

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Marialyne Ruffino Coburn**

Interview Date: 06/24/2011

Interviewer: Diane L. Ware

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Location: River Bend Country Club, Sugar Land Texas

5 Pages



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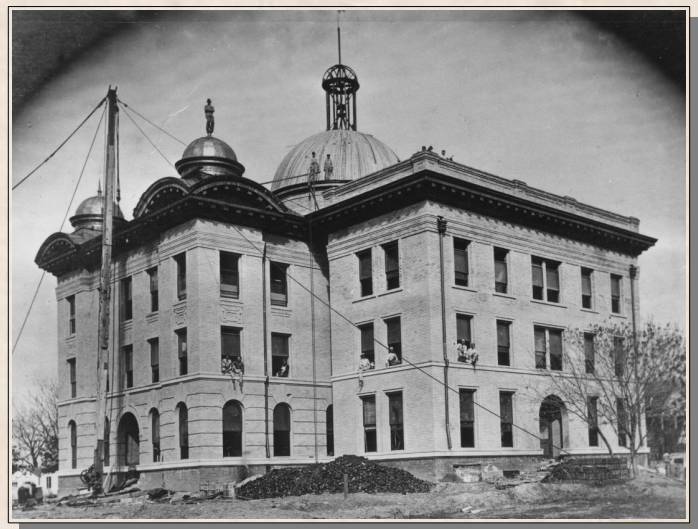
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Transcript

WARE: Lets start with some biographical information. When and where were you born?

COBURN: I was born at Saint Joseph's Hospital, October 12, 1934.

WARE: What brought your family to Fort Bend County?

COBURN: My father, John Thomas Ruffino, and his father lived on a farm and ranch in the Missouri City/Stafford area.

WARE: Where exactly was that?

COBURN: It's very close to Sugar Land.

WARE: When was that? What year did he have a ranch there?

COBURN: Well he was born in 1914. My mother was born in 1916.

WARE: Did his parents live in that area also?

COBURN: Yes, they ranched and farmed and had nine children. They were Italian! Our name is Ruffino, but Preston Ruffino, the oldest son, spelled his name Ruffeno because of the mail mix-up in different correspondence. They are brothers one is 'eno' and one is 'ino'.

WARE: Do any of the Ruffinos still live in the Stafford, Sugar Land, or Missouri City area?

COBURN: Yes, Lula is a Triola now and she lives in that area. Rose is the daughter of Carrie Ruffino who married a Biamonte, and Rose still lives in that area. You see Sugar Land was just a skip and a hop down the road so my daddy had a barber shop in Sugar Land. That's how we happen to live in Sugar Land.

WARE: Where was his barber shop?

COBURN: On the main street.

WARE: What years did he have that barber shop?

COBURN: Oh, gosh, I don't know, he had one in Bellaire for awhile, and then he had one in Sugar Land.

WARE: Did you ever live in Sugar Land proper?

COBURN: I think it was on Kyle Street in Sugar Land. It had the porch with two windows and there was a bedroom window. It had a formal dining room, a kitchen, a little sitting/eating area, too. Then it had the bedrooms and the baths.

WARE: That was a good size house. How many bedrooms did it have?

COBURN: I think it had what you call two and a half because one bedroom was really kind of small room with a twin bed in it.

WARE: What other families lived near you when you lived in Sugar Land?

COBURN: We had a lot of Italian relatives. Mary Antoine Cash, Joe and Lula Triola, my aunt and uncle, Preston and Mary Ruffeno. Tony and Lula Ruiffino, Carrie and Rose. With their spouses, that was eighteen and a lot of them, like Preston and Aunt Mary, had five boys.

WARE: Right, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

COBURN: Just one brother, no sister.

WARE: Tell me about attending Sugar Land High School.

COBURN: It was wonderful, the teachers just really doted on us because there weren't many of us. You were lucky if you had eighteen in the class.

WARE: Who were some of people in your class?

COBURN: Nona Sue Raisewell, Ida Lee Pachala, I cannot think of the other girl names.

WARE: What did students do for relaxation and recreation?

COBURN: We had a Miss Heifingh that was really into activity and exercise. She was our physical education teacher and we had modern dance, ballet, and gymnastics. When you got through with her class (chuckling) you were ready to go back to school and study. She was a character, she was. She was really good.

WARE: That was a lot of variation in a small school. What was your favorite of any of those subjects?

COBURN: I just can't think of what my favorite subject was. I really liked it all. I liked my English class, I liked my teacher, and I liked science.

WARE: Tell me about sports in Sugar Land.

COBURN: Okay. Since there were not a lot of us, we were required to go out and be on some team. I was interested in volleyball and girls basketball. We practically killed ourselves. It got pretty rough sometimes. That was before golf came in so strongly, now they have golf and all kinds of things we didn't have back then.

WARE: What type of extracurricular activities other than sports did you participate in?

COBURN: We had a science class. Pretty much by the time you did the others, that's about all you could handle. Back then you brought homework home with you, you know.

WARE: Did many of your classmates get married to each other eventually?

COBURN: Not many, but a few did.

WARE: For example?

COBURN: My husband and I, Trinkka Helmcamp and Ronald Miller, that's all I can think of right off hand, but there were more than that.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the Katherine (Trinka) Helmcamp Miller and Ron Miller interviews on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=42579> and <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=42755>

WARE: Were you and your husband in the same class?

COBURN: No, he's two years older than I am. He probably graduated in 1951 and I graduated in 1953.

WARE: How many of your classmates went to work at Imperial Sugar?

COBURN: Not many. Their mothers or their fathers did, but not many of us did. A lot of them went on to business college or worked in Houston. About three classmates went to college. My husband went to A&M to study fire protection and safety.

WARE: Okay, what about the service, did many of the men go into the service?

COBURN: My husband did. B. I. Webb did, they were at the age to be drafted.

WARE: For the Korean War?

COBURN: Yes.

WARE: How long did your husband stay in the service?

COBURN: It wasn't that long, but he was in it until they discharged him. I'd say probably two years.

WARE: What's your favorite memory of Sugar Land?

COBURN: Because it was such a small town, your teachers cared about you, they doted on you, and they made you feel like you were ten feet tall. It was just a wonderful place to grow up. They had as much fun teaching as we did learning. There wasn't any crime. You know Kenneth Hall was a super football star, they lived in Sugar Land. His daddy was a constable here, Curtis Hall. There really wasn't any crime, and it was just wonderful. Cars would very seldom come down your road for anything except just to go back in their own driveway or something. It was just a wonderful place to grow up. No crime, lots of closeness, and you weren't bombarded with so many students like you were in Houston or places like that. That was really nice. My grandparents lived in the Missouri City/Stafford area. You just felt so protected and it was just great.

EDITOR'S NOTE: See Kenneth Hall's interview on the FBC Historical Commission website at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=40325>.

WARE: Was your brother older or younger than you?

COBURN: He was younger. I am about nine years older than he is. I remember my mother worked for Imperial Sugar in the packing department. They'd weigh sugar and move it down the line (laughing).

WARE: This looks like a good time to stop. Thank you.

Interview ends