

Mary Marett

interviewed by

Mrs. W. A. Schmidt

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ORAL HISTORIES OF FORT WORTH, INC.

INTERVIEW WITH MISS MARY MARETT - JUNE 6, 1975 (Miss Marett was Mr. Raymond Buck's private secretary for 16 years. Mr. Buck was a former mayor of Fort Worth.

I was looking for a job about 1923. I left Kosse and worked from place to place for several months; then I heard that Mr. Buck wanted a girl. It was a month before Christmas; naturally, I wanted to go home and stay awhile. When I went to see him for an interview, he said he only wanted someone for a month, and offered me a salary of \$100. I told him that suited me fine-- that I wanted to go home for Christmas anyway, and if he would let me have a few days for Christmas that I would come back after Christmas, but if I worked any longer than that I would have to have a raise in salary--and he promised.

He was a young struggling lawyer about 31 years old--even owned his own home. He had a young son about a year or two old. So I went to work for him and the law firm of Jones & Buck. They also had an office in Marshall. The girl that had formerly worked for Mr. Buck was in love with Mr. Jones' son; they were trying to make a go of that marriage. She went over there to work and try it out. Well, I told him I would be glad to work for just a month. When the month was up they came in and told me the girl had decided to stay in Marshall, so I told him, "Yes, I would stay, provided they would give me a raise", which they did. That led to 16 years of service.

Mr. Buck was a civil lawyer, and I encouraged him. Oftentimes when he would start for the Court House he would say, "Miss Marett, I can't win this one." I would say, "Get yourself up there. They hired you because they thought you were the best lawyer in town and I know you are, so you get yourself up there and win this case." He would always come back having won. He had one case, in particular, that the man had gotten killed out at the Packing Plant. He had a plate in his head. He had gotten kicked when he was a child. A weight hit him on that place and he died. He had a widow and four or five children. When the time came for the trial, they were all up in Oklahoma. She told him the children were all down with some childhood disease (measles, if I recall), but she came. So when Mr. Buck got to the Court House, there wasn't anyone there but the wife, not even a child to be sitting around to impress the jury. I told him, "I think you will be better off without the children. They will feel sorry for you." He got a judgment for \$40,000 with none of the children there, so he was just walking on air. They finally settled it out of court. I have forgotten how much he got, and how much she got, but I have often seen him take cases on a one-third basis. I have oftentimes seen him give the person more than that because they had not gotten as much as they had hoped they would. I would tell him lots of times, "You are just giving them too much." He would say, "I would rather have one satisfied client than five dissatisfied ones." It was like that all during my career with him.

He began to get into political life. He had friends like Will Rogers and

Postmaster General Farley, E. R. Smith, Selman Evans, who was formerly Postmaster General. Amon Carter was one of his long-standing friends. They entertained a lot. They had big breakfasts at the Blackstone Hotel. Garner was there, and all the other dignitaries. They had an unveiling of President Roosevelt over at the Fort Worth Club. I attended all those big affairs, even when Roosevelt was in Fort Worth out at a park. It was pouring down rain, but I was there.

He (Mr. Buck) was a very colorful man, very--a very likeable person. He was a good honest lawyer. I worked for him 16 years, so I think if anybody could have discovered if he was telling a lie, I could, but I never knew him to lie or do anything shoddy in the entire 16 years.

He was still practicing law when I left as his secretary. He had a first cousin that was a district judge; they were about to form a partnership. He came in one day and asked me what I thought about forming a partnership with this Hal Lattimore. I said, "Well, Mr. Buck, I know how hard I have worked for this business and how much I think of you, but I would rather see a \_\_\_\_\_ coming in than form a partnership with that man." They formed it tentatively for a year. When it was obvious that it was not going to work out, he tried to dissolve the partnership.

Mr. Buck and Selman Evans had been to Mexico City. Lattimore had threatened to fire one or two of us there in the office. I told him, "I am not afraid of you. You all formed this partnership with the distinct understanding that you would dissolve it at the end of the year if either one of you was dissatisfied. Now why don't you leave it like a gentleman?"

When Mr. Buck came in that night (one of the men stayed at the office with me until he came, and I knew he would come because he had called me from Dallas), Lattimore had gone over to the Club--at least, that was my understanding. He said there would be bloodshed over that deal, so Mr. Buck wanted to go to the Club and see him. I said, "No, you are not. He is ready for you, and is going to kill you if he can; if you don't go home, I'll call your wife to come after you." He went home. He promised he would, and when he promised I felt he would. The partnership was dissolved.

Later I heard Mr. Buck said (and he said to me that he did say it) that the day would never be too long nor the night too dark if I ever needed him he would come to me. He did do a lot for me. He helped me take my sister when she had to go to the hospital in Galveston. He took her and brought my mother over to my apartment in Fort Worth at 2:00 in the morning. He was that kind of man. He would do for anyone in need or trouble.

I saw Mr. Buck through a lot of good times as well as bad times. After I went to work for him, he made a big fee, so he and his wife and child and Dr. Howard Johnson, who was his best friend at that time, and his wife and child went on a Caribbean cruise. That was the first real money he had made, I was so glad to see him do it.

There were times that he did not even have the money to pay me and I borrowed money to pay my own salary so he could get on his feet. But when he died, I feel sure that he was wealthy. We worked many nights until 12 and 1:00 o'clock.

One day when Mr. Buck and his wife had gone to Kerrville to take his young son to camp, Mr. Carvey called over from the Fort Worth Club and said that James Roosevelt (at that time he was secretary to his father) was over at the Club and needed a secretary and would I come over? Well, I knew I was not going to any man's hotel room. I didn't care if it was the President himself. So I said, "No, I am sorry. I can't come. Mr. Buck is out of town; I am sure that he would send someone if he were here." He said, "Well, can't you come over?" I said, "No, in Mr. Buck's absence I can't leave. Tell Mr. Roosevelt that if it isn't imposing on his dignity, he may come over and use Mr. Buck's private office. I will assist him in any way I can." In about five minutes Mr. Carvey called back and said Mr. Roosevelt (you know the Roosevelts were very diplomatic) said if it wasn't imposing on my good nature, he would accept my hospitality and would be over in 30 minutes. You could knock me over with a feather.

In the meantime, the only other girl that we had came in just before Roosevelt did, and fainted and fell on the floor. (Her mother had been operated on that morning and I told her to stay, and not come to the office, but, no, she had to turn up!). I said, "Oh, good night, get a cup of water and dash it on her. We've got to get her out of this floor." We got her sitting up. When Roosevelt came in with his man secretary we went in Mr. Buck's private office; he dictated a long dissertation on some democratic speech he was to deliver in the next few days. As he left he said, "Now, if you will call me I will come back and pick it up." Well, I was not about to let him come back and dictate to me again because I was already so scared I did not know which way I was going. So I said, "Oh, I wouldn't think of imposing on you. May I not just send it over by a messenger?" He said that would be fine.

Mr. Buck went East a little later. Everybody had just gotten in one morning when the postman came in with a big box addressed to me from Washington. I said, "Oh, my lands, it must be something Mr. Buck left in the hotel and they've sent it back, I guess." I didn't open it at first, but I thought, "Well, it is addressed to me. I better see what it is." It was a great big beautiful box of candy from James Roosevelt with his personal card. I still have the letter he sent thanking me for my services. Mrs. Buck told me that he said any time Mr. Buck didn't want me, just let him know and he would be glad to have me. Later Elliott married Ruth Googin and lived here; they had a beautiful home out there from Fort Worth. One Sunday they picked me up and took me out there to write up some contracts, and then Mrs. Roosevelt served us dinner that night. That was something for me to know that I had been entertained in the President's son's home. I went back to the office the next day and wrote up the contract.

Another time, C. R. Smith and Mr. Evans were selling Dixie Motor Coach. They stayed there all day long, and I wrote contract after contract. Mr. Evans asked Mr. Buck what they could pay me. He said, "You would insult her if you offered her anything." Then he said, "She may want to make a trip some time on the plane." He said, "She can go anywhere any time she wants to go." So one summer I decided I wanted to go to New York and they gave me a pass.

Douglas Chandor, in Weatherford, painted a picture of Roosevelt and they had the unveiling of it at the Club. I was there. He also painted the picture of Queen Elizabeth, I believe. I think I saw her picture at their home. They have a beautiful place over there at Weatherford.

I was working for Mr. Buck when the Centennial was going on. I went out there when they had the Casa Manana. I danced on that revolving floor. I had tickets and would go whenever I got ready. The President and Vice President were superimposed on a big gold dollar. They had chains of them that they sold.

I lived on Travis when I first went to Fort Worth, and went to the Travis Avenue Baptist Church. Later I joined the First Baptist Church when Dr. Truett was pastor, then to Broadway Baptist in Fort Worth, and then I belonged to the First Baptist Church in Dallas when Truett was there. I was there the first day Criswell preached.

I moved from Fort Worth to Dallas in about 1941, and stayed there until I retired. I worked for different lawyers for about 20 years; then I went to the American Association of Oil Well Drilling Contractors and was Associate Editor for a magazine which they published. I stopped that and went into the private real estate business in Dallas. When I was with that company I was always on an expense account, and I attended all the directors' meetings in and out of Dallas. I went to different places and planned all their menus and met with the hotel caterer to plan the food for over 1000 people.

I went to California two or three different times and sold advertising by myself--never been to California before in my life. I told the man I worked for that I wanted to go. I had a friend out there. In about six days I sold over \$2000 worth of advertising. Pacific Wire Rope was one of the biggest companies in the country. The man I worked for said, "Don't go to them." I said, "That's the first place I am going." I guaranteed him I would get in the office, even if I didn't sell him anything. I called one of our oil men and found that he was going to play dominoes with this particular man I wanted to see. He made an appointment for me and said one of his men would pick me up at the Biltmore Hotel, where I was staying. When I went in I called for Mr. Spears. When he finally came and met me he said, "You come in here. Everybody in California has been calling me about you. I want to see you and see what you want." So I asked for a

two-page ad in our August magazine, and got the contract signed that same day. I called my boss that night in Dallas said, "Well, I not only got in Mr. Spear's office, I sold him a two-page spread and he carried me back to the Biltmore in his private automobile, and I have the contract signed and sealed. What else you need out here?"

I knew I had to work, and knew how to take care of business. One day Mr. Buck was up East when we had a divorce case coming up. The plaintiff was in Fort Worth and the man lived in Louisiana. He called and said he wanted his divorce, that he was getting married that night. So I got the plaintiff, and we and a "jack-leg" lawyer went up to the judge. I told him the facts, and he said, "Divorce granted." When Mr. Buck got back I told him about it and he said, "My God, what will you do next?" Mr. Buck told his mother, "No matter where I am or what happens, I know that she is going to tend to it."

(Miss Marette read the following):

Achievement Award from Shanblum Lodge B'nai B'rith: To the man who had reached the top rung as a lawyer and a business executive and one who had devoted his time to civic and charitable affairs.

The University of Texas honored him at a luncheon at the Fort Worth Club in 1968 and at the same time announced the establishment of an insurance library named for him. He received a world globe on behalf of the then Texas Governor, John Connally, and was praised by the University for his work with the Insurance Division of the Finance Department of the University. He was also recognized for his contribution of funds for the new library.

Buck had been active in aviation for many years and was one of the backers of Southwest Airport.

He had served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Southwest Exposition and Fat Stock Show.

He was also active in the Democratic Party and served as chairman and organizer of the Young Democrats of Texas.

One morning he called me at 4:00 o'clock. We were attending to all that Democratic stuff, you know, and he wanted to catch a plane out early (about 7:00 o'clock). We went down there to the office and he dictated enough to me to last me all day long to write up, while he went to Washington. It was on Saturday, and I stayed there until way in the afternoon getting that stuff written up.

In the 1940's he was Texas Chairman of the Jefferson Fund Raising Dinner, Finance Chairman of the Texas Democratic Party, and a member of the Texas War Bonds Commission and the Governor's Post War Planning Commission on Texas Aviation.

He also served as campaign manager for former President Lyndon B. Johnson's first senatorial campaign in 1948.

He was Chairman of the Texas Democratic Convention in 1956 after serving the previous year on the Democratic Advisory Council. He was State Chairman for business and professional men and women for the Kennedy-Johnson presidential campaign in 1960.

Buck was a General Counsel and Director of Southern Air Transport, Associate General Counsel for American Airlines and General Dynamics of Fort Worth, and President of Midway Airport Corp.

His honorary commissions include Admiral of the Texas Navy; Special Texas Rangers; Honorary Colonel of Tennessee, New Mexico and Louisiana; and Honorary Citizen of Nashville, Tennessee.

Other presidencies Buck held include Bucko Homes, Tarrant Land Company, Better Business Bureau of Fort Worth, TCU Ex-Students Association, and First Officers Training Camp Association.

He had served as Director of the Trinity Improvement Assn., Jr. Achievement of Fort Worth, TCU Stadium Assn., and Texas Tech Foundation.

He was a member of the University of Texas Ex-Students Assn. and served on the Executive Committee of the University of Texas Dads' Assn. for 1959-60.

He also was a member of the Buck Bible Class at Broadway Baptist Church, named in honor of his father, the late Judge R. Buck.

He was owner and operator of the Raymond E. Buck Range and Cattle Company.

He had been Governor, Director and a member of the Executive Committee of the Fort Worth Club, and of Rivercrest, Colonial and Ridglea Country Clubs, and the Admirals Club.

He is survived by his wife and daughter, Mrs. Roy E. <sup>McDermott</sup> Montgomery; a grandson, Raymond E. Buck III, and four grand-daughters, Mrs. Richard W. Moncrief, Miss Catherine Buck, Miss Catherine Buck McDermott, and Miss Mary Margaret McDermott of Fort Worth.

I was with him during the formative years.