

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Nancy Stubbs North**

Interview Date: 11/08/2013

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill via telephone to Westcliff, Colorado

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

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6 Pages



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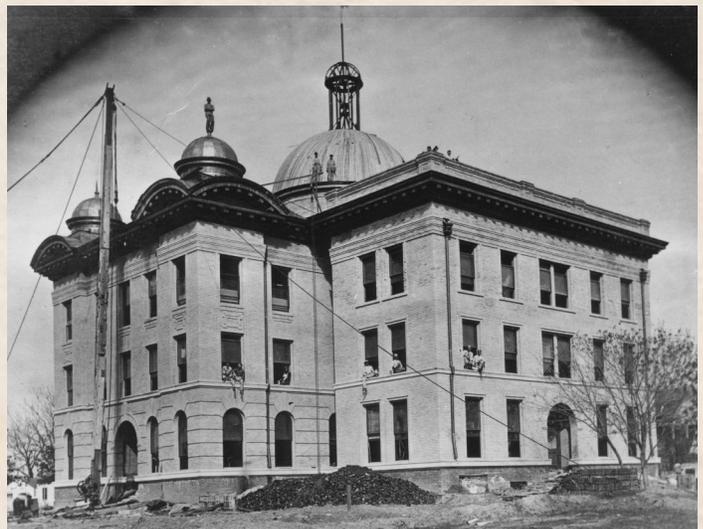
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Transcript

GOODSILL: Nancy North is specifically talking to us today about Lois Wessendorff.

Nancy, let me get a little bit of background on you, first. Tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and your parents' names, etc.

NORTH: Okay. I am adopted. I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and my parents adopted me as an infant. I was two and one-half weeks old when my parents picked me up in Kansas City, and I was raised in Wichita, Kansas. My father was an independent insurance agent and my mother was a stay-at-home mom.

GOODSILL: And tell me what their names were.

NORTH: My father's name was Lurton Thomas Stubbs and my mother was Pauline Wilson Stubbs. And I have one sibling, a brother who lives in Scottsdale, Arizona. My brother is Thomas, he goes by Tom.

GOODSILL: And is he older or younger than you?

NORTH: He is younger than I am, almost five years younger. And he, likewise, was adopted.

GOODSILL: And your maiden name is Stubbs.

NORTH: That's correct.

GOODSILL: Tell me the story of how you found yourself in Fort Bend County.

NORTH: Well, I was married and my husband went to work for Texas Instruments in 1963. We lived in the Dallas-Fort Worth area for several years. Then he was transferred to the Texas Instruments plant on Southwest Freeway. We lived in the Memorial area for a little bit and we decided we wanted to raise our children, we have four, in a more rural area, so we moved to Needville, Texas which is south of Richmond and Rosenberg. And I was a teacher and then I was a school counselor and he was in management at Texas Instruments.

GOODSILL: And what's your husband's name?

NORTH: My husband's name is David and he goes by Dave.

GOODSILL: And tell me about your children. What are their genders and names?

NORTH: Our firstborn is a son, Mark, he and his wife, Nancy, live in the Fort Worth area. They are both pharmacists and he is also an ordained minister, having gone to Dallas Theological School. They have one son. They have lost three other children at birth.

Our second son is Michael. Michael manages a ranch, The Halifax Ranch, at Kyle, Texas, outside San Marcos and he and his lovely wife, Holly, have three children, and one that died at sixteen months because he was born with half of a heart.

Then our third son is a Christian camp director. He and his wife have four girls. Two live in Louisville, Kentucky, and the other two live with them. The two oldest are both grown. One is married, one is twenty-five and she is on her own.

GOODSILL: And what is your third son's name?

NORTH: Brad and his wife is Janet. And our daughter, who is also adopted, lives in Las Vegas, Nevada, with her husband, an attorney. She's a stay-at-home mom and loves it. They have three little girls-- 10, 8 and 6. Her name is Kimberley and her husband's name is Michael.

GOODSILL: Okay! So you were living in Needville and how did it come to pass that you got to know the Wessendorffs?

NORTH: Well, we bought property in Needville from John Gupton, who was a veterinarian. Lovely people, John and Marguerite. And he came into our driveway one day and said, "I really need you to come to work for me." And I said, "Oh, really?!" (with a chuckle). And he said, "Yeah, I do." And this was before I was teaching and hadn't decided to do that for sure. Well, I had been through nursing school but I didn't complete it because I got too emotionally attached to my patients. I lost my first three clinical patients. They had all been in long-term care, and you go back the next day and they're gone. That's quite a shock. I thought, I can't do this. I can't be emotionally involved like this all the time. I've GOT to find a career where I'm NOT as emotionally involved as this.

He knew I had the medical background and he wanted me to come do the lab work for him. And so I DID go to work for Dr. Gupton. He also cared for the Wessendorff's dogs. And I knew Mr. Wessendorff but I had never met Mrs. Wessendorff.

My mother had breast cancer and it went into remission for fourteen years and then it came back with a vengeance. She and my step-father were living with us for a short time while she was getting medical care, and she passed away. And as near as I can tell, Dr. Gupton probably is the one who told the Wessendorffs that my mother had passed away. I took about a week or ten days off, caring for things and going back to Kansas for the services. It was a very sad time in my life, because I was in my mid-thirties and this was the LAST of my parents. We'd lost all of our parents by the time we were in our mid-thirties, which is unusual. Most of our friends had their parents, but we did not. And all of a sudden we were the older generation! I really missed my mom. My mom was just a tremendous, wonderful person, very supportive to me and to my family, and to my brother and his family. And just a very loving, motherly person! And I really struggled with her death. I think it was because it was the final one of our four parents.

I think Dr. Gupton sensed that I was bothered by that and I think he said something to the Wessendorffs. That's the only way I know that they knew about it. I had never met Mrs. Wessendorff. I had met him. He was usually the one who brought the dogs in. One day, about a month after my mother passed away, the door opened at Dr. Gupton's office. I happened to be at the front desk at that time, covering the desk while the receptionist was at lunch. And she came in and said, "I'm Mrs. Wessendorff". I said, "Oh, I'm SO glad to meet you!" I talked to her about how I enjoyed her husband and meeting him, and I enjoyed being with their dogs. They had good dogs.

And she said, "I came to talk to you. Are you Nancy?" And I said, "Yes, I am." She said, "I understand you've lost your mother." "Yes, I did." And I was just STUNNED! Just overwhelmed. And she handed me two devotion books and a little tract about grieving. And in the book she had written, 'If you ever need a mom to talk to, here's my number'. And that just GOT me. [voice catching]

This is just such a touching gesture. And she said, "I really mean that. If you ever need a friend or a mom to talk to, I'll be available." That was such a loving gesture. I only saw her one other time after that, so I only had two encounters with her. But WHAT a tremendous impact she made with her presence, and just her loving nature.

GOODSILL: That is a very sweet story.

NORTH: About two weeks ago I went to San Antonio for the Conference of Southwest Foundations--CSF. It's the foundations in the southwest part of the United States. They network together and hold an annual meeting. The Wessendorffs are members of the conference. The Executive Director is a friend of mine and she asked if I would come down and help. I was registering folks and when they registered the Wessendorff, I said, "You know, I knew Mrs. Wessendorff." And then they started pumping me about her, and that's how I came to be interviewed.

GOODSILL: OH, you're kidding! And who did you meet there? Was it Joe [Robinson]?

NORTH: I didn't meet Joe, but I met Lane Ward. He asked me how I knew her. And I told him briefly the story. That she was very supportive and thoughtful when my mother passed away, and gave me these two beautiful devotional books and a tract about grieving. I didn't tell him about the fact that she had signed the book and made a note 'if you ever need a mom to talk to, here's my number' and put her number in there.

GOODSILL: You never did call her to have her be a mom?

NORTH: Never did, but I was so moved by that gesture. That was in the mid-70s, '74 or '75, somewhere right around in there.

GOODSILL: And even though you never called her, just knowing that somebody in the community loved you and was willing to be a surrogate mom was very touching?

NORTH: Yes, I thought that gesture was HUGE! And she meant it. It wasn't a doubt in my mind that she meant it. And I just always knew that I could pick up that phone and call her if I was down or blue or whatever. I never DID call her. And then I only saw her one other time.

GOODSILL: Did you mention it to her when you saw her again?

NORTH: Yes, after she knew who I was, she looked at me and said, "I think I recognize you but I don't know who you are." And then I told her. And she said, "OH, I KNOW who you ARE!" And that was it. And it was just in passing. We were at a theater so there really wasn't any way to talk.

GOODSILL: How nice.

NORTH: I just thought that was a treasure, an example of the kind of person she was. She was known for that. I mean, when I mentioned that to Dr. Gupto, John and Marguerite both, what she had done, they just kind of nodded their heads, kind of like, well, that's Lois.

GOODSILL: (chuckles) Let me ask you a question, just out of curiosity. Have you ever been able to pass the favor on to anybody else?

NORTH: Not as a mother, but I have stepped up. Two of our children have lost their children. And so we've been able to help them through the grieving process, Dave and I have. And then we have a friend who really struggled through the grieving process. And I told her one time, "This is something that was given to me and I need to pass it on."

GOODSILL: So you HAVE passed it on. Literally you HAVE passed it on?

NORTH: Well, that's true. And I have loaned those devotional books out. I can't tell you how many people who have deaths in the family borrowed the books.

GOODSILL: Don't you think Mrs. Wessendorff just would be thrilled with that?

NORTH: Oh, I do! I think she would be ecstatic to know that it was like throwing a pebble in the water, and the rings just kept reaching out.

GOODSILL: OH, that's very, very sweet. I'm so glad to have your story. It is lovely.

NORTH: When Joe [D. Robinson] called me, I said, "This just kind of blows me away." I am HONORED to be able to share a story about her. It's kind of humbling to me because she really touched me. She never knew, and I didn't know at the time, how much her gesture helped me heal.

GOODSILL: That's a lovely story. I feel like we could talk some more but it feels so complete. I feel very happy, having had this interview.

NORTH: Well, I feel very pleased. I felt real connected to you from the beginning and I feel blessed to have had the time to visit with you.

GOODSILL: Oh, thank you. How nice of you to say that.