

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Sue Brinkman Alston**

Interview Date: 02/29/2008

Interviewer: Diane L. Ware

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Project / Group: DeWalt Heritage Project
Recorded at Ms. Alston's home

20 Pages



This oral history is copyrighted 2014, 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

This file may not be modified or changed in any way without contacting 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

WARE: Let's start with some basic biographical information. When and where were you born?

ALSTON: I was born in Houston, Memorial Hospital, on September 2, 1935.

WARE: Tell me a little bit about your dad.

ALSTON: My dad was Walter August Brinkman and he was from Kansas. My father was born December 24, 1903. Born in Missouri but from Kansas, and came down here and worked for the Houston Press as the circulation manager. At the time that he worked for the Press, the circulation was the biggest it had ever been or has been since. He had gone to Kansas State University for two or three years, and then ran out of money and couldn't go any further. He was from a German family. He was 100% German.

WARE: Tell me a little bit about your mother.

ALSTON: My mother, Lillie Veal Dew Brinkman, was born in Northsworthy Hospital in Houston on October 20, 1909.

WARE: Tell me how your parents met.

ALSTON: On a blind date. I used to remember who introduced them, but I can't now.

WARE: Where were they married?

ALSTON: Saint Paul's chapel. I THINK they were the first couple to marry in their chapel.

WARE: Saint Paul's Methodist Church in Houston?

ALSTON: Yes On Main Street.

WARE: How long did they know each other before they got married?

ALSTON: Probably a couple of years. I have their old love letters but I have never felt like I should read them! So I haven't. I could probably figure it out if I opened the letters.

WARE: (chuckling) I don't think they'd mind if you read them. Tell me about your brothers.

ALSTON: I have an older brother, Hugh. His name is Hugh Louis, named for both of his grandfathers. And he was born September 2, 1932, on the same day as I. And then I have a younger brother, Walter August Brinkman, Junior, who was born on February 2, 1948. He is a dentist and lives in McGregor.

WARE: I have seen the name, W. A. Brinkman as a school board member in Missouri City. Do you remember anything about your father serving on the school board in Missouri City?

ALSTON: Yes, he served on the school board for as long as I can remember. He took the place of Uncle George Dew when Uncle George died, so that was in the '30s. And he was on it for years and years and years--probably thirty-something.

WARE: Did he ever discuss what he did with the school board?

ALSTON: No. He would have considered that confidential and he would have never squeaked a BIT about it.

WARE: Tell me about the Brinkman Egg Farm.

ALSTON: Well, Daddy, for years, ranched and I think he grew some cotton. And he also had rice fields. And then he got into the egg business. He had caged eggs of the highest quality. He had 35,000 chickens or so. (laughs) Then he sold all his cattle. He was also on the board of First National Bank of Stafford for years. And then it became Texas Commerce. He did that besides the school board. He was always involved in some kind of civic something.

WARE: Let's go back to the egg farm. When did your mom and dad move back out to the DeWalt area?

ALSTON: It was after I was married, and I was married in 1955. Probably 1957 or 1958.

WARE: Where did you grow up?

ALSTON: I grew up on Bull Lane in Missouri City. It was the corner of Bull Lane and 5th Street. The Roanes lived on the South side of 5th street and we lived on the corner. The Whatleys lived across from the Roanes. The Colemans lived across from our house, but we didn't have street numbers then.

WARE: (chuckling) Where did your grandmother, Mrs. Mantie Veal Dew, live, during your childhood?

ALSTON: She lived on Bissonnet, 2223 Bissonnet in Houston. And then, in about 1940 I think, she moved in with my mother and father. She was going to move to Missouri City so that she'd be closer to them because by then her husband had died. They were going to build her a little cottage, and THEN she had a stroke while they were building it. So they just put another story on it and then we all moved in together. She had to be taken care of.

WARE: So after 1940, she lived on Bull Lane with all of you. What things do you remember about your grandmother?

ALSTON: I remember she didn't like me very well because I always tore things up! (laughs) And I lost her favorite little ring that her father had given her. I was playing in the ditch--you know, they used to have those great big deep ditches on 5th Street--and there STILL are some deep ditches. We would get in our washtubs and we would float down those ditches. (laughs) And I would dangle my hands over and I had that ring on, and it just washed away. That poor woman looked in the ditch and dug around in that ditch for YEARS because she was so upset about that. And I remember her baby-sitting me at the house on Bissonnet. That would have been when I was about two years old 1937-38. And I can remember that the milkman came to her house and brought milk, and he also brought an orange drink, that I just LOVED. And I can remember the glasses that I drank it out of. I have some of them. Some little pink crystal glasses.

WARE: What did the ring look like?

ALSTON: It looked like a wedding band, about 1/4" wide and it was just a gold band. And it's somewhere in the mud, probably down a few feet by now--at the corner of 5th and Bull Lane.

WARE: Some day, somebody will be excavating and this will explain exactly what that ring is. You said that your father had 35,000 chickens on the egg farm. Do you know about how many people worked on the egg farm?

ALSTON: Lee Padilla and his sons Jose and Zeke worked there. He also had Mr. Woodrow Trlicek and his children worked along with him. So there were two families.

WARE: Did the Trliceks live on the farm, also?

ALSTON: They lived on the farm. I can't remember if the Padilla family lived there too.

WARE: Who lived in the Dew Plantation House during your childhood?

ALSTON: Aunt Jessie Dew Agnew.



WARE: Tell me what you remember about your aunt, Jessie Dew.

ALSTON: She was kind of a large woman, not fat, but just big in stature. She had a number of servants and she was kind of cross (laughs) but don't put that in there!

WARE: You can take that out. (laughing)

ALSTON: She was my grandfather Hugh's full sister. The daddy, T.T. Dew, married twice. The first wife had eight children and died. I would have died too, if I'd had eight children! (laughs) And then he married again and had four more. She was one of the first group. I think it was Aunt Lillie and then Hugh, and then maybe Jessie. I'd have to look on the charts. She lived in the house all my life that I can remember, I didn't really know her that closely. I went to her house a lot but I really didn't know her very well. I DO remember that it was either her parrot or somebody else's--somebody had a parrot in the back yard, in a cage. A homemade cage about four feet by three feet. This parrot FASCINATED me--this green parrot. Of course they live to be real old. It could have been Uncle George's bird.

WARE: And how tall was the cage?

ALSTON: It was taller than I was, as a child, so I would say it was five or six feet tall. It was a pretty good-sized cage. It was up on legs.

WARE: When you went to the Dew Plantation House, do you remember any of the servant's names?

ALSTON: One of them was Viney. She was the cook.

WARE: Do you remember when Jessie Dew Agnew died?

ALSTON: Yes. I don't remember the year, but I have it on some of my records. She had heart trouble and she apparently had gotten up to get a breath--she must have been having trouble breathing--and she raised the window in her bedroom to get some fresh air, and when she did, she must have passed out and fallen out of the two-story bedroom. She died from the fall.

WARE: Describe your impressions of the Dew House. What do you remember about it when you were child, besides the parrot in the back yard. (chuckles)

ALSTON: It fascinated me. I LOVED it. I loved the stairway; that always fascinated me. I loved going up and down the stairway, and there was a bathroom that had black fixtures and I had NEVER seen anything like that before! But I think that was an add-on. I don't think that was original. The bathroom that had the black fixtures was probably the one upstairs.

WARE: How often or DID the extended Dew family gather?

ALSTON: Well, when Uncle George was alive, they gathered at least once a year, I THINK on New Year's Eve. And I just remember going there a whole lot. But I think that Uncle George liked to have parties more than anybody else. But Jessie threw a lot of parties too.

WARE: Describe what you remember about some of the parties that you went to.

ALSTON: Just being a lot of people and I knew most all of them, because they were local people. There were some people from Houston I didn't know. Always had a lot of wonderful food that probably Viney cooked. She made GREAT rolls. And I don't remember specifically what kind of food. I just remember there being a lot of food.

WARE: Were there a lot of other children there?

ALSTON: I don't remember many children. Some. Barbara Roane was often there. She would be my contemporary. Her parents and Jessie were good friends. Later my Muffie and June Moroney would be there, they are younger second cousins. And Alice Margaret and Billy Tom DeWalt who are Aunt Maggie's children. Aunt Maggie is a half-sister to Hugh. Those are the only children I remember. WAIT - I remember another one. Mary Perry Taylor was some kin to Willa Rue and Rusk Roane.

WARE: Tell me about interactions you had with your great-aunts and great-uncles.

ALSTON: Uncle George died when I was just a baby so I don't remember him. I have a doll that he gave me. I knew Aunt Ruth probably better than any of them. I knew Aunt Mae pretty well. She lived in Missouri City and she would have been one of the first eight children. So she would have been a whole sister. Aunt Ruth had a lot of parties. I always went to them. She did a LOT of work for the Cancer Society. She was in the Women's Club of Missouri City, and I was too. And we used to make Easter baskets, so I had a LOT of interaction with her. Not so much with Jessie, but some.

WARE: What was your aunt Ruth's personality like?

ALSTON: She was a 'get things done' person. Always involved and trying to do good things for people; especially people that had cancer.

WARE: Why do you think she was so interested in cancer?

ALSTON: She told me that her dad, Thomas Tristram Dew, had cancer. From what I understood it was something on the nose or around. Something that must have been skin cancer that must have gone deep.

WARE: Tell me about your aunt Mae's personality.

ALSTON: (laughing) Aunt Mae was a pistol! She was always VERY kind to me and nice to me, but she was very prim and proper. She and Jessie didn't joke very much.

WARE: More serious?

ALSTON: More serious, yes. I got along with them fine, but I just didn't have much in common with them. More so with Aunt Ruth, because she and I did a lot of civic things together.

WARE: Are there any relatives other than your parents that you consider a role model?

ALSTON: My grandmother, I think, had Alzheimer's. Of course they didn't call it that, then. She got to be very, very senile when I was a little bitty thing. I don't remember her very much. And my grandfather had died, but I'd heard SO many good things about him that I think he was a role model.

WARE: Who did you hear the stories from, about your grandfather?

ALSTON: A lot of different people. There is a lady who lived in Austin and I went to the University of Texas, so I saw Ellen Carroll Shelly a lot. And she would tell me a lot of things because she grew up in that area, and they were all good friends. In fact, one of the ladies in one of those pictures at Mineral Wells, was her mother. Her name was Ernestine Carroll.

WARE: So when you went to the University of Texas, you had contact with Ellen?

ALSTON: I went to see her all the time. I just LOVED her. And she used to tell me stories. I remember that she said what a gracious man my grandfather was and how everybody loved him. And then I heard stories about him riding horseback down in the river bottom, to doctor on some old black people or old white people, too poor to pay. He was a physician. And they would give him a chicken or an egg or whatever they had. So I just thought that if anybody would do that it was really a good thing. And he must have been a very generous person. So I think he was a role model even though he died before I was born, just by his reputation. My mother, I could tell, really loved her daddy. I don't know too many stories, but they would just say nice things about him.

WARE: Do you remember anything specific your mother said about her parents?

ALSTON: I remember she said that one time, she must have been talking about the kids of today, and she said when she was little, she didn't know there was any alternative to obeying your parents. Although I think she gave them a run for their money (laughing).

WARE: Did she ever share with you, things that she did that were naughty, as a little child?

ALSTON: No, she didn't share with me 'what', she just shared with me that she got spanked.

WARE: What was that Dew Brothers Plantation area like when you were a child? What was your impression of the area?

ALSTON: It was just vacant land. No crops that I remember. Kind of shack-like houses.

WARE: Do you remember anything about the trains? Did they seem to run a lot? Did you see them frequently?

ALSTON: Yeah. I remember the trains. I remember I saw the ones that were up on Main Street (Highway 90) but I also remember the ones in DeWalt. I remember there being an old store there, an old mercantile store that was owned by Dew Bros. There were some trains that ran around there.

WARE: Do you think you could have seen the store from the Dew Plantation House?

ALSTON: Probably. In its original location.

WARE: Do you think it was the Dew and Hutchins Store?

ALSTON: Yes The Hutchins lived next door.

WARE: Tell me about the Hutchins.

ALSTON: Well, all I remember about this is that I knew them, I guess from the day I was born. I remember going to their house and I remember they had an old black daschund dog that I thought was the FINEST dog I had ever seen! (laughing) Mrs. Hutchins was real friendly and talkative. She would talk to you and you could tell she really loved you and was really interested in you. She was a real sweet lady.

WARE: Do you remember much about Mr. Hutchins?

ALSTON: I remember he was a really friendly old man and he, like she, was always happy to see you. Loved talking to you and they were just comfortable to be around. Very gracious.

WARE: Their children were probably grown by then?

ALSTON: Must have been because I didn't remember them. There was George Stokes, one son, and two daughters, Charlene and Robbie Louise.

WARE: Do you remember if the Hutchins had cows or horses?

ALSTON: I don't think so. I think he was maybe the postmaster. I think his name must have been George or John. I'm sure we can find them on a census or something.

WARE: Right. Do you remember how old you would be when you visited the Hutchins?

ALSTON: We visited them a lot! We visited them when they lived in Barker. I don't remember specifically visiting them in their house that was next to the Dew Plantation. That house, (The Halsey Tucker home in later years) is still there, incidentally. I remember going to see them in Barker.

WARE: About what year did you start going to Barker to see them?

ALSTON: I don't remember, but I was a little child, so probably in the '40s.

WARE: When you went to see the Hutchins in Barker, was the store still in DeWalt?

ALSTON: I think so. I think there are some old pictures of that store.

WARE: I would LOVE to figure that out.

ALSTON: I don't know that I have them but I think I've seen them in one of my Missouri City history books, or one of those books.

WARE: Okay. When did you move away from Bull Lane and why?

ALSTON: I got married in 1955 that's why---and that's when, too!

WARE: (chuckles) And tell me about your husband.

ALSTON: His name was Robert Bailey Alston. He went to the University of Texas. We met at Laura Dorman's Dance Studio in Houston because my mother and Mary True Myatt's mother thought that we needed to take ballroom dancing. So that's how we met. He went to the University of Texas, graduated as a chemist and worked for Texaco in their research lab. We got married November 25, 1955.

WARE: And where did you live after you got married?

ALSTON: The first year we were married, we lived in Austin, because he was finishing school. Then we moved to Bellaire and then we lived in Houston. He was from West University.

WARE: So you never moved back to the Missouri City area?

ALSTON: Yeah, I did, in 1970 or 1971 but I'm not positive about the year.

WARE: Why did you move back to Missouri City?

ALSTON: My mother and daddy gave us a piece of land so we could move there and send our kids to school in the Fort Bend School District.

WARE: Where was the piece of land that they gave you?

ALSTON: Right next to theirs, in DeWalt, on Oyster Creek. Close to the chicken farm.

WARE: Describe the land that you had there.

ALSTON: It was flat, it backed up to the creek. It was just FLAT! (laughing)

WARE: (laughing) It's ALL flat out there! About how many acres was it?

ALSTON: I think that had been part of the Dew land and I think there were 125 acres, something like that, in the beginning. Quail Valley bought some of it and what was left was probably 20-25 acres.

WARE: Let me back up just a little bit. You went to Laura Dorman's Dance Studio, with Mary True Myatt? She was someone that you grew up with in Houston?

ALSTON: No, in Missouri City. She was True and Gertrude Myatt's daughter, and we grew up from the time she was three and I was four. They lived across, on Bull Lane, in the very beginning. Kind of down from Ma and Pa Coleman. And then they moved down off of Highway 6, WAY back in the woods, almost. Close to where the DeWalt Family Cemetery is, where the Roane's and all them are buried. It was back in there. I don't even remember what the name of the road was.

WARE: When you were a child, did your family raise a vegetable garden?

ALSTON: I don't think so.

WARE: What type of chickens did your dad raise?

ALSTON: I have NO idea! They were white. (laughs)

WARE: You went to Missouri City schools. How did you get there?

ALSTON: By that time we had moved up on Bull Lane and I walked.

WARE: How many years did you go to Missouri City schools?

ALSTON: The whole twelve years.

WARE: And what were your favorite classes?

ALSTON: Science. Definitely not math! English was good. I loved history. Mrs. Frances King was our teacher and she'd been ALL over the world. She just made it come alive. So I would say history and science.

WARE: Did you participate in any sports or other activities?

ALSTON: NOT sports! (laughing) I did drama club and annual staff. I can give you some of my yearbooks and you can see.

WARE: That's exactly my next question. Could I look in some of those yearbooks? What did you do for medical care or medical emergencies when you were growing up?

ALSTON: We went to Sugar Land, to Doctor Slaughter. Isn't that a horrible name for a doctor?!

WARE: Oh, it is! Carlos Slaughter.

ALSTON: Carlos A. Slaughter.

WARE: Yes! Doctor Deatherage lived in Missouri City. I guess he wasn't still a doctor at that point.

ALSTON: I think he must not have been. I remember the name and I remember Dorothy, his daughter, and I knew the other daughter, Kelley, but I don't remember Doctor and Mrs. Deatherage. I just remember that they lived there.

WARE: There were obviously churches in your community. Tell me about church activities when you were growing up.

ALSTON: My parents didn't go to church. My neighbor down on Bull Lane, who I grew up with were JoAnn Bledsoe, Mary True Myatt, and Shirley Borden. Shirley didn't come until I think Junior High. JoAnn's mother, Beulah Bledsoe, played the piano for Missouri City Baptist Church. And they would pick me up and take me to Sunday School.

WARE: What did children do when they weren't in school? School vacations or summer vacations?

ALSTON: We climbed trees. Mary True had a GREAT tree in front of her house, 2234 Adams. Which, incidentally, was MY great-grandparents' house. My grandfather, Hugh, built it for his parents. And it's still there. And they lived there, part of the time. And we played dolls. Played dolls until I was fifteen but the main thing I was doing with them was sewing clothes. I liked to sew, and I liked to design dresses. I had no one to instruct me in sewing but I figured it out and what I liked to do was make dresses.

WARE: Your mother didn't sew?

ALSTON: No. But HER mother did.



Curtains made by Ms. Alston for the renovated Dew House in Kitty Hollow Park

WARE: What did you major in at the University of Texas?

ALSTON: At first I majored in Natural Science Education and then I switched to Home Economics. I still got my science, but more practical.

WARE: What do you recall about any special community activities when you were growing up?

ALSTON: One thing that I remember was during World War II, we all got together and rolled bandages. I don't remember what the kids did. I remember rolling bandages. And I have often thought how unsanitary that was! Surely they had some way that they disinfected those things after everybody had been touching them! And they'd have BIG Red Cross parties, making money for the Red Cross. I remember those. And a lot of them were at my house, on Bull Lane. And my daddy was an air raid warden. Because he was a farmer, they wouldn't allow him to join the army. I can remember him going up and down the street, blowing that whistle. And we HAVE that whistle, somewhere, but I don't know whether Walter has it or whether it's gotten lost in recent years. I remember it was a VERY STRANGE sounding whistle. If you heard it, you knew what it was and you needed to turn out all your lights.

WARE: Did your mother entertain very much?

ALSTON: Some. Not a whole bunch. I remember she had those Red Cross parties and she always let me have a lot of kids over and we would dance, because our house was really large, on Bull Lane. It had HUGE rooms.

We would dance and have a BIG party and dance. I think the thing that my mother liked to do, because she had to cook three times a day--Daddy being a farmer and a rancher, he would come home for lunch--I think she didn't much want to cook. Except holidays. He would take her out to eat real often.

WARE: Where would they go out to eat?

ALSTON: They would go to Gaido's up on Main Street and Kaphan's and Christie's. Christie's had a place on Main Street, back in those days. I don't know that it's still there.

WARE: Did your mother have much help at the house?

ALSTON: Yes.

WARE: Who were some of the people that helped?

ALSTON: When I came home from the hospital, she had a lady named Letha Simpson and Letha's still alive. She's 103. I'm going to find that information about the servants of Aunt Jessie's from her.

WARE: Where does Letha live?

ALSTON: She lives on 5th Street, in Missouri City, by herself!

WARE: I would LOVE to get her address and maybe talk to her myself, too. That would be a wonderful thing!

ALSTON: Sometimes she had more than one maid. I remember one named Beulah Minter. We had to get rid of her because she stole everything in sight! But she was a HARD worker. And then there was Lillie Brown, Lillie died, bless her heart. And there was also Lorene Martin, who also died.

WARE: And Lorene was in Missouri City, also?

ALSTON: I guess it's really Stafford.

WARE: How close would you say you stayed with Letha?

ALSTON: Oh, every time I go home, I go to see her. I call her sometimes, in between.

WARE: Would you consider her like family?

ALSTON: Yeah. Like a mother.

WARE: Did Letha ever marry and have her own children?

ALSTON: She had one son, who died fairly young. I say fairly young--I guess he was in his 60s, maybe. I didn't think she was going to survive that. She loved that Frank. But I don't know--this is not for the book or whatever--but a lot of times the black girls got pregnant and didn't have husbands. So she raised Frank herself. And they were VERY close. Then after he was grown, he went to California. She still has grandchildren that she goes to see, as recently as six months ago. Still traveling by herself on the train. All of his kids live out there, except one lives in Austin, and she comes down a lot. Checks on her.

WARE: Did you ever hear about or experience any ghostly activity in the Dew House?

ALSTON: No, but I've heard the story. But Uncle Frank was murdered in his apartment in Houston.

WARE: I didn't know that!

ALSTON: Oh yeah. The youngest Dew boy, from the second wife, was named Frank-- well, he might not have been the youngest. Uncle Walter might have been the youngest. I'll have to look on my genealogical records. I think a woman--there was some jealousy or something going on-- and he went to the door of his apartment and she shot him. Killed him.

WARE: Kind of a lover's quarrel kind of thing?

ALSTON: Probably. Letha remembers.

WARE: Do you know about what year that was?

ALSTON: I think it was 1942. I'm not sure

WARE: I know you don't know this because you probably didn't experience it, but do you remember the woman's name, so I could look up the court records?

ALSTON: I'm not sure. Let me look in those papers. Lala will know.

WARE: You just called Letha a nickname. What did you just call her?

ALSTON: Lala. She will know.

WARE: Do you remember watching any of the renovations or additions they put on to the Dew House?

ALSTON: When I remember it, it already had them. Except for that back sunroom. I remember that that was added on, but I don't remember what year.

WARE: Do you remember if there was a house right there on the property that some of the servants lived in?

ALSTON: I think there was.

WARE: How did you feel when you heard that the Dew House might be demolished?

ALSTON: Well, I HATED it. I could understand that she might want to get rid of it, you know, but it was just a place I loved and I would have loved to have had it. But as it turned out, Muffie inherited Aunt Jessie Agnew's things.

WARE: Tell me about the farewell celebration that you attended, in August of 2005.

ALSTON: I just remember going there, and I took a lot of pictures of the house, because it had been MANY, many years since I had been in the house. And I was unhappy to find out that somebody had broken a piece of glass in the upstairs bedroom, which had supposedly come from the Belvedere Plantation. It was etched glass.

WARE: You don't remember how it got broken?

ALSTON: No. That's my guess that that's where it came from, I don't know if there are any records of that. It was just a REALLY OLD, old door and it was my guess that it came from the Belvedere Plantation. It had a glass pane in it. It may have been an exterior door that they just used on the interior.

WARE: On the other side of that story, how did you feel about the Dew House being moved?

ALSTON: I was pleased that it was not going to be torn down. And that people would be able to enjoy it. When they left and moved to Houston so my mother could go to Kincaid, they left it for Uncle George and Uncle Frank and Aunt Ruth and Aunt Jessie. And they all lived there for a while. And then Aunt Ruth married again. I think her first husband died.

WARE: That was Mr. Lalley, right?

ALSTON: That was the second. I think her first husband was Carl Calloway.

WARE: So all of them lived there together in the house?

ALSTON: For a while. And then Uncle Frank got murdered, Uncle Walter moved to Houston and Aunt Ruth got married.

WARE: Aunt Jessie was already married, correct?

ALSTON: I think she was a widow by then. I think that's why they left the house to them. My mother said that they left everything-- lock stock and barrel-- the furniture, the crystal, the silver, everything, for them. And then Muffie inherited it. She had a big garage sale because she had inherited Aunt Mae's stuff, her own mother had died, and Aunt Jessie died. In something like TWO YEARS she inherited ALL those estates so she had a big garage sale. My mother went down and bought some of her mother's stuff.

WARE: So that's how your mother got the pieces that you inherited! She bought them back at the garage sale.

ALSTON: Well, some of them. Some of the china and silver, some little stuff that she bought back.

WARE: This is our first interview, but I want to ask you if there is anything that I haven't asked you about, that you remember.

ALSTON: Besides the parrot? (laughs)

WARE: (laughing) Did the parrot talk?

ALSTON: Yeah!

WARE: What did it say?

ALSTON: Polly want a cracker! (both laughing)

I don't really remember Uncle Frank getting killed, I mean I don't remember the hub-bub that must have caused. I just heard about it but I don't remember WHEN I heard about it.

WARE: A murder might not be the thing people would talk about in front of a seven year old child.

ALSTON: Yeah. Probably not. I know that Uncle Frank went to the University of Texas and I know that nobody was allowed to say anything bad about him because Aunt Ruth would have thrown a fit. But they had to bring him home from the University of Texas because he was spending too much money (laughs) and living a real high-heeled life, and WILD. And Uncle George and my grandfather didn't like that.

WARE: So, did he ever finish college?

ALSTON: I don't think so. I think he got brought home.

WARE: He and Aunt Ruth were very close, it sounds like.

ALSTON: I think so. He was a very charming and good-looking man. Very charming from what I understand. I remember seeing him, but I don't remember really anything about him. But I have heard the tales about the ghost, and I don't know whether that was supposed to be HIS ghost or whose ghost that was. What have you heard about it? I'd like to know! (laughs)

Hugh Saunders Dew and Uncle George Dew looked a lot alike in younger years. Not so much as they got older. Uncle Henry looked a little bit different from them. His hair was REAL black, and Uncle Walter looked totally different. Of course, he had a different mother. But Uncle George and my grandfather looked a lot alike in their younger pictures. In fact, I thought that one of Uncle George's pictures was my grandfather. I'm glad my mother told me the difference and we were able to identify that. Before mother died I thought about finding out who some of those people were, in those pictures that I had. And I was really thankful that I did that. Because I'd already gotten into genealogy so I knew what kind of things I needed to know.

WARE: Your mother was an only child. Did your parents lose children?

ALSTON: I don't know. She never said. I know they were VERY late in having her. I think they had been married twelve years or something before she came along.

WARE: For such a large family, it doesn't seem like there are that many Dew heirs.

ALSTON: No, there's not. Aunt Ruth had no children, Aunt Jessie had no children, Aunt Mae had one and lost a baby boy. Lillie, the oldest one, died not too long after she was married. She had no children. Hugh had one, May had one.

George never married. Frank never had any children. Maggie had two, a boy and a girl. And Jessie Robinson Moroney, that was Aunt May's child plus the one that's buried in Morton Cemetery in the Dew plot. I don't remember whether he was a year or less than a year--but somewhere around that age. I think Frank married, once but he never had any children. Uncle Walter didn't marry until he was an old man.

End of Interview

Addendum to the 1st Oral History Interview.

WARE: Sue, I'd like you to tell me why you believe that your father sold off his cattle and started the Brinkman egg farm.

ALSTON: I think that cage eggs was an idea that was coming of age at that time. I think he saw that he could make a better living out of that. I have heard him say that he thought it would be something that our older brother could do.

WARE: Had Hugh already had his breakdown?

ALSTON: Yeah.

WARE: Also, you discussed a little bit about how your grandfather, Hugh Saunders Dew, had an automobile accident, a fatal automobile accident. Would you tell me a few of the details about that?

ALSTON: He was out in Missouri City and my grandmother and mother were there too. And they must have been in separate cars because my grandmother and mother went on home. And Aunt Mae was always a little bit sick and he stayed to doctor her, to make her feel better. And he had the accident on the way home.

WARE: Did he regularly make house calls or was that an exception because it was his sister?

ALSTON: No, I think he regularly made them. He went on horseback down to the Brazos River bottom to doctor on people. I know that. I remember my mother telling me that. And, so, I think he did it regularly. But I think that he didn't get paid except you know, maybe in a chicken or a dozen eggs or whatever. And so he had to go into other kinds of businesses, besides just being a doctor. I think he just doctored for the fun of it.

WARE: It's different now-a-days, isn't it!

ALSTON: Yeah! (chuckles)

WARE: Okay, I'm going to thank you for adding this addendum to your oral history.