

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Jane Harrington Leightenheimer**

Interview Date: 08/18/2012

Interviewer: Melissa Dixon

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Location: Fort Bend County Museum, Richmond, Texas

9 Pages



This oral history is copyrighted 2017, 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

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

DIXON: When and where were you born?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I was born in Richmond, Texas at the old Summerville home which is where the Richmond oil field is at. There was a big two story home, my mother and daddy came from Arkansas and I was born in that house.

DIXON: What day were you born?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: October 14, 1930. I was delivered by Doctor Weeks.

DIXON: And you were born at home?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Born at home.

DIXON: Where in Arkansas did you parents move from?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: My mother and daddy both came from Arkansas; he was from Foreman, Arkansas, and my mother was from Ashdown, Arkansas.

DIXON: And what brought them to Fort Bend?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: My dad was a mechanic and they had a Ford dealership here and he went to work for them.

DIXON: Where was the Ford dealership?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: You know where Saint John's United Methodist Church, the back of it on the street just right across from the City Hall, there was a Ford dealership there.

DIXON: So that would have been on Morton Street.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Yes.

DIXON: What year was that? How old were you?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I think they came in about nineteen twenty-eight. My father's first wife died from typhoid fever and he had two children. He buried her in Richmond at Morton Cemetery. He went back to Arkansas and met my mother and brought her back. They came in about nineteen twenty-eight I guess. She raised those two children besides her own.

DIXON: Did your mother work?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No, she didn't.

DIXON: Where did you live? Where was your house?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: 700 South Eleventh Street. That's Thompson highway.

DIXON: Is it still there?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Oh, yeah. I just sold it a couple of years ago, after my mother died.

DIXON: Did she live in it all that time?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Oh, yeah. My daddy owned half. He bought there to get a filling station, he was a Sinclair dealer. He was on one corner and the house was on the other corner. He had half a block there, had two businesses, a little grocery store besides his filling station and garage.

DIXON: So then you grew up just right here.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I grew up right there on 700 South Eleventh Street.

DIXON: What other families were near you? Do you remember the names?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Kovel, the Kovel's lived in back of us. The Christians, Roy and Vivian Christian. In fact my sister was named after Vivian Christian. They lived back behind us. Joseph's, the Joseph's lived behind the station. Richard, mean little devil (laughing), he was. I grew up in that neighborhood with him. Richard was a little bit older than I was. I can remember him so well.

DIXON: He got into things, uh?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Oh, he was something else.

DIXON: We'd like to know where you shopped. Do you remember?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I didn't do much shopping. Used the drug store, trying to think of the name of the drug store now, Post Office, pharmacy was in downtown Richmond. Of course, we traded at Joseph's; Richard's mom and dad. I know Mother traded at Robinson Store because they had material and she sewed beautifully so I know that she bought a lot of material from them. It was a Dime store, you know.

DIXON: Did she make most of your clothes?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Oh, she made everything. She sewed beautifully and I can't sew a button on (chuckling).

DIXON: My mother sewed and I can't. What did your family do for entertainment?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Gosh, there were five of us. I don't have any idea, I don't remember. We went to the ball games and school activity is about the only thing. There wasn't much to do in Richmond. Roller skating, we went roller skating. Bicycles, no television, not very much entertainment, the movies. We went to the movies all the time.

DIXON: There was a movie house on Morton Street, right?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Yeah, sure. Cole Theater, Cole Theater. He owned the one in Rosenberg and the one in Richmond.

DIXON: Was that located down by Joseph's Store? Not up by the Post Office Pharmacy?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No, no down by Richard's, down there by Joseph's.

DIXON: Where did you go to church?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Saint John's Methodist Church. Been there all my life.

DIXON: That's nice. What about school? Elementary through...?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: All through high school, yeah.

DIXON: The high school, what were the names of the schools then? Or do you remember?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Richmond High.

DIXON: Do you remember any classmates or teachers or were you in the band?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I was in the band, Lida (McNeill) and I grew up together. Just... (chuckling),...I don't know, yeah in the band, that's about all...

DIXON: Is there a typical day from your childhood... How would you describe a typical day?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I don't remember that, I don't remember. Just an average day, you know. That's about it, we went swimming in the summer time. Other than that nothing out the ordinary.

DIXON: They built the swimming pool... where was the swimming pool?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Down by the City Hall and they covered it up when they didn't want certain people in.

DIXON: So it was that late that it was covered?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Yeah.

DIXON: Was it on the same block with the City Hall?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Yeah, right next to it where the parking lot was. That's where it was.

DIXON: Do you have a favorite memory or something really vivid about Richmond that you remember?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No

DIXON: Happy or sad.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No, I have just always loved Richmond. I never have moved off anywhere.

DIXON: Now you lived in town, correct? Did you have a garden or anything like that? Were you involved with crops or anything?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: My dad, had some chickens between the house and the filling station. I was so afraid of chickens (chuckling). He had a cow, but you know in the city you could do that back then. What else? I think it was just the cow and some chickens is all that he had.

DIXON: Did your mother can things or go to the store?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Everything came from the store. With five children she stayed pretty busy.

DIXON: Did you have pets?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Oh, yeah. We had dogs, all the time and they'd get run over on the Thompson Highway.

DIXON: What are the major changes that you have seen in the area during your lifetime, both good and bad?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: The growth, people, you know. We knew everybody in town and now I don't know anybody (laughing) hardly, when you go to the grocery store, but it's growing a lot. I wish it could have stayed small, but you can't do that.

DIXON: I guess you have to move on.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: You have to let it grow.

DIXON: Where do live now?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Up in Winston Terrace just off the Thompson Highway in a subdivision. Lived there fifty years.

DIXON: Are there organizations that you or your parents were involved with?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No, I'm not into any of that.

DIXON: Just primarily church?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Just church, yeah. Sunday school.

DIXON: Well, we went through this list pretty quickly. So what kinds of things didn't we discuss enough or do you have something you want to share?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No.

DIXON: Did they do anything for Fourth of July when you were little or Christmas parades?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Yeah, we used to have picnics. Richmond had an old man, what was his name? He had a wagon and he'd take a bunch of kids. We'd go down to the river and have a big picnic on the 4th of July. Lida knows who it is but I don't. I can't remember his name. I can remember doing that, but as far as my family, there were so many different ages that we never did do too much. My father died so young. Not that I can think of. It's just that picnic.

DIXON: Did people fish from the river a bunch or did the boys go down there and play and get in trouble?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Some of them, I'm sure did. I don't know if they ever went fishing or whatever they did. I don't know. I don't have any idea. I stayed away from it. (chuckle) We had bicycles, Lida and I. We always rode bicycles, or walked. We walked to the movies. We'd go to Richard Joseph's and get a dill pickle before we went to the movie (laughing). That was a treat.

DIXON: Did you go into Houston much?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No.

DIXON: Or ride the train anywhere?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: No. A very dull life (chuckle). I didn't lead an exciting life (laughing)

DIXON: Oh, I bet it was nice. Do you remember any thing from the 1950s when your children were growing up?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: My children were born in the 1950s.

DIXON: Did you work?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Oh, yeah.

DIXON: Where did you work?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I worked at Polly Ryon Hospital for about six and a half years. Then I went to work for Houston Natural Gas for ten years. I retired in 1999 from working for Allstate Insurance. I haven't worked since. But, really I didn't work for Allstate. I worked for the agent, Ron Dean.

DIXON: So your father started as a mechanic and then had the shop over there?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Had the filling station and all and he had a heart attack at the age of fifty-five and died. My mother was thirty-four years old, left with five children. Well, we were pretty grown by then. She had never worked in her life, but she went back to school, took typing and retired from the county as secretary for Bob Worthington, who was the County Agent, so she did all right. She died in 2006 at ninety-five years old.

DIXON: What did your husband do?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: He was in the finance business. He worked with the bank over in Rosenberg, but most of the time he worked for... I don't know if you remember, Universal CIT, where they financed cars. He started out working for them and retired from there and then he went to work at the bank. He quit there and went to work in Houston for a big company. He died in 1997 from cancer. He was from Ohio, his family all lived up there, but they are all gone now. I don't like to think about it.

DIXON: Yeah, I...

LEIGHTENHEIMER: (sniffing) It's hard.

DIXON: Are your children here now?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I have a daughter who lives in Rosenberg and my son is in Las Vegas, working for the Wynn Hotel. He's a master plumber; he has a home in Rockport. He went over there (Las Vegas) on vacation. He and his wife love to go to Las Vegas every year. While he was there he filled out an application. They called him and wanted him to come to work. He's been there for about five years. They love it out there.

DIXON: That would be fun. Do they have children?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: They just have one daughter and she lives in Rosenberg. One granddaughter. I have one granddaughter and two grandsons and one great granddaughter. Two of the boys are in college. My daughter has two sons, they're real close together. They're both in school and the granddaughter works, I don't know where she works, over here in Rosenberg somewhere. They are doing good.

DIXON: Good.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: My daughter works for Allstate, she's been with them twenty years in Houston. She drives back and forth every day. I couldn't do that (chuckle). My husband drove back and forth every day, too. He was one of those that it didn't bother. But I couldn't do that.

DIXON: We've got a little time so let me ask one other question. What was it like in Richmond during World War II? For example, when Pearl Harbor...?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I remember hearing it on the radio and I had a half-brother who signed up for the Navy. That's about all I remember. There wasn't anything else going on as far as I know. He went into the service and I remember we had a flag we put in the window. Other than that, I don't remember anything different; the days were just like every other day.

DIXON: Okay.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I don't remember too much of anything (chuckling).

DIXON: Well, if there is anything else you want to...?

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I can't think of a thing in the world, except I love Richmond. My husband was transferred one time and I threw such a fit. I missed home so bad until the company had to move him back over here (chuckling). They said he was spoiled or I was spoiled. I said, "Well, Richmond is my home and that's where I want to be." So that's where I have been ever since.

DIXON: It's a beautiful town.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Well, when they transferred us over to La Marque, I didn't like all that water. I never lived anywhere else but right here. Life's too short not to live where you want to live. Lots of people live all over the country, but I can't do that. That's about it.

DIXON: All right, well if you think of something else let us know.

LEIGHTENHEIMER: I can think of... I want to look at those pictures, because some of them I can tell... I can remember some of those places.

DIXON: Well, Claire is working on some of those pictures and so she's making notes. So we can go back in there and you can...

LEIGHTENHEIMER: Yeah, she was doing that.

DIXON: Okay

Interview ends