

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Patricia Lynne Stanford Carpenter (Patsy)**

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Interviewer: Roberta Terrell

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Location: St. John's United Methodist Church, Richmond, Texas 8 Pages



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Transcript

TERRELL: Lets get started with some basic biographical information. When and where were you born?

CARPENTER: I was born in Houston, Texas on November 26, 1940 to Jack and Hazel Stanford.

TERRELL: Were you born in a hospital or at home?

CARPENTER: At Herman Hospital.

TERRELL: What brought your family to Fort Bend County?

CARPENTER: My husband and I came to Fort Bend in 1965 after finishing college. We both came out as teachers. We were teaching in Aldine I.S.D. with Jan and Richard Elliot. They were neighbors at our apartment unit. Richard took a job in Fort Bend ISD at Dulles Junior High school. He said to my husband, "They need a math teacher why don't you come apply?" He went to apply and he got the job so we moved to Richmond in 1965.

TERRELL: Did you become a member of this church at that time?

CARPENTER: Yes we did. Irvine went to church one Sunday before I did and on the second Sunday we went with our one year old and we joined the church.

TERRELL: And this is St. John's United Methodist Church in Richmond, Texas?

CARPENTER: That's correct.

TERRELL: Where did your parents live?

CARPENTER: My daddy was a native Houstonian. He lived in downtown Houston close to the First Methodist Church. He had married my mother but they separated after he came out of the service. He remarried and I lived with my dad and stepmother in Houston until I went away to college.

TERRELL: Where did you go to college?

CARPENTER: I went to Lon Morris Junior College, which is in Jacksonville, Texas. It was a junior college so I went to Southwestern University at Georgetown and finished my degree there. I also took classes at Lamar Tech and I got Masters from Prairie View A & M. Lydia Boucher was teaching the classes here in Lamar High School, she was associated with Prairie View A & M. A friend, Meredith Dogget, said, "I am taking those classes why don't you go with me?" We did and we got our masters.

TERRELL: Where did you meet your husband?

CARPENTER: I met Irvine at Lon Morris Junior College. I went in September, he came in January and we just started dating and that was in 1959.

TERRELL: Did he go Georgetown Southwestern?

CARPENTER: No, he went to Centenary College in Shreveport Louisiana, which is another Methodist school. We kind of stayed under the Methodist umbrella I guess you would say.

TERRELL: What kind of work did your father do in Houston?

CARPENTER: My dad worked for the Houston Belt and Terminal. He was a railroad switchman. He did that for years, he had other jobs in his younger years but primarily he worked with the railroad.

TERRELL: Did you ever help with the chores of your stepmother? Did you help in the kitchen?

CARPENTER: Oh yes, yes. My stepmother had been in the military, so she believed that a child did chores. She showed me how to make my bed correctly and expected me to keep my room organized. And I think when I was a little gal I stood on a stepstool and hand washed some dishes.

TERRELL: Where did you live when you moved to Fort Bend County?

CARPENTER: That was kind of an interesting story; this place didn't have too many places to live, or rent. We moved from an apartment unit in the Aldine Westfield area. When we came to town we went into the Methodist Church building and asked the church secretaries, Lady George Jefferies and Christine Little, if they knew of any places to live. They told us about a garage apartment that was being vacated by one of the other members. We were able to get that and moved into that garage apartment which was right across the street from the Jane Long campus. We out grew that rather quickly; we had our one year old, Jill, when we arrived then our son Will was born. I was thinking we needed something bigger so we asked help again of members of the church and they suggested the house at the Seventh Street. I think the address was 702, it was owned by the Meyers. We lived there for several years. Our third child was born there.

It was sold to the Y. O. U. - Youth Opportunities Unlimited. Presently it is the Depelchin Children's home. That is when we built our home out on Sycamore Road.

TERRELL: Is that in Richmond or Rosenberg?

CARPENTER: It has a Richmond address but we are surrounded by Rosenberg. Rosenberg has annexed everything except maybe one street behind it. It's behind the shopping center off of Mennonite Road.

TERRELL: What families lived near you?



*Meyer Home, 202 S. 7th, Richmond, TX
-currently DePelchins Children's
Home*

CARPENTER: Patsy and Fritz Zurovec that lived on our street. We had a lot of friends in town, which was just a few miles away. There was a young couple's class here at St. John's and we made friends with a lot of them. They remain our friends to this day. We still do things together and enjoy each other.

TERRELL: What are your children's names?

CARPENTER: Our oldest is Margaret Jill Carpenter and we call her Jill, the Margaret is in honor of both grandmothers. Irvine's mom was Margaret and my mother was Margaret. Then our son is William Irvine Carpenter the Third (laughter) so there you go. Our youngest is Kay Lynne Carpenter. The Lynne is my middle name; each child has someone's name that they are carrying.

TERRELL: That's nice. Where did you and your family shop? Can you tell me about the setup of the town when you came?

CARPENTER: I did not have a driver's license when we came.

TERRELL: How old were you?

CARPENTER: I got my license before my son was born and in 1967. But I would put Jill and Will in the little carriage and would walk to downtown to Richmond Food. I would walk to Walker's Drugstore on Morton Street. I would do as much as I could that way or bring myself to church if Irvine was working because he had THE car.

For bigger shopping trips he would take me until I got my driver's license and then of course I was more independent and he could keep the kids at home while I went grocery shopping which was nice.

TERRELL: Did you know how to drive? You just didn't a license?

CARPENTER: I didn't have an automatic shift car and I never could manage the stick shift and the shifting of those gears without making a spectacle of myself (laughter).

TERRELL: What did you do for entertainment? I think there were several movie theaters in town, or one.

CARPENTER: Yes, the Cole Theater was the one we used. We had several things I think we did at our church family. Maybe a trip to the beach, a favorite of our family was going to Galveston or Matagorda to spend time. We didn't mind going into Houston for different things and of course I have family in Houston that we would visit. Most of my family was in Houston.

TERRELL: How long did it take to drive from Richmond to Houston?



Patsy Carpenter with daughter Jill Carpenter, on the Jane Long School campus

CARPENTER: I guess to the Southeast side where my parents live, maybe 40 minutes. I still don't do the Freeways. They were building Highway 59 and we would go along side of it to get to Sharpstown. We used to get to Sharpstown it seemed so quickly.

TERRELL: And you shopped there?

CARPENTER: Yes, when we first were here in the early years. Now we never go that way. We buy local.

TERRELL: Did the church have a lot of events for couples and families?

CARPENTER: When we moved here there was a young couple's class. I think at one point we had the name of Upper Room. Yes we were very close and we spent time together and we spent gatherings

here. There were church socials and we'd meet in each other's homes. We are still in touch and go to each other's children's weddings and weddings of our grandchildren, whichever the case in this point in time. Now I play dominos and card games and other things with a couple of them.

TERRELL: Are they members of the church?

CARPENTER: One of them is and one of them moved her membership elsewhere.

TERRELL: What about your schooling? Elementary and junior high, senior high?



Bridal Shower for Carole Anderson marrying Rev. Carl Garner of Needville UMC

Front: Barbara Watson, Peggy Glass, Wanda Andrews, Betty LeBlanc, Jane Fenn, Diane Box, Shirley Wilson; Back: Unknown, Unknown, Julia Harrison, Carole Anderson, Mrs. Anderson, Christine Little, Wanda Plummer, Susie Benes, Unknown, Unknown;

CARPENTER: I kind of had a history. I went to kindergarten in Galveston. First grade I was at Eastwood Elementary in Houston. Second grade at Garden Villas Elementary in Houston and third grade I stayed with my grandmother for awhile. That was in San Antonio and I went to school there. Then fourth, fifth and six I was at Meyer Elementary in Houston. Junior High was Jackson Junior High and High School was Austin Senior High in Houston. I graduated and went off to college.

TERRELL: Where did your children go to school here?

CARPENTER: Each of my children went to Jane Long. Sometimes the school would redistrict a little bit. Jill and Will went to Deaf Smith when it opened. Kay and Will went to the new Taylor Ray School. All three went to George Junior High. Our oldest Jill went to Lamar High School and graduated and when Will came along he had a choice of going to Lamar or Terry, because Terry had just opened up and since his sister had just gone there he had a choice. He chose Terry, his dad was teaching at Lamar at the time and he thought he would rather be at Terry. Then our youngest went to Terry High School.

TERRELL: Where there any racial issues when you were in school?

CARPENTER: When I was in school we were not integrated. That came after we moved here, so I don't recall any racial issues.

TERRELL: Can you elaborate a little bit about when you came here?

CARPENTER: Irvine was teaching in high school and I think they integrated in high school. I don't recall that there were any huge issues there. Of course in the bigger picture of the United States there were hot spots but I don't recall that there were any major issues here. I seem to think things went okay. Of course I wasn't in the high school unit then.

TERRELL: Do you have some vivid memories about when you moved to Richmond, did it look small to you or did you like being smaller?

CARPENTER: Coming from Houston, yes it was small and it was pleasant, I could get around. It was a nice town full good people. My husband had come from a small town, Port Neches, Texas so he liked the small town. I loved being here I think it is a wonderful town. They talk about annexing us and if they give us a Rosenberg address I am going to have an adjustment to make. (chuckles).

TERRELL: During the time you have been here what major changes have you observed?

CARPENTER: Of course the 7-story Courthouse was a dramatic change. I worked at the church since 1974 and I could see the downtown section and things seemed pretty calm for a good while. Now the growth is explosive and we are behind the Brazos shopping center but we were out in the middle of cotton patches and Milo fields when we moved here. We have had an adjustment as the traffic picks up and the neighborhoods are all around us. I think my husband is reacting a little bit more to it than I am. I am kind of glad, now I can get myself to the stores, the shopping center since I didn't do freeways. I didn't travel into Sugar Land or the Houston area without his assistance.



St. John's School for Little Children

TERRELL: You said you worked for the church. What did you do?

CARPENTER: I had worked in the public school teaching one year with sixth grade. When I moved here I worked with the first Head Start program that was here on the Jane Long campus right across from where we lived. That was enjoyable. For my next job I worked at Calvary Episcopal as a kindergarten teacher for three years. I had my own son in one of the classes; it's not something I recommend. It's too hard on them (laughter) to live with their mother twenty-four hours a day.

Then they had an opening here at St. John's. They had created the St. John's School for Little Children so I came in 1974 with my four year old, our youngest. That's twenty-eight years that I worked here.

TERRELL: In the little school?

CARPENTER: Yes, in the little school as the director and loved it. Ninety-nine percent of the time I just loved it.

TERRELL: What organizations have you been a member of?

CARPENTER: I volunteered at Child Advocates of Fort Bend. That is the main one I am remembering right now.

TERRELL: Can you think of some things that I have forgotten to ask you? Or some funny things that have happened that you would like to include?

CARPENTER: There were some interesting things that happened here. They used to have the drive-thru from the post office adjacent to the church building. One day a lady drove through the post office to mail her mail and she kept on going coming through the playground taking down the fence and the sand box and wound up right at the back door of the church. After that I couldn't sleep for a good while (laughter) thank the Good Lord it was rest time and the children were inside. It was traumatic, it really was. She wanted to be able to back out and go home and we said NO (chuckles). It was quite an event.

One time somebody was injured on Highway 90 and they brought a life flight helicopter and landed in the street. That was exciting for the kids to watch, it blew all our hair and blew the dust on the playground. Speaking of the playground, that was kind of a very special place. We had a big tower out there that the children loved. It was built in honor of Deanne Woody who was more or less the founder of the little school. When I think of pleasant memories I think of all the children that have used the playground and the facilities out there. I think of the chapel. We had one minister. I have a photograph of him in the Good Shepard's costume with the little sheep and the children gathered around him.

We moved from one building to other. All the little children helped carry the things from their classroom down the hall to their new classroom. It was a transition for them and we made our adjustments.

One year, I think it was 1982, there was a fire that took place in the educational building, the original one. It did a lot of damage to the upstairs. Then they came and covered the roof with the tarps and it was time for school... for little school to come in and setup classes, and it poured so all the rain came and filled the lower floor. Maybe about six inches of rain so we had to shift and relocate to another part of the building in a very quick fashion. We did it, it was close quarters and we were a close fellowship but we made it.

TERRELL: What was the name of the first director of the little school?

CARPENTER: Beverly Richard

TERRELL: Thank you. Any funny anecdotes?

CARPENTER: This is funny in a way and sad in a way. On the playground birds were flying out from underneath the church basement. I remember putting a barrier at one location, because they would fly right past the children. It was kind of scary. We discovered another location they were coming in. I talked to the minister about it and I decided to plug up the opening. There must have been hundreds of birds in there and they panicked and flew up this chimney flue. After awhile we began to be aware that there were dead birds in that area. We called around to see who could help us. No body wanted to step into that dilemma, so the minister, Kip Gilts, and the Choir Director, Tim Benson, and our custodian, Julie Almarez, who loaded five 5 gallon buckets of dead birds into big trash bags. The birds were caught in the underground basement trying to get out of the flue of the chimney. It had its humor after the fact, but it was pretty serious during the fact. I think after the fact the minister was celebrating his birthday so we made little copies of black birds and put them on his cake (chuckles). He was not too thrilled.

TERRELL: I really appreciate it your time and memories.

Interview ends.