

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*

Interviewee: **Rosie Syblik Janssen**

Interview Date: 01/30/2010

Interviewer: Flo Cook

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Sugar Land, Texas

6 Pages



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*Transcript*

COOK: Rosie, where were you born?

JANSSEN: Down at Columbus, Texas.

COOK: Do you remember at what age you moved to Sugar Land?

JANSSEN: I was, I think, twenty. We moved here because my husband was working at the refinery as a sugar boiler.

COOK: Sounds like a hot job.

JANSSEN: It was.

COOK: Where did you live when you first came to Sugar Land?

JANSSEN: We moved here in 1945 and I've lived on 6th Street ever since.

COOK: Why did you never move away?

JANSSEN: Didn't have a reason. I say if you drink Sugar Land water, you'll never leave!  
(both laugh)

COOK: Did your parents, brothers or sisters live in Sugar Land?

JANSSEN: No, but my uncle lived in Clodine.

COOK: How about school? You did not go to school here if you moved at age 20.

JANSSEN: I done did that (schooling). I didn't want to go back. (both laugh)

COOK: Where did you work in Sugar Land?

JANSSEN: I worked in the library first. Then I 'graduated' and went to the cafeteria (both laugh). Eventually, Father Jackson, at St. Theresa's Catholic Church, needed a secretary to help him do the work and run the bulletins.. So I started there in 1966. The church was on 5th Street then.

COOK: So you were a secretary for twenty-one years.

JANSSEN: Yes.

COOK: Tell me about your work here.

JANSSEN: (chuckles) I enjoyed it because I took care of the bazaars and the bulletins that went out. I helped the leaders of the bazaar; if they needed anything, they came to me. They sold canned fruit, pickles, sourkraut, baked goods and arts and crafts.

COOK: Sounds like a fun time. Did you enjoy it?

JANSSEN: Oh, yes. That is what I miss the most, meeting people.

COOK: Tell me about how you and your husband, Lad, met.

JANSSEN: I've known him since I was nine, I believe. My daddy knew him. He'd come and work for my daddy. He helped my father when we lived on the farm. I'm a country girl.

COOK: Where did he come from?

JANSSEN: Columbus. He was in the service and then when he came back he lived with his sister.

COOK: Okay. So was he in World War II?

JANSSEN: Yes, in the Infantry. He got wounded by shrapnel.

COOK: Did it affect him physically?

JANSSEN: I think it did.

COOK: Tell us about your daughter.

JANSSEN: She was born in the old hospital at the corner of Lakeview and Wood Streets. The medical facilities were pretty good for a company town.

COOK: Tell me one of your very favorite memories of living in Sugar Land.

JANSSEN: Meeting all the nice people. Playing cards with my neighbors. They were great! Miss Prikryl, Miss Frances Tice.

COOK: (laughs) Think back and tell me your least favorite memory.



*Rosie Syblik Janssen poses in front of a stylish sedan.*

JANSSEN: Oh, I got sad when they moved the City Hall from here to First Colony. I was VERY upset because THIS part of town is really where it belongs. When they moved it, well, we was nuthin'. People that came in to Sugar Land, they didn't know the history of Sugar Land and what it really meant to us.

COOK: What major changes have happened in Sugar Land in your lifetime?

JANSSEN: The city started growing when they started selling property at Venetian Estates. Down here on 7th Street there used to be pasture and cotton fields. I picked cotton just for fun. Down Eldridge was mostly cotton fields. I picked cotton for Mr. & Mrs. Vavrecka and then for my uncle.

COOK: Did you LIKE to pick cotton?

JANSSEN: Yes. (laughs) Well, if it's not too hot. Now I couldn't do that. What is now Bay View Drive, used to be alfalfa and they milled it there and turned it into feed. Then further down there were cornfields. When you go down Bay View, and you come to the "T", that was all farm land. Further down was pasture. Frost Ranch had cattle. Then we had Humble where they pumped oil.

COOK: Where was that?

JANSSEN: Oilfield Road close to the Brazos River dam.

In town we had the guy delivering milk with horses or mules. I remember that. He'd get the milk and bring it in to our houses. Fresh milk! The dairy was off Ulrich Street. He delivered milk with mules, pulling a wagon. We also had an ice man that delivered blocks of ice to put in the old type icebox. (chuckles) There was delivery of vegetables. I think the dairy came every day or maybe every other day.

COOK: And the postman? Did you have to go after your mail or did they deliver it?

JANSSEN: They delivered it to the house since 1945. Before that, don't ask me.

COOK: You saw the pastureland and cotton fields begin to develop? What do you think attracted people to move in to Sugar Land?

JANSSEN: People came for jobs after the war.

COOK: What did your family do for recreation, besides play cards?

JANSSEN: We went to movies at the Palms Theater.

COOK: Tell me about the education your daughter got in Sugar Land.

JANSSEN: She went through the twelfth grade and then she went to college where she was Valedictorian.

COOK: Oh! Congratulations!

JANSSEN: Thank you. She went to Austin State College at Sherman.

COOK: First through twelfth grade in Sugar Land and you felt that she got a very good education here?

JANSSEN: I think so. She's doing research as a statistician. I think she got a good education. With our help! (laughs)

COOK: Yes. I bet you helped her a lot.

JANSSEN: But you know, she was always into books and she still is. If she had a choice between working and going to further her education, she would go to college.

COOK: Tell me, Rosie, before the Civil Rights Act in the 1960s how was life different in Sugar Land?

JANSSEN: Oh, they had a school for the black and Spanish people across Oyster Creek. They didn't have too many Spanish going to Lakeview.

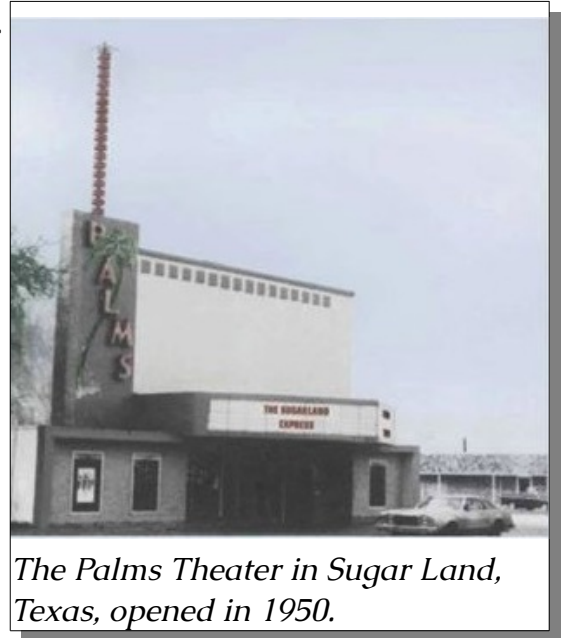
COOK: What did your family do in case of a medical emergency?

JANSSEN: Went in to Houston.

COOK: So you didn't use the facilities here in Sugar Land?

JANSSEN: Yes, we did. But, for specialists, like a pediatrician, we went in to Houston.

COOK: Did you ever see a medical emergency while you were growing up in Sugar Land? Were there ever any ambulances that came or a wreck?



*The Palms Theater in Sugar Land, Texas, opened in 1950.*

JANSSEN: Well, Highway 90A was a muddy road when I first came and so were the streets in Sugar Land.

COOK: Where did you do most of your shopping?

JANSSEN: Sugar Land. We had groceries, furniture and feed, to be able to raise chickens and cows. They had a mercantile, which they moved from this side of the railroad track to the other after a while. We had clothing, too. We always said the railroad track divided us. (chuckles)

COOK: (chuckles) I really have enjoyed talking to you. You painted a good picture of what Sugar Land once was.

JANSSEN: It was really nice. I'm still disappointed in them moving City Hall.

Interview Ends