

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Abstract: **Joanne King Herring**

Ms. Herring, author of *Diplomacy and Diamonds*, is a direct descendant of George Washington's sister, Betty. Five generations, including Joanne, grew up in a house built by her grandfather that was a replica of Mount Vernon. Eventually, Joanne purchased the house and moved it to Simonton on land originally owned by one of the Old 300 settlers as part of the Spanish Land Grant. The property is situated along the Brazos River.

Joanne also purchased a former Methodist Church, built in the 1850's and moved it to her property in Simonton. She provides a hilarious story about moving the church from Fulshear to her property. Since 2016 the house and church have been decimated by two major floods. Although the floods broke her heart, Joanne is a fighter and believes in miracles to eventually restore both to their previous beauty.

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Interview Summary

People (in alphabetical order)

James Bittle – president US Historical Society

Robert R. Herring – spouse

Howard Johnson – business leader

Don Jordan – president Reliant Energy

John Nau – business leader

William Emmett Sampson – grandfather

Betty Washington – ancestor

George Washington – first USA president

Places / Businesses

Stephen F. Austin museum

Brazos River (*Brazos de Dios*)

Cleveland/Romayor, Texas

George Ranch

Fort Bend County, Texas

Fulshear, Texas

Hilltop Herb Farm

Hurricane Harvey

Rose Emporium

Rosewood Hospital

Simonton, Texas

Texas A&M University

Texas Sand & Gravel Construction Company

The Alamo

The Battle of San Jacinto

The Garden Homeless Shelter

Valley Lodge Subdivision

Events

Joanne King Herring is an American socialite, businesswoman, political activist, philanthropist, diplomat, and former television talk show host. Hailing from Houston, Texas, she is best known for influencing policy through her long association and political relationship with the President of Pakistan, Zia-ul-Haq. Herring also served as the honorary consul at the Consulate-General of Pakistan based in Houston; she is also the recipient of the Jinnah Medal, one of Pakistan's highest honors.

Joanne is the author of the bestselling book *Diamonds and Diplomacy*.

She talks about saving her family home that is a replica of Mount Vernon by moving it to her Simonton property along with an 1850s church that she saved from demolition.

Both the house and the church suffered major damage after the May 2016 flood and Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Eventually, she hopes to save both.

Today, she is still active in many organizations and enjoys life with her two sons and her grandchildren.