

Pine Cone Profiles (Sep 2020)

Sally Langston

Such an end to the summer, East Texas Historical Association members! As if pandemics, politics, protests, and fires were not enough, we find ourselves preparing for one more 2020 jolt: Hurricane Laura. In hope that everyone is boarded up and tightened down by now, please enjoy—a few days ahead of time—September's Pine Cone Profile interview with Sally Langston.

This woman is energy personified. Along with teaching AND serving as reference librarian at South Texas College of Law Houston, Sally enrolled in the school's law program in the 1980s, earning her Juris Doctor degree in 1991. Here, in her own words, is this indefatigable East Texas Historical Association member:

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Timpson, Texas, in Shelby County, site of the Regulator-Moderator War. My paternal grandparents lived eight miles west of Timpson on U.S. Highway 84 in Rusk County. Their farm was part of the land purchased by my great great Grandfather, John Barham in 1854 when he moved his family to Texas.

How did living there affect you?

I really can't recall a time when I wasn't interested in history. My grandfather loved to tell stories which were of both family and East Texas lore. Living so close to Nacogdoches afforded wonderful opportunities. I remember visits to the Old Stone Fort and the Sterne-Hoya House when I was a child. My father's brother had been a member of one of the talented S.F.A. debate teams in the mid 1930's which was coached by Rev. George L. Crockett, and I read *Two Centuries in East Texas* as at an early age.

What profession did you follow?

After graduation from Timpson High School, I took as many classes as I could at Stephen F. Austin State University before transferring to Texas Woman's University where I could take prerequisites for a Master's degree in Library Science. I received both a B.A. and an M.L.S. from T.W.U. After two years as reference librarian at Bishop College, a liberal arts HBCU (Historical Black Colleges and Universities), I began my career in Academic Law Libraries. I served at University of Houston and Southern Methodist University. The majority of my career was at South Texas College of Law, Houston. I received a J. D. from there in 1991.

Who influenced you in your career?

My Daddy had worked at the S.F.A. library for Mildred Wyatt as a student in the late 1930's. When I announced at age eight that I wanted to be a librarian, Daddy took me to the library to

meet her. This started a dear and wonderful friendship. Each summer when I was in high school, I would ride to Nacogdoches with folks from Timpson who were commuting to class. I would immediately head for the library where I loved to read current periodicals in the main reading room.

While an undergraduate at S.F.A. I was pleased to have opportunities to visit with my cousin Joel Barham Burke and her aunt, Professor Viridian Barham. I was also pleased to have had a 30+ year friendship with Lon W. Taylor, eminent Texas historian and storyteller.

Besides Miss Wyatt, another of my father's friends was Miss Elizabeth Tucker. She had semi-retired from a professorship at Louisiana State University and worked in the library. She was often in the East Texas Room where I loved to visit. At that time Lois Blont was Curator of the Collection.

I was extremely fortunate to have had excellent history professors in both universities I attended. The first college class I ever attended was the freshman World History survey. The professor was Archie P. McDonald! At T.W.U. I was thrilled to have classes taught by Dr. A. Elizabeth Taylor. I joined both the East Texas Historical Association and Texas State Historical Association in the 1980's. I have greatly enjoyed attending meetings of both over the years.

Besides formal instructors, I was fortunate to have a number of family and friends who loved history with whom to share conversation and correspondence. My first cousin, once removed, Rosalind L. Ulmer had an M.A. in History from the University of Texas. Walter Prescott Webb was her thesis advisor. Her thesis on the life of R.T. Milner (who wrote the law requiring the teaching of Texas history in public schools) was published in two issues of the Southwestern Historical Quarterly in 1941. She taught high school history in Henderson and had one of the first Junior Historian chapters. One of her students was Dorman H. Winfrey, who later served as Professor Webb's assistant on the original Handbook of Texas and was the State Librarian as well as author of several books on Texas History.