

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Leonel R. Salazar**

Interview Date: 03/20/2010

Interviewer: Roberta Terrell

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: Dew House, Missouri City, Texas

7 Pages



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Transcript

TERRELL: Mr. Salazar, let's start with some biographical information. When and where were you born?

SALAZAR: I was born in Premont, Texas in 1928.

TERRELL: What brought your family to Fort Bend County?

SALAZAR: I came in 1953 to work for Plummer's Nursery in Richmond, Texas. From there I was hired by Doctor Hampton C. Robinson, in 1962. That's when I met Miss Agnew because he used to lease all the land from Miss Jessie Agnew.

TERRELL: How did you first meet the Robinson family and what type of work did you do for the Robinsons?

SALAZAR: I was hired to take care of all the trees: fertilizing, spraying and that sort of thing. I loved cattle work, so I helped them do the cattle work, which took all of my time, between those two things.

TERRELL: When you worked cattle, did you do it on horseback?

SALAZAR: Yes, ma'am. For about thirty days in a row. We had LOTS of cattle at that time and the Doctor leased land from Miss Agnew, all of the land that she had.

TERRELL: Do you know about how many head of cattle they had?

SALAZAR: Oooh, probably had about fifteen hundred.

TERRELL: Quite a few.

SALAZAR: Yes.

TERRELL: Then what did you do for Miss Jessie Agnew?

SALAZAR: I did not work for her. But anytime she needed something, she would ask Doctor Robinson, and we would go and do things for her. Like put up a fence around her yard or trim a tree, or put up the bell. Make a stand to put the bell up and things like that, you know? I never worked directly for her.

TERRELL: Okay. What other family members did you know? Ruth or Mae or could you tell me a little bit about them?

SALAZAR: Well, I knew Miss Lalley but not very well. I was at her house, once or twice.

TERRELL: Did Jessie Agnew or any of the other family members raise crops?

SALAZAR: No crops.

TERRELL: Do you remember the train running through DeWalt?

SALAZAR: Oh, yes. In fact, when Doctor Robinson bought some land across from Miss Jessie's house, there was a barn there that they say used to be a vegetable barn. They would bring vegetables out there and sort them out. We used it to store hay. It was a VERY big barn and it stayed there for years, of course, until we took it down.

TERRELL: That was on the railroad track?

SALAZAR: That was right next to the railroad track, yes, ma'am.

TERRELL: Did the train stop there regularly?

SALAZAR: No, it went all the way to Sugar Land.

TERRELL: Okay. Do you know how often?

SALAZAR: It was once a day.

TERRELL: Do you remember the cotton gin or the barns or the old store?

SALAZAR: When I came to work, the store was gone. The blacksmith shop was still up but almost gone. We tore it down, cleaned everything. There were two or three little rent houses there, little, small rent houses. We tore them down and cleaned the place up. We didn't use any of the material. It was pretty bad. That's where the Burger King is now, and later on Bum Phillips bought that piece of land and built his house there.

TERRELL: Oh, on Highway 6?

SALAZAR: On Highway 6, yes.

TERRELL: That's interesting. Do you ever remember anybody ringing that bell?

SALAZAR: No. Maybe WE did! (laughs)

TERRELL: Played with it?

SALAZAR: Yes.

TERRELL: Well, if you had to describe Miss Jessie Agnew, how would you describe her?

SALAZAR: She was a real nice lady. I never talked to her very much but, you know, one time we did some work for her. When we finished, she invited me and the rest of the men to have cake and drink coffee with her. She was real nice.

TERRELL: What about Miss Ruth Lalley? Did you know her?

SALAZAR: I knew her but I just never had anything to do with her, except that I knew her. That was all.

TERRELL: What about any other family members?

SALAZAR: Well, I think I knew Muffie and June, mostly Muffie and her husband and family. June, I knew who she was, but I didn't know her that well.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the Linda L. S. "Muffie" Moroney interview on this web site at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=42954>

TERRELL: Did you work for Muffie?

SALAZAR: No.

TERRELL: You just knew who she was?

SALAZAR: Well, I helped them, you know. At one time, she and her husband decided they wanted to go into the cattle business. So they took the land from Doctor Robinson and bought cattle and put them on the land. Later on, I bought the cattle from them.

TERRELL: About how many head did they buy?

SALAZAR: Fifteen head.

TERRELL: So there weren't any calves.

SALAZAR: Well, yeah, there were some calves in there.

TERRELL: Did you ever meet Walter Dew?

SALAZAR: Yes, but I didn't know him very well. I knew who he was, yes.

TERRELL: What type of buildings were near Miss Agnew's house?

SALAZAR: There was only Nancy Woods' house and Mr. and Mrs. Tucker, who Miss Agnew had sold a couple of acres to, before. They built a house right on Highway 6, and the house is still there. It doesn't belong to Mr. and Mrs. Tucker any more, but that house is still on the place. Just like it was before.

TERRELL: Is it lived in?

SALAZAR: Some sort of business is there. They sell pottery and stuff. A Realtor had it at one time. It's just two acres. But it's still there.

TERRELL: Okay. Can you describe the Dew House?

SALAZAR: I was in the big house several times. It was old and needed a lot of work done to it. It was just very, very hard to keep up. The roof leaked and it was just very old, that's all I can say about the house. Muffie had it painted at one time and it looked real nice for a while there, and then something else would come up and it needed some more repairs.

TERRELL: Do you know else worked for Miss Agnew or any other family members?

SALAZAR: Slim Blake worked there for a while and lived behind the DeWalt Store. There was a little rent house there. He was there for a long, long time. Maybe his wife worked for Miss Agnew. I don't know. I didn't know her. Nancy Woods worked for Miss Agnew forever. She worked for a long time and lived probably half a block from Miss Agnew's house. Had a house there on the place.

TERRELL: Okay. Did she have a family?

SALAZAR: Yes, she had a husband, Sammy, and had a daughter and a son.



The Dew Plantation home was built at the turn of the last century by Dr. Hugh Saunders Dew. The Dew House opened to public as museum in 2011.

TERRELL: Did they work on the place?

SALAZAR: No. Sammy worked for the Sugar Land refinery and then, of course, the kids went to school. I guess they grew up and got married afterwards. Eventually they tore the old house down and built a brick house there, where Nancy lived for a while, until she moved to Arcola.

TERRELL: When was the last time you saw her?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the Nancy Stephenson Woods interview on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=45528>

SALAZAR: I saw Nancy probably a year ago. I knew Muffie very, very well, and I would call her just to see how she was doing, and say hello. Sometimes I talked to Nancy. She would answer the phone.

We had the land leased from Miss Agnew for cattle until Muffie and Clarence wanted to have cattle of their own. That's when the Doctor let them have it back. But they didn't stay in the cattle business long, maybe a couple of years.

TERRELL: Did you help them when they were in the cattle business?

SALAZAR: Yes, I did. But then Muffie and Clarence moved to Virginia. They moved out of state. That's when I bought their cattle, when they were away.

TERRELL: Do you live nearby? Today?

SALAZAR: I lived in Richmond for a while, and then I lived at the ranch on Highway 6 for eighteen years. Now I live in Fulshear. But I have worked for Doctor Robinson since 1962, and I still work for him. I still work for the estate. Now I've got the grandson that I work for.

TERRELL: What do you do for him?

SALAZAR: A little of everything. I help him with landscaping and we've got his great grandmother's house that we take care of, in Missouri City. Miss Hampton C. Robinson, Senior, and that's a VERY old house that's there.

TERRELL: Do you know when it was built?

SALAZAR: About one hundred years ago. Miss Danny died when she was in her 90's and had a very, very good memory. A lot better than mine! She could remember everything from back in the 1900s and tell you a story and everything else, you know. She was very, very nice.

TERRELL: What a treasure.

SALAZAR: Yes.

TERRELL: Well, that's good. You can't think of anything that I have neglected to ask you?

SALAZAR: Doctor Hampton C. Robinson, Junior, bought a lot of land from Miss Agnew and from Miss Lalley. We would clean it up. We had a little over two thousand acres there that Quail Valley has developed into a golf course/house project and it's still going.

TERRELL: I think it was the first planned community in Fort Bend County.

SALAZAR: Yes, ma'am.

TERRELL: Well, we appreciate your interview.

SALAZAR: Well, you're sure welcome.

Interview ends