-, general merchandise. They had materials, and, uh... Oh, you could get a tub if you needed it, or a bucket or something like that.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: You know, they had that sort of thing. Just a regular old country grocery store.

MM: Well, tell me about the brickyards.

LT: Well, they tell me at one time there were 14 brickyards on the bayou. Now, I do not remember that many, myself.

MM: That is a lot.

LT: Um-hmm. But they tell me at one time there were 14 brickyards up and down the bayou. And, uh, the one I remember most is the one that was right down here close to the, the Methodist Church. And, uh, they, they made brick there for years. In fact, uh, maybe 20 years ago that it was discontinued. And, uh – time gets away from me, so I'm not sure about my dates on that.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: But, uh, they would dig this clay, and make their bricks. And then they would fire the kilns. They'd stack the bricks so that the, uh, heat could go between the brick and dry them out. And the heat was by wood. Wood fires. And they had to keep these wood fires at a certain level; they couldn't burn it too hot because it would break the brick.

MM: Oh.

LT: Or it couldn't go too low, because it wouldn't be enough...

MM: Too cool. Uh-huh.

LT: Enough heat. So it took some skill to know just exactly the amount of heat.

MM: And they got the wood just from ...

LT: Oh, yes. Just way out in the woods (laughs).

MM: Yeah.

LT: Out here and ...

MM: They must have cleared a lot of land!

LT: Cut down a – cut down a tree. (Laughs) But they had lot of, uh, they had lots of trees available then.

MM: And they shipped those bricks to Houston? Is that mainly where they ...

LT: Yes. Uh, to Houston and to Galveston, both. And many of the streets in Houston have a base of brick from Cedar Bayou brickyards. And Houston and Galveston.

MM: That brick is all real dark, isn't it?

LT: Yes. Yes. Uh-huh.

MM: Because um, [Inaudible].

LT: It's dark brick. Uh, and at first, they did not have a – they didn't stamp a name on it like they do now. And, uh, you couldn't identify one, one brickyard from another because of that. Because they weren't named or anything.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: But they – they made much brick here on the bayou.

MM: Well, for 14 brickyards to stay in business,

LT: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

MM: I guess they really sold brick.

LT: And – well, I'm sure they did. I'm sure they did. You know, just to build a, a street, it took an awful lot of brick.

MM: I guess it does.

LT: Because Navigation Boulevard in Houston was a wide street. And, uh, I have no idea the length of it. But it must have been five or more miles long. And you can imagine about how many brick it would take for that.

MM: Oh, yeah. Yes.

LT: It'd take an awful lot of brick. And of course, any buildings of the older buildings would be made from those brick.

MM: Oh. Now, I guess they went by boat, then.

LT: Most of them. Um-hmm. Or barge. You know the –

MM: Yes. Uh-huh.

LT: Barge traffic. But the boats carried them. And we used to, uh, have boat rides. Now, uh, kids think they have lots of fun now, but they don't know what it is unless they went on boat rides. We used to, uh, uh decide we were gonna have a boat ride such-and-such a time, and everybody'd fix a picnic lunch, you know. And we'd go and get on the boat and go out the bayou to the bay, turn around, and come back. And that was about a four hour trip. You know.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Which was a nice trip.

MM: Yes.

LT: And you just got to see everything all along there. You could wave at people all along the bank, and ...

MM: Well, that would be fun!

LT: Oh, it was more fun than anything. But the thing that put a stop to that was this business of having to have life jackets for every person on board. And you know the stringent, uh, rules.

MM: Yes.

LT: That were necessary because of insurance.

MM: Oh.

LT: And you can understand it, but at that time, it didn't mean a thing to us, you know.

MM: Yes. Uh-huh. Interrupted some fun.

LT: Uh-huh. And sometimes if it was a big crowd that was going on this boat ride, they might even take a barge and tow it along bes-, behind it, you know.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And the older people stayed in the barge, but the kids all climbed all over the tug boat.

MM: Oh. That does sound like fun.

LT: Oh, it was. And especially on moonlight nights, you know, it was just beautiful.

MM: Oh!

LT: On that water.

MM: I bet.

LT: But we just had more fun than anything doing that.

MM: What other things like that did you do?

LT: Well, uh, I can, I can remember the box suppers that we used to have. To raise money, we'd have box suppers. And, uh, each girl or lady would fix a lunch for two in a box. And you decorated those boxes just as fancy as you could decorate 'em. And, uh, somehow or other – no one was supposed to know who the boxes belonged to.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: But if you had a favorite boyfriend, you got word to them somehow that this was your box, you know.

MM: Yeah.

LT: Because whoever bought the box – and it was by bidding.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: You sold those boxes by bidding. And whoever, uh, bought your box, you ate supper with. So naturally, you wanted your favorite boyfriend ...

MM: Sure.

LT: ... to, uh, buy your box. But that was one of the fundraising things that we used to do.

MM: Oh.

LT: Instead of bazaars these days –

MM: Yes.

LT: you know, we had box suppers then.

MM: Oh, that does sound like fun.

LT: It was. It was a lot of fun.

MM: What else as a child did you do?

LT: Well, let me think.

MM: You have any big events that you remember? Or a holiday celebration of any sort?

LT: No, I remember one time going to see the Ku Klux meet here.

MM: Oh.

LT: The only time that I remember seeing them, uh, it was over on the corner of what is now Cedar Bayou Road and Bowie School Drive. You know there's a, a 7-11 store right there.

MM: Oh. Yes, I know where you mean.

LT: Ok, there's a big brick house across the street.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Well, now that was a pasture, then. And the Ku Klux met out there for their meeting. Now ...

MM: In the pasture?

LT: In that pasture. Now, whether they had someone they were trying, or doing something. Because you know they had trials. If somebody did something wrong, well, they didn't wait for the law to take care of it. The Ku Klux took care of it. If a man was trifling on his wife ...

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Or if he was unkind to his wife or something like that, they took care of it. And so whether it was for that, I don't know. But I can vaguely remember, uh, we drove – Daddy drove us by there. We had a 1917 Ford touring car. A fancy car, you know. We drove by (laughs) so I don't know when we ...

MM: Yeah.

LT: ... when we went.

MM: You were little, though.

LT: I was little.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And we went by there, and I can remember seeing the men with their hoods on. And the fire. They had a fire burning, and they were all around it. And we were not close enough to hear anything that was going on. But they were meeting there. And in a little while, well, Daddy says, "I think it's time for us to leave."

LT: Now, what they were going to do, I have no idea.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: But I just remember that about it. But that happened right here in this community.

MM: Well, did you ever see 'em again, or...

LT: Uh, only in parades and that sort of thing. Uh, I did not have much contact with ...

MM: That was in a Cedar Bayou parade?

LT: Yeah.

MM: Or was that for Goose Creek?

LT: Well, probably Goose Creek.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Probably Goose Creek. Uh-huh. And, um, the lodge and the church, at least once a year, had what they called Dinner on the Grounds. They would have something big that the church in the summertime – well, and the lodge, too – everything had to be in the summertime because you didn't have air conditioning in places inside. You know, you had to be outside. And, um, the lodge on the 21st of A-, of, uh, June. And then the church did theirs at different times. Just whenever they'd decide it was homecoming time.

MM: Uh-huh.

(Phone rings)

LT: They would have it.

MM: Oh, do you need to ...

LT: Hmmm.

MM: Get ...

(Tape cuts off)

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: Ok, at the church.

LT: Uh-huh. The church, uh, would have their homecoming, or the lodge would have their, uh, get together on the 21st of, uh, June. And, uh, people would bring their picnic lunch and just make a day of it, and it was just – just like a homecoming. Everybody got to see everybody else. Maybe they hadn't seen 'em since the year before.

MM: Yes.

LT: But it was, it was really a big occasion.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And then on the 21st of April, everybody went to the San Jacinto Battleground.

MM: Oh!

LT: That was just the highlight of the year was to go to San Jacinto River. To the battleground.

MM: And take the ferry across?

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: Is that what you did?

LT: Um-hmm. Uh, there at Lynchburg.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Um-hmm. And, uh – oh, you sat in line for hours waiting to go across, you know.

MM: That's what you mentioned.

LT: And the mosquitoes were bad.

MM: Oh!

(Laughter)

LT: And it was hot. (Laughs)

MM: It sounds like, like that was – wasn't the most fun part of the ...

LT: No, it wasn't. But we always had a lot of fun doing that.

MM: Well, were there programs at the battleground?

LT: Yes. They usually had a program. A regular program. Now, when I was, um, when I was up in Grimes County, we always went to Washington on the Brazos.

MM: Oh, yes.

LT: On the 3rd of Mar-, I mean on the 2nd of March.

MM: Oh!

LT: Second of March was ...

MM: That was huge. Yeah.

LT: ... that sort of day. Uh-huh. Up there.

MM: I'm out of tape in a minute.

LT: But here, uh, it was 21st of April.

MM: Oh, yes.

LT: That everybody celebrated. And, uh, we had big programs. Uh, it was sort of political as well as – you know the politicians always took advantage of ...

MM: Oh, they love a crowd.

LT: Yes.

MM: Yes.

LT: Politicians always took advantage of the, uh ... crowds that –

MM: Yeah. Uh-huh.

LT: that gathered.

MM: Well, was it just people from this side of the county that went to the battleground? Or did they come from ...

LT: Uh, all around. From Houston, Pasadena ...

MM: Oh, my goodness.

LT: And down that way. Uh, La Porte. You know, all around.

MM: For a gathering.

LT: Uh-huh.

MM: I wonder what they did in Houston.

LT: I don't know that they did anything there.

MM: Maybe they didn't celebrate it.

LT: You know, everybody – everybody that wanted to celebrate came to the battleground.

MM: I see.

LT: And, course, there weren't nearly as many people then as there is now.

MM: Yes. Yeah.

LT: And, uh, even though you had a lot of people, it wasn't – it wasn't terribly crowded or anything.

MM: And it hadn't begun to sink yet.

LT: No. No. Or if it had, we didn't know about it.

MM: Yeah.

(Laughter)

LT: But it was nice.

MM: Oh. Let me turn this.

LT: Alright.

MM: Flip it over.

(End of tape)

(Tape 2 of 2)

MM: Uh, you had told me earlier about there were only four telephones. Can you tell...?

LT: Yes. Uh, when, when I was a child, we only had four telephones in this area. And, uh, so you spent a good bit of your time taking messages to people. Uh, but they were always important messages. People didn't call just to – just to visit.

MM: Yes.

LT: They called to tell you something definite.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh, but Smith's Store had one. And, uh – I guess Ilfree's Store had one. And we had one. And why we had one when the others didn't, I don't know. But we did.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: We had one. And, uh, I can't remember the fourth one, but it seems to me like it was the Thompkins who had the fourth one.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh, the Thompkins were the undertakers.

MM: Oh.

LT: Uh, they sold caskets, which was all the undertakers did at that time. They, they didn't do the work that undertakers do now. And, uh – but they had one. And as far as I know, that were the only – that was the only... And the exchange came out of Crosby. Crosby was the main city because it was on a railroad.

MM: Oh, ok.

LT: And, uh, in fact, everything – for years and years, the bank was in Crosby.

MM: Oh. You did all your banking that far away?

LT: Banking, uh-huh. Uh-huh. And, uh, if you had to catch a train to go anywhere, if you wanted to go any distance ...

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: You went to Crosby to catch a train.

MM: And how long did it take you to get to Crosby?

LT: Oh ... an hour or so. Maybe two hours.

MM: Oh.

LT: You know, it took a while.

MM: Yes.

LT: Because sometimes the roads were bad. And the best roads were just, uh ... uh, shell roads.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And I can remember when they put in the concrete road. The first concrete road in, in Harris County was between Crosby and Lynchburg.

MM: That main street of Highlands there.

LT: Uh-huh. Which is the Main Street of Highlands, now. And we use to – on Sunday afternoons, it was the delight of everyone to go up there and drive on that concrete road. (Laughs)

MM: Well, what was in Highlands? Was there anything nice in Highlands?

LT: Not a great deal. It was just sort of a little wide place in the road.

MM: Oh.

LT: Um-hmm. At that time. There were a few people who lived there, but it wasn't – it wasn't built up much. Now, it seems to me, like in ... well, a little bit before World War II, Highlands really came to life. They began, uh, putting in the fig farms and things of that sort. And they put in – well, during, during the Depression, they, uh, put in a cannery up there.

MM: Oh, I know where that is.

LT: Uh-huh. And they, uh, they canned peas, and things of that sort.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And they sent it all over the United States.

MM: Oh!

LT: Because it was sort of like a, a charity project as far-, the government subsidized it.

MM: Oh, I didn't realize that.

LT: And, uh – uh-huh. And people, they, uh – the, uh, government would buy up what, the surplus.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And they'd send it wherever it was needed, in whatever part of, part of the United States it was needed. But, uh, that was Roosevelt's part of his program at that time.

MM: [Inaudible].

LT: Uh-huh. And, uh, then, Highlands began ... settling up a little more that way.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And then, too, an interurban came out of Houston to Baytown about that time. And it came through Highlands. And that helped them to build up because they had more transportation that way.

MM: Now, is that on a train?

LT: Uh-huh.

MM: The interurban was a train?

LT: Uh-huh. Um-hmm. And that was one of our ways of getting back and forth to – to Houston. And when Market Street, which is now Interstate 10 up that way.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: When Market Street was built and we had a concrete road between here and Houston, we thought we'd died and gone to heaven.

MM: I bet!

(Laughter)

LT: Because it was just wonderful to go. And I can remember there – course there were trees on every side, and it was just almost wilderness between here and Houston. And my grandfather used to tell me when we'd be going along there, he says, "Now, sister, one of these days, this'll all be built up so you won't know when you leave one town and get to the..."

MM: And that's the truth.

LT: And it's that way.

MM: It is.

LT: Um-hmm. And, uh, you know, to me, I just couldn't even picture it.

MM: (Laughs)

LT: And I thought well, what in the world's he talking about? You know.

MM: (Laughs) How could that be? Yeah.

LT: But it was – yes. But of course it is that way.

MM: It sure is.

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: Well, what was at Lynchburg?

LT: At, at one time, they had a grocery store, or a general merchandise store, and some filling stations, and things of that sort. But not a great deal that I can remember. Now, at one time, they tell me that Lynchburg was pretty nice-sized little, little burg.

MM: Uh-huh. I didn't know that.

LT: But, uh, I don't remember it being that way.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Because when – I remember going across the ferry, and going to the battleground, and that sort of thing. It was mostly – maybe there were two stores. Two or three stores. Seems to me like there was a hardware store at one time there.

MM: I wonder if it's that, that one that's still there.

LT: But ... I don't know.

MM: It's called Lynchburg Hardware –

LT: Uh-huh.

MM: and it's a wonderful hardware store.

LT: Well, this was all right down there by the ferry.

MM: Oh!

LT: It was all – every bit down there close to the ferry.

MM: Oh!

LT: You see, it was much higher then. This ...

MM: You mean where the ferry docks, now?

LT: Uh-huh.

MM: That's where the town was?

LT: Um-hmm. Yes.

MM: Well, when did they leave there and come?

LT: When it began getting so low, and, and the storms began washing it away so much, well, they began moving farther back.

MM: Well, see I – it never occurred to me it wasn't in the same location.

LT: No. No, it was all down there where the ferry landing is. Now, there wasn't anything much on the other side.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: It was all on this side. And, uh ... up this way, I guess maybe a mile from the ferry landing was what we'd always heard was the Lynchburg house. The people by the name of Lynchburg had lived there. That was their – and it sort of a high, a hill.

MM: Oh.

LT: And there was a house there that, where those people lived. And the town of Lynchburg was named for the Lynch.

MM: Well, is that the ...

LT: Lynch. Lynch family.

MM: Is that house still there?

LT: I haven't been that way in so long, I don't know.

MM: I just live a stone's throw from there. I think I'll go drive over there and take a look.

LT: Um-hmm. Well, it used to be just as you made the curve before you got to the ferry landing.

MM: I know where you mean.

LT: You know there used to be an S-curve.

MM: Yeah, they've, they've done a lot work right there.

LT: Yes, I know they have.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: But it used to be that way. And that first part of the S as you're going down toward the ferry landing, right up, right on the water, was a high place. And these people, their house was there. And, uh, but their name was Lynch.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And that was – the town was named for them. And I am not sure, but what the store probably belonged to them.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: But, I just don't remember that.

MM: Yes. Well, speaking of storms ...

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: What do you remember about hurricanes, or [Inaudible]?

LT: Well, I've seen a good many of them. And, uh, I was never upset about 'em. My mother was the kind that was scared to death of storms. And she was so upset all the time that the rest of us always tried to be so calm ...

MM: To keep her.

LT: ... to keep her from being upset, that storms never upset me.

MM: Oh.

LT: But, um, we've been through some pretty bad ones that I can remember. In 40 ... I guess '43 – something like that – there was a real bad one. And, um, and I remember that one. We had, we had an awful lot of trouble with flooding.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Then. And that's the first one that I remember a lot of flooding. And then it just gradually got worse and worse. And then, of course, Carla was our worst one.

MM: Yes. How bad, how bad did that hit Cedar Bayou?

LT: Well, it hit pretty badly. Um, the water got up in the church.

MM: Oh.

LT: For the first time that it had ever gotten in the church. And, uh, it got up in the present sanctuary.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And it was about four inches deep in the present sanctuary. And, uh ...

MM: Were you living here in this house?

LT: Yes.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Uh-huh, I was living here then.

MM: But the – you didn't have water or anything, did you?

LT: Well, you see, I'm up on piers.

MM: Well, I was just thinking –

LT: On blocks.

MM: And this is really high here.

LT: And this is high. I've seen the time when water came across this whole thing as much as four or five inches deep across here. But, um, being up on blocks, it has helped us so that we didn't have a problem. But, uh ... Carla was ... had the worst tides.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Having the high tide plus the storm made it worse than any other we had had here. And, uh, I remember Daddy saying that that was the highest it had ever been to his knowledge.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: At that time. We tell me we had a 15-foot tide at that time – I mean, uh ...

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: Tide and storm.

MM: Ooo.

LT: At that time. And 15-foot would cover an awful lot of Baytown.

MM: Sure would. And it did.

LT: And of course now,

MM: Yeah.

LT: now it would cover even more.

MM: Uh-huh. Be worse.

LT: But, uh, we've had several since then – smaller storms – that we've had a lot of high water, but not as much.

MM: Not like Carla.

LT: But we've had an awful lot of flooding.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: Around here. Uh, at one time, Cedar Bayou stream used to flood every time we had an awful lot of rain.

MM: Oh.

LT: But it doesn't do that anymore because they keep it cleaned out so well. But, uh, when it used to not be cleaned out as much as it is, well, uh, the trees would hold back the debris and that sort of thing.

MM: I guess – yes.

LT: And caused it to s-

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: To ... uh...

MM: Damn it up.

LT: Uh, they claim that the last storm that did a lot of damage up, uh, on, uh ... Crosby Barbers Hill Road up that way.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: I don't remember the number that they've given it, but anyway, it's a road up there. Uh, it was caused from debris that would back up ...

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

LT: against these trees. And then it would the water to flood those houses.

MM: Yes.

LT: And, uh... But I can remember Brownwood area and Lakewood out in that way. That was always low. And when they first started settling that, people who had lived here all their life thought they had lost their mind.

MM: I've heard that. They said that they'd [Inaudible].

LT: Because it was always low.

MM: Lakewood floods a lot.

LT: Oh, yes. It had always been low.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And we couldn't see people building out there.

MM: Yes.

LT: And many of the people who built out there were people had lived here all their lives. So that's what ...

MM: Should have known better.

LT: ... what even made it better.

MM: Yeah. (Laughs)

LT: But, uh ...

MM: Well that's – I've heard that.

LT: Um-hmm. But the storms do more damage here than they do some places because evidently we're in a very vulnerable spot.

MM: Apparently so.

LT: Uh, my daddy used to run a little boat for the Gulf Oil Company down in the Bay.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: In Tabbs Bay. And, uh, he always had to be very careful of the boat during high tides and bad weather or storms or anything. And, uh, uh – he, he went to all those wells out there in the bay. And there used to be many, many derricks out in the bay.

MM: [Inaudible].

LT: And of course when we used to go across the ferry at Morgan's Point, we went across Hog Island, which was a very nice place to go across there. And there used to be the most beautiful, uh, beach along there for people to swim.

MM: On Hog Island?

LT: Uh-huh.

MM: What a horrible name, though.

LT: Yes! But, uh, you could swim right there, and see the ships on the ship channel.

MM: Oh.

LT: All along there. The reason – they tell me the reason it's called Hog Island is that, uh, the man who owned it, ran hogs – had hogs out there. He raised hogs out there.

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

LT: And so they called it Hog Island.

MM: Ok.

LT: At one time it was called Alexander's Island because the man who founded the Cedar Bayou Methodist Church was named Alexander.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And evidently he had a house out there because he lived there. And when he would come to church over here, he would have to ride horseback from the island. And if he caught low tide, that was fine coming across.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: He could just walk the horse across.

MM: Oh.

LT: But if the tide was high, sometimes he had to swim the horse across.

MM: Oh.

LT: And so he always had to carry a change of clothing with him.

(Laughter)

LT: Because it would get wet.

MM: Well I didn't realize, I – that you could get from Hog Island ...

LT: Well it, it hasn't always been as deep between the two.

MM: Oh. Oh.

LT: You see, it wasn't that deep. It was just, uh, well much ...

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Much shallower water.

MM: Did you ever go to the movies in Pelly? Did you ever go to Pelly to a movie?

LT: Oh, yes. I – I went to our first movie here, which was on what is now Commerce. Uh, North Commerce, about, um – well, in the first block of North Commerce.

MM: Oh.

LT: There was a movie. And it had dirt floor. And, uh, uh – we used to go in there to two movies.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh – and I've been to Pelly to the movie down there. And of course out to old – what we called old Baytown.

MM: Yes, I know where you mean.

LT: Went out there. Then to – I, I've been to all the movies around.

MM: (Laughs) Well, what was Pelly like? What was your impression of Pelly?

LT: Well, Pelly was kind of a bad word.

MM: (Laughs) Well that's what I gather.

LT: That was a rough part of town. Now, that doesn't mean that there weren't good people there.

MM: Yes.

LT: But, there was – there was a rough element.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Because of the, of the oilfield.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And, uh, oilfield workers were not always the highest class people. Not that there weren't many good people who did.

MM: Oh, I know.

LT: But, uh, their ...

MM: A lot of transients, though.

LT: That's right. And some of them were single men.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And, uh, they raised sand. (Phone rings – tape cuts off.)

MM: Curious ...

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: about Pelly. Did you ever see hogs? People – I've heard a few people tell me about seeing hogs.

LT: Uh, yes, when I was a child I can remember seeing 'em around. You know, we didn't always have concrete streets and, and good sidewalks. We had wooden sidewalks. And, um, yes, I've seen hogs around there.

MM: I bet.

LT: And, uh ... it – not only in Pelly.

MM: Oh. Oh, ok.

LT: They were all over town.

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

LT: They were all over town. Because people ... had whatever they needed to live.

MM: Yeah.

LT: You know, right with 'em.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh... old – what we called old Baytown, out around the refineries, uh, was just sort of exclusive. I mean, there were just a few people who lived out there.

MM: Oh.

LT: And it was an entirely separate part.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh, so was Goose Creek. Uh, it was three distinct cities.

MM: That's what I've ... read.

LT: Um-hmm. It was three distinct cities. And, uh, uh – after World War II, when my husband and I moved into this house, it was over on Cedar Bayou Road. And when we first moved there, we were in Goose Creek. It – we had not been there very long; we only live there two years. And we had not been there very long until they made it Pelly. Pelly took over all of it.

MM: Oh.

LT: We were still in the same house.

MM: [Inaudible]

LT: Same area. But we were in Pelly. And then in no time, they took a vote and decided to call the whole thing Baytown. So in (laughs), in the two years' time, we lived in Goose Creek, Pelly and Baytown (laughs).

MM: Never moved! (Laughs)

LT: And didn't ever move. (Laughs)

MM: It'd be hard to keep up with – with your mail.

LT: Yes, it was. It really was. And one of the amusing things while I was living there: one time I got a Christmas card from a friend of mine in New Jersey. And it came just to our address, Cedar Bayou Road.

MM: No ...

LT: No town.

MM: No town?

LT: Nothing.

MM: No Texas?

LT: No Texas. Nothing. Cedar Bayou Road. Would you believe it came from New Jersey?

MM: And it got here?

LT: Got to me. I said that wouldn't happen today.

MM: I know. But, and it might not have happened then if the right person hadn't ...

LT: That's right. That's right.

MM: Good grief.

LT: But it – it did. I tell you, there were some strange – but people took an interest in things. For instance, we knew practically everyone who lived here.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And we knew something about them and their family.

MM: Yes.

LT: And, and people don't know that now; you don't have that closeness.

MM: That's right.

LT: There are many of my neighbors that I don't actually... The people across the street, I don't know their names.

MM: I know, I know what you mean.

LT: And it's sad we ...

MM: Yes.

LT: ... we've lost that closeness.

MM: I think so, too. How many people were in Cedar Bayou? How many, how big?

LT: Oh, I think at one time we may have had as many as 900, honey. (Laughs)

MM: Oh, I had no idea what, what size it was.

LT: It never was terribly large because it was, uh, scattered. But it was scattered from, uh – well, we, we always considered Cedar Bayou from about North Main all the way to the bay.

MM: Oh.

LT: See, Cedar Bayou was over a whole lot of area.

MM: It is.

LT: Part of it in Chambers County. That was all Cedar Bayou.

MM: Oh.

LT: And we are told – now, we have no proof – but we are told that when Sam Houston lived here when his – they had a home down on what we call Cedar Point.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Down at the mouth of Cedar Bayou. And we are told that he got his mail at Cedar Bayou Post Office.

MM: Oh.

LT: And that they had seen him, people had seen him come up here. Ride his horse up to the post office and get his mail. And we are told that possibly they worshiped at Cedar Bayou Methodist Church.

MM: Oh!

LT: At that time. But, uh, we don't have any proof of it.

MM: Yes.

LT: But we've been told that.

MM: Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if you could just find something to help it.

LT: Um-hmm. Well this is, this is a very important area historically.

MM: Yes. It certainly is.

LT: Because so many of the early leaders of our nation, of our state ...

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Lived in this area.

MM: That's right. They sure did.

LT: Um-hmm. And of course Mrs. Allen, who was the adopt – well, not adopted daughter, she was a foster daughter of, uh, Anson Jones.

MM: Oh.

LT: Is – did Anson Jones? Ashbel Smith. Ashbel Smith.

MM: The doctor?

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: He was the doctor.

LT: Ashbel Smith. Uh, she lived right here in this area.

MM: That's what I have ...

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: ... read.

LT: And so, uh ...

MM: So you grew up with a real sense of ...

LT: That's right.

MM: ... of history.

LT: Um-hmm, Um-hmm.

MM: Was, was Cedar Bayou and incorporated town?

LT: No.

MM: No. So it didn't have a mayor or anything?

LT: Um-mm. Um-mm. And Cedar Bayou didn't want to be.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And they would not sell land for the railroad that came through.

MM: Oh.

LT: And that's the reason that the town is in the area it is rather than out here because all the commerce and everything was out here.

MM: Oh.

LT: But they did that ... there's my husband. But, uh ...

MM: Hello.

Unidentified: I wonder whose gonna have interest in this place.

MM: (Laughs) I believe ... (tape cuts off)

MM: Tell me about the electricity.

LT: Um, the first electric lines came out of Crosby. And of course the telephone out of Crosby.

MM: Now when – do you know when that was? When that ...

LT: No, I don't. I can't remember. I know I was very small, let's see. I can – about ... it must have been in the early '20's.

MM: Oh.

LT: That it came.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: And, uh, it was most unusual because just a few people would take electricity. And you had to sign up for so many to take it before it would come down your ...

MM: Oh. I see.

LT: Your road.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Not your street. (Laughs) Your road.

MM: (Laughs)

LT: And, uh, but I do remember it coming out of ...

MM: OH.

LT: out of Crosby.

MM: And did, did your family have it?

LT: Yes, we had electricity. Mother didn't want it; she was scared to death of electricity. She just knew it would burn down the house.

MM: (Laughs)

LT: But it didn't. So we had, uh, we had electricity put in there, and all we had was just drops.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Didn't have anything fancy, you know, not any chandeliers or anything.

MM: Yeah.

LT: Because ...

MM: The wire and a bulb.

LT: Um-hmm. Um-hmm. But we were real pleased with it.

MM: Oh, I bet.

LT: And, and the first electric, uh, iron that we had was just – oh, that was really something. We were so pleased with it.

MM: I – well, I bet that changed life so much.

LT: Yes. Oh, yes. It was the most wonderful thing in the world to have something that would keep steady heat.

MM: Yes.

LT: Because otherwise we had had – well, we had had the gasoline iron.

MM: Oh, now I didn't know about that.

LT: Well, now those things were a little tricky. And you – uh, they'd uh, it was like a gasoline lantern, you know, after a while, you'd have to pump it up again.

MM: Um-hmm.

LT: And, uh, it didn't keep steady heat.

MM: And it burned? I mean, it actually had a ...

LT: Had, had flames inside.

MM: You lit it with a match?

LT: Uh-huh.

MM: Ooo.

LT: And, uh, so you had to ...

MM: You must have scorched a bunch of stuff with that.

LT: Well, it was easy to scorch.

MM: Yeah.

LT: Um-hmm. And before that, of course we always heated our irons in front of a fireplace, or on the stove.

MM: Yeah.

LT: Um-hmm.

MM: Oh, I – an electric iron would be a ... [Inaudible].

LT: And, and that was really a, an invention. And I think that was the main thing that Daddy wanted us to have the electricity for.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Was for an iron.

MM: Oh, yes.

LT: Because it was such a wonderful thing.

MM: Oh, well I can see.

LT: And, uh, I remember our first electric toaster; that was quite an invention. It – it didn't pop-up. That was before you had pop-up toasters, you know.

MM: I bet the sides it ...

LT: Opened out.

MM: Uh-huh.

LT: Um-hmm. But it would, it would toast. But you had to watch. You had to be on your toes, you know.

(Laughter)

MM: You had to open it at the right time.

LT: Just at the right time, otherwise you had burned toast.

(Laughter)

MM: Still an improvement, though.

LT: Yes, very much.

MM: Oh.

(End of tape)

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