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Billy Jack Silman, Oral History Index

Billy Jack Silman

Marcia Lair

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Recommended Citation

Silman, Billy Jack and Lair, Marcia, "Billy Jack Silman, Oral History Index" (2020-02-25). *All Oral Histories*. 59.

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Interview with Billy Jack Silman conducted by Marcia Lair

February 25, 2020

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00:00:01	Introductions and general information
00:00:50	Born 8/21/1944 in Florence Nightingale Hospital in Dallas, TX. Mother – Joyce Bartley Silman; Father – Jack Pratt Silman.
00:01:20	Grew up in Delta County. 1 st grade at Little Orphan Annie School, 2 nd grade in Sandy then East Ward School and Cooper High School. Remembrances of teachers – Mr. [Thomas] Skinner – taught math and coached football; Ms. [Valera] Sparks – typing teacher.
00:02:29	Involved in a number of pranks at school – memories of teachers trying to catch them. Played junior and senior high football. Graduated in 1962.
00:03:50	Went to East Texas State College – more involved with ping-pong and tennis than studies. Memory of last day at college.
00:05:45	Went to barber school managed by Earl Tatum’s brother, Carl Tatum. Finished after 7 months – employed by Webb’s Chapel in Dallas, TX for a year; took a master barber test. Went to work as a barber for Robbie Plunkett for 13 years, and then worked at East Texas State University in the Maintenance Dept for 25 years. Has also had his own barbershop since he passed the master barber test. Rouffer style haircuts.
00:07:54	Changes in barbering and barbershops. Other barbershops in the area over the years – Duck Stevenson, Paul Miller, Truman Whitlock, Aubrey McGuyer, Casey Culp, Ed Stahmer. Changes in men’s hairstyles - flat-tops to longer hair – heavily influenced by the Beatles – now going back to shorter.
00:13:30	Meeting wife, Linda [Conway Silman] while in high school. Was dating Linda’s cousin, Linda [McCombs Wheeler] and met Linda Conway at Olinda McCombs’ house. Linda Conway was working at Westinghouse in Paris, TX and he was working in Dallas. He decided to date Linda Conway.
00:15:55	Children – Christi [Silman Davidson], married to Jeff Davidson, with 3 daughters; Son Bruce Silman has 1 daughter and 2 sons; Daughter Sally Silman Stout married to Lance Stout, with 2 sons
00:18:25	Beginning of Billy Jack’s yard business – when Sally was in college, she helped him mow yards and trim trees.
00:19:40	Silman’s Grocery Store – when Billy Jack’s father, Jack Pratt Silman, came back from WWII, he went to work in his father’s [John J. Silman] store. After John died, Jack and his wife ran the store for 50 years. It was a grocery store with a lunch counter and sporting goods. Memories of the store, and Billy Jack and his brother John Silman delivering groceries. Ladies working the lunch counter – Maggie Bowers, Sam Bettes’ mother, and Hester Hooten. Store sold about 1980.
00:25:54	Story about an incident from about 1945, when Billy Jack accidentally set some clothes on fire in the bathroom.
00:28:55	Memories of playing Little League baseball – father was a coach, as were Vernon Stanley and Larry Smith
00:30:05	Father, Jack Pratt Silman, spent 4 years in the service during WWII; served in Germany and Italy. Went overseas on the Queen Mary, currently docked in California.
00:31:14	When JFK was assassinated, was in barber school two streets over from the parade. Went to the parade and saw the President about 2 minutes before he was shot.

00:33:05	Vietnam War – brother John Silman was drafted when he graduated from college and went to Vietnam. After about a year, was hired by Wade Bledsoe as a teacher and was able to come home early.
00:34:14	Father Jack Pratt Silman announced the Friday night Cooper High School football games. Vernon Stanley [sp?], Ted Carrington, or Jeral Hamm would spot for him. Opal Preas ran the clock.
00:36:00	Father Jack Pratt Silman loved fishing.
	More about father Jack Pratt Silman fishing/golfing – stocked catfish at Brent Woods' [sp?] and Pete Woodard's places at Clark Ridge. Played golf with Dr. [Oscar Gaza] Janes, Lundy Hooten, Wade Bledsoe, and Teed Carrington
00:37:25	Mother Joyce Bartley Silman worked for the Delta Funeral Home beginning before the Silman Grocery Store closed.
00:38:00	More about the Bartleys – Grandfather [William Ivy Bartley, Sr.] worked at the Pecan Gap Bank and was President of the Ladonia Bank and then the First National Bank in Cooper, TX. Oldest child was Billy Jack's mother, Joyce Bartley Silman; she had six brothers – Sam Bartley lived in Dallas; William Ivy Bartley, Jr. lived in Pasadena, TX; Joe Bartley lived in Grand Saline, TX; Harry Bartley owned the oil mill and the Ford Tractor Dealership in Cooper, TX; Bill Bartley lived in Lubbock, TX; and the youngest brother, Bob Scott Bartley, worked for Delta Funeral Home and then relocated to Lubbock, TX and ran a funeral home there.
00:41:00	Memories of incidents in Cooper – school bus accident on Hwy 19
00:42:30	Memory of consolidation of schools in Delta County
00:44:0	While in high school, incidents in cars: incident at the old lake with Charles Horchem and Danny Toon. Another incident with Charles Manning's car, with Keith Klein, A. C. Smith, and Edgar Preas.
00:48:40	Words of advice – get an education, keep family ties, stay close to your faith.
00:49:00	Favorite holidays – Christmas and Thanksgiving. Mother, her six brothers and their families came to Cooper to his grandmother's house.