

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Sandra Wade Janik**

Interview Date: 09/01/2016

Interviewer: Susan Lowe-Strickland

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: At her home in Fulshear, Texas

19 Pages



This oral history is copyrighted 2018, by the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. All Rights Reserved. For information contact: Fort Bend County Historical Commission, Attn: Chairman-Oral History Committee, 301 Jackson St., Richmond, TX, 77469.

Terms and Conditions

These oral histories do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the County Historical Commission or Fort Bend County. This file may not be modified or changed in any way without the express written permission of the Fort Bend County Historical Commission.

This file may not be redistributed for profit.

Please do not 'hot link' to this file.

Please do not repost this file.



Transcript

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Where and when were you born?

JANIK: I was born in a hospital in Midland, Texas, in 1950.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: What was the name of your paternal grandfather?

JANIK: James Hall Wade. He lived between Brookshire and Fulshear, on what is now property that a Chinese man has bought, I don't know his name. Prior to that, it belonged to Tom and Phil Hunt and had been part of the Wade property. My family farmed it and lived there. I think they raised cotton.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: When you say, 'a Chinese man', are you talking about Twinwood?

JANIK: Yes. They own that property now. It's at the corner of what is Pool Hill Road and Hunt Road, on the southwest side, and it is several thousand acres.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Do you remember going to the farm?

JANIK: My grandfather sold the property right before my father went into the service in World War II.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Who was your paternal grandmother?

JANIK: Her name was Louise Meosmer. She was born and raised in Colorado and was adopted as a niece by the governor of Colorado. Her sister, Betty, was adopted by the Governor as his daughter. Betty lived in Denver until her death. My grandfather was in Colorado on business when he met Louise, and they married. She had studied nursing, and in her late 30s, she was stricken with rheumatoid arthritis to the point where she could not walk or bend her arms. They had five children, and one of the children (probably my uncle Stuart because he was a builder), took wire clothes hangers, pinching them together and attaching a clothespin so she could grab things with those clothespins. She was so independent! She lived in Fulshear, was an excellent pianist, and taught piano. She was so strict, and if you were in her home, you behaved yourself. You did NOTHING that was less than lady-like.

She lived right outside of Fulshear. Now it's in the city limits. Do you know where the cemetery is? If you are standing at the front gates of the cemetery, looking straight across the road, you will see it. It is much larger now because it has been added on to. My grandmother moved to Houston and lived with my aunt until her early 70s.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Please tell me the names of all the children.

JANIK: Stuart Wade, James Henry Wade (my father), Kathryn Bell Wade Hoker (she is buried in that cemetery), and 'Aunt Muff'. I'm sure I know her real name! It might have been Mary Louise Wade, and then Dorothy Wade Short. She's the only one who is not buried there. She is buried in Houston, next to her mother.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Did you learn piano from your grandmother?

JANIK: No. I later played the clarinet, but I'm not sure I had the patience at that age. She taught my cousin, Susan. Susan was really good.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: You said she was a strict disciplinarian.

JANIK: Yes. That was all right with me because I was raised in a very strict household. She was also a very devout Christian. I was blessed in that both sides of my family were very strong in their faith.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Let's talk about your maternal grandparents.

JANIK: I never knew my maternal grandfather. His name was Charles Kelly, and he was originally from Biloxi, Mississippi. They moved to Houston not long before my mother was born. He was a builder and built a lot in Houston, throughout the Heights. They lived in the Heights – it wasn't known as the Heights then. He built schools, too. He built a school in McAllen that has a historical marker on it. He died when my mother was 18. He became ill when she was very young, maybe 10-12 years old. He was confined to home. He had a heart issue, and it might have led to other things as well because Mother would talk about how it was hard for him to move around.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Did your maternal grandmother remarry?

JANIK: No. Her name was Mary Elizabeth Maude MacDonald Kelly. She was from Canada. Her father owned Silver Creek Farms, near Ontario. He was sold land in Mississippi, so they sold everything they had in Canada to purchase this land that they said had a train on it.

They came down by train and drove to the property. It was a swamp with a mule train on it. Her brothers and her father got busy clearing the land. People were interested in coming to the coast, and the land was right on the Gulf, so they established homes. Today we know that as Gulfport, Mississippi.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: How old was she when they moved to Mississippi?

JANIK: She was in her early teens. She was a devout lady. You would never see her not smiling. I remember her well. I was 19 when she passed away, and I spent a great deal of time with her and with her brothers and sisters who were in Mississippi. I would go there for the Christian revivals, and afterwards stay with them. I never once heard her complain. When her husband became ill, she went to work. She, too, was a nurse. She went to work for people, taking care of their children. She took care of John Connolly, our governor, and the children of the Lays, of the potato chip company. She had such a great reputation for her faith and her goodness. She would never touch anything that had alcohol in it. I know we are all sinners, but trying to find her sins would be very difficult.

She and my other grandmother were also close. I remember my mother's mother coming out to visit with her, and they would spend the whole time reading their Bibles and sharing verses. I was really pleased to be raised in such an atmosphere.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Was she ill before she passed away?

JANIK: No. She was never ill. I don't know if she ever had a cold! At the age of 76, she was still surfing. I rode horses; I did not swim. I can remember being in Pensacola with one of her sisters-in-law, and they all went surfing. She kept trying to get me to try it. I was 13, sitting in the sand, watching my cousins and my grandmother surfing. At 78, she was still climbing on top of her roof to get the leaves off. She was taking care of her yard, taking care of other children being born into our family at that time. When she was 84, she had a stroke, and the Lord took her home in a matter of months. Up to then, she was never sick. She died in 1969, right after I turned 19.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Do you remember the dates when your grandparents were born?

JANIK: They were all born in the late 1800s.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: When she watched the kids, did she watch them in her own home?

JANIK: No, she stayed wherever she was. It was very difficult for my mother, because my mother was so young when her mother had to leave. My mother was the baby of the family. The next sibling to her was five years older than she was, and she left home quickly because she married young at 17. So, my mother, at the age of 12, was having to cook and take care of her father, while her mother had to go to other homes and be gone for maybe a year because she took care of infants.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So how many kids did Charles Kelly have?

JANIK: The eldest was Charles Herbert Kelly, then Mildred Kelly Upton and Roy Kelly. Those three were very intelligent. All of our brains went to them. Uncle Herbert graduated valedictorian from Auburn, Aunt Mildred and Uncle Roy were valedictorian and salutatorian graduates from Rice. Their offspring are also very intelligent. They are deans and doctors. One is a dean at Texas State University. The rest of us are just normal. The next group of children were Ethel Kelly Davis, Dorothy Kelly Harrell, then my mother – Betty Kelly Wade.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: And your father's name?

JANIK: James Henry Wade. He was born in Smithville, January 14, 1919. My mother was born September 18, 1920, under the kitchen table during a storm, in Houston, in the Heights, on East 25th Street. I'm not going to swear to that, but they all laughed and told me that, and I assume they were telling the truth. I was surprised to find out my father was born in Smithville. I think they were there on business, because they lived in Fulshear.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Where did they meet?

JANIK: When my grandmother became unable to raise her children without help, she moved into Houston, on Courtland Avenue. They grew up going to school in the Heights. My Aunt Muff and my mother grew up as best friends. So, my dad was around, and they grew up knowing one another. After high school, which went through 11 grades, she learned shorthand and worked as a legal secretary. When the war broke out, she and her cousin moved to Mississippi where all the other cousins were, and worked at the USO, putting on dances and entertainment, cooking meals and whatever needed to be done. She was there for maybe six years, and my dad was in the service. I think my dad's cousin, Carl 'Bubba' Bentley, told me that Daddy was the first one drafted from Fort Bend County. You would have to check on that. When the war was over and he came home, I'm sure he went to see his mother, and my mother was there. They started going out. My mother was 28 when they married, and my dad was almost 30.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Where did he serve?

JANIK: He was in the Army with the 36th Division. According to him, they went all over the world, and he got to see everything. I know they went through Africa and all the way up through Germany. He was with the group who had to bury all the Jews that Hitler killed.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Did he talk about the war much?

JANIK: He talked about driving through the mountains and the snow and ice. He talked about being in trenches full of water. He got sick with something. He died with a kidney disease that the doctor said was probably a result of the trenches and the unsanitary conditions. He said, "Starting in Africa, going up, the people's skin got lighter and lighter as you went."

He was a farmer, and many of the African-Americans in our area worked for my dad. I remember if they were in need, they came to my dad. We were not rich, but my dad would give them his last dime. He appreciated people who worked for what they needed, and he had no tolerance for those who did not work and wanted things. That's the type of home I was raised in. Daddy farmed and ranched, but he leased his land. He owned a ranch in Bedias, Texas, which is near Madisonville. The land around here he leased.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Who did he lease the land from?

JANIK: I think the Guylers might have still owned it. I was very young then. It was across from Simonton store, across from Ropers. Go to the end and all of that on the left ended up being owned by the Pearson family, who descended from Sam Houston. Robby became friends of ours, and I was there a lot. That spurred memories of hanging calves in the trees to butcher them. We have some cows now, and my cows will never land on anybody's plate (be eaten). They all have names. My dad is looking down, thinking, "What did I raise?"

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Was his land on the river?

JANIK: It was that back piece on the river, and some in Pattison, that belonged to different people like James Sadler and Mr. Muskie. Everybody in Brookshire knows Mr. Muskie. If it had dirt that was too red, my dad didn't want any part of it. He said that red mud stuck to his boots. He had an opportunity to buy all that land for \$10 an acre, and he told my mother that he didn't want any part of that red mud.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: That was the land that was on Pool Hill and Hunt Road?

JANIK: Yes. It ran to the road that goes to Simonton. It was also across the road that they had as well. The Mullins live on a corner of it and they still refer to it as the 'old Wade place.' Not David, but his cousin, Rick.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: What kind of crops did your dad grow?

JANIK: Cotton.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: He used local labor?

JANIK: Mostly the Parker family. They have quite the reputation today, but the ones that I am referring to have all passed away.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Did they ever use any of the braceros, the Mexican laborers?

JANIK: I don't remember my dad ever using them. The Hernández's, who lived in Fulshear, had a lawnmower and mowed our yard.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Did your dad make you work on the farm?

JANIK: I grew up working cows. I can't say that I thought that was work. I remember the McCanns had cattle. Everybody had cattle at that time, and they took turns helping one another. Tommy Hunt, Phil Hunt's son, lives in Simonton. Another ranch nearby was called Rue Ranch was owned by a man who had a tire company. He had a beautiful black horse that I loved when I was three years old. He gave me the horse, but the horse was only two years old. Tommy had a pony, Toughie, and Mr. Phil (his dad) traded with my dad to give Tommy the black horse, and I would get the pony that I could ride. Toughie was a little larger than a Shetland, so I'm thinking he might have been a Welsh or a Welsh-quarter cross. We kept him. I wouldn't let him stay out in the pasture. He had to stay by the house. I was no more than four years old, and I took very good care of my horse. Mr. McCann told Daddy, "You let her come with us." I will never forget that. I loved the McCanns, and I got to go with them to round up the cows. I guess I obeyed well because my dad was very strict, just like his mother. From then on, I always got to go with them when they would work cows. Then I started school, and I couldn't stand it if they worked cows while I was in school.

In the first grade, I went to Brookshire. My teacher was Mrs. Hayes. It must have been the first or second day of school, and they were going to work cows, and I wanted no part of school! They found me halfway to Fulshear on my way home. I had a great love for horses, so working cows was a great joy of my life, not work.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Do you still have horses?

JANIK: I did until a few years ago. I have one left, but she's with friends in Bay City on a huge ranch, loving her life and being a mother.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So, your dad was really strict. What about your mom, Betty?

JANIK: She was strict, too, but she was the type who would call out, "Jimmy, I need you in here," and you hated that because that meant you were going to get the belt! (laughing)

I can tell you that I never heard my mother say a curse word. I don't remember her being anything less than a lady, ever. She was the type of person who, before she came out of the bedroom, was dressed nicely with her make-up on. She was like that until we took her to the hospital for her last moments. She died in late January of 2015, and I think we buried her on February 8th.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Can you tell me about her near-death experience?

JANIK: Yes. We talked about it frequently because we both had those experiences. She was ill, and I think she was eight years old. She was running a high fever. She remembered leaving spiritually. She said it was like her body stayed, but she was gone. She was in a field with beautiful flowers and said it was like resting in these flowers, and then she was back. So, she was ready to go back to that field of flowers. She talked about the light, and the Lord was the light, and he talked to her.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So she saw the Lord.

JANIK: She saw the Lord in light, and I understand it because I experienced the same thing four years ago. I didn't quite understand it, and it's hard to explain the supernatural until we experience it. So that's what she kept saying. In fact, she grabbed my hand. I said, "I'm not going to pray for you to live if that's not what you want." She said, "I'm going to live; I'm just not going to be living here!"

LOWE-STRICKLAND: She was a great lady.

JANIK: Yes, she was. She was better at it than I.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Let's talk about your siblings.

JANIK: I had one sibling, and her name was Peggy Wade Thurn-Valsassina. She was eight years younger than I. She was born on August 13, 1958, and she passed away at age 25 from lupus.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: What kind of things did you and Peggy do as kids? Did she help you with the cows?

JANIK: No. We tried that one time, and she wasn't really good at that. She was very good with horses, though. Peggy had no patience to be the one to feed, groom or care for the horses. She had the desire to be the champion. She won her share of competitions. Daddy bought her nice horses and she did well. She grew up primarily showing horses and rodeoing, and was accomplished at that. She was even the Fort Bend County Rodeo Queen. It might have been 1974 or 1975 when she was Rodeo Queen. She attended school at Sam Houston. Peggy was very smart. She was in the National Honor Society.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Did you both go to Huggins?

JANIK: No, but I was on the FOH board there because my son, Jim, went there. You are forgetting how old I am! Huggins was opened in 1979. Peggy went to school in Rosenberg. She started at Travis, and when she was a freshman or a sophomore, she switched to Katy and graduated from Katy High School. It was so much closer to drive to. My parents had moved to Pecan Hill, and we were seven miles to Katy and twenty-something miles to Lamar.

I went 1st through 5th grades to Brookshire because my mother and dad's better friends lived in Brookshire. Then in the 6th grade, I went to Taylor Ray. Very few of us remember Taylor Ray. That was only for the 6th graders. I had Mrs. Werlla, and I had her husband for band for a very brief time. Then I went to Lamar Junior High and Lamar High School. At that time, you had to walk from the junior high to Lamar High School for lunch because we didn't have a cafeteria. If it rained, we had to go on the bus.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So you graduated in 1968?

JANIK: I did. People never could understand why I went to Katy. I want to say that when you grew up in Fulshear, you knew everybody in Fulshear; the same could be said for Brookshire, Katy, Sugar Land, Missouri City, Rosenberg and Richmond because they were tiny little towns.

I was dating somebody who went to school in Katy, so that could have been why I wanted to go there, but another thing was I twirled. I did not want to twirl for Dr. Walt Wendtland. That's all I'm going to say on that. Anybody in my generation who went there will understand why I said that. He made my dad look like he wasn't strict at all. He was overboard on things. He was at Lamar and was one of the greatest band directors that I've ever known. I will give him credit for that. Wasn't Henry Mancini his real good friend? And Tommy Dorsey. He was beyond the word great. He got his doctorate in two years. I played bass clarinet, first or second chair, depending on if he liked me that day.

He wanted me to twirl. Dolly Hyatt had graduated, and he looked at me and said, "I want you to take her place." Dolly was a great gymnast. She could go up and down that field doing flips and splits and nobody cared if she could carry a baton. She was gorgeous and had a figure that would knock your lights out; beautiful dark hair and legs. And I'm thinking, "I'm going to go out there and twirl!" I said, "I am not going to replace Dolly Hyatt." There was nobody who was going to replace Dolly Hyatt. He kicked me out of band and made me sit in the office with Mr. Stevens, our vice-principal. It even upset Mr. Stevens. I stayed in the office for a while, and then I went back and Dr. Wendtland decided to like me again, and I got to be 1st chair again.

The next year try-outs started, and now I'm very involved with a friend of mine and going to rodeos. My dad with another man had bought the Round-Up Coliseum in Simonton, which is now a business. I was NOT interested in going to football games. This was in 1965, I think. So, I wouldn't twirl. Dr. Wendtland wanted his way, so I left and went to Katy for school at the end of my junior year. I asked my dad if I could please go to Katy because Dr. Wendtland was relentless. My parents felt if you start something, you finish it. I had started band in the 5th grade, and I was going to finish it. I just wasn't happy. But I went to Katy for my senior year.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: When your dad bought the Round-Up, did your sister go there to rodeo?

JANIK: Oh, yes, we all did. That's when I had to work. I remember keeping time with a lady named Ann Madison, who was a rodeo secretary. After I went to college, when I came home I had to work. So, I didn't actually get to perform in that arena until Luke Van-Dries bought it from him.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Were you in the National Honor Society, too?

JANIK: No. I was in all advanced classes, and I made As and Bs. Nobody in the family was going to make Cs, or you got visited by Daddy's belt! (laughter)

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Where did you go to college?

JANIK: Dallas Fashion Merchandising. I did my mother's dream for her. I don't even know how it came about. I remember Mother telling me, "You need to learn to do something besides being in the barn." So, I think I went for Mother, to get me out of the barn. I was not happy about going there and ended up loving it. I had great teachers and did learn something besides the barn. But she sent me to the 'capitol of cowboyhood'.

There I am, in Dallas, SO close to Fort Worth, and fifteen minutes from Mesquite. We had to work for 50% of our grade, so I worked for Tiche's, which is like Joske's. I have to say I'm not interested in clothes, but I love the design part of clothing. I really loved interior design, and we had a great teacher. We had to take modeling, we had to do the whole thing. But my weekends were spent at the rodeos. I worked in the record department and worked as an assistant to the buyers. Somebody I met at the rodeos worked at one of the western stores in Mesquite. Without asking permission from anybody, I quit Tiche's and went to work there. They let me work with the buyer, and I loved that job. I worked there until I graduated. I caused a ruckus between my mother and the school. She had loved the fact that her daughter was working for the buyer at Tiche's, NOT the buyer at a western store.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So you liked the interior design part?

JANIK: I loved it all. When I completed school and came home, I married. My mother and I were always close. We did a lot of stuff together. She could paint unbelievably. One day, she looked at me and said, "Why don't we open a dress shop?" And I said, "Sounds good to me. I know where to go, and I know ALL the stores," because the college had been in the Apparel Mart in Dallas.

So, we opened a shop. Both of us had the same middle name, Jean. The creative person that she is, she said, "We'll call it Jean's Fashions." Everybody thought we were going to carry blue jeans because they knew me! There used to be an old building at FM-1093 and FM-359, and my dad owned it and the lot next to it. Ed Huggins owned the next lot, and I think the Pate's lived on the next one. Daddy was a real estate broker and had his office there. Mother said, "We need to fix up that whole thing," and they made it like a little shopping area and put in our shop. My mother had exquisite taste in clothes; even when she was a child she dressed up to go ride her bike! We opened our shop right there.

Across from us, a lady named Shirley Mayer opened a barber shop. The building was shaped in a rectangle. The building was bought by Dr. Pawelek and named One Fulshear Plaza.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Was the building called The Wade Building?

JANIK: I don't think we had a name for it. Originally, it had Mayes up there. John Mayes married Lucretia, and she had Tucker Wade's money. My dad probably was proud to leave the name up there because he was all into the history.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: When did you open the dress shop?

JANIK: One year of school, I married in 1969 right at the end of the school year. I think right after January, 1970, we opened Jean's Fashions.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Let's go back a little bit. You came home and got married in 1969?

JANIK: Yes, September 5th, to E. V. "Sonny" Foy. We had James Wade Foy on February 24, 1972. He came in the first week of the 7th month of my pregnancy, but he was 19 1/2 inches and weighed 5 pounds 8 ounces, so I thanked God. He was always the biggest boy in school.

It started getting hard to have this dress shop. We had other people working in it. We did extremely well. Mother was great at this, and I was sort of along for the ride. She didn't let me buy blue jeans. It was dressy-casual. My mother's taste was such that we had a lot of designer clothing. In fact, we discovered that the brands that she chose were the same brands that Neimans carried, and we were half the price of Neimans. Ladies from River Oaks who had places out here would stop at the little dress shop. This was 1970-73. They would stop in and order \$4,000-\$5,000 worth of clothes at one time.

When they really got to know my mother, they asked her to buy for them when she went to market. My mother was excellent at this. She missed her calling. She could have very easily been a fashion coordinator. In fact, the fashion coordinator for Sakowitz at that time was Jeri Chalpin, a very good friend of my mother.

So, the dress shop was a big success. People were very surprised that we closed, but it was not my dream – it was her dream. I did interior decorating also. We lived in Sweeney for a while because my husband was from there. While I was down there, I worked for twelve builders. I don't remember when the shop closed. Possibly the same time Daddy closed the Round-up because they wanted to go traveling.

I think we might have closed the shop in 1975-1976, and Daddy ended up selling that building to Dr. Pollock, the dentist. Selwin and Doris Jones had a liquor store right where our dress shop was.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Let's go back. When you came home, you got married?

JANIK: Right after we married, we lived in East Bernard in some apartments until Christmas. I was close to my dad, and he told me he needed my help. My parents built a big two-story house in Pecan Hill and were going to be moving there. Daddy said, "We'll be moving there. Y'all move into this brick house," which was the house that I lived in all through high school. I said, "Okay." I was kind of excited about that. I never liked being very far from my dad. Then I worked with him because he had cows all over the place at that point, so it was kind of a full-time thing.

Eventually, we moved next door to Daddy's other house, the first one he built that we lived in. Sonny had some really good jobs, and we were saving our money. I went down to Wallis to buy all the little \$50 antiques, and I got it furnished like I like. So that house looked good. Now we have the dress shop, I have Jim, and I also have lots of friends in Katy. I wanted to be on the Katy Pumper Team. I was the one who hooked up the hose. I was skinny and fast. This was why we moved to Katy, Sonny had friends there. They were involved in rodeo, and we thought Katy was a good place to move to. I loved it! Sonny had his own businesses, Servepro, and a carpet business. I worked in it, but I'm not interested in bookkeeping, so that didn't last. I'm back to working cows. (laughs)

LOWE-STRICKLAND: How long were you and Sonny married?

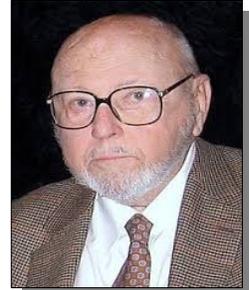
JANIK: Seventeen years. We're still friendly. He is married to a lovely lady. On August 25, 1990, I married the most wonderful man I've ever known, Delbert Ray Janik. His family originated from Czechoslovakia and moved to the Wallis area. They farmed from Wallis to East Bernard.

Delbert and his siblings went to school at Lamar. His mother died when he was in the 6th grade, and his dad got transferred, and they moved to Pecos. So, he spent junior high and high school in Pecos. Then he came back to this area, and he lived off of Bois d'Arc in a home down there. We met, fell in love, and have been together ever since.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: I'd like to go way, way back for a couple of things. Your dad, James Henry Wade, went by Jimmy?

JANIK: Yes. He was on the tax board. He, Hilmar Moore and Milton Rabinowitz (one of his very best friends) had cattle together. Stuart Wade had the saddle shop in Rosenberg. His saddles are all collector's items. We called him 'Big Uncle Stuart' because we had 'Little Uncle Stuart'. He lived in Rosenberg for a while before he moved to Houston. He managed to hold on to his inheritance and was a very successful man.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Hilmar Guenther Moore was the longest serving mayor in the history of the United States. On September 22, 1949, he was appointed to fill an unexpired term as the Mayor of Richmond, Fort Bend County, Texas. After that, he won 32 consecutive elections, and served a total of 63 years as Mayor. Hilmar Guenther Moore died on December 4, 2012, at the age of 92.



Fulshear didn't even exist when William Wade came. William Wade had so many children that in history, they refer to it as "the Wade neighborhood". Then one of his daughters married a Pitts, he gave them land, and they created Pittsville.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: When was this?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the interview for William "Junior" Hartlage, Jr. on this web site at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=45314>

JANIK: William Wade was from Natchez, and he married Hulda Ennis Stuart. She was from Natchez, and William's parents was from England. His father had wealth, and he married into enormous wealth. She was from France. France was promoting all of that area and the rich, a lot of them from France, came there and built those big homes. During the Civil War, the reason those homes were not destroyed was because of the great wealth that was in Natchez, the Union soldiers would not destroy it. And they were two of those families. That's why when they came here, they didn't get land grants. They bought over 11,000 acres.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Where exactly was all this land?

JANIK: Between Brookshire and Fulshear, almost exactly midway. Just north of Pecan Hill on the west side of FM-359. They bought some of that from Nathan Brookshire.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Do you know what year?

JANIK: He started coming in 1823, because their first child was born in Natchez, and the second one was born here. Bell brought Moses Austin over here, and they are part of the first 13 families. This is my great-great grandfather on my dad's grandmother's side.

William Wade's father actually came to Texas and had a plantation in what is now called San Augustine. In fact, the chimney of the house is still standing, and there is a historical marker on it. This is pre-Fredonia days. This is before Stephen F. Austin. But they lived in Natchez.

They owned a big plantation in Natchez, and while my cousin Doug Wade's wife was on a tour over there, and they found out who she was, they purchased the map. This plantation ran from Natchez all the way to New Orleans. I didn't know this until 6 months ago. We've been finding out more about Wade because he was a quieter type. They did a lot, and a lot of our wealthy families, even the Briscoes, that Dolph, it's from them.

We've been researching this information. Hulda Stuart is a direct descendant of King James. Stuart is the royal line, and the cousins who are not in the royal line as heirs, changed the spelling to Stewart. Mary Stuart, who was Mary, Queen of Scotland, would have been that line. I have pictures of my sister, and it is strange how genes pass, but they are like identical. The big saucer-like eyes, the red hair.

Another thing we found out was we didn't think we had any cancer in the family. One of the Stuarts got hold of me through Texas stuff. Almost every one of her siblings died of cancer, and she died at 42, after the 12th child. We always thought it was from having children, but more than likely she got cancer. My great-grandfather, Alexander Wade, who was a doctor, lived in Brookshire. I think he was her 10th child. William Wade remarried a lady who had married a Parker, and that's how the Parkers got that. That was still part of his land, but she inherited that side and all of Hulda's kids got the other side going all the way to Columbus and around the Richmond area that they bought. So, he was raised by her. She was a Bevins. That's their history.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So, I have it here that William Wade was born in 1791, and died in 1859, and Hulda Stuart was born in 1805, and died in 1846. Does that sound right?

JANIK: Yes, that's all on the markers up there at the cemetery.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: I was interested in Lucretia Foster. I've been researching her. So, William and Hulda's son was Pennington Tucker Wade?

JANIK: Yes, and I'll tell you how she had him. My cousin Doug has a family Bible and it is wonderful. Hulda kept great records, and then it went from Hulda to Sophronia Bell. They were both record keepers. Hulda went home to visit, and she was pregnant. If you are going to go from this area to Natchez at that time, you are going to stay for at least a year. William Wade had a sister named Susan Wade, and she was married to Pennington Tucker. Hulda stayed with them, and when she had her son, she named him after her brother-in-law, Pennington Tucker.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: What do you know about Pennington Tucker Wade?

JANIK: I don't know much about him except that he had that house in Fulshear. It did not look like it does now. Lucretia and Tucker may have lived there with him. Gordon Briscoe can also verify all this. Lucy Wade and Minnie Briscoe raised my dad. That's why Daddy and Bubba were so close.

His mother lived in Houston and his father was not available. So, they would feed him and take care of him. Cousin Minnie was Minnie Briscoe Bentley Gibson, mother of Carl 'Bubba' Bentley.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: She married Phillip Owen Gibson?

JANIK: Yes. But she was originally Minnie Briscoe who married Bentley. I think he passed away. Then she married Gibson. So, I have great memories of those people because of the closeness my dad had with them. The Van-Dries bought their place. That's where they lived, up there on that land. I would get off the bus and walk to Cousin Minnie's, because that was as far as the bus could go from Brookshire. That was on Hunt Road.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So Minnie lived on Hunt Road. Was that when she was a Gibson or was she a Bentley.

JANIK: Gibson. That was all Wade land, so I have no idea of how long she lived out there. She didn't move to town until they were much older. Daddy sold that land for them to Van-Dries, and they built the house in Fulshear and moved into town. In elementary school, I rode the bus every day for five years and walked up there. She would have cookies and milk waiting for me. I LOVED her. She was like another grandmother to me. I grew up calling her Cousin Minnie. She was a cousin, but she was near my grandfather's age. They didn't like my grandfather, and she would tell me stories about 'that wild man'.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So Mitch Mayes had a saloon?

JANIK: He had the Mayes building where Daddy was, but I think that was more of a drug store.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: It was across the street from Meiers Meat Market. One of the articles I'm writing for the magazine is on the gunfight.

JANIK: That was Jody, not my grandfather.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: But it was about Mitch Mayes' saloon, so I was trying to figure out exactly where it was.

JANIK: There's a picture of my grandfather with a Model T parked out front. My aunt told me and Susan, "What was wrong with your dad (James Hall Wade) was he was the baby, and he was spoiled rotten." He was quite a looker, too. He had lots of women. But he always loved my grandmother. I think getting crippled like that back then, when they didn't have the means to make you better, that caused them to separate. Susan has a wonderful story of the two of them when they were older. She had come out to visit, and he knocked on the door to go in to see her. Susan was standing in the hall, watching them, and the love they had for one another showed.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: So, Pennington Tucker Wade was married to Lucretia, and they had Jody Wade, who was their son. Is that correct?

JANIK: I don't know all of that line because when she married Mitch Mayes I think they had kids or somebody had kids, and they brought kids together. My dad knew a lot of them, and it was just by first name. I don't even know how Burford fits in there, but he does. There were a lot of Wades. There were 15 of them who lived and married. One of them married a Simonton, well, THE Simonton. (laughter)

LOWE-STRICKLAND: This is a great oral history. Do you have some things that I haven't asked you that you really want to tell me? Memories of any of your family members or things you did as a child.

JANIK: Growing up in Fulshear, the kids were close. The Doziers had Joe Dozier and Bill Dozier and Jim Dozier. And the Holmes's – she was a Dozier. That's the Holmes Sausage. They were from Fulshear. Virginia ("Ginny") was Peggy's age, and Carl Wayne, and Gary. They were younger than I. In my age group, there was Joe Dozier and Hilda Meier, who was a Walker descendant. They had Walker & Meier Grocery Store. In that family, there was Penny, who was drop-dead gorgeous and still is to this day. She is beautiful and a strong spiritual person as well. And then Herc. I love Herc. He was my sister's age, and keeping them out of trouble was a job. They were either loving each other or trying to kill one another. Hilda and I spent our time separating those two. Hilda married a McJunkin. Tita Shamel was a Walker. Then there was Sissy Shamel, Bill Shamel, David Shamel, Luanna and Paul. Paul died in an accident on their ranch.

Growing up, everybody rode horses, and you could go as far you wanted because the only houses were the houses in town. It didn't matter whose land it was because somebody on one of the horses owned the land. So, we had a good time growing up. We could ride and see our friends in Simonton.

We had dirt roads. I believe Alice Krause opened a Dairy Mart in town. They were somehow related to the Ruey's. Walker Meier had a building, and at the end of it was our post office. Miss Irma Helwig ran the post office when I was a girl. I loved her. She would let me come in and do the mail with her. At that age, it was probably a toss-up; do I want to grow up to be a cowgirl or the mail lady?

David Mullins had a sister named Sissy. I loved her, and grew up with a crush on David. They danced, and they were on American Bandstand and won. I loved his mother, and I would go down there and sit in that long room of theirs and watch them dance. They had a U-shaped house, and they danced in the middle, which was concrete – it was like a solarium or something. I can still see myself sitting there. In the backyard, they had these pull-up chinning bars, and I remember David lifting me up. I was probably five or six years old, and I thought, “Oh, this is the most wonderful person in the world.”

There was Ug's Gulf Station. If you wanted to find every man in the county drinking coffee, all you had to do was go to Ug's. Mother would say, "Go get your dad." She didn't even have to say where. I knew where to go, and they would all be there. Ug Dozier was a hoot. That's what I'm talking about. No matter what was going on, everybody had such great fondness for one another. Everybody was very close.

NOTE: See Billie Amilee Harris Wendt's multiple interviews on the FBC Historical Commission website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=30614>, <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=30616>, and <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=30618> See also, Constance Ann Harris Seger's interview on the FBC Historical Commission website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=41231>

And homes were open. When I was growing up, if we were playing at one end of town, you could always go into somebody's house and they would have something that you could snack on. At Miss Bill Harris's, I can still see her sitting out on those steps in front of that house. Her granddaughters were Jackie, Laurel, Amilee and Evalyn Wendt. Jackie and I were friends. Well, everybody in town was. You can't really single people out. So, when everybody was there, we would have so much fun.

There were two houses I liked to walk into. One was Mama Floss, who was Hilda's grandmother. She always had something to eat. I was so skinny, but food was my favorite thing. The other was Duane Bentley's mother's house, Stella, who was Bubba Bentley's wife. That was where you could always find me. She had certain days she made soup, certain days she did other things. That lady could cook. She might have been the best cook in Fulshear. I remember when she got Bubba to fix the kitchen up. She had yellow tile! I can still see myself sitting on that bar stool, and she would fix me a bowl of soup and then dessert afterwards. I remember one day I decided to go say "Hi" to Duane, probably pick at her and Duane hollering at her mother, "If you're going to let her in here, you're going to have to keep her in there with you!" (laughter) And Duane's probably one of the sweetest people in Fulshear, so I know I was being pesty.

I have great memories of growing up in that town. Then, as I got older, the church had MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship). I don't care what the parents did on Saturday night; on Sunday morning they were in church. Some of the ones who could really party on Saturday could really give the best lessons on Sunday. I could tell you which people were very straight-laced. These people were so important in our community. Ed Huggins was a wonderful teacher. I remember when Aunt Faffy Meier was my teacher, and she WAS a teacher. So was Tita. They could teach! I remember hearing Ed Huggins and being taken away because he could speak so well. He was very straight-laced. My dad was, and so was Van Poorman and his wife.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Is that the Poorman who owned that white house?

JANIK: Yes. In fact, they might have been the ones who made it look like it does today.

LOWE-STRICKLAND: Do you think we've covered enough for now?

JANIK: Yes, thanks.

Interview ends