

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Delbert Wendt**

Interview Date: 06/28/2016

Interviewer: Karl Baumgartner

Transcriber: Sylvia Vacek

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17 Pages



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Transcript

BAUMGARTNER: Today is June 28, 2016. My name is Karl Baumgartner and I am interviewing Mr. Delbert Wendt at the Needville City Hall, Needville, Texas. This interview is being conducted by the Fort Bend County Historical Commission Oral History Project. By way of introduction, Mr. Wendt was born and raised in this area and has been a Needville civic leader for many years. Following his business career, Mr. Wendt has served as Mayor of Needville for the last thirteen years.

Delbert, what is your full legal name?

WENDT: My full name is Delbert Wendt. I always tell people that my middle name is "n m n" that stands for "no middle name". [both laughing].

BAUMGARTNER: What is your date of birth?

WENDT: I was born December 25th, 1934.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, you were a Christmas baby?

WENDT: Yes. I was born in Brenham but my folks were living here already. My mother came from a family of twelve children and they all went home for Christmas. My grandfather lived in a huge, big house on the outside of Brenham. Everybody came home for a Christmas celebration and it just so happened I was born at that time.

BAUMGARTNER: How about that. That was good tidings. You were born there but was your family living there?

WENDT: They were living here in the Needville area.

BAUMGARTNER: How did your family get to Texas? Who was the first generation? Were your mom and dad born here?

WENDT: Yes, sir. My grandparents on both my mother's side and my father's side were born in Germany. My dad was Edwin Wendt and my mother was Rosa Blome Wendt.

BAUMGARTNER: When did your mom and dad's parents come here from Germany?

WENDT: Late 1800's, right around the turn of the century. I have a 103-year-old aunt, Clara Narramore, my dad's sister, who lives in Rosenberg. She ran Mr. Ralph's Dress Shop for a long time and she worked for Etta Mae's Dress Shop. She is still very independent.

BAUMGARTNER: So your grandparents moved here from Germany? Did they move to Fort Bend County?

WENDT: My grandfather on the Wendt side did move down here but my grandfather on my mother's side, William Blome, Sr., stayed in the Brenham area. Like I said he had twelve children and there were lots of aunts and uncles there. On the Wendt side my grandfather had two girls and two boys, but one of the boys died in infancy. Aunt Clara is still here.

BAUMGARTNER: When did your mom and dad get married?

WENDT: 1932, then I was born in 1934.

BAUMGARTNER: They were living here in Fort Bend County by then?

WENDT: Yes, sir. My dad was a farmer. Around here you farmed cotton, corn and milo. Back in those days you farmed with mules. I can remember the first tractor my dad got. It was a John Deere with lug wheels but I grew up helping with mules. We had mules that pulled our implements. You would plant with them and cultivate and harvest with them. You had a planter just like you have these days but instead of a tractor you had a mule pull it.

BAUMGARTNER: It was a different era. Did you have brothers that helped?

WENDT: I am the oldest. There were four boys and one girl.

BAUMGARTNER: Where did you farm?

WENDT: Well, my dad didn't own property, they rented it and they moved occasionally from one place to another, moving to a little bigger site and so forth. One of the first ones was down on what I call Snake Creek down off of Brinkmeyer Road.

BAUMGARTNER: Yes, that ends up emptying into the San Bernard River.

WENDT: They moved off of Williams School Road, Bushnell Road, different locations. My mother died in the seventies and my dad didn't farm too much after that. My youngest brother was a farmer and he lived with Dad.

Like I said the first John Deere my dad had was that tractor with the lug wheels. I can remember the first cotton picker was a one-row cotton picker that you hired to pick your cotton, one row at a time. Now they have twelve-row cotton pickers! [both laughing].

BAUMGARTNER: What were your chores as a boy?

WENDT: I was the oldest and every morning and every night my job was to take care of the hogs. You fed the hogs in the morning and night. The next brother milked the cows, and the next had to do the chickens, and so on.

BAUMGARTNER: So you did that for how long when you were a little kid?

WENDT: All the way through high school. My senior year in high school, between junior and senior year, I worked across the street at the grocery store called Farmers Market, which was owned by Buddy Otto. I worked from 7:30 in the morning until 8:00 at night for \$7.00 a day.

At the grocery store they sold feed, and in those days it was not the fifty-pound sacks you find now, they sold hundred-pound sacks. They also bought eggs. The farmers would bring eggs in and you had to check each egg, what they called "candle them." I had to hold each egg over a light bulb in the back to make sure the eggs were not fertile already.

BAUMGARTNER: To make sure the chicks hadn't started. So you were a pretty stout farm boy?



*Kenneth Bryce "Buddy" Otto,
owned Farmer's Market in
Needville, Texas in 1953.*

WENDT: Yes, sir. There were two of us who worked there. Back then your feed sacks and flour sacks were in print and women would come in and they would want a certain kind because they made their clothes out of the sacks and one sack would not be enough. They would say, "I need that one on the bottom," and there could be six piles on top of it and you had to get it out of there. That's the old saying: we were poor and didn't know it. On the farm you raise your chickens, your hogs for bacon and ham, you butcher a calf, you raise your potatoes and you canned it or you put it up in lard.

BAUMGARTNER: Yep. Canned beets, green beans and different vegetables were kept underneath the house during the summer because it was a little bit cooler.

WENDT: That is where you kept your potatoes.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah, potatoes in a bushel basket. I was taught how to run a garden but I've lost those skills [both laughing].

WENDT: It has gotten to where that part is easier now because you have mechanical equipment to do things. Things are a whole lot different. We didn't have electricity until I was in the eighth grade; we used coal oil lamps or kerosene lamps. You go out to the well and get a bucket of water, you had it in the house and everyone drank out of it. You had one dipper; everybody drank out of the same dipper. Nowadays that's always a no-no. They say everyone will get sick.

BAUMGARTNER: What are the names of your brothers and sister?

WENDT: Well, I am the oldest. I am Delbert, the next brother is Edgar, my next brother is Ralph, my sister, Rose Marie, came in there, and Stubby. His name is Ernest, his nickname was Buddy and now he is Stubby [both laughing]. He has had some tough health issues. He had a heart attack and a stroke, and now leases out his bar over off Highway 36. He has a power wheelchair that he runs from the house to his bar so he can keep up on his socializing. He mows his grass with the riding mower around the place and the house.

BAUMGARTNER: Wow. He is making the best of it. It's a blessing that he's maintained his mobility.

WENDT: I tell you what. He is doing things that I don't think I can do.

SCHOOL DAYS

BAUMGARTNER: Growing up, where did you go to school?

WENDT: Up until the seventh grade I went to a country school. There were seven small school districts: there was Foster School, Modena School, Williams School, Guy, Long Point, Marlow, and Concord.

BAUMGARTNER: They all had multiple grades?

WENDT: When I was in the sixth grade, I was the only one in the sixth and there was one boy in the seventh grade and we took classes together. I didn't know I was taking seventh grade classes and he was taking sixth grade classes. Needville High School consolidated in 1948 and Lamar did at the same time because Richmond had a high school and Rosenberg had a high school. All the satellite schools shut down in 1948 and we had to come to town. From then on Needville had an elementary school and a high school.

BAUMGARTNER: Elementary went to eighth grade?

WENDT: Seventh and eighth grades were at the high school. They had it all together.

BAUMGARTNER: That must have been exciting to have the schools all merged together.

WENDT: It was small enough that you knew the people that were juniors and seniors and you had all these country kids coming to town and, heck, they knew everyone anyway.

BAUMGARTNER: People today do not realize how much they missed out on having an experience like that. A lot of us used to go all the way from first grade through high school together. Then you compare it with my kids who attended high school with over 1,000 students. They had a few friends here and there but it wasn't the same.

WENDT: That's true. I graduated in 1953, in the second smallest class ever to graduate from Needville. There were twenty-seven in my graduating class! Needville High School started in 1948, so the first graduating class was in 1949 because you started in September, 1948. So I was in the fourth class that graduated from Needville High School.

BAUMGARTNER: How big is it now?

WENDT: They graduate 200 to 220. My youngest granddaughter graduated two years ago and they had 206 in her class.

BAUMGARTNER: What is the high school like now compared to the old days?

WENDT: You know the high school burned down some years ago and they built a new school. They have taken the old high school and put in some junior high and intermediate classes in there. I am told that the elementary school in town has 1,100 kids in the kindergarten through the fourth grade and that they are going to split Highway 36 and will take part of the elementary school from that side and move it up to the high school in a couple of vacant rooms that will be available.

BAUMGARTNER: How big is the high school? How many kids in the school?

WENDT: In 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade you are talking in the nine hundreds. The interscholastic classifications are 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A; as you get higher you jump into a higher classification. We are 4A.

BAUMGARTNER: I can't believe you are in 4A now.

WENDT: Yes, sir. We were Class B years ago because we were 3A and everyone moved up one, but B moved to Class A and Class A moved to 2A, and then 2 went to 3A [both laughing]. Lamar and Terry in Rosenberg were 4A schools when this all happened and now they are 5A.

BAUMGARTNER: Wow, nine hundred kids that is a pretty good-sized school now. Needville has always had a reputation for having good schools.

WENDT: Very much so. They have a very good school. Just last week Louis Ludwig passed away, an administrator when I was in school in 1953. He was a math teacher and my coach. He ended up retiring from Needville High School as Superintendent. He ran a very good school district. He was disciplined, didn't overdo it but the kids knew what was the way you had to do it and that was the way it was. When Mr. Ludwig retired, then Leroy Mische became superintendent. Leroy was the same way.

BAUMGARTNER: He was a coach, too?

WENDT: He was a coach, too, at one time. Now our Superintendent is Curtis Rhodes who graduated from Needville in 1983. He is the same age as my youngest daughter and he does a lot of stuff that is traditional and when people ask, "Why do you do it like that," he says, "That is the way we always have done it." They have a good administration over there at the school and we have a lot of teachers there that graduated from Needville High School. A lot of them.

BAUMGARTNER: That is great. What are the demographics of the school? Have the ethnic ratios evolved much over the years?

WENDT: The Hispanic sector has been increasing and African American has decreased. Even though I don't have anybody in high school since my youngest granddaughter graduated, I still go to volleyball games, basketball games and so forth. Three years ago I was sitting next to Curtis Rhodes and noticed that we had one just one African American on the basketball team. I asked how come we don't have more blacks on the basketball team and he said we didn't have that many in school, about twenty. There are more now, I believe, and the Hispanic numbers have increased.

BAUMGARTNER: Going back 40 or 50 years, how did the integration transition work out in Needville? Were there difficulties to it?

WENDT: We didn't have problems. My youngest son is 53. When he was in the second or third grade they integrated here in Needville. At one time the N. A. Allen School was a black school. When integration took place he went there for the first couple of years until they closed that school down and built a bigger elementary school. I was not aware of any integration difficulties. When they closed the N. A. Allen School the black teachers there had jobs if they wanted to stay. They could come into the school district and get started.

BAUMGARTNER: I was told that your wife passed away recently; I'm sorry.

WENDT: My wife passed away on May 10, 2015. She had a massive hemorrhage. We got married October 15, 1955. We were married fifty-nine and half years.

BAUMGARTNER: What was her name?

WENDT: Her name was Shirley Kageler. I was a senior in high school and she was a sophomore. She was head twirler and I was in the band. I graduated in 1953 and she graduated in 1955. I had to wait two years for her to get out of school to get married. She graduated in June and we got married in October. To make it easier we got married on her dad's birthday.

BAUMGARTNER: What are your kid's names?

WENDT: My children's names are Delbert C. Wendt, Tammy Miller, Pam Sullivan, Tommy W. Wendt, and Janet Raesner. I have nine grandchildren and thirteen great grandchildren!

BAUMGARTNER: Wow! What a blessing.

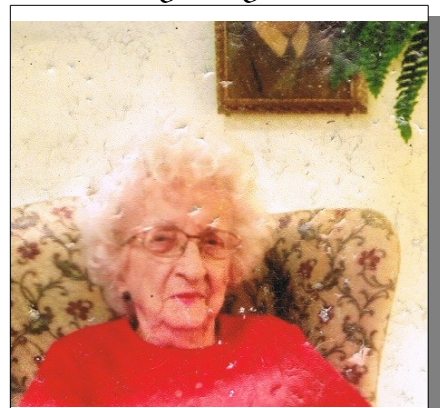
WENDT: I have pictures of Shirley and me when we were in the band. I also have a picture of my Aunt Clara on her 103rd birthday. She goes to St John's United Church of Christ on West Street.

CAREER

BAUMGARTNER: What did you do when you graduated?



Shirley Kegeler Wendt and Delbert were married for 59½ years. She passed in 2015.



Clara Narramore, Delbert's 103-year-old aunt.

WENDT: My parents could not afford college. I went to a business school called Durham Business School. The man in charge had a friend in the car business that told him that he needed a young man. The dealership wanted to start a finance company. The business school guy told him, "I got the guy for you." I didn't apply for the job but I got it.

At that time it was Hopmann Motor Company and we started a finance company called Gulf Coast Loans. What we did was finance the cars; he was a used car dealer and financed the cars that he sold. The dealer financed the cars but now it was a different company name so you didn't put it back to the dealer.

BAUMGARTNER: That was before Hopmann Chevrolet?

WENDT: Hopmann Motor Company turned into Hopmann Chevrolet. I worked there from November 1, 1953 for twenty years until Joe Grillo enticed me to come over and work for him. I set up his finance department, financing through GMAC, Universal, and CIT. His son Joe Junior later sold the dealership to Weisner out of Conroe and the dealership moved out to the Highway 59 freeway.

BAUMGARTNER: So you started with Grillo in 1973? That was a rough year to start a finance company. The prime rate, which had never hit double digits in U. S. history, went to 12 per cent. The oil embargo from OPEC began in 1974. The stock market fell from 1,000 to 450.

WENDT: Yes, interest rates were high and got higher. Back in those days I can remember getting my first IRA for my wife at 17.9% for a three year CD! 17.9% and I locked it in for three years.

BAUMGARTNER: Wow, isn't that amazing. Now you get .07%.

WENDT: You might get lucky and get .20% [both laughing].

BAUMGARTNER: So all the car dealers ended up going to the highway. I remember Joe Hubenak. Who did he buy out?

WENDT: He took the dealership from Hopmann.

BAUMGARTNER: Yes, and finally GM moved him out to FM 2218 which I always thought was a good example of a big manufacturer pushing a little dealer around and the dealer getting screwed.

WENDT: Hubenak went bankrupt and there was no dealer in Rosenberg for a year or so; that's when Grillo got the Chevrolet dealership. He applied for it and got it with Oldsmobile and also got the Dodge dealership when Perkins went out.

BAUMGARTNER: So how did you like the finance end of it?

WENDT: I liked it. You could always hear stories about the dealer pushing you around and I can honestly say that a customer that I financed would never say that I did them wrong. I disclosed everything. There were no directions to put your hand out here and sign below because you didn't read what was on top.

BAUMGARTNER: Did automotive finance evolve much when you were in the industry?

WENDT: Well, it was pretty basic at first and then finance companies came out with special rates. I remember the first special rate was 6.9 and people were coming to the dealership wanting to get that cheap interest rate on the car. Back in those days you had a fax machine where you faxed your credit apps to the finance company. I would go to work at four o'clock in the morning because we had so many credit apps to run to GMAC and they only had two fax machines and you had countless dealers trying to fax deals to them.

BAUMGARTNER: I had forgotten about those fax machines. Those were tedious.

WENDT: Well, you put one page in at a time and you had to sit there and watch and when that page ran out, you had to open it up to put the next one in because if you lost your phone line to the finance company somebody jumped in on you [both laughing].

BAUMGARTNER: You know we grumble because computers are such a pain but we sure take it for granted now compared to those days.

WENDT: Very much. I retired November 9, 2000. Forty-seven years and nine days, and I never once applied for the job. I was the finance manager, I knew the business, when the dealership changed I stayed.

BAUMGARTNER: That's a good career to be proud of. You don't see that kind of job stability very often.

NEEDVILLE CITY GOVERNMENT

BAUMGARTNER: So let's talk about Needville. You've been helping city management for a long time.

WENDT: I have been Mayor for thirteen years and I have been on the city council for 32 years, since 1984. I was elected in 1983. I have been mayor since 2003 and was elected all seven times with no opposition. My present term will be up in 2017.

BAUMGARTNER: Really, that is a great accomplishment. It shows satisfaction and respect by the people of Needville and it saved you from a tremendous pain in the neck of campaigning.

WENDT: I have never campaigned. I have never given out a card or put up a sign. I am not going to spend money for a job that doesn't pay anything [both laughing].

BAUMGARTNER: What is Needville's structure of government? In Texas isn't it dictated by population size?

WENDT: Yes, it's called a Home Rule Community form of government. If the population is under 5,000, as it is in Needville, a Home Rule form of government is called for in Texas. We have a mayor and five council people, a planning commission and an economic development commission. A home rule municipality cannot annex anybody unless the citizen petitions to come into the city limits. There is no option on that. So our potential for growth is hindered and we cannot go out and get the next piece of land and add it in.

BAUMGARTNER: The city of Richmond just went through that in the last year or two and changed their form of government.

WENDT: Yes, of course their population is over 5,000 so they were able to change their form of government and it allows them the power of annexation. But right now if I am in the city limits and you are two parcels of land over and you want to come into the city limits, the person in between us must give consent, the properties must be contiguous. The economic development commission is trying to get businesses to town. We have some vacant stores in town that have been vacant for some time; we are trying to entice businesses. We have some subdivisions which are building out and we are getting more people in town and we are in need of businesses.

BAUMGARTNER: How has Needville changed in the past thirty years?

WENDT: Let's go back further than that. At one time Needville had a movie theater that was owned by Cole's. We had a jewelry store, probably had six garages, and three, maybe four grocery stores. Back in 1948 when I was going to church confirmation, they started laying water lines here in Needville.

The water tower we have here and the piping that runs down Main Street and Church Street was used material that came from an Army base in Hitchcock, Texas. The water tower, which today is in need of repair, was put up in 1948, and the first public water supply started in 1948 or 1949.

BAUMGARTNER: Everybody had their individual water wells prior to that?

WENDT: Yes, sir. Probably back in 1948 or 1949 the population was six or seven hundred. The population has increased and our population right now is 2,823 according to the 2010 census which I think is wrong. You ask people now, "Where do you live," they say "I live in Needville," but they could be ten miles out of town and they consider that Needville. The community is not just what it is inside the city limits, it is much larger.

BAUMGARTNER: Is Ladd's grocery still here?

WENDT: It is Lowe's now. Mr. Stavino passed away and the girls that were left sold it to Lowe's. They are a chain and they are still at Ladd's location. I have had two informal meetings with the spokesman for HEB Grocery and I have asked him twice about putting a store here, but he said, "Your town is not big enough." I said, "Scott, the community is bigger than you think, if you live ten miles out of town, you are from Needville. I don't want one of those mega stores. Put in a small one here." There are Mexican restaurants everywhere. Right here across from City Hall we have Los Charros Mexican Restaurant; they do a lot of business there. We have Texas Burger, a Chinese restaurant that opened about six months ago, the 36 Bar & Grill, and of course we have Jay's Café which is just outside the city limits out there by the high school. Lifecheck Drug Store does a lot of business at the shopping center there, where Juanita Todd had her real estate business.

BAUMGARTNER: What is W. C. Todd up to these days?

WENDT: Building fences. W. T. Fence Company. He still plays in his band.

BAUMGARTNER: Right along with those Triumphs [both laughing].

WENDT: The Triumphs are still playing. There are a lot of people who still like to show up when they're playing. Pete Vacek told me that Boling High School is about to have their class reunion and they hired the Triumphs to come play.

BAUMGARTNER: Really. It must be Pete's 40th or 50th, or something like that.

WENDT: Something like that, but those Triumph guys don't play cheap either.

BAUMGARTNER: Really, that is amazing that the Triumphs have remained intact for all of these years. I moved here in 1973 and they were playing then, that's been 40 years.

WENDT: Don Drachenberg is in there, Tim Griffith is in there. I don't know if Tim's brother Tom still plays or not, and whether Teddy Mensik is still playing. I remember talking with you a couple of times back then. I knew Carl Lehman who worked with you.

BAUMGARTNER: Yes, Carl was in finance with CIT Financial. I hired him away from them and made him president of the corporation a few years later. It is really amazing how things have changed over a couple of generations.

FUTURE GROWTH

WENDT: Growth is coming this way. Rosenberg and Richmond have grown so much that growth is coming this way. They are working now on a four lane highway from Freeport. It has been happening since April of 2004! My first term as mayor was in 2003 and I attended meetings about the new highway in 2004. They have measured this road, and when I say measured, TXDOT would survey it and put stakes out in the farmers' fields which the farmers would then run over. That has been going on since 2004, twelve years ago. Now they have started sending letters out to the property owners on Highway 36 from here to West Columbia, telling them they want to take "X" amount of feet from the front of their property.

The growth is coming from the Houston, Sugar Land, Richmond, and Rosenberg areas. It has to grow because there is no more land the other way. For years and years this has been a farming community. Eventually as the older people pass away and their children don't want the farms they will be sold and all we are going to have is subdivisions. You will have concrete on the ground now where we grow your food. We have younger people today, I am talking about six or seven years old, who say when we need some food we go to the store and buy it. They do not even realize that they have to grow it. We get a lot of produce out of Mexico. That is good but it is not one hundred percent good because of the possibilities of disease and so forth there. It is just like getting your fish out of the Gulf. It is there but the government gets their hands in it and you have to make it healthy for the people. We have a planned subdivision on FM 360 just north of town on the right hand side where a young man has platted it and divided it into one hundred forty lots.

He got slowed down because he needed a left hand turn lane coming in from the Beasley area and he didn't have the money to put it in. The length of a left hand turn lane is determined by the speed limit that you have coming into it. Don Wenzel, when he was running Uicon, said you are looking at \$100,000 to \$150,000 to make a left hand turn lane. I understand the property is changing hands to somebody with deeper pockets, and now it is going to happen. We annexed that property about four years ago because the man wanted it put in the city limits. We have the water and sewer available on that side of the road. The growth is going to happen. It is probably going toward the high school on Hwy 36 and eventually going out of town to the west.

Of course, that is going to affect the school and I think it can be handled. I figure the population now is about 3,200. We send out some 1,200 water bills each month. We have enough water and storage capacity to double the size of Needville. In fact we already purchased land next to the present sewer plant and we can put another sewer plant in or enlarge the one we have. We have planned ahead.

BAUMGARTNER: You are not going to be impacted by all the water subsidence issues that are taking place in Richmond and Rosenberg? I know you are in the Subsidence District Category "B," a different category than Richmond and Rosenberg.

WENDT: I happen to be one of the members of the West Fort Bend County Water Authority and we are looking ahead, too, because your cities are acquiring surface water.

BAUMGARTNER: That Water Authority was the commission that Judge Bob Hebert recently put together?

WENDT: About three years ago, yes sir. I was appointed along with Roland Adamson; there are five of us on it. My understanding is that Needville has hardly experienced any land subsidence.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the interview by Roland Conrad Adamson on this web site at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=39115>

BAUMGARTNER: Well, of course people in Rosenberg say the same thing. If you look at actual subsidence over a ten year period, or twenty year period it looks like a pretty flat graph.

WENDT: The water subsidence meter is at the water tower on the west side of town and I don't think it has hardly changed any.

BAUMGARTNER: It is a potentially serious problem and they are changing rules. I just had to pay money to get a permit for my wells on the San Bernard River and Brazos River for fishing ponds. I have to meter these wells now and submit an annual usage report to the Fort Bend Subsidence District.

WENDT: I imagine that is going to be countywide at some time.

BAUMGARTNER: It's a rule right now for much of the county. I am not doing it because I want to [both laughing]. You haven't had any zoning efforts here?

WENDT: No, sir. We don't have any zoning.

BAUMGARTNER: We tried to introduce it in Rosenberg, which of course was rejected, but Richmond sneaked in zoning a couple of years ago.

WENDT: You have to vote on it to do that, but at a lot of your city council meetings in Needville, people do not show up for them. Our city council meets the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. right here at city hall and sometimes we don't have anybody but the department heads and the city council. But if something comes up that is controversial, then you got people all of a sudden. Right now the water tower needs repairs; it is rusted and so forth. Back in March the City Council, since we do have additional sufficient water supply, voted to take it down. There was no one at the city council meeting and word got out that we were going to demolish it. We now have a group called Save the Water Tower.

So we have postponed taking the water tower down and have given that group an opportunity to come up with a solution to do something with the water tower. We are talking about \$300,000 to fix it. It is a fifty thousand gallon water tower. You can either take it down, or restore it as a historical site. It has lead paint on it and to get lead paint off you have to drape it and that is costly. You can put up a new water tower cheaper than you can fix it. But it has been up since 1948 and a lot of people feel that it is part of the Needville heritage. Anyway going back to zoning a lot of people don't come to the city council meetings, but you need to listen to them, that is why you were elected. Here in Needville we have houses on Main Street that are zoned for businesses and we have houses on insurance [both laughing].

BAUMGARTNER: As far as your relationship with Rosenberg and Fort Bend County civic leaders, is that pretty smooth?

WENDT: We get along with them real good. Commissioner Richard Morrison is the County Commissioner for this area and we get along with him real well. As far as the maintenance here in town we have a tax office and you can do anything here that you can do at the county office in Richmond. We exchange information with the City of Richmond more than we get from Rosenberg. Richmond is smaller than Rosenberg and when Glenn Gilmore was over there we had good relations with him. The former mayor of Rosenberg, Joe Gurecky, grew up out here.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the Robert Glendell Gilmore interview on this web site at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=41844> and his followup interview on this web site at

<http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=41950>

Also, please read the interview by Joe Gurecky on this web site at

<http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=37256>

BAUMGARTNER: Yes, Joe is from Fairchilds.

WENDT: Back six or seven years ago at a Chamber of Commerce banquet, they took a picture of graduates of Needville High School who were in public office. It included Ike Fredrickson, Ron Pope, A. J. Dorr, me, and Joe Gurecky. There were seven or eight of us in that picture who all had graduated from Needville High School that were elected public officials.

BAUMGARTNER: That is pretty impressive.

WENDT: Do you know Gary Jansen? He is the Justice of the Peace here. He took Ike Fredrickson's place, but he is also our city judge; that was him that just walked in.

BAUMGARTNER: Who are some old timers that come to your mind as far as people you grew up with, kind of prominent type local residents, farming community or in the town?

WENDT: The first one that comes into mind would be the superintendent that just passed away, Mr. Louis Ludwig. I recall a picture in the 1952 Annual, a picture of me and my buddy Alan Ray Schmidt holding Mr. Ludwig down and pretending that we were spanking him on his birthday. We were 18 and he was 30, which is how close we were. He was just one of the guys. Mr. Ludwig was one of the smartest people I knew. Bill here

in town, he is 93 or 94 and I used to kid him that at one time we had an electrical board here instead of an inspector, and Bill sat on that board and it has never been dissolved.

Of course, the Otto family here in town, Monroe and Little Monroe, and the man I worked for across the street in the store, Buddy Otto, are still around.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the interview by Kenneth Bryce Otto on this web site at <http://www.fortbendcountytx.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=37523>

BAUMGARTNER: Who are some of the farming families?

WENDT: Well, you still have your Freund family. The Wendt family, my nephew is a pretty big farmer. The Beard's, the Fredrickson's were rice farmers and the Mueck's were big farmers.

BAUMGARTNER: Farming is tough now, isn't it?

WENDT: Oh yes. When I grew up my dad farmed 50 to 75 acres. Now you have to farm hundreds of acres to make anything.

BAUMGARTNER: It sure seems tough. I was just talking to Pete Vacek, in the hay business...

WENDT: He was complaining this morning. He was bailing hay out there for David Beard and it was wet. These round balers are heavy to start with and you put a twelve to fourteen hundred pound bale in it and the ground can't hold it up. He busted something yesterday because of being too heavy and he said, "There goes another three or four hundred dollars." It's been raining so much; if the ground was right it wouldn't have broken. There are people out in the cattle business. The cattle prices are still good but from a year ago it has decreased thirty to thirty five per cent in price. Who thought a year ago you would get a thousand or eleven hundred dollars for a four hundred and fifty pound calf? During the last two years people were buying to replenish their herds and they were paying three thousand dollars for a heifer that was going to have a calf and the price is not there anymore. That old cow that you are replacing is only going to bring you two hundred and fifty dollars depending on the age of the cow.

BAUMGARTNER: Delbert, it's been a pleasure talking to you. You've made a big contribution to Needville.

Interview ends.