

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Donald Gene Drachenberg

01/23/2023

As you will read in his oral history, Don Drachenberg has deep roots in Fort Bend County. They reach back to his childhood in Needville, where his parents were involved with the town's school system. The small, tight-knit community seemed limited when he was a boy, but his perspective changed as he grew older. Like others in his family, Don went to Sam Houston State University for his higher education, developing a passion for teaching, particularly American History.

Don and his wife Doris bought a home in Rosenberg where they raised two daughters (both school teachers) and have resided all their married life, over 50 years. Don taught at Dulles High School for 14 years before working in his family camera shop in Rosenberg, Cameras Unlimited. Don and Doris were fully immersed and fully committed to life in their local community.

There was always the draw of a different life which arose unexpectedly in Don's high school years. The garage band he and his friends started, The Triumphs, became successful beyond their wildest dreams. Their lead singer BJ Thomas opted for fame and fortune (5 Grammys) while Don and the other band members chose quieter lives in their local community, entertaining their loyal fans on the Texas Coast for decades, but never forsaking their small-town life, local roots, and friendships.

Interview Summary

People

Family

Wife Doris

Daughters Laura & Terry

Parents: Robert Burnet & Alice Drachenberg

Siblings: Karen Sievers & Rick Drachenberg

Grandparents: Julius Tavener Drachenberg
& Glody Walzel

The Triumphs

Tim Griffith, rhythm guitar

Tom Griffith, bass guitar

Teddy Mensik, drums

Denver Zatyka, bass guitar

Gary Koeppen, trumpet

Ronnie Peterson, saxophone

Don Drachenberg, saxophonesw

BJ Thomas, lead singer

Friends & Acquaintances

Maxine Phelan

Sue Mitchell, loan officer at Community
Bank

Frank Gutowsky, employed at Cameras
Unlimited

Billy Hafer, owner of Hafer Case, Rosenberg,
Texas

Places/Businesses

Needville, Texas

Rosenberg, Texas

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville,
Texas

Dulles High School, Sugar Land, Texas

Cameras Unlimited, Rosenberg, Texas

Triumphs performance locations

mentioned in interview

Teen Canteen, Calvary Episcopal Church,
Richmond, Texas

American Legion Hall, Highway 36,
Rosenberg, Texas

Riverside Hall, East Bernard, Texas

Swiss Alp Hall, Schulenberg, Texas

Club 90, Richmond, Texas (early practice
sessions in December 1959)

Employment/Activities

Played saxophone in Needville High School
Band

Member of The Triumphs

Earned bachelors (1965) & masters (1967)
degrees at Sam Houston State University
Taught American History at Dulles High
School

Co-owner of Cameras Unlimited,
Rosenberg, Texas

Employed at Hafer Case, Rosenberg, Texas