

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Marie Muehr Dunkerly**

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Interviewer: Bruce Kelly

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

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17 Pages



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Transcript

KELLY: Welcome, Marie.

DUNKERLY: Thank you, sir.

KELLY: Where were you born?

DUNKERLY: I was born in Schulenburg, Texas.

KELLY: Okay. What brought you to Sugar Land?

DUNKERLY: My daddy went to work for Hughes Tool and he got laid off during the Depression. We moved to Sugar Land in 1929. His name was John Muehr. [pronounced Mure]

KELLY: And what house did you move to in Sugar Land?

DUNKERLY: Well, when we first came to Sugar Land, we lived kinda out in the country for a little bit. Then we moved to the second house on the right hand side of main Street, from the church. My brother, Alton, was born when we lived there. He was born in 1931. Then we moved to 2nd Street, and that's where we lived. I started school there and walked to school. It was just HALF a block. We'd come home at noon and we had so much fun. We didn't have a lot of money but we had a good life. We ate our meals all together, you know. We sat at the table – breakfast, dinner and supper, we called it.

KELLY: What were your siblings names?

DUNKERLY: My older brother was Leo Muehr, he was four years older than I. He went to school here, too. And then it was me, and then it was my sister, Anna and then my brother, Alton.

KELLY: And your mother?

DUNKERLY: My mother was Rosie. She was a Derrick before she married my daddy, Muehr. We all came from Schulenburg. We were ALL born in Schulenburg except Alton.

KELLY: Did your father know Mr. Ulrich, who was from Schulenburg?

DUNKERLY: Well, I don't really know. I don't know how he got to Houston. I had an uncle there, Louie Muehr. Daddy went to work for Hughes Tool. He came to Sugar Land, 'cause Louie Muehr was here. You remember Louie Muehr?

KELLY: I DO remember Louie. Now, were they brothers?

DUNKERLY: Yes. Victor Blaschke worked in the hardware store, too. His wife was my daddy's sister.

KELLY: When your daddy came here, where did he work?

DUNKERLY: He went to work at Sartartia Dairy. We had a dairy. We had a lumberyard, we had a gin, we had everything here.

KELLY: Tell me about the Sartartia Dairy. Nobody ever talks about that.

DUNKERLY: Well, I don't know too much about that, but I do know that Daddy walked to work. The dairy was kind of where y'all [the Charles Kelly Family] used to live on Imperial Boulevard. It was back behind where the blacks lived. Yeah, Mr. Scarborough ran the dairy.

KELLY: You got to it along Ulrich Street?

DUNKERLY: Yeah. And then Daddy got to work in the Mercantile hardware store. He drove a truck for a while and they picked things up in Houston and brought things back, and then he got to be in the receiving part, seeing whatever come in and out. That's where he retired.

KELLY: Well, now, let's go back to you living on The Hill. How old were you when you moved to Sugar Land?

DUNKERLY: In 1929 I was 6. I can't remember first and second grade too much. We had a good life. Mother was a saving woman. She cooked and sewed and all. We had a lot of friends. The Tices' lived a couple doors down, and Ruby Douglas – me and her were real good friends. We walked to school together. I was in the pep squad and I made pretty good grades (chuckles) because I graduated! But anyway, I just had fun. I met my first husband at the carnival on the school grounds. You know those little buildings on each side of the auditorium? I wish they had never tore those down. I wish they could've made something out of that. That was so beautiful.

KELLY: You went to school in those little classrooms?

DUNKERLY: Yes. I took Home Economics. I made a dress! I'll never forget that as long as I live. Pretty dress; orange dress with a little brown bolero. I never did keep up with sewing. When I started going with my first husband, I was sixteen. I married him when I was eighteen and then I was so in love and (chuckles) didn't go back to sewing!

KELLY: Sugar Land High School was a very good high school. The Home Economics facilities were really superb for a school its size.

DUNKERLY: Oh yes. We did a little cooking; it had a kitchen and a sewing room. I can't remember too much. But I do remember that dress I made.

KELLY: Who was your first husband?

DUNKERLY: Ray Miller. He was from Idabel, Oklahoma. He came down here and he went to work in the canning plant. He was a label machine operator. He was kin to the Millers. Peggy and I don't know what the boy's name was. But he came down – they were related. I met him when I was sixteen. We had a little carnival over at the school.

KELLY: The Spring Festival?

DUNKERLY: Yeah. Laura Cooke was my friend and we went to the carnival. This Ray Miller kept following me around and he finally wanted to take me home. And I said, "No. You were going with Ruby Douglas." And he said, "Well, I just had a date or two with her. I wasn't GOING with her." So anyway, he took me home. He had a car around the corner, there. Ruby got so mad at me she wouldn't talk to me for a week or so.

We went to California and got married there in 1941. He had two sisters in Redondo Beach, California, and they encouraged him to come out there and get a job so he did. That was in September of 1941. Caught the train right at the depot. I was eighteen in April. We lived there until the war broke out in December, and we came home. We came back over here, to Sugar Land.

I went up to East Texas in 1950, and he went to woodworking school in a little town called Ladonia. He made the bedroom suite that I got in my bedroom. He was real good at that. We were going to come to Sugar Land to see Mama and Daddy and go to the Valley where his parents lived. And then he went to Greenville. The little town, Ladonia, wasn't much to it, and he wanted to buy some different clothes – because he really dressed! Always looked like a million dollars.

Anyway he left that morning; it was December the 30th. He got in the car and he came back in, and he kissed me a second time. I watched the car go away and he never come back. He had a wreck in Greenville. Big old truck out of Lavender killed him. Ran into him. I had a little house there and a few acres of land. I sold it and came back to Sugar Land. We brought his body back and buried him in Richmond.

KELLY: When you moved to Sugar Land, did you get a house of your own?

DUNKERLY: No, I moved in with Mother and Daddy. The furniture was brought down here and was stored up in the old hardware. I lived with Mama and Daddy 'til I married Raymond.

KELLY: What year did you marry Raymond Dunkerly?

DUNKERLY: In 1957. He was a good man. [soft voice]

KELLY: Tell us about Raymond.

DUNKERLY: Oh, Raymond, I was everything to him. He thought I looked cute in the morning, in the bed. "You look so cute with your little old nose." And I said, "WHO in the WORLD looks good early in the morning?!" But he thought so. I came first in his life. And he took me everywhere. I went huntin', I walked behind a bird dog many a mile. He LOVED to hunt. And he LOVED to dance! He was a good dancer! GOD, he could dance!

KELLY: What were the dances he liked to dance? Polka?

DUNKERLY: Anything. He could dance any kind of dance. He looked so graceful on the floor, you know. Some of them, you know, they shake their hands, like 'that'. He looked so good and he was good to my mama and daddy. He was a good man. I sure did hate to lose him (voice quivers).

KELLY: Yeah, I know.

DUNKERLY: We married – now this is strange. Raymond and Anna Maude married September the 24th, 1941. And my first husband and I married September the 27th in 1941. And then Anna Maude died in 1952. She had a cerebral hemorrhage. Do you remember Anna Maude?

KELLY: No, I was born in 1952.

DUNKERLY: Oh, gosh, I didn't know – (chuckles). Bless her heart, she was a sweet lady. Anyway then my husband got killed December the 30th in 1952. So we married the same year and then lost [our spouses] in the same year. I came back to Mama's. I knew Raymond when I worked for the Sugarland Industries many a year ago. And, he and Dr. Wheeler came and picked me up one day at Mama's and said, "We're going down to" – that place in Houston where you used to eat oysters and drink beer (chuckles) – "Bill Williams." That's how I started going with Raymond. Went with him five years and then I married him.

KELLY: You worked for the Sugarland Industries? What did you do?

DUNKERLY: I worked in the mailing department. I worked in that old building.

KELLY: Describe that old building.

DUNKERLY: Oh, I tell you, Charles [Bruce's father's name, who Marie knew], I mean, Bruce, I can TELL you just every bit of that place.

KELLY: Tell me. Spend your time on that, because I'd like to hear about that.

DUNKERLY: Okay. I'm gonna start way down there. I remember the Prickle Hotel. They had rooms. People ate there and all, and I remember one guy shot himself in the head. I don't know what his name was. They said it was terrible. He committed suicide. Then we had the lumberyard and then we had the gin. Then we had Pike's Café and above it, they had rooms. The railroad people come to town. I don't know what they done here but they'd come for a few days, so they had rooms up there so they could sleep. Then, down below Pike's Café, was a barbershop and behind that was Miss Cheaney's beauty parlor. Then we had the clinic. Dr. Wheeler was the dentist. We had an eye doctor; he pierced my ears. Then we had Dr. Quillian and Dr. Dub O. Jenkins and Dr. Slaughter and Dr. Kuykendall. I don't remember who else might have been there.

We had a shoe shop. The Scanlin's ran the shoe shop. Betty and Roy Cordes had the tailor shop. I don't know who had it before Betty and Roy. There was another building where the meat market was, and behind that was Mose Narvick, a vegetable man. Then we got the big hardware store. When you first walk in, there was a candy counter on the right-hand side, and then the grocery. They tell me the house that I lived in was built for Mr. Charlie Dierks. I don't know, 'cause it was built in 1920. The groceries were all up behind the counter there, with shelves. And Mr. Dierks had to climb up there and get them. You ordered your groceries, and then they'd put them on the counter, and you pay for it.

Across from that was the dry goods department. They had clothes and a few things. In the middle there was a round area where the office was. In the back was the hardware store. They even sold the caskets! And then next to that was the old drug store. Above that was the telephone operators and the doctors offices, Dr. Slaughter and them. The next building was where they had the post office, where Miss Nona Laperouse worked. Right next to that was a bank and in there was the Sugarland Industries and the Sugar Company.

KELLY: I want to ask about the bank. When you walked in from the front, the porch, was it a separate room?

DUNKERLY: No it was kind of all-in-one. But they were right on the left-hand side.

KELLY: And you could see the office pool behind them? It was just all open?

DUNKERLY: I think it was all open, to the best of my knowledge. The Sugarland Industries and the Sugar Company was kind of together, but yet, was separate. Odell Woods did something with the railroad. I never will forget him either. He was a nice fella. We had the Gandy Hotel and the Prickle Hotel. Then we had the Imperial Inn, you know – it burned. They were telling a while ago, a man got drunk and he left a match lay on the floor. I don't know.

KELLY: The Imperial Hotel had a little dance floor?

DUNKERLY: Yeah! They used to have dances there.

KELLY: Did you ever attend a dance?

DUNKERLY: No, I never did attend the dances. But Ray (my first husband) and I lived there for a while, I don't know how long. Til he went to work in the refinery. He took care of all the ladies and then the sewing. All those machines. He was in the packing department. That's where he worked.

KELLY: Now, they tore down all the stores except the mercantile and they built the new shopping center in 1952, across the highway. And you went to work there?

DUNKERLY: I worked over there, across the street, 20 years for Imperial Sugar Company.

KELLY: When you say 'across the street'...

DUNKERLY: That new place. But what happened – Mr. Steed, he was an office manager at the Imperial Sugar Company and he called me one day, and said, "What are you doing?" We was living out there on the farm, where Raymond and I were living. I said, "Not anything." He said, "Would you come and help us out? The girl in the mailing department is pregnant and we hired another girl, but she didn't want to stay." So Miss Myrtle Stahbler said, "Why don't you call Marie, 'cause she worked for us once before?" So I went and the girl that had the original job – well, she didn't want to go back to work. I worked twenty years! That's how I got that job. Then I relieved the girl on the information desk, Connie [Morales] Meza, who still works there. They had a telegraph office and I had to learn how to do that. That was something else! But, I had such a good time there. That was the BEST company to work for and the BEST people to work for and to work with. I loved that. That was the BEST days of my life.

KELLY: When my brother and I were youngsters, we could walk upstairs and talk to you and say, "We wanna see our Daddy." That's the kind of place it was, wasn't it?

DUNKERLY: Yeah. Yes, yes.

KELLY: I don't know if we were the only children that did that, but I bet there were others.

DUNKERLY: I read that article. [NOTE: Kelly wrote his remembrances of his young years for a newspaper article for the City of Sugar Land's 50th anniversary of incorporation.] You had some good articles in the paper. I read them.

KELLY: I remember seeing you. You and Faye Ford, I think, often worked at the...

DUNKERLY: Yes, she worked up there. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah she worked. She was there before Connie came, yeah. Faye Ford. I forgot about her.

KELLY: And some other people that worked there, when you were there...Lillie Mae Hickey. What did Lillie Mae do?

DUNKERLY: Well, she was kind of a secretary, I guess.

KELLY: I've heard from many people that she thought she kind of ran the company.

DUNKERLY: Yeah, she did! Yeah. Yeah, yeah, that's right.

KELLY: She was a character.

DUNKERLY: And then there was Hugh Williams. He retired the same year I did, in 1979. You remember him?

KELLY: He was the president at one time.

DUNKERLY: President, yes sir. And he and I retired and we had a BIG party. We had so many nice gatherings up there, until somebody, one Christmas, in the refinery, I think it was, in the machine shop. Somebody done something there and they cut us all off. We couldn't have any more parties. We had a drink or so, you know? We might have laughed a little bit, but we didn't do anything out of school. (chuckles) Oh, but I enjoyed them days, I tell you. That was the good old days.

KELLY: You married into the Dunkerly family. I'm sure you knew Mabel Dunkerly pretty well. Tell me about Mabel.

DUNKERLY: That was the MOST wonderful person that ever drewed a breath. She never did marry for years and years. They had a crippled boy. Do you remember Freddy?

KELLY: I do.

DUNKERLY: Well, I always thought, before I got my family, that was her child. But it was her brother! Then she married Virge Wooley. Do you remember him? She didn't live but a little over a year with him and he died of a heart attack. He was so good to her, 'cause he helped take care of Freddy. She would help everybody anywhere she was. She was an angel. (gets choked up) She was a good person. But she didn't get much happiness, 'cause she took care of Freddy and then she did all that other. She used to work in the office there where it is now – you know, we had a barber shop there. You remember that? Behind the Miss Cheaney, beauty shop there was the Credit and Collections office. Mabel worked there and Austin Karr, and I think, Phillips.

KELLY: Rufus [Phillips].

DUNKERLY: Oh, I remember so many of those people. My brother comes over and we ride up and down these streets, and we remember who lived in all those houses. I still remember all those good old ladies. He and I, we're eight years different, but we had a lot of fun together.

KELLY: Let's talk about Raymond a little bit. Did he own the property, the acreage up here, when you married him?

DUNKERLY: Yes. He bought that when Anna Maude was still alive. They lived on Lakeview next door to where the Wheelers used to live. Anna Maude and Raymond were living there, and he was working for Junior Wirtz. You know, the veterinary. He was a dragline operator. I always heard that he could work with cattle. I mean, he knew how to give 'em shots and drench 'em and whatever they had to do. They said he was just as good as Mr. Wirtz but he couldn't write a prescription. And he bought this piece of property. You won't believe that he paid \$2,500 for that piece of property. It was a little over seventeen acres.

KELLY: It's on Burney Road, west of Burney Road, north of...?

DUNKERLY: Yeah, uh, huh. On that ridge that goes down like that. Buddy Wheeler bought it and sold it for \$1.1 million something. Raymond paid \$2,500, but he didn't have a bridge then. He had to go by boat. He bought it from somebody from the prison farm, I think. But he didn't have the money, then. He was at White's Café sittin' there one day, after they got off of work. A bunch of them went there and drank a few beers. This man heard Raymond say he had this piece of property, but he didn't have the money. And so Mr. Ware, I think his name was, said, "Would you take me out there?" And he lent him the money. We paid, I believe, fifty-five dollars every month. We paid him the LAST payment and he died right after that! That was quite a coincidence.

KELLY: And so, Raymond's work, was to run the cattle on the property?

DUNKERLY: Well, he worked for other people. He baled hay, and people like Pete Fendley had cattle. He'd go out there and work the cattle for him. Then we had the city dogs. They brought the dogs out there. We had nice pens for them. They'd pick the dogs that were stray or got away from their house. We made good money with that. And we had the garden. We had three BIG spots of garden. We had one with just potatoes, oh, and we raised quail. We had ducks, we had chickens – we didn't have no pigs. (chuckles) We had some dogs – we had bird dogs, and, Raymond was a good hunter, a very good hunter.

KELLY: Where would you all go hunting?

DUNKERLY: Well, we went to Schulenburg. But that was more or less dove hunting somewhere out around Clodine area. Well, I walked behind him with the bird dogs and I picked the birds up. I was his bird dog, I guess you'd call it! We had more fun together. (chuckles) We DID! Raymond took me everywhere. He always said, you know, I'm German. He said, "I married a Dutchman. She's hell with them pots and pans!" (laughs)

KELLY: (laughing)

DUNKERLY: Anna Maude didn't care about cooking too much. But I love to cook.

KELLY: He liked your cooking!

DUNKERLY: But now I'm by myself, you know. You don't do much cooking, you know. But I got a nice home and I want to live there as long as God lets me. I don't want to have to get in the home, unless I just have to. My house was built in 1920. Alton, my brother, didn't believe it. So I called the county and sure enough, it was 1920. And I was born in 1923. See I'm 86. I'll be 87 in April. April the 10th.

KELLY: Amazing. Oh, St. Theresa's has been a BIG part of your life.

DUNKERLY: I've been a Catholic all my life.

KELLY: Tell me your first memories of St. Theresa's.

DUNKERLY: Well, St. Theresa's Catholic church was on Main Street. Down the street was the Methodists, and then the Presbyterian and then the Baptists. We didn't have Mass every week. Years and years ago, Father Flannigan stayed at Miss Baime's house. He used to take care of the prison and we'd have a mass maybe once a month. I've been a Catholic and both times I married Catholic. I married the boy in Redondo Beach, California, by a priest. And then I married Raymond. I told Raymond that I wanted to marry by my religion, and he didn't go to church. He was a good man. Church ain't gonna get you to where you're supposed to go. You can be a good Christian. I don't belong to all those societies at the church. I haven't been going [to church] lately because it's so hard for me to walk. And that school, Bruce, we didn't need that school. Our church has changed so much, but I still belong to it.

KELLY: Well, describe to me the inside of the old building on Main Street. What was it like? Do you remember walking in the front door, and kind of describing it? Do you recall? The one on 5th and Main?

DUNKERLY: I don't recall too much. But I tell you what did happen when I was little. I got to tell you this. When I was just born, I mean I was just walking good. We went to church in Schulenburg and there was a man by the name of Mr. Laubach. I can see him right now. He was tall, had black hair and a black mustache. And when Mother took me to church, I had to go see him. I had to run to see that man. And I still like a man, you know. (chuckles). Anyway, I just LOVED him, and I had to go to where he was sittin'.

So, oh, not too, too many years Mother and Daddy knew he was in a nursing home in Schulenburg. They went to see him and he remembered me. He asked if I grew up to be a pretty girl. Naturally Mama said yes! I was gonna go see him next time we went bird huntin', but he died. I'd have loved to see him. He still remembered me like I remember him. I can just visualize him. I could draw a picture of him.

KELLY: Could you tell me who your favorite priest was, over the years?

DUNKERLY: YES. Well, I loved them all, but Father Murray – I don't remember what year he was here, but he signed my prayer book. We used to have a prayer book. Father Bob Matzinger used to be our priest, and Father Ritz. Father Bob is the one I want to bury me when I die. He lives in Houston. He was transferred there. He's been kind of sick, I heard, but he was a SWELL priest.

KELLY: You were saying early on that the priests came from Richmond to Sugar Land only every so often for mass?

DUNKERLY: Yeah, that was Father Hugh Finnegan. I know that we went to midnight Mass, the Wheelers and Raymond and I, in that old church way back there.

KELLY: Who was your favorite teacher here in Sugar Land?

DUNKERLY: Well, I tell you something. I don't remember a lot of my teachers (chuckles). But you know, Alton remembers them.

KELLY: How about classmates? Who were your friends?

DUNKERLY: Oh well, Ruby Douglas and Lucille Terry and Laura Cooke.

KELLY: What did young girls do for entertainment and recreation when you were growing up in Sugar Land?

DUNKERLY: I don't know what we done too much.

KELLY: Where'd you go swimming?

DUNKERLY: I never did learn to swim (chuckles). I can't swim!

KELLY: Did you go to dances?

DUNKERLY: Well, yes, we went to dances. And you know they had that upstairs in the Salvage Building, you remember that? Old Ottis Enquist ran it. My older brother, Leo, worked there. He painted. He learned to be a good painter and he died in 2004.

KELLY: Were your parents kind of protective? Did they kind of try to keep you from going to the dances, or...?

DUNKERLY: No, no. Mother and Daddy, well, we were all good kids, you know. When we got married, they never interfered with any of our lives. You know, they may like some things we done but we all...

KELLY: Tell me about medical care here. What was that like?

DUNKERLY: Oh, well, you know, we paid just a little bit and, I think Raymond said he had his appendix, it cost \$3.00 in the hospital. I don't know what our fee was, but we went and got our shots and everything we needed. I tell you, we just had such a good life here.

KELLY: Did you see Dr. Slaughter or Dr. Kuykendall?

DUNKERLY: Well, I went to Dr. Slaughter, and Dr. Dub. O. Jenkins. Do you remember him? I had four miscarriages and he was my last doctor when I had my last baby, and I lost it. I had four, and I just couldn't carry 'em. Way back there, they didn't know what to do. Now they sewed you up or something else to keep the baby. But they couldn't help me. I went on Sundays to get my B-12 shot at the clinic. Medical care didn't cost us nothin' much. We didn't make much money but things were cheap then.

KELLY: Things were good in Sugar Land, weren't they?

DUNKERLY: We didn't have a car for years and years. When we went to Schulenburg to see our grandparents, we had to ride with somebody.

KELLY: Your formative years were during the Depression. Did you know there was a Depression when you lived in Sugar Land?

DUNKERLY: No, no I didn't. I was just six years old when I come. I didn't know. And then I started school the next year, 1930. I vaguely remember the first few years of school. I wasn't smart but I done pretty good. (chuckles) I got out of school and I married twice, but I married good men. They loved me and they treated me royally. And Raymond was such a good man. He was so sweet. He always complimented me. When we lived out at the farm we had a lot of company. We drank beer and had fun and a lot of couples came.

We decided to go to Clodine to a little old beer joint. They had shuffleboard and we danced and drank beer. And the girls said, "Well, we gotta go home and fix up." He said, "Why don't you do like my wife? She gets up in the morning and fixes up, and if we get ready to go somewhere, she don't have to go in there and change. She always looks nice."

KELLY: (laughing) You can't ask for a better husband than that!

DUNKERLY: I know it. I never will forget that. He always complimented me. And he loved my cooking. He didn't like a lot of food at first, like salmon patties and okra. But he learned to like all of those things, after I fixed them. And we danced at home. He loved to dance.

KELLY: What kind of music would you dance to?

DUNKERLY: Well, you know, Glen Miller and then some of the...

KELLY: Big bands?

DUNKERLY: Yeah. Ray Anhaizer used to play for us at the school functions.

KELLY: Oh, is that right?

DUNKERLY: You know, at the Community Center. He was good. My husband would say, "Well, we gonna go but I guess we won't dance much, or we won't stay long." So first number they played, we danced. And then we're the last ones to leave! (laughs)

KELLY: Your brother-in-law, Harold, told me he played saxophone in a little band at the Imperial Inn. Back in the very old days.

DUNKERLY: Oh? I didn't know that! Harold was a good boy. Yeah. Did you know Howard Dunkerly?

KELLY: No, I know of him but I never knew him.

DUNKERLY: Well, he died young. See, Raymond was only seventy-eight when he died. And Mabel was eighty-four, and Harold was, I think, eighty-four, and Helen Friend was eighty-four. But Raymond died young.

KELLY: Is there anything that you can think of that you would like to say, before we close?

DUNKERLY: I'm just glad that I lived here (voice quavers) all those years. Everybody, like your daddy and your mother and Margaret and Robert Hill, and all those other people that lived here. We were all good friends. Let me tell you one other thing. I worked for a root beer stand. I hopped cars, you know, waited on people.

KELLY: In Sugar Land?

DUNKERLY: In Sugar Land. I wasn't really of age to serve beer. [spoken in a confidential tone] But Mr. Baldwin, he had the liquor store. They hired me, and they fixed it some way that I could wait on cars. I went out there and people were in their cars all dressed up. I didn't know 'em – front and back seat. So I brought that tray out to put on their door, and dadburn, that beer fell on that man! I said, "Well, I'm so sorry. I'll pay to have your suit cleaned." He was dressed up! He said, "That's all right. Don't worry about it." Now, how many would have said that? Anybody would've got out there and went up to the boss and said "Fire this girl!" I'll never forget that as long as I live.

KELLY: I didn't know you worked at the root beer stand. Can you describe it?

DUNKERLY: I waited on cars. Everybody drove up there. Do you remember Arcola Salter?

KELLY: Of course. She was married to my uncle Tom.

DUNKERLY: Oh, that's right! She was my sister-in-law. I mean, Louise was my sister-in-law and also her sister-in-law. So, she would say something about it. One time they drove up to get waited on at the root beer stand. Not when I served them. I don't know who it was. And said some guy come up there and said, "Where's Arcola?" And she said, "Here I am, here I am." But they wanted to know where the town of Arcola was. I can never forget that! And she – you know, she liked her beer and so did Salter.

KELLY: Did the root beer stand have a little dining room or anything?

DUNKERLY: Well, they had a big room there. A big place where you go to sit down and eat, you know. Then they had that open window where people went up there. When I worked for Pike's Café I made a dollar a day. I walked from my house on 2nd Street, down there where Pike's Café was. I never will forget that. I could see better. Now I got night blindness and this eye's got that retinas-pigmentosa and they can't help me. That's why I can't see good.

KELLY: Did you wait tables at Pike's?

DUNKERLY: Uh huh.

KELLY: Well, you probably were the nerve center of Sugar Land. I'm sure you heard a lot of stuff there.

DUNKERLY: Oh, well, I don't remember a lot of things. I know I didn't make much money and a little bit of tips, but I bought my first husband a signet ring. I saved that much money. But, you know, I don't know what I paid for it. That thing got lost. I don't know what ever happened to that ring.

KELLY: Hmm.

DUNKERLY: Ray Miller was part Cherokee Indian. Good lookin' guy! He had a lot of girl friends but I got him!

KELLY: Well, thank you. I really appreciate this. I need you to sign a paper.

DUNKERLY: I hope I didn't say nothin' out of school.

KELLY: You did wonderfully. You did absolutely wonderfully. And you didn't say a thing out of school. It was wonderful. I'm just going to read this to you. Basically, it's saying that you give us permission to use the interview. But, we'll transcribe it on paper and we'll give it back to you, to look at. And if there's anything you want to change or whatever, that you'll have that opportunity. You have control over that.

DUNKERLY: Okay.

KELLY: So I just want you to know that. But it says, I, Marie Dunkerly, of Sugar Land, Texas, do donate and convey all rights, titles and interests in my oral history interview, which was recorded with my consent, on January 30th, 2010, in Sugar Land, Texas. I understand that the Fort Bend Historical Commission, Museum Association and other local historical organizations will use this interview, including components of my recorded image and voice, for scholarly, educational and historical purposes, as they see fit. I understand that a transcript or a copy of this interview will be provided for my review.

I understand if I fail to notify the Fort Bend Historical Commission of desired changes within thirty days of receipt, my interview may be finalized without change. I relinquish all legal title and literary property rights which I have, or may deem to have, in said interview to the Fort Bend Historical Commission. One thing I want to say is, it may be a while before you get your transcript.

DUNKERLY: That's okay.

KELLY: Because we're behind on that.

DUNKERLY: You look SO great. I tell you. I've thought about you and Chuck, I haven't seen them, but Sally, your momma's still good-looking.

KELLY: You ought to come visit. We live in the Teacherage, Jane and I do.

DUNKERLY: That's what she told me.