

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*



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### Abstract: **Mary Perry Thompson Arledge**

Mary Perry Arledge was born in Houston, Texas in 1938 just before World War II and slightly after the Great Depression. Her childhood was split between city life in Houston and country life in DeWalt at the Dew House. Although her parents were not rich, they were very well connected to the social scene of the times including the Junior League, American Red Cross, and other charities. Mary's mother was an avid bridge player, playing the game with Jessie and Ruth Dew and friends often times until 2:00 AM. Her father was involved in the oil/gas industry and lobbied Congress on behalf of that industry.

Mary has wonderful stories of idyllic life at the Dew House located in the country, being free as a bird, raising and riding horses, enjoying picnic lunches and Easter egg hunts. She shared life as a privileged, white child as compared to that of black children. Walk with her down memory lane as she looks at photos from a bygone era in DeWalt and the stories revealed.

32 Pages

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

## Interview Summary

### People (in order mentioned in interview)

Ruth Dew Lalley and Jessie Dew Agnew – mother’s playmates & lifelong friends  
 Leslie Butcher Thompson – Mother  
 Edwin Tommy ‘Imslee’ Thompson – Father  
 Kinman ‘Bubba’ Thompson – half brother  
 George McCullough ‘Mac’ Thompson – brother  
 Ole T – nanny & Effie Blake – main cook  
 Dr. Slaughter, Pediatrician  
 Miss DeMeyer – caretaker  
 Alice Dew – Ruth’s mother  
 Sam Watkins – helped around the yard/barn  
 Garbell – helped around the yard/barn  
 Walter Lalley – Ruth’s husband  
 Eliza Watkins – cook  
 Nancy, Jessie May, & Boots – children raised by Sam & Eliza Watkins  
 Mr. Meyer – horse owner  
 Sam Blake – Effie’s husband  
 Ole’ Joe – aka Mexican Joe  
 COL Ernest Agnew – Jessie’s husband  
 Muffie & June – Mary Perry’s childhood friends  
 Jessie – Muffy’s mother  
 Cricket Williams – Maynette’s husband  
 Ward Williams – Maynette’s son  
 Henry and Frank Dew – founded the Dew Ranch  
 Nicky Blani – Mary’s playmate  
 Mae Robinson – Little Jessie’s mother

Smitty/Butch Schmidt – playmate

Horace, Crystal & Ellen Tucker – new tenants when Mary’s family moved back to Houston

William Henry “Pinkie” Arledge – Mary’s husband

Patty Thompson – niece

Carl Calloway – Founder of Fort Bend County Fair

### Places / Businesses

Houston, Texas

The Great Depression

DeWalt, Texas

Rice University

Galveston, Texas

Junior League of Houston

United Services Organization (USO)

American Red Cross

American Cancer Society

Texas Independent Producers & Royalty Owners (TIPRO) Association

Congress

Sugar Land, Texas

Surprise Hurricane of 1943.

Sugar Land Railroad

Lubbock, Texas

Texas Tech University

Houston Club

River Oaks Country Club, Houston

### Events

Mother played serious bridge with the Dews and their friends.

Father was in the independent oil/gas business & owned the News Well, a local newspaper for service men and their families. He played the ukulele and sang.

Ruth & Jessie Dew loved to entertain, play bridge, and volunteer.

Moved from Houston to DeWalt in 1940 but moved back during WWII.

Alice Dew lived to be 101 years old.

Played & rode horses with Nancy, Jessie Mae and Boots.

Ruthie Saloon was a hangout for the farm/ranch workers.

Ruth & Jessie opened a post office & general store.

Fun times were milking the cows, watching the killing of chickens, Easter egg hunts & picnics.

Enjoyed viewing a lot of photos of the people and life in and around the Dew House.