

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Lynn Edmundson**

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Interviewer: Diane L. Ware

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

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Transcript

WARE: This interview is being recorded for the Fort Bend Museum Association, DeWalt Heritage Project by the Fort Bend Historical Commission Oral History Committee.

WARE: How did you first learn about the Dew Plantation House?

EDMUNDSON: I think I had a phone call from an architect at University of Houston, Geoff Brune. Geoff told me he had a friend, Muffie Moroney, who had this house down in Missouri City. Geoff made that connection and got Muffie in touch with me. As I remember, she called me about her family home. It was in Missouri City on a large piece of property. I think she was IN the process of negotiating the sale of the property when she contacted me.

WARE: About what year was this?

EDMUNDSON: It would be 2003 I think. I want to say it was spring. She wanted to move the house. One of the techniques to try and save an old house is to utilize the students at the College of Architecture at U of H. They do measured drawings of the house for documentation. It serves two purposes: 1. If the house is lost, there is some record of it. 2. It often jump-starts a project. When people have a set of drawings and photo documentation, they suddenly think, well, maybe we could use this for something else. I brought in the students at U of H College of Architecture, and I think that was a spring semester class for them. Shannon was in on the project.

WARE: What is Shannon's last name?

EDMUNDSON: Kimbrough.

WARE: What specifically about the Dew House interested you?

EDMUNDSON: A couple of things. One, even though it was on Highway 6, it was remote. There was not a lot developed RIGHT there on their property. So the siting of the house was interesting in the fact that it was surrounded by these REALLY beautiful 100-year-old oak trees. I just like old houses, so that's always intriguing.

But there had been a LOT of development to the north on Highway 6, commercial development, shopping centers and all of that, and then probably two or three miles down the road on Highway 6 was the Sienna Plantation development. The plantation house sat there as a relic of the past.

I remember looking at it from the front and NOT being all that impressed with it, because it had been so changed over the years. But walking around to the back of it you had a real sense of how the original house may have looked.

It was VERY apparent how things had been added on to it, probably more in the convenience of time and expense than a master plan for enlarging the house. You know, you needed an extra bedroom so you enclosed the porch. OR you needed a den to accommodate big family gatherings, so you just made this den off the back. As you walked through the house, there were interesting elements from turn of the century and then there were additions from the '20s and '30s, and then from the '50s and then from the '70s.



Historic Dew House, east facade, ca. 1980, was built by Dr. Hugh Dew in about 1900, but it wasn't well maintained by the end of the century.

WARE: Did it ever cross your mind to try to keep it in that location?

EDMUNDSON: I always try and encourage people to do that. Through Historic Houston, we have moved twenty-seven or twenty-eight houses. I LOVE moving houses, but from a preservation standpoint, it's a very sad process because the house is really supposed to stay where it was built. That's where its history is, where events happened, where the family was associated with it and so it's very sad to pick it up and put it in a new spot and expect it to have the same relationship with the community that it does in its original site. So I always DO try and encourage people to think about other options. That's one of the reasons we like to get the students involved because that sparks the imagination of what could this be if kept in its original location. Also, when you move it, you move it out of its context but you lose the trees that are there. I know we talked at length about keeping it there. Muffie was selling the property to Johnson Development Corporation, and could they carve out this tract of land, this little section with the trees, and use it as an amenity for whatever development they were going to do?

I think that was considered off and on, but it really didn't fit into the overall plan that Johnson Development had for the larger tract of land that they were developing. You can't keep forcing this idea that's just never going to work. So the next best step is, if we have to move it, where are we going to move it to?

WARE: Did you ever consider leaving the additions on the house?

EDMUNDSON: Not really. We originally planned to move it all in one piece. That was the goal and we had no intention of cutting it. There was a problem under the enclosed glass porch on the back. There was a HUGE four-foot solid concrete slab with rebar through it. We were just SHOCKED when my guys cleared out the debris. We rented a piece of equipment to try and jackhammer this slab out because the house was configured in an L shape. To move a house you have to jack the house up and put steel beams under it. We had great conversations with the house mover about having steel beams that cross the entire length of the house. Well, then if you think about it as a four square, there's a corner that isn't going to have any weight on it, and what were we going to do to keep the house from flipping forward? We talked about getting a container and filling it with water or sand to weigh down that corner, so we could move it all in one piece.

But when we found that HUGE concrete slab and rented this piece of equipment, we were under a time frame to get the house gone by a certain date, we couldn't jackhammer it. The concrete slab was tied in to what would be the west wing of the house. It was poured up under it and tied in with rebar. We managed to get about a three foot section of that separated. And at that point the mover said the only way we can do this is if we cut it and take it in two halves. So we DID think about keeping it intact in terms of the L configuration, which was the older part of the house. The additions were all things that were not tied to the house well, structurally. They were porches that had been enclosed and typically a porch is not structurally tied very well to the house. It is scabbed on. It's VERY hard to keep that from falling off as you are moving it.

WARE: If it hadn't been moved, would you have left the additions on?

EDMUNDSON: No, I probably would have taken them off. I think the house has much more interest in its 1900 to 1920 form than in its 1980 form.

WARE: Going back to the very beginning. How did you first envision your role with the Dew House?

EDMUNDSON: I always saw myself as a consultant. Remember, I'm with Historic Houston, not historic Fort Bend County, not historic Missouri City. You don't want to come in as the person outside that comes in and ramrods the deal through. Isn't there someone local here that can take this project on? Muffie worked very, very, very hard to find different entities. I think that's why this took SO long to accept the house. But a gift of a house comes with obligations. It's really wonderful to get a house but you've got to DO something with it. Most institutions have figured out that unless it's coming with an endowment to fix it up, it's very HARD to get them to accept a house because it HAS to get fixed up!

My role originally was to give her advice; what could be done, how could it be moved. Could this house be moved? If it couldn't be moved, I think Historic Houston's role shifted. We would reclaim what building material we could from the house before it was demolished. That would be a last resort.

But there ended up not being anyone to coordinate the move, and it's not something you can just wave a wand and say, "Okay, I want this to get from here to there." It takes someone being able to talk to the mover, handle the mover; someone who can go and talk with the county, and coordinate all those pieces. I kept getting put into that position, even though I kept not trying to be in that position. Because I really did hope that someone down in Fort Bend County would take that project on. I also understand how difficult that is. I guess I've also come to realize I have this body of knowledge about moving houses. Someone who operates museums may not really know how to move a house.

WARE: In what ways was the Dew House project similar to other projects you've been involved with?

EDMUNDSON: It was like no other project we had been involved with to date. Part of that was the size of the house. I go on every move so I'm pretty comfortable with what should be happening, what you expect to happen. You'd see all kinds of weird stuff in the middle of the night. Those were all single story houses. We have done some things where we've had to cut them in half, but they are still single story. There's just an entire new dimension when you start doing a two story house. For example calling around and getting prices to deliver a container and then fill it with water or sand. What are those costs going to be? And handling the utility lines! That goes from just a couple of phone calls to being an intricate network of different levels of contractors, and a WHOLE different level of equipment needed. So a two story move was like nothing I'd ever done before.

WARE: Do you remember how tall the house was when you moved it?



The Dew House made ready to move several miles on Highway 6. The L-shape of the house required it to be cut for the move or the "empty" square would have unbalanced the structure on a truck.

EDMUNDSON: On the trucks, probably close to twenty-five, twenty-eight feet, something like that. The house was not going a huge distance. It was only going five and one-half miles or less, down Highway 6, which IS a main highway. That's the other thing. It's not just country roads. You're dealing with Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) and their mandates. You're on their highway. They tell you when you're moving and when you're not! And you submit to them. There's no calling them up and talking with someone about it. Complicating everything were some very high voltage utility lines that only CenterPoint Energy has the equipment and manpower to handle. That isn't something you want to have just any old person out there messing with. A whole other area was the liability issue. For a non-profit to take on a move is just enormous. I've got a very understanding Board that is very generous with their trust in me. But things can happen SO quickly, especially when you've got high voltage lines OR a road completely closed and nineteen trucks out there and it is dark. It's a MAJOR undertaking which I really didn't have an understanding until, really almost the night of the move. I remember being overwhelmed that night.

WARE: Would you have taken it on if you'd HAD an understanding of that?

EDMUNDSON: Probably not.

WARE: Were there points when you thought that you'd have to tear down and salvage the house?

EDMUNDSON: Oh, Muffie had a going away party, in August or September of 2005. We could not find an entity to take the house. She decided she was going to have this party; have everyone who's been at the house, partied at the house, done things at the house, knew her family, come down, and say goodbye to the house. We were planning to start salvaging. I think at that party, I talked on behalf of Historic Houston about how we had looked at different options for moving it. I've managed to get comfortable with the salvage issue myself, from a preservation standpoint and from an environmental standpoint, but it is always the last resort.



CenterPoint Energy directed the highway move, with TXDOT concurrence, to assure public safety as well as the safety of the contractor and for the protection of the house.

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

I like to look at ALL the options. Do everything we possibly can do to keep the house in place and then if not in place, then move it. Then as a VERY last resort, we'll salvage it. At that farewell party I think I was saying this is the best we can do and I hope you all understand. Grady Prestage from the County Commissioners Court was at the party. I think Muffie had talked to him before, there had BEEN some talk that maybe Fort Bend County would take it. But up until that party, and even when I left that night, I thought I'd be coming back and scheduling my crew to begin salvaging. Even that is a logistical nightmare for us because you've got all the equipment down there. What are you doing with the salvaged stuff? Leaving it down there or bringing it back every night?

WARE: So as of August 28, 2005, you did NOT know if you were going to salvage that house or save it?

EDMUNDSON: Correct. THAT night I thought I was salvaging it.

WARE: What person or people provided the most support in saving the house?

EDMUNDSON: Gosh, there were a LOT. Muffie was really a force because she just went to extraordinary lengths to try and find anything that might be an option for saving it. Grady Prestage was unbelievable. I think as a Commissioner he went into this because it was the right thing to do. Often you have to sell that whole idea and people want hard numbers of what it's going to look like, they want renderings, they want to know what the final thing is going to be, and that it's going to be worth it. I think he just KNEW it was the right thing to do.

Lisa Glenn was unbelievable, in terms of getting Missouri City and the politics involved. That was 'nother whole aspect of this job I had not bargained for or understood, although I sorta was aware of it, because I remember going to meetings very early on and thinking, "Well, I've got county people here and the county is fine, but we're IN Missouri City and I don't see any Missouri City people here, and I don't see any city officials. So, is someone keeping them on board?" I am someone who believes everyone needs to be on the same page. It needs to be VERY transparent because you can't miss a big house, moving!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read the Lisa Glenn interview on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=45498>

While it DOES happen in the middle of the night, you still can't HIDE it! So that was always in the back of my mind. I think that if I had to say there was a lesson learned, it was, listen to the back of your mind.

I remember thinking at numerous meetings, everyone is telling me that everyone else is on board, but I'm not hearing from everyone else, or seeing them at these meetings. So I'm hoping that's true but I didn't really know it and I didn't find it out for myself until late in the deal. But Lisa Glenn was just wonderful about getting public support and educating people about the importance of the house

WARE: Was there anyone from Missouri City that jumped on board?

EDMUNDSON: The mayor, Allen Owen, came on board. To be real honest, I think we were a week out from the move when I realized there was a problem with some traffic lights in Missouri City and I wasn't really aware of the politics going on.

I had a sense after sitting in a ton of meetings with city council that there had been a lot of non-communication. I think a lot of it could have been smoothed over earlier, had there been some clearer communication with Missouri City. I think there was a lot of my sense, and this may not be right, but MY sense was there was a lot of they felt excluded from the process.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please read Mayor Allen Owen's interview on this website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=44917>

WARE: By Fort Bend County?

EDMUNDSON: Uh huh. Uh huh. These are the people who live here in this community, so who am I to come in here and dictating, "Okay, we're going to tear down this road and we're going to have this huge house going down there". I didn't TALK to them about the consequences of that. So, yeah, did they want to put a halt to it and say, "No?" What I THINK, part of that I take responsibility for because I didn't quite understand the politics going on, but part of what I think they didn't quite understand is that a move like the Dew takes SO much coordination and there were SO many variables that were not just at my whim. I didn't pick the day of the move. That was dictated by, in fact, normally it is dictated by TxDOT, but because of the high voltage lines it was CenterPoint who, after we got a moving permit, came back and said, "We will give you crews and equipment on these two weekends and those are the only two, because after, I can't remember WHAT it was, but after a certain date all our crew is tied up with rodeo and we're not available until April".

That decision came in at the end of January, or mid January. Maybe even early January, because we were supposed to be off that property February 1st. We already had permission from TXDOT and had a moving permit. We had to go back to TXDOT and say "CenterPoint has dictated we've got to move on one of these two weekends", and TXDOT doesn't normally allow us to do a house move on a weekend. So then we had to wait a couple of days to hear back from TXDOT about whether they would allow the move or not, and what were the reasons. Part of it was the high voltage lines and the need to be doing the rodeo once that started. Part of it, they didn't want it during the school week because there was a school in the neighborhood. There were neighborhoods involved. If the house clipped a power line, you've got kids trying to go to school, they've got security issues. So they said, "We want you moving between, I think it was 11:00 Friday and 5:00 Sunday."

WARE: 11:00 PM Friday and 5:00 PM on Sunday?

EDMUNDSON: Right before dark on Sunday. THAT was mandated by CenterPoint, to facilitate their equipment and their customers in the neighborhoods and the residents AND security issues. Needless to say, that isn't what TXDOT wants. They want you on the highway when there is the least amount of traffic possible, which is mid-week. So it was back and forth with that, but really, it was CenterPoint that won out and then TXDOT said, "Okay, that's fine" and issued the permit for the weekend.

WARE: What was the date?

EDMUNDSON: I want to say it was January 26th. I'll double check it. Now that I thinking about it, it may have been February because we may have had to been off by March 1st. I know the date we were supposed to be off, shifted through the whole process. First it was going to be the end of the year, then it moved to January, and then it got to February. When we get into December/January, we start getting into rain issues. I remember pushing it, I thought, to February 1st, figuring we would at least have some clear days to move.

WARE: If the weather had been bad, would you have had to postpone the move?

EDMUNDSON: Yeah, and that's why we picked the first weekend that CenterPoint gave us because if we HAD to postpone, we had one more weekend they'd have open to complete it.

WARE: Compared to other old structures that you've dealt with, how was the construction of the Dew House similar?

EDMUNDSON: I'm always amazed at how well built older houses are. They are just built to last! The construction material is better. Needless to say, if they've lasted 100 years, they tend to be around for quite a while. The bugs, I mean, people always ask me, do we NOT just find enormous amounts of rot and termite damage. Bugs don't like that really dense, hard wood. They LOVE the new stuff because it's porous and they eat right through it. The newer parts of the house that we removed had much more rot and damage than the older portions of the house. Trees were grown longer and the material was denser. I can't remember if there was anything unusual about the construction about the house.

I was extremely pleased, that as Historic Houston's crew deconstructed the newer portions of the house, we would uncover bits and pieces of the older house. You never took stuff off and just threw it away. You would enclose something. For example, we had a picture of it from a book on the history of Missouri City and it indicated a *porte cochere* off the north side of the house. The copy of the photograph I had was not very good, but it looked like there were two turned columns and when our crew deconstructed that side of the house, lo and behold, in the wall are the two turned columns! Which is really lovely.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A *porte-cochère* coach gate or carriage porch is a covered porch-like structure at a main or secondary entrance to a building through which originally a horse and carriage and today a motor vehicle can pass to provide arriving and departing occupants protection from the elements.

And the same thing happened under the roof. There was a VERY large addition off the front, big roof. It enclosed what was a two story gallery porch on the original house that had been converted into a bathroom or maybe a little sun room. It was a teeny room. But up in the attic portion, under that enormous front gable was the original, off-center gable of the house. My guys will call me and say, "Oh, you need to come down and see this." It's so NICE when you see that. They wouldn't deconstruct, they would build over it and leave it there, as almost a structural member. You ARE going back to what the original structure looked like. That's VERY rewarding. I didn't see hand sawed logs. We did find some square nails. That's typical of that construction. It's really nice to see the older material, to see the unlayering of the house as you remove the newer parts.

WARE: That's very typical that they used to do that?

EDMUNDSON: Often. It's also, again, it's very satisfying because you go, "YAY! We are going in the right direction here. That WAS really there. We ARE looking at the same house!" Because, you know, a lot of times, someone sees something in a book or has a photograph and they tell you that's what it is, and yeah, it looks like it. And a LOT of times, if you saw the early picture of that house to what it looked like in 2005, you'd go, "THAT'S the same house?" Because it was very changed on that front. So it's really nice to say, "Oh, yeah, that WAS the original house. YAY. We ARE spending this money on the right project!" (laughing)

WARE: You touched on some of the political issues that you ran into. Were there any specific legal issues that presented a problem in preserving the Dew House?

EDMUNDSON: From Historic Houston's standpoint, a non-profit, we accepted the gift of the house. The arrangement of the transfer was very different from any other project we've taken on, because most of the time, when we move a single story, smaller house, the new owner reimburses us for the moving costs and for our costs. In this case, Muffie Moroney was donating the house; the cost of the move was being divided between Muffie and Johnson Development. The county was the end recipient of the house, and so we were in this three-way/four-way deal of making sure Muffie's happy, she's the donor; Johnson Development's got a huge investment in moving this house; then the county's the end recipient and has to pay us a dollar at the back end. Muffie had legal representation. I think our attorney looked over all the contracts. Everything looked as best we could see. At some point, you just hope everyone wants to do the right thing at the end. Sometimes you've got to cross your fingers and just hope a little bit. But it DID all work out well.

WARE: Had you ever worked that type of an arrangement before?

EDMUNDSON: Never! Never. Never. It was complicated because I was getting a check from Muffie to pay for parts and then I'd have to go to Johnson Development and when we ran into that four foot slab and when we had to rent equipment, that was coming out of our pocket. "Okay, who's paying for THIS part we weren't anticipating?" I'm extremely practical but you can't always just do things for the love of it. I think that little 'Bobcat-y' thing was \$1,500 a day! After two days and he hadn't gotten anything done. I said, "Take the piece of equipment back" and I called Johnson Development and said, "We either need a HUGE extension or we need more money or we need a bigger piece of equipment to crush this, because you WILL have to get this off your site eventually." But again, they're practical business people and they are saying we don't have to do that right now, and we're not going to race out there. You know, MY emergency wasn't necessarily THEIR emergency.

There was already a VERY large amount of money being spent moving this house. To go and get another \$30,000 to break up some concrete just to move it in one piece, there were some other solutions we could look at. Cutting the house was a much better solution than spending two more weeks, losing our date with CenterPoint, losing the date with TXDOT. I mean there were other considerations at this point. The house went back together within a half an inch from the front to the back. It was just amazing.

WARE: You had mentioned some monetary issues. Compared to other projects, how did Historic Houston come out?

EDMUNDSON: It's really hard to know. Since this was a little different than the normal project. There's a price for the house and a price for the move and then there's a price for Historic Houston. And I would LOVE for that to work but that isn't how that works. Usually there's a price for move, there's a price to reimburse Historic Houston for my time out of the office and coordinating the move, and very little left over for 'profit'. I think Historic Houston made a decision early on that house moving wasn't a fund raising activity.

On the Dew move, because it was structured so differently, we made a little bit of money in the overall cost of the move, I think. Not what we thought we would make. I think we expected to reclaim a lot more material, especially because of the size of the house. But the new additions had a LOT of rot damage to them, and so that material couldn't get reclaimed. We had hoped that if we didn't get the monetary cost upfront, we'd get material that we could resell through the warehouse. That will offset. When we ran into that material not being reclaimable we probably broke even, is what I would say. In terms of manpower, if I looked at the number of hours I spent, I think the last week alone, well, I know my phone bill went from an average of \$160 and that week before the move, with all my phone calls and meetings in Missouri City, I think my phone bill was \$2,500 that month (laughs).

WARE: WOW! (chuckling)

EDMUNDSON: So we were on WAY WAY overtime in that sense! But there are things you don't know about until you get into it. Like, we thought there was all this siding we could get and reclaim. When you can't do that, that's a negative value for us to be down there, because I've got crew that's down there, trucks down there, and containers down there. All of that is costing us money and time. But if someone doesn't do it, it really just doesn't get done.

We can go to the foundations and say, "We did this really great project but we ran over for these reasons that we couldn't anticipate" and we can ask them for help. And we can get help from the public. We always joke at Historic Houston because we are so small that what we don't make monetarily we'll get in good press. One has to consider that, too.

WARE: You've mentioned the role of Johnson Development Corporation, who has developed the Sienna Plantation area. Explain their role in saving the Dew House.

EDMUNDSON: Well, we've had a LOT of meetings with them. Not on the site with Rusty Campbell. Chad Johnson also spent several meetings talking with them.

WARE: Chad Johnson is with Johnson Development?

EDMUNDSON: Correct. I've never met the father, we had e-mail correspondence but Chad was the one that I met as the representative of Johnson Development. I will give them credit. They were very sensitive to Muffie to trying to save that house. I don't know what they are planning for this large tract that they've bought. But for them to take a step back and think about how could this house be used, could it repositioned somewhere, could it be kept in its spot, could the trees be kept? Could the house be moved? Could they jump in here and pay for half the move? That's HUGE! That really IS huge. My perspective was they really did way more than they needed to. They were very sensitive to the community. They tried to do the right thing. I think they DID do the right thing. They came forward and paid for half that move and it was a pricey move when it was all said and done.

WARE: About how much did they pay?

EDMUNDSON: The mover's fee for moving the house was \$108,750. Part of that was HIS moving fee and part of that was Historic Houston's coordinating of him. We had a private contractor who was lined up to handle the utility lines and traffic lights along Highway 6, other than the high voltage lines that CenterPoint was going to handle. We have used this company a lot. I'm very familiar with them. A week before the move I had a call from someone in Missouri City in the administration there, that they wanted to know the name, I guess it was a Thursday, they wanted to know the name of my contractor and a phone number for them and how did I get his name. I said, "Well, we've used them before. He's handled traffic lights and other things." Then Friday afternoon, about 3:00, I got a call from the contractor who said he'd just spent the entire day with people from Missouri City and basically, he was not going to be permitted to do the work. We're a week out from the move. It's 3:00 on a Friday afternoon; I can't get anyone in Missouri City to answer the phone. I don't have the right numbers to call.

So over the weekend I start getting a bunch of emails about these four traffic lights that Paul, our contractor, was going to handle, and how it was going to be a \$60,000 job to handle because they've got sensors on them for the ambulance and fire trucks and it's not just a "simple job". \$60,000 is just a HUGE number to me when the move is costing that number already.

But to put it in perspective, CenterPoint Energy said they'd give us a crew and they don't donate anything. Their charge for Friday night from 11:00 until Sunday at 5:00, I think it was 28 crews and 8 double bucket trucks was \$3,200.

WARE: \$3,200?

EDMUNDSON: \$3,200. Our guy was on board for about \$4,800. He's a smaller guy, \$4,800 to handle the traffic lights and any other utility lines, which means fiber optic lines or whatever. So, suddenly, \$60,000 on top of this \$108,000?

WARE: It's almost ten times what you expected.

EDMUNDSON: Yeah. AND as the weekend progressed, the emails were flying and part of the problem is while Muffie has been paying me and Johnson has been paying Historic Houston for the move, all that money was going straight to the mover, to keep him moving and on his schedule and for his expenses and costs. It was really looking, Monday morning, like this move isn't going to happen. The mover hasn't been paid his full amount so he's going to want money but the house hasn't moved. So where's that money? It was really a frantic few days.

WARE: Where did they get that \$60,000 number?

EDMUNDSON: That was another issue. We had all day meetings Monday with administrative people in Missouri City and then Monday evening was a city council meeting. I met before the city council with the council people. That was a nebulous number out there but that was what they were saying it was going to cost to handle these four traffic lights. Part of the other problem was our contractor was not licensed to work in Missouri City.

WARE: What was the name of your contractor's company?

EDMUNDSON: Liberty Electric.

WARE: What is Paul's last name?

EDMUNDSON: Virgadamo. So they weren't licensed to work in Missouri City. You can't ask Missouri City to bend all their rules to accommodate one thing. I understand that. But I couldn't get them to give me names of people who COULD work. By the time I got the list of who could work to handle the traffic lights, now, as Paul said, there's a simple way of doing things and then there's a really complicated way of doing things.

Now everyone and their brother has looked at every single line up and down this three and one-half to five miles of Highway 6. NO ONE wanted the liability of touching anyone else's line. So now we have not only the traffic lights, we've got Southwestern Bell and Time Warner was out there. I couldn't get ANY of them to just drive the route with me and identify their lines. I don't mind driving around but I don't know when I see a wire, whose line that is. So I need someone to go with me and say whose line this is.

That took three days but every single person had to identify their lines and then we had to make sure they could come out and EVERYONE got paid. So while I think the Missouri City bill came down to something close to \$40,000 for the traffic lights, Time Warner got \$4,800, they dropped ONE line, there was another fiber optic company, they got \$3,500. I felt like Muffie Moroney was just writing checks and part of the thing was, they were all looking at me like, "Are you paying for this?" I said "I'm not paying for this. This isn't our deal." So then, in the matter of a week, we had to get all these contractors lined up to do this AND the cost of the move started escalating WAY up there. I never found out exactly how much Muffie ended up having to pay, but from my rough numbers, I think it was about \$165,000.

WARE: Did you ever think she would say, "Enough?"

EDMUNDSON: She said "Enough" a couple of times. I just kept saying, "Historic Houston can't pay this". I think at one point I just kept saying, "Friday we're delivering this house to Kitty Hollow Park, so y'all've got to figure out how to make that happen." And they did. But we had so many people out there on that stretch of highway, there were so many crews from different companies, it was just amazing!

WARE: By what time on what day of that week did you KNOW that it would happen?

EDMUNDSON: Thursday.

WARE: Thursday morning?

EDMUNDSON: Mid-day. I will tell you, added to ALL of that, I think I told you the mover was very ill, so he was trying to back out of this deal, just get out of this, let's stop right here.

WARE: Back up a little bit and tell me about the shared history of Historic Houston and King Movers.

EDMUNDSON: Historic Houston began moving houses in 2002 and we used King House Moving. House movers are a very interesting breed of people. The really good ones are VERY skilled at what they do. They anticipate EVERY problem before you get on the road, because the last thing you want to do at 2:00 in the morning is have a problem! But there are a lot of them that DO just fly by the seat of their pants. It's scary. Frank King, the owner of the company, has been doing this for years. His son, Frank, they call him Bubba, had been doing it since he was probably ten or eleven. Frank and I got to be really good friends. In fact, I remember we moved the first four houses and I think he thought I would go away. But I kept coming back!

We had moved all these houses together and become close friends, and I remember the Wednesday before the move Frank had gotten VERY ill. In fact, the whole couple of weeks that his crew was out there working, preparing the house, he was back and forth, having tests and at the doctor. He was REALLY not feeling well. With all of this added cost and who's going to pay, and the tension of it, he was just ready to walk the deal. I remember on that Wednesday saying, "Frank, if we don't move this house right now, this house is not going to move. It's not going to happen next week. You either dump it and we walk right now, and what you've been paid is all you're going to get paid, because they are not going to pay you any more for a house that's never gotten delivered." I remember thinking, "I can't believe I'm talking him into doing this." But I think he really felt so bad that he just would like it to have gone away. I think he was optimistic that he would feel better in a week. He passed away in April of 2006. So he progressed downhill from that move.

WARE: Tell me about Brent King and the day of the move.

EDMUNDSON: Mmmh. That was HORRIBLE. I have to back up and tell you a GREAT story, because Frank was really a practical joker. When we had problems with Missouri City and we had the two halves of the house ready to go, Frank said, "Well, I know what we'll do. We'll move them up, right at Highway 6, so that everyone and their brother who passes is going to be wondering what these two half of houses ARE, sitting up here. And they'll start calling Missouri City and all that." And it worked! We DID. We moved them up there and ALL KINDS of people started calling about what are those houses, because I think when they were tucked back in the property with all the trees, it was hard to see what was really going on. But when they're parked at the side of the street, everyone and their brother was wondering what was going on. So that was great!

The day of the move Frank had gone to the doctor and had had some tests done. We were to meet out at the house between five and six and I had a call from his wife at about four that the doctor had called and said he had liver cancer and Frank was sleeping. She said, "Should I tell him?" She was crying, and I was crying and I said, "Lois, you've got to tell him." I said, "I don't want to be out on the move and I'm the only one knowing." I said, "That isn't going to work."

WARE: So, we're talking 4:00 the afternoon of the move.

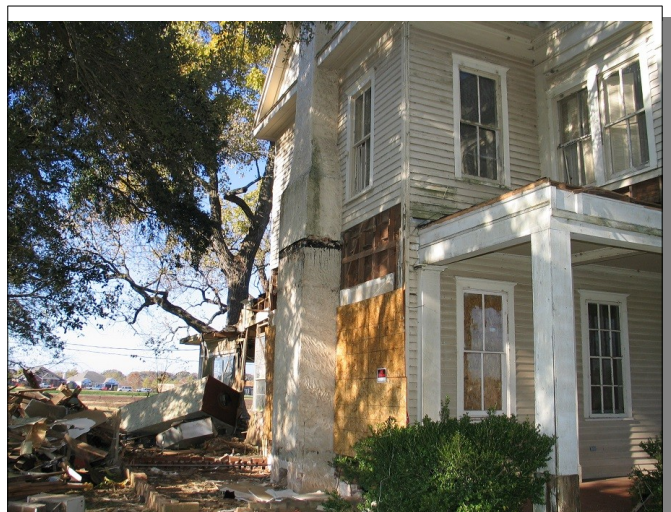
EDMUNDSON: Right. So that move, Frank's son was pulling the main part of the house. They had another person working with them that was pulling the back part. Frank, Jr., the son, I call him Bubba because that's what his dad called him, had his best friend with him. His daughter was there, Bubba's girlfriend was there. I think Lois, his wife, came. She may have left at one point. Sid came. I remember we all just got through it. But there was just this 'cloud' over it. But also, I think Frank knew that if he didn't move it that night, it wasn't going to move. To his credit, they all got out there, we didn't talk about it. Then, on top of it all, this was an unbelievably complicated move. It was almost surreal.

WARE: Did Frank King, Sr. ever move another house for Historic Houston?

EDMUNDSON: No. But the son has. Shortly after that he got profoundly ill. And, as I said, he died in April two months later. They set the Dew House down and I think the dad was so sick, they were all around the house, pretty much in shock.

WARE: We touched slightly upon prepping the house and moving it to the side of Highway 6. Tell me about that.

EDMUNDSON: One of the reasons that Frank and I worked well together is that house movers like to move houses. They like to do the stuff for moving houses. What they don't like to do is all the stuff to get the house ready to move, like take the porches off, cut the roof, board up the house, all of that. So MY crew would do all the prep work to get the house ready so that Frank and his crew would come in and do the house moving piece.



Historic Houston crew begins deconstruction of the Dew House in December 2005.

So Historic Houston's crew started with a one story addition on the south side of the building, and they dismantled that. Then there was a two story addition on the north side of the building that was two stories at the front and one story behind that. So our crew deconstructed that. Then they went to the back of the house and removed the enclosed glass porch and some additions that were off the second story, which had been a porch and been enclosed and turned into a bathroom. So our crew took that off and went to the front of the house and took off the front porch and the newer portion of the roof.

When they got down to the original part of the house, Frank's crew comes in and does the jacking up of the house and getting the steel under it and stabilizing that. Frank's crew was involved in trying to break up that concrete slab off the back and because of time constraints, they did the cut of the house. I would trust Frank's crew to have done ALL the prep work too, but that had just been the way our working relationship had always evolved, that my crew would do that. And since we like to reclaim the lumber, that makes more sense and it frees his crew up.

WARE: How long did the actual prep take?

EDMUNDSON: We started in December. I looked back on the pictures and I think my crew started the 15th of December. We had four guys on a regular basis and at certain times when they were taking off parts of the second story, we were up to six guys. They worked up to the Christmas holiday. I think they took a day or two off for Christmas and a day or two off for New Year's, but they worked, probably three weeks. Then Frank's crew came in around the 5th of January, something like that. His crew worked for probably two weeks straight jacking the house up and trying to break up that slab, and then cutting the house in half.

WARE: Were there any outbuildings by the Dew House that were worth saving?

EDMUNDSON: There was a smokehouse that was all brick that was interesting. I think Muffie may have had someone come in and reclaim all the brick. There may have been two outbuildings. A smokehouse and a pump house, maybe. That's why you want to keep it on its original site because those outbuildings are important to the history of the house and how the property evolved. The students from U of H that we used documented the site and showed where the outbuildings were in relationship to the house. Could they have been moved? It's probably economically easier when it's a small brick building like that to disassemble it and rebuild it.

There was a newer house on the property, to the north, that I think was a caretaker's house, or someone who worked maybe as a housekeeper. Someone had built that, maybe in the late '60s or '70s. So that house was there. I think the last time I looked that house may have still been there. There was talk about moving that. I don't think it ever moved. There was a garage that was somewhat attached, through a little walkway but there was never an intention of taking that garage to Kitty Hollow Park. While this sounds strange, a house mover normally likes a garage apartment, because they're usually a fairly low-pitched roof. Frank asked me to ask Johnson Development, because he would have the cost to demolition it and clearing up the mess, so Frank said, "While I'm out there on the property, if you want, we'll take that garage apartment". So they jacked the bottom floor and lowered it and took it out. That was happening during the whole week that the confusion with Missouri City was going on. They decided they'd keep their crew busy and get the house out of there. In fact, we needed to have the garage moved because of the tree configuration on the site. We had to have the garage gone because that's how it had to leave the property.

WARE: Where did that garage end up?

EDMUNDSON: As most houses that Frank had, they go to Waller. They live on his property and then people call him and he sells them.

WARE: Tell me about the night of the move.

EDMUNDSON: Most moves are really a lot of fun. I know I should probably NOT say this on tape, but it really is true. Frank used to joke, "It's running with the big dogs". For a woman doing this, it's really fun! I am a fly on the wall because I'm not really part of the crew but I get to be in the front truck. They are completely in charge, and I'm just along for the ride. I just love it.

That night there were SO many people. Everyone wanting to help, wanting to participate. The county brought in tons of people. For example, one of the mandates on the fiber optic lines is you can't cut them. So you have to lower them down and build this bridge over it. WELL, the county guys couldn't wait to build something. They wanted to build a mountain! They were great. It just felt like there were hundreds of people. Usually there are a lot of spectators, watching but there weren't for this move.

At the very last minute, I think I got down there about 5:00 or 5:30, we found out from some of the police officers that were there, or from the county people, that Missouri City had decided to close the road and re-route traffic around. Which was great because not only were there a ton of trucks but there were two halves of this huge house on the road. Traffic going by is usually is an added confusion factor. So that was interesting because the road was just empty. People were walking all over Highway 6 at ten o'clock and eleven o'clock at night, two o'clock at night. A move goes really slowly, through certain parts where they either had utility lines or whatever. It was somber because we all knew Frank was sick and I think he wasn't really feeling well that night particularly.

Emotionally he wasn't, but I think he physically wasn't feeling well that night either. We got the house out on the road, got through some early utility lines, like Time Warner, and then we came up to the first high voltage line. I think we were there at 10:00 but CenterPoint wasn't coming until 11:00 so we had to wait for CenterPoint. People were milling around and wandering around. When CenterPoint came they were the heroes of the night. The guys LOVE doing this. And I



Missouri City law enforcement routed traffic around Highway 6 for the move so the whole convoy had good conditions to move the Dew House to Kitty Hollow Park.

think part of it was because it was out of the ordinary. They're out there in their bucket trucks, just joking with each other, handling these lines, and we're all just sitting there, watching them. It was really interesting.

We didn't get into Kitty Hollow Park until 5:30 in the morning. It took a LONG time, because they have to raise the lines, and then you have to lower the lines. I'm not sure why that seemed to take so long, but it did. Then when I came back out of Kitty Hollow Park it was like monkeys on a tree; these guys working that one intersection with these four lights. It felt like there were five trucks around each one, and twenty guys up, and I thought "Okay, so maybe the \$60,000 wasn't out of proportion."

I had no clue about how intense a project this was. But, again, their job was to get that up and going by 6:00 when traffic starts coming through. Testing it and making sure it's timed back out again. So, in that sense, I was really humbled by that because here I am, getting ready to leave, but these guys are now on overtime and doing all this. It was a LOT more complicated than I had envisioned. I was really humbled by the amount of work that was involved in all of that.

The move was really spectacular. Just great pictures of just this enormous house, moving! A funny aside is, I always go look at the house the day after the move, and of course, the other rule is, you cut a house and it rains. No rain was expected – it rains. So that morning it poured. I went out there that morning with my daughter, and it was wet and there was no one in the park, and I checked on things. Then I decided I'd go back out in the afternoon because it had gotten sunny. I go back out and there are people ALL over that house! They're inside it and it dawned on me, how strange it is for them! Because they left the day before and there was no house in the park and they come back twelve hours later and there's a house in the park – and in the BACK of the park. How did it get there?!? It's a HUGE curiosity, so much so that they took the plywood off the doors and crawled up through the chimney and got in. They just wanted to see what's inside! None of it was malicious; they just wanted to see why it was so important to move this house. Most of the people I talked to had seen the house on Highway 6 forever. It was there when they were kids but they had no clue about the history of the house. Glad to see it saved, but they didn't have any clue about how it got there. It was just THERE! They are amazed at that. Everyone said they were just happy to see it saved.

I will say the house always looks its most horrible the day after the move. Whenever we have moved a house, I tell the new owner, “When you go look at it the next morning, be prepared. It's going to look as awful as it will ever look. It'll have tree parts hanging off of it and things hanging down. You will be questioned by everyone you know, “Why did you spend money doing this because it looks bad?” But if you THEN go back two years later and it has been re-done, that picture is just a snapshot out of a whole deal.” But it's VERY hard when they see it the next morning and you can just see it in their face. It's like “Oh my God, why did I spend the money to do this?”

I think the general public is appreciative and thinks it IS worthwhile. Even though they don't know what it takes to get it there.

WARE: Had Historic Houston ever moved a house to a park location?

EDMUNDSON: No. In fact, there was talk at one point through the project that it was going to go to the park but we didn't know where in the park. We were going to put it on some temporary spot until a permanent decision was made. Then Frank and Grady Prestage, and several other people at the county had a 'Come to Jesus' meeting. You'll have two halves of a house. The longer they sit, they won't go back together. The mover will tie them back, but if you're going to move it again, what's the point of him tying them back together? So we convinced them to figure out a place for it to go and let's put it there one time.

WARE: A while back in the interview, you mentioned the Dew House Celebration and Farewell in August of 2006. Have you ever experienced an occasion like that before?

EDMUNDSON: No. In fact, I almost didn't go. I'll be real honest. I got the invitation for it and was a little surprised that I saw my name on it and that I was going to speak. I was like, "OH, gosh, I guess this means I've gotta go!" I really almost would not have gone. If I could have come up with a viable reason, I wouldn't have. I think it was a Sunday afternoon and I didn't want to go. Also because there's this, I'm going to be salvaging it, I'll be seen as the Reaper in the night, the Black Knight. So I hate BEING in that position. A lot of people will also throw out a lot of ideas that it's too late to be thinking about those right now, and I'm too tired to discuss all those. I know that sounds callous, but there's only so much of me and time and all of that. So I was really surprised by all of that and then to see my name on it. I thought, "I've GOT to go now."

It was very interesting to see people talk about their experiences in the house, and parties they went to, and what they thought of the house and how important it was for the area. A LOT of the people who were there were associated with Muffie and her family. What was probably more interesting to me were the phone calls we got. When my crew started working on the house, we put a big banner on it, Historic Houston. So people driving by would find us. The banner doesn't have our phone number on it, so they'd find us and call us and ask us. They'd tell us stories about when they were little, seeing that house, and who lived in it. When my crew was working on it, taking the house apart, again, because it's close to Highway 6, people will just pull in and talk. You get the anecdotal stories of who lived in the house, events that happened. That was how we heard, anecdotally, the slab in the back.

We were told by several people, and the story was pretty consistent, so I have a feeling it was probably pretty right on, was that when that addition was being contemplated, parts of Highway 6 were being built. So the property owner, whoever he was, went and talked to the contractor that was pouring the concrete for Highway 6, and said, "You know, if you want to dump your end of the loads here, because I'm going to be doing this patio." Everyone told us that story and as we tried to break up that concrete, yes, I think it was road grade. It had rebar throughout it. It wasn't going anywhere!

The support I get from people who are just happy to see that it's not being torn down. That's the small reward you get for doing the project. You get people saying, "Oh, I grew up seeing this house" or "My mother came." There were a lot of ladies who must have had tea in that house because a LOT of people talked about "my mother used to come over" and either play cards or have tea. They would stand out on the porch or the kids would run in the back yard. But it encourages the thought that yeah, it does deserve to be preserved and kept.

WARE: What haven't I asked you about that you want to share?

EDMUNDSON: Nothing. You've hit it all. I can't think of anything.

WARE: Then I'm going to thank you!

EDMUNDSON: You're welcome.

Interview ends