

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*

Interviewee: **Henrietta Angeline Rosenbaum**

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Interviewer: Claire Rogers

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

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12 Pages



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*Transcript*

ROGERS: Let's start with some biographical information. Where were you born?

ROSENBAUM: Well it sure wasn't in the hospital. (laughter) It was between Orchard and Rosenberg on the Moore's ranch out there in nowhere.

ROGERS: Do you have brothers and sisters?

ROSENBAUM: I have one brother and five sisters, and we are still living.

ROGERS: Wow (softy), all of you are still living! Great!

ROSENBAUM: We lost our oldest brother. He was almost two when he died.

ROGERS: When did your family come to Fort Bend County?

ROSENBAUM: Well, my mother came from Czechoslovakia and my daddy come from Bastrop. As far as I know, they have been in Fort Bend ever since we were kids. We were born in Fort Bend.

ROGERS: So when were you born?

ROSENBAUM: I was born December 14, 1928. I am next to the oldest. I have an older brother and four sisters below me.

ROGERS: What type of work did your father do?

ROSENBAUM: He was a farmer. He farmed cotton, corn and maize.

ROGERS: How much acreage did he have?

ROSENBAUM: Well, at that time, we lived in Orchard so I don't remember how many acres. I was in the third grade when we moved half way to Beasley from Needville. We farmed fifty acres of cotton as far as I know. It wasn't a very big farm. (other voice states, "They made enough to raise those kids.") (chuckles)

ROGERS: Did your grandparents live near here?

ROSENBAUM: My daddy's mother and dad died when they were young. I did not know mother's mother. I would guess I was two years old when she died. But I remember Grandpa Sindell. He was seventy-six when he died. I was sixteen. He was in Wharton County, in East Bernard, he was staying with his sister.

ROGERS: When your mom moved here from Czechoslovakia, did she come with her family?

ROSENBAUM: Yes. There was a bunch of them. With mother, there were 4 girls. They lost two sons on the ship. They are buried in Galveston. After they came to America grandma and grandpa had three more boys.

ROGERS: Have you ever lived outside of Fort Bend County?

ROSENBAUM: Yes, when I married my husband, we lived in Damon. Then we moved back and forth to Fort Bend. Then we moved to West Columbia and that's it. We came to Needville in 1961 and stayed.

ROGERS: So when you were growing up in this area, what was a typical day like? What were the first things you remember doing?

ROSENBAUM: Well, we picked cotton, chopped cotton, hauled hay and cut corncobs. (laughter).

ROGERS: You were a farm girl!

ROSENBAUM: A farm girl, right! I was eighteen when I got married and left. When I lived in West Columbia and had two children, my daddy would pick me up on Sunday night or Monday morning and I'd go to their place to pick cotton and chop cotton with my two little ones.

ROGERS: So during the week you would spend time with your family working on the farm, and on the weekends you'd spend with your husband?

ROSENBAUM: He would come and pick us up and drag us back (laughter), yea. He worked for the sulphur company at Long Point, for 38 years.

ROGERS: So, when you were little, tell me about school.

ROSENBAUM: We went to school in Orchard at first. First three or four years of my grade school, I went to Orchard. They tell me we were so little that the bus driver had to always get out of the bus and pick us up and put us in the bus. I don't remember that. But then we moved to Beasley, and we went to Medina School. It was about a mile and a half from me. I went to eighth grade in Medina. We went through eighth grade, then we went to high school in Beasley.

ROGERS: Was it just 12 grades when you were in high school?

ROSENBAUM: Yes, it was just two rooms with four grades in each room. There was just a very few of us in each grade. I would say about twelve to fifteen kids in one grade.

ROGERS: How many teachers in that one room?

ROSENBAUM: Medina has two in a room. Beasley had more. It worked pretty well. Before I graduated, I got married. (laughter) I only went through the eleventh grade.

ROGERS: And then you got married and you have just the two kids?

ROSENBAUM: No, I have three. Shirley is my oldest. She was born in 1950, and Allen was born in December of 1952, about two days from my birthday. David was born October 10th, 1957. I had them all in the fifties.

ROGERS: Where did they go to school?

ROSENBAUM: Shirley started in West Columbia. Then we moved to Needville. Two boys and a daughter graduated from Needville.

ROGERS: So what did you do when you weren't going to school and you weren't chopping cotton? Any relaxation or recreation?

ROSENBAUM: There were a bunch of us kids; 5 girls. We'd make ourselves busy playing house and school and playing ball, you know pitch it over the house and Red Rover Red Rover and all this... (laughter)

ROGERS: Did you have close neighbors?

ROSENBAUM: No, not really. It was about a fourth of a mile.

ROGERS: When did you start driving?

ROSENBAUM: Not until after I married. I was probably about 20 or 21. I learned in the fields. I would drive to go see my in-laws.

ROGERS: Did you ever drive a tractor, or help your dad?

ROSENBAUM: Well, my daddy was going to show me how to drive a tractor. When you turn, they had wire fences. You know I cut one of those wire fences and drug it under. That was the end of my driving.

ROGERS: (laughter) Okay. What about when you were a young mom?

ROSENBAUM: Well, my husband worked shift work. When we lived in West Columbia, I took in washing and ironing, and I baby sat at the bowling alley. I always took David, the youngest, with me.

ROGERS: Did you have any big challenges when you were raising those kids?

ROSENBAUM: Not really, you know how kids get into mischief. Now Allen had a little friend name Charlie Snaick who lived just down the street from us. David was just a little, tiny thing, and he'd slip away from me and go into this pasture about two blocks away with Charlie. Later he told me there was quick sand down there. Every time I'd miss Allen I would have a peach switch, and that would sting him. It would sting him and he wouldn't wander. (laughter)

ROGERS: Did he ever get in the quick sand?

ROSENBAUM: No, I don't think so. He was little, I'm not sure he knew if it was quick sand or sand. But it was dangerous.

ROGERS: How about when you moved here to Needville, did you live in town?

ROSENBAUM: Yea, we lived just across from the nursing home at first. I went to work in a cafe. My mother in-law had my little one at home. I worked at Pauline's Café, then I went to Hadoway's Café which is Rosarita now. I even worked for Sally Gaston for about nine months.

I was a waitress. I would make their pies, too, in the kitchen. When ginning season came, they wanted me to keep books at the cotton gin. So, I worked at the cafe until three o'clock and worked from three to twelve at the cotton gin. Then I'd come home and sleep, and then I would repeat the work. But when I went to work in Rosenberg, I couldn't work at the cotton gin, because I worked there until six o'clock.

ROGERS: Where did you work in Rosenberg?

ROSENBAUM: Luksa's Grocery. It's where Robert E. Lee School was.

ROGERS: How old were your kids when you were working in Rosenberg?

ROSENBAUM: David was still at home.

ROGERS: What was your husband's job during that time?

ROSENBAUM: He worked in a power plant. He was with the boilers at the Sulphur Company. I don't know, there is just a lot of noise in there. I didn't go there very often. Except one time I had to go and pick up car keys I had left. There was just too much noise in there. He worked there 38 years and was 60 years old when they closed down the place.

ROGERS: What did he do then, pretty much retired?

ROSENBAUM: Oh, yea. I retired when I was 60 because Mr. Luksa closed up the store.

ROGERS: When your kids were growing up, what kind of recreation did they do, besides getting into quick sand?

ROSENBAUM: (laughter) Well, I know Shirley and others took turns driving them to East Bernard dances and I took my turn.

ROGERS: How big was town then?

ROSENBAUM: Well, let's see, we had two grocery stores here, big ones like Bartell's Grocery and then Ladd's. I know they used to have a theater here but part of it burned down. He took me to town, and that is the first time I ever remember coming to Needville because my mother and dad always traded in Rosenberg.

ROGERS: How long did you and your husband date?

ROSENBAUM: Gosh, I don't know whether it was a couple of years, maybe not even that, maybe a year. I don't know (laughter).

ROGERS: Were you in high school together?

ROSENBAUM: No, he was six and a half years older than I. We had a good life.

ROGERS: How did you meet?

ROSENBAUM: He stopped one time because his uncle lived across the street from us. He saw there was a bunch of girls there. We were walking down from the school bus, and I guess he stopped.

ROGERS: You have just known him all your life it seems like. (chuckles)

ROSENBAUM: We were married 48 ½ years when he passed away.

ROGERS: So tell me about your children.

ROSENBAUM: Shirley lives close to Alvin, Allen lives in Rosenberg, and David lives two streets from me. Allen, the oldest boy, is a UPS man. He goes out on a Monday morning and then doesn't come in until Thursday because they go all the way to Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. They spend one night over there, and they come back. He is off on Fridays. Then Saturday he goes to Kentucky with another guy, and they come back Sunday. He's got three children. His youngest boy graduated last Saturday, then Dustin and then Megan. My youngest boy has two grandchildren. I have six grandchildren and three greats.

ROGERS: So has Needville changed a lot in the time you have lived here?

ROSENBAUM: Yea, because when we lived in Needville on the farm, there were muddy roads. Our buses would even get stuck going to take young ones to school. Of course, now everything is paved. When my husband came courting, he got stuck, too. (laughter)

ROGERS: Did your dad have to pull him out with the tractor?

ROSENBAUM: No, not really. I think he got stuck before he got to the house.

ROGERS: So there were a lot of muddy roads. Any other big changes?

ROSENBAUM: At one time they said they had a theater here in Needville, but I never did go to the theater here. It was just across the street from here.

ROGERS: Did your kids go to school here in Needville?

ROSENBAUM: Yes, all three of them. Well, Shirley started in West Columbia.

ROGERS: Were those small schools like yours with the one or two rooms?

ROSENBAUM: Oh, no. (laughter) At West Columbia they had quite a few classes.

ROGERS: Did you start in kindergarten or first grade?

ROSENBAUM: There was no kindergarten when I went to school (laughter). No, I started when I was, I guess my birthday falls...

ROGERS: Your birthday is in December.

ROSENBAUM: Yes, so if you didn't have a birthday before September the first, then you had to wait that whole year.

ROGERS: So you would have started first grade when you were six or seven? Probably about six and a half.

ROSENBAUM: Yes, six and a half. When we lived out there, if they needed somebody to work in the fields, we would skip about two or three weeks of school, maybe longer. Now a days you can't do that.

ROGERS: Would you mostly have to skip in the spring or the fall, or either one?

ROSENBAUM: Well, it's whenever you picked cotton.

ROGERS: The fall.

ROSENBAUM: I would skip about three or four weeks of school, and I even caught up with the other ones, and I knew more than they did when they were going everyday.

ROGERS: So when you picked cotton did you have a big cotton sack?

ROSENBAUM: Big sack and sometimes I picked over a hundred pounds in one sack.

ROGERS: (softly) Wow.

ROSENBAUM: When we moved to Needville in 1961, Mr. Fuller needed a cotton picker. My husband was off on a vacation, so we went to pick. I picked over three hundred pounds.

ROGERS: How long did that take to pick three hundred pounds?

ROSENBAUM: A day. We picked just the cotton, not the whole boll.

ROGERS: When they pick cotton, do they only pick once? I've heard you have to pick more than once.

ROSENBAUM: Oh, yea, more than once, when you pick cotton. Now they have these machines and they try it one time I think.

ROGERS: You would go out there and pick the first crop, and then how many other times would you go and pick?

ROSENBAUM: Till there was no cotton in the bolls. We would pick a bail of cotton a day.



ROGERS: All of you together would pick a bail?

ROSENBAUM: Even when my brother went to service, we picked. Daddy would always say, "Well girls, if y'all finish these bails y'all can go to gin with me." So we did (laughter).

ROGERS: How did he take his cotton to the gin?

ROSENBAUM: He had a big trailer and he pulled it by the car.

ROGERS: Did he ever get a machine to pick the cotton?

ROSENBAUM: Not when I was little. When they bought that farm in Tavener, yea.

ROGERS: So your dad farmed here, and then he moved to Tavener?

ROSENBAUM: In 1948, they moved to Tavener. I got married in 1947.

ROGERS: How big is that farm?

ROSENBAUM: About 9.6-something acres.

ROGERS: Where is Tavener?

ROSENBAUM: It is about four miles on this side of East Bernard. It is in Fort Bend, but East Bernard is in Wharton.

ROGERS: How long did they live in Taverner?

ROSENBAUM: Till, they built that freeway. They always came to church in Needville to the Presbyterians and dad told me one time, "Henrietta, if that house on that corner comes up for sale, now you buy it. We will move over here with you all." So sure enough we turned around and we bought that house and I said, "Okay, dad, we bought the house now we are MOVING you." We didn't ask him if they wanted to move, but anyway we moved him. But I think they enjoyed it right next to me.

ROGERS: They went to the Presbyterian Church?

ROSENBAUM: Well, I was a Presbyterian before, but I married a Methodist. That's where I got married, and I just kept it up.

ROGERS: Do you still go to the Methodist Church?

ROSENBAUM: Well, when we lived in West Columbia, I transferred the letter to them and still was a Methodist.

ROGERS: So your parents moved here, they went to the Presbyterian Church and you went to the Methodist?

ROSENBAUM: Uh-hum (chuckles) yea.

ROGERS: Did you have Sunday dinner together?

ROSENBAUM: Yes, and Thanksgiving was always at my house.

ROGERS: When you were growing up, when your parents would have a holiday like Christmas or Thanksgiving, would people come to your parents' house? Or would you go somewhere else?

ROSENBAUM: We went to mother and dad's. We took turns between the in-laws.

ROGERS: Where did your in-laws live?

ROSENBAUM: Near the Foster School down in the country there.

ROGERS: Foster School Road?

ROSENBAUM: Years later when they retired, they moved to Needville. He used to work maintenance on the Needville School when it was located here across the street.

ROGERS: When I came today you were quilting. How long have you quilted?

ROSENBAUM: I was going to high school when I was quilting.

ROGERS: Did your mom quilt?

ROSENBAUM: Oh, yes. I had an uncle and aunt that lived close to Beasley, and when I'd get off the bus over there, because mother was there, I would quilt and then come home with them. So I have quilted practically all my life except when I was raisin' my children. I didn't have time to do that. So when I retired at the age of 60, I started up again.

ROGERS: Who do you make your quilts for?

ROSENBAUM: For myself, my grandchildren, and my children. I think my children each have two quilts apiece and my grandchildren each have one. I also donate to the Methodist Church and even to the Needville senior citizens event they have in January.

ROGERS: When you were growing up and you were quilting with your aunt and your mom, where would they get the material for the quilting?



*The Needville Senior Citizens Center is getting ready to host the annual Leroy Miksch Fundraiser in January 2011 at the K. C. Hall in Needville. Sitting (from left) Mavin Hicks, Henrietta Rosenbaum, Roy Hartfiel, Alice Bily, Barbara Sims and Florence Kramer. Standing (from left) Kathryn Wellspring, Winona Luedeke, Willie Mae Kuban, Laveta Mitchell and Dorothy Lipinski.--courtesy fbherald.com*

ROSENBAUM: Gosh they even had feed sacks.

ROGERS: What did they do with their quilts?

ROSENBAUM: Well, I still have one of mother's that she said my aunt Sophie made. I still have that one myself. But they made them for a regular bed; they didn't make those in queen size.

ROGERS: And you enjoy quilting?

ROSENBAUM: Enjoy it very much; I would rather do that than eat practically (chuckles)

ROGERS: So that is what you spend your time doing? (chuckle).

ROSENBAUM: You see when I leave here, I'll go home and work on a quilt that I am doing for a lady. I have even quilted for a lady out of Colorado. I don't know how many embroidered quilts she had. She brought them to me and the next time she came, she'd pick them up.

ROGERS: How many gins where there in the old days? Where did your dad take his cotton?

ROSENBAUM: He took it to Beasley. When they moved to Tavener, they had a gin there. They have two gins here in town.

ROGERS: They have two Needville gins, and one in Fairchilds, too. He didn't go to any of those?

ROSENBAUM: No, when they moved to Needville they didn't farm anymore.

ROGERS: When did you mom and dad die?

ROSENBAUM: Dad died March the 6th 1989. Mother followed a year and a half later. Daddy's birthday is July the 12th and he died March the 6th. So he didn't reach 92. Mother's birthday was September the 3rd and she died September the 7th or 16th and she was 92.

ROGERS: Well thank you so much. It has been a pleasure talking to you.

ROSENBAUM: Thank you.

Interview ends