

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **WALTER AUGUST BRINKMAN JR.**

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Interviewer: Dianne L. Ware

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Interview with Mr. Walter Brinkman Jr. at the home of his sister, Sue Brinkman Austin in McGregor, Texas. This interview is being recorded for the Fort Bend County Museum Association, Dewalt Heritage Project.

Number of Pages 8



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Transcript

WARE: Let's start with some basic biographical information: When and where were you born?

BRINKMAN: I was born February 2, 1948 at Memorial Hospital in Houston Texas.

WARE: Tell me about your dad.

BRINKMAN: My dad was kind of like my hero. He used to take me fishing all the time. That's what I remember. My mother would leave the bed and let me sleep in the same bed with my dad so we could get up at 3:00 AM to go fishing. He was a really good friend.

WARE: Your dad was on the Missouri City School Board for years. Do you remember anything about that or any other activities that he did in the community?

BRINKMAN: He was a charter member of the Stafford Missouri City's Lions Club; on the school board; and on the board of directors at the bank.

WARE: Did he ever talk about any of those activities around the house?

BRINKMAN: Some. I use to get in trouble all the time and since he was on the school board, he used to tell me that I embarrassed him from time to time. (chuckle)

WARE: And that made you stop?

BRINKMAN: No (both Ware and Brinkman break into laughter)

WARE: So you had a normal childhood. Tell me about your mother.

BRINKMAN: She was a homemaker. I used to get in trouble and she nagged at me a lot, but she was a good woman.

WARE: Tell me about the Brinkman Egg Farm.

BRINKMAN: My dad was in the cattle business before he sold all his cattle and started the egg farm around 1956-57. We lived on Bull Lane in Missouri City for 3-4 years before we built a house at the egg farm. I did a good bit of work on the egg farm, everything from gathering eggs to shoveling chicken manure and all that sort of stuff.

WARE: Did you ever hear your dad talk about the reasons why he got out of the cattle business and chose chickens?

BRINKMAN: Not really but I think it was a financial thing.

WARE: Parents don't always talk in front of children about things and that is very common. Did your mother ever talk about growing up in Dewalt or anything in her childhood in Houston that you can remember specifically?

BRINKMAN: I remember her telling me that her dad got killed in a car wreck. We were talking about when she went to Kinkaid School, then Sam Houston High School from where I think she graduated. Then she went to Rice University but it was Rice Institute then.

WARE: Rice Institute, right. Can you remember any of the details when her father was killed in the automobile accident?

BRINKMAN: It was such a sudden thing, I know there was a lot of sorrow and grief. I can't remember but the street where it happened was Cherokee and it was on a corner.

WARE: Cherokee and Rice or Sunset?

BRINKMAN: Something like that but I am not sure.

WARE: Tell me about your brother and your sister.

BRINKMAN: AH HH ... I am a good bit younger than they are. I was born in February and they were born in September so I'm 12 ½ younger than my sister and 15 ½ years younger than my brother. I really never knew my brother when he was normal because now he is paranoid schizophrenic. All I remember is he being a little unstable mentally. I can remember them talking about him when I was a little kid. All my sister's friends would hand me around feeding me beans and naming them all so I would eat them.

WARE: Like green beans? Why would they name the beans so you would eat them?

BRINKMAN: I really don't remember but one name was George.

WARE: So they would give the beans human names?

BRINKMAN: I think so. I was little so I don't really remember too much of that. I remember my sister getting married and being in the wedding. My brother-in-law was kind of like a brother to me because my brother had mental problems. Then they moved next to my parents and I would always hang out at their place.

WARE: And eat their green beans. Do you remember much about your grandmother, Mrs. Mantie Veal Dew?

BRINKMAN: I remember she had a book of the presidents of the United States and she would call out their names so I could memorize them. I was somewhere between 3-5 years old. It was a neat book but I don't know what ever happened to it.

WARE: Your wife is telling me, that you still know them. (laughing). Has that knowledge come in handy to you at all?

BRINKMAN: Oh, yea. All the cross streets in McGregor are named after presidents and they are in order in the terms that they served. It is easy to find my way around these streets. I've always liked history. I remember my grandmother living with us for a while. She was pretty elderly and getting a little senile.

WARE: About how old were you when your grandmother passed, do you remember?

BRINKMAN: I was pretty young, maybe 10 or 11. What was still odd to me, and is till odd to me, is that they brought her body in a coffin to the house on Bull Lane. I don't know what they called that ... a wake or something like that.

WARE: Did they have the funeral at the house or just the viewing?

BRINKMAN: Right, the viewing for one day.

WARE: Did you ever experience that with other grandparents or relatives or friends of yours?

BRINKMAN: Not that I can remember.

WARE: Describe the house at the egg farm.

BRINKMAN: It was built about 1961. A really nice brick home. Dad was in the construction business so he had some really good craftsmen that built it. It had four bedrooms, a nice big den, a dining room, a living room, and a big kitchen. A beautiful home with a nice patio. You could step out the back door and look down to see Oyster Creek.

WARE: When your grandmother was going senile, did you have a nurse that came in and took care of her?

BRINKMAN: I don't really remember. I kind of watched her a lot (chuckle). I would go tattle on her when she was doing something she wasn't supposed to be doing or thought she might be getting into trouble.

WARE: What happened to the house that was on the egg farm?

BRINKMAN: When our folks passed away we sold it around 1998-99.

WARE: There was a time lag there when the egg farm was productive, but your family did not live on the egg farm. Who took care of it, at that point?

BRINKMAN: There were several families, I remember a family named Garcia; then a family named Trilicek and another family named Padilla. A bunch of them worked on the egg farm.

WARE: Did the Garcia's and the Trilicek's actually live there?

BRINKMAN: Yes. There were about 8 people who worked on the egg farm.

WARE: Did anyone still live at the Dew plantation during your childhood?

BRINKMAN: I guess Jessie Agnew did. I don't know if Muffie Maroney or her mother ever lived there.

WARE: Did you ever go visit the Dew house?

BRINKMAN: Maybe once or twice. It was a big house.

WARE: Are there any relative, other than your parents, that you considered was a role model?

BRINKMAN: Well, my brother-in-law.

WARE: At the egg farm, did the family have a vegetable garden also?

BRINKMAN: Not at the egg farm but we did at the house. The house was a good quarter to a half mile from the egg farm because of the smell from the chickens.

WARE: Were there any other farm animals other than chickens?

BRINKMAN: I don't think so but we may have had some turkeys. We had DeKalb chickens and another kind. I remember my dad telling me what kind they were but I don't remember the name.

WARE: Do you remember the letter it started with?

BRINKMAN: I thought it was an H. But I am not sure about that.

WARE: That's good we can fill that in. I know that you went to Missouri City schools. Tell me what was an average day like at school? What are some memorable things or ordinary things?

BRINKMAN: They were good. We just studied and everybody liked recess. I played football and baseball in junior high and high school.

WARE: Was you dad involved in sports with you?

BRINKMAN: He loved little league baseball. I think one year he was president of the little league. He came to all my games. I don't think he ever missed a game I played in.

WARE: When you were growing up, what did you do for medical care and emergencies?

BRINKMAN: We had a pediatrician in Houston, Dr. John Glen. That's also the name of an astronaut. There was a physician in Sugar Land named Dr. Slaughter. That's a heck of a name for a physician. There was also a Dr. Abbe Ledbetter in Houston.

WARE: Did you go to Sugar Land or did he come to your house?

BRINKMAN: No, we went to Sugar Land or Houston. There weren't any house calls.

WARE: Did you ever go to a church that was in your community?

BRINKMAN: Yes, First Baptist Church in Missouri City. It was notorious for running their preachers off.

WARE: What did you do with your free time when you weren't in school?

BRINKMAN: When I wasn't in school I liked to fish, play all sorts of sports, and play pick-up games.

WARE: Did you have friends that lived nearby and what were their names?

BRINKMAN: We lived on a chicken farm so I had to drive to our hang out at the Dairy Queen in Sugar Land. Calvin Rozelle, Russell Smith, my cousin Bill DeWalt at an earlier age, Wayne Strickland, Chester Juroska, John Nugent, Lawrence Fuqua ... I could go on and on.

WARE: That was your closest circle? The ones that were in your wedding. Where and when did you get married.?

BRINKMAN: We got married at First Baptist Church in Waco on August 19, 1972. I get a brownie point for remembering.

WARE: How did you two meet?

BRINKMAN: We both went to Baylor University in our undergraduate in the 1960's. It was a blind date. We were introduced by a guy named Mike Slavens, who we haven't seen in years.

WARE: It happens. Do you remember a store in Dewalt area when you were growing up?

BRINKMAN: Yea. It was a little grocery store just a stones throw from the Dew House on Highway 6. I know when dad was in the chicken business, he would deliver eggs there. They didn't use many eggs because it was a real small store and there were not many people around.

WARE: Were there other stores near by?

BRINKMAN: No, mostly just open fields with a few houses. Stafford was the closest store and that was maybe 5 miles away.

WARE: Did the trains run fairly regularly along Highway 6 during your childhood?

BRINKMAN: Yea, they did. We were several miles from the train tracks. I'd see them from time to time, but we were too far away to really hear them.

WARE: We discussed this a little bit earlier, but I would like to get it on tape. What do you remember about the Hutchings family?

BRINKMAN: The only thing I remember about them is they were living in Barker and my parents used to drive over there to visit them. I was a little toddler at that time.

WARE: How do you think that your parents knew them?

BRINKMAN: Well they lived next door to the Dew house.

WARE: When did you move away from the Brinkman Egg Farm and why?

BRINKMAN: I went to college at Baylor in Waco. I would live in Waco during the school terms and in the summers I'd live at home. I did that for probably 6-7 years. Then when Sharon and I got married we lived in Dallas; I was still going to school.

WARE: For the record what is Sharon's maiden name?

BRINKMAN: Broom.

WARE: Did you go to the farewell celebration for the Dew house? Did you have any special feeling about the house?

BRINKMAN: No. Well I'd like to see it preserved but I wasn't really emotional about it or anything.

WARE: Have I forgotten to ask you about anything that you can think of that you want to get recorded?

BRINKMAN: Not that I can think of.

WARE: Thank you.

BRINKMAN: You bet.

Interview ends