

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Eugenia Virginia Brown**

Interview Date: 11/16/13

Interviewer: Charlotte Fleck

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Location: First United Methodist Church of Fulshear,
Fulshear Texas

15 Pages



This oral history is copyrighted 2018, by the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. All Rights Reserved. For information contact: Fort Bend County Historical Commission, Attn: Chairman-Oral History Committee, 301 Jackson St., Richmond, TX, 77469.

Terms and Conditions

These oral histories do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the County Historical Commission or Fort Bend County. This file may not be modified or changed in any way without the express written permission of the Fort Bend County Historical Commission.

This file may not be redistributed for profit.

Please do not 'hot link' to this file.

Please do not repost this file.



Transcript

FLECK: Would you tell us whole name please?

BROWN: Eugenia Virginia Brown. My pet name is Jean; everybody cut that Eugenia off and calls me Jean.

FLECK: Where were you born?

BROWN: I was born in Houston, Jefferson Davis Hospital. June 19, 1935.

FLECK: What brought your family to this area?

BROWN: My mother was born in Fulshear. The whole Brown family was from Fulshear.

FLECK: What was your father's name?

BROWN: I am an adopted child. My mother's name was Nora Louise Brown, and I was given to her second oldest brother and his wife. They had no children and they wanted children and they had my oldest sister. They say I was one year old when my mother gave me to them. But my sister was just a couple of months when my aunt took her.

FLECK: What were their names?

BROWN: His name was Willie L. Brown. The people called him Bill. Some of them called him Will, but his name was Willie Brown.

FLECK: What was her name?

BROWN: Her name was Maggie B. Clay Brown. She was a Clay before she married him.

FLECK: Were they both born in Fulshear?

BROWN: I know he was. I guess so because they had to meet somewhere. I think her parents really live close to each other. I remember that store was Schultze's store...I think that is the Foster area. Both of them were farmers. They grew cotton, corn, potatoes, pumpkins, white and red potatoes and baled hay. It is just amazing on how they do the hay now. I think about all the trouble my dad went through baling hay.



Mules moving round bale of hay.

FLECK: Tell me about that. Tell me what did he have to do?

BROWN: They didn't have tractors then, they had mules. I remember the machine going kind of around in circles and they had to feed hay to this thing...

FLECK: It was being pulled by a mule?

BROWN: That's right and then it made these bales, they had to put the wire somewhere and it was roped with baling wire, they would call it. The farming that I recall was in Fulshear; down Bois D'Arc Lane until Bois D'Arc run out. I don't know what they call that little dirt road...gravel road. I remember Mr. Mitch Mays. He owned this big farm with a lake not too far from it and a great big old house.

FLECK: Is it still there?

BROWN: I don't think so. It had fireplaces in the bedroom and one in another room. It had an upstairs because I remember sneaking upstairs. They said, "Don't go upstairs." You know how children just want to explore, look at things and just see what's up there. I used to go up there and look at a saddle for a horse. They told me back in those days, the ladies saddle had one stirrup on it.

FLECK: Saddle? So she rode sidesaddle?

BROWN: That was my grandmother. I never did meet her, Willie Brown's mother. I never did meet his parents. Both my grandfather and grandmother were deceased when I came along. I never did know them.

FLECK: Did you know their names?

BROWN: Her name was Mariah and his name was Will Brown.

FLECK: Did they live in Fulshear?

BROWN: Yes. I guess he worked for Mr. Mitch Mays' family before my dad did.

FLECK: So the family worked for this one man?

BROWN: As far as I know. I don't know how Mr. Huggins came into it, but somehow he did. I know years ago when they had big functions, barbecues down on the Fourth of July in Fulshear he would come up here and do the barbecuing for them. I remember that, because we would be waiting on the goodies they was going to bring back, and it wasn't scraps, it was real good food.

FLECK: So you didn't attend the barbecue?

BROWN: Oh, no. We were black. Back in those days black really didn't mingle with the white, like they do now. We were the class that was colored and not black. I don't know why because in the box of Crayolas there are ALL colors.

FLECK: As a child did you question that?

BROWN: Oh, yea. Why? They said, "This is the way it is." Why do I have to call her Mrs. and her children don't call my mom Mrs.? Mrs. Huggins for example.

I remember that we were separate. Hispanics are called white now but they were Mexicans back in those days. It is a long story. I never was really mistreated, but I wondered why we were pushed back, on the back burner all of the time. Today I guess being born in Christ and knowing the Lord you forgive people for them to be ignorant because God made us all.

FLECK: Have you seen it improved? Do you feel like things have improved?

BROWN: Oh, yea. We have come a LONG way. After we stayed on this farm I started school but we walked to school.

FLECK: Where was the school?

BROWN: Across from that church on Bois D'Arc Lane it was opposite, not directly in front. They got angry about it...on the other property.

FLECK: That was a separate school as well?

BROWN: Ah-huh, called Mt. Pleasant.

FLECK: Mt. Pleasant was it a one room school or several rooms?

BROWN: I think it was two big rooms, and it was something like the classes they have today, that they put two teachers in the room. You were not too loud because you don't want to disturb the other class. It was only two rooms and we had a room where we put our lunch, our coats in something like an oversize closet. My principal was Mr. Hanes. My first teacher was Miss Daisy Flemings. Her parents lived not too far from that church, Pleasant Hill Church. Mr. Flemings was an educator. I don't know if he came into Fort Bend County. I think my mom (my aunt Maggie who raised me) said she went as far as the seventh grade.

FLECK: Did they go to that same school?

BROWN: No, she didn't go to that school, Mt. Pleasant. When she went to school, it was in a church. They had moved the Pleasant Hill Church that stands there now; it wasn't in that location. It was back there behind in the woods somewhere. I think they moved it up to where it is now, where the historical marker is. Dad didn't have much education but they were very smart. They worked the young men instead of letting them go to school. I think they taught each other to read and to do things.



(Former) Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church, Fulshear, Texas

Our race is a beautiful color, we are colored because the masters on the farm took advantage of the women, you know what I mean?

FLECK: Did they ever tell stories in the past about their parents that you remember?

BROWN: My dad and mom? Yes. My grandfather was Willie Brown, Sr. because my dad was junior. His master or his boss whatever you want to call it really did love him. He did farming and I guess he did ranching too because in the last picture he was on a horse. I don't know what my grandmother did. I think she just had children -- fourteen of them.

FLECK: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

BROWN: Just me and my sister. My Mama had just two daughters. My sister is Alice Brown and she passed in 1933. She always had asthma. She had an asthma attack and her doctor was out of town and they took her to this doctor who I guess didn't want to touch blacks. Anyway she didn't make it. That was at Polly Ryon Hospital in Richmond. I don't like that hospital today. It's Oak Bend now. But I don't care for it because...(long sigh) it's just too much memory that hurts me there.

FLECK: Ah. Sad. How many children were in the school that you went to?

BROWN: I say there was about fifteen to eighteen in my class and then the other class. I say all together it might have been seventy-five children in the whole school. Sometimes all of us didn't attend because the parents pulled the children out to harvest the crops.

FLECK: Usually around late summer or fall?

BROWN: It was the fall because that's when the cotton would get right for picking. The corn for the harvest and stuff like that, because different families did different things. We had some cousins who they raised cane and made syrup from the sugar cane. Different people did different things, they were smart people, but held back. They weren't learnable, they just wasn't taught.

FLECK: Did any of the children that you went to school with, do you still know today?

BROWN: A whole bunch of them passed away. I know Gloria Rae Woods. She's still living, but she doesn't attend our school reunion. I graduated from A. W. Jackson in Rosenberg.

FLECK: How far was that?

BROWN: I say a good three miles. Maybe a little longer than three. My mom would wrap us up in our little hoods and we had our little coats when it got cold, every day we walked.

FLECK: What was your favorite subject in school?

BROWN: I don't really know if I had a favorite.

FLECK: Do you happen to remember your address as a child?

BROWN: I can't remember, back then they had boxes. P. O. boxes. They finally named it Bois D'Arc Lane. How it got it's name I don't know.

FLECK: What did you all do for recreation and relaxation, when your dad was done with the work and maybe it was a Sunday or a Saturday?

BROWN: Oh we played Jack Stones, you know the little Jacks.

FLECK: With Jacks. Why do you call it Jack Stones?

BROWN: Because it looked like a little stone. They was silver. We played with our dolls, some of them were homemade dolls. My mom made them. The one's we had bought were stuffed. When I was a little girl I was afraid of rain. I didn't like rain, I didn't like water, not that I wouldn't take a bath, but I didn't like water. I think I was afraid of drowning. I remember I had this doll and she was made out of some kind of saw dust or something and the rain caught me with this doll and I was crying and the doll got wet and started falling apart (laughter).

FLECK: How old were you?

BROWN: I wasn't going to school then. So I had to be four to five. I was trying to go where my parents were, down in the fields while they were working.

FLECK: Ooh (sympathetically). Did religion play a part in your lives?

BROWN: We were Baptist. That little church that is still standing there, was the first church I was a member of. I was baptized when I was twelve. Reverend F. J. Thomas lived here in Fulshear.

FLECK: Did you have social things at the church?

BROWN: We had picnics; we had Sunday school, a picnic once a year. They would bring the ice cream from Fulshear. Those were the best vanilla wafers that you wanted to eat back in those days and they had other cookies too. Pleasant Hill Church was a big community. I remember that little church used to be full because people from Fulshear came down there to attend. Some of them went to Greater Zachery.

My dad, Willie Brown, all his sisters practically moved to Houston. That is why I was born in Houston. They moved away from the country. They were born in Fulshear but they moved away, they got smart and left early.

FLECK: When they were born in Fulshear, were they usually born at home or...

BROWN: At home.

FLECK: By a midwife?

BROWN: They had midwife, ah-hum. I was told they had a midwife.

FLECK: Were finances a great concern for your family?

BROWN: That was the neatest thing. They could really stretch a dollar. I don't know how much they made or how they did the farm land because that wasn't their property. I guess so much of the crop went to the boss and so much went to them for harvest, to making the crop there. I don't know really too much about how they stretched that. One time, I think when we moved from that big house. We were further down...well, I remember there were three locations in the country. From there it was on that little farm road before you get to Bois D'Arc Lane...Winter Foster.

FLECK: Winter Foster?

BROWN: It was a house between Bois D'Arc Lane, across a plant they called a mound.

FLECK: Was that called Huntington's Mound?

BROWN: I guess so. I never did live there. Spanish people lived there, so I really don't know how they operated. All I remember is playing with their little girl, their daughter. We played everything. Her name was Francis. She learned how to speak English and we (laughter) didn't learn how to speak Spanish. She learned from us. From that location my dad found out this man who wanted to have a ranch hand. So we moved from there to Montgomery Ranch and Farm. That was further down Bois D'Arc Lane. I don't know if they still call that Bois D'Arc or not. You had to go through this woody area then it would just open up to a beautiful place. They had their weekend home there and that's where my dad died.

FLECK: How old were you about the time you moved to that place?

BROWN: I was young when they moved there. At that time my mom had to bring us as far as West Winter and Bois D'Arc corner and we caught the school bus and went to Rosenberg.

FLECK: When did you start going to Rosenberg to school then?

BROWN: I know I was in elementary school, so about the seventh grade or six or something like that.

FLECK: Do you remember a moment that because of the color of your skin the rules would be different?

BROWN: Yea, it bothered me when we came to Rosenberg and we had an old car. My daddy never did buy new cars. I don't know if it was because of finances or what. We always had a car, but it wasn't a new car, they were always five or six or seven years old or older. Anyway when we would come to Rosenberg to do grocery shopping or buy our clothes. Fulshear had two stores, Walker and Meyers. We called them the big store. Where Dozier's is now. I believe they called that Walker and I think the Meyers was the great big store across over there close to where they have the service station...

FLECK: Where the Shell station is now?

BROWN: NO, on the opposite side over there. Mr. Bill Grady had a facility where he sold tractors, lawnmowers and all that. I remember him and the little post office. It was where that bank is now because the post office moved. I don't know why they call that lady Miss Tight. I don't know her real name or anything, but she ran the post office.

We mostly went to Rosenberg for our clothes, because they didn't have any here then. So we went to town in our little car, and it did bother me, back when you asked me about color, why... we passed this park. The park is still there, after you cross the river bridge. It used to be full of swings and slides and it bothered me why I couldn't go and swing and slide there, because it was for white only. I think they started letting the Hispanics mix in.

FLECK: So your parents had to tell you?

BROWN: Oh, yea, um-hum. I remember the word colored for the rest room, for eating places. I remember the word colored, they didn't say black they'd say colored. You knew you was going to make it but everything was second hand. Nothing was given to you... like it is now. Our textbook was worn out books that had come from Lamar School or somewhere. So many children had had those books there was no place to put our name in the back of it. When they issued the books they were second hand books there was nothing new for us. We were so glad to get a text book we did not ask questions.

FLECK: Were you in Fort Bend County at the time that Civil Rights really took hold and these signs started to come down. Were you in Fort Bend County at that time?

BROWN: Half of the time I wasn't. I spent most of the time in Houston. I remember going to Tyler to be interviewed for being a lab technician and I had to ride the bus. I sat halfway on the bus and the bus driver went a couple of miles and he stopped and he told me I was still too close to the front. I was so scared I went to the back where the restroom was and sat in that seat!

FLECK: What year was that about?

BROWN: I graduated from high school in 1954 so it had to be 1955.

FLECK: And the bus driver white?

BROWN: YEA... there wasn't no black bus drivers during that time.

FLECK: And it scared you?

BROWN: Oh, yea, it sure did. I even forgot about being a lab technician. I didn't want to be that no more. I was going to be interviewed. I finished high school at Erma Hughes Business College in Houston. I graduated after about a two or three year course. Then my Mother's mother got sick and I came back home to help her with her. That was when they were still on the Montgomery land.

FLECK: This was after your father had passed on?

BROWN: No she died in 1958 and he died in 1960. He had planted a cotton crop because my mom stayed there until ... different people came to help harvest that. After that, we found a house in Rosenberg to rent, that's why we moved.

FLECK: What kinds of work have you done?

BROWN: After Business College I didn't like to be closed in an office. I didn't like people piling stuff on the desk, "do this" while you're working on something else. I knew business wasn't my thing. For four years I worked in a school cafeteria. I knew I didn't want to do that. The Weiner's had a son named Leonard. I worked at Leonard's clothing store for about seven years. I got up to an Assistant Buyer, where you decide what you want to buy. When I started out working for them I made the signs that said sheets on sale for such and such a thing. Jeans on sale...so I was a sign girl.

FLECK: When did you come back to Fort Bend County?

BROWN: After I worked those seven years I put an application in at Texas Instruments, no automobile, no nothing just faith and trust in God and I would find somebody to ride with. Then I moved back to Rosenberg. That's how I came to Rosenberg, my mom was by herself and so I found a lady that was very dependable and she didn't like be absent either. I started in 1970 working at Texas Instruments (TI) and I think by '76 I bought my first car. The first thing I did was fix my mouth up. I said, "I don't want no ugly teeth!" So I did that before I bought a car (laughter). Back then if you had a tooth ache your parent would not take you to the dentist. My teeth were neglected, not on purpose but because of not knowing. I have a forgiving heart. They weren't enlightened they just didn't know any better. I worked at TI for twenty-one years seven months. I used to know the weeks and the days!

FLECK: What did you do at Texas Instruments?

BROWN: First I was training for an inspector to inspect the little device that was going to go in your computer. I had to learn the wires to be sure the wires were perfect and what not. From that...they called it bonding. The work I was inspecting I had to learn that and after awhile I felt like I was a floater because it looks like they needed somebody everywhere I went.

TI had about two other separate plants beside the main plant. It was beautiful, I met a whole bunch of beautiful people, and we still stay in contact. I am a member of the retiree club. Matter of fact every second Wednesday we meet at a restaurant over there on highway 59. I really want to be with the people. I am still connected with TI. They forced us out for early retirement...laid off and I took early retirement.

FLECK: Have you ever been married?

BROWN: No, I had a guy we were supposed to get married and you know how guys are. They just promise you and promise you...anyway I got pregnant and I have one daughter and I just love her to death. Her name is Jacqueline and she knows the history and she knows my struggles and my ups and downs.

FLECK: Is she in Fort Bend County?

BROWN: She lives in Sugar Land. She was raised in Rosenberg with us. She graduated from Lamar High School. She was the president of the class, she always was a striving person a fighter (striking the table). She is going to make it. She did because after she graduated from Lamar she went to the University of Houston for a while and she said, "Mama, I am going to transfer to U. T. in Arlington." I switched from day shift to night shift. I went to work at eleven at night and got off seven in the morning. I had a Toyota Cressida then. I think they started making Lexus after the Cressida. I would get off at seven in the morning and hit Highway 45 and go to Arlington to see my child to visit her. She graduated from U. T. in Arlington and she came back to Houston and worked thirteen years for U. of H. in the finance area. She got tired of being responsible for all the finance coming through there. She went back to Prairie View and got her masters degree and her certificate to teach. She taught five years, now she is a counselor in Baytown. It is a good school area, Goose Creek. She got married in 1996.

FLECK: Do you have grandchildren?

BROWN: One grandson...one daughter and one grandson. His name is Jordan. My son-in-law is Leon Booker.

FLECK: Tell me the major changes you have seen as well as what you have noticed the changes in Rosenberg to, the whole county.

BROWN: Fulshear is all together different. The county has changed because today they don't see color. We meet a few nasty people in both races.

FLECK: Still?

BROWN: Still there is nasty people in both races, the black race as well as white. Not like it used to be. I have lots of white friends. This year on September the sixteenth I had a light heart attack. At my first retiree meeting this past week, I got hugs from everybody, white and the black. It is different, you all are different. I can talk with you, I can have dinner with you, we can go out for lunch. Years ago, it wasn't like that, it was separate. We had to go to the room in the back years ago, you know when I was in high school it was different. They started making little changes at A. W. Jackson when I was going to school. I remember when they had the parade; they made the children in the A. W. Jackson band march after the horses marched.

FLECK: The Fort Bend County Fair Parade?

BROWN: Uh-hum. They had them march after the horses and the horses had done their business. The children's boots got messed up and everything. But they were a GOOD band and they PLAYED, they blowed those horns. They finally changed but the scar was still there. I remember when I was working for Leonard stores I was going to the bank, a white man spit on me.

FLECK: OH! When was this?

BROWN: That was in the 1960's in Houston. I was going to the bank minding my own business and he just hauled off and spit.

FLECK: Tell me about a happy day.

BROWN: I don't remember because I had a whole bunch of happy days.

FLECK: That is wonderful. Tell me about one that had to do with Fulshear.

BROWN: I remember, coming to Fulshear. We met with the Fulshear School when I was a child, once a year like a big picnic. Guess what? They would walk...oh, they didn't have school buses then; they would walk half way to Bois D'Arc Lane and we would meet them.

The school was somewhere close to Greater Zachary Church. Mt. Pleasant was against them, so we played softball before they served us the picnic. That was a good day...good days to, that is how we got connected...the schools and the teachers, too. That Pleasant Hill School I missed that, my first teacher was Miss Daisy my second teacher was Willie B. Woods and then there was Miss Eferneil and there was Miss Veronica Summers. Those was my teachers.

FLECK: Were they strict?

BROWN: Oh, yea. Everybody was strict back then, they were really interested in us learning. There was no abuse like the people doing now, nothing like that. We started going to A. W. Jackson Elementary School from there to the high school they built which is an elementary school now.

FLECK: Did any of the men in your family have any military experience?

BROWN: My uncle... he went to the service and was there just a short time and the war was ended.

FLECK: This is World War II?

BROWN: It had to be...NO, it had to be WW I. He was he was born in nineteen hundred.

FLECK: Were you in Fulshear at the time of the depression? You must have been very little.

BROWN: I remember when they had to have stamps for your sugar, had to have stamps to buy your shoes. I guess that was in the depression time. I was born in 1935.

FLECK: What do you remember about the railroad in Fulshear?

BROWN: They had a little train come through and they would...I think my aunts and uncle and my mom originally rode that train to Houston. It was a little train...a passenger train like Amtrak but it wasn't Amtrak. I remember the train coming through and blowing. But Weston Lakes said we ain't going for that, we ain't having no train coming through waking us overnight, and they did away with it.

FLECK: Do you remember hearing the train whistle as a child?

BROWN: Oh, yea, I hear it now in Rosenberg because I am not too far from the railroad tracks.

FLECK: When you lived in Fulshear as a child, did you ever have to travel into Houston?

BROWN: When we did it was on a bus...Trail Ways or Greyhound bus. I never rode a train.

FLECK: You told me you were afraid of rain. Do ever remember any floods or big storms?

BROWN: Oh, yes, I remember the river overflowing.

FLECK: The Brazos river? When was that, do you know how old you were?

BROWN: (sigh) I can't remember the first one.

FLECK: Oh, several times then?

BROWN: Yea, the last one I was living in Houston because I came out to see my folks and couldn't get to them. The water was coming towards Winter Foster. Water was down there on the Montgomery Ranch so I couldn't get to them.

FLECK: Were you here when Hurricane Carla came through?

BROWN: Hurricane Carla, I was in Houston. I was working at the school cafeteria during that time. I remember Hurricane Carla.

FLECK: Is there anything I have forgotten to ask you about that you would like to tell me about?

BROWN: I always attended church. I am Baptist and always attended church from Pleasant Hill. When I was living in Houston I went to Hope Well Baptist Church. I think I was a member there about sixteen years. I am an usher and I ushered there. When I started working at TI I moved my membership to Mount Vernon Baptist Church which is on Third Street not too far from the Brazos River. I remember, the last flood they had. The water came...I've got pictures of that. Water came up to Sixth Street.

FLECK: What year, do you remember?

BROWN: Oh! I can't remember. It was a bad flood because it came up...there is a park there. The little children's swings and see-saws, all that was in water from that Brazos overflowing. I joined the Mount Vernon Church in 1991. I joined the church that is going towards Pecan Grove...Zion Watch Tower. Now I am a member of Fort Bend Church on Eldridge.

FLECK: What do you think when you drive down FM 1093 and you see all the developments and the houses?

BROWN: It is amazing that all that land was vacant and no more rice fields, no more of what ever they had over there. It is just beautiful. It is just amazing that they have decided to use that land for homes.

I wouldn't mind living back out here now. Especially going down FM 1093. Those subdivisions on your right going out that way. That would be a nice...my daughter says I wouldn't mind living back and forth. I said you never can tell, this is where I come from and I might end up back there; although the little house in Rosenberg is ours.

FLECK: What do you think your father would have thought?

BROWN: From Heaven they are looking down saying, "WOW! Look at Fulshear." I imagine it would just be a dream for them to see Fulshear. I remember my dad came to Fulshear on a wagon. I begged him one day, let me ride the wagon to Fulshear, I never did that no more. (laughter)

FLECK: Why?

BROWN: It took sooo long to get to Fulshear and so long to get back home. He never did have no more trouble with me wanting to ride the wagon.

FLECK: Is this when you lived on Bois D'Arc?

BROWN: Montgomery Ranch.

FLECK: Oh, do you ever drive down Bois D'Arc and see where you used to live?

BROWN: I wanted to show my daughter and we went as far as the gate, but they had a shooting range behind there and I couldn't tell where they were shooting or if it was permissible to go because I wanted to show her the ranch.

They have built and developed across from Pleasant Hill down Bois D'Arc Lane. They haven't gone down towards the ranch. I would like to know who ever bought that from the Montgomery's. I have lost contact with them.

FLECK: We sure appreciate getting to speak with you.

Interview ends