

Notes from Recorded Interview with Laura Faye Kirkland
By Wheelice Wilson, Jr. (with Ruby Nell Wilson present)
January 16, 2006, in the Woodridge Nursing Home, Grapevine, TX
Notes Prepared by Wheelice Wilson, Jr., in 2015

Wilson's note: The Kirkland names can be confusing. Laura Faye Kirkland, the person interviewed here, was the daughter-in-law of Laura Sue Kirkland. Laura Faye and the elder Laura were close in Coppell, and the two lived together in Grapevine after Bill Kirkland died. People usually referred to them as Laura Faye and Mrs. Kirkland. The elder Mrs. Kirkland was a forceful, formidable, domineering woman who was often not liked by those who knew her.

This interview was made after the Thweatt windmill was moved to Wilson property but before the Kirkland House was moved there.

Laura Faye's family background:

Her maiden name was Landers. Her family lived in Lewisville, where Laura Faye graduated from Lewisville High School.

Laura Faye's husband Bill Kirkland lived with his family in Coppell. His mother, Laura Faye's mother-in-law, was Laura Sue Bullock Kirkland, a daughter of the Bullocks who started what is now called the Bullock Cemetery in Coppell. Laura Faye's father-in-law was Hubert Kirkland, the brother of Jack Kirkland and the son of John and Jeanette Kirkland, who built what is now known as "The Kirkland House."

Most of Laura Faye's extended family lived in Texas, but by 2006, essentially all of them had died.

One of Bill Kirkland's uncles (on his mother's side) was Bill Bullock; another was Mr. Cooper (Wilson's note: Oscar Cooper), who was a railroad agent in Coppell.

She and Bill had one son, Terry, born shortly after their marriage, in about 1946.

Before she was married:

Laura Faye, living in Lewisville in 1943, was working in the bank in Carrollton. It was a credit union, located on the Carrollton square. One day she asked her boss, Mr. Nix, about a man she noticed through the window; he was in an air force uniform. Mr. Nix brought the man, Bill Kirkland, in and introduced them. When she told Bill she lived in Lewisville, he offered to drive her home, and she accepted. They were married in 1945.

Where she lived:

After they were married, Bill and Laura Faye lived in the "little rock house" in Coppell.

(Wilson's note: This was a stone house on the east side of S. S. Coppell Road, about the equivalent of two blocks south of the intersection of S. S. Coppell Road and W. Bethel Road. This house was next door to a large cotton gin and later the Coppell Church of Christ, and my own brother Bill Wilson and his first wife lived there for a while.)

From the rock house, the Kirklands moved to a farm on the west side of Coppell, between Coppell and present Highway 121, on the south side of W. Bethel Road, which is now airport property.

From there, Laura Faye and Bill moved to a house in Grapevine. After Bill died, Laura Faye lived there with Terry and, eventually, Mrs. Kirkland.

Laura Faye says that it was about in 1952 when they moved to Grapevine. (Wilson's note: This does not match up with her other comments about buying the old depot for the chicken farm in 1957. Possibly, she meant 1962, but this date might be too late if Terry attended all four years of high school in Grapevine after they moved there. Terry would have entered 9th grade in about 1960. Some Coppell students did attend high school in Grapevine after the 8th grade because Coppell had only eight grades. Most attended Carrollton, but at some point, Carrollton refused to take Coppell students, and they went to Grapevine for a while. Possibly Terry attended Grapevine before they moved from Coppell.)

Bill died of a heart attack in the early 1960s. He was buried in the Bullock Cemetery in Coppell. Terry suffered from diabetes and had a foot removed. According to Laura Faye, he would have eventually lost his entire leg. Terry died of a stroke and was also buried in the Bullock Cemetery.

When Laura Faye died, she was a resident of Woodridge Nursing Home in Grapevine.

Terry's Interest in Trains:

Terry was always fascinated with trains. When he was about eight years old (Wilson's note: In his stroller?), his parents took him down the road from the little rock house to the railroad to watch the trains go by. Once, the train stopped, and the men onboard asked him to share their lunch. Terry ate fried chicken with them; he hated fried chicken and would not eat it at home. He was allowed to get on the train and go to Carrollton and return to Coppell. He was elated.

As an adult, Terry worked for the railroad for eighteen years – at first in Dallas, then in Commerce and surrounding areas. He was in charge of schedules and switching trains to various tracks. He was also involved with computers.

Bill's Occupations:

At first Bill worked for Strickland Transportation in Dallas. It was a company that collected, stored, and resold defective merchandise such as refrigerators.

Bill's uncle Bill Bullock worked there, and he got Bill the job.

Eventually, Bill decided to start a chicken farm, and they moved to the farm west of Coppell. They raised chickens and sold eggs. They did not hatch their own chickens. They purchased chicks from J. T. Davis.

The Depot Building:

In 1957, the railroad was abandoning its depot in Coppell. Oscar Cooper, Bill's uncle who had once been Coppell's railroad agent, told Bill that the railroad was taking closed bids to buy the building. Bill bid \$75 and won the building. He moved it to his chicken farm.

Laura Faye had the letter from the railroad saying that they had bought the depot, but she doesn't remember where it is now.

Laura Faye and Bill used the right side of the building for sorting, boxing, and candling eggs. The left side held Terry's model train collection.

(Wilson's note: I was in this small depot two times. The first time was when I was about six or seven. My cousin Pat was babysitting me, and we took my dog Blondie down to the depot at the railroad. I don't remember the left side (west side) at all, but the right side (east side) was an open area, apparently with no doors, with built-in benches for people

who were waiting for the train. When the train went by, it was only a few feet from us, and it was extremely noisy. Fortunately, my dog was on a rope, and we struggled to hold her back from lunging at the train. The fear that she might get free was enough to engrave the incident on my memory. The second time I was in the building was after it had been moved to the chicken farm. I was in the left side with Terry, playing with his model trains.)

Laura Faye seems to remember that there was a sliding door that closed on the left side of the building.

When the Kirklands sold their land to the airport and moved to Grapevine, they were unable to move the depot to behind their new house because of city codes, so the depot was torn down, along with the farmhouse.

The Coppell Baptist Church:

Laura Faye and Bill were Baptists. Some of the people they attended church with included the Phillipps and Clarence Long.

Their preacher was Brother Hand.

Laura Faye remembers that Mr. Phillipps once was dissatisfied with something that went on in the church and he got up and left, taking his children, one by one, with him.

Behind the church was a tabernacle, an outdoor roof held up by posts, primarily used for summer revivals. It had hanging lanterns. Any religious group could use the tabernacle.

Once, when Terry was about three years old, a “holy rollers” group was having a revival in the tabernacle. Terry wanted to go. He called it a “tabernicle.” As the group started “having a fit, shouting, foaming at the mouth,” he got scared and wanted to go home.

Miscellaneous Memories of Coppell:

Laura Faye does not remember an older, larger depot that existed by the Coppell railroad before the smaller depot existed.

She does not remember any reference to a bank in Coppell.

Mrs. Kirkland, Laura Faye’s mother-in-law, was a railroad agent in Coppell. She had a store located on the west side of S. S. Coppell Road, in the location of the small house that Jack Kirkland moved into when she left the original Kirkland House. Mrs. Kirkland would take a red wagon to the railroad depot, pick up the mail and bring it to her store. The store had a soda fountain in it, and Laura Faye had a round soda table and four chairs from the store until she gave them away to a woman in Grapevine who was moving into a new house.

(Wilson’s note: I thought she meant the old drugstore – known as Miss Minnie McGee’s drugstore – which was located a few yards farther south, but it does not seem to be that building. I do remember some references to a two-story store on the southwest corner of S. S. Coppell Road and W. Bethel Road, which would be next to the location that Laura Faye was mentioning. I thought it was a grocery store and that mail was dispensed there for a while; but I never heard there was a soda fountain in any store except Minnie McGee’s drugstore. Also, the story of the red wagon was told about Clayta Harwell, when she would pull her son Bill to the railroad to collect the mail. Both Clayta and Oscar Cooper were railroad agents for long periods of time.)

Terry, Laura Faye and Bill’s only son, was about two years older than I. I would go to play with him when they lived in the little rock house. I always wanted to play with the Kirklands’

“trouble light” – one of those drop lights that were used to hang under the hood of a car to work on the engine. For a birthday present to me, Terry gave me my own trouble light. I must have been very young, because I do not remember playing at the rock house or getting the birthday present.

Mrs. Kirkland and her husband Hubert (who was a brother of Jack Kirkland) lived in the Standifer house, east of Ernest Gentry’s house on the north side of W. Bethel Road, almost across from the Wilson house.

Laura Faye mentions a woman named Jean married to a man named Richard who lived north of downtown Coppell, close to the Pare family. (Wilson’s note: Could she mean “Parr family”?)

Laura Faye remembers Herschel Wood and Mary Ruth Arnett. She also remembers Mary’s small house west of the Baptist Church.