

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Frances Hernandez Franco**

Interview Date: 11/16/2013

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Olga Barr

Comment: This interview was conducted at the First United Methodist Church of Fulshear. Mrs. Franco was joined by her daughter Barbara Franco Marroquin

9 Pages



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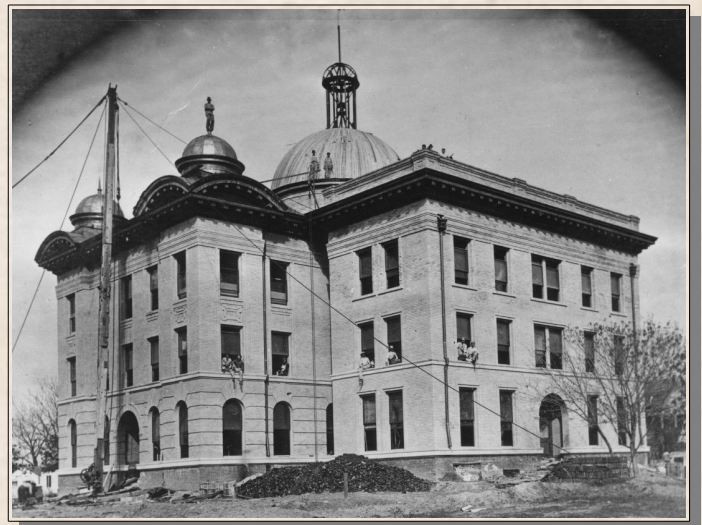
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Transcript

GOODSILL: We want to hear about your life. Maybe you could start with your parents.

FRANCO: My father, John Hernandez, Senior, came from Goliad, Texas where he met my mom. They got married and moved to Fulshear in 1929. He worked for Mr. Ed Huggins, Senior, in the farm across from the City Hall. We used to ride the buggies to go to the store. My daddy used to take the little train to go to Houston or to Eagle Lake. There were nothing but dirt roads at that time. There was the Briscoe and Huggins Store in Fulshear. My dad worked for Mr. Huggins. My mom also worked for Mr. Huggins until she passed away. My daddy continued working for him. He would plant cotton, potatoes, sweet potatoes and corn from 8 – 3:30 and then he would go work for Mr. Ed Dozier, Senior, to clean the yard for him.

GOODSILL: Tell me the full name of your father and the full name of your mother.

FRANCO: My daddy's name is John Hernandez, Senior, and my mom's is Mary Bolboda Hernandez.

GOODSILL: How did they get to Goliad? Do you know how your father's father came to Goliad?

FRANCO: That part I don't know.

GOODSILL: You didn't know your grandparents?

FRANCO: I didn't know none of my grandparents. My father worked for the Huggins for years. I have a brother that worked for the Huggins, too, two brothers. Both of them worked for Mr. Huggins. Old Mr. Huggins died when junior was there, Mr. Ed Junior, Miss Betty. They still worked for him. My mom passed away and my daddy continued working for them until Mr. Ed Junior bought a ranch over there in Junction. Then they moved over there. My oldest brother John Hernandez, Junior, is still working for Mr. Huggins over there.

GOODSILL: Wow, a multi-generational thing. John and Mary had some children. Tell me the first one.

FRANCO: Let's see who is the oldest one. See when they came over here they had...they were married before. They were widows.

GOODSILL: Both of them had children from other families?

FRANCO: My mom had a daughter named Maria. My daddy had two daughters named Margaret and Lupe. Those were his daughters from his first wife. They came over here and they were raised with us when we were little.

GOODSILL: How many between the two of them?

FRANCO: I had four brothers and four sisters.

GOODSILL: There were eight of you and then three step-sisters. Holy Moley.

MARROQUIN: Then he adopted a set of twins, remember?

GOODSILL: I need to get your name.

MARROQUIN: Barbara Franco Marroquin. I am her daughter.

FRANCO: My oldest brother is still working for the Huggins, over there in Junction. Mr. Ed Junior died, Miss Betty died, but her son and daughter kept the ranch. They own the ranch. My brother is the manager of that ranch.

GOODSILL: Oh, that's nice.

FRANCO: I had two brothers working for Mr. Huggins, but one passed away. It was different here in Fulshear. It was nothing but dirt roads. We grew up all right. In 1949 my daddy bought the land where I'm living right now. He built a small house with two rooms and one kitchen. That's how he started.

GOODSILL: What was your life like when you were little?

FRANCO: It was good.

GOODSILL: Tell me what you did on a typical day when you were 10 years old.

FRANCO: When I was 10 years old I was going to school in Simonton. There was a white school in Simonton. We used to have to ride the colored bus to go over there.

GOODSILL: The coloreds couldn't go to that school?

FRANCO: No, the coloreds had their own school in Simonton. There was only one bus going that way and that was the colored bus. So we had to ride the bus.

GOODSILL: Was that a problem? Did everybody get along?

FRANCO: Yeah, everybody got along because the bus driver took care of us in the front, "Tell those colored people not to..."

GOODSILL: The Hispanics sat in the front?

FRANCO: Um hum.

GOODSILL: Really was a class system wasn't there?

FRANCO: Yeah, it was different, the colored, the Spanish and the white. My brother and I went to the Rosenberg school, to Travis Elementary. Then I went to another school they tore down right there where Walgreens used to be Taylor Ray. I went to school there and then I quit to help my parents work.

GOODSILL: What did you do?

FRANCO: When I was 13 years old I started washing dishes for Mr. and Mrs. Ed Dozier, Senior, at their home. On the weekends, I would go help Mrs. Dozier make up the beds, sweep, do little odds and ends with her. She taught me how to cook. The first thing Mr. Dozier said, "Mary, show Frances how to make pinto beans and cornbread. That is all I can eat. When I come from work (he used to work at the cotton gin in Brookshire), she can have that cooked for me." So she showed me how to make pinto beans and cornbread.

I stopped working for them when I came to the McCanns. I worked for them for years, babysitting and helping them clean the house. Then when I was about 20 I would go to the old house and cook for Mr. McCann's workers on weekends. Then I worked for Mr. Bill Meyer at the store, cooking, me and this other lady. Then after the store burned, I didn't work there no more. I took care of Mr. Gibson and Mr. Bentley's stepfather because he couldn't get around. I was a little nurse.

GOODSILL: Well, no, you got married and had children along the way.

FRANCO: I married Videll Franco and had eight kids.

GOODSILL: Tell me their names from oldest to youngest.

FRANCO: The oldest one is Jim Hernandez. Then there is Michael. Then there are Richard, Michelle, Lloyd, little Frances, Barbara, and Videll.

GOODSILL: Took a long time to name somebody after your husband.

FRANCO: Yeah (laughter). We lived real good here at home, right here in Fulshear.

GOODSILL: What kind of work did your husband do?

FRANCO: He was in construction. He would work with Donny Mullins. He owned his own construction company. My daddy died in 1974. He was taking care of the cemetery.

GOODSILL: Oh, tell me about the cemetery.

FRANCO: He was taking care of the cemetery, cutting it. You know how people don't want to do nothing. But my daddy would always go cut it and take us along with him. I used to ask, "Daddy, why do you cut the cemetery?" He said "Well, I don't like to see them ugly." I said, "Why nobody comes and helps?" He said, "Because nobody wants to help. They just COMPLAIN about the cemetery."

So my daddy took care of the cemetery for YEARS. He died in 1974 so it was up to us now. We would go check if the grass was long or tall. Until I told my oldest kid, "We are going to keep the cemetery up like my daddy told us to do." So in 1982 I incorporated the cemetery because Mr. Ed Junior used to live over here. Mr. Bentley and Mr. Ed Dozier told me, "Frances, you need to fix papers on the cemetery because Houston is coming in and they are going to try to take over and that way y'all got your cemetery." I said, "Okay." Mr. Ed Junior said, "Do you need a lawyer?" I said, "No, I'll get my own lawyer." So my own lawyer fixed the papers.

GOODSILL: Hispanic lawyer?

FRANCO: Yes.

GOODSILL: What's the official name of the cemetery?

FRANCO: Fulshear Spanish Community Cemetery.

GOODSILL: Tell me a little bit about it.

FRANCO: Only the people that have family in there can be buried there.

GOODSILL: So newcomers can't be buried there. It's a family thing. Is it mainly your family or Hispanic families?

FRANCO: Hispanic families, other people that have been buried there for years.

GOODSILL: Barbara, were you recruited to help at the cemetery?

MARROQUIN: We all were. (laughs)

FRANCO: She's one of the members.

MARROQUIN: As we were growing up, we all had to contribute. "This is the clean-up-the-cemetery-weekend", so we would go clean up.

FRANCO: We would take the barbecue pit and cook hamburgers or hot dogs.

MARROQUIN: To this day, even her grandchildren go and clean up on cemetery weekend.

FRANCO: But I pay somebody to go clean the cemetery. To keep it clean every month. They charge me a hundred dollars a month to cut it once a month and when it needs cutting twice a month I pay two hundred.

GOODSILL: It's important to you. Are both your parents buried there?

FRANCO: Yeah, brothers, sisters, nephews.

GOODSILL: How big is it?

MARROQUIN: About two acres.

GOODSILL: Really! Is it mainly full or is there plenty of room?

FRANCO: No, there is still plenty room. That cemetery was divided from the white to Spanish.

GOODSILL: What does that mean?

FRANCO: It used to be all white but then they divided it. Half was Hispanic. They put a fence.

GOODSILL: So the part that's Hispanic is the part that you incorporated? The white part is separate?

FRANCO: They incorporated the white.

MARROQUIN: They are right next door to each other. So if you ever drive down there you will see the Spanish cemetery and then you will see the white cemetery. They are just divided by a fence.

GOODSILL: Do they have different names?

FRANCO: Yeah.

MARROQUIN: Oh, yeah.

GOODSILL: So will it be up to your generation, Barbara, to carry on.

MARROQUIN: Oh, absolutely.

FRANCO: It is because of my father. He took care of it for years. Sometimes we would be over there, but we want to go do something at the cemetery, try to cut limbs or something, and people ask, "What are y'all doing?" I say, "We are trying to keep the cemetery." But they never offered to help. They just look and turn around and leave. But then they make their own mess in the cemetery, and they complain. I say, "Why complain, these come from your grave." I know, (laughs) they can't trick me about those flowers where they from.

GOODSILL: You keep an eye out.

FRANCO: They try to tell me they didn't put it out there. "No these flowers came from that grave. These limbs came from your grave."

GOODSILL: You know where all the trash comes from. Is religion an important part of your life?

FRANCO: I am Catholic.

GOODSILL: Is there a particular church that your family has gone to?

FRANCO: Well, we go to Rosenberg. My kids go to Rosenberg. She has her own church to go.

MARROQUIN: For the most part growing up as Catholic.

FRANCO: But they came to this church.

MARROQUIN: We came here to the United Methodist since I was in kindergarten for bible study.

FRANCO: They treated the kids good. They would go pick them up and bring them to the church. So my kids are baptized here and baptized at the Catholic Church. But they loved to come here. It didn't matter to me as long as they went to church.

MARROQUIN: That's right! That's what she told us. It doesn't matter where you choose to go, but you have to go and have a belief in something. I was like, (said in a little girl's voice), "I like going down the road." When we would go to bible study they have snacks. (laughter) You know when you are litte they gave us sugar.

GOODSILL: Tell me something about your mother. How did her family come to Fort Bend?

FRANCO: She came with my father. My dad met my mom in Goliad. My dad was from Mexico. A long time ago he had to go to Houston to the immigration office and put his thumb. Long time ago it's put your thumb, your fingerprint.

GOODSILL: That's your immigration process?

FRANCO: Yeah. Now you got to get papers. Everybody liked my daddy!

GOODSILL: I can tell you had a lot of admiration for your father.

FRANCO: People still visit me who knew my daddy. On the Huggins farm the colored people were the Villalobos, and Manciks, and the Torres, and John and Mary Pittman. Mrs. Mary Pittman was my momma's nanny for the kids. She was real nice.

GOODSILL: She was your mom's nanny? She was the one who took care of all the kids because there were a lot of them and your mom needed some help.

FRANCO: While she went to work.

GOODSILL: What kind of work did your mom do?

FRANCO: She worked for the Huggins as a house cleaner.

GOODSILL: So there is a real connection between your families. What else should I ask?

MARROQUIN: Your dad, Grandpa, also owned property in San Antonio. He had two homes. He went from San Antonio to here. I don't know why they did that.

FRANCO: My aunt, his sister, gave him that property in San Antonio. She lived over there. When she passed away she left it to my dad. So when my dad passed away, I was the one in charge of it. But then one day we decided to sell it because we don't go over there. Then my aunt had borrowed money from the bank and she was still owing for the real estate. "Frances you might as well let the bank keep it."

GOODSILL: So you didn't get any profit out of it? Oh, that's a shame. She needed the money for something?

FRANCO: Yeah, but she never told my dad because my dad would have paid for it, but she never did it. Yeah, now it's Mr. Bentley's. He knows us since we were little. He was my kids' grandfather, him and Mrs. Stella. In school, you know, for Grandfather's Day.

MARROQUIN: Adopted. They find grandparents in the community to adopt a child at the school, because when I was born my grandparents were deceased. We had adopted grandparents.

FRANCO: They are just like family.

GOODSILL: Nice. Thank you. I appreciate you coming. Good to hear your story.

Interview ends