

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Irene Bohac**

Interview Date: 06/03/2011

Interviewer: Claire Rogers

Transcriber: Olga Barr

Location: St. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church,
Needville Texas

9 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.

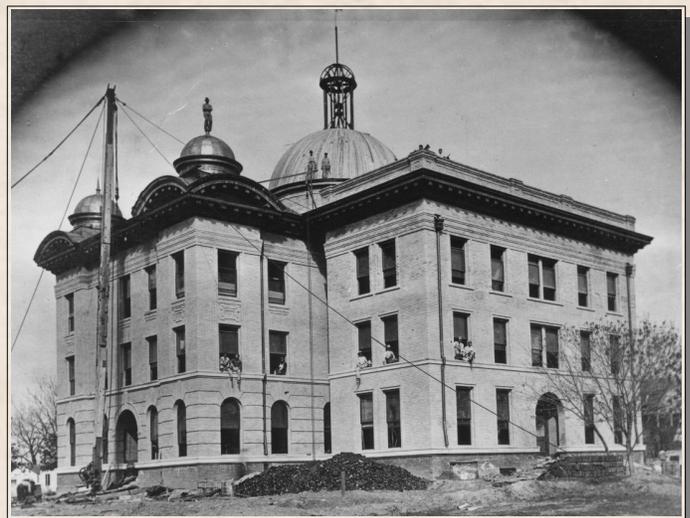
Terms and Conditions

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

ROGERS: Let's start with where you were you born?

BOHAC: I was born at home just across the county line in Lavaca County, which is close to Schulenburg, on February 2, 1929.

ROGERS: Were you the only child?

BOHAC: No, I had a younger brother. We lived there until I was about maybe a couple of years old. Then we moved out on Highway 77, south of Schulenburg. We lived there until I was about five years old. Then my parents bought a farm west of High Hill. We moved there when I was about five years old. I remember that. I lived there 'til I got married when I was twenty-one. I moved to Damon with my husband. In fact, we still own the farm northwest of Schulenburg that my parents bought in 1934.

ROGERS: What did your father raise on the farm?

BOHAC: We raised corn, cotton and, some grain. Then we had our own sugar cane that we made our own molasses. We had chickens, cattle, pigs, and horses. Of course, in those days we farmed with horses.

ROGERS: Did you help with the farming?

BOHAC: Oh, yes. [laughs] I had to work hard doing a little of everything. We had to feed the animals, chop cotton, chop corn, stack hay, and put the hay in the barn by hand. Everything by hand and feed the animals. We raised our own meat. Of course, we had to process it since we had no refrigeration and no electricity.

ROGERS: No inside bathroom?

BOHAC: No inside bathroom. During the Depression you just didn't have much. We ate what was put on the table, what we raised, otherwise we'd go hungry. Which was the way it was in them those days.

ROGERS: Did you help your mother with the cooking?

BOHAC: Oh, yes. I helped with the cooking and, baking. We had a wood stove then we used. We finally got a kerosene stove. Then after I left home, my mother got an electric stove. We went from one to the other.

ROGERS: Did your family have electricity before you moved out?

BOHAC: Yes, I was 21 when we got electricity, and I got married in the fall of that year.

ROGERS: Where did you go to school?

BOHAC: High Hill Parochial School.

ROGERS: What grade did you start?

BOHAC: First grade. We didn't have kindergarten or anything like that. I went from the first through to the ninth, and that was it.

ROGERS: Was there a room for each class

BOHAC: No, there was at least two classes in each room because we had nuns as teachers and they had two grades. They kept us occupied while doing the other grades.

ROGERS: How did they keep you occupied?

BOHAC: They'd give us something to read, something to write.

ROGERS: So you went to parochial school until ninth grade and then what?

BOHAC: I stayed at home.

ROGERS: When you got married how you did meet your husband?

BOHAC: I belonged to the Catholic Youth Organization at the church and sometimes we had social functions at area churches. He belonged to the Catholic Church of Ammansville. He and some of those young people came from over there and we had dances and stuff. That's how we met.

ROGERS: How far was Ammansville?

BOHAC: From my house to Ammansville was about fifteen miles, so High Hill was a little closer. I guess it was about ten miles.

ROGERS: You lived outside of High Hill?

BOHAC: Oh, yeah, about five miles west.

ROGERS: Did you parents have a car?

BOHAC: Oh, yeah. I remember the first car, it was an old one. Because I was born in '29 twenty-nine, so it was a 1930 something.

ROGERS: Did you learn to drive while you were at home?

BOHAC: No, I didn't drive 'til I got married. [laughs] Now that is all I do. Every day I go somewhere, making up the lost time.

ROGERS: What brought you to Fort Bend County?

BOHAC: When I married my husband he was working in Damon for Barda Brothers. They have propane but at that time it was butane. They had appliances, they did plumbing and they had a gin. They did a little of everything.

ROGERS: What did your husband do?

BOHAC: He did whatever needed to be done. Mainly, he did plumbing and installed appliances. Later he worked on air conditioning and heating systems.

ROGERS: So how long did he work for Barda Brothers?

BOHAC: He worked there before he went into the service, before World War II. When he came back he stayed at home with his parents for a few years and worked for the county there. He came back to Damon in the late 'forties, a couple of years before we got married.

ROGERS: Where did you live when you moved to Fort Bend?

BOHAC: In Damon, in town. It had dusty roads. [laughs] It was just the way the towns were in those days. They just didn't have the wherewithal to fix things up. You did whatever you could with what you had.

ROGERS: Was it a large town?

BOHAC: Oh, no! It still isn't. It is not even incorporated yet.

ROGERS: So what was in town? Barda Brothers was right in town.

BOHAC: We had a school, a post office and several churches. There was George Bulls General Store, a feed store, barbershop, and what they called a drugstore. You know they had ice cream and all that good stuff.

They didn't dispense drugs over the counter. It wasn't a pharmacy. They called it a drug store but I don't know why. They had kind of a hotel with a café in the bottom and rooms on top. It's no longer there.

ROGERS: What did you do during the day while your husband was at work?

BOHAC: Just the normal household chores, whatever needed to be done. Eventually I had a garden and some chickens. We added on to the house as the kids came along. Then we built a double garage with a utility room in the back. We just added on little by little.

ROGERS: How many children do you have?

BOHAC: Three boys and a girl. I had four of them in a little over eight years. They're all in their fifties now.

ROGERS: So when they were growing up, what kinds of things did they do? Did you have places they could go to play or hang out with the neighbors?

BOHAC: No, just the neighborhood. They had little chores around the house. When they got bigger they mowed yards for different people in town. They'd find little odd jobs when they were in school. When they went to Wharton Junior College they had little odd jobs on the side.

ROGERS: Did they go to school right there in Damon?

BOHAC: Yes, but just 'til eighth grade. Then they went to Needville High School where all four graduated.

ROGERS: Did they take the bus to school?

BOHAC: Yeah, they had to take the bus because we didn't have a high school. They had a choice of going to Needville or West Columbia. Of course, most of them chose Needville, so they had to take the bus.

ROGERS: Why would most of them choose Needville over West Columbia?

BOHAC: Just a little closer and the people are more like we were. West Columbia they just didn't get along too good. You know how that goes.

ROGERS: Did they walk to school in Damon?

BOHAC: Yeah. It was just up the hill. We've got that mountain there you know. [laughs] They walked up there and walked back. Of course, in bad weather I took them because I was at home.

ROGERS: Did you have any sort of thing you did for relaxation or recreation with your family on the weekends?

BOHAC: Well, since our parents were still living around Schulenburg and Ammansville, we usually went there to spend the weekend every chance we had. In those days it took a little longer to get there. Cars didn't go that fast. In summertime sometime we went to the beach.

ROGERS: I understand that you worked at the Damon School.

BOHAC: I worked about twenty years as a cook in the cafeteria. It was a job and close by. It was a hard job because there was only two of us for about 100-150 kids. We had to do everything, but we made it.

ROGERS: What time would you go into work?

BOHAC: About 7:00 AM and got through about 2:00 PM. Of course, the kids didn't all eat at one time. We had three lunch groups.

ROGERS: Were you working there while your kids were going to school there?

BOHAC: My youngest one was in the seventh or eighth grade when I started there. Back in '64 I started selling Watkins Brothers house to house. My youngest one was five so I took him with me.

ROGERS: Now Watkins are spices?

BOHAC: Spices, extracts, medicinal products, home care, personal care. A little of everything but a lot of the stuff has changed now. I enjoyed going from house to house talking to different people. A lot of them were glad to see me because there was nobody else doing that.

ROGERS: How long did you do that?

BOHAC: I'm still doing it from '64 'til now. [laughs] I guess it's almost fifty years.

ROGERS: So the job at the cafeteria was just a little extra and you still kept up your Watkins?

BOHAC: Yeah. After you get a system worked out, you know who lives where, who will be a customer and who won't. You pretty well know what to do and where to go. I had to slow down quite a bit 'cuz I can't get around as good.

ROGERS: Are you a member of any organizations?

BOHAC: Yeah, I was a member of St. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church in Damon since I've lived here. I belong to the Altar Society. I also belong to the Katolicka Jednota Zen Texaskych (KJZT), which is the Catholic Family Fraternal. It used to be a ladies' organization, now it's a men's and women's fraternal group.

ROGERS: What do you do with that group?

BOHAC: We had meetings, and did charitable work. I also belong to Damon PTA as a life member. I belong to the American Legion Auxiliary here in Needville for over forty-five years.

ROGERS: Are you still pretty active with the Legion?

BOHAC: As much as I can, but I can't do what I used to do. [laughs] I keep busy, too busy sometimes.

ROGERS: So you started living in Damon when you got married. When did you move to Needville?

BOHAC: Three years ago. I lived in the same house in Damon until three years ago. The house is still for sale [laughs]

ROGERS: The house had a two car garage. Did you and your husband each have a car?

BOHAC: Yeah, eventually. I moved here so I could be closer to my oldest son. I go to a lot of things around here, so it is closer for me. You'd be surprised what a difference ten miles is.

ROGERS: Do you still go to church in Damon?

BOHAC: Yes, as much as I can. I'm still a member. They don't have mass during the week, except on Wednesday morning, so I go here.

ROGERS: Tell me about your oldest son.

BOHAC: He lives across Highway 36 from me. He's got a job in Richmond at the WKM and stays pretty busy. It changed names a bunch of times since it's was built about fifty years or more. He has quite a bit of responsibility. Last year he went to India for six weeks because they have a plant over there. He's supposed to go again sometime this year, but I don't know when. The other children: one lives near Waco. He works for the Texas Farm Bureau ever since he got out of college. My daughter lives in the Alief area. My youngest son lives in Houston. He works for Grocery Supply Company and Sears part time in West Oaks Mall.

ROGERS: How many grandchildren do you have?

BOHAC: Ten, I believe, and almost that many great grandchildren. [laughs]

ROGERS: When you have holidays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, do the families get together at your place?

BOHAC: Most of the time, yeah. I used to cook for them, but now they bring the food. [laughs]

ROGERS: When they were growing up, did y'all have Christmas at your place, or did you go to your parents?

BOHAC: Usually we went to our parents until they passed away. My father-in-law passed away in '72; my mother passed away in '82; my mother-in-law passed away in '84; and my dad passed away in '94. My younger brother passed away about five years ago. I'm the only one left.

ROGERS: You said you still have the farm.

BOHAC: We still have the farm. My brother and I divided it up between us. When he passed away, he handed it down to his two sons. They have half of it and my half is in my children's name. We rent out the pasture for cattle grazing.

ROGERS: When did your husband die?

BOHAC: He passed away in '02 at 81. We were married over 52 years when he passed away. We would have been married 60 last October, but we didn't make it.

ROGERS: So you lived in the house in Damon for a few years after he died and then you moved to Needville?

BOHAC: He passed away at home. All the children were there and some of the grandchildren. That's what he wanted and it made him happy. He was sick off and on for about eight years. The last two years was the worse being in and out of the hospital a lot.

ROGERS: So what did you do after he retired from Barda?

BOHAC: He mostly sat at home because I was still working at the school. He did the cooking and cleaning. He was a good cook.

ROGERS: We're interested in Fort Bend County. What are some of the big changes?

BOHAC: The mall in Rosenberg, all these new businesses.

ROGERS: So when you wanted to go shopping where did you go?

BOHAC: We had this little store in Damon. They had groceries, dry goods and material for clothes. We usually went there. In those days I sewed a lot. But if I wanted ready-made clothes I had to go to West Columbia or Needville. Today, I go to Rosenberg. I even sewed some for my kids. I don't know how I did it, but I did it.

ROGERS: Any stories you want to tell me about that bank robbery.

BOHAC: What bank robbery?

ROGERS: One of the men was saying you were going to tell me a story about robbing a bank. I think he was just teasing you.

BOHAC: Well, I didn't know about one. [laughs] Although, we had a prisoner escape one time from the prison farm at Rosharon. He wound up in Damon. They caught him a little piece out of town. Of course, when it was all over, come to find out I saw him walking on the street behind us, but I didn't know who he was. Then later on they caught him across the highway. But that's the only excitement I can think of. [laughs]

ROGERS: Well, thank you very much.

BOHAC: Oh, I enjoyed it. I hope I did good.

ROGERS: You did great!

Interview Ends