

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Abstract: **Jewell Jenkins, Jr.**

Mr. Jenkins was born in 1934 in Sugar Land. He shares his candid assessment of the challenges he faced as a black person growing up in The Quarters in Sugar Land.

Jewell's father, Jewell, Sr. held many jobs including building Hwy 6 and working for Sugarland Industries and Visco/Nalco. In the 1950s he became a part-time minister. His mother, Ella worked at Imperial Sugar Refinery in the 10-10 room packing sugar. The entire family loved to sing.

Jewell began college in 1954 costing \$34 a month. He was drafted into the Army in 1957 and refused to attend Officers Basic School. Instead, he spent 6 years state-side before being honorably discharged.

Mr. Jenkins shares memories of the negative aspects of segregation such as being called "boy" or "Black Sambo", having to wait until all the white folks were served before a black person was served, not being able to eat in the same area as white people, and made to feel inferior.

He and his wife Mary Frances raised their 5 children in Sugar Land. He retired after 21 years from sales with Helfman Ford.

30 Pages

⇓ *Scroll down for Key Words from the Interview.* ⇓

Interview Summary

People (in alphabetic order)

Mr. Armstrong
 Eva Jane Barlow – teacher
 Sanita Channel Jenkins Carmen – daughter
 Major Christmas – military
 The Crusaders – Jewell’s singing group
 Hollas Felder – Nation coach
 Cora Fisher
 Captain Gamaia – military
 Mrs. Green and her tent show
 Andre Jenkins – son
 Ella Jenkins – paternal grandmother
 Ella Jenkins – mother
 Jewel Jenkins, Sr. – father
 Johnson Jenkins – paternal grandfather
 Mary Frances Horace Jenkins – spouse
 Velasco Jenkins – son
 Vincent Voltaire Jenkins – son
 Willie Lee Jenkins – brother
 Ike Kempner
 Dr. Kuykendahl – area physician
 Leon Loring – Nation coach
 Mrs. Charlotte Mayfield
 Ella Jenkins Patterson – sister
 Rev. R. L. Robinson – Pastor
 Lana Jenkins Roco – daughter
 Simpson Gilman Cadillac
 Dr. Curtis Slaughter – area physician
 H. L. Smith – Deacon

Rev. Eddie Thomas – Pastor
 Dr. Tollson – college music teacher
 B. I. Webb
 Emma Webster – maternal grandmother
 Robert Webster – maternal grandfather

Places / Businesses

Church of Christ Church
 Double Bar Ranch – Stafford
 Firestone Store
 Goodyear Store
 Helfman Ford
 Imperial Sugar Refinery
 Mamie’s & Mattie’s Boarding houses
 Mayfield Park – residential area of Sugar
 Land
 Mount Calvary Church
 Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist
 Church
 Palms Theater
 Pleasant Spring Missionary Baptist
 Church
 The Quarters – residential area of Sugar
 Land
 Richmond Fairgrounds
 Sugarland Industries
 The Hill
 Visco/Nalco
 Bill Williams Café
 M. R. Wood Elementary School

Events

Mr. Jenkins shares memories of segregation growing up in Sugar Land, in the military and as an employee. He met his wife while stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia. They raised 5 children in Sugar Land because they thought it provided the best environment compared to other areas in the South.

Jewell's stories are detailed and interesting about what it was like to grow up in a segregated town and working at the Sugar Refinery.

In school, Jewel played basketball on the M. R. Wood team where they had to lime the dirt field boundaries.

He was drafted and spent 6 years in the US Army, but he did not like it enough to become an Officer or make it a career. He received an honorable discharge.