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Denise and Richard Diggs (discussing Natalie Collins Diggs)

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Bridges That Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewees:

Denise Diggs

Richard Allen Collins Diggs

Interviewer:

Jennifer Tilton

Interview Date:

June 3, 2021

Interview Location:

Redlands, California

Length:

00:32:32

Interview Summary completed by:

Makaley Montano, 2022.

Caroline Blanchard, 2024.

Description:

The Diggs family has a deep family history in Redlands. Their family originally lived in Imperial Valley, but moved to Redlands to give the children in the family better opportunities. Out of the 10 children brought to Redlands, Natalie Diggs was known to have made a remarkable contribution to the Inland Empire. Her children, Richard and Denise, share stories of their mother's educational journey and life experiences. Natalie attended and unenrolled from Tuskegee college during the great depression. She later went on to obtain a degree from the University of Redlands and became the 1st Black teacher to be hired in Rialto. Denise and Richard note that education runs in their family as their grandparents Jerome Collins & Callie Collins were both educators as well. Beyond education, their Jerome R. Collins impacted other sectors for the Black community as he was highly involved in politics and was a self taught real-estate agent.

Subject Topic:

- Redlands (Calif.)
- Imperial Valley (Calif.)
- Valley Truck Farms
- Education
- Family
- Labor Unions

- Housing

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Valley Truck Farms	South Waterman & Central Ave, San Bernardino, CA
University of Redlands	200 E Colton Ave, Redlands, CA
Redlands High School	840 E Citrus Ave, Redlands, CA
Gospel Hall	1022 N. Orange St. Redlands, CA

Temporal Coverage:

1930s-1960s

Key Events:

- The Great Depression

Key Organizations:

- Rialto Unified School District
- Redlands High School
- University of Redlands

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:01:04 – 00:03:01	Diggs family move from Imperial Valley to Redlands
Digital Video	00:06:23 – 00:08:33	How and why Natalie became a teacher and went into education
Digital Video	00:08:35 – 00:12:50	Natalie’s experience at Tuskegee, why she left, and the alumni she met and reunited with. Interactions with Tuskegee Airmen.
Digital Video	00:12:56 – 00:15:23	Natalie was persistent in finishing her degree at the UofR.
Digital Video	00:15:33 – 00:19:49	Natalie’s hardships in being the first Black teacher hired in the Rialto School District.

		Stories of treatment from admin and her friendship with a fellow teacher.
Digital Video	00:19:49 – 00:22:00	What Natalie’s life and personality can teach future generations.
Digital Video	00:22:01 – 00: 23:54	Natalie’s near death experience during the move to Redlands.
Digital Video	00:24:27 – 00:29:19	Information about the political involvements and family dynamics of Denise and Richard’s Grandparents.
Digital Video	00:29:24 – 00:31:27	Grandfather’s experience with real-estate and how he was self taught/trained.
Digital Video	00:31:27 – 00:32:32	Education runs in the family, Natalie and her parents all had experience as teachers.

Related Materials:

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation’s “Bridges that Carries Us Over Project” on CSUSB ScholarWorks, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>.

Materials and photos from Natalie Collins Diggs have been archived at the A.K. Smiley Library.

Full interview transcript can be found below

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:01] All right, so we're here today to celebrate Natalie Collins Diggs, who graduated Redlands High School in 1935 and then finished her college degree at the University of Redlands in 1969. We're right here in the browsing room at the University of Redlands with Denise Diggs and Richard Allen-Diggs. Two of Natalie Collins Diggs three children, both of whom have dug pretty deep into their family history and are here to share some stories of their mother with us here today. So, maybe you can just start with how your family ended up moving to Redlands and living in Redlands.

Richard Diggs [00:00:39] OK. Since I'm older than her it maybe more fresh in my mind. Oh, it really started when my grandparents lived in Imperial Valley and my grandfather was a farmer and my grandmother had nine children, 10 actually one passed away, but nine then lived 10

Denise Diggs [00:00:58] 10 that lived and one that died would have been 11

Richard Diggs [00:01:04] She's the mathematician. anyway so, so my grandmother had raised all the other children in the Imperial Valley, with the exception of the three little ones when my uncle then my mother 4 children. But then my mother, my aunt Bessie, and my aunt Helen. At some point, she decided that living in the valley was not going to be socially beneficial to those children and decided to move to Redlands how that came about. We discussed a little bit today, but there were people from Redlands that came and went from the Valley area, and perhaps he found out from them about this because I don't know that she knew anything about Redlands. And so she took the four children and moved Redlands and they were raised. My mother and her siblings were raised here in Redlands till they all graduated and moved on in their lives. Now, my other younger sister can tell a little bit more about my grandfather, who apparently didn't come on the first wave of family coming up.

Denise Diggs [00:02:00] Well, my mother, when my mother taught me, was like, my brother says that my grandma thought that the life in Imperial was a really hard life, and she wanted something more for her children. So she left and came here. My grandfather stayed there with the older children, and they were separated for 10 years by distance. But my grandfather would come and visit back and forth, and my and the older children would come when school was out and help my mother with my grandmother with the four youngest children. And then after 10 years, I, my mother, told me that she said Papa finally sold the ranch and farm and came up to stay, and we all lived together again. And I said, what changed his mind? And she said that mama wasn't coming back. So he said, I guess I'd better go because she's made up her mind. She's not coming back here. So that's they were rejoined in Redlands, and that was it. My mother grew up there.

Jennifer Tilton [00:02:59] Yeah. Did your mom tell you any stories about kind of her life in Redlands back in the 30s?

Denise Diggs [00:03:06] She talked to me about her. My grandmother went to a church called the Gospel Hall, which was a church run by people that were Dutch. And I was surprised because I just I assumed my grandparents went to Baptist churches, and my mother said no mom never went to a black church. She always went to the gospel hall. And Grandpa or poppa, she would say, would he went to a Baptist church for a while. We visited the Baptist Church some times, but we consistently went to Gospel Hall, which was not far from where we lived. And then at some point, she said, Papa joined that church and we were all members of the Gospel Hall, which I believe years ago. Well, and I believe, but I know for a fact. Years ago, probably in the 90s, my mom and I drove over here to Redlands to see the house she grew up in, and I believe the gospel hall was right around the corner. It's a little clapboard. White church looks like something out of the, you know, early 20th century late eighteen hundreds or something. And that's where she went to church all her life. So she talked about that. She talked about the children, she went to school with the Beals and some of the other children we visited actually with some of the families that day, we came together and said, still live in the area and their grandchildren that lived. Or children that lived there. I don't. We even went by the elementary school she went to, which is of course, much larger than it was when she went to school. There, it's expanded over three or four blocks now. And high school as well. Redlands High School was just one campus. I think it's two now. So she talked about that and going to the store, and

Richard Diggs [00:04:49] I remember talking about working in Redlands. I don't know if she was in college or she was in high school.

Denise Diggs [00:04:54] I do remember something about her work.

Richard Diggs [00:04:56] She worked as a housekeeper.

Denise Diggs [00:04:58] She was a babysitter, actually.

Richard Diggs [00:04:59] the one I remember was, she said, to work for some lady that was really mean that she hated every minute she was there.

Denise Diggs [00:05:05] she did, but she was the babysitter. Her and her older sister worked as domestics. And her older sister, I don't remember which sister was, was the housekeeper, and my mother was charged with the two children taking care of the children because she was only about 12. So she was charged and she did hate it. She said she never liked it. She knew she didn't want to be a domestic. She told me they were there because I thought it was strange that a 12 year old would be away from home and normally come home one day a week. And. But that was how it was. And it was when school was out. She would do this with her older sister, who I want to um wasn't Gladys. But one of my mother's older sisters would cook and clean for this wealthy white family. And my mother said she was responsible for managing the children. They had a four year old and a six year old, and she said, and I was supposed to keep them

Richard Diggs [00:05:59] if she was a good cook it was Gladys.

Denise Diggs [00:06:00] it wasn't nice that Gladys, cause Gladys was already gone.

Richard Diggs [00:06:03] It was Ruthie then.

Denise Diggs [00:06:03] I think it was Ruth. I was just going to say, I think it wasn't my aunt Ruth yeah, yeah. But she did not like it. And she said, I knew that I did not want that for my life.

Richard Diggs [00:06:12] That's an understatement, she hated it. Yeah, she made clear she didn't like it.

Jennifer Tilton [00:06:15] So that's a great transition. I mean, how did your mom end up going to college and then ultimately graduating from the University of Redlands?

Denise Diggs [00:06:23] We were talking about that. We're not sure we know she loved children and she loved teaching. Yes, but we don't know if it was it. I think and Richard may feel different. I think, it was probably a two pronged thing during that period in this country, black women, there were only so many career paths for them teaching, nursing. So I think that might have been a part of it. But the fact that she loved children and love teaching was important. So so all of that probably formed her decision to move into education.

Richard Diggs [00:06:58] And my grandfather was and grandmother. Both were really high on education, so they had to go to school and they had to go to higher education. They couldn't just go to high school. Right. So and all of the children did at least a year or more in college. And so I'm thinking that knowing she was going to go to college and like my sister said, the opportunities for women in particular was probably limited. That teaching was one of the things you obviously could do. But I think there was another part of her that just loved to teach. And I say that because during the summer months, like I remember when after I was grown and moved out of the house that she would teach the neighborhood children, and she had summer school classes and she would tutor children. So there was an innate part of her that really wanted to be a teacher.

Denise Diggs [00:07:43] It was important to her to be. She used to say this to me. It was important to her to help children discover the world, whatever that meant. And Richard's right. She would tutor my friends in the summer, and they had trouble in math. Our nieces and nephews, she tutored them. I have friends that I worked with that had children struggling. Two of my girlfriends, actually, that I worked with for the sheriff's department just happened to be visiting with me at my brother's one day and talking about their children struggling and my mother offered to tutor their children. And they said, Well, Mrs. Diggs will pay you, she said. You don't have to pay me. Just bring them, and I'll do it. So she did like teaching very much. It was very important to her. So.

Jennifer Tilton [00:08:26] So I know that she first went to school at Tuskegee. So yes, so that kind of that and and how she ended up ultimately coming back to University of Redlands.

Denise Diggs [00:08:35] I know there what I know about her years are dear. I think a year and a half it was it was a financial reason she came home. And I remember being surprised because I found a transcript once on that transfer, but a financial document from Tuskegee.

And we were talking about why she came back and she was saying, because mama and papa couldn't afford to keep me there. And you had to work at Tuskegee to be a student. You couldn't just go to school, you had to have a job. And she did. And I remember finding this financial document, it was literally like sixteen dollars a semester, and I was like, I was in high school. I was like mom and grandma and grandpa couldn't afford sixteen dollars, she said. That was a lot of money. In nineteen thirty six, thirty seven, that was a tremendous amount of money.

Richard Diggs [00:09:18] People bought cars for \$25-\$40.

Denise Diggs [00:09:20] So it's all relative, you know, I didn't get it. I couldn't keep it school. Yeah. So what I remember most about her time at Tuskegee was her Booker T. Washington, I believe, was a professor there or had just,

Richard Diggs [00:09:38] and I know she met George Washington Carver.

Denise Diggs [00:09:40] OK, maybe that's why I'm thinking of

Richard Diggs [00:09:43] I remember her talking about that. And many of the Tuskegee Airmen the Airmen program was, in effect, when she was there.

Denise Diggs [00:09:48] That's right. Yeah. And there's a girl who years later, many, many years in the 80s, Spike Lee did a movie called Four Little Girls about the four children that were bombed in the church. The Baptist segment of 16th Street Baptist Church, and I had bought the video this is outdating myself it was a VHS, and my mother and I were watching it and I found out that she knew the parents of one of the little girl. She never put it together until the video until the interview with the parents, and it shocked her because she went to Tuskegee with both of the parents. They weren't married then. And when she saw the woman speaking about her daughter, Diane, who had been killed in that bombing, she was so shocked, she said, I know her and I knew her husband all these years. I never knew that they were the parents of that child. So we talked a lot about that. And then Richard took her actually to meet and see some of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Richard Diggs [00:10:46] And yes, they had

Richard Diggs [00:10:49] The artisan had a mural that was hanging in the Tom Bradley International Airport. It was really an interesting story. He did these two murals of the Tuskegee Airmen in battle scenes and pictures of them individually. And he didn't buy them. He loaned it to Los Angeles for the international airport. Now, normally, they only keep them on display for six months. They were there. It was. There are two and a half years. So he finally said, Listen, I want my painting back. And he donated to the Air Museum in Palm Springs. And so they're having this commencement to bring these murals back, and they had a big celebration for it. And so I took her there because of all the potential members of the Tuskegee Airmen, and I think there was one or two there. She actually remembers who were in their class. It was just a great day for her because, you know, there were people that she actually knew from the same area at the same time.

Denise Diggs [00:11:43] I have pictures, those pictures, if you ever want to see,

Richard Diggs [00:11:45] I have pictures of that. Yeah, it was really great. And the best part of it, I guess, was a friend of mine who. And it's a long story who worked for me had bought me two lithographs of the same mural. Oh, and he told me, listen, he told me about it because he keeps up with this. He flies in his private licenses. So he constantly says, we are about Tuskegee Airmen. Even today, even within the last month or so, anyway, he said, Listen, take the lithos out of those frames and bring it down, and I bet you can get those airmen to say that. And I thought, really? So obviously, I ask my mom who want to go. We went and sure enough, they all signed it. So I have those 2 lithos those with all the signatures of probably two of the very last of the Tuskegee Airmen that are still alive if they are still alive. I think I have something like 18 signatures.

Denise Diggs [00:12:33] The last one just passed, I think last year.

Richard Diggs [00:12:34] okay, so anyway, you know, first later that day.

Jennifer Tilton [00:12:40] So your mom had to come home from Tuskegee in the middle of the depression, I suppose. And then built her family. And then what do you know about how she ended up going back to school in the 60s here at the University of Redlands?

Denise Diggs [00:12:56] All I know is, well, they were because they were local, she and my dad and all of us, but she always wanted to complete her degree. She wanted a credential to be able to teach, and she knew without that, she would probably never be able to be able to teach the way she wanted to, she said. So it was a she had that goal. Life gets in the way she's she's substituting, and she was a home teacher and lots of things in us coming along. But she said it was important to her to finish. And so what, however long it took, she was going to finish.

Richard Diggs [00:13:32] The interesting thing, and I talked to both my sisters about this was I kept thinking back about when she was in school. I never remember seeing my mother study,

Denise Diggs [00:13:41] but remember, he's remembering is if he was there, he was already in the house today, you know, going back.

Richard Diggs [00:13:47] Yeah. But as you just were saying, you know, you walk in a room and your pair will be having books out and they'd be writing papers, or they would do something. I never saw her studying

Denise Diggs [00:13:55] He don't remember. I do remember seeing.

Richard Diggs [00:13:59] and she may have seen some of the things I thought. How did she work that into her schedule? She's raising me, and my older sister and she's proving meals and clothes and getting us to school, and my dad was taking this and she was picking it up and she managed it somehow and

Denise Diggs [00:14:15] When they were gone. I do remember differently because they were not now. And it was just me there, and I was, you know, there wasn't as much need for her to do all that because she was often grading papers late into the night and doing whatever she was doing. So, yeah, yeah. That was like 1969. You know, you guys were already like, so

Jennifer Tilton [00:14:35] you were sort of still at home, living at home when she was going to University of Redlands.

Denise Diggs [00:14:38] I was, yes.

Jennifer Tilton [00:14:40] Did she ever tell you any stories about what it was like there?

Denise Diggs [00:14:42] She didn't because she was going to school in the evenings because she was working in the daytime so she didn't have a campus life. She just had and going to class and coming home. That's all I remember. I don't remember anything specific like, you know, any friends that she had on campus. But, you know, one of her friends, Maggie. Who I talk to still, I should ask Maggie, because if she had memories she would have mentioned them to Maggie and Maggie has lots of her stories. We've been talking about things she remembers about being a new teacher with my mother, so I should ask her.

Richard Diggs [00:15:16] Yeah she might know

Denise Diggs [00:15:17] She might know. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:15:19] And so after she graduated, she finally was able to become a teacher. A teacher? Yes. And I know that she was the first black teacher hired by the Rialto School District. Yes. So did she ever tell stories to you about what that was like for her?

Denise Diggs [00:15:33] She did, and this is where Maddy comes in to, because what she told me and then there's some writings that you have that you can make copies of. But she wanted to teach. She actually taught in another district first, which I didn't know until I started reading some of her writings. So but she anyway, she went to the district to try to get a position. And basically they didn't have Negro teachers, so they weren't interested in having having one. And she kept. She just continued to go back and try to get a job. And I think she says she thinks it was kind of like, Well, let's hire her so we can be done with this. We give her a temporary position and then she'll go away. So they did, and the district superintendent came to her class every day and watched her teach. And I, remember asking her why he did that, and she said because there were parents that were concerned because I was a Negro and I was teaching their children. And he was concerned that there might be some problems. He wasn't protecting her. He was actually critiquing her work. She felt that he was going to maybe find a reason why she couldn't continue. But she said he came to her class. I think she said two weeks, it wasn't long and he sat in class every day. And then finally, when they didn't come and she thought, Well, this is it, they're going to let me go today. And at the end of the day, a student or someone came from the office and told her that the principal wanted to see her and she thought, OK, well, this is it. He's going to let me go. And when he went, he said, now we'd like to offer you a permanent position. And she said I accepted it and I stayed there until I retired. So, you know, but Maggie, who was a young white teacher from the Midwest,

my mother talked about how at first no one would really talk to her and it was very lonely. But my mother's thing and Richard can attest to this.

My mother's belief system from her generation was work is not where you find your heart or your or not your heart, but that's now where you find your support and your love and your. That's where you get that from your family. Work is work. It's a means to an end. You go to work so you can make a living and you can take care of your family. So if you're going there to make friends, that may not happen for you, it's still a job you need to be there. So she was resigned to the fact that I'll probably never have friends here, but I'm still going to be here. And then one day, she said, Maggie walked into the lunch room and she walked in the lunchroom to sit down, and Maggie was sitting at a table and Maggie came over and asked her if she could join, and she would like to have lunch with her. And my mother said I would love that. And they were friends forever and Maggie and I just talked about this a few months ago because I said, What made you even approach my mother? She said, Well, I knew the people weren't being kind to her and I knew why. And I was from the Midwest, and I didn't believe that there was anything different about your mother. She was a teacher, like I was a teacher. She was older than me, but she seemed pleasant and there was no reason for me not to be friends with her. And I didn't care about what those other teachers thought, so I befriended her. And she said it was the best decision I ever made because your mother was the best friend I ever had,

Richard Diggs [00:18:47] and my mom was very strong willed who she was, and that was defining as

Denise Diggs [00:18:52] well. Not willing to be kowtowing to kowtow to anybody

Richard Diggs [00:18:56] could hold her own the best she could. She felt that way, and she always felt that she was equal to anyone. All right. You know, that's steeled her in her ability to deal with the uncomfortableness of other teachers not accepting her into the group

Denise Diggs [00:19:09] She said she knew, wasn't going to be easy. And I remember saying to her once about Maggie, I said, Maggie thinks the world of you. She said, I think the world of Maggie. Maggie made my years teaching there a joy because I was able to be friends with someone who respected me and looked up to me. And we have things in common. And yeah. So Maggie's in her late 80s, now, almost 90 now. Hmm.

Jennifer Tilton [00:19:36] That's a great story. What are some other sort of important lessons your mom taught you or you think she might have to teach to kind of a future generation?

Denise Diggs [00:19:47] Oh my gosh Jen, how much time do you have,

Richard Diggs [00:19:49] you know, I think about some words, the word that comes to mind about my mother's persistence.

Denise Diggs [00:19:53] Yeah, or resilient

Richard Diggs [00:19:55] She was really a strong person.

Denise Diggs [00:19:58] Never give up. Never, never, never back down. Never give up. If you're right. Stand up

Richard Diggs [00:20:02] always felt there was going to be a better time and a better place for her and her family

Denise Diggs [00:20:04] She did. She was hopeful

Richard Diggs [00:20:06] she was very hopeful about things like that. And I think that made her life as good as it could have been based on all the other things society had imposed upon her. And because she's a woman and she's a woman of color. And so all the things I'm sure she dealt with that we are now seeing proves out into society, that people that have been there for years and decades, you start to see that now that things that have been covered up for so long are now being exposed. And I think the power, you know, for me in particular, she was my rock. She really was growing up and I felt like she always had confidence that I would do well. And she was right. And she was all not just me, but my sisters as well. But, you know, being the only boy ever in the family of two girls, they say, I was there is special, no, no, no special relation. But I do. But I think she had a special relationship with all of her children.

Denise Diggs [00:21:06] But all she did

Richard Diggs [00:21:07] and there was something that they had commonality among each other. And so I think

Denise Diggs [00:21:13] I would say the one thing that my mother had a deep abiding faith and that faith, she was really good at parsing things out and not generalizing about people. She took people. There were good people and bad people everywhere. She didn't make sweeping indictments about people. She found something to be hopeful for in times like my brother said that she lived through those devastating times, and yet she always believed that people would do the right thing. She never was negative or the glass is half empty, or it's never going to be good or things won't ever work out, no matter. And I think it was a that's a generation, you know, she came from the greatest generation and

Richard Diggs [00:22:01] She almost died. We didn't mention this did we? Yeah, she almost died when she was a little, I think she was two, two years old and she had scarlet fever and they thought she wouldn't make it. I don't know if she remembered that.

Denise Diggs [00:22:11] She talked about that.

Richard Diggs [00:22:13] Or told her about how close she had come. And I think, you know, she just I

Denise Diggs [00:22:18] I think it's a generational thing. Maybe, yeah, those people were people in that generation, the depression era kids. They really knew how to dig down into what was really of value. And a lot of things just kind of fell away. I can remember my mother saying to me when I was in college, I asked her about marrying my dad, like, did you follow

because my mom was 20? My dad was older and he'd been married and had a son, and I remember asking her, You know, how did you fall in love with daddy? And I had I videotaped it. Like this interview with her, and she said, "I'm not sure that it was that I fell in love with your father as much as I respected him. I liked who he was. He was hard working. He had good friends and he was a decent person. He didn't drink or gamble money away. I mean, what they thought were the core things to look for in a person. My mother who never lost that. It was like all of those other extraneous things that are on the surface are so unimportant. What is the core of who that person is? And she was always reminding me that no matter what someone's behavior is, you cannot condemn them. That is not your role in this world. Only God gets to make that decision. She was very forgiving, and she believed in forgiveness. As hard as it was, she believed in it. Yeah, true. So those are the things that I took away from being raised by her.

Jennifer Tilton [00:23:48] So I think that that's probably all we need for this purpose. But I do want to go back to one other question. And I realize I don't think we ask this on that other interview. And that is a little bit more about your grandfather and grandmother who lived in Redlands. And kind of and I know that you said she was involved in politics in different ways in there. Yes. And so I'd love to hear a little bit more about kind of her past like so that her mom and dad and kind of what we know about them in terms of what they his political involvement, but also social involvement kind of his work.

Denise Diggs [00:24:27] And one of the articles that's in the paperwork over there is about one of the political organizations. He was a founder of that I thought was the Valley Truck Farms, which he was a member of. But that's not the group that he was the founder of it. It's in there. I can't remember the name of it, but what I remember my mother telling me was that she, when she was about 12 or 13, she learned to drive and I thought that was very unusual. And she said, Well, I wasn't old enough legally, but I used to drive my father to political meetings, and I found out that my grandfather actually supported and supported the Republican Party. And he, Mervin Douglas, I think, was the name of the candidate at the time. My grandfather politics for him in the presidential election over a Democrat that was really

Richard Diggs [00:25:18] Well parties are not like they were today. So they were

Denise Diggs [00:25:20] a different political party, had a different philosophy. Yeah, it just

Richard Diggs [00:25:24] was you as he might find them today.

Denise Diggs [00:25:26] Yeah. So my mother would drive him to those meetings in the evenings. And I think based on some of the things she told me that my uncle, her oldest brother, his political involvement kind of started there working with his father, and he went on to become a union organizer down in Imperial. When I was a kid, my mother and her sisters would go down to visit him and take me and my cousin, one of my cousins and we were in the last two born would take us for the summer and visit their brother. And I was always fascinated by the fact that he could speak Spanish so well, and all these farm workers would always be at his house and he would always be going to these meetings. And I was probably in middle school and I finally asked him, How do you know all these people? And he told me that he helped with getting them their... They're making sure they're working. No, I don't. It

wasn't like that. It was more just making sure that they were being paid and that they could earn a living, that they were being given accommodations on these ranches that were, you know, not sleeping in a ditch while they're working 16 hour days. And so he was very active in them, and I think he probably got it from my grandfather. My grandmother was the homemaker. Yeah, and she had been a domestic.

Richard Diggs [00:26:44] Yes. She also had a degree

Denise Diggs [00:26:46] she did.

Richard Diggs [00:26:47] her and all her brothers.

Denise Diggs [00:26:49] Who were educated in Hammond Texas.

Richard Diggs [00:26:54] Some of them were doctors, morticians. But the grandmother was, she was kind of like the glue that kept the whole family together. She raised all the girls, obviously, but they can. I remember them canning products every year, and there would be all these family reunions. My grandfather would set them up and my grandmother would make them happen.

Denise Diggs [00:27:14] Richard, wouldn't he and Diane remember? I was two when they passed so I have very few memories of them.

Richard Diggs [00:27:18] It was an interesting time. Could I go back and look at the house not that we were raised and raised in, but came and visited and think to myself, we were all there. At the same time, almost every family had at least two children. Some didn't have any, but others they had more than two. And so there would be there

Denise Diggs [00:27:37] 23 first cousins.

Richard Diggs [00:27:38] Yeah, maybe 15 to 20 kids that were hanging out in that house over the weekend or during summer 2 of them were there almost permanently. And it seemed like the house was huge. And then we had plenty of room. But I got to look at, you know, we all actually lived in there.

Denise Diggs [00:27:54] well, you know, when you're when you're 5, you don't mind sleeping on top of your cousin.

Richard Diggs [00:27:58] My grandmother was an angel to deal with all. Yes, because all the girls and bring them there for the weekend and you know, things that they had to travel, they would leave their wonderful vacation. And I thought myself, Grandma, look, this amazing person. Oh, and I never, ever saw her get angry. Never saw her get angry, never saw her raise her voice. And my grandfather, he had a way of dealing with children that you know that I remember my one cousin who was always rambunctious and always precocious and always in the subject, and he would make his name was Reggie sitting right next to him at breakfast. Everything that we had breakfast, he would be right there because he could control him. If you sat there, if you sell him off somewhere else, he'd be running around. The kids have been

going through some them. So you make him sit and we all used to laugh about that because we got to see the seat next to grandpa for raising the sitting in the pictures

Denise Diggs [00:28:49] and all the family pictures, Reggie's missing. There's an empty chair

Richard Diggs [00:28:52] or, you know, you just got in the picture. Yeah, he

Denise Diggs [00:28:55] just was getting out of the chair.

Richard Diggs [00:28:58] He was that child. I said,

Denise Diggs [00:28:59] Reggie is never sitting in any of these pictures, and they and they all said it because he never sat still He was always running around

Richard Diggs [00:29:07] it was so funny, and it started with a running joke for the family. But, you know, it really was an amazing person to handle all those children.

Jennifer Tilton [00:29:13] Yeah, you you say you remember a sign of your of your grandfather's real-estate agent. So was that like out of the house that he ran his real-estate?

Denise Diggs [00:29:20] Oh yeah, like out of the house that it's like a shingle or something. It was the

Richard Diggs [00:29:24] ceiling. Let me let me think about that. It may have been in the window. It is. In a study in his library, it was on the on the east side of the house and it ran north to south. And it was a long, slender room and it was either. In that window or it hung above the desk on the porch. But I really vividly remember that being there. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:29:47] And it was just sort of his name and real estate agent

Richard Diggs [00:29:49] and real estate. And that what he did and I think you have rental properties, I think was one way he had income.

Denise Diggs [00:29:55] My cousin, Liz, said he managed properties for real under these properties. She call them Bachelor Apartments. And I said, What is that? And she said they were just little one bedroom like kind of almost like a studio, but but a separate house. And people that would come into town on the train or for work, they would rent them out for weeks or months or days, and then they would move on

Richard Diggs [00:30:18] and they were right down the street. Yeah.

Denise Diggs [00:30:20] She said they were right down the street from the house. My cousin, Liz and Veronica actually lived with my grandparents for many years growing up. So they have lots of stories. Details

Richard Diggs [00:30:32] My other cousin, the oldest child of my grandfather's oldest son owned some of those properties. And then as far as I know, they're still in the family because I believe he sold them to my cousin. One of my cousins who still owned them. But there was one or two Yeah, yeah, Robbie. So there's one or two units right there, I guess, it is still there. I find out. But yeah, that was. I know they're still in the family from all that. Yeah, yeah, that's interesting.

Jennifer Tilton [00:30:59] But you don't know what other real estate agent he worked with in town. I don't.

Denise Diggs [00:31:02] I don't. But it could be in that.

Richard Diggs [00:31:03] I do know that he took the test on his own because there was no school for him to go to at that in that period of time. So he if

Denise Diggs [00:31:13] he had a study on his own, he had

Richard Diggs [00:31:14] a study on his own. He advanced state test on his own. And my mom try to be sure I remember this correctly said he passed it the first time took it. Now he was a teacher in Texas.

Denise Diggs [00:31:27] And so it was grandma. They were both educators

Richard Diggs [00:31:29] because in the 1910 census, he shows up as that's what he says that he's he was a teacher, his wife was a teacher. The other, my grandfather was a teacher, the one. So, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:31:43] Anyway, so your mom comes from a long line of teachers in the end

Richard Diggs [00:31:47] Apparently there were a lot of teachers. My aunt, two aunts actually. Gladys was going to be a teacher of home economics and got a degree in home economics. She was the one that was a great cook.

Denise Diggs [00:31:59] She was my mother's oldest sister

Richard Diggs [00:32:01] When she did meals in Redlands my mom said they loved them when she came home to do meals because he had a menu with all the different, you know, appetizers and desserts and the main course and they just loved it. But yeah, she had a degree in home economics. And my aunt Kate I want to say a Junior High School Teacher, she may have been a high school teacher in L.A.

Denise Diggs [00:32:22] and she went to UCLA. I don't know what she taught.

Jennifer Tilton [00:32:27] Well, awesome. Well, we should probably end there.

End of Interview:
[00:32:32]

