

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Peter Cangelosi**

Interview Date: 03/20/2010

Interviewer: Pat Pollicoff

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Dew House. For other interviews related to the Dew House, see

Project / Group: JoAnn Cangelosi Hargrove, Frank Cash, Jean Cash and Lawrence Vaccaro. 6 Pages



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Transcript

POLLICOFF: You said that you used to deliver groceries to this house. Tell me what you remember about the Dew family who lived here.

CANGELOSI: Yea, I delivered groceries there a few times when I was a teenager. Miss Dew would call down to the store and we would fill her order for her. We did that for a lot of little old ladies in those days. That's not something that would occur anymore for sure.

POLLICOFF: What was she like?

CANGELOSI: I remember her as being a very elegant older lady. Very much a southern lady. She had a Texas drawl, if you will, or a southern drawl. Very genteel lady.

POLLICOFF: Did you ever come to the house before Muffie inherited it

CANGELOSI: That was when I delivered groceries.

POLLICOFF: Do you remember what the house was like? You said it was very statuesque and very elegant.

CANGELOSI: I remember the house had antique furniture. I remember Mrs. Dew being a very well dressed lady. I remember her she always had a housekeeper. It was sort of kind of a big deal to get to go into this house. It was one of the biggest and the best in the county at that time. My father owned the shopping center. Only I was allowed to deliver.

POLLICOFF: So it was a pretty good assignment to be asked to deliver groceries there? Did she invite you in and show you around or did you pretty much stay at the kitchen door?

CANGELOSI: Pretty much in the kitchen, pretty much in the kitchen. She would say, "Come on over here young man." I think she gave me a tip once or twice.

POLLICOFF: (giggle) That's really neat. Now I understand that you bought a table and chairs recently...

CANGELOSI: Actually what happened was... after Mrs. Dew passed away and her granddaughter, Muffie, inherited the property she had an estate sale and my mother was an antique collector. Mother came to the estate sale and she bought several pieces. One of those was a dinning room table and old chairs. Mother also bought a silver server... a center piece. It had a crystal bowl on top, it was a very large ornate silver Étagère. Mother treasured that and that table. The table stayed in the family all these years.

POLLICOFF: That was back in the 1960's?

CANGELOSI: That would have been around 1972. 1972 was when I think Mrs. Dew passed away. We treasured that table. When Mom and Dad passed away it came down to me and when I heard that they were restoring this house I came by and talked with Diane [Ware] and let her know that I had this piece of furniture. We weren't really using it. From what I understand it's going to be one of the few pieces of furniture that ever really resided in the house.

POLLICOFF: Oh that is wonderful. So it is a table and chairs?

CANGELOSI: It's a table and four chairs. It's SOLID oak and it's showing a little bit of its age but it's got to be... I would say... it has to be seventy eighty years at least. Here we are in 2010. It was an original piece of furniture from this house.

POLLICOFF: Now you said it was your mother is the one who came the auction. Did you come to the auction as well?

CANGELOSI: No I didn't.

POLLICOFF: So you don't remember the other things that Muffie sold?

CANGELOSI: No I really don't, but my mother treasured that table and every chair.

POLLICOFF: Somebody told me one time that if you love a piece a furniture you will never mind dusting it. (both POLLICOFF and CANGELOSI break into laughter)

POLLICOFF: I don't know about that (laughter)

CANGELOSI: I don't either.

POLLICOFF: If you could describe the major changes that you have seen over the years in this area, how would you describe them?

CANGELOSI: It was a very rural community. Lots of open spaces, there was farmland everywhere. It was a small community; there weren't a lot of people. We have had so much growth and so many people have moved in. We have lost that tight-knit community where everyone knew each other. That's the biggest thing. I think progress is a good thing but at the same time I think we have lost something.

We have so many areas around here that are historic such as the Freedom Tree on the Dew Plantation. It was the place that the Emancipation Proclamation was posted in 1865 freeing the slaves! Thank God, we managed to save it and make it into a park.

You know Santa Anna camped in Stafford on his way to San Jacinto? Passed right through Stafford. Unfortunately nobody made any allocation for that.

POLLICOFF: So that land is privately owned now?

CANGELOSI: That land is privately owned. They do know the approximate campsite.

I think the biggest change is the large growth of population and the confines. But you know here we sit in this beautiful park [Kitty Hollow Park]. When I was a kid, there wasn't a park in Fort Bend County. There really wasn't.

POLLICOFF: Because everybody had land.

CANGELOSI: Everybody had land; we didn't have a lot of facilities. We've made great strides in public facilities. We are doing our best to try to preserve the history. Preserving this old house that was treasured by this family, is a very worthy cause. I am glad that I was able to be a small part of it.

POLLICOFF: Is there still a core of people from Stafford, the old timers or the old families that still keep in touch or has everybody has just grown and moved on.

CANGELOSI: It's mostly kind of family now. The Falsone family is still close to us. Most all the older generation have passed on. I have seven eight cousins and they are still a number of businesses here in Stafford that are owned by family members. We are still trying to do our part. Do our best for the community and pass on as much as we can.

POLLICOFF: They are asking if you have any photographs maybe of some of the old days or your grandparents or any old documents that you think might be valuable that we could add to the history that we could borrow to scan. Any photographs or things like that.

CANGELOSI: I do have a photograph of the Blue Room Café and the old Pontiac dealership. I have a photograph of the Cangelosi Gin. The Dew family had a gin and the Cangelosi family had a gin and we were sort of competitors because gins were a funny thing. Each one was individual and they had contests on the cotton that was ginned to see who had the best cotton. For many many years the Cangelosi Gin tended to produce the best cotton so people wanted to bring their cotton to us because it would bring a higher price.

POLLICOFF: Just better equipment?

CANGELOSI: Yea, and part of it was that my great uncle Frank was a tinkerer and so he was always trying to tweak his gin and make it a little bit better.

POLLICOFF: So really an inventor in many ways. I am sure that old family photographs of any of your early family when they first moved to Stafford would be great. Family gatherings, places and things like the café and the furniture store are great, but if you have got your dad working at the store or your grandmother at the grocery store, something like that would be great.

CANGELOSI: I have a wonderful picture, and this would be something for the Sugar Land ladies. The old Palms Theater, my mom and dad would set up displays in the lobby of the Palms Theater of the newest refrigerator, or the newest washing machine for that year. We have some photographs of Mom and Dad in the lobby of the Palms Theater. Everybody went to the movies at the Palms Theater.

POLLICOFF: Because that was one of the closest theaters for this whole part of the county.

CANGELOSI: That was the closest one, it was air-conditioned and everybody went to the movies.

POLLICOFF: Even my sister-in-law, Diva had her first date at the Palms (laughter)

CANGELOSI: Mom and Dad would put up these displays there. They would have raffles and I have some pictures of Mom and Dad in the lobby of the Palms Theater. I would like to show you.

POLLICOFF: That would be great.

CANGELOSI: I have four or five of those I think she would really enjoy.

POLLICOFF: Oh that would be fantastic. Have I forgotten anything? Is there anything else about the Dew family or your families' history in Stafford that we really didn't touch on?

CANGELOSI: I remember that Mr. Roy Schmidt was the gentleman in charge at the ranch operation for Mrs. Dew. I remember that they had a large cattle operation and Mr. Smitty ran that for them and Mr. Roy Schmidt was the Post Master of the town of Dewalt. He and his wife and had the little Dewalt store and they had the post office inside of the store. Mr. Smitty was sort of the ranch foreman I guess you would say for Mrs. Dew. Of course all the men had passed on so she had to have someone and Mr. Smitty was her manager I guess, farm manager.

POLLICOFF: Where there any Dew children?

CANGELOSI: Muffie was a granddaughter.

POLLICOFF: Was she about your age, or close or older?

CANGELOSI: She was a bit older than me.

POLLICOFF: She was a bit older, okay. I wasn't sure if you went to school with any of the Dew kids. They didn't end up at Dulles or anything, I'm sure.

CANGELOSI: No I think they probably went to the Missouri City School. Which would have been the closest school for them. Yes ma'am and Missouri City School district. My great uncle Frank Cangelosi was president of that School Board for a long time. Helped establish that School Board.

POLLICOFF: A lot of good memories! I thank you very much.

CANGELOSI: Well thank you.

Interview ends