

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Janet Kruger Buettner**

Interview Date: 06/24/2011

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: Riverbend Country Club, Sugar Land, Texas

5 Pages



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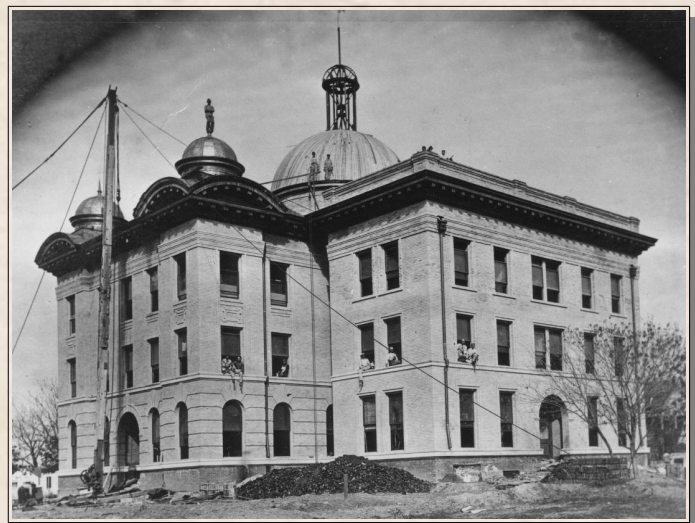
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Transcript

GOODSILL: I understand you grew up in Sugar Land. I'm curious to know what brought your family to Sugar Land in the first place.

BUETTNER: Imperial Sugar. My dad was hired as a salesman for Imperial Sugar. He had worked for McCormick & Company in Amarillo, Texas. So we left the dry, west Texas land.

GOODSILL: How old were you when you came here?

BUETTNER: I was in the 5th grade.

GOODSILL: What was it like when you got to Sugar Land?

BUETTNER: I couldn't believe it. I loved the lakes. I was just amazed at the little school with the small buildings that were sitting right on the lake. It was charming. I wish I could remember how I really felt as a 5th grader, leaving my friends in Amarillo. It was such a new experience and I don't remember it being anything but fun.

GOODSILL: It was fun, and you seemed to fit into the community and the school? Made friends easily?

BUETTNER: Yes. In fact, two fellows are in the room right now [interview taking place at a class reunion] who were in the little building that I went into, in Edwina Milam's 5th grade class. I don't remember if she ended up being my home room teacher. The classes were divided into these little rooms, which weren't air conditioned, and it was hot. I can't remember if we moved to Sugar Land at the beginning of the year or mid-year, but I believe it was at the beginning of the year. It was quite a change. We lived in a company house.

GOODSILL: Where did you live?

BUETTNER: Our first house was next to the Catholic rectory on 5th Street close to the Catholic Church. It was a real small little house with one bathroom; a little clapboard house with a screened in porch. Then for some reason we moved across town after a couple of years to a little bit bigger company house on Belknap Street that had an attic. My friends and I painted that attic and we formed a club. In fact there are two gals here this evening and we laugh about that. It must have been 190 degrees in that attic but we thought that was cool. We slept up there, had our club.

At that point we were probably in middle school so we were kind of cool. It was a private place to be. We had to go downstairs to the bathroom, of course.

GOODSILL: Climbing down the attic stairs?

BUETTNER: Yes.

GOODSILL: How many kids in your family?

BUETTNER: Only me. I lost a sister when she was a baby. So I gathered up lots of friends. Several families who lived in the West University area of Houston bought land on the water at Alkire Lake; the Kellers, the Krauses and the Kamps. My best friends growing up were Sandra Krause and Jan Keller. We loved that water. I LIVED at their houses.

GOODSILL: Swimming in that water. Not worried about animals?

BUETTNER: No. Jumping off the bridge.

GOODSILL: How'd you get back up on the shore?

BUETTNER: Just climbed up the edge. When I think about the snakes and everything – in fact, my parents bought a home from the Greenwalds, down the street on Belknap and lived in that house. When I was a senior in high school, my parents built a home on Lakeview Dr, next to Mr. Mercer. So I got to live on the lake one year before I went off to college.

GOODSILL: Tell me your father's full name.

BUETTNER: Raymond Kruger. He ended up being merchandising manager for Imperial Sugar. He died very suddenly at 58 and it was a very big blow to the whole town. He and my mom literally started Church of the Epiphany in Missouri City, on Dulles Avenue, with another family.

GOODSILL: What was your mom's maiden name?

BUETTNER: Her name was Doris Smith Kruger. She was a west Texas gal and she loved to fish on our property there at Cleveland Lake on Lakeview Drive.

GOODSILL: So your memories of growing up here were very nice?

BUETTNER: Wonderful memories. As you can see we are still very connected.

GOODSILL: Did you go off to school afterwards?

BUETTNER: I went to North Texas and then went to Colorado to teach school.

GOODSILL: To Colorado! That was brave of you.

BUETTNER: So I never really came back to Sugar Land. When my mom sold the house on the lake, I was divorced and had two daughters and I wished I had bought that house and come back here. But then I wouldn't have met my husband.

GOODSILL: How did you meet Gary?

BUETTNER: I met him through friends. We were both divorced and both of us had daughters. He has become friends with my Sugar Land friends.

GOODSILL: Isn't that nice when that happens? What did you do for recreation and relaxation when you were a child?

BUETTNER: We would get on our bikes and go spend the day on the water. We'd camp out and fish. We'd be in a boat all day long and just get cooked. We just lived on the water. In high school, I was an athlete. I played basketball and tennis. My dad was a golfer at Fort Bend Country Club. My first job, after I went off to college, was during the summer at River Bend Country Club as a day camp counselor. They had just opened River Bend.

GOODSILL: What year you were born.

BUETTNER: 1941. I graduated in 1960, the first graduating class of Dulles High School. My class had to consolidate with Missouri City.

GOODSILL: Any remembrances of that?

BUETTNER: Well, I don't remember our being anything but excited about it. Missouri City was a rival school but I quickly fell in love with a guy at Dulles, and that was just wonderful. It was a great year. This reunion we had last summer was interesting because the Missouri City kids sat with the Missouri City kids and the Sugar Land kids sat with the Sugar Land kids. So we never really came together as a group. I don't remember being bitter or sad about it, because my best friends were a year older and some of them are here, Buddy Wheeler and that group. They had already gone off to college.

Sandra Krause and I and several of us were very, very close friends, so we had each other. The problem was we had to go to Missouri City High School for classes. Sandra had a Jeep and my friend, Jan Keller, had a Jeep, so we had transportation to get us to campus.

GOODSILL: It sounds like a fun growing up time for you, especially the camaraderie of the friends from early years.

BUETTNER: It was a wonderful community. I feel very blessed to have been able to live here.

GOODSILL: And the fact that you come back for the reunion and enjoy it so much. It's wonderful.

BUETTNER: Oh yes. Every year we've had a reunion. We've missed it. We've had it the last two years and it's just been great because it's like nobody has ever left.

Interview ends