

Interview with Merry Kone FitzPatrick

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Date of Interview: October 16, 1985

**Location: Professor FitzPatrick's Office, Taylor-Murphy Building,
Texas State University, San Marcos, TX**

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Iris T. Schumann: I'm Iris T. Schumann, a student in Dr. Ronald Brown's Graduate Oral History Seminar at Southwest Texas State University. As a class project and a part of the Texas Sesquicentennial, the group is planning to tape significant San Marcos, Texas area residents. I will be taping Merry Kone FitzPatrick of Southwest Texas State University and a life-long resident of this community. Today's date is October 16, 1985. Professor FitzPatrick is Professor of History at Southwest Texas State University, and we are taping in her office at the Taylor-Murphy Building on the campus. Professor FitzPatrick has agreed to review the transcript after the interview is complete and understands that she will be asked to sign an agreement that will give the tape to Southwest Texas State University to be used in the future for research purposes and that another tape will also be placed at the San Marcos Public Library.

You do understand that, do you not Professor FitzPatrick?

Merry Kone FitzPatrick: Yes.

Schumann: Thank you. Professor Fitzpatrick, I wish you would tell me today just a little about your early growing up days in San Marcos. I know it must have been interesting and a fun experience.

FitzPatrick: I'll say just a little bit about how my family got to San Marcos. In 1841, John Drayton Pitts came over to visit in Texas from a little town in Georgia, and he visited with General Edward Bureson [and] then came over to San Marcos, and he thought it was the most beautiful place that he had seen. He went back to Georgia and sold the idea of moving to Texas to his family and friends, and they decided to come to Texas. Mr. Pitts bought land from General Bureson on the Old Post Road to San Antonio, and the families—eleven families with thirty wagon loads—settled along that road, and that's why they called it Stringtown because they were strung out.

One of the folk stories about the early time was the women telling about how they would come to crossings—it was very difficult, there weren't any bridges across the rivers and streams in the

1840s, so to lighten to loads, they would have to throw away some of their furniture. And for the women, that was very devastating, but they finally got here. Once, typically I think of early frontier times, they told about Mr. J.F. Malone who had sixteen children of his own, and they built a big two-story house. I think he had—I've forgotten how many slaves, he came also with fifteen or twenty slaves, and he adopted twelve children. These were from families who had died; you know how they did on the frontier, people died, and these children would be left homeless. So, he and his wife raised twenty-seven children, I think. And somebody asked him one time, "How can I find your house?" And he said, "Well, go down Post Road and when you come to a house that looks like school's let out, that's my house."

Well, as I said, my father was the last child born in Stringtown. He was the youngest child of his family—the John Pitts Kone Family—and he grew up to become a pharmacist, and he worked in several places in Texas. One was Edna, Texas, and he married my mother there, and I was born there, but we moved back to San Marcos when I was three, so I really did grow up in San Marcos. Of course, for him, it was coming home, and I came home to be surrounded by relatives. My younger brother and I used to hate it when we had family reunions because the Kones are very big on kissing and we didn't like being kissed a whole lot. We used to have big family reunions down on the San Marcos River, down where Rio Vista was.

Schumann: What were they like?

FitzPatrick: Well, they had big picnics, and Uncle Sam Kone, who was kind of the old man of the family when I was a child, was already kind of the father figure of the whole—we'd have seventy or eighty people down on the river. Uncle Sam had white hair and a loud voice, and people just gathered around him. There are a lot of stories of Uncle Sam in early San Marcos. He had a livery stable, and he was the first person to put in automobiles, and I guess this was around 1905, between 1905 and 1910. Uncle Sam didn't like to be told how to do anything and so he didn't take any driving lessons, he simply got in the car and started driving, he drove around the square and came back to his livery stable, and he didn't know how to stop the car! He was screaming, "Whoa, damn you! Whoa!" (laughs) And then [he] had an old Model T Ford that he drove for years, a coupe, and Dr. Rob Tampke bought [it] after Uncle Sam died, and he drove it until about 1965 or so. But everybody laughed when Uncle Sam came to town because you got off the street. He just drove down the middle of the road.

Schumann: It was kind of prevalent at the time; I guess there was nobody to teach you to drive.

FitzPatrick: (laughs) Anyway, he was kind of a funny man. I thought I would tell you a little bit about the kind of schools I attended and so on because they're all gone. When I was in elementary school, there were two schools in San Marcos—well, I'm really ashamed when I look back on how unaware we were. There were two "white" schools. One called West End and one called East End. I went to West End, which today is a residential area, and the school's all gone.

East End is where the Episcopal Church is today. There was also a campus training school. A lot of my friends went there—the Education Department ran the school on campus. There was a “black” school and a “Mexican” school.

Schumann: What time are we talking about? What time frame?

FitzPatrick: This is the 1930s. I was in elementary school. We had, I remember, a woman principal at West End School, which was kind of unusual. Women didn’t get those kinds of jobs—her name was Miss Jenny Garth, and she was a marvelous teacher. Hundreds and hundreds of San Marcos children had contact with Jenny Garth. The high school, which is also gone, is where today the Balcones Apartments are. It was a big, old, red brick building, which we called the “Bat Roost.” Of course, San Marcos at that time in the thirties was about five thousand population. If you’re familiar with the streets in San Marcos, particularly if you go up the hills, they wind around, and we have a lot of one-block streets in San Marcos, and they literally were cow trails and animal trails, and they just simply came in and paved them. And San Marcos is not laid out north and south, it’s kind of off-center.

Schumann: How did the children get to school in those days?

FitzPatrick: We walked. Now, one of my high school friends, and we’re talking about late thirties, was allowed to use the family car, and I rode with her, but I had to walk about four blocks where she picked me up. But I walked to elementary school. In fact, I walked home for lunch too, and that was about eight or ten blocks.

Schumann: Was that common? Did most children—

FitzPatrick: We all did that. There were buses, but those were mainly for the country children, and I was already too close to ride the bus. I didn’t like riding the bus anyway.

Schumann: That brings a point. Did the country children all come into San Marcos from Hays County, or did they have schools out in the county also?

FitzPatrick: They had county schools, they had a county school in Wimberley, but we had a lot of rural children that came in—not a lot, of course, it wasn’t that big a school. In fact, I was trying to think, there were about forty in my graduating class. Forty or fifty in my graduating class, so it wasn’t a very big school. Our big rival for football games was Lockhart. At that time, Lockhart always beat us. Everybody beat us! Why did I say that? (laughs) Though the year I left, Coach Jowers came, of Jowers fame—he came to San Marcos High School. And San Marcos High School, which had not won a game when I was there, won state! So that it makes a difference in the coach, I guess. He came on up here to become an institution at Southwest Texas, and, of course, we have the big Jowers Center named for him at Southwest Texas.

This was, of course, the depths of the Depression. There wasn't anybody in our town that was wealthy. We were all pretty poor. We had ten times more fun, I think, than the high school kids today who have cars and all kind of things. Of course, we were kind of on our own.

Schumann: What did you do for fun back in those days?

FitzPatrick: Well, we had a very unique group of girls in my class. We called ourselves "The Thirteen" because there were obviously thirteen of us. One Halloween night I remember—there were a lot of vacant houses in San Marcos. Can you remember that? It's just incredible today because there's no such thing as old vacant houses in San Marcos anymore. We had a lot of old vacant houses, which we called them haunted houses, and we asked permission of Mr. Daley who owned this old beat-up Victorian house. It was really a huge house, three-story, and we asked if we could use it for a Halloween party. He said yes, so we cleaned it up and decorated it for Halloween, we went up those rickety stairs and down and had all kinds of fun, and we invited a lot of people—not just our crowd, a lot of our high school friends. We just had a wonderful party! And then after we got it all cleaned up, Mr. Daley rented it. (laughs) We did him a favor. We worked like dogs, but we liked doing things like that. We took picnics out to Five Mile Dam on the Blanco River. We were, I'm sure, bothersome, we would go to the movies and talk too much, and I'm sure the other people could have just killed us dead. And giggles, you know how teenagers do.

Schumann: How would you get around on these jaunts? Did you walk most of the time, or did you by that time have more access to a car?

FitzPatrick: We were fortunate, one of the girls, Catherine Herndon, who went on to become [a] professor of education at the University of Wyoming, was one of us. Her mother was a divorcee, and they lived in her grandparents' house—Catherine's grandparents' house, which was another big old Victorian house on San Antonio Street. Her mother was Mary Herndon, and she was my first grade teacher, and she's still alive, by the way. Catherine was killed accidentally last year, but her mother is still alive, she's in her early nineties. She was a young, very wonderful person. The last time I visited with her, about four years ago, she was still a lively person and interested in life. Now, I understand she's had some strokes, and she is not doing very well. Of course, Catherine's death nearly killed her. But she had an older Model A Ford—four door. And she would take all thirteen of us around in that car. Can you picture this with arms and legs sticking out all over?

Schumann: Yes, I can. (laughs)

FitzPatrick: Or other parents, sometime my mother would take us, or others would take us as they could, but mainly it was Mary Herndon. We were fortunate in the late seventies; she came to two of our reunions. We just had the best time talking to her because she had been the teacher for several of us, first grade teacher.

Schumann: You mentioned the Five Mile Dam on the, did you say the Blanco River? Was there a picnic area out there?

FitzPatrick: Well, they had the dam, and no, they didn't have a park, but people did go out there; they still do. College kids still do. I think Hays County maintains that dam. Last year, you know, it dried up. You remember in the drought. The rains came, and now it's filled up again, I understand. I haven't been out there. It's a beautiful area. We would swim out there. In fact, my mother taught me to swim in the Blanco River rather than the San Marcos River.

Schumann: I guess that was an individual thing at that time for teaching children to care for themselves.

FitzPatrick: Yes. Now, when I came to the university here, we had to take swimming. I hated to take it—that river is cold, and we swam very late in the season. We had a man, Dr. Sewell, for whom Sewell Park is named, who really made that river a name all over the state because in the summertime he put on a pageant—a water pageant. I swam in it two years. We had a marvelous time, people sat on the bend of the river, there weren't benches, they just sat on the bend, but we'd have three or four thousand people come to that, and then students would do the formations, and we had diving exhibitions off the tower. I remember, in particular, that New Braunfels had an Olympic gold winner, I don't remember when—in 1940 or sometime. His name was Starr, and one summer I saw him perform. If I ever remember any physical event, I remember that. It was like seeing poetry in motion. It was just beautiful.

Schumann: I've heard that he was a wonderful diver.

FitzPatrick: He was. Wasn't he killed, I think he was.

Schumann: His mother is Martha Starr and she, until a few years ago at least, was still alive and living in New Braunfels. I'm not sure, I can't think of her son's name, but I've heard of him, and it will probably come to me at a later time. I'm not sure if he was killed.

FitzPatrick: Well, these pageants were just outstanding, and since he got so much attention for Sewell Park and he cared about it, Dr. Sewell kept it absolutely clear; there were never any weeds or that kind of debris in the river. It was just sparkling clean. That's the difference one man can make I think.

Schumann: That was at the period then when the river was developed, actually cleaned out? Is that right?

FitzPatrick: Of course, the river has always been a big part of San Marcos life. We used to swim a lot out at the head of the river. I have some pictures of my father when he was a young man and they picnicked out there where Aquarena is now. When I was little, the springs gushed up so high, and there was such a flow down the river over the dam at Rio Vista that the water

shot way over the dam, and we could climb under the water and sit down there as the water rushed over us. That shows how the flow has been reduced so much. Anyway, when I was in high school, there was a hotel there that Mr. A.B. Rogers had built, and he went bankrupt in the thirties. But when I was a senior in high school, we had our formal dance on the roof of that hotel. It was the most wonderful night, out in the starlight and the band playing.

Schumann: This is interesting, you did have dances then. I had always heard that San Marcos was sort of opposed to that kind of activity. Is that an earlier period?

FitzPatrick: No, I think the Baptist Academy had that reputation. They didn't allow dancing until about four years ago. And I suppose we always had dances.

Schumann: I guess I'm thinking about the university when it was maybe in its earlier days.

FitzPatrick: That's right. I remember Emmie Craddock interviewed Dr. Tampke, and Dr. Evans would not allow dancing in the twenties, he wouldn't allow Southwest Texas students to have dances, and Dr. Tampke finally got him to allow it. He said, "All right, you can have a dance if the orchestra doesn't have a saxophone." Saxophones are supposed to be sexy. (laughs) I don't really remember particularly restrictions of that order. I know my Baptist friends were a lot more restricted than I was, but I was Presbyterian, and Presbyterians were not very restrictive. Now, we had an old lady in our church who played the organ forever, and she was very strict because one time I said "Damn," and she said, "Now, you must not ever say words like that." And I wanted to say, I didn't because I was too well-bred, my mother would have whipped me, but I wanted to say, "If my mother doesn't mind me saying it, I don't want you lecturing me about it!" (laughs) Of course, my mother didn't care. She was Mrs. Burkholder, and her husband taught economics at Southwest Texas.

Schumann: You're talking about the Presbyterian Church. You are a member of that church? What was that church like in your growing up days? How many members and so on?

FitzPatrick: It had about the same amount as it has today. It's a small church, and it always will be a small church. I joined the church when I was thirteen years old, and two of my colleagues joined at the same time. We were about the only high school kids in the church at the time—Marion Nelson Meeks, whose family owns the Nelson Center, joined. Her father was an agriculture teacher here at Southwest Texas. And Bill Wyatt, Tula Townsend Wyatt's son, also joined. All three of us joined the same day, and we're still in that church. Three of us—all three of us have served as elders in that church. That's just one of those ongoing life pictures that's fairly unusual, I think.

Schumann: It's an old church in the community?

FitzPatrick: Yes. I think it was organized in the 1860s. For a while there were two, they called one the Cumberland Presbyterian Church here, but it didn't last very long. We have a Memorial Presbyterian Church in San Marcos that largely has Mexican-American members, and they preach in Spanish every other Sunday. And that's an old church, which is, I think, fairly surprising. I think it was founded in 1886 or around there. For a Mexican-American Protestant Church, that's rather unusual.

Schumann: Are there good relationships between the two Presbyterian Churches? Do they do things together?

FitzPatrick: Yes.

Schumann: In recent years or earlier times?

FitzPatrick: It kind of comes and goes, kind of depends on who we have as ministers in both churches. When my daughter Kate was in high school, their youth group and our youth group and the Episcopal youth group met together all of the time. They called themselves "PEP"—Presbyterian, Episcopal, Presbyterian. They had a really good relationship. You know, it kind of flows and goes. We have some services together. Their church is rather simple, almost primitive. One year, my daughter was dating a Lebanese fellow. His family was wealthy beyond my understanding. And he's Catholic, but he was here for Christmas, and Kate asked him to go to Christmas service with us, and he agreed. She didn't realize it was going to be in the Memorial Presbyterian Church. I don't suppose he'd ever been in a church like that. He was used to large cathedral-type churches.

Schumann: And the Catholic Church, too, has a very stylized way of conducting their worship. It would be very different from that. That's interesting. I didn't mean to tear you away from some of the other things that we were talking about. I really would like you to talk about growing up with siblings. I heard you say something about your brother a while ago. Who were your brothers?

FitzPatrick: My older brother, who is seven years older than I am, is a half-brother. My mother was married and divorced. My mother was divorced in 1916. You talk about having to live with divorce! And Mother never made a big deal out of it, and neither did anybody in my family. My older brother, I grew up just adoring him because he looked after me and took care of me, and I just—he was just my idol—and my father adopted him, so he is a Kone. He goes by that name. His father's name was Menefee, and they were early settler—that family came to Texas with the first Austin colony. That's an old name in Texas, and he uses the name Menefee for a middle name.

Well, there was a Menefee, a really coming politician about ten years ago. He was from Houston, and everybody said he was on his way to be an outstanding politician. He had all the qualities

that you want—dedicated and honest, and he was killed by a mugger in Houston. He was about thirty-five years old. Anyway, that was my older brother, and I had a younger brother, Woods, who was two and one-half years younger than I was. My older brother we called Bob—Robert Kone. We all went to school at Southwest Texas; all three of us took degrees here. Bob and I both took master's degrees here after the war, after World War II. He had been in the service, Bob was in the Army; he was a depot supply officer in India and in Burma. After the war was over, he was asked to stay on; he was a captain and disposed of American goods in Burma. They did that around the world, they sold as much goods that they had in those places so that they wouldn't have to throw it away or bring it home. It was too costly to bring it home. So, he stayed an extra year in Burma. Bob was always very absent-minded, my mother said, "Oh, I know he will misplace a million dollars somewhere and get in trouble!" (laughs) And that was not unlikely. Bob was absent-minded. He so concentrates on what he does, he blocks out everything; anyway, he got the highest dollar value of any area where they sold U.S. goods. He loved Burma. He thought the Burmese, and he was dealing with Burmese people by and large, he just thought they were the most wonderful people. In fact, when he came home, I thought maybe he'd go back there and stay. He just loved the Burmese people. He loved the country. I remember one time, too, he said he'd gone up to the Himalayas to a retreat, and he said, "I can understand how those people become mystics because when you get up on those mountains, nothing else matters but the mountain. It's just overwhelming." Well, anyway, he didn't do that, he didn't go back to Burma. He had been promised that if he would stay there he would get special commendation and a promotion in rank. Well, guess what? His commanding officer got all the credit, and he didn't get anything they promised him. And he was too ill, he had contacted amoebic dysentery there, and he was in the hospital a year after he got home. He was too ill to fight it and didn't care that much about it by that time.

Schumann: Did he come back to San Marcos?

FitzPatrick: He came back, and he took a degree here—master's degree. As a matter of fact, he and I were in a course with Dr. [Retta] Murphy together. He always said, "She likes you best." He didn't relate to her as I did. Although he did very well. He did very poorly as an undergraduate. When he was chewing on his children, I liked to remind him that he didn't do all that well. He said, "Shut up!" (laughs)

My younger brother [Woods Kone] was torn between choices. He wanted to be a doctor, an MD. He was very talented in that direction, but he also very talented musically. And he was torn—which route to go. He finally decided when he was working on his degree here since he had a teacher who encouraged him to go the music route, and so he went to Cincinnati and graduated from Cincinnati Conservatory with a master's degree. And then he, well, he was in the Navy. He joined the Navy when he was seventeen and went through World War II. Then he was called back. He was working on a master's at Texas University and teaching as a TA when they called

him back to the Korean action, and that did something to him that—I guess he really shouldn't have gone back. He finally got over it, but it was hard. He was a very sensitive person, anyway. But he finally got a teaching job, he was teaching at Sam Houston, he'd been teaching piano there for about seven years when he died of a heart attack at the age of forty-three. It was a very moving funeral because all his young students were so crazy about him, they came over and sang. The Sam Houston Chorus sang at his funeral.

Schumann: Did you do things together, the three of you? Was it pretty much you and your gang, and the boys went their own way? I heard you say that your older brother was very important to you.

FitzPatrick: Well, but he was so much older. I mean he was seven years older, so that I really didn't do things with him. I remember that my friends in The Thirteen and their older sisters were always trying to get me to do what I could to get Bob to notice them; although, Bob grew four inches after he was twenty-one. He was kind of short when he was in high school. That's very unusual, but he was a nice-looking young man, but he has gotten better looking the older he gets. Darn him! But they had their fiftieth high school graduation reunion this year, last year, and several people said that Bob was the best looking man there! And he really has grown old gracefully. Well, he has a wonderful wife, that's why, who looks after him.

And no, I didn't do very much with my young brother, either. We used to feel so sorry for my younger brother because, as I say, he was very talented musically and he was asked to play all the time at the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club and this club and that club and so on. When I was growing up, I was telling my friends about that, and they said, "I'll bet you were jealous." I said no. Bob and I said, "Poor Woods!" He had to just perform all the time. You know, in a small town like this, there weren't very many talented kids; the emphasis was more on football at that time anyway. He was kind of a big, I mean he wasn't tall, but he was extremely strong. In fact, he broke a guy's jaw in the Navy when they made him box, and he said he didn't like to do that, and he didn't really mean to, but he was a very strong person.

Schumann: Were you involved in organizations like Girl Scouts or 4-H, or were those organizations not here at that time?

FitzPatrick: Yes, in fact one of The Thirteen, Sue Evelyn Wade [Peters now] was very much involved and went on to become—after her husband was killed, a Girl Scout executive, and now she is one of the top executives in the nation in Girl Scout work. So yes, we had that—I didn't like that kind of organized activity. I just never have, and then neither one of my daughters like it very much.

Schumann: Just wonder if San Marcos had those kinds of organizations.

FitzPatrick: Yes, and they had 4-H too. I don't remember the girls so much, but I do remember boys being in 4-H. They had a 4-H club.

Schumann: What was downtown San Marcos like when you were growing up?

FitzPatrick: About like it is now. Not so much traffic. The courthouse was always there. Since I was a little girl, and I grew up where there was a courthouse, I thought every town in Texas had a courthouse. It didn't dawn on me that this was the county seat and only county seats had courthouses. And, you know, when you drive around small towns in Texas, you usually hit the county seats: Lockhart and Seguin, New Braunfels, you have courthouses. And I would go from here to one of those kinds of towns, and then I thought everybody had a courthouse. But anyway, there is the courthouse. And it seems like to me, one of the things that I can remember, we had political campaigns. When we'd have elections, we'd have politicians who would come to San Marcos, and they would speak—we had a bandstand on the courthouse lawn, and the politicians would stand there and speak. The people just gathered around. And my dad took me when I could barely walk; he took me to those political rallies. I think that I've been interested in politics from a very early age. I do remember one time—and the reason I do know how young I must have been, I was hanging onto his coattail, his coattail was in my fist, and he moved to talk to somebody, I suppose. I dropped it, and then after while I hung on again, and I looked up, and it wasn't Dad. This man said, "I don't mind you hanging on, but do you know who I am?" So I must have been very young. Then we also had political rallies down on the river too, I can remember. Then we'd go down there on the river.

Schumann: Was your family involved in any of the political activity that was going on in the community? Or was he just an interested person?

FitzPatrick: He was just interested. He was on the school board a long time, and he was the president of the school board when there was a terrible flack. The community demanded that the superintendent be fired. Well, what had happened was the superintendent was one of those men that kind of—liked to pat ladies, hug them, and so on. There was this terrible flack about one of the ladies, and I really don't know the ins and outs of it. But the community demanded—can you imagine that? For hugging one of the teachers. Then, it may have been more serious than that, and I just didn't know. But anyway, with today's easy lifestyles, you can imagine! And another thing, Mary Cardin. About the same time that the superintendent episode happened, Miss Mary Cardin, who was Dr. Murphy's housemate for so long, was accused of smoking, and so they demanded that she be fired for smoking, and they demanded that Mr. Berry be fired for hanky-panky with one of the lady teachers. And the board did not want to do it. And Dad did not want to do it at all. He really fought it and made a lot of people angry, and in the end Mr. Berry had to go, and so did Miss Mary Cardin.

Schumann: That must have been a very difficult thing to work through in a small town.

FitzPatrick: Yes, and I think it hurts Dad's business. That's why businessmen don't like to serve on city councils and things like that because when you do something unpopular, it hurts your business. And I had had Miss Mary Cardin in school—she was my music teacher when I was in the first grade. She went from school to school teaching music, and I remember I was a redbird. We were divided into redbirds and bluebirds. The redbirds could sing; the bluebirds couldn't! They got to play the tambourine or something like that. Or triangle. I do remember that, and at West End School, the first grade was in a little wooden house by itself, and the second grade was in a little wooden house by itself. Third, fourth, fifth, and sixth were in a big brick building. We used to listen to Walter Damrosch. Do you know who he was? He was a conductor, and he played on the radio; he played classical music for children, and a certain time of the week we always listened to Walter Damrosch. But anyway, when I was in the first grade, Mary Herndon, my teacher, would pull out a drawer and say, "Hum, I have all kinds of wonderful things—colored chalk, colored pencils, scissors." I thought, "Oh, when I grow up I want to be a teacher because their desks have such wonderful things in them!"

Schumann: It's interesting the way children react and remember, remember things that have happened.

FitzPatrick: I remember learning the alphabet because I thought learning to read was the most marvelous thing that ever happened to me. I can still remember the excitement of learning to read. I just thought it was so wonderful. I've been reading like mad ever since.

Schumann: You had a good teacher back there someplace.

FitzPatrick: Yes!

Schumann: Tell me, did one teacher have one class, one age group, or did one teacher have more than one age group at the time you were at that school?

FitzPatrick: We just had the one teacher all day long. She taught us everything.

Schumann: And it was only your class. You didn't have two classes in the same room at the same time?

FitzPatrick: No.

Schumann: Was that a consolidated school? You were talking about the extra buildings that were brought in.

FitzPatrick: Yes, yes it was. I would like to say something about my mother; she was Mary Gillespie of Scotch-Irish family. She grew up in Kosse, Texas, and she went to a one-room schoolhouse where the professor, they called him "The Professor," taught all the grades. I think he taught from sixth through high school. She had four years of Latin. She read all of Caesar's

commentaries in high school. She had world geography, and even in her old age, it was amazing to me what knowledge she had. She didn't go to college; she just had the high school education. She had read literature; I think she had a better education in high school in that one-room schoolhouse than the average college student does today. Four years of Latin. She was not very good in mathematics, she said, but she was as good as I was, I'm sure.

Schumann: Do you think that was common in the one-room schoolhouses, like the one-room schoolhouses in Hays County? Would they have been providing that kind of an education?

FitzPatrick: I just don't know. I don't know if this was an unusual man who taught there—it was a man, the professor. They called him “The Professor,” she always talked about it. I just thought, My word! She didn't need to go to college as far as education was concerned. Now, she didn't like to read very much like my father did. He read all the time, and he was like me and like my older child. We read, read, read! Some people don't like it that much.

Schumann: What kind of classes did you have in that elementary school? Arithmetic, reading—

FitzPatrick: Yes, reading and writing—penmanship was very big. Penmanship, I wish they'd go back so I could read my students' writing. I would say a third of my students cannot write in longhand. They have to print. And I don't know how they got through school doing that. And when they write, they print very poorly. And they don't know how to capitalize. They make capital letters in the middle of a word. But anyway, we had penmanship—push-pulls, I remember that, and ovals and so on. We had geography, math, reading, of course, and music. The music teacher was the only other teacher we had who came in. We wrote exercises on the board, and we wrote on our paper also. There must have been about twenty-five in that first grade, but remember, that there were five first grades in town. There was an East End, West End, campus, black and brown schools.

Schumann: Did your thirteen friends all go to the same school?

FitzPatrick: No. We didn't really get together until we were in junior high school. And the junior high school was over here in what is the Psychology Building today. Mr. Clayton and I both say we have ghosts up here because we went to—I think he went to elementary school up here.

Schumann: How did that happen? How did that happen that you would have come to the campus, college campus at that time to high school?

FitzPatrick: It had to do with the contract between the university and the public schools for the use of the public schools to train student teachers. This is one reason why San Marcos got behind so badly in their school building program. Evans was the high school, and I went to junior high school here, by then we went over to the other old building when the old building burned down,

what I called a while ago the “Bat Roost,” then the university offered them Evans. When my children were small, when I came back here in 1961, and my children eventually went to elementary school in Evans. By this time, they had built a high school. But San Marcos, oh, I don’t know how long—fifteen or twenty years, rocked along without building any school buildings, just letting the university provide these buildings, which meant that all of a sudden when the university began to grow, and they had to play catch-up.

Schumann: Was this a time when the university enrollment was down because of the Depression?

FitzPatrick: When I came back to San Marcos in 1961 to teach, after my husband was killed, the university only had 3,200 students. In 1961. So, in twenty-four years, now we have close to twenty thousand. It began to grow in the sixties by leaps and bounds. When I came back, Dr. Flowers, who was president of the university said, “This college will never hit five thousand.” Well, he was wrong. The chairman of our history department was Dr. James Taylor, and he said that Dr. Flowers had been here too long, and in a way he had. College presidents, Dr. Taylor said, “After about ten years, they’ve given it about all they can give it, and they really need to move on.” Dr. Flowers had been here about—he was here, I don’t know, twenty-one years, and he had gotten out of touch with reality, and I think he didn’t realize the kind of growth that was coming. The president of North Texas State University did, and he began getting money, appropriation for buildings, but Dr. Flowers was saying we’re never going to be bigger than five thousand and didn’t push for a building program, so we got behind in those years, and we’re still playing catch-up, and that’s why the campus looks like it does. So much building going on.

Schumann: You really have had many new buildings these last few years.

FitzPatrick: And we’re going to have more, if you’ve seen what they’re building over on the Academy campus. They’re putting in—they’ve torn down two buildings, and they’re just tearing up that hillside over there, and they’re going to put in a twenty million-dollar dormitory and cafeteria.

Schumann: This is West Campus?

FitzPatrick: And then, of course, they’re going to start this library which is a twelve million-dollar building.

Schumann: I knew that was on the drawing board someplace. Let’s back up, I’m still interested in the downtown area of San Marcos. What were the major stores during the early years when you were growing up? The ones everybody went to.

FitzPatrick: There was J.C. Penny on the corner, what we then called Austin Street is now LBJ Street and Hopkins. There was a Jacob Schmidt’s. There was Harrison Ladies Ready-to-wear

and Woods Brothers, menswear. They're both gone. But that drugstore on Hopkins used to be called Williams Drugstore. I don't know what it's called now, that's still there. And it's still kind of like it was in the old days, across from the courthouse.

Schumann: The names of the businesses have changed. Are they still in family hands?

FitzPatrick: They've changed. There was a five-and-ten on the corner of Comanche and Hopkins called Duke and Ayres. The State Bank was on the corner across from Duke and Ayres. There were some grocery stores, Jack and Dement Grocery Store. Mrs. Jacks, whose daughter was one of The Thirteen, was County Clerk for a long time. Her husband went blind, and she ran for County Clerk and was County Clerk for a number of years. Then she was defeated, and she and her brother opened a grocery store there on the Square. There was a hardware store called Tallmadge Hardware Store when I was little. Southside, I remember Pappas Café. Mr. Pappas was a, his name was Pappahanapapalas. [Possibly spelled Papanapopolus] He was a Greek, and he came here and opened a very popular café on the Square and ran it for a long, long time. His son is now a commander in the Navy.

Schumann: Interesting.

FitzPatrick: Yes. When he was piped aboard, as they called it, when he became an admiral, Bill Pool was asked to be part of the ceremonies. He couldn't go, but I thought that would be exciting. This Greek immigrant, who came over, worked hard, and did very well. All the family worked. Then there was the National Bank, the State Bank, and on one corner, and on the opposite corner was the National Bank. There was a hotel behind the National Bank—this is very shadowy—as I remember, but it was a very popular hotel. Where Safeway now is, the Episcopal Church stood. It was a little, tiny church. It was a gem of a church, but it was sitting on the fault line, and it just was coming apart, and finally, they simply had to move. And Safeway has this paving there. It's really not a good place to build. If you know where that line is.

Schumann: Stay away from it!

FitzPatrick: Yes, stay away from it!

Schumann: I've seen a picture of that little church—we have it in the University Archives. It is a pretty church on the outside.

FitzPatrick: Well, the windows were beautiful inside in that church. Catherine Herndon and her family were members of that church. And Dr. Nolle was a member, and it was so small they didn't have a minister for years and years and years. He was a lay reader. There were only about ten families in that church, but they kept it alive. Of course, now, the Episcopal Church really flourishes here in San Marcos.

End of interview