

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Bob Wayne Bass**

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Interviewer: Susan Strickland

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Transcript

STRICKLAND: Bob, will you tell us your whole name and where and when you were born?

BASS: My name is Bob Wayne Bass. I was born in Bryan, Texas. Dad was going to A&M. My mom graduated from Sugar Land High School in 1948. They married and I was born on October 27, 1949 in a Catholic hospital in Bryan.

STRICKLAND: How long were you in Bryan?

BASS: We were there for at least a year. It might have been a little bit more than a year.

When my dad went to basic training in the Army we lived with my grandmother in Sugar Land. We caught up with him when he went to Germany. He served over there for a year or more. I lived over in Germany for the first couple years until I was about three. I spoke German as well as English when I was over there. I don't remember any of it now (laughs). When I came back everybody wanted to show me off speaking German. I had to go into Wheeless Barbershop in downtown Rosenberg to perform.

STRICKLAND: When your parents came back from Germany, they came to Rosenberg?

BASS: Yes. My dad was born and raised in Rosenberg. When we came back we lived off Mulcahy Street in West Rosenberg. We called my grandfather, Nelson I. Bass, Sr., Pop. Mom and Pop lived on Carlisle Street.

STRICKLAND: Mom and Pop were your paternal grandparents?

BASS: Yes, paternal. They had moved here in 1928 or 1929. Both of them were born and raised in Hubbard, Texas, which is in central Texas, near Waco. My grandfather went to A&M and graduated in '23. He had an older brother that was working for Houston, Lighting & Power (HL&P). So, he got a job in the Houston area. His complete name was Nelson Ives Bass, Senior. My dad is Nelson Ives Bass, Junior.

STRICKLAND: What was your grandmother's name?

BASS: Her name was Maydel. I think her maiden name was Smith. My great-great-grandfather had an electric power and ice electric power company in Hubbard City, Texas. That's the way it was back then. You had a power company. You had to have power to make ice. It went hand in hand.

STRICKLAND: Did he sell the big blocks of ice to individuals for their refrigerators?

BASS: Right. The four brothers were all in that business. My grandfather was an electrical engineer major at A&M. When he got out, his older brother had already gotten a job with HL&P so, I think he got him on. The younger brother served in WWII and they all worked for the light company in the Houston area. In fact, one of them ran the station in Freeport. My grandfather ran Rosenberg. One of my other uncles ran the one on Hiram Clarke in Houston. The other one was in management somewhere. They all stayed with the light company their whole careers.

STRICKLAND: What specifically did your grandfather do for the light company?

BASS: He managed the station in Rosenberg. The building where he worked is still there, across from the Chamber of Commerce on Avenue H. He was responsible for the Fort Bend County area, maintaining the power lines and making sure the power stayed on and new service got to people.

BASS: He went to work at a young age. He used to go out with the line crews. Of course, you could do that back then. They would go up the poles with their spike boots. He told stories of having done that when he was a teenager. My grandfather's YOUNGEST brother, Hubert Bass, went to WWII and was a paratrooper. He was at D-day.

STRICKLAND: So your dad had how many brothers and sisters?

BASS: My dad only had one older sister, Betty. She eventually married Robert (Bob) Martin from Wharton. Her married name was Betty Martin. She just recently passed away. My grandfather had three other brothers.

STRICKLAND: Tell me about your mother's mother and your mother's father. What were their names?

BASS: My mother's father was Herbert Rachuig, a German name. Mamie Adams was my grandmother's maiden name. She married Herbert Rachuig. They had two daughters. My mother is also named Mamye (, but it is spelled M-A-M-Y-E). My grandmother's name was spelled M-A-M-I-E. And also Sally Rachuig, who became Sally Kelly when she married Charles Kelly.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the Sally Rachuig Kelly interview on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=42120>

STRICKLAND: Where did your dad work?

BASS: When he got out of the service, he went to work for Texas Gulf Sulphur Company in New Gulf. He worked for them for approximately five years as a bookkeeper. He wasn't a night watchman, but he did the graveyard shift. They managed the Sulphur production and kept records. He was in management..

He only worked there for about five years. He was commuting from Rosenberg to New Gulf, which is about a 30-minute drive. He always liked to draw plans and do design work. In the mid '50s he started doing side jobs drawing house plans for people. Then he built a house for somebody. He did it while he was still working for the light company. He really liked it. He took a leap of faith in about 1957 by quitting his job and starting the construction business. He had three small kids at home, so it was a pretty good leap. The company is now in our sixtieth year.



Bass Construction Management Team, left to right, Dave Oliver, Jeff Durrett, Bob Bass, unk, Buck Bass

STRICKLAND: Bass Construction. Did he do commercial or just residential?

BASS: Back then it was different. We were a small community. We were separate from Houston. All the communities out here were their own little entities. Richmond and Rosenberg were kind of close, but even they were separate. They weren't as blended as they are today. I didn't realize it, but I think there was just a little jealousy on the part of the two communities. Even though they joined, they were separate. Sugar Land was its own entity. Stafford and Missouri City, too. Then they got swallowed up with Houston as time went on.

When he started, he would build whatever there was to build. It wasn't JUST houses. When Mr. Ward built the first Dairy Queen on Highway 36, it was Ward's hamburger

place. That was the first place to offer soft-serve ice cream. It was a special deal to go down there and get soft-serve ice cream. He built that on Highway 36.

STRICKLAND: How old you were when he built that?

BASS: I was probably about ten. Usually we would go down as a team and get an ice cream after the game. That was a special treat for the kids.

Of course, there were other buildings that he worked on. He built some of the banks around town. He built a building down by the Chamber of Commerce, that is now a Car-Town. It used to be an Academy. It was originally a dry good store. He built a lot of houses. He just built whatever there was to be built. Most people if they built something, they used a local firm to do it. Every summer I would work to try to make some money.

STRICKLAND: How old were you when you started helping him?

BASS: Probably 12 or so. I didn't work full time until I was 14 or 15. Then every summer I would work full time in the field, mostly doing cleanup. I was a one-man cleanup crew. I did a lot of drafting for him though. I got a taste of that . I really enjoyed that and did well at it.

STRICKLAND: So you learned drafting on your own?

BASS: My dad taught me. Then I took drafting courses at Lamar High School and had some good teachers. When I went to A&M, I started out in architecture thinking that's what I wanted to do, but I switched majors after a year and went into construction. I ended up getting a building construction degree. Then I came home and went right to work for him in '72. I've been there ever since.

STRICKLAND: Where is the office?

BASS: His first office was at the house. We had a one-car garage that he converted into an office. Then while I was still at home he moved into a building at 1117 Tobola Street in Rosenberg. He was in there with Henry Steinkamp Engineers, Raymond Cachere Insurance and, Doug Dawson Insurance. All of them were in that one building. It wasn't a very big building. I don't know how they got all the guys in there. They all shared one secretary. We stayed there until about 1980. Then we built a new office on Avenue I and Damon Street. We were in there with Raymond Cachere Insurance again, and Jay Junker, attorney. We stayed there until 2000. Then we built the office we are in now, on Damon and J. Our offices have all been in about a six-block radius. We haven't moved very far in

60 years.

STRICKLAND: So you know everybody around you and they all know you.

BASS: Pretty much. My dad passed away in 2000. I have two sons that are working with me.

STRICKLAND: Did they both go to A&M?

BASS: The older one, Jay Durrett went to A&M. Then Buck Bass went to Texas State. We have two other children; Jennifer Barker and Marshall Durrett, who are both graduates of A&M. We have three that went to A&M and one that went to Texas State. The two youngest ones work for me. They've done a real good job. They've been there for ten plus years now and are ready to take up the banner.

STRICKLAND: What about your mom? Did she work?

BASS: She was a housewife and a homemaker until I was about 12. Then she and my Aunt Sally started a private kindergarten in Sugar Land.

STRICKLAND: Do you remember the name of it?

BASS: Mary Moffitt.

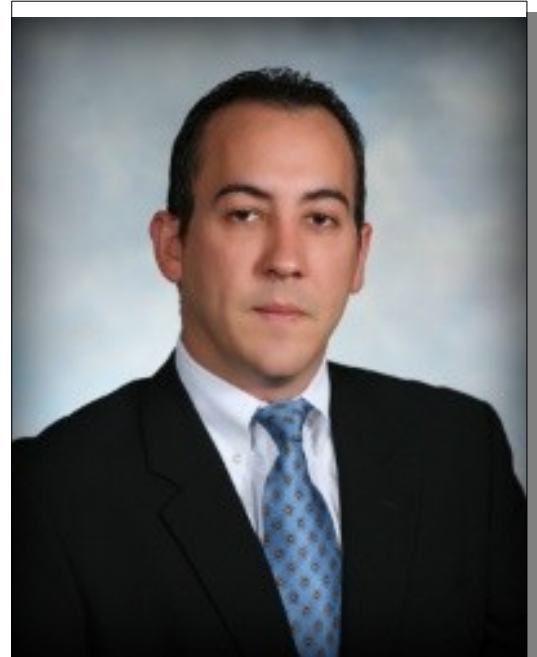
STRICKLAND: Cute name.

BASS: They did that for quite a few years. Then my parents divorced in '73 or '74 and she went to work for the school district as a registrar for Lamar Consolidated School District. She worked there for ten years. After that she remarried, her husband had a business and she helped him for awhile.

STRICKLAND: Does she still live in the area?

BASS: She lives in Rosenberg as does my sister, Becky.

STRICKLAND: Did either of your two grandmothers work outside of the home?



*Buck Bass, Project Manager /
Marketing Director, Bass
Construction, Rosenberg, Texas*

BASS: My paternal grandmother did not. My mother's mother did. My mother's father, Herbert Rachuig, worked for Exxon, and he was killed in an explosion in Warda, Texas. He was in charge of an oil field. They had a camp right there where my grandmother and he lived. There was an accident. When he went to the accident, there was a man still in the building.

While they were trying to get him out, the building exploded. He was burned severely and died a few weeks later in the hospital. So my grandmother was widowed in 1950 or '51. Exxon had some kind of company insurance policy. She got some money, and she bought some rent houses in Sugar Land. But to supplement that, she went to work for the bank in Sugar Land, at the shopping center in downtown old Sugar Land. Then she worked for the school district as a registrar for quite a few years. In fact, she was there when my wife, Scotty Bass' daddy, Dugan Hightower, was the principal and even while Scotty was going to high school my grandmother was the registrar.

STRICKLAND: And you said your paternal grandmother did not work.

BASS: She WORKED, but in the house. She had a very loving spirit. She was very kind and quiet. I don't ever remember her getting angry. She had a really good peace about her. She was a very good cook and housekeeper.

STRICKLAND: What was your favorite thing that she made when she cooked?

BASS: Probably bread pudding. She made it the way I wanted it made. I liked pineapple in it, but not raisins. So, she would make it that way for me. They went to the Methodist Church in Rosenberg. She loved to play bridge and Canasta. She had a lot of friends that played bridge. The card games were real popular with that generation. She died in about 1979. My grandfather passed away about '75 and she lived a few years past him. They didn't go to the doctors much.

STRICKLAND: Tell me about your wife.

BASS: I have a very special wife. Her name is Margaret Scott Hightower Bass. She grew up in Sugar Land. They moved there when she was five years old. Her dad was a coach. Then he was hired to come to Sugar Land. They lived in one of the houses on The Hill in Sugar Land, she and her mom and dad and her sister Tuta. Scotty was a couple of grades ahead of me. I didn't go to high school in Sugar Land. I went to school in Rosenberg. I visited Sugar Land a lot because my grandmother and my cousins were there. So, I knew a lot of people over there. And I knew of Scotty.

STRICKLAND: What did you know of her?

BASS: Well, I knew she was very pretty and she was older than me. I was kind of in awe of her. After I got out of school and came back home, her sister tried to match us up at a Super Bowl party in 1980 or '81. The timing was just not right. It didn't work for either one of us. So, I went on my way. We just had that one meeting. Then, probably a year later, for some reason I ran into her sister and her daughter at the grocery store. I don't know why, but God just put it on my heart to call her. I wasn't dating anybody at the time. I mustered up enough courage to call. I don't know how I got past her dad. Her dad answered the phone at her house, which kind of startled me. But I somehow got the words out. I asked if I could speak to Scotty and I asked her out. Then it just went from there. It was, I think, the same for her. She was ready. We were just in a good place. After about a year and a half, I asked her to marry me and she accepted. We got married in August of 1983. I went from being a single man to a husband with four kids.

STRICKLAND: Life style shift.

BASS: Yes, and three dogs. So, it was quite a change. But it was wonderful. The kids were very accepting of me. It was the best decision I ever made.

STRICKLAND: Did Scotty work outside the home?

BASS: She did. She was working at that time as a counselor at Dulles. She had been a teacher; then she was a counselor. She eventually became assistant principal and then a principal at the Meadows. So, she worked the whole time up until 2002.

STRICKLAND: Tell me a little bit about growing up in Rosenberg. What was it like?

BASS: It was a nice place to live. It was small but not too small. If I had to guess, it was probably five or six thousand people. Richmond was a little smaller. So, the two combined was ten thousand maybe. There wasn't any strife of any sort. There wasn't a lot of crime. I would leave the house and come back to eat at suppertime. Everybody knew who you were and watched out for you. If you got into mischief, it was of your own doing. I was usually trying to find the next baseball, football, or basketball game I could play in.

BASS: Downtown Rosenberg had Rude and Sons Sporting Goods and the Hardware Store, the drugstore, Mr. Wheelless's barbershop, and Coles Movie Theatre. Across the street Mr. Danzinger had a clothing and dry good store.

One time, when I was out of college, I stopped to look in the window of Mr. Danzinger's store. I didn't know Leon Danzinger, but he saw me looking in the window so he came outside (chuckles) and he talked to me in broken English because he was German. He said, "You want to buy something?" And I said, "No, I am just looking." "Well, come on in my store, let me show you." So I politely went in there. I didn't realize what a talker he was! It took me a while to get out of there. He would not let me get out of the store without buying something. I ended up buying a pair of socks. (Laughing). That was the cheapest thing I could find.

As a kid, one of my greatest thrills was baseball season. Larry Rude kept stats, and he would always post batting averages for the Little League up in his store. I would ride my bicycle down there to see if I made it into the top ten (laughs). He probably thought I was crazy because I would come in there so often. Sometimes it would take him a while to get it posted. I'd be rather sad when I would go in and he hadn't gotten the new postings up. Larry and I became good friends later and I coached with him. I coached Babe Ruth Little League baseball in Rosenberg for about ten years. When we got married I spent another 12 years in Sugar Land coaching my boys. So, I had about 20 plus years' experience of coaching Little League baseball.

I tell my grand kids about how safe things were. When I went to Robert E. Lee Elementary in Rosenberg, we lived about five blocks from the school. My grandparents lived about a block and a half away. I would ride my bike to school, go to lunch at my grandmother's, and ride my bicycle back. You were allowed to do that. I never had a problem coming back on time. In fact, I believe that this taught me how to be responsible. In fifth and sixth grade, when I was at Taylor Ray, I would go across the street to Kocurek's Dairy Queen. He worked in Alaska a lot, so he always had moose burgers. He had a doughnut store also. You could get donuts or you could eat a hamburger. Down the street was the Rose Drive-in. It was a little farther, so you had to walk a little faster to get back to class on time. It was just a different world back then.

This story wasn't such a GOOD memory! At the carnival in Sugar Land I had won a duck by throwing a ring around ducks swimming in a tank. My parents weren't that happy about it when I brought the duck home and put it in a cage beside the house. During the school year, I rode my bike home to feed the duck. One day, as I opened the cage door and turned to get the food, the duck waddled out and ran off. It was starting to rain and I was in a hurry, so the duck got away. I never could find the duck. I was really traumatized by that. But I still made it back to class on time, even though I couldn't find my duck.

STRICKLAND: You said you were in Little League. What about junior high and high school?

BASS: I played all sports, all the way up through high school.

STRICKLAND: Baseball, football, basketball, track, tennis?

BASS: No, I wasn't very good at track. (laughs) My one experience in track is not very noteworthy. They said you had to run track if you were going to play football. So, I ran track. I signed up for high jumping and running the 300-yard dash. (chuckles) They called it a dash. I am not sure that's what it was (laughs). The first time I ran it I remember kind of hitting the wall at about 200 yards. I didn't stay in the 300-yard dash.

STRICKLAND: So what position did you play in football then?

BASS: I played offensive and defensive end in high school.

STRICKLAND: Give me an idea what you did with your friends. What kind of activities and fun things did y'all do?

BASS: The community was a nice place to live, growing up. When I was younger I would go to Sugar Land and play with my cousins. Back then people entertained themselves more than they do now. We spent a lot of days listening to radio. There was TV, but you only had three stations you could watch. There was only a baseball game on Saturday afternoon, football games on Saturdays and Sundays. That was pretty much it. I did a lot of reading. I was a pretty good student, so I enjoyed reading and studying. I really liked history. I read a lot of biographies. I didn't really get into fiction too much. Historical stories and accounts of wars and battles was what held my interest.

STRICKLAND: But you did not talk to your uncle about the war.

BASS: No, he didn't talk about it. I wished I would have talked to him more about how it was. They moved to Rosenberg in 1929. That is when the market crashed and the great depression happened. What was it like? They worked for the light company which was not a real HOT paying job, but it was steady. It was an ESSENTIAL job so I know they had work. They put food on the table. They built a house there on Carlisle Street, a pretty nice house at the time. I do remember that when they bought the house it was like a package. It was a catalog house you could buy.

I think local people built it, but you bought the materials out of the catalog. They built it for like \$12,000 or something. It was a four-bedroom house, two stories, kitchen, dining room, den. It was a nice house for only \$12,000. Back then that was quite a bit of money. Now it seems a pretty small amount to pay.

We went to church every Sunday at the Church of Christ on Brazos Street in Rosenberg. It is a small church—five or six families. When I got married, Scotty and I lived in Sugar Land and her home church was First Baptist Sugar Land. So, I became a member over there.

STRICKLAND: Did religion have a big role in your family life?

BASS: Yes. My mother ingrained that in me and developed my faith. She is a strong, Christian woman. I think that got me on the right path even though I veered off the path for a while when I was in my late teens. Then I came back. When we got married it was really important for me to pass that on. It was important already to Scotty for her kids. We were devoted to going to First Baptist in Sugar Land. Now we've been going to Sugar Creek Baptist in Sugar Land for more than 20 years. My youngest son and his family go there. My daughter goes to Tylerwood Baptist in Houston. My other son and his family go to Methodist Church in Austin.

STRICKLAND: What are some of the things that you see that have changed the most about Rosenberg?

BASS: Well the growth and population are good and bad. The growth has given us some conveniences that we didn't have before. Growing up, it was real special to drive to Houston and go shopping. You would go Saturday morning and stay all day and then come back in the evening. It would take at least an hour to get there.

STRICKLAND: Did you take Highway 90 all the way in?

BASS: South Main, old 90, all the way in was pretty much the way to go. There were some times I remember we would go on old Richmond Road and end up off of Bissonnet. This was before Highway 59. There were some restaurants and places that we would go to. There was Westheimer. There were some restaurants on the West side of Houston on Gessner and Fondren.

Now we have all these places to eat and shop at in Fort Bend, just about as many as they do in Houston. We have these shopping centers everywhere you look. So, all the conveniences have moved out with the population. BUT with that comes crowds, mobility issues and more crime. Growth is good for my business. It creates work for us. But at the same time, you lose some of the identity of the community. People were a little more community-centered then than they are now. Now it is more of an area in Fort Bend County instead of Rosenberg/Richmond. Having seen both, I see advantages to both. It would be nice to be able to go back in time for a while. (laughs) but I would probably decide to come on back here to this time.

STRICKLAND: Did you ever travel with your family?

BASS: We did. Every summer we would go on a family road trip. Typically, we'd make the rounds of New Braunfels, Austin, and Corpus Christi. I don't remember going to Dallas or Waco. We mostly went to the hill country. New Braunfels was special. We would spend a lot of time there in the summers. We made a few trips to Colorado. I think the first trip we took anywhere out of the country was when my dad took all of us to Mexico City when I was in college. That is the only time I remember going out of the country before I was on my own.

STRICKLAND: Did you and your family play games together on weekends or anything like that?

BASS: I was the oldest son and I had two sisters. I probably didn't play with them as much. Becky is about five years younger than I am. My youngest sister, Bridget, is about eight years younger than me. I was doing my own thing. I was pretty independent. I didn't play with them very much.

The growth of the area has been good for business. It helps us do more work. But because we can do more work, most of the time you have to do it for less money, so you have to do MORE work. It allows you to do work a little easier, but you are still having to do more work. It is kind of a vicious cycle. My company could make a good living doing ten million dollars worth of work in 1980. Now we have got to do thirty million. Sometimes I wish it were the slower pace. It would be a lot easier.

I enjoy building buildings. Probably the best part of it is the clients that enjoy working with you and appreciate the work that you do. I've run into many. But it does seem like the older generation is a little more appreciative than the younger generations. Now it is all about the cost and how fast you can build it.

In the old days there was a little more of a relationship to it. People worked with you and really respected you and your opinion on an issue or a problem with their house or their business. I still get calls like that. That is the rewarding part of it.

Mr. Wessendorff in Richmond was really a fine gentleman. Every project I did for him, he would say, "Bobby, what do you think this is going to cost?" And I would give him the price. He would say, "Let's go build it." As long as I was doing my job, he didn't say a word. At the end of the job he was very gracious and thankful. Those are the kind of jobs that I remember and really appreciate.

Some of those buildings that we built are legacies for us. They are still there and will be there for years to come. I think the last job my dad did of any consequence was the police station in Richmond (600 Preston St, Richmond, TX 77469). It's part museum, part police station. It was the original county jail. It was a catalog building like a Sears and Roebuck. If you go around the state and maybe to different states, you can run across buildings that look very similar to that building. It was interesting work. When we first sized the job up, I remember going in there and the building hadn't been occupied for a while. There was a little portion of it that had been used for a museum. They had the old bars and the jail cells. They had the area where they hung people. It was a little bit spooky. (laughs) We had to go in there and pretty much gut it and clean it up and fix all the brick up and rebuild. Then we added on the new jail on the backside for the city. Dad was very proud of that.

STRICKLAND: How old were you when you were working with him doing that job?

BASS: I would have been 50. He did his jobs and I did mine. That was one of his. Some of the memories that I tell my grand kids all the time is about getting paid a quarter for the first job that I ever had. We had a little convenience store about a block and a half from my house. I went down there one day and I asked the guy, "Do you need the parking lot swept?" And he said, "Well yeah, I will give you a quarter if you come sweep it every week." So, I would go down there and sweep that parking lot. I thought I was in tall cotton with that quarter. I could go around the corner to Geick's filling station and buy a Coke for five cents and I would still have 20 cents left over. I could buy a couple of packs of baseball cards for the rest of that money. I had plenty of money and some left over after I did that.

STRICKLAND: How old were you then?

BASS: I was probably about ten. We only lived a block and a half from the store. At night it would be dark by 7:00 or 8:00. We didn't keep soda waters in the house. So I would ride my bike down to the store to get everybody a soda water. It was always a little bit scary to ride the bike because you had to pass a couple of alleys and old buildings to get there. So, I learned to pedal real fast. (laughs) Whenever I got past those buildings I was moving pretty good then. I wasn't going to get stopped and caught by someone jumping out at me.

I mentioned my dad's office in the garage. Back then, people started driving at lot earlier than they do now. In fact, I started driving when I was eight or nine years old. I didn't drive out on the road! We had a long driveway and my mother would always back the car out to the end of the driveway at the road so I could play on the driveway. One day I said, "Mom let me pull the car up today.". She was busy or something and maybe she just told me to go do it. When I was pulling the car up, I accidentally hit the accelerator instead of the brake. So, I went through my dad's office. (laughs) The front wall just knocked back and was laying on the hood of the car. My mom came running out and wanted to know if I was okay. Nobody was hurt. Then the panic hit her because she was afraid I was going to get a pretty good whipping when my dad got home. She ran next door to the neighbor, Jimmy Wheelless, a schoolteacher, and it was during the summer so he was off. He was a pretty handy guy. He was an artist and a part-time carpenter as well as a history and art teacher. He came running out and she said, "Jimmy, do you think there is any way we can put this back before Nelson comes home? "He says, "There is no way. I am sorry, but there is nothing I can do." So anyways, I got my whipping, and I survived. We didn't have to get a new car or anything. It wasn't that bad.

When I was head clean-up guy on the jobs I remember when we were building the Fort Bend Country Club. We had torn down the old country club and we had to haul all the trash off to the dump over on Mennonite Road. It was just a big hole in the ground. You backed your truck up as far as you could and threw the trash out the back end. This was a pretty big job. We had gotten a cotton trailer so we could get more trash in it and make fewer trips. One of my friends and I loaded that cotton trailer up and backed it up to the ditch that was about ten feet deep and about twenty feet wide. I accidentally backed the trailer up too close to the edge. The trailer was sitting up at an angle and the truck was off its back wheels. There wasn't anyone out there but us. We tried, but we couldn't do anything about it. We flipped a coin to say who is going to stay and who is going to walk to the job, which was three or four miles away. I walked back to the job and had to confess to everybody what I had done and face the ridicule and the rebuke of all the other men, who loved to do that anyways. So that was one of our learning experiences!

STRICKLAND: Did you ever find anything good in the trash? Treasures?

BASS: No, no treasures. It wasn't a real fun job because it was garbage and trash. It was kind of a stinky place and had a lot of flies. It wasn't the best of jobs. In fact, it helped develop a work ethic in me. I wanted to go to college because I didn't want to be a clean-up man all my life. I mowed a lot of lawns in my day, so I didn't want to do that. I think that is one thing that's changed. Back then you could hire kids and kids would work and if they cut their finger, they cut their finger. Nobody got all upset about it.

STRICKLAND: Child labor laws were not the same.

BASS: Right. Now we can't hire kids, and they don't get the benefit of manual labor, going out there and working, and appreciating how hard it is. I think that is probably one change I would say is not always for the good. The younger generation seems to be less patient in the jobs they do. They want to move up. They want to be paid a LOT before they have paid their dues. I think patience is a virtue. If you stick with a job and do well, you will work your way up.

STRICKLAND: Do you feel like you have instilled that in your employees?

BASS: I try! I have some really good, devoted employees. We have got some that have been with us a very long time. We have lost some that have been with us for 20 or 30 years. We don't have a lot of turnover.

Being a family business, I think the utmost thing is that we treat them with respect. We pay them as much as we can. We try to reward them at the end of the year. I think they like the atmosphere. Nobody hollers at them. We try to maintain a business-like atmosphere. We have a very good group and some good young ones whose parents somehow taught them the right way. We are fortunate to have some good ones.

LAMB: Can you tell us more about the buildings you and your dad built?

BASS: He built First National of Richmond. He did a lot of work for Bert Winston. A bigger company built the bank that Mr. Winston had. My dad did some remodeling at that bank, on the corner of Thompson Highway, right in front of Dr. Thompson's place. It is a pharmaceutical place now. They hired him to monitor this bank building. Then he went on to build some stuff for Mr. Winston out at his plantation, Old South Plantation. We built the Anglican Church out there between 1985 and 1990.

In '86 I built the Confederate Museum outside of our subdivision. Now it is an insurance office. He did a lot of work for the county fairgrounds. Over the years we have done quite a bit of work for the county. At one time I tallied it up and it was something like 70 or 80 projects. Since that time, we have done a few more.

My grandfather, Nelson Bass, was on the first fair board that started the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. The county fairgrounds used to be in Rosenberg where Fiesta is now. We didn't build Polly Ryon Hospital, but we did work there. We do a lot of schools now, but we didn't back then.

I did the Rosenberg Railroad Museum and remodeled the Fort Bend Country Club, which was originally a wooden frame building. We tore that down and in '66 we built the brick building that is still there. We added on in the back in the '80s.

Probably the biggest job we did was building the Alvis Manufacturing Plant on the West side of Rosenberg in 1990. We have done projects all over Fort Bend County,

We did the plaza behind the courthouse and the fire station a few years ago. We do our own concrete and earth work. We don't just do buildings now. We built McCoy's in Rosenberg.

BASS, SCOTTY: Your dad did a LOT of things in Wharton whereas you stayed in this area mainly.

BASS: Mobility being what it is, we travel farther than we used to. Instead of just building in Fort Bend County, now we go to Matagorda County, Wharton County, and Montgomery County. We've worked in Galveston. We work in Clear Creek ISD. I've just finished a dome emergency management facility in Bay City last year and a building at the Wharton County Junior College campus in Wharton. We have to go all over now.. We have built many buildings at Southern Cotton Oil, including the cottonseed facility across from Polly Ryon in Richmond.

One of the first houses that dad built was for my aunt and uncle, Charles and Sally Kelly in Sugar Land. He built a house for Mr. Huntington in Rosenberg. He built so many houses I can't even remember them all. When we go west of Rosenberg and try to compete for local projects, it is very difficult.

Places like El Campo and Ganado are going to give the job to their local guy for the most part. Even if you are more affordable, they are still going to give it to that guy. I don't get upset about it because I understand that. They know those guys. hey grew with them. They trust them and they are going to give them the work first. That is the way it used to be out here, but now it is not. Now we are part of Houston. You have got to compete.

STRICKLAND: Thank you so much for your time, Bob!

BASS: My pleasure, thank you.

Interview Ends