

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSIONER
ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Donna Kay Blase Tucker**
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BAUMGARTNER: Today is July 28, 2022. My name is Karl Baumgartner. I'm interviewing Donna Kay Tucker in Rosenberg, Texas as part of the Fort Bend County Historical Commission, Oral History program. Donna Kay is a 5th generation resident of Fort Bend County. She and her late husband, O.D. Tucker, are known throughout the county for their leadership in the farm and ranch youth activity.

Donna Kay, what is your full legal name?

TUCKER: Donna Kay Blase Tucker.

BAUMGARTNER: And your date of birth?

TUCKER: December 27, 1943. It was a good year. It was a great time to grow up.

BAUMGARTNER: Yep. My friends and I make note of that more and more often these days. Perhaps just the luck of the draw, but it was a good era.

Where were you born?

TUCKER: In Rosenberg. There was an old hospital on Avenue H which is no longer there, a little white building on the north side of Highway 90 (across from what used to be First National Bank). The building was shut down and the doors were hanging sideways and it was finally torn down.

BAUMGARTNER: What were your parents' names?

TUCKER: My dad's name was Fred Henry Blase, and my mother's name was Hildegard Blume Blase. Her maiden name was Blume.

BAUMGARTNER: Really? For whom Blume Road was named, I assume.

TUCKER: My grandpa Blume lived on Blume Road before Little Mexico developed there. Nobody else lived back on it. He had pasture behind there with cattle, and he had pasture right there on the highway frontage. His house was there, and he had a windmill that you had to pump it to get water out of it. No city water in those days.

BAUMGARTNER: That was your grandparents on your mom's side?

TUCKER: Yes, that was my maternal grandfather, Charley Blume. I spent a lot of time there with them.

BAUMGARTNER: And what was your grandmother's maiden name?

TUCKER: Elizabeth Gabel Blume. Gabel was her maiden name. I think she had lived in Orchard; she had relatives in Orchard. Grandpa's and Grandma's parents both came from Germany, on both the Blase side and the Blume side.

BAUMGARTNER: Your grandparents, were they born here or were they born in Germany?

TUCKER: I think they were born here. On the Blume side, they moved here from Akron, Ohio to Orchard, Texas, because they had heard Orchard was a beautiful place with fruit trees everywhere and a wonderful place to live. So, they got on the train with all of their possessions, which wasn't very much. They were raised by my great grandfather. and my grandpa ended up marrying my grandmother. Anyway, they decided that Orchard was a cold, muddy mess, not a good place to live, they didn't like the soil in Orchard. So, they bought land in Rosenberg on Blume Road, which is named after him.

BAUMGARTNER: What did they do?

TUCKER: They farmed for a while, and they had cattle.

BAUMGARTNER: Do you remember much about your grandparents when you were growing up? Did you grow up here or did you grow up in Beasley?

TUCKER: I grew up in Rosenberg, at the same location which is now Tucker's Tire. Way back then it was Blase Oil Company and my dad delivered wholesale gas to all the farmers. My Dad's name was Fred Blase.

We've lived there since 1926. It's been family run all these years. It was also known as Fred's Service Station and Fred's Cafe. My mother ran the cafe and daddy ran the station there at that location.

When I was growing up, we had no kitchen upstairs above the station. There was a warehouse downstairs where they pulled in cars and worked on trucks and cars and tractors, what have you. Upstairs there was nothing but bedrooms on both sides and a small bathroom at the end of the hall. No kitchen, nothing else.

We had to go downstairs and eat all our meals in Fred's Cafe. Breakfast and lunch. We had a lady who was a cook at the cafe, who was also my nanny. Her name was Phoebe Wilkie, but Annie Wilkie to me. She took care of me and washed my clothes

BAUMGARTNER: Do you have siblings?

TUCKER: I had one brother, ten years older. Charles Henry Blaze, better known as Buckshot. We were never close because he was so much older.

BAUMGARTNER: Where did you go to school?

TUCKER: When I was old enough to get on the bus and go to school, I went to Robert E. Lee Elementary off Highway 36. Sometimes I walked home. Henry Aldhouse was the bus driver way back then. He later became a school administrator. He picked me up at our tire store, which is still there after 93 years and my son works there today.

I remember at Robert E. Lee the kids would pool our money and one of us would go down to Luksa's Grocery, which was maybe a block away, and at lunch buy snacks. One person would get the money and buy snacks there for all the kids. It didn't cost much; a dime was plenty for me. Little kids could walk there, it was safe then.

BAUMGARTNER: It is surprising the stuff that you recall after all these years.

TUCKER: They were good memories.

BAUMGARTNER: Growing up, were you more of a city girl than a country girl?

TUCKER: Well, you could say that. But I had my horse behind the tire store. I would ride down Main Street in Rosenberg. I would ride all the way to Richmond, to Rocky Falls up the Brazos River on my horse with my friends.

BAUMGARTNER: Really? When you were living upstairs at the tire store?

TUCKER: Yeah. We swam in the river. When we would go to Rocky Falls, there was a mailbox there and you were supposed to put a quarter in it, or maybe it was a nickel. You put money in to pay and then you could go in



Going to the fair parade in 1940s

L-to-R: Charley Blume (grandfather), Hildegard Blume Blase kneeling (mother), Donna on Dolly, Lizzie Blume (grandmother), and Fred Blase (father) on Jumper.

and swim. But nobody ever checked. Nobody was there to see if we paid or not. There was a good sandbar there, so we could have a picnic on the beach, ride our horses in the water. Now you can't get there. It's Richmond State Assisted Living School property and it's blocked off now.

BAUMGARTNER: So, you started at Robert E. Lee. What was Rosenberg like then?

TUCKER: It was wonderful. You knew everybody. I went to Bailey's Feed Store a lot, which after that, I think Home Lumber moved in. And there was a Western store, which I liked because I was always a cowgirl. Blase Dry Goods, which was owned by a cousin of mine, and RB Department Store.

We knew the owners, you knew everybody. And everybody traded with us because there weren't many gas stations back then.

BAUMGARTNER: And that persisted even after you grew up, right? This was way before we had the mall and all that stuff.

TUCKER: Definitely. Downtown Rosenberg was basically just Third Street. If we wanted to go really shopping, my mother and I would drive to Houston and park, and we would ride the bus to all the stores, Woolworths and other stores. That was a big deal for me.

I lived in Rosenberg, not Richmond. We were like on the wrong side of the tracks dividing the two towns. Richmond was considered the good side of the tracks. Hillcrest Drive was in Richmond.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah, I remember when I moved here, it seemed like there was kind of a rivalry between Richmond and Rosenberg, and I to me it was hard to figure out why. To me it was all the same community.

TUCKER: And we had good friends in Richmond. I knew all of them. Jackie Lehman was really good friends. Carol McCann, Sue Mitchell and Mary Anne Grayless. We used to travel together. We called ourselves the Babes of '62. Evelyn Wendt Moore graduated with me. We graduated from high school in 1962.

George Wingate had the Post Office Pharmacy in Richmond. And Richard Joseph. He was a wonderful gentleman. And his wife was such a lady. Dolly Joseph. They were wonderful people.

BAUMGARTNER: I never knew him; I wish I would have had a chance to talk to him.

TUCKER: After they built the new high school in 1948, the two cities became more like one. Right across Avenue I there was old Rosenberg High School. When I got old enough, it was Junior High, and I went to Rosenberg Junior High then. I could walk over for lunch to my aunt's house on the other side of Avenue H. It was built in 1931. My daughter Cisco lives there today.

BAUMGARTNER: And high school?

TUCKER: They named it Lamar Consolidated. We called ourselves Lamar Con. Yeah. When I got to high school, you could drive and now kids cannot even leave campus for lunch or anything.

BAUMGARTNER: That was when the two cities finally got on the same page, I guess. So, what did you do growing up in Rosenberg? You spent most of your time at the tire store?

TUCKER: I put gas in cars and aired up their tires. It was a full-service station back then. I knew how to check the oil and air up the tires and if it needed water under the hood, I knew how to do all of that.

BAUMGARTNER: So, you were like a service attendant?

TUCKER: I didn't get paid, but I liked to do that because I was always a tomboy. I was never a girly girl. My mother gave me a Tony doll, hoping I would like dolls, but I never played with dolls.

I remember when I was too young or too little to saddle my horse, I always had to ride bareback. We had a pasture behind the station with Huisache trees and we would ride back in there and play chase with my friends. They didn't have horses, but they would come over and ride one of my horses.

When I was a kid, there were times when I went to Chinquapin every weekend. And later we got a place at Matagorda.

BAUMGARTNER: Buddy Wheeler used to tell me about fishing at Chinquapin all the time too.

TUCKER: Yeah, Chinquapin, on the north end of East Matagorda Bay. Then Hurricane Carla came along about 1960, and everything was ruined. There was nothing left. You could see a commode here or there. Clothes laying around. Big shelves of lumber and stuff that got knocked down and floated up into the weeds.

BAUMGARTNER: Did you spend much time in Rosenberg at any of the stores? Did you ever work part time or anything at your cousin's store? Didn't you say they owned Blase's Dry Goods Store?

GROWING UP OUTDOORS

TUCKER: I never worked there. My daddy always had cattle. He leased land for a long time for his cows, then he bought a place in Beasley where we now live, and he always had cattle.

BAUMGARTNER: When did your father buy the Beasley property? After you grew up?

TUCKER: I was still a kid, but I was getting older then. At first, he just leased a pasture from Madison Bolton, and I always went there with him every day. Every day I would take one slice of bread and put it in the water trough and feed the minnows.

BAUMGARTNER: You went to Beasley daily?

TUCKER: I went there every day with my dad. He had an old Ford truck that he left out there and it had no brakes, and when I was getting a little older, he let me drive it around in the pasture until I would get stuck or whatever. It was a lot of fun. We had people living in a house who farmed cotton on the land. Charlie Hajeski. Their son grew up there, his name was Jerry Hajeski. built on to our house all around, and he grew up to be a builder and moved just down the road.

We still live there on the property. This summer's been so hot and dry.

We've been irrigating our hay meadow. Thank goodness we've been able to irrigate. We've already baled it once. We cultivate quite a few quail, too. We have a little cactus coming up here and there, which I don't like. But I do get quail cover.

BAUMGARTNER: Do you have bobwhites out there? It's hard to introduce quail.

TUCKER: We've always had some. We don't let everybody just come and hunt them. And we have doves, quite a few doves. We have a Ducks Unlimited Pond on our land, although there are not as many ducks as there used to be. I don't know where they're going. The ponds are doing pretty good, they're kind of low now, but they mostly have water.

BAUMGARTNER: You've got good clay soil to hold water.

TUCKER: Yeah, we have clay. We used to have a lot of jack rabbits. There are no jack rabbits now.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, really? I grew up with jack rabbits in Oklahoma.

TUCKER: We still have a few cottontails, but no jack rabbits. We had horned toads then too but not today.

And turtles. I had pet turtles. I always was raising something. I raised pigeons and doves, rabbits. We even raised an owl one time, a baby owl. We have a family of owls living in the roof of our carport.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, really? They're Barn owls, probably

TUCKER: Yeah. And they come out in the evening, and they screech and carry on at night. They don't like the dogs, for one thing.

I saw a coyote the other day in the daylight running across the pasture.

BAUMGARTNER: That's probably not a good sign, a coyote in the daytime.

TUCKER: No, it's not. But then they might just be looking for water. It's so dry everywhere.

BAUMGARTNER: Coyotes are pretty neat animals. I mean, they're really just wild dogs. People with cows don't like them.

TUCKER: No, we don't like them. They have their place. God gave everything a place. Coyotes have their place. Have you ever heard them at night?

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, yeah, I have. Boy Scouts come to my property and there's nothing cooler than them sitting around a campfire when the coyotes start yelping when it's starting to get dark.

So, you used to go there every day with your daddy? And this is where you still live today, there in Beasley?

TUCKER: In Beasley, we still have it. Thank goodness.

BAUMGARTNER: Is Beasley growing much today or not too much?

TUCKER: Yes, it's growing. There's a subdivision coming up on our road.

BAUMGARTNER: Really.

TUCKER: Sharon Vallet Wallingford sold her land on Finney Vallet Road. That is the subdivision coming up now.

BAUMGARTNER: That was the land that your family, your dad bought way back when, right? Where you're still living now?

TUCKER: That's where I live. And my oldest son Bo lives there too. He lives across the pasture. Our pasture goes from Beasley West End to Hamlink Road, we have an all-weather road between our houses.

I appreciate your doing these oral histories.

BAUMGARTNER: I enjoy it, and it's good for the families, and a good thing for the town.

TUCKER: I think it's good to keep those memories alive. Because otherwise people pass on and everything can go with them.

It's been over 50 years since I moved out here with my husband, O.D. The original house before we moved there was supposedly built in 1914 and of course, it had no indoor commode or anything. It had an outhouse, which, when I visited my grandparents on Blume Road, they only had an outhouse too.

MARRIAGE

BAUMGARTNER: When did you graduate from high school?

TUCKER: I graduated from Lamar Consolidated in 1962 in June and got married in August. I didn't want to go to college. My mother went to college at San Marcos, and she was a teacher, but I never cared about that. I wanted to have my horse and do my thing. Went to rodeos and stuff.

BAUMGARTNER: What was O.D.'s full name?

TUCKER: Olen Dewey Tucker, Jr. O.D. Tucker. He passed away in 2006 of prostate cancer.

We had two children before moving out to Beasley. Cisco, she was born in 1964, Bo was born in 65, Bat in 1966, Bud in 1968.



Donna Kay and O. D. with their children.

They all have nicknames. Cisco's name is Robyn Renee. Bo's name is Olen Dewey Tucker, III. Bat's name is Lane Anthony Tucker, his initials are BAT (Is his first name Blane?) and we've called him Bat all his life. He's an attorney and lives in New Territory. Bud made a career in the military. He was a helicopter flight instructor for many years, and he's retired now from the military. He lives in Alabama.

BAUMGARTNER: Do you miss him?

TUCKER: Yes, of course. But anyway, they all grew up independent, and that's the best thing.

Cisco teaches art lessons to ceramic classes at her studio in Rosenberg. She's an artist, and she's doing a mural at the Rosenberg Arts Center right now.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh yeah, I've seen her mural downtown on Third Street.

TUCKER: Bo has worked at the tire store since he was nine and has run it for all these years. He is now going to retire and lease out the store in December and run cattle and bale hay which he loves to do. His son loves it too.

BAUMGARTNER: Now Bo is your oldest son?

TUCKER: Yes. His name is O.D. Tucker III. And his son was supposed to be named O.D. Tucker the Fourth, but Bo's wife said, no way am I naming my son Olen Dewey Tucker. So, I said, okay, let me name him then. So, his name is Blaze (Should it be Blase?), which is my maiden name. Blaze Quattro Tucker.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, that is his legal name?

TUCKER: Bo is O.D. Tucker III and Blaze is Quattro the fourth.

BAUMGARTNER: So, you got married out of high school and moved out to Beasley with your two little kids. You were a pretty young bride out there with the kids.

TUCKER: Very young and stupid. I was one of the kids. We used to go swimming, in Jack Wendt's rice well pond.

BAUMGARTNER: Jack was a very good guy.

TUCKER: Jack was a dear friend. He and my husband had breakfast together for years before he died.

BAUMGARTNER: You and O.D. were out there then in the 1960s and you remain on the same place now. That's pretty cool. It's remarkable really.

TUCKER: We've been there for many years. I thought 1967, maybe a little earlier.

BAUMGARTNER: I remember coming out one time to your ranch with my wife to a party you and O.D. were hosting. I can't remember the occasion.

TUCKER: We used to have wild game dinners. We had a reception for Miss Rodeo USA every year.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, really?

TUCKER: To raise money for the Fair scholarship. We used to have camp parties for the Boy Scouts fundraisers and Girl Scouts. Maybe you came to one of those parties, a fundraiser for the Boy Scouts.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, it might have been. That was a good chance that it could have been. I remember your house was nice and everyone was very friendly.

TUCKER: It was a wonderful place for us. I had kids to raise. Beasley had such a small school then. They had first and second grade together, and our two oldest were in first and second grade. I once drove the whole class to the zoo in Houston. We went to the zoo; we went to Herman Park. Can you imagine? I'd be a nervous wreck right now.



Tucker children with their friends.

The school in Beasley was so small. It was so great. Our kids all got one-on-one supervision at Beasley Elementary. Sydney Pastor was the principal, and he was also the teacher of the two oldest grades.

When the kids were little, I would take them in to Blase's in Rosenberg and let them play hide and seek because there were always all these counters and places to hide at Blasé's. We would visit Pickard and Huggins Drug Store, and Shaeffer's Drug Store.

BAUMGARTNER: I'm sure you must have known Henry Wertheimer at Schaeffer's.

TUCKER: Oh yes. Very nice guy. He was a good guy. But you know, I didn't know any bad guys or women back then. They were all really good, helpful friends. When you had a business, you got to pretty much know everybody.

Of course, I grew up in Rosenberg and the family still had the tire store and we were involved in the fair and rodeo and parade and museum and lots of friends.

FORT BEND COUNTY FAIR PARADE

We were in the parade every year. We started leading off the Parade and every rodeo. We had a little drill team riding horses called The Sweethearts. On Parade day we formed it behind the courthouse and led it all through Richmond and Rosenberg.

BAUMGARTNER: I used to come watch it with my kids. I'd start down there close to Richmond and try and catch the front end of the parade.

TUCKER: We would meet at the courthouse and load up our horses and everybody would march. Betty Humphrey from the Fort Bend Herald Coaster always had a PA microphone system to call out the exhibitors as they rolled by. We always carried our sponsor's flag to honor our sponsors. There would be a huge crowd all the way.

We had a nice group. The girls really had to know how to ride horses because there would always be silly kids running out from the sidewalk throwing those little cracker bombs at the marchers.

The parade went right by Aunt Esther's house at the corner of Avenue H and Eighth Street, which she and her husband built years before. All the people would gather right under the shade tree in the front yard, and they would end the parade there.

It would be so hot and we had to wear a uniform. We'd be so sweaty. Then we went on to the reception at the Fairgrounds, which was the old Fairgrounds. You know where it was?

BAUMGARTNER: Right at the end of Avenue H down by the old Kmart, and they tore the Kmart down, too.

TUCKER: Yeah, that's where it was when I was a kid growing up. And that was the place to be after the parade. Then you went to the fair. It was great.

Way back then, there were no sponsors for the county fair. So, we started the practice. On my old-time typewriter, I typed out an invitation to send out to local businesses and leaders to become a sponsor for the fair. To begin with Coke was the only one contributing, so O.D. said, we're going to get more bids. Then all the businesses started giving money to the Fair just like they should.

Helping with the parade and rodeo, the rodeo contractor was Smoky Davis and he furnished us horses for the parade so we didn't have to haul our horses in to town. Smoky and his wife Betty Davis also furnished stock for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

BAUMGARTNER: You probably were also involved in the Houston Livestock show.

TUCKER: I'm a lifetime committee member of the Houston Livestock Show, and so was O.D.

BAUMGARTNER: What did you do?

TUCKER: I was on the junior horse judging committee and O.D. was on the tabulating committee. We met in the same building. We always took food along, and we would work

with the kids until they had their scores. We would take them to the Tabulating Committee, and they would see who won. It was a lot of fun.

BAUMGARTNER: And what were the two committees that you were doing?

TUCKER: I was on the Junior Horse Judging Committee, the main event I cared about. OD was responsible for taking the kids' scores and passing them on to the Tabulating Committee which would figure out who won.

Our kids were all on Junior Horse Judging teams, They showed steer calves, and they showed hogs and one of them showed sheep when they were growing up.

My two sons won the Junior Horse judging competition. They had their picture taken with Oilers Coach Bum Phillips.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, really? That is pretty cool. That was after he already made his football fame, right?

TUCKER: It was a big deal. He was still a big coach then.

ROSENBERG CIVIC COMMUNITY

BAUMGARTNER: What were some local organizations or civic leaders from your parents' days?

TUCKER: Oh, I remember we banked at the First National Bank, owned by the Junkers. My Grandpa Blase was on the board there for years. That's where everybody banked. I think it was the only bank except for Fort Bend Federal. Fort Bend Federal was a little bitty hole in the wall building.

Kathleen Lindsey was an attorney; she was probably the leading female attorney. She's a very smart lady. Kathleen Joerger Lindsey. Her dad was a lawyer too. Her sister was a McNutt, McNutt Insurance.

BAUMGARTNER: They were very involved in the early development of the community.

TUCKER: Kathleen helped start the library. The bookmobile would go around to everybody's school because the schools didn't have libraries. She and a group of ladies started a number of community activities. They helped initiate the hospital, though I know that was mostly the George family. Kathleen was very instrumental. Mayde Butler, she had the Rosenberg Telephone Company.

BAUMGARTNER: Bill Butler's mother.

TUCKER: Bill Butler's mother. Bill used to own half of downtown Rosenberg. He doesn't even live here anymore.

BAUMGARTNER: No, he's moved away. I used to see him around regularly but he's moved on. He was an independent guy, a good guy.

TUCKER: Renee Butler was his wife then. Now she's got the old drug store, Pickard and Huggins, today it's the Old-Fashioned Soda Fountain. She does a lot of volunteering with the City and Downtown. Marcia and Bob Vogelsang, they owned the Old Railroad Cafe, and they owned half that block, at least between Second and Third Street.

BAUMGARTNER: Now, what's happened since Bob passed away?

TUCKER: Cisco, my daughter is very close to Marcia. She lives on Second Street. She has had health issues; she had a stroke before Bob died. Bob was a great guy. He had a lot to do with developing Rosenberg.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah. I remember all his activity on the Third Street area.

TUCKER: They had a theatre in the building behind where the antique store is now. And then the restaurant, Old Railroad Cafe is right there.

There used to be the White Elephant at that location. It was a great place. It was like an old secondhand shop. I once took a bridle in there and sold it. I needed money for my horse. It's changed now, Lane Trading Center. Everything has changed. The White Elephant was owned by the Mickey Lane family. Dusty and Rocky are their two kids.

BAUMGARTNER: Grant Lane is their cousin, George Lane's son.

TUCKER: Yes, they own the airport.

BAUMGARTNER: Lane Airport. That's a pretty interesting story too. George and Mickey Lane were brothers who started the airport in 1946 when World War II ended, with practically no money, way before there was a highway out there south of town, They built the hanger and stuff, and their first planes cost them \$300 apiece.

TUCKER: That was a lot of money [laughter].

BAUMGARTNER: Little crop dusters. Now of course aircraft cost millions.

TUCKER: Mickey and Myrtis Lane. That's who had Lanes Trading Corner. We called it the White Elephant. They were good people. Myrtis, she wore high heels till the day she died. She said she couldn't wear low heels because her muscles were so in tune to having her feet shaped like that, that she couldn't wear flat shoes. She was very short and that made her feel taller.

It was before malls were invented. We went to the businesses in town and they came to our businesses. We did business with Rude and Sons Sporting Goods, Dostal's Jewelry. Linda Rude used to work at Rude and Sons when she was growing up. Bill Dostal worked at his dad's store. I went to school with Bill Dostal; we were the same age. He got cancer and passed away a few years ago.

I used to spend a lot of time at Briscoe's Fort Bend Feed. That was a wonderful store. We were very close to them.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah. Mr. Briscoe was such a friendly helpful man. What happened to their son who worked at the store too?

TUCKER: Little Mason, we called him, and his dad was Big Mason. He runs cattle and stuff and takes care of their property. His wife is assistant superintendent at Needville School. She was a Stavinoha. Yeah, he's a good guy. They work at the fair and auction.

BAUMGARTNER: Incidentally, how did you become accustomed to wearing a hat? I mean, I think every picture I've ever seen of you in in the newspaper, you're wearing a hat. It's like a trademark.

TUCKER: I used to not wear hats. I didn't have to wear hats. And then when I was in my thirties, I started getting a headache right up here on my forehead if I don't have a hat on. And it seems to run in my family, wearing a scarf or something, because I remember my aunts always did.

BAUMGARTNER: Really?

TUCKER: And it's much better now. But I like wearing hats, so I still wear them. But I can't have a big cold wind blowing on my head. I couldn't even open the door and let somebody come in with the wind blowing. I put a cap on I would get migraines that would put me to bed, and I would get sick to my stomach it was so bad. That was not worth it, so I wear a cap a lot.

BAUMGARTNER: It hasn't hurt you any. Who knows, it may have added years to your life!

Did you deal much with Travis Reese?

TUCKER: He was the AG teacher at Lamar High School. He retired and went into real estate and did a lot for downtown. He was a good guy. He taught AG but the school wouldn't let us be in the FFA (Future Farmers of America). Girls could not be in the FFA.

Really? Well, it's remarkable how things have changed.

FORT BEND COUNTY FAIR AND YOUTH RODEO

BAUMGARTNER: What have you and O.D. done on rodeo and the county fair activities? Of course, O.D. was well recognized for his leadership in the youth rodeo.

TUCKER: He ran the rodeo for 23 years and it grew from a mom-and-pop rodeo, which was just local, into a big rodeo. I started Rodeo Sweethearts, but it has slipped away because kids don't have horses and don't know how to ride anymore.

BAUMGARTNER: What youth activities was he in charge of with the rodeo? What did he do with the kids?

TUCKER: Well, we didn't have an AG barn. There are kids that didn't have a place to keep their animals. So, we had rodeos, and we started with Lamar and Terry as the only two high schools. We had the Lamar and Terry FFA rodeo, then we invited other schools. Needville came and Stafford. And we raised money to build that building out on Band Road. And developed the arena to show their animals at the county fair.

BAUMGARTNER: And O.D. was involved in getting those things set up?

TUCKER: Oh, he did it all. And we also put on our Little Britches' Rodeo and donated that for years. He worked very hard to get that covered arena because we had an outdoor rodeo and when we had a sunny afternoon, boy, was it hot and dusty.

BAUMGARTNER: How did that deal get funded, the covered rodeo?

TUCKER: We got donations. We had fundraisers. We had a hay hauling contest. It just finally happened. He also started Senior Citizens Day.

And when you used to go to the Fair you had to pay to park, and you had to go in and pay at the entrance. And you had to pay if you want to go to the rodeo. Then you had to pay if

you wanted to go to the beer garden. And O.D. said when he was president, he said, this is ridiculous, all these people handling money. He said, we're going to charge one fee at the gate, and everybody comes and that's it. Noel Yarling threw a fit and Diz Ansel did, too. They said, we can't do that. Nobody will come, nobody will pay more money. I said, if you're just paying one time, you're not really paying more money. So anyway, it went over, and it did well, and Noel and Diz got over it. You knew the Ansel Grain people. Diz was on the Fair Board.

When O.D. became president, he started different programs. Rich kids used to buy their calves and their steers and stuff, and somebody else would raise them and then those kids would show them at the fair and take credit for them. Well, he didn't think that was right. He changed all of that. And we learned that there were kickbacks being passed around in connection with the competition and awards and it was necessary to make changes.

BAUMGARTNER: That was unfortunate.

TUCKER: Yes. But things like that happen. We had a lot of fun. And it has really grown. We used to have it under the pavilion outside, and we got too big for that. Then we went to the covered arena, and now it's in building B or one of the bigger buildings.

BAUMGARTNER: Is that the one that's got O.D.'s name on it? You can see his name on the arena from the highway. Did he have his name on it before he passed away or afterwards?

TUCKER: After. I hated that. But anyway, the commissioners voted to do that. Tommy Stavinotha was kind of an instigator when he was the commissioner. And I don't remember the others, but anyway, they wanted that. I was very honored.

BAUMGARTNER: Really. That's a great honor. It's too bad that he wasn't here. I guess that is life.

TUCKER: I think he knew; he was looking down from heaven and he's very happy about that.

FORT BEND COUNTY MUSEUM

BAUMGARTNER: Donna Kay, I first met you through your involvement with the Museum and the docents. When did you get involved with the Fort Bend Museum Association?

TUCKER: Back in the late 70'S. I was friends with some of the docents and thought the museum was a good idea and would be fun. Jan Lehman, Jackie Lehman's daughter-in-law, was first president in 1976. I joined a little later.

BAUMGARTNER: Did you serve as an officer?

TUCKER: I was president in 1984. We serve for one-year terms.

BAUMGARTNER: Was Michael Moore in charge of the Museum then?

TUCKER: He had just come in as the new executive director of the museum. He had these smart ideas of what he was going to do. The docents earned a lot of money with fund raisers for different projects we were involved with. Every year we earned money, and we gave it to the museum. Michael wanted to control the money.

He thought it would be handled better with him. I had the Docents call him and write him letters that we're not doing that. You want these volunteers; you better treat them right. So anyway, we resolved that and we became good friends after that.

BAUMGARTNER: You worked with Michael for a number of years. He was an effective leader at the Museum, wasn't he?

TUCKER: Yes, he was good. He was smart and he did a good job on Texian Market Days. That was a huge undertaking. He liked to get the cannons and the Indians and all of that into action. He organized all that.

The Docents operated out of the Moore Home, and I was in charge of maintaining the yard for many years, next to the museum. My friend Charlotte Hartlage worked with me a lot. And the Docents were involved in running the Lone Star Stomp.

Billy Wendt started the Lone Star Stomp. It became our major fund raiser. It started out at Denton Cooley's Ranch for the first couple of years, and later moved to the George Ranch.

BAUMGARTNER: Texian Market Days, was that a Docents operation?

TUCKER: No, it was Michael Moore. We didn't expect Texian Market Days to be such a big success. It was. We introduced as a three-day event. The first day was a great turnout; Evelyn Moore was in charge of the food, and there were so many people we ran out of food.

I ran the little store at Texian Market Day for quite a few years. We had a booth outside at the George Ranch. For the Stomp, they still call me to host us in a room that I do in the George Ranch. We used to have a silver tea, too. I was chairman of that.

BAUMGARTNER: What was that like?

TUCKER: Well, we invited people to come who were members of the museum, and they donated money and we entertained them. It was really nice affair. I'm now on the calling committee for the Fort Bend Museum Docents. I have a number of people that I call every month when we have the Docent meeting.

Right now, the museum is planning to help with an event to show visitors and school kids around different landmarks in western Fort Bend County. I'm going to help with Vicki Tonn out at the Old Foster Museum.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, the museum out on FM 359.

TUCKER: Yes, in Renee Lamb's neighborhood where all her family generations have come from. You knew she just passed away.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, yeah. That was such a shame and such a surprise. She was so nice.

TUCKER: Right. I want to go quickly when I go.

BAUMGARTNER: When O.D. passed away, did he go quickly? He died of cancer, didn't he?

TUCKER: Very quickly. He was in the hospital having some stints put in his heart and the operation was over, and it was successful. And they said, how do you feel? He said, I'm hungry. And then he grabbed his chest and he said, oh, that hurt. And a blood clot went to his heart and stopped it, and they couldn't start it back again.

BAUMGARTNER: My goodness.

TUCKER: I was the only one there in the waiting room. That was terrible. I had to call the kids and they came, and our minister came and the Needville Minister came who was a good friend. It was such a shock. It was very fast. That's the way that went. I can't even drive by that hospital now. West Houston Hospital or something.

TUCKER TIRE STORE

BAUMGARTNER: There have been so many changes. The highway department has made a lot of changes to your end of town at the tire store, haven't they?

TUCKER: Progress; they call it progress. I called it a big mess. We had a huge parking area; eighteen-wheelers could pull in and out. Then the road got so messed up we used to have to call our customers and tell them how to get in.

BAUMGARTNER: But your business has done well and stable for all these years. Look how many years you've been here.

TUCKER: It's the same family. Daddy started it, my husband ran it and my son runs it now. Bo, when he retires, he's going to lease it to Derek Hippler, who works for him.

BAUMGARTNER: Does Bo know most of the customers?

TUCKER: He knows everybody. If I want to know something, I just call Bo. Did you hear so and so? Yes, Mom, I knew that a long time ago.

BAUMGARTNER: Is that why you have the business and it's so stable? Because of the personal contacts?

TUCKER: I'm sure it is. Because even when you couldn't get in because of road construction, people come. They sit around and drink coffee. Bo serves free coffee all day long to anybody who wants it. They sit outside when they're working on tires or something. Or you can go inside and there's a table. Everybody sits around there and eats, bring their lunches there. It's really a family.

BAUMGARTNER: Yes, well that's your history. It's a great long-term story of our community. I'm glad we had the opportunity.

TUCKER: Thank you. I appreciate it.

End of interview