

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*

Interviewees: **Whichard, T. Marshall, Jr. & Mary M. Whichard**

Interview Date: 07/06/2016

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: Missouri City High School, Missouri City, Texas

17 Pages



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*Transcript*

GOODSILL: This is an interview focusing on Missouri City High School. Both of you attended that school. Mary, let's start with you. Tell us what year you were born and when you started school.

WHICHARD, M: I was born in Tennessee, in June 1936 and my parents moved to Texas when I was about six months old. We first lived in Richmond. My daddy, True Myatt, was one of the early rice farmers in that area. When I was three or four years old, we moved to Missouri City. My mother's name was Mary Gertrude Williams Myatt. My father moved his operation to the Missouri City area. It wasn't incorporated at that time. The first farm that I remember was on the edge of Quail Valley. Then later, the Hermann Hospital Estate.

My first memory of the gym was during World War II. The ladies would make bandages for the Red Cross there. I remember Mother going to the gym to do that. I didn't go with her.

GOODSILL: What did they make the bandages out of?

WHICHARD, M: Leftover cloth. I remember everybody was saving things. I don't remember mother taking any material from our house, but I do remember her going. The gym has always been a community center. That's one example of how they used it for the community.

I remember I was in a play in the first grade. I was Sonja Henie (Norwegian Olympic figure skater and movie star). It might have been the second grade. Sue Dinges was in that play as well. It was presented on the stage of the gym.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read Sue Reese Dinges' interview on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=42788>

GOODSILL: Describe what the gym looked like.

WHICHARD, M: When you go in the front doors, the area right at the entrance was the cafeteria for the school. Most of the time, I took my lunch from home, but sometimes I ate the cafeteria food. The kitchen was off to the side. When I was in high school, we sold ice cream and popsicles to make money for the prom, which the junior class put on for the seniors. This was the foyer area. They used to put tables out in that area when they served the food. If we took our lunch, often we would sit in the bleachers.

GOODSILL: Was it a light and airy place or was it closed in and dark?

WHICHARD, M: I don't remember it being closed in and dark. They opened the windows in the gym and the doors were in the front, so it was light. It was never dark. There must have been good airflow because I don't remember suffering from the heat.

WHICHARD, T: They had circulating fans and cross ventilation with the windows. The windows could be opened from the top or from the bottom.

WHICHARD, M: The only dark place was under the stage. That's where the band room was. The band was small. Mr. Scarcella was my first band director. He started me playing an instrument in the fourth or fifth grade, I think. I played the cornet, and he started teaching me piano when I was in the third or fourth grade. He was very dear to me. I loved Mr. Scarcella. He was a very kind man. I remember that just before he died, I went to the hospital to visit him. We had very good relationships with all of the teachers, with a few exceptions. He was a very outstanding man.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read Leonard Leon Scarcella's interview, Mr. Scarcella's son, on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=41519>

GOODSILL: What do you think of the quality of the education?

WHICHARD, M: I thought it was good. I didn't know differently. I started there in the first grade, at age six, and graduated from high school there. We didn't have kindergarten. So, I started in 1941.

GOODSILL: The war didn't disrupt schooling?

WHICHARD, M: Oh, I'm sure it did. I was very wrapped up in the war because we listened to the radio at home all the time. We were all aware of the war. My friend, Sue Brinkman Alston's, parents had several parties to raise money for the war effort. All the parents would go to the parties.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read Sue Brinkman Alston's interview on this website at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=30520>

WHICHARD, T: Explain to her about your daddy's farm and why you were so immersed in the war.

WHICHARD, M: In the latter part of the war, when they brought the German prisoners to the old Fort Bend County fairgrounds in Rosenberg, daddy would use these men for labor. He would take his trucks to pick them up and take them out to the rice farm. He was still in the area now known as Quail Valley. They would come with what Daddy called an old sandwich – two pieces of bread and a piece of meat. He said, "These men can't work out here doing this intense labor with that kind of food." So, my mother prepared meals for them every day. I would go down with her to the farm. She fixed turkey and ham. She fixed lamb one day, and I remember they were so excited to have lamb! When they were released after the war, they gave me a badminton set and something else. They wrote to us for several years and then finally we lost contact with them. Daddy was very impressed with these men. They caught snakes, and made belts and billfolds. I remember them repairing a watch. I don't remember if it was mother's or daddy's watch. One of the men was a watchmaker.

GOODSILL: Did the prisoners get paid for their work?

WHICHARD, M: I'm not sure if they were given a stipend or not. I doubt they would have been paid.

Everything was rationed. I remember going down to Sugar Land with our coupon book. We had to tell them what we wanted, and everything was lined up. We had chickens and had to raise our own food in order to eat well. We would pick out chicken feed, and I got to choose the sacks because mother would later make me a dress out of that sack.

Back to our education, I thought it was fine. I remember my teachers – they all made a big impression on me. Mrs. Scarcella was my second-grade teacher. I don't know if Mrs. Scarcella had a Catholic education or not, but she rapped my knuckles a time or two with a ruler. I pulled a few tricks on her and got caught, but she was a good teacher. Nanette Robinson taught three or four generations. My third-grade teacher was Mrs. Lepley. She left shortly after I was in third grade. I can't recall the name of my fourth-grade teacher, but she had been in the school system for quite some time. In the fifth grade, we had a teacher who drove an old two-seater car. It must have been a Ford of some type. It had wooden spokes. This woman was mean.

We had twins in our class, Bobby and Billy Caldwell, and she was mean to them. She was mean to me and maybe some others. Billy and Bobby's mother would come and sit in the classroom all day because the teacher would pick on the kids. I was one of the ones she picked on.

She would call on me to stand up and read, and invariably, the minute she said my name, I would have a panic attack and lose my place. Then I would be sent to the blackboard. She would draw a circle on the blackboard, and I would have to put my nose in that circle. I would have to stand on my tiptoes until she told me I could go sit down. One day she grabbed me by a crocheted scarf my mother had made me. I thought that was the most beautiful thing on earth. I guess I had it around my head. She grabbed it around my neck and twisted it. I'll never forget her.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The spoked wheel was invented to allow the construction of lighter and swifter vehicles. The earliest known examples are in the context of the *Sintashta* culture, dating to ca. 2000 BC. Soon after this, horse cultures of the Caucasus region used horse-drawn spoked-wheel war chariots for the greater part of three centuries. They moved deep into the Greek peninsula where they joined with the existing Mediterranean peoples to give rise, eventually, to classical Greece after the breaking of Minoan dominance and consolidations led by pre-classical Sparta and Athens. Celtic chariots introduced an iron rim around the wheel in the 1st millennium BC. The spoked wheel was in continued use without major modification until the 1870s, when wire wheels and rubber tires were invented. With the invention of the modern automobile, wooden spoked wheels continued to be used into the 1930's but not by all manufacturers.

Her big project was silkworms and if you were favored, you got to take those silkworms home over the weekends. I wanted to take those silkworms home very much. I got to take them home over the summer. I put them in the refrigerator, and my daddy threw them away. I was scared to death to go back to school. But I think my class was the last one she taught, and she was gone when we went back. Sue Dinges may have been picked on, too. She remembers that woman very well.

When we were in elementary school, they had a belt line. I asked J. C. Court if he had ever run the belt line. He said he had to run it twice. I was in elementary school then, and we had some sort of bleachers at the football field. They would turn school out, and all the elementary kids would go sit in the bleachers and watch the boys run through the belt line. I don't know if they had other students or teachers in the belt line. But they would take their belts off and hit the kids with the belts as they ran through the line. This was a punishment for whatever Mr. Patton felt you had done wrong. It was very abusive. I got sent to the office a couple of times for infractions. But other than that, I think all the teachers were outstanding. They did the best they could.

GOODSILL: Did the school go to the 12th grade?

WHICHARD, M: Yes.

GOODSILL: Do you remember your graduation?

WHICHARD, M: Very well.

GOODSILL: Was it in the gym?

WHICHARD, M: All the graduation ceremonies were in the gym – both the baccalaureate and the commencement. I was in the band all through high school. The band would gather out on the steps of the gym. We had a boy in our class who was failing, but no one knew it, including him. He was there in his cap and gown, ready to go into the gym and the teacher told him he couldn't go. Our senior sponsor was Miss Prater. She is another teacher I felt was not the best. She was the English literature teacher. They had a problem getting a science teacher at mid-term, and they transferred her to the science department. I was very deficient in science, and everyone who had her for science was deficient.

In fact, in our senior year, she wasn't there, and we didn't have a substitute teacher. I don't remember teacher's missing class very often. In fact, that's the only time I can recall a teacher not being in the classroom. We were doing an experiment and had an explosion. Whatever we did landed in her fish tank and killed all the fish. I think it rattled everyone, and that may have been the last time she led the class.

Back to the graduation. Miss Prater told the student he couldn't graduate. He was there, his family was there, and he didn't know he couldn't graduate. Our class as a whole said, "We're not going in if he doesn't go in with us. There will be no graduation." She didn't know what to do. The band was playing the processional music, and we just stood there. Finally, she let him go in. He went on to college and to be successful in Fort Bend County. His name was Bob Davis. We told her we didn't want a class speaker; we would handle our own graduation, and we did. This was 1954.

GOODSILL: Marshall, where did you come in to this story?

WHICHARD, T: My family moved here in 1949 when I was in the 7th grade. I went to Missouri City from the 7th grade through my sophomore year, and then ended up moving to Idabel, Oklahoma, where I graduated from Gray High School. Missouri City became home for me during the time I spent there. Mary was my girlfriend in high school, but she didn't know it.



WHICHARD, M: I'll tell you a story about that. My teacher, Fern Stallings, could motivate anybody. She let us comb her hair in class, but I'll tell you one thing, we learned a lot from her. She was a good teacher. We were a small community, and the teachers knew most of the families. She came by the house one day because she wanted to talk to my mother. A young boy had moved to the area and was in my class, and I was being mean to him. She was telling on me to my mother! It was Marshall!

Marshall and another boy came into our class on the same day. At that time, Marshall was 6 ft. 4, and he weighed over 200 pounds. Vince Petronella was maybe 4' ft. 10". They walked into Mrs. Munson's Algebra class together, and we all just started laughing at them.

GOODSILL: Did you become friends with Vince?

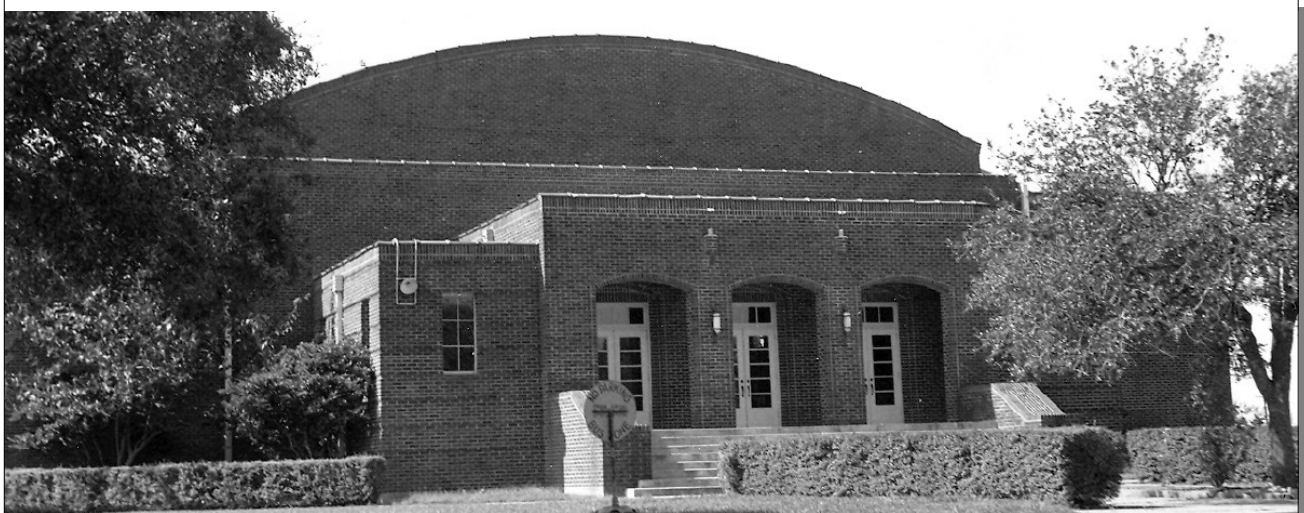
WHICHARD, T: Oh yes. Vince was friends with everybody. We had such a great time at Missouri City. That gym was the center of life for the student body. If you had free time, you congregated in the gym. You'd get some crackers or a sandwich and eat in the bleachers, and sit there and visit until it was time to go back to class. It was THE center of life in Missouri City.

WHICHARD, M: We had a juke box in there. We'd take our shoes off because you were in big trouble if you got on the gym floor with your shoes on. We'd dance in our socks. We had a dance after every home football game. We had the prom as well as our Christmas dance there. It was the center of life for the kids.

One year they had square dance lessons, and the community came and took lessons. Not just people in the school, but people in the community came and took lessons. The parents would come to the prom and the Christmas dance, sit in the bleachers, and watch the girls with their dresses. We had a big Christmas tree every year. John Ferro and I had a discussion about whose responsibility it was to get that Christmas tree. Apparently, the boys in the junior class would get it. It was decorated and in the middle of the gym.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read Frank John Ferro's interview on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=47556>

After the Christmas dance, kids in the community would come and Santa Claus would be there. Candy was handed out to the kids and maybe gifts. I remember taking a neighbor boy, Dennis White, to see Santa Claus. They fought to keep the gym intact because it was the heartbeat of the students at Missouri City. Senior plays were held there, too.



*Former Missouri City Middle School gymnasium became a center of school and community socializing until the consolidation of the Missouri City and Sugar Land schools. It will be restored to its original art deco design with help from Fort Bend County.*  
--communityimpact.com, Nov. 30, 2016

WHICHARD, T: It was on that stage, in that gym, that everybody found out I couldn't sing! (laughter) I was in the school play, and the part called for me to sing. They had to rearrange the script a little bit.

GOODSILL: Were you in the band?

WHICHARD, T: No. I played football and basketball and ran track. We had a great time. Lawrence Elkins was a coach then. He went on to become the superintendent of Fort Bend ISD. This is Larry Rychlik and Bobby Davis, (looking at a picture) and Bobby Williams and Glen. There's Renfrow. I'm not in that picture.

GOODSILL: Are you in this picture? What number are you?

WHICHARD, T: I'm in there, but I have on my jacket.

GOODSILL: So, you are the tall guy in the middle!

WHICHARD, T: Back then, Lawrence Elkins was the head basketball coach and the assistant football coach. The deal was if you played football, it was mandatory you play basketball, because he didn't have that many basketball players. There's a funny story about that. I played center because I was so tall, and he was adamant about defense. I'd run up and down that court three or four times, and then I held back under our basket because I was tired. Coach said, "Whichard, what are you doing? I said, "Protecting the back court, Coach." He said, "Get your butt down there, boy. I'll show you back court!"

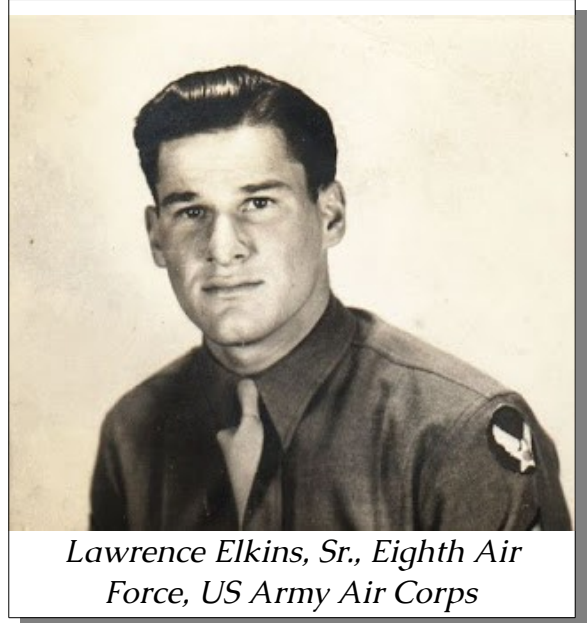


EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the Lee Elkins Legrand interview on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=42511> and the interview of Lawrence Newton Elkins on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=41919>. Lee and Lawrence are coach Elkins' daughter and son.

WHICHARD, M: Lawrence Elkins was a bombardier during World War II, and he was the community hero. Everybody loved Lawrence.

GOODSILL: It must have been hard to go to Oklahoma your junior year, Marshall.

WHICHARD, T: I went up there to work that summer. My dad was in partnership with a dentist out of Houston who owned a lot of land and the local blacksmith shop up there. I worked on the farm and in the blacksmith shop to make some money, and I got to know some of the guys up there. I worked out with them to get into shape, and shortly before it was time for me to go back to school, the coach, Howard Palmer, came to see us. He said, "If you'll move on up here, I'll get you a scholarship." So, I said, "Okay." It was a lot of fun. They put me up in the local hotel for a while until they could find a place for me. I ended up living with the owner of the hotel and his wife. They were really nice people. It turned out really well. Then I came back here and Mary and I got married.



I was at A&M and Mary was going to the University of Texas. Then I joined the Marine Corps and came back on leave, on the way to Santa Ana, California, because I'd been transferred out there. I told her I had decided I was going to marry her, and she said okay. So, we got married in two weeks. Her mother put the wedding together. Her daddy wasn't real happy about it. But we went on to California. We were married in July, and her mother was tragically killed in a car wreck that November. They had gone up to Tennessee to visit. Mary came back here for a while and took care of her daddy, and then came back to California. Our oldest son was born in California. I got out of the Marine Corps in 1958 and came home.

GOODSILL: You were in the Korean Conflict?

WHICHARD, T: Yes.

So that gym was part and parcel of everyday life for the students and the community. I'll never forget this. T. V. Abercrombie was the FFA teacher. If you were a boy in high school, it didn't matter what else you did, you needed to be in FFA. He was a great teacher who related to all the kids. I remember he used to give swats with a wood saw. He'd make you bend over and that would stretch your jeans real tight. He'd double that saw back and let it go. It didn't sting until you straightened up. When you straightened up, you'd wish you hadn't! (laughing)

He bought a Sears & Roebuck car. He was real proud of it. It was a small car, and back then you didn't have a small car. Four or five boys went out between classes and picked that car up and set it up on the landing of the gym, on the stairway going in. When he came out that evening, his car was sitting right up here. He was LIVID! Finally, those same guys, who were peeking around the corner, came out and put the car back where they got it. They didn't damage the car at all. He was mad as a hornet over that!

EDITOR'S NOTE: The car model was a "Henry J", actually made by the Kaiser-Frazer Corporation. To alleviate some of his sales issues, Mr. Kaiser turned to Sears, Roebuck and Co., and proposed to sell the rebadged "Henry J" under the already-established Sears automotive accessory line "Allstate". The "Allstate" was so terrible that it was canned after only two years, with just over 2,500 cars produced.

WHICHARD, M: I mentioned the teacher who was less than stellar, but we had some outstanding teachers. We had a history teacher, Mrs. King, who had lived in China for several years. Her husband was a chemist at Imperial Sugar, and she taught history. She was an outstanding teacher, and I don't think there was one better. She made it come alive. She was partial to the boys. They got all kinds of favors. I was in her last period class one day, and an apple core came sailing in through the transom. I know there was a transom on the door, but it seemed like the windows opened to the hall, and we had cross-ventilation. That apple core came sailing in, and she jumped up. She wasn't tall, and she opened that door, looked down the hall, and came back in laughing. "That was just C. M."

WHICHARD, T: C. M. was a real joker. I learned more from her in her history class than I learned in a lot of classes.

WHICHARD, M: In college, I was totally prepared for history, but totally unprepared for the sciences. Math was good.

WHICHARD, T: She always taught us not to waste our time trying to memorize dates, but to understand the history and the year it occurred. What came first and second and third. If you needed the date, you could go to the library and find it real easily. One of her extra credit assignments was to go to the library and look up some information. You'd turn it in, she'd give you a grade, and then you were exempt from the final. I was always exempt from her finals.

WHICHARD, M: You were a boy, too.

GOODSILL: What year were you born, Marshall?

WHICHARD, T: 1936.

GOODSILL: So you two weren't in the same class.

WHICHARD, M: I don't remember classes together. Maybe that Algebra class.

WHICHARD, T.M.: I think we were in Mrs. Haygood's class together, and we were in English class together.

WHICHARD, M: I was in band, and I knew I was going to college, so I took major subjects. Because I was in the band, I was never in a P. E. (physical education) class with my peers, but with the younger girls. So, Rose Morris, who was head of girls' P. E., Health, and volleyball, let me go in and work with the younger girls. I got to lead the younger girls in their exercises. I was the most unathletic girl in the school! I remember taking them out for P. E. class to play softball. I didn't know the first thing about softball, but I was sitting out on that field watching them!

GOODSILL: Were you two dating in high school?

WHICHARD, M: That was our freshman and sophomore years. We dated some during one of the summers off and on.

WHICHARD, T: In high school, I was always working in the summer and after school and weekends. If you wanted to have a date, you could always find a job and make a few dollars – enough to go out on a date.

WHICHARD, M: We went out on Sundays after he had worked at the dirt factory in Stafford. That's what we called it. It's still there, but I don't remember the name.

WHICHARD, T: I used to work in the summers, weekends and hot days for Mr. Dinges out at the Blue Ridge Oil Field as a roustabout. I think I was 15 when I started working for him. I made more money than a lot of men did. It was fantastic! I thought I was rich. If a boy would work, Mr. Dinges would give him a job. His sons started working in the oil field when they were 10-11 years old.

GOODSILL: Do you know anything about those oil fields and how they impacted this community?

WHICHARD, T: No, I don't.

WHICHARD, M: It was a boom town at one time. There was a bank there. I think it had bottomed out by the time we were older. I don't know how the school was funded. We had a womanless wedding there one time to raise money for the band. Daddy was the ring bearer. But all of that went to pay for school functions, not the school itself.

GOODSILL: Were you here when the consolidation of Sugar Land and Missouri City Schools happened?

WHICHARD, M: We had just moved back. In fact, we were one of the first ones to tour the new school. I think someone said our name was second or third down the list.

GOODSILL: Were you in favor of the consolidation?

WHICHARD, T: No.

WHICHARD, M: I don't think my family was in favor of it. Our school was part of our community, and we were always in competition with Sugar Land. When any of us get together, it's just like we were back in school, whether they were below us or ahead of us. A lot of us still meet every once in a while.

WHICHARD, T: You have to go back and understand the thinking back then. Sugar Land was that smelly place down the road as far as Missouri City was concerned. If the wind was just right, you couldn't stand it. It was terrible. It was worse than a paper mill.

Our biggest competition, athletically, was Sugar Land. We beat them in football four years straight, I think. And that was when Kenneth Hall was down there. He was "All-World" and rightly so. He was a tremendous football player, but they couldn't beat us. It was a competitive thing, and it was a community thing as much for us as it was for Sugar Land. To merge those schools and put it down in Stafford, just didn't set well.

Back then Missouri City was the bedroom community. They didn't want commerce in Missouri City. The only commercial project that was allowed was W-K-M. The reason the city fathers agreed to that was W-K-M agreed to furnish all the fire equipment and have their fire crews man the fire engine during working hours. The Missouri City Volunteer Fire Department would man it after working hours. That's how they paid their taxes.

GOODSILL: What do you think the net effect of merging the schools was on the community?

WHICHARD, T: I think a lot of the interest in school activities lessened over the years because it wasn't a community school. A lot of the older inhabitants of Missouri City were used to going to the Friday night football games because it was just right down there behind the gym. They didn't go to Sugar Land for the games. The school stopped being the center of activities and wasn't used for community projects.

GOODSILL: Other things were changing, too, such as the freeway being completed.

WHICHARD, M: Missouri City incorporated and had a falling out with Stafford over boundaries. Sugar Land had already incorporated. Everything just changed.

WHICHARD, T: Missouri City was a bedroom community. Stafford was the commerce center. If you couldn't get it in Stafford, you'd go into Houston. That's just the way it worked. I can remember the Sugar Land Express freight train coming through here. It was a local freight that came through here late at night. You didn't have that many trains come through, so you always knew when that late night express came through.

NOTE: The train, the Southern Pacific Golden Gate Limited, was best known locally as the *Midnight Special*. The song, "*The Midnight Special*", was a traditional folk song popularized by Leadbelly (Huddie William Ledbetter – b/d1889-1949) upon his release from Sugar Land prison in Texas, where he could hear the *Midnight Special* come through. In the song, the light of the train gives the inmates hope — if it shines on them they take it as a sign they will soon go free.

The Sugar Land Express referred to Kenneth Hall, a remarkable football player in the 1950's at Sugar Land High School. The 1974 movie, *The Sugarland Express*, starring Goldie Hawn, misspelled the city name.

See Kenneth Hall's interview on the FBC Historical Commission Web Site at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=40325>

We didn't start calling it the Sugar Land Express until that movie came out. I remember hearing that whistle blowing at night. It was so quiet you could hear that train coming for miles. I don't remember anybody ever complaining about it. It was just part of life.

The center of Missouri City used to be where the convenience store was located, and it was also the post office. That was where the Greyhound bus stopped. Many times, you caught the Greyhound or the Trailways bus out of Houston to come home. You knew what the schedule was. When you got off the bus, you could walk home. So that was our transportation. It was a fun time growing up and a fun time establishing some personal history. You learned an awful lot in the community. You learned as much from the founders of the community as you learned in school. People were willing to take the time to teach you. There was much more interaction between the generations then than now.

WHICHARD, M: You knew everyone and they looked out for you. You knew you had to behave. I wouldn't trade anything for having grown up in Missouri City. I wouldn't change anything about my education. I'm just sorry my boys didn't have it.

WHICHARD, T: I worked for Shirley Borden's daddy for some period of time. He had a feed store, and I worked for him when he needed some help. If a boy wanted to work, he could get a job.

GOODSILL: Did most of the boys work?

WHICHARD, T: Yes. Everybody worked to make their own money. If you wanted a car, you made your own money, and you bought it. If you wanted to go on a trip, make the money and go.

GOODSILL: What kind of work did your daddy do Marshall?

WHICHARD, T: He was in construction. I was born in California. They traveled all over for jobs. That's how we located in Missouri City. My parents were happy living here.

GOODSILL: When you moved to Missouri City, what kind of work was he doing then? Maybe in Houston?

WHICHARD, T: Yes, Houston and the surrounding area. During that time, this area was very progressive and was really building up. Houston was just getting started after World War II, and oil was still big.



Sugar Land came about in its present form because of Gerald Hines. The work that he did, politically, made it possible to build the levee system that has been protecting this area all these years.

GOODSILL: Tell me about Missouri City and flooding. Did it have to have levees built to prevent flooding?

WHICHARD, M: No. I don't ever remember having floods even after we had some terrific hurricanes. I remember one really bad storm, and we went into Houston to stay at Eloise Addams' house. All the streets were flooded, and we had a hard time getting home. I remember my daddy raising all kinds of cane, cursing, and carrying on because nothing happened out here, but we were flooded in Houston! Now I guess they have levees around.

WHICHARD, T: It's part of the county drainage system now. I do know there was a big drought in the 1950s because we had so many cattle and farmers in the area. I can remember in that drought, ranchers cutting down trees along the river bottom so the cattle could graze on the moss. That depressed the economy. It was similar to the recent drought we had, where ranchers had to sell off their herds, culling them out to reduce the size of the herd so they could feed them. It was the same way back in the 1950s.

Before all this levee system went in, the Brazos River would get out of its banks. Where the University of Houston is now, it's on higher ground. I've seen the water right up to the bottom of that.

WHICHARD, M: I remember when I was a child, Sartartia Dairy was there, and every once in a while, they would sell ice cream. We would go down and get ice cream. I remember it flooding out there.

GOODSILL: Just a month ago it was flooded where Sartaria used to be, along Highway 90.

WHICHARD, M: I was 6, 7, or 8 years old when that flood happened. I'm really happy about the gym and what you all are doing. I'm very thankful.

GOODSILL: I believe it's the county and Fort Bend ISD who are spearheading that effort.

Let me ask you one final question. Do you think that the quality of your education or being "held" by the community the way you were, helped develop you into the person you became, the career you eventually chose?

WHICHARD, M: No. I think I had as good an education, with some exceptions. I went on to college, and I didn't have any problems. I didn't know how to study, but I don't think many young people do. I wouldn't change a thing other than get rid of a couple of teachers.

I looked forward to going to school every day. I participated in everything that I could. I don't think I lacked for a thing.

WHICHARD, T: I think it was the interpersonal relationships in the community that led to helping young people form their character, establish their ideals, and understand what their ideals were all about. It was really great out here. The adult population, without exception, always had time for you. If you needed something, if you wanted something, if you wanted to talk, they would sit down and talk to you, just like we're talking here.

In high school, I worked for Mr. Dinges out in the oil field, Mr. Borden down at his feed store, Mr. McBlaine out here in Missouri City, taking care of his yard and pool. If you wanted to make \$5 to go on a date, you could just walk out the door. You didn't have to go very far and somebody would hire you to do something. Of maybe they would just give you \$5 and tell you to come back next week. There was always something.

WHICHARD, M: At the time that I was graduating, women weren't geared toward a profession. So, when I was in high school, I wasn't encouraged or pushed to develop some kind of plan for a profession. You became a teacher or a nurse; or you got married. I knew I didn't want to be a teacher. Daddy said I would not be a nurse. And that was it. I went to college, and I just went.

WHICHARD, T: I saved her! (laughter)

WHICHARD, M: Yes, and after I got married, then I went to work!

WHICHARD, T: This month we will have been married 60 years. We raised three boys, and we have three grandsons and one granddaughter, and now we have three great-grandsons.

GOODSILL: Wonderful! I really like the feeling that you gave me about the community. Thank you so much.

WHICHARD, M: It means a lot to me. I'm just sorry the young people now do not have it, that they can't run free as we did. It was a good place to be.

Interview ends