

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSIONER
ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Stephen Arthur Doggett**
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Interviewer: Karl Baumgartner
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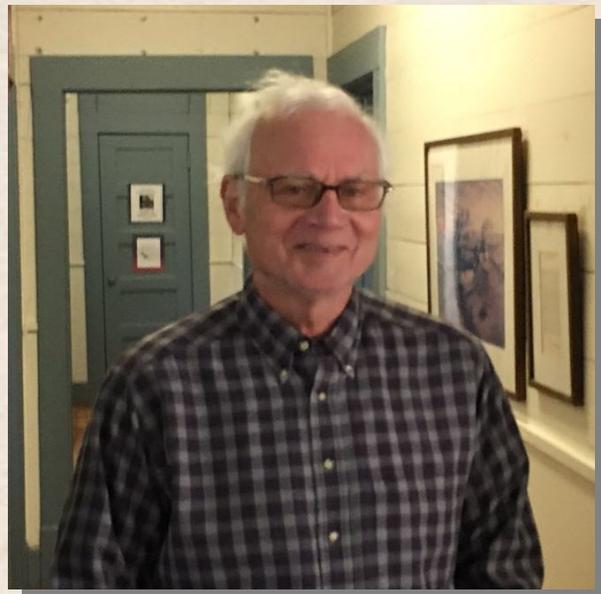
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BAUMGARTNER: Today is October 21, 2021. My name is Karl Baumgartner. I'm conducting an oral history interview with Stephen Doggett, at 1925 1st Street, Rosenberg, Texas. This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Committee of the Fort Bend County Historical Commission.

So, Stephen, what's your full legal name?

DOGGETT: Stephen Arthur Doggett.

BAUMGARTNER: And your date of birth?

DOGGETT: October, 29, 1950.

BAUMGARTNER: Where were you born?

DOGGETT: I was born in Richmond, at Polly Ryon Hospital. I spent my entire life here, except when I was away at college.

BAUMGARTNER: And how long has the Doggett family been around here in Fort Bend County?

DOGGETT: My best guess is that my father moved here in the 1920's and my mother in the 1930's. My father was born in Wharton. His father died in the 1918 flu epidemic when he was about 31 years old, and he left my father and two older sisters and a widow whose maiden name was Bolton. Lucille Bolton Doggett. My understanding of history is that she remarried some guy over in Wharton, but that marriage didn't last very long. And then Lucille Bolton Doggett ended up over in the Richmond area, and she married Claude Davis and remarried for a third time.

BAUMGARTNER: What was your father's name?

DOGGETT: William Fortran Doggett, Jr.

My grandmother, Lucille Davis, opened up the first flower shop in Fort Bend County, in Richmond in 1936. My mother took it over in 1946 and ran it until she retired in 1984. And then my brother's wife, Mary Pat Doggett, took it over after and she and my brother's daughter, Keeley, ran the flower shop until they sold it. Lucille Davis Flower Shop.

BAUMGARTNER: So, your mother's maiden name was?

DOGGETT: Adamek. She grew up near Temple. Her parents came from Czechoslovakia. She grew up on a farm and she went to school in a little one room schoolhouse out in the country. They spoke Czech. I'm not even sure if they spoke English.

BAUMGARTNER: That was up the country.

DOGGETT: My maternal grandfather, Josef Adamek, died in 1926 at age 42. He was a farmer, and he had five kids. And when he died, the family split up. I think that grandmother remarried and the kids got split up. Some went to live with one relative, some with another. And that's how my mother had an aunt, on her mother's sister's side, who lived here in Rosenberg. Her last name was Krcha.

And I think my mother was down here visiting with her aunt when she met my father. That would have been in the late 30s. My mother and father got married in Bellville in 1939, and they were married by the same minister that married my wife and me and my younger sister and her husband, Reverend Lamar Clark.

BAUMGARTNER: Were you the oldest in your family?

DOGGETT: No. I was in the middle. There were seven children. My oldest sister was born in 1941. I had an older brother, William, who was born in 1944. Then I had another brother that was born in 1949. But he died a couple of days after he was born. I was born in 1950, another brother born in 1953. And then I had a sister who was born in 1960. And my youngest brother was born in, I think, late 1963. My father died when he was 46 years old. And my little brother was about nine months old when my father died, Wally,

The two older ones left home, and that would open up bedrooms. You kind of had to share bedrooms when you were little. And then when the older ones would leave, you got your own bedroom. And that's kind of how it worked.

My family has stayed pretty close. Of course, when Mama was alive, we would all go over to her house for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Then when she died, we usually have Christmas and Thanksgiving at my house and so everybody that's still alive comes over there.

BAUMGARTNER: What was Richmond like in the '50s compared to when you were growing up?

DOGGETT: My memory of the town is that the population was a lot smaller, maybe like 2,500 to 3,000 people.

I think Hilmar Moore was first elected mayor in 1949. In fact, my dad served on the City Commission with Hilmar for about a year before he died. He's the only Mayor I ever knew until recently.

BAUMGARTNER: That's amazing. Hilmar served for sixty-two years.

DOGGETT: It was a small town, and we didn't lock our doors. People left their keys in their cars back then. It was way different. When we had Halloween, we would just run wild. Even when we were maybe six years old, we'd go trick or treating all over town.

It was segregated when I was a kid, but I didn't really notice it. People didn't talk about it. It wasn't like, in your face, like today's situation. My Daddy never told me you stay away from black people or anything like that. I never had a problem or had any issues with a black person.

Growing up, my brother and I would go down to the river and shoot a 22. I mean, when we were kids, 10, 11, 12 years old. We would ride our bikes down there and carry a gun. We used to play army man in my yard. I had a couple of friends I hung out with. One was a

guy named Gary Vana. He died young with cancer, but he had a house over behind the dental office in Richmond. He had a big old hackberry tree, and he was real handy with lumber and stuff. We built a huge tree house in the tree.

When we got a little bit older, like 11 or 12, we used to run all over the place. I mean, we would go downtown to Pete Oshman's Five and Dime. Or we'd go to the dry good store, and we'd go to the drugstore. You could go down there and get candy and ice cream and stuff like that. We used to fish in the old river behind Pier 36 and at Smithers Lake.

We'd go exploring out there in the woods near the river. When we got a little bit older, we would go down to the ballpark and watch the ball games. I never played any organized sports. I never played football, baseball. I learned quickly that the trick was you hang out with the football players, and you get to be around all the girls because they're after the football players. But you didn't have to play football.

My house was about six blocks from Jane Long Elementary, so we would walk to School. There was a little crossing guard there, Mr. Oliver, who would help us get across the highway. There wasn't nearly as much traffic as there is today.

I just remember it being you felt safe. You didn't feel like somebody was going to snatch you. You didn't feel like you had to watch your kids all the time for fear that somebody was going to get them. And you didn't have to worry about somebody shooting you. There might have been road rage incidents, but nobody pulled out a gun and shot each other.

The downtown area had a lot of stores. This was before you had malls and freeways and all that. So, you had a lot of dry good stores. We used to pick pecans, and one of the guys at the stores would buy our pecans. We used to pick dewberries. Every year we'd pick dewberries. We had a railroad track right near the house and we would all pick pecans. Now you hardly see any body picking up pecans. I walk by the trees and all the pecans are just laying on the ground. Kind of weird. And you don't see people picking dewberries.

The downtown had all those stores. So, we would shop down there. We had a clothing store called Edelstein's. We would all buy our clothes there. And we had a small local grocery—Loves.

BAUMGARTNER: And the downtown then, it's the same as it was?

DOGGETT: The buildings are still there. Most of the businesses are gone. And you had the Post Office Pharmacy, the drugstore, the barbershop. I still go there to get my hair cut. I've been going there since the beginning. Mr. McFarland was the original barber, and he was rough. My memory is he would put his hand on the top of your head and he would just clamp down on your head to keep you from moving around. It was when I was little. But that barbershop was kind of a meeting ground for everybody.

BAUMGARTNER: Now who's the guy that's owned it?

DOGGETT: A. D. Eversole.

I grew up in the Baptist Church, but when I was in high school, I had a girlfriend who was a Methodist. Jack Myska's daughter, Linda Myska. I started going over to the Methodist Church to go to MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) because my girlfriend was over there and a lot of my friends were over there, so I kind of switched from the Baptist Church to the Methodist Church.

The Methodist Parsonage was a big old two-story house that they later moved out on 359 now by the Creek. It's still there. That's where they had MYF and they had a pool table on the second floor. We used to go at night and Jimmy open the window and crawl up the porch to get to the second-floor window, go in and we'd play pool at night. We did it many, many times and nobody ever bothered us.

BAUMGARTNER: I interviewed Maxine Phelan recently, and she talks about the '50s as being an idyllic time. It was her favorite description. It was just an ideal time to grow up in the Rosenberg/Richmond area.

DOGGETT: It was a great time. My mom's flower shop was in the front of the house and we lived in the back and she was busy working in the flower shop. We had a cook who would come and kind of watch the kids, a black lady named Sephronia. She didn't really need to watch us when we got older, but we still had her coming over and she fall asleep in that rocking chair.

When I got old enough to drive, I would deliver the flowers. My father had died and I was the delivery boy. We would take flowers to the Episcopal Church, the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church. Either the churches weren't locked or I had a key and I could get into the churches. And I would take the flowers on Saturday evening and put the flowers in the vases on the altar. It's kind of interesting being in the church alone and quiet and putting the flowers up. I also took flowers to the funeral homes, to the white funeral homes and the black funeral homes. I met Arizona Fleming. She ran one of the black funeral homes. Arizona Fleming was one of the people who brought the lawsuit that caused the Jaybird Party to be outlawed.

BAUMGARTNER: What was your first car? Do you remember?

DOGGETT: My mother bought me a '67 Ford Falcon, one of the newer models of the Ford Falcon. It was green, and I used to give the Plummer kids rides to high school. I parked my car in the exact same spot every time, at the corner of the road that dead ends in front of the school. And I'm sure most of the people in my high school class remember that car because I drove it all during high school.

Mom was poor. She ran the flower shop. She didn't make a lot of money, and she had all those kids. There were four of us at home after my dad died, but she bought me the car. And I have to say that I don't know how life would have been for me if my father had lived. My father was very strict with my older brother.

But after my father died, Mom was not a strict disciplinarian, and I kind of got to do what I wanted. I wasn't really bad, but I drank beer sometimes. I probably did some things that I clearly shouldn't have been doing, but she never really did anything.

BAUMGARTNER: That's part of teenage years, you know.

DOGGETT: Anyway, my older brother, he was seven years older. He and two other guys joined the Air Force straight out of high school. One of them, Sparky Kuykendahl, used to live next door to us. He would be about seventy-seven now. His family lived on what we call North Second in Richmond, which is the last street before the tracks. It's the one next to the river. It used to be a lot of big old houses along that street, a lot of white people still lived in those houses along North Second. Most of those houses are gone now.

But anyway, Sparky lived on that road and the Kuykendahl name, I think we can trace his roots back to the Old 300 settlers that came here in 1821. One of the land grants was to a Kuykendahl, and it was probably to that property where their home was. Those lots ran right off North Street and they ran all the way down to the river. They were really deep lots. It was kind of a bank drop off and there was a lot of woods back there and all that. When the Mexican Army came here after the Alamo, they camped around here. And at the Moore House out on the Moore Ranch near Orchard that they burned. And they came here and they camped around where the Richmond State School is, where Rocky Falls is.

Have you ever been to Rocky Falls? They camped in that area. That's where Thompson's Ferry was. There is a historical marker down there. And they said the Steamboat came through there, up the Brazos River from West Columbia, and the Mexicans had never seen a Steamboat. And they tried to lasso it and shot at it.

Editor's Note: [Click this link for a short article in the online Handbook of Texas on Thompson's Ferry.](#)

BAUMGARTNER: This was after the Alamo.

DOGGETT: Yes, the Mexican Army came down here.

BAUMGARTNER: They were on their way to the San Jacinto battleground, right?

DOGGETT: A big chunk of the Mexican Army camped here. And then Santa Anna left here and went on with a smaller group, like eight or nine hundred, they went on to Harrisburg to try to catch the Texas government. And that's how they ended up in San Jacinto.

BAUMGARTNER: The house that you live in now, didn't you tell me that it was a childhood house?

DOGGETT: The home where I live in now, is where my office is. It was originally owned by Hilmar Moore and his wife, Kelly who lived in that house for a little while. That's where my family all grew up.

My dad bought it when he got back from World War II, when he came back from overseas. I think he bought it in 1947, for \$9,100.00. And we've lived there ever since, until mom finally bought a house in Country Club Estates in Richmond. Even after she bought a house in Country Club Estates, she kept the flower shop going. My first wife and I lived in the house for a while. And then my older brother and his wife lived in the house for a while. My younger sister and her family also lived in the house for a while.

And then we had some other people rented the back part of the house who lived there for a while. We ended up getting the building. My mother had deeded that property to all six of us, and I bought out my other brothers and sisters. I converted the building to a law office, and I've been practicing there ever since.

BAUMGARTNER: What is your wife's name, and the names of your children?

DOGGETT: Meredith is my wife. I have two children. My son Kasey, he's 42. He practices law with me. I have a son named Kristian who just turned 40, and he lives in Austin. He is an electrical engineer. He works for IBM. They're both married. Kasey is married to Deidra Doggett. They have three kids, two boys and a girl. And my son in Austin has a little boy and a little girl. The two little girls are both about a little over a year old. Kasey and Deidra live right close to us on Hillcrest in Richmond. So, we see those grandchildren all the time, and then we see the ones from Austin a little less often. But we spend a lot of time with the grandkids. Love being with the grandkids.



Stephen with two of his grandchildren.

Well, actually, I don't own 100 per cent of the house. My younger sister Jeter still owns 1/6 of it, and she won't sell out. She won't sell it to me. I said, Jeter, it's not doing you any good. I'll buy it from you. Let me buy it from you. No, I want to hang on to it. I'm in an office that I

own 5/6 of it. [laughter] My office is actually in what was my parents' bedroom

BAUMGARTNER: What were your teenage years like?

DOGGETT: It was typical high school. Well, not exactly, it was kind of a shock since I had gone to elementary school together with all the same kids at Jane Long for six years. But I made some new friends. I moved over to Junior High and mixed in with the Rosenberg kids. I was a good student and I made pretty good grades.

Kennedy got assassinated in 1963. We were out on the playground. That was back in the days when you had recess. I think it was during the lunch hour. A kid named Copeland came running, somebody shot that s.o.b. Kennedy. Kennedy was not necessarily popular.

The assassination was a really big deal in junior high because we were doing a big deal in the 1960 election. We studied the election, we had posters for both sides in a box. Anyway, they said Kennedy got shot, and I remember we all came in and we all went to our rooms, whatever room we were supposed to be in.

Kennedy had died. I remember nobody went to school the next day. We were all watching TV. We watched the funeral and I think I saw Oswald get shot. The drumbeat of that funeral procession made an impression on you.

BAUMGARTNER: If you didn't see it live. You saw it so many times.

DOGGETT: I also remember the Cuban missile crisis because Kennedy went on TV, and he said something about an attack on any of our allies will be considered an attack on the U.S., and we will launch a full scale retaliatory nuclear strike. That's what he said in his speech. And everybody was scared.

My dad went to the grocery store and stocked up on canned goods. Back in school, we used to do duck and cover drills. They tell us to get on the floor. For nuclear attack and for tornadoes.

We had great teachers. Tommy Sue Forrester was my English teacher. I had Mr. Wynn for

Texas History, and we used those little paperback history books. They would have Texas soldiers calling the Mexican soldiers tamale eaters and so forth. Well, they probably did call them that, but now I think in today's society, they would want to erase those. I'm not for discrimination against anybody, but I think we've gotten overly sensitive. We do have different ethnicities and different backgrounds and different cultural histories and people are different. And the truth is people don't always treat each other right. The solution is to tell the truth, not change history.

Since I stayed in the same place my whole life, I formed lifelong friendships. People that I knew in Jane Long and junior high. And then we're moved on into high school. We integrated the high school. We partially integrated in my freshman year, and we fully integrated my junior year.

BAUMGARTNER: That was about 1965, 1966, in that range.

DOGGETT: Yeah, there was kind of a little bit of a buzz about it, but it was a non-event as far as I'm concerned. We all got along. When we would go to the dances at the Legion Hall in Richmond, they'd have a dance every Friday night after football game. And we had some great bands. The black kids, everybody forms a circle around them and watch them dance because they could dance better than us.

I was in the Interact Club in high school, which is a branch of a Rotary. And I got into that club, and we made trash barrels and put them around the campus. We used to work at the fair and we go down and work at the Rotary booth at the fairgrounds. I still work for the Rotary Club at the fair; I've been working for the Rotary Club for more than 50 years.

BAUMGARTNER: Where did you go to college?

DOGGETT: I went to University of Houston. One of my best friends was up at Texas A & M, Larry Small. And he said, why don't you come up to A & M and we'll be roommates. And so, I said, okay, I'll go. So, I moved to A & M in the fall of 1971. I drank a lot of beer. But I still made good grades. Then I transferred to UT because my girlfriend was going to school at UT. So, I moved to Austin and did my last year at UT.

I didn't go to summer school. I would come home and would work. I worked in the oil field, and made money in the summer. I graduated in December. I had to lay out that winter before I could start law school.

BAUMGARTNER: What did you major in?

DOGGETT: Political science. They called it Poly Science at the U of H and they called it government at UT. I finished in three and a half years but I never went to summer school, which I thought was cool.

BAUMGARTNER: Was Poly Science a prerequisite for law degree, or was it related to law school?

DOGGETT: A lot of people would take government or political science to go to law school, but you didn't have to. You had to have high grades and you have to score a good grade on your LSAT to be eligible to get into a good law school. I got into UT Law School. I'm not sure how I could have gotten in there today; they're very selective.

Anyway, I started law school in the summer of '73. I had Dean Paige Keaton as my torts teacher, one of the greatest teachers I've ever had my entire life. He was just fantastic. I had Charles Allen Wright for what they call federal courts. Charles Allen Wright wrote the book on federal courts. It's a very well-known resource that lawyers use.

BAUMGARTNER: Now, how is Trump going to do on his claim for Executive Privilege?

DOGGETT: If they file precedent, I think he's going to lose. I think he should lose. I don't care who it is, whether it's Trump or a Democrat. When they're investigating the types of things they're investigating, which involves possibly the subversion of our system of government, they ought to be able to look at everything. And I'm baffled by it, I don't know if you're a Republican or Democrat it doesn't matter to me. They say two thirds of Republicans want Trump back. I view Trump as a threat to our democracy. To trash our government and to undermine the validity of the election. Why not do what all the other presidential candidates have done and just say you won fair and square and I am going to back you.

I have a lot of my friends who are very conservative Republicans, a lot of my best friends, and they still say the election was stolen, and I was open to that as a possibility about election fraud. I read conservative news sources as well as Liberal and try to get a mix. I actually found I would go online and do deep dive research and get pleadings from some of these lawsuits that Trump's lawyers allowed to set the election aside and look at the opinions of these judges.

I couldn't figure out why he was losing all these cases. Well, he was losing because his allegations were complete and utter BS. And they couldn't back him up. And they had their chance to prove those cases. And these were in front of mostly Republican judges, some of whom were appointed by Trump.

People think lawyers can do anything. We have a code of ethics. We can't make frivolous claims that we know are not true. And you can be sanctioned for that.

I had a good experience in law school. Did good in law school at UT. I remember when Nixon resigned, I heard people start yelling and running up and down the halls, and people were cheering and clapping and the classes stopped and everybody went out in the hallway.

I got out of law school and was in the top 25% of law school. UT is one of the top law schools in the nation. I had good grades. I thought I'm going to be okay. I'm going to get a good job, now.

The interesting thing about my law school was I had no intention of doing any trial work, no intention of doing any criminal defense work. My plan was to come back to Richmond and go to work at the title company in Richmond or go to work for Pearson, Scherer and Roberts, the old law firm in Richmond. Mike Scherer's dad. I came back and they said, we're not hiring.

BAUMGARTNER: Was that in 1973?

DOGGETT: '75. I sent out resumes to a bunch of places, but I only got, like, one or two interviews. I was on the law review. I was on the legal research board. I volunteered at the student attorney office. I had all kinds of extracurricular activity.

BAUMGARTNER: Of course, the economy was suffering in '75 too.

DOGGETT: Anyway, I got a couple of interviews in Houston, and they asked me stuff like, well, do you know some people that you can bring into the firm, business to the firm? And I said, not really. I can't guarantee that I could bring business in. I never got a second interview.

I tried to practice law out of my little house on Jones Street in Rosenberg, and that didn't work. I did interview with Roane and Schwartz, Don Schwartz' firm. I said, I'm not interested in doing trial work, or any criminal work. It's the strangest thing. I didn't really know what lawyers did. My idea of lawyers was those guys down there at the title company who were back in the back looking through old dusty deeds. But I didn't really get what lawyers did.

When I came back here after college, the Fort Bend County Bar Association had only about 20 lawyers in the Bar Association. That shows you how much things have changed. They invited you to come to the bar meeting at the courthouse. And I got a call one day from F. Polland in Rosenberg, and he says, Steve, there's three of us over here and one is going to retire. We got an empty office; are you interested in using that office? I said, absolutely, what will the rent be? He said, well, are you willing to pay for your own phone line? He said, that's it.

Editor's Note: [Click this link to visit the Fort Bend County Bar Association's Web site.](#)

BAUMGARTNER: Wow.

DOGGETT: That is a heck of a deal. So, I went over there and started practicing law and they would let me help them with their cases. And they would sometimes just out and out refer me business. That went on for about a year. And then they said, well, would you like to become a partner? I said, sure. So, we formed a partnership, and I was like a minority partner.

BAUMGARTNER: Now this was after you'd been there, how long?

DOGGETT: This probably started, like a year after I got out of law school, and I was there with them for maybe two or three years. This was a major change in my law school career then.

Bill Meitzen, who back then was the district attorney, and the district attorney's office consisted of one district attorney that was Charlie Dickerson and one assistant. That was Bill Meitzen. Bill was quite a character. But anyway, Bill came to me one day and said, do you want to do any criminal work? And I said, no. I'm not interested. He said, well, why don't you come? He said, it's not that hard. Why don't you come check it out? They'll appoint you on a case and they'll pay you. I didn't ask how much, but they don't pay hardly anything on court appointed cases or they didn't back then. So, I did it. So, I said, okay, I'll try.

BAUMGARTNER: Court appointed. So, you had to represent somebody.

Editor's Note: [Click this link to learn more about court-appointed lawyers and public defenders in Texas.](#)

DOGGETT: Represent somebody who was charged with a crime.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah.

DOGGETT: So back then, we didn't have our own district judge. We had district judges who rode circuit.

BAUMGARTNER: Explain what it means to ride circuit.

DOGGETT: The judges are not based in this county. One of the judges was based in Brazoria County, and one of them was based in Matagorda. And they move around, like, once a month, they'll come to Fort Bend County and have a docket call, and they'll handle the cases there, whatever they could get done in that week. And then they would move on to the next county.

BAUMGARTNER: They work together as a group?

DOGGETT: Individual. It would be just them in their court room. So anyway, the day I was doing it, it was Judge Hardy from Matagorda. That was back when you could smoke in the courtroom. He always had a cigar in his mouth and was kind of a gruff guy for younger lawyers. We didn't know him. We were scared of him. So, I got appointed to represent this girl, a black lady on probation who they had filed a motion to revoke her probation. She had failed to report one month. You have to report once a month to the court when you're on probation, and she was behind on her monthly probation fee.

But anyway, this is the first time I've ever been in court. I didn't even have a suit. I had to borrow a jacket from my brother. I walked up in the court and I studied this little book. I didn't know what to do, really, and I had gotten this book out. It's called Moses. It was this green book. We call it the Bible of criminal defense.

BAUMGARTNER: You were representing this lady, right?

DOGGETT: It never mattered. I never even talked to her. That was one little defect. I didn't even know to talk to her. So, I looked at this book and it says, when you have a hearing on revoked probation, the judge is either going to find, yes, they violated their probation, and then they'll pass sentence; if they find one violation, no matter how minor, they have the discretion to revoke their probation and sentence the accused person to their full term. The judge could say, I find that they violated their condition by not reporting. You have to ask that they put that in writing. That stuck in my mind. It's risky business. The courtroom was packed. A lot of people in there. A lot of lawyers all on different cases.

I don't know what I'm supposed to do. The judge calls the case State vs Mrs. Blacklist. So, we go up and Judge Hardy says, what are we here for? Well, Judge, she didn't report last month, and she's two months behind on her probation fees. She owes us \$20 or something like that. Judge Hardy leans back in his chair and says, well hell, I'm not going to put somebody in the penitentiary for failing to report one time. The case is over. I thought, put it in writing. I said, Judge, I want findings of fact and conclusions of law. Judge Hardy looked at me like, are you crazy? I know the people in the courtroom were experienced lawyers laughing at me. He kind of leaned back and looked at me like get away, boy.

Let me tell you back then, the practice of law was so different than it is now. When we were in a trial, you would go to lunch with the judge and your opposing counsel. We usually would go over to the Cattleman's Restaurant and have a steak. They had drinks. Everybody would have a drink or two or three. And we talk about the case. We try to settle the cases while we're having lunch with the judge.

BAUMGARTNER: Really?

DOGGETT: Oh, yeah. I remember one time I was watching a trial that Logene Foster was defending and Charlie Dickerson was prosecuting. It was a murder case. A Mexican had killed another Mexican.

So, we had this visiting judge. So, we go to lunch. Logene says, hey, Doggett do you want to come with us? I go with them. We're sitting there and Logene says, Judge, my client wants to help the family of the dead guy. He's willing to pay them \$5,000 to cover the funeral expenses and to help the widow out and all that kind of stuff.

He says, if he's willing to do that, would you be willing to give him probation for murdering a guy? I had watched the trial. What that testimony had been in the trial is the defendant testifies. And he's saying that I shot the guy in self-defense. And Charlie Dickerson is cross examining this defendant, this Mexican defendant. And he says, and you shot him. Bang. Yes. And he fell, didn't he? Yes. And you shot him again? Bang, bang, bang. Yes. You hit him all four times, didn't you?

Yes. So that's the testimony in front of the jury. Then we go to lunch. And so, Foster is making this pitch about giving him probation if he gives the family of the dead guy \$5,000. So, the judge says I'll think about that. I'd consider that. And Dickerson said, god damn it, there's no way you're going to give that guy probation.

They said, just keep cool and calm down. We're eating our lunch and having drinks. We go back and, damn if the guy gave the \$5,000 and the judge gave the guy probation.

So, it was way different then. A lot of times when the jury would go out to deliberate, I won't say which judges did, not all judges did this, but some of the judges, they'd send their bailiff

out to get a six pack of beer or they'd have whiskey in their office. We go back in there and drink while the jury deliberates and listen to it. The jury room was right next door. You could hear the jury screaming at each other in the back and couldn't necessarily make out what they were saying.

Anyway, things were different back then. It was a lot more relaxed.

BAUMGARTNER: How about justice being served then and now?

DOGGETT: I think for the most part, there are exceptions. The system is not perfect. But I got appointed to represent a guy at one time who had already been tried. He killed a peace officer. Defendant's name was Francisco Cardenas and he killed Eugene Heiman. Eugene Heiman is who the street is named for Eugene Heiman Circle at the new court house. I knew Eugene and he was a great guy. Great.

Francisco got tried once, got the death penalty. I got appointed to handle the appeal. We had a little bit of trouble communicating, but he spoke enough to communicate. And he said, I don't want you to defend me. I said, what do you mean? He said, I don't want you to.

He said, I deserve to die and he said I took that man's life. I ruined his life. I ruined his family's life. I ruined my life. I ruined my family's life. I don't deserve to live. I'm ready to go be with God.

I said, Francisco, I can't do that. I can't ethically allow you to give up and get the death penalty. I have a duty whether you want me to or not. I have a duty to defend you. I can try to keep you from getting the death penalty. He said, I don't want you to do that.

Logene Foster got appointed with me on that case, and I talked with Logene, and he agreed with me.

BAUMGARTNER: Let me ask you an ethical question, just out of curiosity. So, he had confessed to murder and he was prepared to die. And in fact, he said that he wanted to die because he deserved to die. Why would you want to fight so hard to suppress it and save

him? I mean, I know it was kind of like your legal responsibility as an attorney, but would it occur to you saying he wants to go? He did it. He killed this guy.

DOGGETT: Back then. The ethical rule on capital cases, you could not do anything but try and save him.

You had to fight the case as much as you could. And one way to keep a guy from getting a death sentence is to try to make the state believe they may not win the guilt/innocence phase. They may lose the trial. But of course, back then, any time you killed a police officer, it was automatic. You were going to get the death penalty, and that was going to be the result. So, I'm not sure that would happen today with the way things are today. But back then, it was pretty much a done deal.

So, by fighting the conviction, we were really just trying to save his life.

BAUMGARTNER: I know, but that was my question. It was a big deal to try and save his life and suppress the conviction. If he said, I did it, I deserve to go. I want to go. I screwed all these people's lives.

DOGGETT: Well, I think he changed his attitude.

BAUMGARTNER: When he talked to his Mama.

DOGGETT: Yeah, I think after he talked to his mother, he said, okay, I'll let you try to save me. As time went on. I think his position to be pro-death kind of softened. And he thought, well, okay, I want to live now. I want to live for my mom. He had a son. So, he changed his attitude. But if he had still been saying the whole time, I want death, we could have said, all right, Francisco, we'll just roll the dice on this motion of suppress. If you lose the motion of suppress, you're going to get convicted and you're probably going to get the death penalty.

I mean, that would have been a way to fight the case, but still.

BAUMGARTNER: More or less give him what he wanted.

DOGGETT: But it changed. So, we didn't have to do that.

BAUMGARTNER: So, I'd like to focus more on the western Fort Bend County judicial system and characters you witnessed over the years and legalities and some of the personalities of lawyers and judges and idiosyncrasies of the justice system in Fort Bend County.

DOGGETT: I don't know really why this happened to me, but early on I got the idea that I wanted to be a lawyer.

BAUMGARTNER: What did your dad do?

DOGGETT: He was the county Veterans Service Officer, so after he came back from World War II, he dealt with veterans. And I think he got that job in 1947 or 1948 maybe. And he had that job until he died. I think he died in 1964, he was 46 years old when he died, but what he did, he helped. His job was to assist Fort Bend County veterans to get their federal VA benefits and help them take advantage of any state programs that offer special things to veterans. And so, he would maybe help them write a letter to try to get their disability benefits or whatever. And he had quite a number of veterans to deal with. World War II vets, and then later the Korean War vets.

BAUMGARTNER: That was a county position or state position?

DOGGETT: It was a county position. He had a little office in the courthouse. And so that's why I started going to the courthouse. I go all the time to go see daddy at the courthouse. I don't ever remember watching a trial. I don't think there was much going on. I don't think it was a whole lot of trials. In Fort Bend County, I'm sure they had some. But it wasn't like today where you got so many courts and you got trials going on practically every week you got something going on. But back then it was unusual, I think, to have a trial.

BAUMGARTNER: So, you weren't really especially knowledgeable or familiar with the legal

community.

DOGGETT: I had no real knowledge about the legal community. I knew Arthur Van Slyke, who was about my father's age, was a lawyer, and his brother was Lester Van Slyke. This is not the Lester Van Slyke you know; this is his father. These are older guys. They were both lawyers. And so, my parents were friends with Arthur Van Slyke, and he would come over sometimes and he would maybe take me to Luby's or something as a treat. But he never talked about his work.

Even when I was a teenager, I didn't go up there and sit and watch trials or anything like that. I wish I had. I probably could have seen some really great lawyers. Bob Bassett was the district attorney, and he may still hold the record for the longest serving district attorney in the history of the state.

BAUMGARTER: Now, when did Charlie Dickerson come along?

DOGGETT: Charlie had come in right around the time that I graduated from law school, I think, around 1970. I graduated in '75. Charlie came in around 1970, 1972, something like that.

BAUMGARTNER: Could you discuss a little more about district judges, and riding circuit, and county judges?

DOGGETT: District judges would ride circuit in several counties, Brazoria County, Matagorda County, Fort Bend County, Wharton County. They would move around, and they would be in our county maybe once a month or a week or so. If they had any cases to try, they would try them then.

BAUMGARTNER: How would they get assigned cases?

DOGGETT: I'm not sure how the system worked.

BAUMGARTNER: Throw the darts?

DOGGETT: Yeah, I guess that's how it works. It's just whatever was needed to be tried. So, you wouldn't have a district judge here all the time. The county judges who presided over us; we had that one district court bench where the judges would rotate, and we had a county court, and the county court was the court that did probate wills and things like that. But the county judge was not a lawyer. He could be a lawyer, but he didn't have to be a lawyer. If you probate a will that went to the county court and the bigger cases that went to the county court handled the misdemeanors, too, like DWI, theft, things like that.

Now, why would that person not have to be a lawyer? It seems like if he was probating stuff, he would need to be a lawyer.

DOGGETT: Back in the old days, they didn't think he needed to be a lawyer. And so that's how that works. The last County judge I did a probate in front of who was not a lawyer, was Jody Stavinoha. And you would just go to his office, and he'd call you in and ask a few questions. He'd sign the order, probate the will. It was pretty simple stuff.

BAUMGARTNER: Jody was county judge, right?

DOGGETT: He was county judge. He was not a lawyer. He was a former FBI agent. But I don't think he ever had a law degree. I could be wrong about that, but I don't think he did.

BAUMGARTNER: Probably why he was so honest and fair.

DOGGETT: And you had Josh Gates, who was not a lawyer. He was that kind of judge. Josh was the kind of judge when I came in before Stavinoha.

Before Stavinoha, Josh was quite a character. He was known for drinking. He would sometimes take the bench with alcohol on his breath. You'd see him go out to his vehicle, parked, and he might get a swig of liquor. Everybody knew about it. It was no big deal. But like I said, now we got lots of courts and there's something going on every day. But back then you would have, like, the county court would have a docket call, maybe like once a

month.

BAUMGARTNER: What does that mean, a docket call?

DOGGETT: They would set the cases, like the criminal cases, when you get a notice to come to court on a particular day, once a month, let's say, and all the people who have pending cases would show up at Judge Gates' court, which was a little bitty courtroom in the old courthouse on the northwest corner. There's a little small court. That's where he would hold court. And his office was right across the hall. And Milady Clay was his secretary. But anyway, Josh would have that docket call.

BAUMGARTNER: And what was Meitzen's function?

DOGGETT: Meitzen was the first Assistant District Attorney.

The district Attorney's office consisted of Charlie Dickerson, Bill Meitzen and the Secretary. That was the whole DA's office. I think they got an investigator, too, because Bert Gubbels' was the investigator for a while before he became either before or after Justice of the Peace. He was the one investigator for the DA's office. Very small office. And now I don't know how many people they've got. They've got hundreds of people in the DA's office now.

BAUMGARTNER: And Meitzen became district attorney.

DOGGETT: He later became district attorney.

BAUMGARTNER: Did he have any notoriety or anything? I mean, his name was so well recognized.

DOGGETT: Bill used to work for Pearson, Shearer and the Title Company. He was a Marine. He was older when he got his law degree, and he used to wear his Marine combat boots with a suit. He had a real dry sense of humor.

The district attorney has a lot of power, huge amount of power and discretion in deciding who they're going to prosecute, how strenuously they're going to prosecute, whether or not they're going to show mercy on you. Bill was always very fair in the way he treated people.

BAUMGARTNER: Now, if the DA doesn't have that power and that authority, who would it logically fall to, or has it always been that way and remains that way?

DOGGETT: They still have a lot of power. And it's pretty much not just here in Fort Bend County, but all over the United States. Prosecutors have a tremendous amount of discretion in deciding how they're going to handle criminal prosecution.

BAUMGARTNER: So, is that fair?

DOGGETT: It can be fair if you have a good district attorney and unfair if you don't.

BAUMGARTNER: That's an elective office, right?

DOGGETT: It is an elective office.

BAUMGARTNER: So, I mean, there's no reason to assume that the district attorney is going to be a pillar of ethics or capability.

DOGGETT: No, that's right. There are a lot of books you can read about district attorneys who've not done well and who've been corrupt.

We have a very famous case which resulted in a reform of Texas law. A guy named Michael Morton said he went to work and he came home and his wife had been murdered, and they prosecuted Michael Morton for killing his wife, and he was convicted. They found like a cap in the backyard of the home. And this may have been before DNA testing, but they preserved the cap. And after Morton was convicted, they kept trying to get the state to test the cap because Morton swore up and down the whole time, I didn't kill my wife, no way.

Editor's Note: [Click this link to learn more about Michael Morton and his case's influence on reforming the Texas legal system.](#)

But anyway, the district Attorney's office fought the testing of that cap for DNA for years, and finally they got the cap tested, and it came back belonging to a guy who was now in prison and a murderer while the innocent guy, Michael Morton, sat in prison. And they were able to prove that the district attorney suppressed favorable information. Afterwards they changed the law, and they told the DA's, you've got to tell the defense attorney everything, you can't be hiding evidence just to get a conviction.

BAUMGARTNER: The DA's have such position of power. Is that fair to minorities?

DOGGETT: It can be fair to minorities. I always felt like Meitzen was fair to minorities. But there are places probably in this state, and certainly there have been in the past, and in this state probably still today, where minorities are not treated well. There's a big movement to reform the system and make it fairer to minorities.

BAUMGARTNER: It seems like it's such an obvious potential to be misused, even if it's minor.

DOGGETT: It is open to abuse. I think it's Harvard that has this study they call implicit bias.

BAUMGARTNER: They're making a big deal out of that right now. The implicit bias concepts.

DOGGETT: I think it's true. I am biased. I have an implicit bias. I make assumptions about people because of their race, their ethnicity that I probably shouldn't make, especially if I'm judging them in a criminal prosecution. I even do it. I took the test and it showed that I'm biased. It's not necessarily irrational, but you have to be careful about if you're judging people on a jury, you have to be very careful about not letting that maybe cause you to make an unfair judgment of something.

BAUMGARTNER: So, previously Dickerson and Meitzen served as DA's. Who is DA today?

DOGGETT: Brian Middleton.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, okay. He was just recently elected and reelected.

DOGGETT: Brian worked in the DA's office for a while as a prosecutor, and then he went into private practice, and he did work defending people and doing other cases besides criminal stuff. And now he got elected as district attorney. He's a black guy.

BAUMGARTNER: I don't pay close attention to politics, but he's a democrat I assume.

DOGGETT: A democrat. The democrats swept not two elections ago, they swept the judicial races and the DA's.

BAUMGARTNER: What was your specialty as an attorney?

DOGGETT: I didn't have a specialty. When I went to law school, my plan was to come back here and probably go to work at a title company, and I envisioned me sitting in a room somewhere looking through abstracts of title and just being a paperwork lawyer.

BAUMGARTNER: Isn't that boring, or is it beauty in the eye of the beholder?

DOGGETT: To be honest with you, I really didn't know what lawyers did. So, I mean, I thought I knew what they did, but I didn't know what they did. So, when I went to law school, you had to take a criminal law course your freshman year. You took one semester of criminal law, yet take constitutional law, yet take contracts, torts. There are certain basic courses you have to take. And I had no intention of doing any courtroom work, any trial work, anything like that. I didn't take any courses in that.

BAUMGARTNER: So, you wanted to do just civil law, right?

DOGGETT: Well, when I came back, my intention was to do only civil law and not do criminal really any much courtroom work other than maybe probating a will or something

like that. And I practiced a lot out of my house for six months. That didn't work worth a damn.

BAUMGARTNER: How did you know Bill Meitzen?

DOGGETT: I really didn't know Bill. He just kind of took me under his wing. I think at the bar meeting that I went to, he came to me and talked to me. He's originally from Dickinson. He was in the marines, got his law degree and he worked at the abstract company for a while. Then he got hired as assistant district attorney, and eventually, when he was defeated, he really didn't practice law much after that.

BAUMGARTNER: Has Fort Bend County had many either notorious or interesting or noteworthy lawsuits and criminal cases and legal issues during your years?

DOGGETT: Well, there have been a lot of interesting criminal and civil cases, and I was able to go up and watch some of the great civil warriors. I saw Joe Jamail. I watched him one time in a case. Some people just have a knack for being able to talk and be persuasive. And you could just tell by listening to him talk that he was one of those guys. He was something else. He had a real talent for it.

Editor's Note: [Click this link to read a Wikipedia article on Joe Jamail.](#)

And Percy Foreman, I saw him in court one time. We were in that little courtroom again that I was describing where Josh Gates called his docket. Judge Tom Stansbury was presiding and there was a dispute about what we call discovery, about exchanging documents and all this. And the other lawyer was accusing Foreman of not producing discovery, and warning Judge Stansbury to enter an order compelling the production of the discovery.

And Forman, he was a big man. He was well over 6 feet, maybe six foot four or five. Great big guy. And Foreman was sitting there, and he was kind of with his head down, kind of looked like he was dozing. And there have been rumors maybe that Foreman was getting too old and was losing it a little bit. So, the opposing lawyer gets up and makes this impassioned speech about why Judge Stansbury should spank Percy Foreman for not doing what he's supposed to be doing. And Forman got up. I mean, when he rose up from that

seat it was just like this monster. He was just this giant of a man.

He stood up and he starts talking about the history of English law and the Magna Carta and all this crazy stuff. And the other guy interrupted Foreman and said that's not true or something like that. Foreman turned on this guy, at this table. He turns on this guy and leans over and says "Would you please be quiet? I didn't interrupt you when you were speaking". And the guy kind of like said yes sir, yes sir.

It was a magnificent speech. He was another one of those guys. Foreman was a guy that was just a spellbinder, just magical watching somebody like that talk. And of course, I am not that kind of guy. But anyway, I did get to see some of the great lawyers.

Editor's Note: [Click this link to read a short Wikipedia article on Percy Foreman.](#)

BAUMGARTNER: What were some other cases? Civil cases. What was the case you mentioned that took place around 1950?

DOGGETT: The civil rights case that was brought by Arizona Fleming.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah, that civil rights case. You mentioned it last time, but then we didn't pursue it very much.

DOGGETT: What you had is you had the Jaybird Party, which was formed after the Civil War, and the Jaybird Party would nominate only white. If you were black, you couldn't belong to the Jaybird Party. Maybe from 1865 to the 1880s, there were a lot of Republicans elected and they controlled local government. So, for about a little over 20 years, the Republicans were in control. They were white Republicans, and there were black Republicans.

So, the Republicans were winning the elections. And whenever this Jaybird Woodpecker War took place, around 1889, there was a lot of friction between the old guard whites and the black, white coalition that was electing everybody. A number got murdered. And I don't remember all the details of the Jaybird Woodpecker War. 1889, I think, and after that, they formed the Jaybird Party, and they took control of county politics.

Editor's Note: [Click this link to read a short article on the Jaybird Woodpecker War in the online Handbook of Texas.](#)

BAUMGARTNER: For 60 years, right? But then the Supreme Court, in the early 1950's, they outlawed the Jaybirds.

DOGGETT: Before they outlawed this because of this case, what the Supreme Court used to do is say, well, these political parties are just private clubs like the Rotary Club or the Boy Scouts or whatever, and so we don't have any business outlawing them. That's the way they used to cop out and allow this discrimination to occur. But eventually they changed that, and they said you can't do that. That's not right. It's a de facto government organization almost. So that's when they ruled against the Jaybirds in Fort Bend County.

Editor's Note: [Click this link to read a short article on Arizona Fleming and Supreme Court case against Jaybird Democratic Party.](#)

BAUMGARTNER: So, you were born about that time, when Hilmar first became Mayor.

DOGGETT: I was born in 1950.

BAUMGARTNER: That was the same time frame that he was appointed. So, did you have many dealings with Hilmar over the following 60 years, the remarkable period that he served as Mayor of Richmond.

DOGGETT: Not too much. My dad was elected to the Richmond City Commission during that period, in 1962, I think.

BAUMGARTNER: And the Commission was comprised of three people.

DOGGETT: Yeah, it was three people. It was Hilmar and two commissioners which included my dad.

BAUMGARTNER: So, you were just a kid then. You were twelve?

DOGGETT: Yeah, I was twelve years old, and for my dad it was a big deal. And one year everybody was watching the election returns and all that. My dad apparently went over to Judge Moore's house, where the Museum is now, the big white house in Richmond. That was where Hilmar's father lived. So, my Daddy went over to Judge Moore's. We called him Judge Moore, went over to the house to celebrate the election, and apparently, he had a little bit too much whiskey to drink. And there used to be a stop sign right by the house. And a Richmond police officer found my dad at the stop sign right by our house, passed out in the car and brought him on in the house. I was already asleep. I didn't see that, but I was told about it later. Anyway, my dad was on the Richmond Commission when he died in 64.

I went to a few of the Commission meetings and Hilmar would say something. What Daddy would always say was, Well, Hilmar I'm for whatever you say [laughter]. Anyway, I think Hilmar did a pretty good job of running the city. He was anti zoning. He believed that if you own property, you could do whatever you want to with it. Very strong on that. It was after he died that the city passed Richmond's zoning ordinance. Hilmar probably never would have let that happen. But anyway, which is interesting, Hilmar was a conservative man, but he was a lifelong Democrat. He never became a Republican.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, really? I didn't know that. But he just ran the city the way he saw it. It wasn't Democratic or Republican.

DOGGETT: The only time I had any actual dealings as a lawyer with the Richmond Commission is one time, they wanted to annex part of Riveredge Drive. I had a friend that lived down there, and he didn't want to be annexed.

BAUMGARTNER: On the eastern side of the river there, you're talking about.

DOGGETT: And actually, the way the law was back then is they could not annex you if you didn't want to be annexed. So, I went before the Commission and I said, my friend Howard here does not want to be annexed. And Hilmar said, well, you don't want to be annexed, we're not going to annex you. That was it.

BAUMGARTNER: Hilmar became my hero. This will be a ten second story. I was watching

TV one night way back when, and Judd McIlvain was doing a series on Channel 2 News. So, he comes out on Channel 2 and interviews Hilmar about the wrong side of Mud Alley in Richmond and the illicit behavior that takes place there. He's trying to make a case for getting his name on the front page of the Houston Chronicle. And Hilmar just sits there, and McIlvain keeps insulting Hilmar in a subtle way, and Hilmar doesn't respond. Hilmar doesn't say a word. Finally, McIlvain says, you don't like me, do you? And Hilmar looked up and simply said, No. [laughter] That's the only word he spoke in the interview, and he became my most respected man in political office.

Over the years, Who have been key members of the legal community in West Fort Bend County?

DOGGETT: You know what? There are so many lawyers here now.

BAUMGARTNER: But I'm talking about 30, 40 years ago or whatever.

DOGGETT: Don Schwartz, Neil Kalinowski. They were with George Roane and then the last year or two, George came over to practice out of my office. Logene Foster, he's not a west end guy, but was a powerhouse for years. He officed out of Sugar Land. He was at the courthouse all the time trying cases. A guy named Bob Stallings. He's a damn good lawyer. And he had private practice for a long time. He went to work at the DA's office. There was also Andrew Briscoe, Jim Baker, and Clyde Kennelly in Rosenberg. Bill Meitzen was quite a character, really good guy. Aubrey Leverage out of East Bernard was a longtime lawyer out there. Marty Carden. He practiced family law. Lester and Allen Van Slyke.

BAUMGARTNER: What are some civic activities that you have been involved in? Did you know Franklin Schodek?

DOGGETT: Yeah, I worked with him on a book called "The Richmond Pictorial".

BAUMGARTNER: I read that, a pictorial history of Richmond; it's a very good book.

DOGGETT: Franklin and I and Virginia Scarborough and Janice Ransom Prowell and

Martha Ansel Payton and others. We worked on that book, and basically people brought us all these great old photographs. And I was tasked with like writing captions for a lot of the photographs. The women, Virginia Scarborough, Mrs. Prowell, and Mrs. Payton would start telling stories about Richmond, old Richmond, things that people did. And I would say, you have got to put that in the book. No, we're not putting that. We're taking that to our grave. We're never going to tell that. And I'd say it would make it so interesting and if you didn't want you could not put anything in there that would embarrass anybody. But if you could put some stories in there, that would make this book come to life.

I was on the Morton Cemetery Association board with Richard Joseph and we would talk about the Cemetery, and he was another great storyteller. Oh, my God. that guy, he was so funny.

BAUMGARTNER: What did the Cemetery Association do?

Editor's Note: Morton Cemetery in Richmond, established 1825, is said to be one of the oldest historical cemeteries in the State of Texas. Many of the early Texas settlers and their families are buried in the Morton Cemetery. [Click this link to visit the association's Web site.](#)

DOGGETT: It is a perpetual cemetery. We have a board of directors and we set policy. We hire and fire caregivers. We manage a certain percentage of the money that comes in and goes into the perpetual care fund, which we invest, and it generates income and we use that to keep it at the Cemetery for maintenance. And it's pretty well managed. And we set the policy for how much the lots are going to sell for and make the rules and all that kind of stuff. So, I've been on it for a long time, 20 or 30 years, something like that. And I always thought I was going to be buried out there. My mother, my father, my grandparents on my father's side, and two brothers are buried in the Doggett family plot. There's room for maybe a couple more. I've got a younger brother, Bolton, who is not married and he may be buried there. But I always figured I'd buy a plot. My little family would be buried out there somewhere near where the rest of my family is buried. Well, Meredith and I got to talking about it. Merideth's first husband, Bill Dozier, and her children were killed in a car accident and are buried in the Fulshear Cemetery because that's where Bill was from.

So, I said, well, what do you want to do? I want to be out there with Bill and the kids. I want my ashes put out there with Bill and the kids. She said, what are you going to do? I said, well I want to be with you, but I want to be buried in Richmond. She said, no, you're going

to have to go to Fulshear. So, I said, okay. So now I'll be buried in Fulshear.

My son, Kasey, when he heard about it, he said, No, your dad can't be buried out there. He needs to be buried in Richmond. He's a Richmond guy. I said, yeah, well, I'm going to be buried in Fulshear. It won't matter. I love visiting old cemeteries. I have visited a lot of them. Eventually old cemeteries are just being wiped out. And after a couple of generations, nobody gives a damn.

BAUMGARTNER: Life goes on.

DOGGETT: And you go look at a tombstone or somebody like my grandfather who died in the 1918 flu epidemic, who was 32 years old. I mean, he died 32 years before I was born, and all the people that knew him are dead. So, I have no idea what the guy was like. So, I look at a tombstone, but I would love to know. I think this is where people make mistakes. They ought to write something down about everybody in the family to do a family history and catch something about their personality, good, bad, or ugly. I think it would make for some interesting reading, but most people don't do it.

BAUMGARTNER: That's a good point. I've been doing oral history now for not that long, six or seven years, which is pretty interesting to me. And I've talked to a lot of people that are interesting, but I need to do something for my family history and put something in about my mom and dad and my grandmother and granddad and those that I know and remember.

DOGGETT: Without it, you don't have any sense of who a person was. I would like to say this about court cases. There's a lot going on up at the courthouse now, and I would encourage anybody, if you've got some free time, to go up there and ask around and find out what's going on and go in there and watch some of those cases. They're really interesting, and you'll get a better feel for what goes on up there.

BAUMGARTNER: What kind of cases? Criminal or civil...?

DOGGETT: Either one. If you know a lawyer, you can ask around and ask some lawyer friend and say, hey, let me know. And some big famous lawyers coming up there and you

could tip them off and say, hey, this would be a great guy to go watch or just go watch a little trial or something like that. They're pretty interesting.

BAUMGARTNER: Okay. That's a good thought. Well, thank you. It's been fun. I enjoyed learning some things about the community.

DOGGETT: I enjoyed it too.

-end of interview-