

Julia Ashford Schinke
Interview 21a
August 1, 1980
Joanne Musick, Interviewer
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Abstract: Julia Ashford Schinke, a daughter of one of Diboll's first residents, recalls growing up in Diboll at the beginning of the 20th century, going to school shopping in the commissary, and growing and preserving food. She attended college in Ft. Worth and later came to Diboll where she taught school for 24 years.

Tape one, side one, Diboll History Project, sponsored by the friends of the T.L.L. Temple Memorial Library, Diboll Texas. Friday August 1, 1980. Interviewer: Joanne Music. Subject: Julia Ashford Schinke. Present Address: 412 Carter Drive, Diboll, Texas.

Joanne Music (hereafter JM): Can I ask you when you were born? [Laugh]. If you don't mind telling me.

Julia Ashford Schinke (hereafter JS): April 19, 1906.

JM: So you've been here a while.

JS: I have been here a while.

JM: You were born in Diboll.

JS: In Diboll. The house is still standing.

JM: Where is it?

JS: It is on Hines. I don't know whether you know where any of those old houses are which we used to call company houses.

JM: The company houses.

JS: Yes, or not. It's still standing.

JM: Still standing.

JS: I think it was built in about 1900.

JM: So. Were you born at home? Did you...

JS: Yes. Born at home.

JM: With the doctor or midwife?

JS: With the company doctor.

JM: The company doctor. Who was the company doctor before Dr. Dale?

JS: Oh. Dr. Pedigo, I believe was his name.

JM: Dr. Pedigo?

JS: Dr. Pedigo.

JM: Well, Ellen and I were interested in finding out if there were midwives in this area. We didn't know. And so far everybody we've talked to, has had a doctor in attendance. So, I guess with a company doctor here there was no need for one.

JS: I do know that our next-door neighbor, Mrs. Farrington, who worked for the company for a long time, in the company store at the commissary it was called then, was with my mother then. But Dr. Pedigo was the doctor.

JM: Was the doctor? And Mrs. Dale said you're the baby in your family.

JS: Yes. [Laugh]

JM: What do you remember about Diboll when you were growing up? How did it look?

JS: Dusty roads. I wouldn't even call them dusty streets. Yes, and of course, no sidewalks and I really don't remember. That's all I remember about back then.

JM: I guess everybody who lived here worked for the company.

JS: Worked for the company.

JM: There wasn't anybody around who didn't.

JS: Southern Pine Lumber Company.

JM: Who wasn't involved in Southern Pine? Now your father...

JS: Came here with Mr. Tom Temple.

JM: That's that.

JS: Arthur's grandfather.

JM: Yes, that's what I thought.

JS: And helped him with his overseeing the construction of the sawmill – that was 1893. Of course, they started production in 1894.

JM: So, you're really a pioneer.

JS: And the men lived in tents.

JM: While they were building the mill?

JS: Yes.

JM: Where did they come from?

JS: Now my father came from Louisiana 'cause he was working for Mr. Temple at that time in Louisiana.

JM: In Louisiana. Let me make sure we are recording? Okay. Where did you go to school?

JS: In Diboll.

JM: There was a building?

JS: Old building. It was all on one campus. Of course, they were frame buildings. All of them. And of course, they went from first to eleventh grade. We didn't have a twelfth grade.

JM: How many teachers? Was it more than one?

JS: Oh yes.

JM: It was?

JS: Had more than one. I would say there were six or seven teachers.

JM: Now were there white and black children in your school. Were the black people here working in the mill yet?

JS: Yes.

JM: Did they have their own school?

JS: Yes.

JM: They had a separate school. Would....did...do you remember anything about your teachers or your books?

JS: Well, I know that when I was in high school see, we worked our class, I was a sophomore, we worked that year for accreditation. See we didn't have any up until that time. That was in 1922 when we got it. That was the first graduating class. I wasn't a member of that class. I graduated in 1924.

JM: From eleventh grade?

JS: From eleventh grade.

JM: Did you go on to college?

JS: Oh yes, CIA, which is named TWU.

JM: CIA?

JS: Yes.

JM: What does that stand for?

JS: College of Industrial Arts.

JM: Oh. And you taught here?

JS: Oh, yes.

JM: Okay, let me get back a few years. Do you remember? Were there any big celebrations within Diboll, like Fourth of July or...

JS: Yes, Fourth of July, They always had...the company always had a barbecue and there were always, you know, the usual games and such.

JM: And it was really an affair!

JS: Oh, yes.

JM: Were there parades or...?

JS: No parades.

JM: No parades.

JS: Everyone met on the school campus.

JM: Where was the school?

JS: It's where the elementary school is now. Oh, I think there were about six buildings I guess. Yes, of course, you had the elementary. And of course, we didn't have like the junior high. We had in one building maybe the first through the seventh grade and then of course, eighth was in high school, eighth through eleventh.

JM: What did you do in the summer? As a child. Do you recall any...?

JS: Well.

JM: There's no swimming holes around here [Laugh] that I know of.

JS: Oh, listen it's a wonder we all didn't die of some dreadful disease because I learned to swim in this creek.

JM: Oh, my goodness.

JS: Right where the bridge is, you know, on 1818 over here.

JM: Oh, I don't believe it.

JS: Oh, why it had a sandy bottom. It was clean, but gosh, who knows, but anyway, grapevines, where we could swing across from one bank to the other and it was deep enough you see, so that we could drop off on the ground.

JM: Oh, how marvelous!

JS: But that's where I learned to swim when I was about twelve years old.

JM: So, there was a swimming hole. [Laugh]

JS: A good swimming hole.

JM: Do you remember going into Lufkin as a child?

JS: Yes, in a surrey.

JM: A surrey.

JS: A surrey with a fringe on the top.

JM: A fringe on the top. [Laugh]

JS: And then sometimes I forgot who we went with. We went in a wagon.

JM: Why did you go in? Just for shopping?

JS: Yes. Uh-huh. Just for shopping. To see the town of Lufkin.

JM: The big city.

JS: The big city.

JM: Now Mrs. Thompson told us that they used to go down when they were teenagers and watch the trains go through.

JS: That was the Emporia, I guess. We used to here, in Diboll. But Emporia, I believe that was W.T. Carter, it was really the large place here. In fact, Franklin Weeks called me and, oh, I guess, it's been about three weeks ago, that they had found a record of the church members. And you know, and of course, Emporia and of course, I suppose that's where they gathered for church, down at the church and my mother's name was on the list.

JM: Oh, you recall going to church as a child?

JS: Yes, Uh-huh.

JM: Was it a Methodist?

JS: Methodist church, here.

JM: Was it?

JS: A big frame building, naturally.

JM: Was it?

JS: Of course, it was torn down when this one was built.

JM: Was it really?

JS: I think prior to that, I believe, they had services in what was used for a classroom at one time. As I remember, it was (pause) Woodman or that organization.

JM: Yes.

JS: Uh-huh.

JM: What do you remember about the commissary?

JS: Oh dear. Great memories, I suppose, because see everything was contained in that one building. And where the office was, you know, the main entrance into the office, when it was there that was the grocery store and what we called the department or dry goods, you know, store. And then, of course, they had the barber shop, the post office which you know, beginning at the north end of the building, and then the drugstore, and then, of course, the grocery store. And then the meat market and then later they built an icehouse which as you know, is the south end of the building.

JM: Did you...Do you recall your mother shopping in there?

JS: Oh yes.

JM: With Company tokens?

JS: Everyone did.

JM: Now how did you...?

JS: Everyone did.

JM: Everybody shopped there? How did she...Did she pay each time as she went in or did you run up a bill?

JS: Well, yes, we could. But I think we, or course, then we had the checks. I said I wished I had saved a lot of those, you know we used. Diboll was the only place we could spend them. They had the dollar in real heavy paper and they were coded. Anyway, I know that nickels were blue; the dimes were yellow; and the quarters were green; and the fifty cent pieces were....I can't remember what color they were. That was our money.

JM: Now, when your father brought his paycheck home was it like this? Did they pay in the tokens or did you take, like the check someplace and cash it?

JS: No. Came in the tokens.

JM: In the tokens. How interesting! Now, I used to shop out at...I grew up at Keltys. I remember going to that commissary out there. Of course, I am sure it wasn't anything to compare to this. But I thought it was so neat that it had all that stuff in it. So great. What did you do for cash money to go into Lufkin?

JS: We went to the post office. It was also in that building, the post office and the commissary. Everything, of course, was in that building.

JM: Your whole world. Were there other stores in town?

JS: Not that I remember.

JM: What about cash money, like if you went into Lufkin to buy something?

JS: Don't know, because I didn't handle the finances at that time.

JM: What do you remember about? Was Mr. Schinke from Diboll?

JS: No. No, he's from Wisconsin.

JM: Did you meet him at college?

JS: I met him when I was teaching school in Livingston.

JM: In Livingston. So where did you go when you graduated from college?

JS: My first school was in West Texas, at Happy about 30 miles south of Amarillo.

JM: That's a long way from home. How did you get out there? On the train?

JS: And, of course, you know, we didn't have cars like the students have today. Like when they wanted to, they could jump in the car and come home. I only got to come home at Christmas and, of course, at the end of the school.

JM: On the train?

JS: That was the way it was in college too, when I was in college. On the train.

JM: On the train. A long ride. We spent two hours on the little Texas State Railroad here, oh a couple of weeks ago, and we were so hot and so miserable and I turned around and Jean Bloodsworth was with us and I said, "Jean". We were of course, in shorts and everything, and I said, "Can you imagine spending hours on this train in cumbersome petticoats and things? It must have been miserable!"

JS: Think of my mother cooking on a big old wooden range.

JM: Tell me about your house. Your home where you grew up? How did you heat it?

JS: Oh, wood.

JM: Wood.

JS: Yes, wood heaters, wood heaters and, of course, I remember there was some type of heater that we used in the bathroom that burned kerosene.

JM: Did your mother have a garden?

JS: Oh, yes. A huge garden. And let's see, of course, it was at the back of the old house. There on Hines and Papa also kept two cows. Of course, everybody then had to have...they had a garden and a cow.

JM: Milk and vegetables. Did your mother can? Do you remember her canning or preserving?

JS: Yes, she did.

JM: How did she preserve? Mainly for canning?

JS: Yes.

JM: Did you have a root cellar?

JS: No.

JM: I guess, it's too hot here in this area to keep a root cellar. I don't know. Was there a gristmill around here?

JS: That I don't remember about either.

JM: Do you remember the kind of soap you used? Did your mother make your soap or get it at the store?

JS: I think she bought it at the store.

JM: Do remember washing clothes? Was it an ordeal?

JS: Well, of course, she had...(Pause)

JM: A black person?

JS: The colored woman [Laugh] worked for us, did it, the washing. Of course, the rub board and the old boiling pot that you boiled the clothes in the big old black pot, you know, and of course, you had the wash sheds.

JM: A wash shed?

JS: Yes. You had your tubs, you had to rinse and wash in. And also we had a woodshed that when we ordered wood, they brought it in a wagon, dumped it in the shed and that's what was used in cooking. It was from the planer, you know.

JM: Oh, yes, okay. I have something in my mind. Just a minute. You did...your mother did have help in your home?

JS: Yes.

JM: Do you remember, now your father helped build the plant and then I guess, he was like a...?

JS: He was a, of course, I think, when they started up, he was a foreman of the planer. And then later on, he became Superintendent of the sawmill. See that was the only industry here, just a sawmill at the time of his death in 1925.

JM: Do you remember how many hours he worked a day?

JS: Oh, from six to six. Everybody did.

JM: Everybody did? Were there any fringe benefits?

JS: No.

JM: No?

JS: Not that I know of.

JM: Was your health care free? The company doctor services?

JS: You paid a dollar twenty-five a month. That was your doctor bill. That was taken out of the men's salary.

JM: Just deducted?

JS: Deducted from their salary; a dollar twenty-five a month doctor fee.

JM: Oh, my, wasn't that wonderful. Was there a dentist here?

JS: No dentist. No dentist.

JM: When do you recall going to the dentist?

JS: Oh, I think I must have been about ten years old. There was a dentist here, Dr. Weeks, I believe, but I know I went to, we went for most of our general work to Dr. Hunter in Lufkin.

JM: In Lufkin? Well, now he had to have some cash money there. We are going to have to find out [Laugh] where that came from.

JS: I have forgotten since, I have forgotten about that but evidently, maybe – I wish I could remember someone. See being my age and everything, I wasn't particularly

interested in finances, I guess. But there must have been some way that probably through the office that you could exchange it for cash.

JM: What about your clothing? Did your mother buy them store bought or sew for you?

JS: She sewed for me and bought too, from the store. I remember she ordered a lot from Ottman's in New York.

JM: Oh my goodness. How fancy! [Laugh] What kind of clothes do you recall wearing as a schoolgirl? Not slacks like we have on today, I'm sure.

JS: No, we did not. No. Well, I don't know just exactly what style you were. If I had to describe it, of course, we wore skirts and blouses, and of course, our dresses you know, were something along what you say, a straight line. Of course, you know when I was in CIA we wore uniforms.

JM: Oh, in college? You did? What did they look like?

JS: Well, the ones that we wore to class were blue chambray with braids, you know, and the big collar and then, of course, seniors were allowed to wear...they had white uniforms.

JM: A sign of distinction.

JS: And of course, for winter we had what we called, it was a blue serge. Made on the same line as the blue chambray, but we...it did not have the braid on it. But made along that same line.

JM: Who? Did your other brothers and sisters go away to college?

JS: Oh, yes. Both my brothers went to A & M and my two sisters. I always teased them what is now Trinity University, used to be San Antonio Female College. [Laugh]

JM: Oh, that's wonderful. I never heard that!

JS: Yes, it was San Antonio Female College, now Trinity University.

JM: Mrs. Dale only mentioned one brother, George.

JS: Two brothers.

JM: George, and what was your other...?

JS: Louis.

JM: Louis. What?

JS: Louis worked for the Company for forty-three years, I believe, before he passed away.

JM: And George?

JS: George was in Houston working for General Electric and a Big Electric Company in Houston.

JM: And you say your sisters went to San Antonio Female College?

JS: Female college.

JM: I love that! That's wonderful. Where did your brothers go to school?

JS: A & M.

JM: A & M.

JS: Yes, George grad...my oldest brother graduated from there in 1911.

JM: That's going back a few years.

JS: Louis, I believe, in 1923.

JM: How did they get to school? On the train?

JS: Oh, yes. On the train. Everybody did.

JM: How did you choose a college? How did you decide where to go?

JS: Well, let me see. I don't know unless my parents were the one who did the choosing.

JM: Did they go up there with you when you enrolled or did you go by yourself?

JS: No. I went with a girl from Diboll, Eunice O'Hara.

JM: The first time? Had you ever been up there before you went up to go to school?

JS: No.

JM: Just arrived?

JS: You can just imagine the most desolate feeling. Especially in the dorm and they had all the beds, two single beds and a dresser.

JM: That sounds like my dorm room. [Laugh] Things have not improved over the years.

JS: Oh have they. I went back to my fiftieth anniversary. You see, we were the first class. Last year, they gave us the name of “Golden girls” and I tell you it was something to see that campus. Of course, I had been back three times since graduation.

JM: How many? Did you take a lot of clothes and suitcases with you?

JS: To college?

JM: Yes.

JS: No. See ‘cause we wore uniforms.

JM: So you just took personal stuff?

JS: Yes, personal stuff.

JM: Do you remember taking money with you to pay your tuition or was that shipped ahead?

JS: Now that was one thing I had no...that was paid through check, I suppose, by that time see, we had Lufkin National Bank was the first I remember. That I remember.

JM: A bank?

JS: Yes.

JM: Did...when did the company...did the company switch from paying in tokens into money at some time or did they continue to pay in tokens? When you went away to college...was your family still using the company tokens?

JS: Of course, my father passed away in 1925 and that was the year I went to college, see. And I really don’t remember too much about it. But I think, it seems like to me, that my mother’s finances were handled through the office at that time.

JM: And when you graduated you went to Happy, Texas?

JS: Yes, Uh-huh.

JM: How long did you stay up there?

JS: One year.

JM: Didn’t like it?

JS: No, we had to have one year’s experience before...that was a rule then in Diboll schools. You had to have one year experience before you could teach in Diboll schools.

JM: And then you?

JS: So after that one year experience, I came back home.

JM: To Diboll?

JS: Yes.

JM: How long did you teach here?

JS: Well, then I taught two years...from '30 to '32. And I married and first lived in Austin. Then I came back to the system in '49 and taught until I retired in '71. Twenty-four years here.

JM: You met your husband in Livingston?

JS: In Livingston. Yes.

JM: Were you married here in Diboll?

JS: No, I was married in Livingston.

JM: In Livingston? Was it a church wedding or a home wedding?

JS: No, it was just a very simple wedding at the church.

JM: Do you recall your dress?

JS: Oh, it was a navy. What do they call it? A crepe material with a real lacy blouse.

JM: I guess I have always been under the idea that wedding dresses have always been white, but as I...

JS: Of course, long. While I think about that time they were wearing the dress length just below the calf on your leg. You would say a long dress.

JM: And so where? Ya'll went to Austin?

JS: Yes.

JM: To live? And then back here in '49?

JS: Well, what we...did I say Austin? It was Livingston.

JM: Livingston?

JS: Livingston. We went to Livingston and that was my husband's home. And we stayed there a couple of years and then came back to Diboll.

JM: How did it?

JS: I was here about a year and half before I started teaching school. I had to wait before the baby was born. [Laugh]

JM: How did it change between the time you were growing up and the times you came back as a young married woman? What had happened to it?

JS: Well, of course, there were...I guess, no...there was a box factory here that I remember, which of course, was a part of the Company complex, I guess you could say. But there was...I don't think there was too much improvements in the streets. No, we still had dirt roads and streets and no sidewalks even then.

JM: When do you first recall having...?

JS: We did get natural gas in '46, I believe. Of course, the Company used to furnish our lights free. The thing about that was the mill would not run on...Sunday. It ran seven days a week in those days, six days a week. But anyway, the lights on Saturday nights, the lights would go off at 10:30 p.m. They had to save on fuel.

JM: So when the plant shut down.

JS: When the plant shut down.

JM: The lights went out.

JS: At 10:30 p.m. on Saturday night and Sunday night. And of course, they started up on Monday and turned them on.

JM: When do you recall having a car in your family?

JS: A car in the family. I first remember was a Willis Nine in 1923, I believe.

JM: Were there a lot of cars around Diboll then?

JS: No.

JM: Must have been quite a...

JS: Mr. Farrington here was the Postmaster here and, had the first car in Diboll. Was a Ford? What they called then a touring car.

JM: A touring car. Oh goodness! Let me think here, Uh, Do you recall peddlers coming through?

JS: Oh, yes.

JM: Your sister mentioned...

JS: In fact, my mother bought from Mr. Clark of Burke. I think he came through nearly every day.

JM: With vegetables?

JS: Vegetables. Of course, we had a garden but somethings you could buy from him. That was a necessity then...you had a garden and a cow in Diboll.

JM: It may get to be that way again.

JM: Do you...when do you recall, were there other stores here besides the Commissary when you came back after you married?

JS: I do not recall any.

JM: Where did your husband work? At the mill?

JS: No, he well, he...when we came back here, he started working at the creosote. Lots of people called it the Creosote plant then. But it is...what is the name of it now? (pause)

JM: In Lufkin?

JS: No, in Diboll.

JM: In Diboll?

JS: Yes. He was in on the construction part of it. And then later on he worked in the office, the Personnel.

The last part of the tape is unintelligible.

END OF INTERVIEW