

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Sadie Maiorka Williams**

Interview Date: 05/08/2010

Interviewer: Roberta Terrell

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

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11 Pages



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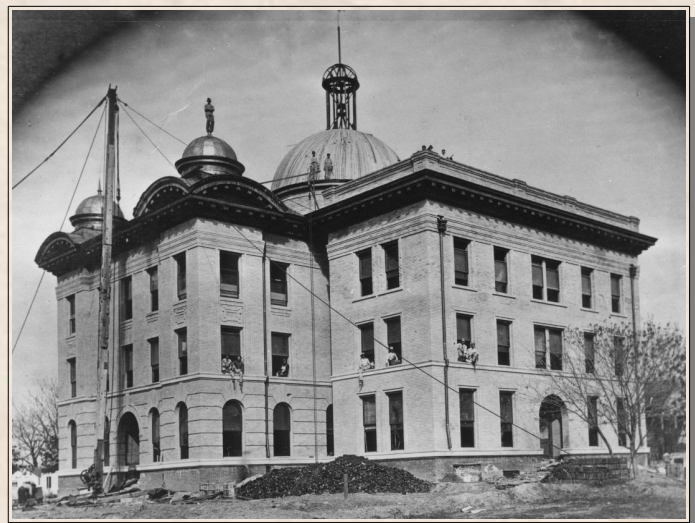
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Transcript

TERRELL: Lets start with some biographical information, when and where were you born?

WILLIAMS: Well, I was born in Sugar Land, Texas, in 1944.

TERRELL: And how did your family come to live in Stafford?

WILLIAMS: Well, my mother's family was living in Bryan, Texas, and they were having trouble with drought in Bryan - the crops were not making - so they came to Stafford. They moved to Stafford upon the recommendation of several friends that had moved her previously. So my mother's family ventured out and moved here.

TERRELL: And what do you know about your grandparents?

WILLIAMS: Well, I know a lot about my grandpa, don't know too much about my grandmother. My grandfather and grandmother came to Stafford 1927. They had several children already and in 1929, my grandmother had a child, and she passed away giving birth.

TERRELL: What were your grandparent's names?

WILLIAMS: Jack and Josephine Giambelluca.

TERRELL: What business were they in?

WILLIAMS: My grandfather raised vegetables and he was also a truck farmer. He took vegetables around in his pick-up and sold them to neighbors.

TERRELL: The neighbors didn't grow their own vegetables?

WILLIAMS: Some did, but some didn't. Some raised cotton and didn't have vegetables.

TERRELL: What was it like for your grandparents here? Do you know?

WILLIAMS: They lived on a farm. They had some land right off of 1092 and it was a small farm. I think they had several acres and a comfortable life. My grandparents were very religious and they believed in instilling morals into their children, so that was their primary function; to provide a home and food and good values to their children.

TERRELL: How many children did they have?

WILLIAMS: In all, they had ten.

TERRELL: And do you know their names?

WILLIAMS: (laughs). I'll try to remember them all! There were seven sisters and three brothers. The brothers were Charlie, Joe and Sam; the girls were Mary, Carrie, Janie, Josephine, Lena, Rosalie, and Laura. And out of all those ten children, I might add, I think eight of the ten continued to live in Stafford and raise their families, once they married.

TERRELL: They were the main population of Stafford!

WILLIAMS: Right, right.

TERRELL: What about your parents?

WILLIAMS: Well, my dad grew up in Bellaire, Texas, and he met my mother and they married in about 1937, and they came to Stafford to live. My daddy worked for Houston Lighting and Power Company and retired from there. My mother was a homemaker, so we lived here all our lives.

TERRELL: Where was your home?

WILLIAMS: Our first home was right in downtown Stafford, on South Main. And then later we moved into a little subdivision called Sta-Mo.

TERRELL: How old were you when you moved?

WILLIAMS: I was eight years old.

TERRELL: Do you have brothers and sisters?

WILLIAMS: I have one brother and he lives in Stafford, Phillip Maiorka.

TERRELL: And what was a typical day in their lives?

WILLIAMS: Oh, Dad going to work he always left early in the morning. He would get home at about 5:00. Mom would do all the household chores. She loved to have a vegetable garden herself, just a small garden, when we were in school. And then she also raised chickens. And when Dad would get home, we would have supper and do homework, and get ready for the next day.

TERRELL: Did you listen to the radio?

WILLIAMS: We always had a TV so I don't recall so much about the radio.

TERRELL: What does your brother do?

WILLIAMS: My brother was a senior design draftsman. He's retired now. He worked for MW Kellogg in town.

TERRELL: What businesses have you or your husband been in?

WILLIAMS: Well, when we first got married, I worked for Southwestern Bell downtown. And after that I went to work for the only bank in Stafford, First National Bank of Stafford. I worked there for several years. And then, with the creation of the Stafford School District, I went to work for the school district. I was hired as the district receptionist and after a couple of years I became the middle school secretary. I just recently retired.

TERRELL: What community activities have you or your husband been involved in?

WILLIAMS: We've been heavily involved. My husband has been a member of the Stafford-Missouri City Lions Club. He coached senior league baseball for the sixteen-year olds. He's presently serving as director of the water board; he's in his 30th year. He's involved in a lot of activities. I am currently president of the Stafford Historical Society and I've been a member of it for several years. I have been active in our church. I created the school district scrapbook. We were a new entity back then, so it was a way of getting all of those collectibles together and I enjoyed doing that.

TERRELL: That's nice. What are you most proud of?

WILLIAMS: Probably, overall, my work at the school, because I love the children.

TERRELL: You got in on the ground floor of that, which made it nice.

WILLIAMS: I did. I went to work there in July of 1982, and I think we opened the doors in the fall of that year. I still love to tell stories about the school. (laughs)

TERRELL: Well, tell us some stories about the school! We'd like to hear that!

WILLIAMS: Well, when we first started the school district, we learned right off the bat that we had to do a lot of things beyond the call of duty. The desks arrived one night and the next day school began. So we were uncrating boxes and desks until about 1:15 that morning, in order for the kids to have desks! We were so enthusiastic about it that it didn't seem like work, it seemed like fun. And we all knew we were doing it for a common goal and the kids would appreciate it.

TERRELL: And it was a new beginning.

WILLIAMS: Right! New beginning.

TERRELL: Oh, that's great! Absolutely dedicated. Do you have any more stories?

WILLIAMS: At the very beginning we really had some hard times. We did not have a cafeteria it was not complete. So we had a company off of Park Row and I-10 in Katy, called Servamation. We would bring a little truck out, it would arrive about 10:00 in the morning and that truck would have all of our food in it.

TERRELL: Oh my goodness!

WILLIAMS: We only had sack lunches the first six weeks of school, but it worked out okay. We had sandwiches and chips and maybe a cookie or an apple, and something to drink. And we managed just fine.

TERRELL: Did children still take their lunch?

WILLIAMS: Yes, they could if they wanted to. Sure could.

TERRELL: That amazing. You just don't think about those things.

WILLIAMS: No, things you take for granted until you realize what you've got to do.

TERRELL: So, how many years were you there?

WILLIAMS: I was there twenty-three years.

TERRELL: That's a long time! How has Stafford changed during your lifetime?

WILLIAMS: Well, it's changed a lot. I remember as a teenager, I guess I was about sixteen, and my cousin lived next door to me, and we decided that we wanted to go get a job at the new Sharpstown Mall. That was in the '60s, or late '50s, I should say. Roark Road was a dirt road all the way to Sharpstown. Now you've got the freeways and it takes you five or seven minutes to get there. It took us almost thirty minutes and if it was rainy or muddy, we had to allow for more time.

TERRELL: Well, has anything stayed the same?

WILLIAMS: I guess the continuity of the community. The people have always stayed the same. Back in the early 1900s when our parents--our grandparents--came here from Bryan, there were several Italian settlers that had come a few years before and encouraged all of us to come here. I remember stories of my grandfather saying that when he first came here he didn't have a job, didn't have his land, and didn't have anything. And several of the other people that were already here came over with welcome arms and brought us staples; food, and things for us to have, so we could get started.

TERRELL: You had the support of the community.

WILLIAMS: Certainly. And I see that that is still happening today. It seems like we're still in a group, we're still willing to help each other, even the new people. When we first started the school district, not knowing how everything was going to work out, we decided to go to the different neighborhoods. And it seems like all the neighborhoods banded together for a common goal to start our own school. We started it because busing from Stafford was eliminated by Fort Bend. It wasn't anything educational-wise as much as we were worried about the children crossing busy intersections. Since Stafford is located right in the town the children would have to cross railroad tracks. [See attached newspaper headlines.]

TERRELL: Do you remember any other stories your grandfather told?

WILLIAMS: The only story I remember was with my grandmother. She had a very nurturing way about her and she would always help, or be willing to help, young mothers or those in the area that needed help with raising their children. She was always willing to help.

TERRELL: And probably they appreciated that. What is your favorite memory of living in Stafford? Along with your least favorite.

WILLIAMS: Oh gosh (long sigh). I guess my favorite is just a composite of always knowing--being able to know everyone that we went to school with--and just the warmth and friendliness of everyone here. And I don't know that I have a least favorite.

TERRELL: I love that! What did you do for recreation when you were young?

WILLIAMS: Well, when we were young, other than going to Sharpstown to work with my cousin, sometimes we would go to the bowling alley in Houston, off of Post Oak. There was a little Dairy Queen in Sugar Land, and we'd go down there. And we'd also go to the movies down there in Sugar Land. I say 'down there' - it's not THAT far but that's kind of what we would do.

TERRELL: Okay, when you were VERY young?

WILLIAMS: Well, my parents would occasionally, like on a Saturday afternoon, take us to the shows in Sugar Land, when I was about eight or nine. And we did things like that.

TERRELL: Did you play board games?

WILLIAMS: Yes, we always played Monopoly. Not as a family, but with friends.

TERRELL: What type of education did your children get?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I think my kids got an excellent education.

TERRELL: In Stafford? Did they go through the Stafford schools?

WILLIAMS: Kind of both. My oldest daughter graduated from Dulles. The Stafford school was created when my son was a sophomore so he got an education from Fort Bend, too only a couple of years at Stafford. And the move was real hard for him, because he had made the Dulles baseball team as a sophomore. It was a hard change for him. On the other hand, my youngest, was in third grade when she started at Stafford. She spent all of her years at Stafford, and it was fine.

TERRELL: Do any of the children live in Stafford now?

WILLIAMS: No. They all left.

TERRELL: And you have three children?

WILLIAMS: Three children.



Williams Family – Sadie Williams in Red

TERRELL: And what are their names?

WILLIAMS: Debbie, Mark and Jennifer.

TERRELL: And, are they married?

WILLIAMS: The two girls are married. My son's not married. They are all three in education.

TERRELL: And where do they live?

WILLIAMS: Debbie lives in Needville, Mark lives in Wimberley and Jennifer lives in Grapevine.

TERRELL: They're spread out!

WILLIAMS: They're spread out.

TERRELL: What do you remember about racial segregation in Stafford?

WILLIAMS: Not in school because there really wasn't any at the school. Now as far as growing up as a young girl, I just remember my parents always used the doctor in Sugar Land, Dr. Slaughter, at the medical clinic close to the refinery. And as a young girl, I remember that the black people had a separate little waiting room.

TERRELL: If you needed to go to the hospital, you went to the hospital in Sugar Land. And the doctor in Sugar Land?

WILLIAMS: Yes and the dentist in Sugar Land.

TERRELL: Can you think of some things that I've left out that you would like to tell us about? Did the girls play sports then?

WILLIAMS: In school we did. I didn't participate. I played a little bit of volleyball but not that much. After we consolidated with Sugar Land, then it seemed like they introduced us to basketball, and some other sports. The consolidation was a very good thing. We got to meet and know a lot of new people from there, and made some lifelong friends.

TERRELL: You said your cousin lived next door. Tell us what the area was like.

WILLIAMS: I think my parents bought two lots, my uncle and aunt next door bought two lots, and then my uncle next to them bought one lot. A cousin lived down the street. We kind of occupied that street.

TERRELL: And that within the subdivision?

WILLIAMS: Yes, they called it Sta-Mo subdivision. It's behind the Kingsway subdivision.

TERRELL: You said you didn't have ANY negative thoughts on Stafford. I think that's wonderful!

WILLIAMS: No, I don't. I guess I wouldn't have continued to live here after we married if I had any negative thoughts.

TERRELL: Is your husband from here?

WILLIAMS: He came here, I think when he was in about fourth or fifth grade. And had always gone to school here.

TERRELL: Were you in the same grade?

WILLIAMS: No, no. He's a little older than me. I'm the young one! (laughs)

TERRELL: (chuckles) The baby.

WILLIAMS: Writing the book on Stafford, The History of Stafford, Texas, with Jean Court really interesting. To hear all of the people tell their side of the story about when they first came. We spent a lot of hours on it, but it was definitely very worthwhile. Its for sale at Court's Hardware in Stafford.

TERRELL: It's a beautiful book.

WILLIAMS: Someone would tell us something and Jean (who I admire immensely), she would say, 'Let's go to the library and go check that out'. So away we went to the library. I don't think I've been to the library so much in all my life! I admire her for her expertise, that's what made the book good. We had to call a lot of people to verify dates as much as we could. On the other hand, we had a lot of people give us SO much information and documents. We had a dear friend in Missouri City, and her mother gave us a copy of the 1934 poll tax--that's in the book.

TERRELL: Oh, how fabulous!

WILLIAMS: Then one day we received a phone call from a gentleman who had retired with Southern Pacific Railroads, and he has his own photo collection of railroads and the tracks. And he had a picture that we used in the book. And it was remarkable, because he called and Jean met him in Katy. He gave her a copy of the picture. It was just beautiful how it all came together.

TERRELL: How long did it take you to do it?

WILLIAMS: Oh gosh, probably a good four years.

TERRELL: And you're the president of the historical society?

WILLIAMS: I am.

TERRELL: And how old is that?

WILLIAMS: The historical society started in 1990.

TERRELL: And how many members do you have?

WILLIAMS: We have right now about thirty-five. Probably about fourteen are active. Everyone's not REAL active but they still want to be a part of it. And our next big project is to try to secure entrance or an opening to the William Stafford Cemetery, which is behind Dulles High School. Mrs. Hilmers, who was from Victoria, was William Stafford's great-great-great-granddaughter and she had a monument for William Stafford put there. She has passed away--and we would like to see her goal continue, to see that we could get access to that. So that's the project that we're working on right now.

TERRELL: By access, you mean a road going in to it?

WILLIAMS: Not necessarily a road, but just being able to see the monument and the cemetery. For example we know that Paschal Borden is buried out there, and several other people, in addition to William Stafford. I think it would have a significant VALUE if we could just get in there and view it, or see it.

TERRELL: Well, I really appreciate your coming to do this.

WILLIAMS: Well, thank you! I've enjoyed it.

TERRELL: You've been very nice to give your time to our project.