

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Lisa Glenn**

Interview Date: 03/20/2010

Interviewer: Flo Cook

Transcriber: Olga Barr

Location: The Dew Plantation House & Museum in Missouri City,
Texas

8 Pages



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Transcript

COOK: Lisa let's begin with some biographical information. When and where were you born?

GLENN: I was born in 1952 in Washington, D. C.

COOK: What is your educational background?

GLENN: I went to Saint Mary's Preparatory College in Alexandria. Then I just took various college classes. I was a stenographer for the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) for four years before I had kids.

COOK: When did you move to Fort Bend County?

GLENN: I moved here in 1980.

COOK: What brought you here?

GLENN: Career move, job move for my husband.

COOK: What organizations have you been involved with in Missouri City?

GLENN: I have been on the board of Quail Valley Proud for the last ten years. I was a trustee on the Quail Valley Fund for five years. I sat on the Missouri City Parks Board for four years. I am a current member of Missouri Community Development Block Grant (CDVG) Committee. I was on the 50th anniversary committee for Missouri City. I edited the 50th anniversary history book.

COOK: Wow! What is the best thing about living here?

GLENN: I think Missouri City has a small town feel. It is a very caring city. It is a city with very responsive city officials, city council, and a great mayor.

COOK: What first got you interested in history?

GLENN: I was born six miles from Mount Vernon, and I grew up in old town Alexandria, Virginia area. I would say that history has been part of me since I was a very little girl (chuckles).

COOK: How did you first get involved with the Dew House?

GLENN: I think I have to backtrack and say my involvement was in writing the [Freedom Tree historical paper](#) that was reported in The Fort Bend Independent newspaper in February 2016. Through that I met Alan Robinson and Bert and Barbara Bliel, who were cousins of the Dew's. I got invited to the funeral for this house in August, 2005. I attended because I couldn't believe that this house was going to get a wrecking ball.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read two interviews by Barbara Roane Bliel on this web site at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=24338> and <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=45358>

COOK: Have you ever worked with saving a historical place before?

GLENN: No, I have not. This is my rookie attempt (chuckles).

COOK: What exactly did you do to try and save the house?

GLENN: I began by sending a flood of emails to Mayor Owen, to Grady Prestage, to Commissioner Patterson, to Doug Goff at Sienna Johnson. I emailed Quail Valley Proud for their support. I emailed anybody and everybody. Mayor Owen was very responsive. He spoke to Doug Goff at Johnson Development and it kind of snowballed from there because the community responded so well, which is another great thing about Missouri City.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the interview by James David Patterson on this web site at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=40647>

COOK: Who, if anybody, helped you?

GLENN: Carolyn Bowden helped with letters. I would say Mayor Owen was one of the biggest helps in the grassroots effort. Greg Vauple took pictures. It was a team effort.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the interview by Mayor Allen Owen on this web site at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=44917>

COOK: What were the major obstacles in saving the house?

GLENN: Finding an entity to accept the house was an obstacle because you can save it, but it had to be moved because the developer wanted the house off that piece of land. The challenge was finding a non-profit to help.

I went to Missouri City to see if Friends of Missouri City could take it. I think Commissioner Prestage actually came up with the idea of Historic Houston buying the house and they in turn sold it to Fort Bend County for one dollar. The Fort Bend County Museum Association partnered with the county. Now we have a big team partnership (laughs). It was a team effort between all the entities: Missouri City, Fort Bend County, the Museum Association, the developer, everyone!

COOK: Did you ever feel that the house would be torn down?

GLENN: I obviously believed that because of the funeral for the house that I was invited to. They even had a funeral program.

COOK: When was that funeral?

GLENN: It was August 26, I believe, 2005. It was on the eve of one of the hurricanes. I think Mrs. Muffie Moroney and all the Dew family and the heirs had a plethora of wonderful memories in this house. It was a family reunion of sorts. They all got together. Ms. Moroney hired a videographer. They taped everyone's memories. Everybody got up and spoke about the house and their memories. Lynn Edmonson of Historic Houston was there. Professor Arnold from the University of Houston was there. He talked about this being the last standing plantation home this close to Houston. It made me sad!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the interview by Muffie Moroney on this web site at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=42954>

COOK: I see your tears. You spoke about the video that was made where people could tell about their memories. That would be interesting to see. Is there some way that we may ever be able to see that?



(L-R) Receiving a donation for the preservation of the historic Dew House are Ivan Butterfield, Diane Ware, Mayor Allen Owen, Lisa Glenn, Alice Aanstoos and Anthony Morado, Feb 2010.

GLENN: I think you might have to ask Mrs. Moroney. I think they are interviewing her sister June this afternoon. They may have a copy.

COOK: Tell me about the day that they move into the house.

GLENN: I don't really know very much about the family's moves in and out of the house other than the fact that this house was owned by Dr. Hugh Dew, who at one point moved into town so his daughter, Lilly, could get a better education. So he let his brothers, Frank and Henry and sisters Ruth and Jessie, live in the house at that point.

COOK: What has been your biggest reward in saving the house?

GLENN: Wow! It's been a multifaceted reward to see the community rally around the house, to see it transformed from shreds on the inside to the beautiful walls you see right now, to know all the schools kids that are going to come through here and see how other people lived.

Part of Quail Valley was built on Dew land, including many of our area subdivisions. Those kids take for granted that every house has a video room. They don't know that people listened to the radio for entertainment or played card games. Everybody didn't have an X-box or whatever the current game system is. These kids are going to see in this house, in their very own community, a piece of architecture that existed back then.

COOK: Have you had any disappointments about saving the house?



The center's exhibits provide a glimpse of DeWalt around the turn of the 20th century, from its mercantile store and cotton gin to the offices where the Dew family's agricultural businesses were managed. Also in the building is a collage of faces representing DeWalt's history.

GLENN: No, no, none at all. Diane Ware has done an outstanding job since she took over. I will say that. There were two museum directors prior to Diane and couldn't seem to pull the project together. She has done an OUTSTANDING job. I work with the community so she has had to work with me. She has had to work with the county staff in finishing the house as you see it today and work with the museum associations. She has had to balance three different groups or arenas, and she has done a wonderful job.

COOK: She really has a passion for history, doesn't she?

GLENN: Yes, she does. THIS is the only recognized historical building in all of east Fort Bend County. In the other part of Fort Bend County near Richmond, you have the Moore House, the Richmond House, and the Fort Bend County Museum itself. That part of the county has a lock on history. I hope they are successful in renovating the old sugar refinery and making a museum in Sugar Land. It would be GREAT to preserve a trail of history in this area.

In Missouri City, if you start at the Freedom Tree on Misty Hollow in Quail Valley, and you cross over Lake Olympia Parkway, the Dewalt Cemetery is there, which is the MOST beautiful cemetery you will ever enter. It is gorgeous.



Historical plaque at The Freedom Tree, Missouri City, Texas



The Freedom Tree, Missouri City, Texas, where plantation slaves were informed they were free, June 19, 1865.

It's a private cemetery. Mr. Bert Bliel and his wife Barbara Roane Bliel are the guardians of that cemetery. He is the president of the Historical Commission. He loves to show it off. He is another person that got me revved up about Fort Bend County history. I had interviewed him when I was working on the Freedom Tree paper. They are passionate about their cemetery—they call it the Planting Ground. They have weddings out there, their family reunions, picnics, and birthday parties. It is truly a planting ground.



East Fort Bend County's first museum, The DeWalt Heritage Center, opened to the public in 2011. It once sat nestled among the oaks and the cottonwoods on Highway 6, it is now located at the back of Kitty Hollow Park in Missouri City. A project of Fort Bend County and the Fort Bend History Association, the historic Dew house was moved three miles down Highway 6 into Missouri City's Kitty Hollow Park in 2006. From there, it was renovated and transformed into the DeWalt Heritage Center and is now open on Sunday afternoons for tours!

--courtesy fbIndependent.com and www.fbhistory.org/dewalt-heritage-center.html

You don't get that eerie cemetery feeling. It's got a grotto and a canopy of beautiful, old oak trees. It's wonderful! They go out there in the summer every week and mow the grass and edge and water the plants. They keep their family history alive over there.

So if you take it, like I said, from the Freedom Tree to the Dewalt Cemetery, and now we're at Dew House, [which was resurrected as a museum in 2011](#). This house, because it was built after Juneteenth and after the slaves were freed, is the only plantation house in this area not to house slaves.

Everybody that worked here was paid. The Dews and Hutchins had a store. Their ranch hands, cook, cattle drivers and everybody were paid with Dew and Hutchins coins. They went to the store and spent their money on flour and milk or eggs or whatever they needed with their Dew and Hutchins coins.

COOK: You tell it so well. Thank you Lisa!

Interview ends