

*The  
Kerr County Historical Commission  
presents*

*An ORAL HISTORY*

*Of*

*James E. (Jim) Nugent*

*Kerrville, Texas 2019*

*Kerr County Historical Commission*

*ORAL HISTORY PROJECT*

Interviewee: Skip Trammell and Nan Nugent-White

Interviewers: Francelle Robison Collins  
Bonnie Pipes Flory

Date: May 10, 2019

Place: Kerr County Courthouse  
Kerrville, Texas

*The Oral History Project is a project of  
The Kerr County Historical Commission,  
a volunteer organization. Oral History  
Committee chair is Francelle Robison Collins.*

Transcribed and Edited by Rita Edington Odom

*Kerr County Historical Commission*

*ORAL HISTORY PROJECT*

Name: James E. (Jim) Nugent

Date of Birth: June 24, 1922

Place of Birth: San Angelo, Texas

Education: Schreiner Institute, Kerrville, Texas  
University of Texas, Austin, Texas

Father: Edward William Nugent

Mother: Ada Belle Teresa Patterson

Spouse: Billie Merritt Nugent

Children: Cal "Skip" Trammell  
Nan Nugent-White

SUMMARY

James E. (Jim) Nugent was born on June 24, 1922 in San Angelo, Texas. He graduated from Schreiner Institute in 1941 and received his law degree from the University of Texas in 1949. He served with the U.S. Navy in World War II as a pilot. He was married to Billie Merritt Nugent. He led a life of political service. His was the Kerr County attorney until 1954 and also practiced law in Kerrville. He was a member of the Texas House of Representatives from 1961 to 1979 and served at Speaker Pro Tem from 1977 until 1979. After being appointed to and elected to the Texas Railroad Commission, he served in that capacity for sixteen years. Jim died on July 17, 2016 and is interred at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin, Texas. This oral history account is shared by his two children, Skip Trammell and Nan Nugent-White.

## **An Oral History of James E. (Jim) Nugent**

*My name is Francelle Robison Collins and I am with the Kerr County Historical Commission, Oral History Project. Today is May 10, 2019, and I am here at the Kerr County Courthouse in Kerrville, Texas, with Bonnie Pipes Floury. We are talking with Skip Trammell and his sister Nan Nugent-White, who understand that we are making audio and video recordings of this interview and that a typewritten transcript of this interview will be provided so that changes can be made. The audio and video tapes, however, cannot be edited. This information along with copies of any family pictures and documents provided by you will then be turned over to the Kerr Regional History Center, Schreiner University, and the University of North Texas' Portals to Texas History, where they will be available to the public unless specific restrictions are placed on them by you. These restrictions will be noted in the Release form after you have had a chance to review your manuscript. Are you clear on what we are doing today?*

SKIP & NAN: Yes. So far.

FRANCELLE: We are talking today with Skip Trammell and Nan Nugent-White, who are children of Jim Nugent. Jim was a resident of Kerr County most of his life. Jim was born June 24, 1922 in San Angelo, Texas. He graduated from Schreiner Institute in 1941 and received his law degree from the University of Texas in 1949. He served with the U.S. Navy in World War II as a pilot. He led a life of political service. His first position was in Kerr County, where he was an attorney, where he served until 1954. He also practiced law in Kerrville. He was a member of the Texas House of Representatives from 1961 to 1979. He served as Speaker Pro Tem from 1977 until 1979 when he was elected to the Texas Railroad Commission where he served for sixteen years. Jim died on July 17, 2016 and is interred at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin, Texas.

Skip, we will start with you. What is your given name?

SKIP: My given name is Cal Cocke Trammell Jr.

FRANCELLE: But we only know you by Skip.

SKIP: Yes.

FRANCELLE: When and where were you born?

SKIP: I was born May 2, 1943, right across the street over there.

FRANCELLE: Where I was, in Secor Hospital

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SKIP: Yeah.

FRANCELLE: Your mother, Billie Merritt, and Jim were married in 1956 when Jim was an attorney here in Kerrville. What are the impressions that you can remember at that time?

SKIP: Well, I was thirteen at that time. We had been living here for about 3 years, my mother and I. He showed up at the door one time – we lived over on Golf Street, 929 Golf Street – with a puppy. And I loved him from then on.

FRANCELLE: Where did they meet, do you think?

SKIP: I'm not sure. I'm very fortunate to have had him as my dad. If I had grown up with my biological father, it wouldn't have been a good deal. It was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

FRANCELLE: Politically, what do you remember? What did people say about him?

SKIP: I remember in '61 we started campaigning in this district, I would go out every Saturday with a carload of leaflets – James E. (Jim) Nugent, running for the Texas legislature – and we'd knock on screen doors at that time – and if nobody was home we'd leave it in the handle. We went to Menard, Junction, all up in there. My buddies and I would just take off every Saturday and spread out. It was good. I was told one time that if he had not been so honest he would have been Governor. We had a lot of good times. We were outdoorsmen. We liked to hunt. I went to Vietnam in '69 – today's the 10<sup>th</sup> – it was this day in '69 – and I wrote a letter in July to Mom and Jim and said, "You know, I don't have anything but a wife and 2 little bitty kids, but I'm not going to get out of this. I cannot live through what's going on over here. Will you please take care of the kids." I didn't hear anything back from them, which was strange. The first of September we were out on a little outing. Now, Nixon said there were no combat troops in Cambodia but I'd have to disagree with him. A helicopter came in there and a lieutenant got off and said, "Lieutenant Trammell, you need to get on the helicopter and go back to CuCHI and meet the helicopter that is coming in at two o'clock." Fine with me, they weren't shooting back there. So, I went back there and I was waiting and this helicopter landed. A Filipino general stepped off, I didn't know him from Adam; I saluted. The next person off was Jim Nugent, the next person off was John MacGuire, who was Jim's roommate at the University of Texas and probably Jim's best friend. I said, "What in the hell are y'all doing here?" He said, "Well, I didn't like the letter you wrote to us so I thought we'd come check on you." I thought I must be the only kid in the world who goes to war and his daddy comes to check on him. They stayed 2 weeks and we had a great time and I was a first lieutenant at the time and what we did and where we went – there were majors and colonels and they were saluting me – they didn't know who the hell I was. Here was this special

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forces guy in fatigues and these 2 other guys that they didn't know what they were doing. It was a lot of fun but, damn if they didn't get on a plane and come home and I had to stay. That's one of the best memories I have.

FRANCELLE: What do you remember about him as an attorney here in town? Did most people know him?

SKIP: Oh, yeah. You know, he had a reputation of being very stern. It was this way and no gray areas.

FRANCELLE: Did he raise you that way too?

SKIP: Oh, yeah. There were 4 of us, I believe, in high school, kinda went crazy one night and there was a school bus sitting out in front of the high school. Steve Nance had a 5-gallon bucket of paint and we painted all the windows on that school bus. Across the street was Chat & Chew and we put another name on the side of it that I won't use today. Eventually we were caught. What happened was we went down to the Chatterbox that night after we had finished and we were sitting there and Tanner Mahan had blue paint on his hand. He looked up and, you know the guys that made you go to school?

FRANCELLE: Jack Roe the Probation officer?

SKIP: Probation officer. His son was in there and he saw Tanner with that blue paint and he told his daddy about that and that's how we were found out. We became known as the 8:30 club because we had to go home at 8:30 every night.

FRANCELLE: For how long?

SKIP: Six months. And that scared me to death. I thought he would probably kill me for that. But he didn't.

FRANCELLE: What did he say to you?

SKIP: I can't tell you. But, he was an excellent attorney. One of the best legislators that ever served over there. She (Nan) was a court reporter?

(back and forth conversation about the word for what Nan did, but finally....)

NAN: A page.

FRANCELLE: We help each other remember things all the time.

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- SKIP: A few weeks ago I couldn't think of the word "fan belt" and I wouldn't ask anybody. It took me almost a week to come up with it. But, when he went on the Railroad Commission, that was a different deal.
- FRANCELLE: What made him want to get on that commission?
- SKIP: Well, he was appointed by Dolph Briscoe to replace someone who had to get off because his wife had too much oil and gas revenue.
- NAN: John Newton.
- SKIP: So, he was appointed to that.
- NAN: And had to run again the next year. And then the next year.
- SKIP: Statewide elections. That's quite a deal. But, it was really funny. When we would campaign, I would fly Dad's plane. He was a pilot also, but I would fly. I grew up flying with him. And they would say, "Commissioner Nugent is coming and his son will be with him." So, they never knew that I was his son. They thought Pat Nugent was his son so they would talk around me and I got to report lots of good things. That was kinda fun.
- NAN: One of my best memories on that was we were all somewhere and we'd been campaigning all week. It had been a long week. And we get somewhere and it was for dinner. So, you had Dad and Mom, Pat Nugent, I think, was standing there, Skip and then me. I was Cotten, he (Skip) was Trammell, and you have Pat Nugent, and the guy putting it on – it was very nicely done – he was a little nervous and he's introducing people and he goes, "This is Billie and Jim Nugent, their son Pat Nugent, Skip Trammell and his wife, Nan." We just grinned and never said a word. We had the best time with it. When they did find out, they kind of freaked out.
- FRANCELLE: Some of the things I read about him were that he was conservative but the people that he got to work for him, a lot of them weren't. That was good in those days, it's good in these days.
- SKIP: They said he was the last conservative statewide Democrat elected. But, we all grew up as Democrats. It's not the same now.
- NAN: He hired women, minorities, because he wanted to know what our community really was. He said, "I can get all the 'yes men' I need. That's not what I'm looking for." So, he was way ahead of his time on that part.

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FRANCELLE: They said when he would walk in a room he would have a big briefcase with lots of papers in it and they would say, "Oh, no, he's going to add something to something today."

NAN: He was frightening when he walked in and there was a bill. He had the nickname of "The Super Snake" because he knew the rules more than anyone else in the legislature. So, when he walked in and there was a bill, he could kill the bill.

FRANCELLE: Nan, what is your given name.

NAN: Billie Nan Noreen Nugent White. Can you tell I was not expected? My mother was Billie. My grandmother was Nancy but they didn't like that so they cut it to Nan. Noreen was my dad's dead sister. So, I got the whole gambit.

FRANCELLE: When and where were you born?

NAN: February 2, 1959, right here.

FRANCELLE: You're sixteen years younger than Skip?

NAN: Yes.

SKIP: Can't you tell?

NAN: Not at all.

FRANCELLE: What else can you tell us about Jim?

NAN: I'll never forget – my best friend, Cynthia, and I got in trouble. We had skipped school and gone to San Antonio during the day. We were in high school. I was seeing one of the Schreiner boys and she was seeing one of his friends. We went to have lunch with them or something but we were tennis players so we were back in time for practice. So, we showed up and Coach Deckert said, "This isn't going to work." And we asked why because we didn't think they would even notice we were gone. He said, "Your dad already knows. He knows you skipped school. And quite frankly, I don't like being involved in this." We freaked out and for the next 6 weeks we were riding out bikes to school and we lived across town and had to be at practice really early. But, Dad knew way ahead of time, before we got back where we were and what we were doing. Like the time we were coming back from Austin, I got a ticket in Stonewall. So, I come strolling in the back door of the house and say "hi"; I was still a teenager then. And he stands up and says, "Nan, is there anything you want to tell me?" I'm like, "No", because I was going to go pay the ticket. He said, "I think there is." I said, "You can't know I got a speeding ticket, can you?" He said, "Yep. I got a call and Mr. Guthrie says if you'll stop by and



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visit him, he'd like to see you when you pay that ticket." It was an hour and a half; they called him as soon as I got the ticket.

SKIP: Bicycles were a big deal in his life. One time at Schreiner I got a bad semester grade. And I had to give up my car. And he put me on a bicycle. We lived over on Virginia Dr. He told me to never let him catch me off of that bicycle between home and Schreiner. I rode that damn thing back and forth – it's a long way. One day, Joe Burkett came by in his pickup. I asked him if he would haul me to school that morning and he said, "Sure". So, I got on the bike in the back of Burkett's pickup and we went right down Main Street and Jim was standing right out in front of the office. I looked at him and he grinned and waved. I was still on that bicycle.

FRANCELLE: Here are some quotes: "Jim Nugent was one of the most effective members of the House and one of the most feared." That was the same at home too?

NAN: Yes. You earned it. You worked for it. He told me when I was young, "All I can give you is an education, the only thing that can't be taken away from you. I want you to know that if I took you up in a plane, blindfolded you and dropped you, that you'll survive." And that's pretty much how he raised us, to be sure that we would be fine.

SKIP: He grew up very poor. His dad was a World War I veteran.

NAN: He was a cook.

SKIP: Yeah. He had tuberculosis. He was a guard out at Legion. So, Jim didn't have very much money. When he graduated from high school he wanted to go to Schreiner. They had a scholarship opening for a clarinet player in the band. So, he applied for that because he could play the clarinet. As a matter of fact, my biological father was a drummer in that same band. My mother was a Sponsor. So, Jim got the scholarship because he couldn't go to school otherwise. He was the third clarinet player and they decided they only needed 2. So, they dropped him, and he said he had to do something. So, they asked if he could play the oboe and he said, "Yeah!" There was a scholarship for an oboe player. He didn't even know what an oboe was. Two weeks later he had taught himself to play the oboe. That's how he finished his education at Schreiner.

NAN: I still have that oboe.

SKIP: That's the way he was about everything.

NAN: One of my favorite things about him, about being in a room where he was campaigning or might just be giving a speech, he was such a scary man, because he was feared, but he was so charismatic that when he would get up to give a speech

he always had a joke at the beginning. He wasn't really like that at home with us so when he would get up he always got the crowd immediately with a quote or a joke. And he was so brilliant at speaking. He kept you captivated. It wasn't boring. He knew your time was valuable. And he wanted to be sure you were listening to what he had to say. For those who were maybe on the other side of the table from him, he really did always want what was best for his district, for his state, it was so important to him. But, because he came from the poor side, he was always for the little guy. What can we do so that they still have a path and not overtaken by the other companies. So, I think he did so many wonderful things.

FRANCELLE: Those education bills that he worked on.

SKIP: Education was nothing before that.

NAN: It opened the door for him.

FRANCELLE: Another comment was that he was a man of unquestionable integrity. Let's talk a little bit about your mother. I know she was a Merritt and the Merritts go back generations here.

SKIP: We're kin to everybody in Kerr County.

FRANCELLE: Where was she born?

NAN: She was born in Kerr Co. Texas on Goat Creek Road January, 1921. She and her 2 sisters used to ride around in the back end of a pickup and I remember she told me one time when I was frustrated about something and she said, "You know, my father always told me" – no, never mind, I'm not going to tell that one.

FRANCELLE: Did she like being a political wife?

NAN: She loved it. She was every bit as important to his re-elections as he was. Because he was just so stern and focused and...

SKIP: She was more of a people person. And pretty.

FRANCELLE: So, she would get out and knock on doors?

NAN & SKIP: Oh, we all would. Because Dad thought that was the most important thing.

NAN: We knocked on every door that was available. His deal, which I think the Democratic and Republican parties can take note of is that he would never mention an opponent because he said why should he give them free publicity.

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SKIP: Why give them any publicity. He never mentioned their names.

NAN: I think that was brilliant. We could use a little of that today. She was awesome. She could calm someone down after he had been maybe a little direct. I think she gathered as many votes as he did.

FRANCELLE: Did they live both places? Did they have a place in Austin?

SKIP: No. They didn't move to Austin until he went on the Railroad Commission. We lived on Ruth Street to start with and then moved to 1223 Virginia Drive.

FRANCELLE: Then they did move to Austin? Did they keep 2 homes?

NAN: Yes. They did. They kept the one here.

SKIP: And he went back and forth to Austin when he was in the legislature in '79.

NAN: (to Skip) Can I tell why Dolph Briscoe wanted him on the Railroad Commission?

SKIP: Yep.

FRANCELLE: Were they friends?

NAN: Well, back then, whether you were the same party or different, once the elections were over, they worked together because it was really the only way to move forward.

SKIP: You can tell they're not moving forward today.

NAN: So, he called dad and said, "Nugent, I have a request. It's the worst opportunity you'll ever have but I really need you. I need to put you on the Railroad Commission. John Newton has to step down and I think there's a fox in the henhouse. And we need someone to go over there and get it in order" That's why he wanted him to go on, but it was terrible because he had to run the next year because he was appointed. And the following year because Newton's term was a 6-year term and it was 4 years in. So, he had to run in the 5<sup>th</sup> year and then the 6<sup>th</sup> year because the term was up. We had the largest district in the state so elections and campaigning we were used to, but a statewide thing – when we came to Dallas and were campaigning in a Baptist church in downtown Dallas – that was awesome. And then, the whole church and we went door to door in that neighborhood knocking on doors as we had always done. It was very moving.

SKIP: It was a black church.

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NAN: It was incredibly charismatic. It was wonderful.

SKIP: Let me tell you one more story. I didn't want to go to the University. I graduated from Schreiner and wanted to go to Texas Tech with all my buddies. Dad said I was going to the University and was going to be a lawyer. I was raised by a lawyer – didn't want to be one. But he said that was where I was going so here I go. So, like I say, when Kennedy was killed in November I drove home right then. I stopped by the church, we were Episcopalians, so I stopped by the church, did a little praying and went home and said I was not going back to the University. He said, "Well, where are you going to go?" I said, "I'm going to Tech where I always wanted to go." He said, "How are you going to get there?" I said, "In my car." He said to check the title on the car; the car belonged to him and it wasn't going anywhere. So, Burkett comes back into the picture and I asked Burkett if he would give me a ride to the bus station, I'm going to Lubbock. He said he would. So, he picked me up and took me to the bus station and I bought a ticket and was sitting at the back of the bus. The sheriff steps on the bus and says, "Boy, your daddy wants you at home." Since he had his "gun" and I didn't have one I went with him. So, I went back home. At our house we never just visited. We interrogated, cross examined, debated – never just sat down and visited. We had a round dinner table and 2 of Jim's young attorneys in his office were there, Dr. Packard was there with my mother because she was having a fit, the priest was there. This is how we operated.

NAN: Mom was not having it go the way it was.

SKIP: So, after about an hour or so we worked a deal out. A contract type deal so I could go to Tech. He said he'd give me \$140 a month for room and board and if I got a B average the first semester I could have my car back. I did and got my car back. I was living in a dorm and they built a new dorm and the dorm advisor asked me if I would like to be a wing advisor in the new dorm. I said yes and asked if it paid anything. He said it paid room and board. I got the job and forgot to tell Jim I had room and board paid. But that's the way we operated, and it was interesting.

FRANCELLE: He just really wanted you to go to UT?

SKIP: Yep.

NAN: That was the only school. When my kids got older and the oldest, Joe, went to Schreiner just like mom and dad did, like Skip did, like I did. My older son did also. The 2 younger ones were athletic, soccer players, and we wanted them to go to school outside of Texas. I thought if they left they might come back but if they stayed they might leave later. So, I told them they could go anywhere but they couldn't stay right here. Dad had a fit. He said, "I'm not going to help one dime with that school." And that was okay because we had already saved the money. We

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just want you to love them. He said, "That's the damndest thing I ever heard of. There's just one school and that's UT." He was really pro UT. Just because Dad had made us go, I let the kids help with the decision. Mom and Dad were talking with Walker, the middle one, who was going away and he said, "You know, life would be a lot easier if you stayed and went to UT." Walker said that UT didn't have a D1 program for him and Dad said he would have a lot more money in the bank. Walker said, "Well, they are paying for my school, too." And Dad said, "Oh" So, all of a sudden it was a little more okay. With Logan the same thing. She went to Rutgers on a full ride. He asked what kind of grades they might make their first year and I said I didn't know but they weren't going to have a car their first year. It worked pretty good. We continued that tradition.

FRANCELLE: How many children do you have?

NAN: Three. Joe Cotten from my first marriage. He's thirty-four. Walker will be twenty-eight in July and Logan is twenty-six. That's our daughter. And 3 grandkids from my oldest.

FRANCELLE: (to Skip) I didn't ask you.

SKIP: I have 2. A boy and a girl. And 2 grandkids.

FRANCELLE: And what are your kid's names?

SKIP: Trey because he's the third. And Cristi.

FRANCELLE: You can mention your wife too.

SKIP: And Nedra. Nedra Harlow. She was not my starter wife. My starter wife was from Dalhart. My starter wife calls me her practice husband.

FRANCELLE: Billie's family, were they ranchers?

SKIP: Her dad was Ike Merritt and he was the foreman out on the Holton Ranch.

NAN: Her mom was Nancy Ellen Kendall.

SKIP: It was the K4 ranch. The guy who makes the mercury motors.

FRANCELLE: Do either of you carry on your homes like Jim did?

NAN: I think it would be more like Mom. Mom did all of that. Dad didn't do any of that. However, if I ever called him and he was in Austin and they were in session, no matter what, even if he was on the floor, he would take the phone call.

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SKIP: Mom called one time. She was having trouble with Nan.

NAN: I was thirteen and she was fifty. Going through puberty and menopause at the same time.

SKIP: Mom called his office and they said, "Mrs. Nugent, he's on the house floor" and she said, "I don't give a damn if he's on the roof. I want to talk to him. I'm having hell with Nan."

NAN: We had a fight. I'd had a dream that she was going to stab me. Their bedroom had been added on, it had been a garage, so it locked from the kitchen and I had locked her in there, so she was going to come and get me. So, she was yelling.

FRANCELLE: So, you didn't raise your children really strict.

NAN: Oh, yes! Absolutely.

SKIP: But it was more of a family deal.

NAN: We do round tables but they are more discussions instead of debates like if you come to the table not prepared you get crucified. It's not like that. But our kids, just like when we went off to school; very little money. We gave them just enough; they need to learn how to manage it. They weren't working in college because they were on scholarships and when you have a full ride the school owns you. You need to do your due diligence so you do your job well for them. So, we could only figure out; pay them very little to run their business on; so, they have to manage that money outside of their scholarship. So, we were definitely hard asses but in a little more...

SKIP: Humane way.

NAN: User friendly.

FRANCELLE: You didn't have to call Burkett.

SKIP: And, you know, Jim took over his dad's seat in the house. So, we had a lot in common. And my son and his son have kind of grown together. He's a piece of work.

FRANCELLE: We'll talk a little about the Army Surplus Store that was moved to the Schreiner campus which is now the Union Church which is just a beautiful building. The Historical Commission meets there, the Boy Scouts meet there, they have voting there, it's a sweet little church.

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SKIP: And that shows the soft side of Jim. He actually started that surplus store so that granddad would have something to do.

FRANCELLE: The commission raised the money to restore it. Luckily, Jim moved it. We probably wouldn't have had the money to move it to Schreiner.

SKIP: So, that was the soft and the giving side.

FRANCELLE: And there's a plaque on the front door saying it was given in memory of his mom and dad instead of giving the attention to himself.

SKIP: He would just as soon the plaque hadn't been there if it hadn't been for that.

NAN: It wouldn't have mattered to him. That's not why he did things. He didn't do things for the glory. He did it because he had a vision of how he saw things moving. I remember when I was still a teenager and I was riding with him somewhere and he was talking about some of the terror events that were going on and he said, "We are not prepared but it will come to the U.S. We are just too arrogant to realize that it's going to happen. It's going to happen. It will be here because we don't take care of things like we should." Cars. He tried so hard with automobile makers. He tried so hard to get them to deal with emissions, smaller engines, not to use the fuel, to get things on a smaller footprint. He was such a visionary. He was sometimes too soon to make a difference. People thought he was crazy.

FRANCELLE: How do you like coming back to Kerrville?

SKIP: I love it. Virginia Drive. Memory Street.

NAN: I was born there as well. I was just itty bitty.

SKIP: I remember the morning my mother came into the kitchen, sat down on the floor, put her head in her hands and used a profanity and said, "I'm pregnant."

NAN: And she was forty. And the doctor had told her she couldn't get pregnant again. And for sixteen years she didn't.

FRANCELLE: You were meant to be.

SKIP: Evidently.

NAN: I don't know about that but I showed up anyway. I told him (Skip) that during the tough times when Dad got sick and had to move – that was the saddest part. But the best part was that I got to know you (Skip).

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SKIP: We spent a lot of time together. And, since he's gone we haven't been able to get together – gosh, this is the first time or two.

FRANCELLE: Well, you live a long way from each other.

NAN: And, everyone's busy. But it's fun coming home. I always go out to the Starbucks and sit on the river and do some work. Just go down and sit by the river. It's just so nice.

SKIP: I don't go to Starbucks. They don't have Dr. Pepper.

FRANCELLE: Well, thank you. Do you have any other stories you'd like to add?

NAN: Mom's dad, Daddy Ike, he's the one that taught me to shoot and hunt and I still hunt today. All over.

FRANCELLE: You don't cry when you shoot something?

NAN: No.

SKIP: I guess we grew up with it and are still at it. I have 7 bird dogs at home.

NAN: I've got a moose sitting at the taxidermist right now, trying to figure out how to get it on my wall because he's too big, he ranks one hundred thirty in the world.

FRANCELLE: Where did you shoot that?

NAN: In Alaska.

SKIP: Was it year before last when y'all killed the bears? Hers was 3 inches taller than Jeff's bear.

NAN: Well, mine made book and his didn't. But they're both big bears. It's the luck of the draw. Every hunter knows that unless you pay someone to go find one. We don't hunt like that. We're fair chase. But Daddy was the one who first taught me to shoot and hunt. And he would put a nail in a tree down on the farm – because Dad also got the Center Point farm so that Daddy Ike and Big Mamma (Ellen Merritt, Mom's mother) would have a place of their own. It was outdoorsy for Daddy Ike. He had a garden in the back and everything. He loved that stuff. So, Dad really took care of his family.

SKIP: He had a passion that most people never knew.

FRANCELLE: Do you still have the Center Point farm?



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SKIP: Yes.

FRANCELLE: Where is it?

NAN: Do you know where the Fritz's place is? We are right behind them because we have the river. But he would put a big-headed nail in the tree down the way and the little wrought iron column on the house, I would put the .22 in there and he wouldn't let me move until I split the nail. Dad was pretty busy working by then. We did some bird hunting together.

FRANCELLE: (to Skip) You do skeet?

SKIP: Trap. I retired from that last summer – summer before last.

NAN: He'd won the world too many times.

SKIP: Forty years and half a million targets, I figured that was enough.

FRANCELLE: Do you still fly?

SKIP: No. I sold my airplanes. I push too many wrong buttons in my pickup, so I figured they don't need me in a damn airplane anymore.

FRANCELLE: Well, thank you. I've known Skip for a long time but it's good to get to know you, Nan.

NAN: It's nice to meet you guys. It's so nice to have this. We appreciate it. My kids will someday take time for it. Joe and Trey and Cristi are the only ones that got to know Mom and Dad well. And Mom was sick. And Dad was much kinder and gentler then.

FRANCELLE: And they are both buried in the Texas State Cemetery?

SKIP & NAN: Yes.

SKIP: That's what really brought me down here this time, other than to take care of our togetherness, property and stuff. My wife and I are going to be buried out at Nichols, next to Daddy Ike and Palsy. There are 6 plots. Daddy Ike and Palsy have 2, Nedra and I have 2 and Buttons Forehand is going to be right in the middle. There are the Merritts and the News and the Howells and the Criders. We're kin to everybody. We'll be amongst family forever.

FRANCELLE: Thank you so much.

END



Rob Kelly

Jonathan Let

Don Harris

SPECIAL FORCES

# SENIORS



BROUSSARD, ERNIE  
 Football '36, '37  
 Basketball '36  
 "T" Association '36  
 Tumbling Club '37  
 Dramatic Club Pres. '38  
 Choral Club '37



GRAY, RALPH  
 Tatler Staff '38  
 Dramatic Club '38  
 Tumbling Club '37  
 F. F. A. '36

TWOMBLY, THETIS  
 Antlerettes, Drum Major '38  
 Antler Staff '38  
 Tatler Staff '35, '38  
 Choral Club '36



KENNEDY, LAVINIA  
 Choral Club '36, '37, '38

GOSS, HARRY LEE  
 Choral Club '36  
 Antler Staff '38  
 Tatler Staff '38  
 Debating Team '38



BERNHARD, ARNO  
 Choral Club '35  
 F. F. A. Club '35, '36, '37

DEAN, DOROTHY  
 Antlerettes '38



MERRITT, BILLIE  
 Dramatic Club '37, '38  
 Choral Club '35



SKIP & NAN'S  
 MOTHER

BILLIE MERRITT'S  
 TIVY SENIOR  
 PICTURE  
 1938

# JIM NUGENT, *WORKAHOLIC*

*Texas' newest member of the Railroad Commission  
is an engineer, lawyer and pilot who hates to waste time*

BY JIMMY BANKS

Shortly after becoming a member of the Texas Railroad Commission last January, former State Rep. James E. (Jim) Nugent turned over to his wife, Billie, the task of finding a house to buy in Austin. He prescribed only one condition.

"It has to be within twenty blocks of the office," declared the engineer-lawyer, an admitted "workaholic" who flies his own plane to save time.

Since the three Commissioners' offices are located in the Ernest O. Thompson Building, just across the street from the Governor's Mansion in downtown Austin, that called for a near miracle. Mrs. Nugent just about pulled it off. They bought a picturesque old house, with a splendid view of the Capitol and the University of Texas Tower, just a mile and a half from his office and are having it remodeled.

Nugent loves his 13-hour workdays but he doesn't like to waste time traveling. As a state representative and "country lawyer," he frequently flew his own plane between Austin and his home in Kerrville.

"It's thirty-five minutes between Austin and Kerrville by air but two hard hours by road," he explained. "I could walk out the back door of my house in Kerrville on Monday morning and walk into the Capitol one hour later. That made it nice."

But, during most of his 18 years in the legislature, he usually made that trip only on weekends because he found the legislative workload "heavy enough to keep me here."

Nugent says he first ran for the legislature because he was intrigued by the thought of being a part-time public official, able to express ideas and have some influence on state government while pursuing a career in

private law practice.

Throughout the years, a great many legislators—and other state officials—found Nugent himself intriguing. He earned respect as a skillful debater whose extraordinary grasp of parliamentary procedure always was reinforced by a vast arsenal of facts. His style itself sometimes seemed to intimidate opponents.

"I do my homework," he says, with justifiable pride.

He also admits that the "homework" required in his new job is much greater than he had anticipated, partly because he feels he has so much to learn.

"There is an immense amount of work to be done here," he declared recently. "And it's much more varied than I thought it was. I'm having to work my head off to get to where I feel comfortable with the decisions I have to make. I'm just not comfortable unless I think I know what I'm doing. I guess when I get to the point where I'm comfortable with what I'm doing, the workload won't seem as great."

The amount of work involved has not been Nugent's only surprise since he succeeded Commissioner Jon Newton, who resigned, on Jan. 4, 1979.

"The energy problem is much more critical than I thought it was before I came over here," he declared. "The economics in that area are more horrendous than I had conceived them to be. The cost factors involved in the production of energy have just skyrocketed, along with the prices of lignite and oil and gas. It's a very capital-intensive business. And it's just ringed with bureaucratic regulation—most of it federal."

While most railroaders believe those same factors—skyrocketing costs

and excessive regulation—are crippling their industry, Nugent candidly admits that may be true. He says he is doing a lot of research on railroad economics, especially in the field of coal hauling rates.

"We have an excellent transportation system in Texas," he said. "But I'm bothered by the rapid increase in the rail rates that the Interstate Commerce Commission has granted on hauling coal into Texas. It looks like they're freezing the price of our natural gas, under the Natural Gas Policy Act, but allowing the price of coal to float just wherever it wants to. And the price of transportation has gone up rapidly. It's raising more serious questions about the viability of coal-fired plants as opposed to something else. But I really haven't gotten as much study in that as I need to have a definitive opinion."

When told that the highest coal-hauling rate to Texas currently is just a little over a penny per ton-mile, and that generating electricity with such coal is still much cheaper than using gas, Nugent promised extensive study of the matter.

"The consumer has got to be protected," he declared. "Maybe we can have some small say in helping the ultimate consumer rate to be reasonable and fair."

He is convinced, however, that additional incentives must be provided for oil and gas exploration. Many experts, he noted, contend that half of Texas' oil and gas is still to be found.

"The only way you can find it is to drill those holes," he said. "And until the incentives are such that people are willing to risk the money to drill the holes, we're not going to find all of it. I firmly believe there is an awful lot of it out there that we haven't

tapped yet. It's just a matter of getting those holes dug to find it.

"I think decontrol of prices would sure help. The reason I say that is that when we had low gas prices, with federal controls on that being shipped out of the state, the activity wasn't too great. When they shifted and the federal government kept the low price on out-of-state gas, and the State of Texas allowed the price of gas to float here within the state, all of a sudden the rig count went up, there were many wells drilled—and now there's a small surplus of natural gas as a result of this drilling activity that took place when there was an economic incentive.

"And now that the feds have stacked all these regulations and price controls on natural gas for the last three months the rig count has started down again," said Nugent.

"I believe that conservation is extremely important," he added. "We've got to conserve what we've got but we've also got to excite these people who are willing to gamble their time, their talent and their money on finding oil and gas into getting out there in the oil patch and digging those holes. If they can't figure out a way to make money by getting it out of the ground, they're not going to do it.

"We've got to put the incentive there so the exploration will continue at a rapid pace. If we don't accelerate exploration, we're going to just use up what we've got and have a real shortage."

Nugent believes the increased supplies of natural gas will have little effect on the need for coal, especially on a long-term basis. With 17,000 people moving to Texas every month, he said, the need for energy probably is growing faster in this state than anywhere else in the country.

"Coal and lignite still are going to be major factors in the future," he declared. "We have plenty of coal and lignite. It's just a matter of making the conversions. But when you're talking about converting a plant from gas to coal, you're talking in \$100 million increments. Somebody's really got to believe in it to put up \$100 million to convert a plant. We need to get on about getting our national energy program underway. We need a national direction—something that's stable, something you can count on, some-



JIM NUGENT

thing you can use to entice people into making these terrific investment.

"As long as it's unstable, and there's no way of knowing for sure what the government is going to do tomorrow, I think people are going to be relatively slow about making such huge commitments," said Nugent. "There has to be a stable viewpoint so those people will be willing to put that kind of money in there. Utility-type investments normally are pretty stable. But we've still got to keep our utility rates down where people can afford them. The consumer has got to be protected from a rip-off."

One of Nugent's goals is to help improve the Railroad Commission's relations with federal authorities—especially the Department of Energy, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Federal Power Commission, "so we can have a personal working relationship."

"We may fight with them ninety percent of the time but, if we do, we ought to do it on a professional basis instead of throwing brick-bats," he said.

"I believe we're making some progress in Washington. President Carter's energy message represented a step in the right direction and the decontrol of oil prices should result in increased production. I was delighted he men-

tioned the California-to-Midland pipeline—that's badly needed and long overdue. And I think it's proper for Congress to make a decision on the windfall profits tax. But we still have a long way to go in solving the energy problem."

In the meantime, Nugent feels he is making progress faster in learning his new job than he is in the familiar task of remodeling a house.

"In Kerrville, I knew who to call to get something done on a house," he said. "Here, I don't."

During the past 25 years, the 56-year-old native of San Angelo estimates he has bought and remodeled a number of houses in the Kerrville area. He has sold most of them but still owns several.

After graduating from high school in San Angelo, Nugent attended Schreiner Institute in Kerrville for two years. He enrolled in a civilian pilot training program there and earned a private pilot's license a few days after his 18th birthday.

He served in the Naval Air Service during World War II, then earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Texas. But after working a couple of years as an engineer, he decided he wanted to be a lawyer. He returned to the University of Texas and won his law degree in 1949.

"And it took me seven years of practicing law to get my income back up to what I was making as an engineer," he recalled.

Nugent served three terms as County Attorney of Kerr County before being elected to the Legislature for the first time. He had just won reelection to a tenth term when then-Gov. Dolph Briscoe appointed him to the Railroad Commission.

He believes his varied experience is a great asset.

"My engineering background is very helpful in this job," he said. "Engineering, law, politics—they're all involved in what I'm doing."

Obviously, he hopes the voters will be impressed by his credentials—and his record—in November of 1980. He was appointed to serve until the next general election, when he is expected to run for the two years that will be remaining on Newton's six-year term.

With a little luck, he may even have his house remodeled by then.

# Texas Monthly Selects Best, Worst Officers

By SCOTT CARPENTER  
Harte-Hanks Austin Bureau  
AUSTIN — Rep. Tom Massey of San Angelo has been named one of the 10 Worst members of the 1977 Texas Legislature by Texas Monthly magazine.

In the July issue, the Monthly names Reps. Jim Nugent of Kerrville and Lynn Nabers of Brownwood and Sen. Ray Farabee of Wichita Falls as among the 10 Best.

It is the third time the Monthly has rated legislators. Massey was tagged as having the hardest job in the legislature — the school finance bill — which he

“wasn't up to.”

Massey, the article says, “seemed to spend the session in a daze. So over his head in the school finance conference committee that he was lucky not to end up on the bottom of the pool. Senators easily outmaneuvered him on important procedural points.”

The education bill produced by Massey and his committee “addressed the issue of equalization by giving more money to rich districts than poor districts.”

Massey “may not be the first legislator to knock his brains out against a wall but



**JIM NUGENT**  
... Top 10

must be one of the few to build a wall expressly for the purpose,” the Monthly says.

Nabers, the article says is “a team player whose decency and independence are unquestioned.”

Nugent, it says, has “absolute, unquestioned personal integrity.”



**LYNN NABERS**  
... Team player

Ray Farabee is tagged as “a rising Senate star: observers describe him as conscientious, hard-working, smart, fair, independent, someone who does his homework.”

Appearing on the Best list are John Bryant (D-Dallas), Ronald Coleman (D-El Paso), Ray Farabee



**TOM MASSEY**  
... Bottom 10

(D-Wichita Falls), Lance Lalor (D-Houston), Lynn Nabors (D-Brownwood), Jim Nugent (D-Kerrville), Wayne Peveto (D-Orange), A. R. “Babe” Schwartz (D-Galveston), Max Sherman (D-Amarillo), and John Wilson (D-La Grange).

Rated as Worst legislators are Tom Creighton (D-



**RAY FARABEE**  
... Among best

Mineral Wells). Bob Davis (R-Irving), Charles Evans (D-Hurst), DeWitt Hale (D-Corpus Christi), Glenn Kothmann (D-San Antonio), Tom Massey (D-San Angelo), Chris Miller (D-Fort Worth), Bill Presnal (D-Bryan), Joe Tom Robbins (R-Lubbock), and Clay Smothers (D-Dallas).

# Letters From Readers

## SCHOOL BILL FIGHT CALLED FUNDING STRUGGLE

To The Editor  
Kerrville Daily Times

As everyone knows by now, the 65th Legislature failed to produce a new Public School Finance Bill for the 1977-79 biennium. What this means is that the public schools will continue to operate under HB 1126, passed by the 64th Legislature in 1975, using the districts' values as reported in 1977 rather than the values used for the past biennium. (The reported values are less than the current values now being used in most school districts.)

Having followed the legislative process closely, concerning public school finance, and being privileged to work closely with the House-Senate Conference Committee on public school finance and our Representative, James E. (Jim) Nugent in particular, there are a few things that we in our area need to understand about what has actually happened and where we go from here.

To begin with, the main

issue was and still is what values shall be used to determine a school district's local fund assignment (LFA). The LFA is the local school district's local fund assignment (LFA). The LFA is the local school district's share of the State Foundation Program, and is determined by applying a set rate to the full value of property in each district. Full value and how it is determined is therefore the issue. The rural areas want, and have to have, full value based on productivity (called ag values), and urban areas want full value based on market value (What property sells for). At this point...the only defense the rural areas have is "no bill"...

The teacher salary increase has been made to appear to conflict with this issue, and appear to relate to the amount of state monies allocated for the Local Fund Assignments. This is true only to a very minimum extent. The House-Senate conference report on HB 750 at the eleventh hour of the Legislative session contained a very reasonable salary increase

for Texas teachers. The teacher pay raise was not and is still not a major issue, in this writer's opinion.

The Governor has reported that he will call a special session of the Legislature to produce a public school finance bill, if the leadership in the House and Senate will guarantee a two-thirds majority support for a House-Senate compromise to be worked on in the interim (during June). As mentioned above the Conference Committee produced a good bill for

the rural areas. The report...had the support of all House and Senate members of the conference committee with the exception of Senator Oscar Mauzy of Dallas.

The Governor further stated that he is delaying the special session for the legislators to visit in their home districts and get the feeling of their constituents concerning this issue. Since the rural areas must have a bill similar to the conference committee report, our feelings should be evident at this time.

In conclusion it should be noted that the senators and representatives from our area supported the conference committee report; and James E. (Jim) Nugent in particular has been a tower of strength in the Legislature and on the conference committee in fighting this issue in our behalf, and should be commended for his outstanding efforts for our schools and taxpayers.

Wm. C. Grusendorf,  
Superintendent  
San Saba Independent  
School District  
San Saba, Texas 76877

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# Nugent Listed As One Of Ten Best Legislators

Jim Nugent was listed as among the Ten Best legislators by the Texas Monthly magazine -- a promotion from his spot on the Ten Worst only four years ago. Texas Monthly, now in its fifth year of publication, has almost 1,000,000 readers a month.

"Jim Nugent, 55, conservative Democrat, Kerrville. The most effective member of the House, and the most feared. Known to his colleagues as "Supersnake"; this session was more super than snake--though there are those who insist it was close.

"Carried the highway bill as chairman of the Transportation Committee, skillfully fending off attacks from liberals complaining it was too much and conservatives complaining it was too soon. Position on Education Committee spelled big trouble for the Texas State Teachers Association(TSTA), which committed two very stupid mistakes last year: they ran a candidate against him, and they didn't win. Got his vengeance by questioning the soundness of the Teacher Retirement System,

a ploy that kept TSTA busy protecting their flank when they should have been fighting the highway bill.

"A legislator of amazing breadth; few pieces of major legislation got out of the House this session without carrying extra baggage added by Nugent. Among the bills he amended: malpractice, county ordinance, and coal slurry. Said one staffer: "All he has to do is walk around with a file folder during debate and other members start worrying."

"Very hard to figure out--and does everything he can to keep it that way. Fiercely protective of his independence and displays it in little ways: one of the few conservatives with a liberal staff; has a strong feminist as chief aide--but that didn't stop him from quashing a proposed

commission on the status of women. Not part of the Clayton team; they, like everyone else, come to him.

His reputation is the source of his power; long ago let it be known he was capable of anything, so is seldom tested. Cultivates the image of a parliamentary Bobby Fischer, who can see so many moves ahead that he's playing a different game from everyone else.

"Despite his nickname, has absolute, unquestioned personal integrity; doesn't like to deal with lobbyists (a feeling that is mutual) and, unlike many lawyer-legislators, never mixes his legislative and professional business. A Best who was on the worst list four years ago, and for many of the same reasons; is there anyone in any legislature anywhere who is harder to categorize?"





PLAQUE ON FRONT OF UNION CHURCH