

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

**Interviewee:** ROBERTA WILLIAMS TERRELL

**Interview Date:** 8/15/2023

**Interviewer:** Karl Baumgartner

**Transcriber:** Sylvia Vacek

**Location:** Rosenberg, Texas



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Today is August 15, 2023. My name is Karl Baumgartner. I am interviewing Roberta Terrell on behalf of the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. Roberta was born and raised in the greater Houston area and has served Fort Bend County civic community for many years, including as an important volunteer of the Historical Commission.

BAUMGARTNER: Roberta, please provide us your full legal name and date of birth.

TERRELL: My name given to me was Roberta Lois Williams. I was born on January 16, 1941. My mother was Mary Lois Ray Williams (1913-1978), and my father was Robert Nunn Williams (1903-1963).

Mother was from Amarillo, Texas, and Daddy was born in Austin but grew up in Galveston. My father was the youngest of nine children. All of his brothers were attorneys, and his two sisters were old maids. He became an attorney and was a member of a Houston law firm.

BAUMGARTNER: Did you have siblings?

TERRELL: I had two sisters. I was the oldest, then Joanne Ray Williams and Mary Sue Williams.

BAUMGARTNER: What religion were you? I'm inquiring because you mentioned that you had nine kids in your dad's family.

TERRELL: Methodist, though my father's family was Presbyterian.

BAUMGARTNER: Okay, so the nine children was not a Catholic phenomenon.

TERRELL: No, it was not. They just had a big family. The family cemetery is in Crockett.

BAUMGARTNER: Is that like a private cemetery?

TERRELL: Well, it's actually the city cemetery, Glenwood, but the Williams family is buried there.

BAUMGARTNER: What about your grandparents? Were they from Texas?

TERRELL: My maternal grandparents lived in the Panhandle. His name was Joseph Ray (1875-1956) and he married Edith Myrtle Barnett Ray (1876-1972). They were both educators. He was a newspaperman who founded and published two newspapers, and then following a tornado they moved to Amarillo in 1903 where he became a financier. He dabbled in real estate and owned a good portion of Polk Street in Amarillo. Anyway, he was well thought of.

BAUMGARTNER: That was the granddad on your mother's side.

TERRELL: Yes, and then on my father's side, my paternal grandfather was Frank Alvin Williams (1851-1945), and grandmother was Laura Celeste Fisher Williams (1862-1945). They were both born in Mississippi and later moved to Crocket, Texas. He was trained as an apprentice lawyer in Crocket and became a circuit judge who rode horseback between regional circuits and was appointed as Associates Justice to the Supreme Court of Texas. He later returned to Galveston to practice law.

BAUMGARTNER: Did you know your grandparents well?

TERRELL: My grandmother died before I was born. My grandfather lived to be 93, and his two daughters, who were old maids, ran the house and took care of him. I have just a vague memory of what their kitchen looked like. I was very young, maybe five when he passed away, so I really didn't know him.

BAUMGARTNER: That's too bad, because it is neat to have the opportunity to spend time with your grandparents. I remember my grandmother and granddad real well and it's fortunate to be able to have that opportunity.

## **GROWING UP IN HOUSTON**

BAUMGARTNER: Where did you grow up?

TERRELL: I grew up in Houston. I was born in St. Joseph's Hospital, which is still there. I don't remember how it got started, but I remember that for years I knew that a couple of the nuns would come have Christmas dinner with us. Sister Dorita and Sister Annette were coming, and so we had to be on our best behavior.

Growing up in Houston was very different than it is today. It was much smaller. I lived in River Oaks, and graduated from Lamar High School in 1958. We knew everybody who went to all the high schools in the area, like Kincaid and St. John's. So, we were all friends.

BAUMGARTNER: What was your childhood like?

TERRELL: I bought my own horse when I was 13. I had always wanted one, and my parents were not buying me one, and I worked to buy one myself. My mother would pay me to work in the yard. She paid me to weed her flower bed. She would pay me a penny an oak tree shoot. We had a lot of those, I guess there must have been a lot of acorns.

BAUMGARTNER: How much would she pay you?

TERRELL: A penny an oak tree shoot.

BAUMGARTNER: You weren't getting rich.

TERRELL: Well, but then I was pulling up so many she required that the shoot had to be attached to the acorn, so I started digging them up. I saved \$87.00, and then this man sold me a horse. The transaction was very illegal, which Daddy pointed out to me.

BAUMGARTNER: Did you have an acre or some land in Houston, or access to property out in the country?

TERRELL: I didn't have my own property, I had to scrounge around. I had enough money for a saddle and one month's board, and I had friends out there, out off Memorial.

BAUMGARTNER: Memorial Drive was on the outskirts of Houston then?

TERRELL: It was a two-lane asphalt road, and most people out there had acreage. I found this man who had a little Shetland pony in his pasture. That was all that was there, and horses really

like companions. So, I knocked on his door and I said, I have a horse, and if you'll let me keep it here and help feed it, then you can ride it with your little boy. So, we made an arrangement, and it worked for about a year and a half. Then he was transferred, but he made an arrangement with the people who had the pasture located behind his property. There was a young man living there saving money for college, and so I paid him \$10 a month to feed my horse with the idea that he could ride it if he wanted to or his friend could ride it. I don't think they actually ever rode the horse. But I spent my adolescent years on the back of my horse.

BAUMGARTNER: Really. How old were you becoming then?

TERRELL: We could drive a car at 14.

BAUMGARTNER: Really?

TERRELL: Yes. We got our driver's license when we were 14.

BAUMGARTNER: A drive -to -school license?

TERRELL: An actual driver's license. Not a hardship. You could get a hardship license at age 13, I think then. I started riding a horse when I was five. My parents took me to a Dude ranch. I was horsey from the get-go and I'm still horsey. I still ride if anybody has a horse available.

BAUMGARTNER: Have you ever had a horse in any of your later years?

TERRELL: Yeah, I had one when we lived out here southwest of Houston, but I kept it in Montgomery County, and I would try to go riding there when I could. I was married to Cliff, and I was trying to go twice a week to ride. It just got to be a problem, so I sold her.



*Roberta with equine companion.*

BAUMGARTNER: So, you grew up in Houston. Where'd you go to high school?

TERRELL: Lamar.

BAUMGARTNER: Was Lamar a relatively newer high school in those days?

TERRELL: No, it's always been there. It's on River Oaks Boulevard.

There used to be a saying that there was a country club at each end of River Oaks Boulevard. River Oaks Country Club at one end and Lamar high School at the other end. I don't think people say that anymore, but they did when I was growing up.

BAUMGARTNER: Was Lamar like a fancy, prominent high school?

TERRELL: No, it was just a public high school. It's across the street from St. John's, which is a private school, so I was educated pretty much in public schools.



*Roberta, 1958 Lamar High School Yearbook (Houston)*

BAUMGARTNER: So, what was high school like in Houston in those days?

TERRELL: Well, it was really fun. It was not integrated in those days. My class just held a reunion and 112 people showed up.

BAUMGARTNER: Wow.

TERRELL: There were 564 in our graduating class.

BAUMGARTNER: Wow. 112 out of 564. Twenty percent returned to reunion. That's a good turnout.

TERRELL: Not a bad deal. Everybody pretty much knew everybody in those days. And one classmate who I really didn't know, and a lot of people did not know, took it upon himself to be the keeper of information-- like who passed away, who received honors, and so forth. That worked until about two years ago, and it was very nice. We got to keep up with everybody.

BAUMGARTNER: That was a blessing, because if you don't have that one person to do it, sometimes no one assumes responsibility and it can go by the wayside, and you lose touch with the whole class.

TERRELL: But everybody knew that they were supposed to email him, and everybody knew that we would get the information, so that was a blessing. In fact, we paid his way to attend the reunions. He lived in Albuquerque.

BAUMGARTNER: So, what did you guys do in high school? What kinds of things did you do?

TERRELL: Well, I rode my horse of course, and played tennis a lot. There were a lot of activities. The school had a big chorus called Lamar Choralettes, and we traveled to other cities. We had Coke parties, where you dressed up. They could be for birthdays, graduations, or honoring someone. Cream cheese was the big snack then. There wasn't an assortment like today. You had Prince's drive in where the employee's roller skated to your car to take and deliver your order. That is where everybody hung out but you never really went out to eat. We did not have the options that you have today of places to go out to eat.

BAUMGARTNER: Since kids could get their driver's license so young, didn't they have access to cars at an early age?

TERRELL: I was given a car on my 16th birthday. And the reason I was given a car was that my mother was very ill with hepatitis and she couldn't be active. So, I did everything. I did all the grocery shopping, and I chauffeured my sisters around.

BAUMGARTNER: You were the oldest of the three sisters.

TERRELL: Yes. I pretty much ran the house.

BAUMGARTNER: What's it like to have three sisters in the family? The reason I'm asking is my son has three little girls and I wonder what it will be like.

TERRELL: I loved it when I was younger. I wanted an older brother, but that wasn't going to happen. But my sisters and I were very close, and that was also a blessing.

### **FOLLOWNG GRADUATION**

BAUMGARTNER: So, what did you do after graduation?

TERRELL: I went to the University of Texas for two years, and then I got married.

BAUMGARTNER: To Cliff.

TERRELL: No, I was married before. I got married when I was 19 and lived in Houston a year. I married Garnett Craft Whittington Voneiff McCoy, October 1, 1960. We had three children. The oldest was Kimberly VonEiff McCoy (1963), and then two boys, Christopher Logan (1966) and Kyle Alan (1969).

Garnet wanted to be a veterinarian, so we moved to College Station, and we were there seven years. He got his degree in vet medicine. During that time, I had two of my children in Bryan, and I made a lot of friends there. And we're still friends; it was a wonderful time in my life. I went to A&M; they would let employees take one course a semester.

We left to move back to Houston. I lacked about 30 hours to graduate, and I always thought I would graduate. I really missed working in an academic atmosphere but U of H didn't offer what I needed at the time, so I never did finish. But being an only female in a lot of classes like trigonometry was interesting and I learned a lot.

BAUMGARTNER: Did it bother you that you never got your degree?

TERRELL: No. It really hasn't mattered in my life. I mean, I became a travel agent. You didn't need a degree to do that.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah, we've seen that having a degree doesn't necessarily help you a whole lot, for most careers anyway.

TERRELL: Well, I think it mainly helps you get a job. You're limited if you don't have one. I think employers will pick somebody with a degree over others because it just shows stability and stickability, and the maturity to finish. I don't think it hindered me in any way.

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

BAUMGARTNER: So, how did your career develop after you married Cliff?

TERRELL: I divorced in 1988, met Cliff in 1992, and we married in 1994. Cliff and I moved to Fort Bend County, Greatwood Subdivision, in 1996. So, I've been here 27 years.

I like to know what's going on and Cliff helped me. He knew the developer of Greatwood and introduced me to him, and the developer asked me to be on a MUD Board, a municipal utility district on the Greatwood Annex. They annexed the 500-acre property after the original plat was recorded.

BAUMGARTNER: And when was that? Is that the late 90s?

TERRELL: It was the late '90's, 1997. And it was what they called a developer board, so I was just asked to be on it by the developer, it wasn't an elected position. I was on that board for eight years. To be on a Mud Board, that's an elected position, it's political.

So later I ran for the MUD Board in my area. Cliff told me, if you do exactly what I tell you, you'll win. He wanted me to go door to door, and it was hot, and I took my grandchildren with me and, they had these little handouts that say vote for my grandmother. And I guess it worked. The

grandkids were pretty cute. And then I would promise them that we'd go swimming, and as soon as we worked one neighborhood, we'd go swim. We'd do one neighborhood, and next weekend get them out there again, and they thought it was great fun.

And I was elected.

BAUMGARTNER: That was what period?

TERRELL: I was on it until 2017, I guess. So was in the area over twenty years, and I loved every minute of it.

BAUMGARTNER: I always was under the impression that you'd lived around here forever.

I've read your oral histories interviews over the years, and it's seemed like you knew an awful lot of those people that you interviewed.



TERRELL: I did know them; I knew most of them through Cliff because he knew everyone, and as I said, I like to know what's going on. I was approached in 1998 to write Good News in Greatwood for the Herald Coaster newspaper, and I wrote that from 1998 to 2015. That's when I retired. Everything became so digital, and it was not personal anymore, whereas before I met so many people and it was personal. For example, that's how I got to know the kids on the swim team.

BAUMGARTNER: You mean through the newspaper...?

TERRELL: Yes, through writing that column. And if I didn't have anything to write, I would just go to the playground and take pictures and talk to everybody there. It was fun. It was a fun time. You could drive around and look for lemonade stands and interview the kids.

BAUMGARTNER: And that was 1998 till 2015.

TERRELL: Yes, then it just became so impersonal that it wasn't fun anymore.

BAUMGARTNER: I remember those years; I sold my business and semi-retired in 1998.

TERRELL: Did you really? Well, after I was divorced in 1988, I went to work at a travel agency named International Tours. Helen Cordes owned it. She was married to Roy Cordes, County Judge and then he was County Attorney.

Helen and I were really good friends. Actually, everyone in that office was a chief, there weren't any Indians. Everybody in the office could be a leader. And it worked. Helen made it work. She just was a very good manager of her friends, and it was fun. She had been a longtime friend of mine, and from 1988 to 2000, I worked for her. She passed away last year of Alzheimer's. Such a loss. She was on the Fort Bend School Board, and she owned this travel agency. She raised money for many organizations.

BAUMGARTNER: Are you still working?

TERRELL: I did outside sales for a travel agency in Stafford in which I had my own corporate clients. I was busy all the time but it was working at home and I really missed the camaraderie of an office. I still work through another agency in Houston in outside sales and I still enjoy it. I love to plan peoples' fun.

BAUMGARTNER: Your three children; do they live nearby?

TERRELL: Well, my three children gave me four grandchildren and I now also have four great grandchildren and one more coming in October. And one was born three days ago.

BAUMGARTNER: Wow, that's exciting.

TERRELL: It's expanding. My family is expanding.

BAUMGARTNER: That's great. I've got five grandchildren but they're not remotely close to great grandchildren yet.

TERRELL: Well, you never know. But these are my grandchildren and they have been wonderful. They're fun and they will remember me whereas I don't remember my grandparents.



*Roberta with her family, including new great-granddaughter.*

BAUMGARTNER: Do they live around here?

TERRELL: Well, my oldest granddaughter is in San Antonio, and she has two children and one on the way in October. And then my youngest son who lives in Colorado has one daughter. My other son has moved to Greatwood, so he's just five minutes away and that's great. I don't know if he thinks it's so great because he's just my rock. He does everything for me. I love him dearly. He has a stepson who is dearly loved by me. And my daughter lives in Houston. She's the mother of three of my grandchildren, one of whom, Allison, is being transferred with her husband to Singapore. That'll be for three years; a big loss for me.

BAUMGARTNER: Now, how did you meet Cliff?

TERRELL: Well, Helen Cordes, was involved in quite a few things in Sugar Land and she had met Cliff for lunch one day and she came back to the office and said, I met somebody I think you would like. Do you want me to call his secretary? And I said, sure. Well, Cliff didn't call back and then finally Helen said, well, I'm going to call him again. It was around Christmas, and he said, OK, we can meet for a drink and go to dinner. We met in Houston and Helen and Roy introduced us and we had a glass of wine and they went off to go Christmas shopping. And Cliff said, well, I thought we'd go eat at the River Oaks Grill. And I said, that's one of my favorites, let's go. And we closed it down at 2:00 a.m. They had to kick us out because we talked nonstop, really, it was just very enjoyable.

BAUMGARTNER: Really.

TERRELL: And then he called me the next day and I thought that was very nice. He said, I really had a good time, I would like to go out again. But I'm tied up until New Year's. I thought that was very courteous to call. And so, after New Year's, I became his Sunday night date and I thought, well, this is kind of strange, but I didn't plan to get married again so it didn't matter. We always had a good time when we'd go out, always great conversation, a lot of fun.

And then I found out that, through his secretary actually, that he was going to Waco every weekend to see his mom. His mother's husband, not Cliff's father, had been put in a home; his mom was alone, and she was really sad, and he would go every weekend to see her. I am lucky and fortunate that I did meet her before she died. She died when she was 93.

BAUMGARTNER: I knew Cliff a little but can't remember just what kind of work he did.

TERRELL: He was with the Chamber of Commerce, what was originally the Rose Rich Chamber of Commerce. He had been here since the 1960s I think, and then he moved to San Antonio and was with that Chamber of Commerce. Then he went to work for Valero Oil as their community advocate for government affairs. Jeff Council contacted him and hired him back here.

And that was when I met him. He worked in conjunction with Herb Appel and the Economic Development Council in Sugar Land. He did a lot. For instance, he got US 59 extended to Rosenberg. He was instrumental in getting Texas Instruments to move into the County. He was known as the man really behind the scenes, that is what he was.

**Editor's Note:** [Click this link to learn more about the Central Fort Bend Chamber](#) (formerly Rose-Rich Chamber of Commerce).

[Click this link for more on the Fort Bend Economic Development Council.](#)

BAUMGARTNER: That was a great honor when Fort Bend County ISD named an elementary school after Cliff. I have seen your picture in the Herald several times in connection with the opening of the school.

### MUSEUM AND CIVIC WORK

BAUMGARTNER: Roberta, when did you get involved with the Fort Bend County Museum Oral History Program? When did you begin taking Oral History interviews?

TERRELL: February of 2011.

BAUMGARTNER: I think you did some interviews prior to that; I'm pretty sure that you actually did some starting around 2009. How did you get involved with the program?

TERRELL: I just love history. I wish I could still retain it better, but I love it. I like knowing how it happened and how it's affected us today. And I did some very interesting oral histories.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah, you did; you did some really good ones.

TERRELL: They were fun, and I don't know, I just liked it. I'm not as active as I was because right now, I've been involved in other things.

BAUMGARTNER: Do you know how many interviews you did?

TERRELL: No, do you?

BAUMGARTNER: Over 20, I know. You were one of the consistent long -term contributors to the program. You started around 2010, I started around 2015.

TERRELL: I enjoyed the interviews and I remember each of them. I remember when I interviewed Jack Wendt, he was such a major person in agriculture and the rice industry, and he worked really hard because he

also managed his wife Billie's land in Fulshear. I hope people do read his history, because I don't think everybody knew what he did and what organizations he led.

BAUMGARTNER: Jack was such a great guy, too.

TERRELL: Oh yes. He was a great guy. I don't think people understood what a leader and good man he was.

BAUMGARTNER: Yes. You know, the most disappointing thing about the oral history activity is the fact that many people are not aware of the program. It's a relatively small pocket of people who are aware that these anecdotal histories are available and how interesting they can be. It's the life histories of how some of our county leaders have grown up in the community and the changes that have taken place in our community over their lifetimes. It preserves the stories of the families and friends who have lived here and what their lives were like then. How the community has evolved.

It's remarkable how our society's lives have changed so much in fifty years. I recall that, as a little boy, a daily chore was walking over to our neighbor's farm every late afternoon and bringing home a warm jug of milk that the farmer had just brought in from milking his cows.

TERRELL: Well, I think if you wanted to look up the story on someone you know, for instance if

you wanted to look up the life history of Jack Wendt, it's so simple:

Just go and google up:

**Fort Bend Oral History**

**Jack Wendt**

All the recorded life histories names are listed alphabetically.

BAUMGARTNER: But a lot of people aren't aware that this information is so available so easily. They're not familiar with the program.

TERRELL: That would be a good article for the Fort Bend Herald or Sugar Land/ Fort Bend Star to explain if somebody could interest them in presenting. it.

BAUMGARTNER: I've tried with the Herald, and Executive Editor Scotty Willey has helped but something needs to appear regularly, and I haven't been successful. I wish I could get publicity to do just a little column write up once a month featuring a recent write-up. I think the readership would get interested and involved in it.

Here's a list of some of the interesting oral histories you have taken. They include:

**Albina Talasek Babovec, Barbara Bleil, Mason Briscoe, Patsy Carpenter, Robert Davis, Sue Dinges, Robert Farrow, Fred Green, Doris Gurecky, Joe Gurecky, Stanley Kucherka...**

TERRELL: Stanley was my first interview.

BAUMGARTNER: Oh, really?

TERRELL: And I was just scared to death.

BAUMGARTNER: Because it was your first one. Actually, he was probably an easy one.

TERRELL: He was very easy.

BAUMGARTNER: Nice, easy to talk to, pleasant. Did you know his son, Kenny Kucherka? Good guy. He moved to Fulshear. He worked at Fort Bend Federal S & L.

TERRELL: He did. I knew he'd switched banks where he was employed.

BAUMGARTNER: Others you interviewed included:

Jacquelyn Leaman; of course, she's been gone quite a while. Dorothy McGee, Clara Naramore, Dwayne Peck and Carolyn Bentley, Lionel Salazar, Constance Segar, Sadie Majorka Williams, Samuel Lake Steffee....

TERRELL: Oh, he had an interesting background.

BAUMGARTNER: Renee Rosenbush Lamb, another interesting story. Her family background was Old Austin 300 all the way. It was so disappointing when she passed away not long ago.

TERRELL: Oh, yeah, she did a lot. She volunteered in a lot of activities.

BAUMGARTNER: Yeah. And she was such a nice person. She and Vicki Tonn participated in lots of volunteer activities together.

Many of your interviews were so interesting. I have read many of them. And it is so easy to look up the stories to read. Just type Fort Bend Oral History and the subject's name, for instance Joe Gurecky, in Google or any search engine.

**COUNTY ACTIVITY**

Roberta, what are some other Fort Bend County activities you have been active in?

TERRELL: Well, I was appointed to the Levee Improvement District Board 11 (“LID”) by Precinct I County Commissioner Vincent Morales, who was Commissioner of our district at that time. The Municipal Utility District (MUD) is elected and the LID Board is appointed.

**Editor’s Note:** [Click this link to learn more about the Fort Bend Levee Improvement District.](#)

BAUMGARTNER: What is the function of the LID district and how are you appointed?

TERRELL: You are appointed by the county commissioner for your district. For my precinct, Precinct II Greatwood, the current commissioner was changed to Grady Prestage. When Fort Bend County redistricted, we became Precinct II. It’s a long-term commitment. There are four terms to serve. I’ve been there for one term, which is approximately four years, so I ‘ve three more terms to go before my term is up. And it's been very interesting, but very different from the Mud Board.

BAUMGARTNER: What's it like? What are some of the things you do?

TERRELL: Well, you set a tax rate for the levees and assess taxes. You take care of the wetlands in Greatwood and the levees. Those are the major jobs.

BAUMGARTNER: Take care of the wetlands—what does that involve?

TERRELL: When the County or the Drainage District put in retention ponds, a lot of that land was low, subject to flooding, and is considered wetlands. And so, you have to designate areas that are specifically wetlands that cannot be mowed or flooded.

BAUMGARTNER: Really, that's an interesting area to oversee with all the flood zone activity.

TERRELL: You do that. These functions are regulated by the TCEQ, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. We attend the general meeting and monitor the financial management of the district. It's a financial organization; you have to pay the engineer and the levy management, and then there's another company that mows it and maintains it, and then there are engineers and they keep the pumps and the generators running.

All data and records must be reported to the bookkeepers. The company collecting the taxes advises on the percentage of taxes that have been collected. Greatwood has a high rate of collection and very few delinquents.

It is just a general business operation of an organization that focus on the levees, so you know what's going on with the levee systems. We monitor if there's any problem with it, if it's been mowed, if the pumps are working, if the generators are working. We have backup pumps now that have been made more secure than when Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017.

It's been a big fight with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) over flood insurance. I think this is supposed to be a hurricane year, and we'll see just how good everything performs. But now at least I know what's going on in Greatwood. If you don't live near the river, FEMA regulations don't affect you. But FEMA is very much in debt and they want to levy a tax that is the same tax for the whole nation on people who live behind a levy. And the government didn't pay for any of our levies; It was all paid with resident taxes or county taxes. We have gone to several national meetings every year with the focus on FEMA, and the one in Seattle this past August was probably the first time we made any kind of inroads.

Our levy board has consisted of three members and when Grady became our commissioner, he expanded it to five. and everybody's congenial about that.

BAUMGARTNER: Now, how is this overseen by the county commissioners?

TERRELL: Well, you're appointed by your county commissioner and the county judge is the one who sets the agenda.

BAUMGARTNER: I interviewed Bob Hebert when he was County Judge which of course was a real interesting interview; he's been so involved for so long and knows so much about Fort Bend County.

Roberta, I know a lot of your civic responsibilities take place in Richmond/Rosenberg though you don't reside here.

TERREL: I live in Greatwood. Every morning I walk on the golf course. I pick up golf balls and while I collected all these golf balls and I learned that I could sell them, so I sell them and donate the money to Lunches of Love organization. I've even had yard maintenance men bring golf balls to me which they find doing houses on the golf course. Neighbors save them for me. People who live in Pecan Grove save them. It's really been a

**Editor's Note:** [Click this link for more on the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.](#)

good thing, and it's been fun.



BAUMGARTNER: That's a good habit. What time do you go?

TERRELL: Well, I try to go by seven a.m., between 6:30 and 7:00 a.m. But it's very warm right now. My dog can't go very far. About 7:30 seems to work for me now

BAUMGARTNER: Weren't you responsible for money raising with Richmond State School at one point? Who was involved with the State School then?

TERRELL: Cliff was always involved with the school because he was instrumental in having it situated here.

BAUMGARTNER: Over the years, what other organizations were you involved with assisting?

TERRELL: In addition to the Winter Wonderland 's program which was the State School fundraiser, I've participated in fund raising with Texian Market Days, Fort Bend Literacy Program, Fort Bend Museum Docents, Garden Club of Richmond, and St. John's UMC.

BAUMGARTNER: Wow. Are there many folks still around here that you used to run around with or bump into?

TERRELL: You know, since Cliff worked out here, my friends largely live in Richmond and Rosenberg, not really Sugar Land. I'm in a prayer group with Vicki Ward and Lane Ward. You should do Lane's interview.

BAUMGARTNER: Well, he was interviewed once, but it was one of these interviews where there was a specific topic in mind that he was to discuss rather than his personal history. Who were some other acquaintances that come to mind?

TERRELL: Vicki and I are good friends, and Margie Eicke. She was married to Cecil Eicke. He was an oil man. And Justine Huseleton, her husband, was a dentist, Charles. Cindy Bass and Diana Kelley.

BAUMGARTNER: Cindy Bass. Gosh, I haven't seen her for a long time. Did you ever play in the card tournaments, gin or bridge?

TERRELL: Oh yes, gin, but I never cared for bridge.

BAUMGARTNER: I used to play a lot of tournament bridge when I lived in New York City, but when I moved here, I was busy trying to keep my business afloat and have never played once.

TERRELL: Never once a single time? Gin was my favorite. I loved gin rummy. They used to have the Ladies Tournament at the Swinging Door. I wonder where they have it now that Steve Onstead sold out and closed the restaurant.

BAUMGARTNER: I was talking to Harriet Geick just last week and she recently played in this year's Ladies Tournament.

TERRELL: Well in my last life we used to go dove hunting in Pleak and on the way back we would eat at the Swinging Door. We ate there often too with the Garden Club of Richmond. I am bulb chairperson for the caladium bulbs.

BAUMGARTNER: Is it still as active as it used to be?

TERRELL: A lot of people, at least 50 people. The Garden Club has been really rewarding for me. It has many old-timers and is a wonderful group of ladies. They always have a good speaker or a good program. Just interesting.

BAUMGARTNER: I guess you've lived in Greatwood for around thirty years now. How has it changed since you've lived there?

TERRELL: Well, the population has become as ethnically diverse as the county. It was pretty much predominantly white when we moved in and now it's not. For instance, there's a Pakistani couple who live with their children across the street from where I live. I live in the patio homes section; across Riverbrook it's townhouses. Well, they walk every morning and I am becoming friends with them. They don't speak good English and so they try their English on me, and I try to speak very slowly though I don't have an easy time doing that. But we do communicate, and you wouldn't have seen that in other eras.

BAUMGARTNER: When you say ethnic, you're talking about other nationalities, not entirely Hispanic or Black.

TERRELL: Yes, I'm talking about a mix--Hispanic, Black, Pakistan, Indian, nothing predominant but they're there and it's a nice mix of nationalities.

BAUMGARTNER: That's nice. No doubt they're good neighbors.

TERRELL: Yes, all the ones I've met are. And when Grady expanded the board, he put a black lady on the board, a Pakistani lady, and a Nigerian man. And Mike Rozelle is the president and I'm the vice president.

BAUMGARTNER: Mike Rozelle, the county judge. I remember him, though it's been a long time since you see his name frequently.

TERRELL: Well, Roy Cordes was county judge, and then Mike Rozelle followed him, and then Bob Hebert followed.

BAUMGARTNER: Yes, when Roy Cordes was county judge, he also served on the board of the Fort Bend County Museum with us. Very nice man.

TERRELL: Extremely nice man and very capable.

BAUMGARTNER: Well, Roberta, it's been a pleasure talking to you about your years in Fort Bend County. You've had a wonderful career raising your family and contributing to the growth of the area.

TERRELL: Fort Bend County has rewarded me in many ways. Whether working, volunteering, or spending time with good friends, it has been fun and productive. I am blessed with wonderful and lasting memories.

End of interview