

## Texas City / World War II Oral History Project

### Audited Transcript

Interviewee: Margaret Tuma

Interviewer: Rebecca Snow

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[0:04]

R: My name is Rebecca Snow, and we're here at Moore Memorial Public Library in Texas City, Texas, and the date is June 5, 2012. And we're here with Margaret Tuma, Mrs. Tuma, who's agreed to help us out and go back and try to remember some things about her early childhood days, because we're interested in the World War II days. So, thank you very much for coming, Margaret.

M: Thank you for asking me.

R: And I did make it clear to you about—this interview is going to be property of Moore Library.

M: Yes.

R: I want to verify that. Great.

M: Yes, you did.

R: We have the paper for that. Good. Okay. Well, I'm not from Texas City, so it's been very interesting for me to find out about what things were like here. So why don't I start by asking you—let me see—were you actually born here?

M: No. I was born in Bryan, Texas. And my mother and daddy moved to Houston, and during the war years that's where we lived, in Houston, Texas.

R: Okay. And what part of Houston?

M: The north side of Houston.

R: And can I ask what your dad did for a living?

M: My dad was a mechanic for the Houston Transit Bus Company. And my mom was a housewife at that time.

R: And did you have any brothers and sisters?

M: Yes. I had one sister and two brothers.

R: And were they older than you?

M: No. I'm the oldest.

R: You're the oldest.

M. Uh-huh.

R: So when you first went to Houston, you were about—just a little one, a couple of years old?

M: Yes, I was very small. Probably about three.

R: And do you remember moving to Houston at all?

[2:02]

M: No.

R: So then, your early memories are being in Houston. Actually, you would have started school, I think, by the time World War II started.

M: Yes. Probably kindergarten. I was born in 1939, and so this is very early years for me.

R: Very early for you. Right. And so they had kindergarten in those days.

M: Yes. They did have kindergarten.

R: (Unintelligible) first grade.

M: Uh-huh, public kindergarten.

R: And do you remember going there? Was it like a half-day?

M: No, I think I went all day. I remember the name of the school was Wharton Elementary, in Houston. When we first moved to Houston, we lived on Sherman, which was sort of in downtown area of Houston. Of course, it would be downtown now. Not at that time.

And then we moved—then my mother and daddy bought a house, and we moved to the north side of Houston. And I went to Berry Elementary. We moved there when I was in third grade. And I lived there until I graduated from high school, in the same home and everything. So all of us were raised there.

R: So Houston is where you were raised, you're really a Houston girl.

M: Yes, I'm really a Houston girl. That's right. I graduated from Sam Houston High School, which was one of the first new high schools in Houston.

R: Mm-hm. Okay, so. I'm just trying to orient myself.

M: Okay. My memories of the war—

R: So when you moved to this new school, you were already in the third grade.

M: I was in the third grade.

R: So the war was over.

M: Um.

R: Let's see my dates. The war didn't get over until actually—the Victory in Europe Day was '45, in May, and then dropped the atomic bomb, in '45, and then VJ Day, the big one, was in August of '45. So really, you would have only been six then.

M: Yes.

R: So you were not moved then.

M: No.

R: You were still either in kindergarten, or—I know people went to kindergarten at different ages—

M: Yes.

R: —in the older days. I remember I went when I was almost six.

M: Yes. And I'm sure I was five or six, but probably six. And since my birthday is in September, September 17, Mother and Daddy actually had to pay something for me to go, since school had already started. We had terms of school then. We had high and low. And so, for me to go to school early, then they paid a certain amount, when I went in first grade.

[5:13]

R: Yes, I remember—I was born in '52, and I remember that my sister—she did get in. She was also born in September. But I was born in December, and so I had to wait. There was no question of paying, but I had to wait. Maybe because it was later. I had to wait a full year. But we didn't have the high and the low. I wonder if that was a regional thing.

M: It could have been. I don't know. But it was all over Houston. And in fact—because my husband graduated even in January of 1956. I mean, they had a graduation in June, and then they had a graduation in January.

R: So it's like two different classes.

M: Right.

R: One starting earlier and one starting later.

M: Yes. Because his birthday was the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. His parents didn't pay for him to go. So he started, actually, in January. And so he graduated in January 1956.

R: So your parents didn't want you to be behind? Is that it?

M: Behind, mm-hm.

R: Even though you would have been starting with other kids with you.

M: With me, right. I guess that's why they did it. They didn't ever tell me why. But I'm sure that's what it was.

R: Okay. Well, instead of maybe waiting another few months, I don't know if you were—

M: A few months, mm-hm.

R: Okay. So then, your life was—you had little brothers and sisters yet?

M: Yes, yes. My sister is three years younger than me, and then my oldest brother is three years younger than her, and then my youngest brother is five years—

R: Right. So he wouldn't have been around then.

M: No.

R: So you would've been, just the oldest, going off.

M: Right.

R: Your mother must have been pretty emotional, maybe, for her first child to go to school.

[7:12]

M: To go to school. Yes, I'm sure she was.

R: Did you walk there? Do you remember that, going to kindergarten?

M: No, I actually—kindergarten—I don't remember how I got to kindergarten. But I started first grade there at Wharton, and we actually rode a city bus.

R: Really!

M: Yes. We went to the bus stop, and they picked us up at the bus stop, and it was a city bus.

R: Did you have to pay the fare?

M: Yes. I had to pay the fare, and then coming home, I had to pay the fare.

R: So you had to have actually coins (unintelligible)?

M: Yes, to put in there. You could buy tokens, and so that's what she did. We had tokens. I had a token to put in there.

R: So that's a responsibility for a little first-grader.

M: It was. And it was very frightening, those first few days, to try to go out, by myself—well, with other kids that lived around us, to get on that big city school bus and then—

R: But was anyone holding your hand, and saying, "Come on"?

M: Well, the teacher walked out with us. But, other than that—

R: How about when you were going from your house?

M: Oh, yes. My mother would walk down there and wait until the bus came.

R: Okay.

M: Because my grandmother lived with us, and she stayed with the little ones, and then Mother walked down there with me and stayed until I got on the bus. But she wasn't there when I got out of school, so—(laughs).

R: When you came, getting off the bus, did you have to tell the driver where to stop?

M: Well, he knew where to stop.

R: He did.

M: But as a small child, you don't know that. That he knows where to stop. (Laughs.) And so, of course, those first few days, until I got into the routine, it was really kind of scary.

R: Oh, I bet. That you would think, "Well, where's this bus going? What am I supposed to say?"

M: Yes, yes. And they're so big. City buses are really large.

R: Did you know where to sit, and stuff like that?

M: Yes.

R: Nobody tried to bother you.

[9:05]

M: No, no, no. Because there were a lot of other children on there too.

R: It wouldn't be like nowadays.

M: No.

R: They considered at that time it was safe.

M: It was safe, yes. Yes. I never had a problem, one, and went there first grade and second grade and then we moved then to the north side of Houston. I watched Highway 59, if you know where that is, being built in Houston. It divided our neighborhood.

R: Wow. Yes, I know—

M: You know where that is, okay.

R: I'm familiar with it, going up north on that. To the airport.

M: Of course I was in high school. And so—

R: So in the wartime, your dad—I guess he didn't get called up? Do you remember?

M: Yes. And that's one thing that I do remember, for some reason. Because he did get drafted.

R: Got drafted.

M: Yes. Or however they did it.

R: But had at least two kids.

M: There were two children. And so, he had to report. But he was not called up. I think if the war had continued, then he was on record as having two children, but still, he would have been called to serve.

And so, I know Mother got us together and we went and had a picture made, when he got his draft notice. Because—which I didn't realize at the time, but after marrying and having children of my own and being grown, I know she wanted that photo in case he did go to war and was killed. Then she'd have a family photograph of us. And he bought her a locket. And then the reason why I remember that so well is because he bought me a locket, and bought my sister a locket.

R: For all his girls.

M: For all his girls. That's right. So that's a memory.

R: Where did you—do you remember where you got your picture taken? Was it like just down in Woolworth's?

M: At Gentry. No, we went to a studio. It was called Gentry. And I have the photograph.

R: And so you'd never—it was the first time you'd done something like that (unintelligible)?

M: Yes. It was the first time we'd done something like that. I mean, Mother had, you know, she'd made pictures of us, and I have a lot of photographs of us when we were small. But that—going to the studio, was a big deal. (Laughs.)

R: And you still have that.

M: And I still have that, yes. I have that photo. But he was never—

R: And so she must have been worried. Of course, you wouldn't know.

M: Yes, I'm sure she was worried. Because her brother served—both of her brothers served in the war, one in the Army, one in the Navy. And then she had a sister whose husband—they had no children, so he was in the Navy.

And in fact when Tom Brokaw's book came out, *The Greatest Generation*, I bought one for each of my children, and wrote in the front of it the names of their family members—uncles and cousins—that served in World War II and what branch of the service that they were in.

R: That's good. Good to have that information. Definitely.

M: And one of my cousins won four bronze stars. So, for his bravery. And he helped evacuate one of the camps where the Jewish people were.

R: Really. He was there for that. Wow.

[12:53]

M: He was there for that. And then would never talk about it.

R: So when you were that age—of course you were just a little girl, but you did know that he might get called up.

M: Right.

R: So you don't remember anything like—maybe Houston wasn't affected by lines, having to stand in line for anything—(unintelligible)—shopping—

M: I don't remember that. I found the ration books, but I don't remember using them.

R: Did your Mom take you shopping? Or did she leave you with your grandmother or (unintelligible)?

M: No, she didn't take us shopping. She mostly went by herself. They had one car, and of course gasoline was hard to come by. And mostly we shopped at a local grocery store when we moved to the north side of Houston. Then there was a local grocery store. And that's where she did most of her grocery shopping.

R: Was it the system where they delivered to you, or do you know that, do you remember (unintelligible)?

M: I don't know. No, I don't remember them coming.

R: And did your mom have like a maid?

M: No.

R: Or a housekeeper, to help out?

M: No.

R: Well, she had her mom.

M: Yes. Mother was a good cook. She could feed a lot of people on a small amount.

R: She didn't mind doing the cleaning and everything? That was okay?

M: No, she did not mind at all. That was part of her being, was taking care of people.

R: And did she do laundry? Do you remember how she did laundry?

M: We had a washing machine that set outside, and it was electric. And I can just see it, the cords going into the house. Had a wringer type.

R: Why would so many people say they sat outside?

M: Because—

R: Was that because they were just spilling water and stuff?

M: Yes, I think it was—

R: Ours was in the cellar. We had one with a wringer.

[15:00]

M: Yes. I think it was because of the water, the spillage and everything. And then they had some kind of a cover, that went over it when it was not in use. But that's how she washed and hung things on the clothesline, and we would help her.

R: So was it like one of those hand wringers, or a wringer, electric so it just fed—

M: Yes, it was electric she could just feed the stuff in, the clothes through. And you had to be careful because your hand could get caught in it. She never let us do it.

R: Did she tell you to be careful?

M: Oh yes. Yes.

R: I remember looking at it, when my mom would always say that to me. (indrawn breath) Your hand—

M: Yes. Exactly. Because it could really hurt a little one's hand, going up to its arm and everything. But really I didn't help do that. I helped hang clothes up on the line, where I could reach, things like that.

R: How about washing the dishes?

M: Oh yes. We washed the dishes. My sister and I took turns in washing the dishes.

R: But probably when you were older, probably not when you were—

M: No, not when I was younger, no, no. She did it. And of course my grandmother helped her with the cooking and things like that.

R: Do you remember, was your mother still able to bake you cakes and stuff, when you were that little, going to (unintelligible)?

M: The only time I remember a cake, and it's because of a photo. And it's when my sister turned a year old. I have a picture of that. And her with her birthday cake, and I'm sitting there with her. But I do not remember even—I don't, you know, I don't remember eating the cake, or anything.

[16:40]

R: The kind of foods and stuff, the food you ate?

M: No. Well, they grew—they had a garden.

R: They did.

M: Yes. They had a garden, yes.

R: But you were living in a city!

M: Well, they had chickens, and they had a garden in the north side of Houston. And everybody did.

R: How about the first place you lived in Houston?

M: No, no. There in Houston there, they didn't have—

R: On Sherman?

M: On Sherman. And I think that's—

R: No chickens there.

M: No, no, no.

R: No backyard, or anything like that.

M: No, there was a backyard, but I don't remember a garden there. But when we moved, they definitely had a big garden.

R: Okay. And that was just normal, even though you were still really in the suburbs.

M: Yes, yes. Yes. Everyone there had a garden. Because times were hard!

R: Were you scared of chickens?

M: No, unh-uh. My sister was, but I wasn't because my grandmother and grandfather lived in Bryan, and so that's where I was born, and they had chickens. So I'd been around them all my life, where my sister, you know, had not. So—no, I was not afraid of chickens.

R: You were not scared. And the cow? Did you have a cow then?

M: They had a cow. No, we did never have any kind of livestock.

R: Okay. So when you said who had—

M: My grandmother.

R: It's your grandparents—

M: My grandparents in Bryan.

R: In Bryan. But not when you lived in north Houston, you didn't have chickens then?

[18:03]

M: Yes, we had chickens there. But no livestock, no cows or anything like that.

R: No cows. But garden—

M: Yes, garden. Big garden.

R: Did your dad work in the garden too?

M: Yes. My dad worked in the garden too, yes. Because he'd been raised on a farm. So he knew how to grow things, and so did my mother. They both had lived through the Depression, so they knew how to save and can and this kind of thing. Nothing was wasted.

R: Good, good. Did you have to eat your vegetables?

M: Yes. We ate our vegetables.

R: So you didn't put your vegetables in your napkin and feed them to the cat, or anything. We used to do that.

M: No. (Laughs.) No, like my kids did. (Laughs.) To the little poodle we had. But no, we ate what was put on our plate. And of course, we didn't have a lot of meat, or anything,

unless it was chicken. And every once in a while, we'd have a roast. But that was very rare occasion. So we ate well.

R: You ate well. That's good. So there wasn't any memory of want or anything.

M: No.

R: Of course, your father was able to work.

M: Yes.

R: (Unintelligible.)

M: A lot of people had come to Houston during the war. And I know my husband's parents did. He was a welder, and worked in the ship yards in Houston. So, like in Texas City, in the '40s, where there was work, people came. That's the main reason why they came.

R: Right. I notice that in the ration books or in the war literature at the time they were telling ladies, "Go ahead and eat poultry," you know, just ease up on the beef, whether they wanted to have the best meat sent to the armed services, or something like that. But they said there were just the other parts, you know, the kidneys and things like that could be saved for the home front, but they were encouraging people to eat chicken, so it wasn't eaten as much—I think people eat chicken maybe a lot more now, I'm not sure.

M: Yes. I think so too. But my memory of the war is mostly—and I would have been like six or seven I guess when the war was over, like we were talking about. My mother's oldest brother was in the Army. He came to live with us when he got out of the service. He was not married. The house that he had lived in, up in Onalaska, he had lived up there by himself for many, many years, and then he was drafted and was in the Army.

R: Which town?

M: Onalaska, which is up by Lake Livingston.

R: Okay.

M: So anyway, when he got out of the service, he came to live with us, in Houston. When he came in, of course he had on his uniform and looked so handsome and everything, in his Army uniform, and of course as an inquisitive child, you know, I thought this is

something, to see this soldier here. He had a trunk with him. And so, he set the big trunk down. I went over and I said, "Uncle John? I want to look in the trunk."

R: Well, you were not too shy then.

M: No. (Laughs.)

R: Or did you know him already?

M: Oh yes, I knew him already. Yes, I knew him. And he said, "Margaret Ann. You can't touch that trunk because it has secrets in it. Military secrets." I still remember how I felt, like, I mean, it scared me.

[22:10]

R: Or did you feel ashamed?

M: It really frightened me, and I felt ashamed.

R: That he reproved you, in a way. Yes.

M: He reproved me, that's right. But it really frightened me too, to think that I had military secrets in my house. (Laughs.)

R: Yes.

M: But he—

R: And you didn't tell your mom?

M: No, I don't remember telling her.

R: In those days, we didn't tell (unintelligible).

M: But he had a job in the service of driving an ambulance. And he picked up dead bodies of soldiers and I'm sure Marines, and you know, whatever he had to do. And he was never the same after the war. It really affected his mind. And I guess today they would call it post-traumatic syndrome, but in those days, I mean, I don't think they knew anything about that. And he lived with us about two years, and tried to find jobs—even tried to be a barber. But he just could not get along with people. And so—

R: And this is your—

M: My mother's brother.

R: Younger brother.

M: No, oldest brother.

R: Oldest brother?

M: Her oldest brother.

R: She was young. She must have been young to get married.

M: Yes, she was. She was about seventeen when she got married. So, they took him—

R: Did he have his own room in your house? Did you have enough room for that?

M: Yes, he had a room in the house. And so—

R: But you kept out of it. You didn't—

M: Yes. Oh yes. We all did. But you know, he mellowed after that. And of course I never asked to see the trunk again. And I really—it was in his room, and so I never tried to fool with it or anything. He had really scared me enough that I didn't want to look at it.

But he would go trick or treating with us. And then he built my sister and I a playhouse. Mother and Daddy had a big empty lot by their house, and so he built us a real nice playhouse there.

But it just got to the point to where I think Mother just couldn't take care of him anymore. And so they had him examined by a doctor, and so he went to the VA hospital in Waco. And that's where he spent the rest of his life—was there, in that hospital. A home there. He worked in the laundry there at the VA hospital, or whatever it was called at that time. I say, "hospital"—

R: I think the VA hospital.

M: Anyway, he worked in the laundry room, and they paid him. But he lived there for the rest of his life.

R: And yet he served. He served well.

[24:58]

M: Yes. He served well.

R: And that was the Army.

M: That was the Army, mm-hm, yes, he was in the Army. And her other brother was in the Navy. But he, you know, didn't have any problems. But I think—

R: Well, some people didn't—some of them didn't have really contact with that. I interviewed some men, and they went up and they bombed—

M: Yes.

R: But they didn't have contact with the dead.

M: Right.

R: And then their particular planes, the two I've interviewed, they didn't get a hit. Or they got a hit and no one got hurt, or someone got hurt a little bit, but no one got killed. They didn't see a lot. Yes.

M: No. But I think what he saw, really—and I think it would do most people, to go through what he went through—picking up the dead and the wounded—it would be a very difficult job.

R: Right. But you didn't find out about that really until later, until you got older.

M: No, no. Until I got older.

R: And he was already moved out.

M: Yes. Mm-hm.

R: And were you able to see him some? As an adult?

M: Yes. And we corresponded, and you know, I'd send him cards, and things like that. Because we had really gotten attached to him, with him being there every day with us, for a couple of years. And hated to see him leave, really. But it was just one of those things. As I've grown older, I thought, well Mother just couldn't—she couldn't do it anymore. It was a lot of responsibility, and a lot of—although he did get some, I think, a little pension or something like that. But it was a lot of responsibility.

R: Oh, yes. Oh yes. Definitely. And she had her own family.

M: Yes.

R: Do you think your father—did he ever talk about that he was sorry that he didn't go?

M: No.

R: He was glad.

M: I think he was glad, yes, that he didn't have to go. He really did.

R: And for his work, since he was working for the transportation thing, that would be something else, if we had ever been able to interview him, about how the war affected the transportation, you know, about the—

M: Yes.

R: But he was to do with the actual buses?

M: The buses, uh-huh, yes.

R: Oh, the same busses you took? When you were—

M: Yes, the same company that I rode on when I was a little girl. Houston Transit.

R: But was Houston Transit part of Inter-Urban?

M: No.

R: Or was Inter-Urban a separate company?

M: Yes, it was a separate company. This was owned by the City of Houston and it was a Houston bus company.

R: So Inter-Urban was a new idea of something like to go between the cities.

M: Yes, between the cities.

R: We have a lot of their—some of their literature, and everything. They made a big fuss—

M: It was a railroad.

[27:53]

R: Yet, I don't think that they lasted that long. Did you ever take an Inter-Urban?

M: No, no. I never—I heard about it and have read about it, and of course the terminal would take people on the jitney bus out there to catch the Inter-Urban. Because it was a train. But no, I never—that was way before my time.

R: But you had some experience then in your family of what the war could do, its impact. For sure.

M: Yes.

R: For sure.

M: Mm-hm.

R: For sure. So you grew up in Houston.

M: Mm-hm.

R: Did you end up going to college?

M: I went to business college. I went to Massey Business School, in Houston.

R: Which?

M: Massey.

R: Massey, okay.

M: Massey Business College.

R: I'm just not from here, so I don't know a lot of the names. Massey. Was that a two year school?

M: Two-year, uh-huh, a two year school.

R: And did you learn, like accounting at all?

M: Yes, we did some accounting, we did keypunch, which happened to be my first job with the railroad, with Southern Pacific in downtown Houston—was a keypunch operator with, you know, the computers had come out, and you punched these cards, and then the cards went into something and they sorted them, and then that went into a big computer—I mean huge, gigantic computers.

R: Right. I remember how big (unintelligible). When I was in early college, I was taking some classes and I took a computer class—introduction, and we had the cards. And you wrote the program, but then you had to—

M: Punch them in? Type it in.

R: Punch it in. But I didn't learn how to punch it, I think someone did it for us. And then we took the cards and put it in the machine and then it ran.

M: And then it ran, that's right. It was quite a process.

R: But I don't know—So you learned how to keypunch.

M: Uh-huh. I learned how to keypunch there at the school, I sure did. And you know, you had business English, and shorthand, and things like that. A business school.

R: And then you worked for the railroad.

M: And then I went to work for the railroad in Houston.

R: And did you see any after-effects of the war, or anything, after did people ever talk about it and say, "Oh we'll never have a war again," and talk about—

M: No, I don't remember.

R: —the Jewish situation, how is the Jewish population, like in—were people prejudiced against Jews here still, do you think? Or do you think that was still going on?

M: No, I don't think so. That I can remember, no.

R: There was some of it I know, in this country.

M: Yes.

R: I don't think we had anything as bad as Europe.

M: No. I don't think here—here we didn't. I mean, I don't remember any at all, myself.

R: And you didn't have friends who were like, German, or—

M: No.

R: Maybe Japanese extracts—I know that they did take some of the Japanese, from—like, who said that they knew someone in League City, and they took them and put them in a camp somewhere. But I don't know where, whether it was nearby? One of these camps nearby, or not? And we had some prisoners of war.

[31:19]

M: No, I never, that I can think of. I don't even remember Mother or Daddy talking about it.

R: So when you were growing up, it was the Korean War. The Korean War was your big war then, right?

M: The Korean War, yes.

R: (Unintelligible.)

M: But I don't even remember, because I didn't have anybody involved in that. My uncles were older by then, too old to be really recalled. And most of them, none of them made a career out of the service. They all got out when their four years or whatever it was they signed up for was over with. I have no relatives that were career.

R: No, not in mine either. They just served.

M: But most of them—I have one uncle that served on a ship. And he became a minister. He was in the Navy. And he had to kill somebody in hand-to-hand combat. They attacked his ship, and he actually killed a Japanese person, a Japanese soldier. He wouldn't talk about that at all, either.

But I know my aunt said that his hair, when he came home, was white. It had just turned, after that. He had real dark hair. And she said, it was just white. So I know he was severely affected by that, having to kill somebody and see them face to face. But it was either his life or the Japanese person's life, but still—that would be a hard thing to do, I would think.

R: Yes. And it's funny, I was reading a book about the Pacific, and they were saying they were so scared, in a way, of the Japanese and thinking of them as being barbaric. But then, actually, the Japanese soldiers complained about the jungle and how scary it was. Because a lot of them, of course, they were from cities and towns too, and they were

scared of the insects, and the snakes. And it wasn't really like the American G.I. thought: "Oh, those guys are really out there ready to get me." They were both kind of feeling—

M: Yes, feeling that way.

R: Feeling out of things, yes. But of course, there's different reputations for atrocities in war, and things like that.

M: Yes.

[34:05]

R: Well. I liked the picture of you all in Houston, with the chickens, even though you were in north Houston, and feeding the chickens. Did you have to feed them too?

M: Yes, we helped feed them. We really did.

R: And did you go and get the eggs out?

M: Get the eggs out, yes.

R: But your sister was scared.

M: My sister was—

R: One of your sisters. The one younger than you?

M: Uh-huh, I just had one sister. Yes, she was about three years younger than me. But she was afraid of chickens, for some reason and so I would get the eggs, Mother didn't make her get in there, or anything.

R: That's good. Well, I think that's a nice picture and those details are important. How about your clothes? That's what I was thinking of asking. How about your clothes?

M: Mother made our clothes.

R: Oh, she did.

M: She had a sewing machine, a pedal sewing machine, and even in the photo that I was telling you about, well, we have on our little homemade dresses. And she did a very good job. She had lace on them, and a little seersucker, and—

R: And where did she get the material?

M: She bought it at a store. Now where, I—you know, I don't know. But like I said, she was raised during the Depression, and so she was very thrifty and—

R: Right. She wasn't going to buy store—there were store bought dresses, then?

M: Oh yes. There were store clothes. And our shoes and things of course were from the store. But she made everything we wore, and made a lot of my brother's shirts, and things like that as they—she was a very good seamstress. In fact, she made my prom dress.

R: She did.

M: So. She was a good seamstress.

R: And she was the homemaker then, throughout your life?

M: No—then she went to work.

R: Really.

M: Yes. She decided that she—when she went to the University of Houston and got certified as a—that she could run a daycare. So she started a daycare, and they had first grade through fourth or fifth grade at their church, and she ran that.

R: Good for her.

M: She also worked at Prudential. She went to work at Prudential Insurance Company, and worked there several years. Then she hurt her back, and had to retire.

R: As like a clerk, or secretary, or—

M: Uh-huh, as a clerk. A file clerk.

R: I was a clerk in insurance companies for quite a while.

M: And so then when she couldn't do that, then she went back to the U of H, and got certified where she could run the daycare, and that's what she did. For many, many years.

[37:08]

R: Well do you think she was kind of motivated in the light of your own progress of what you were doing in the business world?

M: Yes, and I think—

R: You were already by then come down to Terminal Railway Company? Not yet?

M: No, not yet.

R: So after the railroad company, where did you work then?

M: Then I went to—I only worked for the railroad. I worked for Southern Pacific there, in Houston. Then my husband, you know, was in the newspaper business, in circulation—

R: I didn't know that.

M: Yes. He worked for the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Houston Press*, in Houston. Well, he worked for the *Houston Press* and then the *Houston Chronicle* bought the *Houston Press* newspaper. So he was working in Galveston, and they approached him about coming to work for the *Galveston News*. So, he did. He quit the *Chronicle*, and went to work for the *Galveston News*.

R: You mean you were living in Galveston? You were married already?

M: We were living in Houston. We were married already, and living in Houston. And I was pregnant.

R: But you said he was at Galveston.

M: He drove back and forth.

R: Oh, he worked in Galveston—

M: He worked in Galveston.

R: As the *Chronicle's*—

M: Circulation, yes.

R: Representative there.

M: As their district representative. Yes.

R: Oh my gosh, he drove all—in those days, that’s quite a (unintelligible).

M: It was quite a chore. And he was going to the University of Houston at the same time.

R: Were you working?

M: I was working, uh-huh, at Southern Pacific.

R: And you had children?

M: I got pregnant—we were married six years before we had any children. I was waiting for David to be born, and someone called me and said, “Margaret, the *Houston Press* has been sold to the *Houston Chronicle*.” And I said, “Oh, dear.” (Laughs.) Because I didn’t know if he’d have a job or not.

Well, he did. They did want him, and so he stayed with the *Chronicle*, still going to Galveston every day. But then we lived in Pasadena, so it wasn’t too far a drive. Then when they approached him about coming to work for the *Galveston News*, well, then we had to move to this area. I had to quit my job up there. I tried driving back and forth, but I could not do it, from Galveston. It was just too hard, especially with a baby.

R: Oh, you were in Galveston first, living there?

M: Yes, we moved to Galveston.

R: That must have been—but wait, was it the railroad, no wait, the bus company.

M: No. I worked for the Southern Pacific.

R: Right. Your father did. You worked for the railroad, Southern Pacific. And they had nothing down here.

[40:07]

M: No. They had nothing down here. So I went and interviewed at the Texas City Terminal. I was drawing my unemployment. Then we ended up here.

R: How old were you?

M: How old was I?

R: In your twenties?

M: No, let's see—I got married at eighteen. I was—yes, I was in my late twenties. When I came to work.

R: So you didn't really want to live down here.

M: I didn't want to live in Galveston.

R: Because Houston from Galveston, that's a big jump.

M: And to Texas City, was even, at that time. Well, it was in 1967 when we moved to Texas City. We lived in Galveston a couple of years. Then we went back to Houston. Then I said, "I don't want to live in Galveston permanently."

R: So this was the next best place.

M: This was, uh-huh. Billy came over, and he also was circulation manager for the *Texas City Sun* too, so he was by that time familiar with the area. He said, "I think you'll like Texas City." So we came down and looked. My son was three, and then I had Beth, and we moved down here when she was three months old, moved to Texas City.

R: You've been here ever since.

M: Ever since.

R: So you're kind of a Texas Citian.

M: Yes.

R: But sort of a reluctant one, at first.

M: (Laughs.) I was. I really was.

R: Well, Houston and Texas City, there's a big difference.

M: Oh, it was.

R: Even now, there's still a big difference. (Laughs.)

M: I told Beth one time, I said, "You know, I felt like he'd moved me to the end of the world," that's what I felt like. (Rebecca laughs.) Because we had Palmer Highway. And there was like a chicken place, a pizza place, and a couple of hamburger places, and a

Mexican food place. And I mean, that was about it. (Laughs.) And I was used to big city life, going to the movies and liked to go to the theater, sometime, and this kind of thing.

R: Big parks, and everything.

M: Yes, it was really a change for me. The zoo, and all this.

R: I still like Houston very much. I like to go there. But it's kind of a—

M: But I don't know, I feel like it was meant to be. It was part of God's plan for my life, for us to be here.

R: And then, so both of your children attended the public school here?

M: Yes.

R: They did.

M: They both graduated from Texas City High School.

R: And they were in the kind of a race-segregation time, integration and everything, went through that.

M: Yes. Well, I went through that.

R: You went through that?

M: I went through that.

R: In Houston?

[43:02]

M: I graduated in 1957. And they started integration there in about 1958, '59, '60, around in there, that they started integration. So I'm sure it was probably the same thing here, around those times.

R: What they did here is they actually opened it up, but only a few, like just a trickle would come over and be in the regular high school. Because they could still continue—the black schools continued here for awhile. Or they could even go down to Galveston. Because a lot of them were not so hesitant, and they didn't, so it was just this many—a

few, two or three, and for the braver ones maybe. Or ones whose parents decided, "Yes, you're going to do this." So it took them quite awhile to get fully integrated.

M: But my kids—it was integrated when my kids went, I mean, they had black students that went. Especially in junior high.

R: In the sixties, late sixties. Yes.

M: In junior high, around that time.

R: I think you're right, I think you're right. I think it was fully integrated.

M: By the time they got to school. And then in high school, and everything, because David played Little League, and I know there were a lot of black kids that played Little League with him. And also he played football, the Rebel football team, and he had a lot of black friends. So it was, at that time.

R: So it was meant to be, that you were to come and—

M: That's what I think. I really think—

R: I think it was wonderful for the company to have you.

M: Oh, thank you. And I really enjoyed it. They were so good to me. It was a wonderful place to work. And then Billy had a real good job with the *Galveston News*, had a wonderful boss named Les Daughtry. Of course his son, you know, was the editor—the publisher of the *Texas City Sun* for many years.

R: Oh, no, I didn't.

M: Yes. His name was Les too.

R: Well, maybe that's why I know the name.

M: That's why you know the name. Les was really a good boss, and just became part of our family, and it was just a wonderful life. I was so blessed.

R: That's good. And did you ever end up going to the Texas City Dike, like as a regular thing?

M: Yes.

R: Start fishing, or anything?

M: Oh, yes.

R: Really?

M: Oh yes, we fished off the Dike, took David out there, and fished. Yes, we did. We really enjoyed it.

[45:50]

R: So you did get to feeling home here. Good.

M: Oh, yes, we did.

R: Okay, I think we'll wrap it up. And I know we've been sort of all over, here and back—

M: Creation, yes.

R: Hither and yon. Thank you so much for coming and talking to us, and I thank you for giving us the information you have.

M: Oh, well you're welcome.

R: Your insight. We appreciate it.

M: Well, thank you for asking me.

R: Okay, very good. We'll stop.

[46:17]