

Sadye Hailey Rippy

interviewed by

Mrs. Jo Buck Jones

February 21, 1975

Ruby Schmidt Collection of BiCentennial Interviews

ORAL HISTORIES OF FORT WORTH, INC.

Mrs. Felix Elonzo Rippy (Sadye Hailey)
February 2, 1886

I am Mrs. Jo Buck Jones, a member of Six Flags Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution and now I am going to interview a citizen of Haltom City, Mrs. Felix Elonzo (Sadye) Rippy.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Mrs. Rippy: Rockdale, Milam County, Texas, 1886.
My daddy's name was W. T. Hailey, a preacher, and my mother was Sarah J. Hopper. There were eight in the family, all were born in Mississippi.

Interviewer: Who were your grandparents?

Mrs. Rippy: On the Hailey side, there was Charles Hailey and Annie Nancy Henson Hailey.

I lived at Keller after May, 1909 after moving from Abilene.

Interviewer: What did you do during the depression?

Mrs. Rippy: We had money enough to live on, is all we had during the depression.

Interviewer: How did World War I and II affect your life?

Mrs. Rippy: World I, I had a lot of nephews in the war, but World War II I had a son Lt. Weldon A. Rippy, who came out a Lt. Col. on a stretcher, during World War II. He received a leg wound serving in New Zealand.

Interviewer: Who do you consider the most outstanding personality on the local level?

Mrs. Rippy: Oh, Smauel Sayers. He was a prominent lawyer in Fort Worth and a very fine, kind man.

Interviewer: And on the state level?

Mrs. Rippy: State level, Shiver, Governor Shivers.

Interviewer: And on the national level?

Mrs. Rippy: President Truman, also Lyndon B. Johnson and I still have a letter that he wrote me when he was Vice President.

Interviewer: Have you ever seen any of these people personally?

Mrs. Rippy: I knew Mr. Samuel Sayers quite well, but the rest of them, I just heard of them.

Interviewer: What organizations do you belong to?

Mrs. Rippy: Riverside Baptist and Riverside Eastern Star Chapter No. 834, and United Daughters of the Confederacy, Julia Jackson, Chapter No. 141, Riverside Study Club, Diamond Hill PTA, Past President, Past President of the Study Club. I believe I've been Past President of everything I have ever been in.

Interviewer: Tell something about your duties in the Eastern Star, about the offices you held.

Mrs. Rippy: Well, I was Matron in 1935 and 1936, and then went out as Matron and was elected Secretary of the Chapter in 1937, and retired in April, 1974, 37 years as secretary of that Chapter.

Interviewer: I understand you received honors when you retired.

Mrs. Rippy: Yes, they went all out. It was beautiful something you would be proud of for the rest of your life, and I certainly appreciated everything they did for me. The hall was full of people that came for the reception that the Eastern Star Chapter had for me, and we had four Matrons and lots of other high officers in Eastern Star were present, besides all of the friends that came.

I was honored last Thursday, February 13, (1975) at Diamond Hill PTA-Parent Teachers Association - and when they asked me when I was president, I said 1920. They said, oh, that's fifty years ago. I still go back everytime they honor presidents, and I am going as long as I am able.

I became a member of United Daughters of the Confederacy, in 1946, and was elected treasurer about a year later.

I belong to Riverside Baptist, and go down there every second and fourth Tuesday for the Keenage Club. We have a Keenage Club. KEENAGE - instead of Teenage it is Keenage, and we have a buffet, play Forty-Two, in the Fellowship Hall, the preacher comes has lunch with us, and we have a real nice time.

I am past President of Diamond Hill PTA, stayed about six years, past president of the Riverside Woman's Club, and also Sunday School teacher for twelve years in Diamond Hill, and Sunday School teacher at Riverside Baptist Church.

Interviewer: Give your present address.

Mrs. Rippy: I live at 1606 Oak Knoll Drive in Haltom City. The reason we changed the name from Doris Lane to Oak Knoll Drive (we changed that in 1940) was because we had so much trouble getting our mail, it went to Davis Street. Davis and Doris looks just alike the way people write it, and Dorothy Lane, and Daisy Lane - it was all confusing, so we changed it to Oak Knoll Drive.

Mrs. Rippy: We selected to live in this area because of politics. Mr. Rippy still worked for the county when he was no longer superintendent of the County Poor Farm.

We were almost by ourselves. We lived in Tarrant County. We did not have a city of Haltom City, and we didn't pay any tax, just county tax and state tax.

If you didn't have a car, you were just up a tree.

Usually my home was kept wide open for all we met; they were telling me the other night how they used to enjoy coming to my house, and standing around the piano and singing; we would sing and have games, that was the form of entertainment that we had for years and years.

Interviewer: Do you have any particularly outstanding events in your life that you recall other than the one you have mentioned about being worthy Matron, President of PTA, etc?

Mrs. Rippy: I was Precinct Chairman for many years, of #102, and held the election at Haltom City for years and years. In fact, I set up the Haltom City - they didn't know anything about how to set up the election box - so they came to the house, and I set it up for them.

Well, I was the election judge for a number of years. Now you are appointed judge by the County Commissioner, but you are elected Precinct Chairman by your voters, and for years, and years, I was Precinct Chairman. I was a judge for many years; then I was elected Precinct Chairman by the voters of Haltom City, Precinct #102..

We got married in Abilene, Texas, March 24, 1909. I was a bride when we moved to Tarrant County.

Well, I'll tell you what I remember about when they celebrated the Texas Centennial, 1936, I went to the parade; I used to never miss a parade, but I got pushed up against a glass window. I thought to myself, "Well, I'm going to be killed right here," because I never saw such a crowd in my life.

Interviewer: We want you to tell about your years of experience and the interesting things that happened when your husband was superintendent of the County Poor Farm.

Mrs. Rippy: Well, when he was appointed Superintendent of the Tarrant County Poor Farm, he couldn't stand it being called the Tarrant County Poor Farm. He had it changed to the County Home, and had a big sign out front that said it was the County Home. It was the County Home as long as he lived there because he was very, very, sympathetic with the people that had to live in the County Poor Farm. We moved there in December, 1918. The officers a long time ago used to change in December, and then they could be ready for January. Nowadays they take office in January. We moved there because John Roberts had charge of County Poor Farm, and he was in Precinct 4, which was Precinct 4. We lived in Keller at the time, this is why we moved to Tarrant County.

This location of the County Home later became 3, but it was 4 when we lived there. John Roberts was elected County Commissioner and stayed in one year; then Henry Wall that lived at Grapevine died. Henry had a bed down at the Court House where he slept. His brother, Sandy Wall, was a county Commissioner so Mr. Wall and John Roberts exchanged; the County Courthouse at one time was in Precinct 3. Mr. Wall asked for the County Home - since he had a wife, wanted to stay at home at Grapevine - and so that is why we changed Commissioners was because Sandy Wall and John Roberts exchanged the County Home for the County Courthouse, with John Roberts in charge of the Courthouse then, and Sandy Wall in charge of the County Home.

Interviewer: You mean that's how Precinct lines get changed - the Commissioners for their own particular benefit, could change the lines?

Mrs. Rippy: Yes, as a County Commissioner, you can do anything.

The County Home was where the Tuberculosis Colony and Tarrant County Juvenile Detention Center are now located. The County Home was a big brick building - with a woman's ward and another big brick building that we called a men's ward. We lived in a big two-story brick home, a beautiful place, with the dining room. The kitchen was a long, long place built to the back, and adjoined this Superintendent's home. We kept our own place, and didn't go in the kitchen, because we had a man and his wife that were cooks in the kitchen and kept everything going in there. Of course, Mr. Rippy was Superintendent. When he was elected Superintendent of the County Home, he was elected Superintendent of the TB Colony - and also Superintendent of the Smallpox House. Now they do not have a smallpox house on account of all the different things they have had to take care of. The County Home, and that beautiful brick house that we lived in has been torn down.

Mrs. Rippy: We had eight big rooms, with a beautiful stairway; there were twelve stairs that went up to a landing, and then you turned to go up on the second floor, which was a beautiful place.

Well, when Mr. Rippy was first made County Superintendent, the old men knew that we had children. An earlier Superintendent had a boy that rode a bicycle and knocked those old men down. When we moved in Madeline was 8, Weldon was 6, and the youngest boy, Merrill, was 18 months old. They called these old men "Mr." and the old ladies "Mrs." They were very nice to everybody.

There were two Commissioners, one from Precinct 2 in Poly (Polytechnic) and John Roberts of Precinct 4, North Side; they voted for Mr. Rippy. The other two Commissioners were Childress and Givens. When they voted for the man that had been Superintendent of the County Home. John Roberts was watching the County Judge, Hugh H. Small, and when he dotted his "i" for Rippy, John Roberts said "I knew you got it." (He was watching the Judge's hand move while writing "Rippy.") The vote was two and two, and the County Judge voted it off.

The Commissioners helped the man they thought had helped them the most, had pulled more votes for them.

Everybody in Keller voted for John Roberts, they knew he was going to give Lon Rippy a job.

Interviewer: Tell something about the life at the home when you were there.

Mrs. Rippy: Back to the County Home, why John Roberts appointed Mr. Rippy to be Superintendent, and then in a year's time, Henry Wall of Grapevine died, and Mr. Wall was appointed Commissioner so he got John Roberts to swap with him, and he took the County and Mr. Wall got the County Home, and John Roberts took the Courthouse, and then after Wall stayed in a year, and Hugh Hightower of Smithfield was elected Commissioner, and he stayed in four and then Mr. Wall ran and he stayed six years, so we stayed at the County Home quite a few years longer than most people stayed there. (Sandy Wall, County Commissioner over fifty years ago, was the father of Dr. S. A. Wall who is now a professor at T.C.U.)

When Mr. Rippy took over the old men were sleeping on suitcases for pillows. He went to the Commissioners and told them immediately of the condition that existed. They furnished plenty of pillows, plenty of blankets, and plenty of nice good clothing for the old men and for the old ladies there.

We had a full house all of the time of the old men, but we didn't have so many elderly ladies.

Interviewer: What did you have to do to be eligible to be in the County Home?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, no one to take care of you. A pauper, just a pauper, that's what they were.

We had one young woman there with a little baby who said her husband was crazy, so she didn't have anywhere to go. They brought her there and she stayed a long time. Someone adopted the little baby so she moved.

Interviewer: Besides just board and room, what else did the County furnish for these people?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, it just furnished a home. Different churches would make arrangements for socials; one Sunday, it would be the Catholics, and one Sunday would be the Baptist, and the next Sunday would be the Methodists, and next Sunday, would be the Church of Christ, or the Christian people. We always had services on Sunday afternoon for those elderly people. They met in the big dining room which had plenty of chairs.

Interviewer: Did they bring refreshments for a social affair at any time?

Mrs. Rippy: Oh, the Catholics brought the nicest refreshments of anybody that ever brought refreshments for the elderly people to eat. They were wonderful.

Some churches brought the very best singers they had; that pleased some of the old men. We had old men there that had been around world; just because they were inmates of the County Home, didn't take away the life they had had earlier. We would have lots of the churches bring little children, but they couldn't understand what the children were singing, so there was a little criticism of bringing the small children.

Interviewer: Did you feel it was good for children to find out how the other half lived?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, we just let them work out whatever they wanted to on coming and having a soiree and entertainment that they wanted. If they wanted a program, they would have a good program.

We had lots of good people there. Lots of good men and women, but there were just circumstances so they didn't have anywhere to stay. Someone would go to the County Judge, he and the Commissioner in charge of the place told who could come. You were on your own because there was no State Aid. They didn't have any Social Security, so they had to depend on the County to keep them. The County furnished plenty of clothing for the men and for the women.

They had a bed, and a mirror in there, and chair in their room.

Mrs. Rippy: They didn't have electricity when we moved to the County Home, but we had gas lights. After awhile, we got large enough to have electricity put in. They simply hadn't connected it out there earlier.

Well, Mr. Rippy was a man that had a heart for people. He wanted them to have good things, and plenty to eat. The county bought everything to eat, and wear, all the bed clothes, etc., Tarrant County was certainly nice while we were at the County Home.

We had Dr. Helbing who came every day to the Home to see about the men and the women.

Dr. Rhodes was first, then we changed Commissioners, and Helbing came.

Interviewer: Doctors were political appointees the same as superintendents, then?

Mrs. Rippy: Yes, Ma'am.

Interviewer: When they were ill, were they cared for there, or were they taken to a hospital?

Mrs. Rippy: They were taken to a hospital when they got to where they couldn't tend to them at the County Home. They City and County Hospital took care of them.

Interviewer: How did your children feel about living on the poor farm?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, they had a wonderful time because they had a wonderful place to play and they enjoyed it very much, because where we lived, that beautiful house, was the talk of everybody that came to see us because it was so unusual for a poor farm to have a Superintendent's home, like the Tarrant County Home. It was on 28th Street. Now, if you go there, you can see some trees that have been set out, but nothing of the old County Home is left. There is nothing standing, not a thing. I wonder what became of the cornerstone that was in that beautiful house we lived in.

The County Home was due west of Beach Street, where Sylvania intersects 28th Street. The Tubercular Home is still there. It has been built into a big, big place.

We had around ninety men, but we wouldn't have but maybe six women at one time. The women could make themselves more useful to their relatives than the men I suppose.

The TB Colony had little individual houses in those days. After Mr. Rippy had been Superintendent so many years, they got a Superintendent for the TB part. They did away with the pest house - that's small pox.

Interviewer: When a person, or a pauper dies, what sort of burials do they have?

Mrs. Rippy: Shannon took charge of all when we had a death. The Pauper's Graves are out at Oakwood Cemetery. The paupers are all buried in one section.

Before we came they had their own burial system at the Home; the Superintendent would dig a hole, and would put these old people away. The graveyard is covered with railroad tracks now. A dog dug up one of the legs of one of the inmates that had been buried was the reason that Shannon's was called for burials.

I guess the County still owns the land, but I don't know. They have sold to different ones, because there is a lot of commercial housing along there now. In those days, there wasn't anything on 28th Street, or Belknap or Kimbo Road—that goes right by where the Poor Farm used to be. I can remember when people just called it County Poor Farm Road.

Interviewer: Where did your children go to school when you lived there?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, the girl was eight years old when we moved there. She went to Diamond Hill. The second boy, Weldon, entered in the first grade and graduated in the 11th grade at Diamond Hill. Merrill, the younger boy, went through the sixth grade at Diamond Hill, then we transferred him to Riverside Elementary. They all graduated from college, and the youngest boy has his Ph.D.

Interviewer: Did the school children ever kid your children about living on the Poor Farm?

Mrs. Rippy: Oh no, they all wished they lived there because when they would come we would entertain them. The teachers would lay down on that beautiful rolling lawn that we had in front of the beautiful house, and lay down and roll. We would keep the teachers on at night, and entertain them with big parties. We had wonderful parties there at the County Home; that is why Diamond Hill still remembers me. I felt sorry for the children because they would have to walk from Diamond Hill past Mount Olivet Cemetery. The boys would get sheets and come in screaming and hollering because somebody scared them to death down there. Coming down 28th was a long lonesome dirt road at that time. There was nothing between Diamond Hill and there.

When we moved there, we were the only one that had a telephone or bathtub and inside plumbing.

Interviewer: You mean that it was the only house in that area in 1918 that had inside plumbing?

Mrs. Rippy: Where the Superintendent lived wasn't anything like the Poor Farm.

Interviewer: Do you recall the name of the Superintendent before Mr. Rippy?

Mrs. Rippy: Holman

In 1974 they tore that beautiful home down, and there is nothing there now. Mr. Rippy died in '40. Soon after '45 they began doing away with it, and began boarding these old men and old women out.

Interviewer: Where did you move when your husband was no longer Superintendent at the home?

Mrs. Rippy: I moved out on Honeysuckle - in Oakhurst; we also owned ten acres on what is Beach Street now. In those days, we didn't have water, lights, or gas. We had butane gas, and had a brick house built on ten acres we owned on what is now Beach Street. It was just then a country road. The brick house we lived in for a month and two days, and it burned down. Then we brought this place.

Interviewer: Did you lose all of your personal possessions?

Mrs. Rippy: Everybody you saw coming out of that house, while it was burning had something in their arms.

Interviewer: Where did you move then?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, we bought this place, at 1606 Oak Knoll in 1940.

My daughter's husband, Lawrence B. Connelley, was superintendent at the Fort Worth Refinery for twenty years, until he died, 5 year ago. She still lives there in the Superintendent's home on 28th Street.

Weldon lives in Corpus Christi, and Merrill and his wife both have Ph.D's and are teachers in Ball State University in Munice, Indiana. Ball State University is endowed by the Ball Fruit Jar Family.

Interviewer: How many grandhcildren do you have?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, I have Michael and Caroline Connelley. Caroline is a teacher in the Fort Worth Public Schools, and Michael has been transferred back here from Illinois; they both live at Bedford. Then I have three grandchildren that live in Munice, Indiana. Felix will be thirteen the 24th of March, Conrad is ten years old, and Marguerite Hailey Rippy, will be eight years old in April. I have two great-grandchildren. That's Todd and Melissa Connelley.

Interviewer: You are still active in how many organizations?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, while I retired after being secretary for 37 years, I am still Treasurer of the United Daughters of Confederacy, Julia Jackson Chapter, No. 141.

I still go to Study Club because I am past president. I went last Wednesday. I like study.

Life is enjoyable, being active as long as I have. I have driven a car about 45 years, but my children thought I ought to quit driving because I was a fast driver.

I never had any trouble except little wrecks; the children always said that I picked the largest thing in Fort Worth, like the streetcar, to hit.

I can get around all right, but I am just a little bit slower than I used to be.

I don't keep anybody waiting. When they pick me up I think if they are nice enough to come by for you, you surely should be ready.

Interviewer: There was a short period that you lived away from here. Tell me about when you moved to Austin and why.

Mrs. Rippy: My son, Merrill, was working down at Austin State University on his Ph. D, he was boarding, and of course, he wasn't getting enough to eat, so he wanted me to come down. He rented a nice place. I rented my big house to a soldier and his wife, and moved down to Austin, and stayed down there from October 1945 until May 1946 and then moved back home. During that time. the Eastern Star told me to go on and stay down there, that I could still be Secretary when I came back, so I never did resign, just went down and stayed in Austin. I think it is a wonderful place to live. I came back and have been living here since April, 1932.

Interviewer: Do you do all your own housework?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, I did up until right here lately, but I have to hire it done now.

Interviewer: Do you cook for yourself except when you go out for meals?

Mrs. Rippy: Well, my daughter has been cooking for me since I've been sick, and brings it to me, but yes, I cook my breakfast.

Interviewer: You had a birthday party recently. Tell me about where it was, and what you did.

Mrs. Rippy: Oh well, I haven't been a member of Keller Baptist Church in 50 some odd years. They always send me an invitation when they have an anniversary. Their anniversary this year, fell on my real birthday, February 2, so I went up there for church. My daughter had a birthday party. My granddaughter had baked a cake in the shape of a piano with a keyboard, because I used to be a musician. I used to teach piano in Abilene and other places in West Texas.

My birthday is on Groundhog Day. I was called "pig" until I was about 12 years old.

I'll tell you, since they built these freeways, Fort Worth has changed. It's not like it was when I moved here. It's really too big a city now to enjoy it like we used to enjoy it. The old landmarks are gone now that I remember and miss. Like the McBride home, on East 1st. The beautiful old, old homes, and Fort Worth just tears them down, I hope they keep this one on Penn Street. I hope to goodness they keep that for Fort Worth.

Well, you know Belknap at one time was the finest part of Fort Worth, and then it changed from Belknap and went to Arlington Heights.

Interviewer: Now you live within a long block of Belknap. How has Belknap changed in the years you have lived here?

Mrs. Rippy: When we moved out here, Belknap was Grapeview Highway. It wasn't a highway you understand, but just a wide place in the road. Belknap is not all commercial. I like where I live because my yard has so many big, old trees and beautiful shrubs and flowers. My bluebonnets are beautiful every spring, I enjoy working in the yard.

Interviewer: You are one of the four "Real Daughters" of the Confederacy now still on the membership roll of the Hulia Jackson Chapter, UDC, and the only one of the four who is still able to be an active member. You were not born until twenty years after the close of the war. What was your father's full name and his rank in the confederate states army?

Mrs. Rippy: He was Wesley Tarrant Hailey, Pvt., Company C, Jefferson Davis Legion, Mississippi Cavalry, CSA. Mustered into service at Scooba, Miss. on March 25, 1861. He was born 25 June 1844so was not quite seventeen when he enlisted; he married after the war was over after serving for the entire four years of the war.

One of the more interesting periods of the war was when he was assigned to care for Gen. Robert E. Lee's horse, "Traveller."

Addendum: Mrs. Sadye Hailey Rippy

Husband's full name Felix Llonzo Rippy

The present Juvenile Detention Home is on the former site of the Tarrant County Poor Farm.

Mrs. Rippy is a REAL DAUGHTER OF THE CONFEDERACY. Her father was Wesley Tarrant Hailey, Co. C., Jefferson Davis Legion, Mississippi Cavalry, C.S.A. Details of his service might be of interest since not many REAL DAUGHTERS left. At present time, 1975, there are three in the local U.D.C. Chapter.

Mr. Rippy's brother is over one hundred years of age and lives in Denton Co. He still has his driver's license.