

Karen Howden

Interviewed by Aurora Kolar

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Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Transcribed by Aurora Kolar

**Aurora Kolar:** All right. This is part two of the oral history interview with Mrs. Karen Howden. My name is Aurora Kolar. It is September 28th. We are in Corpus Christi, Texas, and we're here today to talk a bit about Old Bayview cemetery. Ms. Howden, do I have your permission to record you?

**Karen Howden:** Yes, you do.

**AK:** Um, excellent. To start off, tell me about the second yellow fever epidemic and the journal of the sheep herder.

**KH (00:34):** Oh, Okay. (Karen laughs and her phone buzzes) That is a good one. Um, there were actually two yellow fever epidemics in Corpus Christi. One was about 1854 and there just wasn't that many people in Corpus Christi. Yeah. And there were deaths and such, but it, it just didn't spread like the one in 1867, where we lose about a third of the city's population. We lose all three of the doctors. And, um, I believe, um, one of the, one of the folks that are at, buried at Old Bayview cemetery is a doctor by the name of Alexander Hamilton. And he was Canadian, and he came here after the three doctors passed white and he brought with him a student by the name of Arthur Spohn. Who has, who founded those hospitals here in Corpus Christi, and they are still named after this gentleman. But the yellow fever epidemic was, if you ever read anything about yellow fever there, um, they believe that it came in on banana boats and it came in to Indianola, which is north, which was north of Corpus Christi. Um, the, um, during the summer people would be more or less quarantined if there was yellow fever outbreaks along the coast, that was all over the Gulf Coast. And they were supposed to be quarantining anybody that was coming in from Indianola, because Indianola was a point of entry, Corpus Christi's, um, port didn't exist. Ships did come into Corpus Christi, but not like they were coming in to Indianola. Um, anyway, they, this man arrives in Corpus Christi. And this is where Joseph Almond comes in. He's one of those that are Old Bayview. One of those obscure folks, he has a pretty nice monument, but he's one of these obscure folks that, you know, there isn't a street named after him. There's not a building named after him. Uh-huh, he was a sheep rancher, and he kept a journal. Most people kept journals. And in that journal, if you ever wanted to know anything about sheep ranching in 1867 or 1860s, you would just read it. It goes into all the detail and everything that he was doing with his sheep and such. But in that journal in July of 1867, he writes down that this man came in from Indianola, a visitor from Indianola. And by the next morning he was dead. And he, that was the beginning of the yellow fever epidemic in Corpus Christi. And Joseph Almond records every death, every time he goes into town and learns of the list of people who passed away, he writes them into his journal is it's just so sad to read that every day, you know, it started with one and it grew and it grew and it grew and it grew by October when the first cool front actually comes

through and chases off most of the mosquitoes. Then that's when this will decline, this yellow fever epidemic declines. But in Corpus Christi, 1867, I believe there was like 600 people that were, 600 plus people living in Corpus Christi. And a third of them are going to pass away from yellow fever. And there was really nothing you could do about it. Um, it, it's, it's a great lesson as we're dealing with COVID-19, but it's, um, because you know, a lot of people didn't get it. That's two thirds of the people did not get it or did not die from it. So, you know, as far as Old Bayview cemetery, it is, it is a teaching cemetery. In some ways it teaches us about our life.

**AK (04:43):** (Aurora giggles) All right. I believe last time you talked a little bit more about the family of the sheep herder? His wife and daughter?

**KH (04:54):** That was the Von Bluchers.

**AK (04:57):** Ah-ha, can you tell me a little bit about them?

**KH (05:00):** Ok, that's fine. Yeah, yeah. Um, yeah, Joseph Almond's family I mean, they lived and died and, you know, had married and the name Almond is no longer around because of marriages and such, but, um, one of our members of the Friends of Old Bayview Cemetery Association she's related to him. Okay. But, um, I had told you the story about Felix and Maria Von Blücher, and that they had come to Corpus Christi about 1856, somewhere around there. He was some muckety-muck aristocrat, or his family was some muckety-muck aristocrat in Germany. And he, um, but you can have a title and have zero funds and throughout Europe, and he was not the first born, so he wasn't going to inherit anything there. And so, he makes his decision to come to the United States. Um-hm, if not, he was going to be conscripted into the German army. And he wasn't- they're always in a big fight over there, somewhere in Europe, throughout the 1800s of, if you've studied world history and going up to World War One, World War Two, you know, it's just constant. So, him, him, and Maria, he marries Maria and they come to Corpus Christi by 1856 or so, and being, um, educated folks from Europe they spoke several languages. They spoke German, English, French, Spanish, and who all, and Lord only knows what else they spoke. Well, they come to Corpus Christi and Maria she is going to write these letters home to her mother throughout this entire, the entire time, her entire life here. And she tells this, what it's like to be in Corpus Christi. Amazingly, she, she is really not a big complainer about Corpus Christi in 1856. There's just not a heck of a lot happening in Corpus Christi. They live in a little old lean-to shack type thing until their house is built. And they're going to have one of the grander houses in Corpus Christi for that time period. And, uh-huh, they, they are seen as, you know, some of the, um, if you had an aristocrat aristocracy in Corpus Christi, they were part of it. So, they, um, she writes these letters home and she tells these stories. She tells about what life is like in Corpus Christi and how their biggest problem was, she really doesn't complain about the weather. You know, everybody wants to complain about the weather now, but she really didn't complain about the weather. She complained about not being able to get goods, um, certain food, you know, just food in general, flour, sugar. Um, it came in by boat through Indianola, very seldom did it come directly to Corpus Christi, or it came up through Brownsville. And uh-hm, it, they just, that was her biggest complaint. But she tells her story of her family and she had a son, she had a daughter, she actually had three daughters, one passed away when she was a baby, not unusual for that time period. And she, uh-huh, her husband, Felix, he was a

surveyor by trade. That's, he likes, like I said, he spoke every diff-, every kind of language and Texas in 1850, 1860, everybody spoke every language. It's just, you had Spanish, you had French, you had German. Lots and lots of German. So, he, he, uh-huh, he could do several, he wore several hats, but surveying was his main, his number one hat. And out at A & M Corpus Christi, you have the Conrad Blücher Institute. And that is the same family. Okay. Engineers. Okay. Anyway, so Felix also had a love for drinking, and he would get, um, carried away in his bottles. Okay. And he would, um, he would come home and hang around just long enough to get Maria pregnant. And then he'd take off again, surveying he surveys throughout all South Texas, uh-huh, following the civil war. He's gonna survey in Mexico, uh-huh, while he's avoiding the, um, um, Reconstruction government. And he, he's really not, he's just not very good husband, but really if you, if you, if you're reading it and as a history person, he's a typical European man. I mean, that, that was just, just the typical man for that time period. And Maria pretty much kept that house together. Anyway, she had, she had the two daughters, and she had the son, but sh-, her, um, during the Civil War, Felix has gone. He had been a major in the Confederate Army in the defense of Corpus Christi. And when the Union troops were coming, when Texas was all but fallen, he takes off from Mexico and works with the French army down in Mexico. So, you know, he's just wearing all kinds of hats. And Maria has left here with this Reconstruction Period, and it's just, there was this terrible drought in South Texas during this time period. Um, they are occupied by union troops. They are, um, they can't get goods, they can't get food, but her daughter caught the eye of two union officers. Uh-hm, I forgot the other guy's name, but James Downing was the one who finally managed to woo her enough. And she was young. She was only about 15 years old and hey, in 1860, 1870 that's not- Maria mentions in her letters to her mother that she thought she was too young. But in these times, she did not, you know, there was really no choice, not, not a whole lot of choice. So, um, James goes back to his family somewhere up North and he returns to Corpus Christi and he actually stays in Corpus Christi. I'm surprised he doesn't take the daughter with him, his wife with him back up North, but he, he liked it here. And he, but while he was courting her during this occupation, he made sure that the-, their property was not looted by any of the Union troops, which was not usual, either side, either side, you know, whoever took the town, they would loot it. And uh-hm, he was, he was a protector. And, um, Maria, the mom in her letters refers to that. Uh-huh, James Downing is a story in himself, he, um, he was in the Union Army. He was captured somewhere in the Eastern Theater. Can't remember at the top of my head, but he's, um, captured. And he sent to Andersonville prison. And it's, you know, if the students of Andersonville prison, it was pretty bad prison. All of them were bad whether union or Confederate, but, and Andersonville had a pretty bad reputation and two stories come out. Um, he either escaped or he was paroled. Um, you're going to hear lots of two stories of, of people, you know, their story and the real story. Um, when he gets back to his unit, he's only 80 pounds. He's, very, in a pretty bad shape. Um, they make him an officer of the Union troops that are coming up from Brownsville to occupy Corpus or, uh-hm, the Texas. And those are African American troops. So, you can imagine that it was first being a, um, Union officer. It was not the most prestigious position to have, and those his troops were not welcomed in Corpus Christi at all. Um, and there were some issues with that. Both sides, both sides had issues. So, um, but he was kind of, he, you know, he was the mediator. And like I said, he was, uh-hm, James Downey was the, the protector of the Von Bluchers. Um,

Felix is going to come home one time and he's going to get roaring drunk and Maria is going to shove him, literally shove him out a window. Okay. Outside. Yeah. I imagine that it was all kinds of, well, I guess anybody that's dealing with alcoholism and, and, um, and an alcoholic, they, you know, they have pretty much the same stories, maybe not quite as, um, rugged, But anyway, they, um, so the Von Bluchers, when, um, after the Civil War, the youngest daughter, Julia, Maria, is going to send her to Germany to be educated, to go to school. And she is, um, she loves it in Germany. And when Maria, when, uh-hm, Maria's mom passes away, Julie comes home and she brings with her all these letters that her mother, her grandmother had kept. And they took those letters and wrote the book, Maria Von Blucher's Corpus Christi. The, um, Julia is a story in herself. She never married. She, um, loves to tinker with automobile engines in the 1890s, 1900s. She always had the latest new automobile. She, uh-hm, you know, drove around town. She was involved in all kinds of, of, uh-hm, charities and, and uh-hm, uh-hm, genealogy society, societies, and such, just ladies' groups. But she's, uh-hm, she's kind of like one of these people that you just- she was just unusual, but the whole bond blue, true family was unusual. And a lot of that is because they were from Europe and there were lots of people from Europe, but they were fresh from Europe and they kept those traditions. So many of those traditions, and they were, uh-hm, aristocracy from Europe. They weren't just a common man trying to make some land here. They, they had these, these, um, um, gosh, what word am I thinking of? Just went out the door. They had these standards that they held to. Um, they were friends with the, um, the, um, John, John Marks more. Did we already talk about him in the first one? I can't remember.

**AK (16:30):** Um, I believe we did. He's the one who grew up with, um-

**KH (16:36):** With Sam Moore, Yes. Yeah, yeah. Okay, so we talked about him. And there was during the Civil War, there was a, uh-hm, our veteran from the War of 1812 was here in Corpus Christi. His name was John Dix, D-I- X. And he, he was on a privateer ship during the War of 1812. And I always told my students, you know, the War of 1812 was nothing, but the Empire Strikes Back that's so we can trace that all the way back. But he was on a privateer ship, which is a, another word for pirate ship it's just that they're working for you. And he was probably about 12 years old, sailed the world. He comes home to his, uh-hm, I believe his home is in Michigan and there is an actual town named after his, him and his family up there. But he, uh-hm, after the war with Mexico gets going after Zachary Taylor's troops, move into Mexico, he comes to Corpus Christi and probably, uh-hm, with the ocean, with a, with a port in mind type of thing. So, by the time the Civil War rolls around he's up there. And when they are voting of whether or not to stay in the Union or succeed, of course, he's a pro-Union person, him and the, the Britons. Um, there are no Britons in Old Bayview, but, um, they're all kind of together. Just, it's just, they, remember we were pretty small town, and these are the, the prominent people of the town. John Dix is just going to have the devil harassed out of him during the Civil War. He's, uh-hm, he's an old man and he is going to, uh-hm, they're going to accuse him of using his lights in the second-floor window to signal Union gunboats in the Bay. And, you know, all of they threatened to hang him. They threatened to shoot him, you know, and he, he just really doesn't pay much attention to them. When the Civil War is over and reconstruction, he turns into a judge. And, but he's very, it's, it's, he's very, you know, he doesn't, he doesn't go out and seek revenge on anyone. What's

interesting was he was, he was pro-Union. Okay. And the Von Bluchers were Confederates, and they were probably Confederates because this is where they lived and the town voted to stay, to succeed. And, you know, that's just what everyone's going to do. Uh-hm, John Marks Moore the one that had Sam as a slave, he, he is also going to be a Confederate officer here in Corpus Christi and Nueces County during the Civil War, but they are good friends. The Moore's and the Dix's family are very good friends. And when the war is over, when the Emancipation Proclamation is issued, and I think I told you that Sam goes out the countryside with his wagon and the shotgun cross his lap. But after the war is over John Dix's wife and John Marks Moore's wife are going to open up the school. And that school is going to be, I guess you could call it a Freedman school, but it is open to African-Americans Boys don't go because boys are working, whether they are white or black, they're working, you know, and they're turned 14, 13, 12 to 14 years old, they're working. And the girls, this school is going to teach them how to read and write, add, subtract, multiply, and divide. It also teaches them how to sew, how to do, uh-hm, how to, how to take care of a household, how to do these things, because that's what women did. You know. They, those girls, whether they were black or white were going to get married and they were going to maintain a household somewhere. But what's interesting about this school was upstairs. It wasn't segregated. It was in the same building. Upstairs would be the African Americans downstairs would be the whites. I can't remember if that's the exact order, but they were separated by floors of the building. And uh-hm, they eventually build a black school. So, the blacks get the new school. Okay. I found that was kind of interesting. You know, usually now they always get the old one, but they got the new new school and his, and I think you about Anna Moore Schwien, the daughter of Sam Moore. And she's the one that had, had given that interview. She is in Old Bayview Cemetery, but her children moved to Baltimore. John Marks Moore's daughter marries and moves to Baltimore. And it's, you know, questionable whether or not everybody went there together. So, when you look at Old Bayview cemetery, not only do you, do you see this, um, it being non-segregated. It was these people are in there together. These people who work together are, who didn't agree with each other, we're all in there together. Um, it's, they're just, it's just an amazing place just, and their stories are so, so interesting. We, uh-hm, the, the, um, in 2003, the city had a grant. And with that grant, they created a website for Old Bayview cemetery. You can Google it. Old Bayview cemetery, Corpus Christi, Texas. It goes through the core, uh-hm, La Retama Central Library. And it has, they researched as many as they can, could find buried there. They looked at the obituaries. If family gave them information or pictures or anything, it's on that website. And it tells these people's stories there. Um, a lot of it is just facts. Uh-hm, when you look at those guys from the Zachary Taylor's troops, they're just young guys from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, from Chicago, Illinois, from, you know, Bohac/Bohick[I don't know what this is I plan on asking Karen about it], New Hampshire. They're just, they're from all over. And a lot of them, they just came down because they wanted an adventure. They were not the first-born son. And then they were going to, they weren't going to inherit anything there. So, they go into the Army, then sometimes they get a commission because daddy knows some muckety-muck. But they come in, they come down for an adventure and many of them stay in Corpus Christi. They come back to Corpus Christi or somewhere along the Texas coast. So, the, those, when you're reading about these people, and this can be any cemetery, Old Bayview is just lucky to have that website. But when you're reading about these

people, you have to remember that they are not us. They are not anything like us. They don't talk like us. They may speak English, but it's not anything that we're accustomed to. And remember that, you know, women had, did not have any rights. The only rights that a woman had was, uh-hm, the right of, of, uh-hm, of a supply and demand. If you didn't have enough women around, they were treated like gold. And if there were multiple women around, if there, if the population of women was high enough, they weren't treated like that. So, it's, but they had, they had no voice, no legal voice or anything like that. But so many of them do have a voice in Old Bayview. Corpus Christi is just really a neat place when you look at its history. And how they allowed everyone, just where their prejudice is probably that'd be my guess, but it wasn't, it wasn't what we, we viewed today. It wasn't, it was, it was something that just accepted. Everyone just accepted it. And it's right or wrong, it was just the way it was. Did we talk about Tito Rivera? Can't remember that was in the first one or not. Okay. Tito then probably was the second one. If we can't remember, uh-hm, Tito Rivera, I had told you that in Old Bayview, there was, it's not segregated and some folks have told me, well, you know, there's not very many Mexican Americans in there. Well, if you were a Mexican American in South Texas in the 1800s, you were probably Catholic and you're going to be at the Catholic cemetery. And there are several over there. One, several are in Old Bayview cemetery. One of them is Tito Rivera and his story kind of interesting story. His daddy owned a silver mine in Mexico. And uh-hm, when Tito was about 10 years old or, so it was, you know, "Daddy, daddy, I want to go with them when they take the silver in", you know. And "No, you can't go", "Please, please let me go", "Oh, let him go. He's never been before. He'll be okay. You've got all these guards with you. What could possibly go wrong?" Well, uh-hm, bandits attack them, killed everybody, took Tito, and sold him to Comancheros who sold them to the, to the Comanches in Texas. Um, Tito was an educated child. His family, his family had money and he, he, uh-hm, could read and write Spanish. So, while he was with the Comanches, uh-hm, they were negotiating with the locals around New Braunfels. And he, uh-hm, he was the one that was writing these terms and these conditions and such, and Comanches couldn't read or write Spanish. So, Tito lets them know in this, in these communications that he has being held, he was captured and, by the Comanches. And so, the, um, authorities and the New Braunfels area, they paid to have him released. I think they paid like \$120, which was a lot of money back then. They paid to have him released and Tito went to live with a family by the last name of Neighbors. Okay. And they were prod- they were from Germany and New Braunfels, of course. And they were Lutheran. So, Tito is going to be raised Lutheran. And when his adopted family in New Braunfels, when his father passes away, he goes to Port Lavaca, and then to Corpus Christi, he works as a banker. And when he's in Corpus Christi, he works as he works as a banker. My question is, why didn't he ever go back to Mexico? His family owned a silver mine, and you know, Mexico's political situation just exploded, you know, during that time period. So, the family may have lost everything, and he just may have liked it here. I don't know, but it's just, you know, how, how did he come to Corpus Christi and become this banker in Corpus Christi? Well, if he hadn't begged his daddy to go with those guys on that silver trip, it never would have happened.

**AK (28:41):** Um, could you expand a little bit more on how come Old Bayview isn't segregated?

**KH (28:50):** I, it was the, it was the city cemetery. When Zachary Taylor's troops leave, they, um, they turn it over to the city. I have to go turn off my soup. (Karen laughs) Um, hold on. They turn it over to the city. And that's just where everybody was buried. Um, when Zachary Taylor's troops leave the population of Corpus Christi, he gets down to almost nothing. And they, it slowly builds back up in the 1850s and there was shipping going on, but there wasn't a port there. You know, like I said, that the ships just couldn't get into Corpus Christi Bay, but they would ferry goods back and forth and someone had to unload those. So that's where lot of the slaves in the 1850s worked, um, they weren't growing cotton. They weren't, you know, they didn't have these huge plantations around here. They worked within the city. They were, um, uh-hm, they drove carriages. They worked in stores. They worked in, you know, whatever manufacturing. So, they were a part of the community. And a lot of them, even though that they were a slave, they, you know, the, the owner of the store didn't have a shack for them to live in at their house. Like you see in movies, they had their own community, they had their own places to live. And, and, um, about over there where Old Bayview is, uh-hm, in that, in that general area. So, they became this, their own community and they were part of our community and, just that's my guess. But folks are buried. There is no black section white section, Hispanic section there everybody's scattered. They're everywhere in an Old Bayview. Now there is a, when you first walk in and to Old Bayview, the Von Bluchers are there, we have Rogers. Is there, you know, those, the prominent people and my guess is that's, you know, that was the prettiest spot, probably the most expensive plots. And that's where they, they picked. But there's others like, uh-hm, John Marks Moore and his family or towards the back. I think I told you that they're about, you know, 50 feet away from Sam Warren, his family there, they're just all in there together mixed up.

**AK (31:34):** Um, could you tell me a little bit about Eli Merryman Jr, I believe, and how he created the Old Bayview Historical Association?

**KH (31:44):** Well, his daddy, Eli Merriman Sr, was a doctor here in Corpus Christi and he is going to pass away from yellow fever. Okay. And that's where Alexander Hamilton comes in at, and then Arthur Spohn, but his son, Eli Merriman, he is going to be the editor of either the Corpus Christi Caller or the Corpus Christi Times. They're eventually going to merge. And he talks about how just terrible shape Old Bayview, Bayview cemetery is in. So, they formed the Bayview Cemetery Association and Old Bayview is pretty full by then. I remember that, you know, keeping track of where people are buried was not their forte. A lot of those markers were wooden markers, so they had no marker at all. So it was, it was getting full. And when we did the ground penetrating radar two years ago, yeah, it's pretty full. Uh-hm, they came up, they created New Bayview cemetery and pretty much closed Old Bayview. You could be buried there if your family had bought, had purchased a plot and you could prove that they purchased a plot. And they kept records after that. And they came up with a map. Uh-hm, the map was pretty much what everybody could remember. They saw the Von Bluchers monument, for example. And they remember that, um, Thomas Parker was right next to them. So even though Thomas Parker may not have had a marker, which he does, but if he didn't have a marker, they would know someone remembered he was buried next to the Von Bluchers. So, they made a map that kind of put that out there, uh-hm, had lots of gaps in it, but it was, it was something that they could do. Uh-hm, Eli Merriman Jr, he goes even further. He is going to fence Old Bayview cemetery, and he's going to actually hire a caretaker. And he's going to build that caretaker, uh-hm, building out

there to stay in, they call it a shack, but you know, just pretty simple. And I could just imagine that place was absolutely beautiful during that time, um, with the caretaker out there and the headstones and, you know, anything that was leaning, he would probably take care of it. So, uh-hm, about 1930s, uh-hm, the Old Bayview Cemetery Association dissolved, and it was turned over to the city of Corpus Christi and it goes into the, uh-hm, falls under Parks and Recreation. If you know anything about a municipals, Parks and Recreation program, it's on the bottom of the list and funding and within Parks and Recreation underneath that at the bottom of its list is cemeteries and libraries. Okay. So, it's, it's been neglected, uh-hm, throughout its entire history. We stepped in as the Friends of Old Bayview Cemetery Association to, uh-hm, have it recognized as a, um, uh-hm, historic tourism, if anything, just come and see these, these people. And why, you know, these people that were here in Corpus Christi and, uh-hm, the actions that occurred here in Corpus Christi, they, um, it we've got some traction with this, that people are starting to realize that, yeah, this place is important. COVID has just knocked us on our rear for the time being. But we, we decided to introduce Old Bayview cemetery to the community. And I, I told you this, that, um, to have these newspaper articles and people wringing their hands and saying, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, we need to do something about this". And most everybody would read the article and say, "Yes, you know, that we need to do something about that", but until you show them and tell those stories in person, it really didn't mean a whole lot to them. Um, when we first had our, when we had our first cemetery walk, we invited the city council and only one person showed up. uh-hm, now they all show up because as part of the, you know, the politicking of, uh-hm, not this year though, it's going to be, uh-hm, it's, our cemetery walk actually takes place after the election. And it's, it's gonna be interesting. It's gonna be interesting. Locally, it's going to be interesting. But they, um, the last one we had one last year, they were all there. They all came out. Um, and they were, when they, most of them came out two years ago and they were just amazed that the stories, the purpose, the importance of that cemetery.

**AK (36:55):** Would you like another question?

**KH:** If you want! If you want, you know, we can just kind of,

**AK (37:04):** Oh, I definitely want another question. Okay. Um, could you tell me a bit more about the damages in the cemetery and the markers and what was done to fix them?

**KH (37:17):** Oh, okay. Yeah. That's a good story. That's a good, that's a good one. Um, Old Bayview cemetery, like I said, it was, it has always been woe for Old Bayview cemetery has been neglected, blah, blah, blah. And when we took, when we took on Old Bayview cemetery, as the Nueces County Historical Commission it looked like a bomb had gone off over there, and everyone said, "You know, y'all need to get these up. Y'all need to do something about them". When we formed the Friends of Old Bayview Cemetery Association, we took that on. And, but in a cemetery, those markers are actually owned by the family. Now, granted 80% of the families are long gone. They never go back. And most of them have no idea that, the families have no idea that they're even there, but technically we can't mess with the markers without their permission, and I'm not going to go track them all down. However, if that marker is a dangerous marker, they're all in danger. But if this is going to hurt somebody, because it's leaning at a 45-degree angle and somebody, some kid walks by and touches it, and it falls on top of them. Now that's not a good thing. So, we made the decision that we were going to learn how to reset those

markers, repair them. And three years ago, almost three years ago, the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training part of the National Park System had a workshop here in Corpus Christi. We sponsored it and they taught us how to reset and repair those markers. And we managed to get us an aluminum tripod, and we got the equipment. And over the next two and a half years, we wrestled in some volunteers which included the Navy Chiefs out of NAS, Corpus Christi, and Kingsville. And the Association of General Contractors and some Boy Scout troops. And we have reset and repaired over 60 of these markers. Remember they had to be dangerous if they're laying on the ground, they're not dangerous. They're not hurting anyone. The mowers are tearing them up, hitting them. The weed eaters are tearing them up, but that's not my marker. It's I, you know, I can't, unless I go find the family, I really don't have any power to do anything about, about that marker. So, um, yeah, we still have some down. Uh-hm, our biggest problem is erosion and mowers and some vandals. We had some vandals come in in January and they knocked down probably 8 to 10 of them. Uh-hm, one day they just tore the heck out of, I don't know why they, I think it just was a lot of fun knocking it down and it shattered and such, but, um, they left, they knocked over Eli Merriman's, uh-hm, his is simply using that tripod and putting it back up. Um, one of the veteran's markers, they dug it up out of the ground and laid it on the ground. I don't know why. I have no idea, but, um, we had planned to get back over there this spring. Um, COVID stopped that. And, um, summer heat, we can't get in there and the heat is just too hot. And now it's just a matter of setting up, looking for some volunteers. People are still worried about getting out together and, um, they, um, we'll get it done. We'll get those ones that are dangerous back up. The ones that those vandals knocked down. I can't do anything about not, you know, not unless the families ask us to, uh-hm, which brings up another thing. You know, when, when, uh-hm when we're doing this well, these are volunteers. And like I said, we, we, uh-hm, we just want to preserve, protect, and restore Old Bayview cemetery, but it's, it takes money to get the equipment and the supplies to redo that. And it takes manpower. And then, then the question is, you know, are we free labor or what? So that's a, that's a dilemma that we've, we've discussed. We all would like to see all those markers repaired and put back up. It's an almost impossible task for us. We, uh-hm, some of them, I just thought that they were pretty, and we thought, Hey, let's put this one back together again and put it up because it's really nice, neat looking marker. And we would do something like that, but it just, there there's one family that wants us to do something about theirs. It is huge. Our crane will not, our, our TRI pod would not handle. You'd have to have a crane in there. I'm not renting a crane. We don't have the money to rent a crane. Uh-hm, we don't have the manpower to do it. And that's something that the family is just going to have to suck it up or else that markers probably coming down. Is that what you needed, or did I get off topic? (Karen laughs)

**AK (42:58):** You didn't get off topic, but I kind of wanted you to talk a bit about more of the markers and how they came to be damaged. uh-hm, what were they like?

**KH (43:10):** Erosion is erosion and main, lawn maintenance are really, our biggest are our biggest problems. The vandals we'll get in there occasionally uh-hm, we've managed to get the gates locked. And like I said, the guys got somebody got in there in January and did some damage. But knock on wood, we haven't had anything since. But in Corpus Christi, it's feast or famine in the weather, it's either dries as bone or wet. And we have this black clay, this, uh-hm,

call, they call it gumbo. Okay. So that in the drought, you don't have any grass down, you get these huge cracks in there, and then you get a big rainstorm through there, and it all feels up. And that marker that had those big cracks all around it starts leaning and it starts leaning and leaning and leaning, and eventually it'll fall over. Um, the other thing is the wind, the salt air, some of those markers have iron dowels in them. And salt is not a friend of iron. So that rust way, and it just falls over. It's, it's that simple. Um, there's trees and Old Bayview, some beautiful Mesquite trees. Trees are not a friend of a cemetery. The roots will tear up markers. They will, limbs will fall down on markers. And just about a month ago, one of our members sent me an email where this marker for, uh-hm, for a Hispanic preacher for the Methodist church was down and it's underneath the Mesquite tree. And that Mesquite trees, limb used to sit almost on top of it and the city cut that limb away but there was a bigger one on top of that. And Hurricane Hannah brushed by, and I think that bigger limb just blew enough that it would knock, they just knocked that marker over because there's no other damage to it. It's just laying, you know, it's like somebody picked it up and laid it on the ground. And that limb was there. I knew that that was an, that, that was an issue. Mowers. It's on the same schedule for mowing, uh-hm, the Bayfront where, uh-hm, the sea wall and such is. And, uh-hm, but the grass grows faster over Old Bayview because people aren't trampling around on it. So, the mowers get over there and they just get on those riding mowers and just plow over anything that's in their way. Um, some of those flat markers there they're just chipped away. Even the dates are starting to chip away. Anything that was damaged and laying on the ground, those mowers will hit it. Weed eaters. They'll tear them up too. They're just, if I'm over there, when their maintenance people are there, I stop them and say, "Hey, you know, y'all need to be careful around this" and they say, "Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am", you know, and they go on and they usually are. They're just amazed by the cemetery once you talk to them, the only problem is the next maintenance crew that comes by in six weeks, not the same people. So, it's, yeah, they don't, they're just in there and hurrying up, but the city does keep it mowed for us and they keep the limbs trimmed. If, if, if we have problem with limbs, all I have to do is get ahold of Parks and Recreation and they'll come in there and they'll trim it up. But that's the, the other problem that we have is, um, just stupid people getting in there. Uh-hm, Old Bayview cemetery is right next to Concrete Street. Amphitheater, are you familiar with that's at? Okay. And when you're an Old Bayview cemetery, you can sit over there on that northeast side and you can see a stage and you can watch the entire concert free of charge. So, people will figure that out. And they would go over to Old Bayview and drink and smoke and do what else. And then they get stupid and they got to show off how strong they are. And they go around knocking down headstones. uh-hm, Corpus Christi police department is aware of this and they will go by and run anybody out of there. Like I said, we've got the gates locked now. So that discourages a lot of that. So those were just some things that we could do. Uh-hm, hurricanes, you know, someone always asks me about the hurricanes and they're really not an issue except for the trees. I mean, they're not going to knock over a, it'd be a heck of a hurricane to knock over some of those monuments that, um, the trees, the limbs and the trees falling down. And, um, just like I said, just, you know, people being stupid.

**AK (48:22):** Uh-hm, could you tell me, um, of any instances that you know of where they accidentally dug someone up?

**KH (48:32):** Oh, yes. (Karen laughs) I have never heard of one of them actually accidentally digging someone up. Um, when we had the ground penetrating radar, if you're familiar with Old Bayview cemetery, it's right next to where I-37 goes downtown, and that was all a bluff, so that all had to be dug out. And the question was when they dug close to Old Bayview cemetery, did they dig anybody up? We've never been able to find anything. So, I tell people, no, you know, there was never, there's no newspaper article about it. And that was in the 1950s, you know, newspaper article are where they, um, I guess, what do you say reinterred then? Um, somewhere in the cemetery, I don't know. Okay. But as far as just digging around in the cemetery, when we're doing, um, when we're doing maintenance and resetting or whatever, the only incident that I've run into is, uh-hm, we had the Navy Chiefs over there and they were resetting a, uh-hm, veterans marker. And you have to go down so far because on the veteran markers, those older veteran markers, they don't, they can only be 22 to 24 inches above ground. Everything else has to be below ground. And some of those markers are 48 inches long. So, they were digging down there and they call me over. We hit something, found something. Oh brother. Well, we might have to just move it over some, and I get over there and this, this white, (phone buzzes) it looked like a skull, firstly, and you look at your thinking, it's a skull. And, but you know, it just didn't look right. You know, something was about it. So, I stick my hand down there and I'm feeling around and has these bumps on it, these ridges on it, it's just so weird. I just, you know, was that an eye socket or what, you know, but there was too many of them. And then I put my hand way up underneath it and I could feel that it was a vacant underneath that there was no bone quote-unquote. And there was then that I realized that it was a very large lightening whelk shell. And if you're lightning welt shells, they're going to have that curve. But it was, it was big enough that my hand was laying on it and rubbing across it. Those guys wanted to dig it up. And I said, no, nope, those lightening whelk shells, aren't normally here. Then somebody put it there and they put it there a long time ago. So, we left it and we did move over a little bit about six inches dug up about six inches and didn't hit anything there either. Thank goodness. But that's the only time that I've ever, ever my heart was in my throat. When I went over there, I was afraid that we hit somebody and I thought, Oh no.

**AK (51:33):** Can you tell me a bit about, um, how people used to like behave around graves? How they-

**KH (51:43):** Oh, well, you know, his history has us that we, um, we used to, people go out there and they would maintain the graves. They would picnic out there with their loved ones. Uh-hm, go have picnic with Meemaw and Pawpaw of, I mean, it was, they were, where they were. And, um, I there's even photographs of people who got married out there next to Meemaw and Pawpaw's grave, you know, it's, it's just so strange. But a lot of times on Sunday afternoon, they would go out there and have a picnic. And we've talked about doing that, Hey, let's, you know, have a picnic out there, invite the community to come out and have a picnic. Uh-hm that's I think that would be a fun thing to do maybe in the spring. And uh-hm, but you know, COVID can took care of that, but you know, maybe this spring, then we, we should, we should be able to do that. Um, some, some of the markers have the fencing around it. Not many of them, and some of them have like a concrete or stone marks for it, but it, it it's, uh-hm, when you're walking out there, you realize that three to four feet next to you is a veteran of the Civil War, of the War with

Mexico, of the Spanish American War, of the Indian War, of the War of 1812, of Texas Rev- , you know, there's somebody there. And he was, he was walking in our community and he, he or she lived in our community, they were, they were part of us. And they have a story to tell,

**AK (53:40):** I believe last time you talked a little bit about how the people of the past can't really be judged, but should rather be respected, I believe.

**KH (53:53):** Can you say that again? Are you there?

**AK (53:57):** Yeah, I'm here.

**KH (53:58):** I had a call coming in and I can't hardly hear you now.

**AK (54:06):** Okay. You talked a bit about how the people of the past were so different from us last time and how they can't be judged.

**KH (54:16):** Oh, no, you can't judge these people. They are different from us. They, they lived in a society. Like I said, we were, women had no rights. Um, they, they are, you know, 50 years removed from Europe, which still had an aristocracy and you were born with a title and, and didn't matter if you were rich or poor, you always had that title and in, and it entitled you to things and people who could never achieve that, no matter how rich they were, they, they had doors shut because of that. And when you get over here in the United States, you know, just crossing an ocean, doesn't end that it's, you know, it has to be worked out through your society. And so, these people were, they didn't talk like us. They didn't act like us as far as, um, respect for others. uh-hm, children had no rights. None. They had no, they had no. um, they really had no recourse until they reached an age. They could take off basically when they got old enough to just leave. But if you were the firstborn son, you were expected to take over whatever business you're expected to do as your parents told you, um, if you were the last daughter, you were expected to take care of your parents when they were of old age. So, you just can't even imagine that. Um, I think I told you about the Nolan brothers, the two boys that came with Zachary Taylor's troops, one was 9. One was 11. You know what, what is your 9 and 11-year-old brother, sister doing? They're not taking off for war. You know, they're playing with whatever current toy is in. They're playing some videogame. It's just not something that they're like, they could even, even fathom to me. So, we can't judge these people, never judge them. I don't judge them that there's no way. I think people have asked me, you know, Karen, when you die, you're cremated. Do you want us to scatter your ashes at, Old Bayview? And I tell him, no, I don't want to be around those people. I don't want to live like that. I want to be, if I would tell my eighth graders, they'd asked me, if you could go back in time, where would you go? And I said, "I'd go back as a fly on the wall, but I'd never wanted to live there". As a woman? Never, ever. No way.

**AK (57:04):** Okay. Um, last time I believe, I mean, it's a little lot topic, I suppose, but you said last time they sold plots at Old Bayview for fundraising, for the, um, I believe it was the historical commission or-

**KH:** We sell what?

**AK:** Uh-hm, sold pots and all Old Bayview for fundraising to aid the cemetery when the, uh-hm, association was created.

**KH (57:45):** Oh yeah, yeah. They, they sold plots for the, for the cemetery, but no, it was to make some sort of money, but it wasn't, you know, it's, it's and they probably had a section off there for African-Americans this group of people at that time, but it would just be whatever plots were left, they might go into the African-American community and they would say, Hey, you know, I'm, I'm a salesman and I'm selling cemetery plots and, you know, given the whole spiel. So, you might have a large group of African Americans in a certain area, but they're not the only ones in that area. It's, it's like, when you look at, when they were buried there, it's all, uh-hm, within a timeframe.

**AK (58:40):** I think that was it. I think we got it. Okay.

**KH (58:43):** I've got this person. They keep calling me. So, I guess I better go respond.

**AK (58:50):** Okay. Let me make sure it actually stops properly this time.

**KH:** Okay, sure.