

Emma Lou Scott Oral History Interview

Anna Thomas

2015

Family Life

Emma Scott: I'm born in Houston on the east side, about oh, 300 or 400 yards from the Buffalo Bayou, and 5 miles from downtown in Houston, Texas. We did have a nice piece of land. It was 50 by 150 and it was on 212 North Lennox, two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and the dining room was in the kitchen, and a little extra porch. Mother and father separated because during the war in 1941, I guess, my father went off to Fort Hood and evidently, he sort of got in trouble with another woman you know, out drinking, carousing, whatever they did, but I guess my mother found out about it and so they separated when I was 7. My siblings were my sister Betty Lorraine and she was 7 years older and my younger brother Jimmy Lee was 2 years younger. Mother and father had moved to Houston probably in 1925 as my sister Betty, the oldest, was born in 1927. My father had built a little playhouse that we were able to play in. It had a front door and a window in the back and we had little tables and so we had a wonderful life. We had our bicycles that we could ride. We worked to make our living. We all worked and then we didn't have people to do our lawn. We did it ourselves. We didn't have people to clean our house. We did it our self, and we always seemed to have food on the table and milk to drink, but my sister was a girl. She got married and had Nina and then Norma, and then Richard Keith, who was the son that was a hemophilia. So, her life changed a lot because she had to find out when he was 8 months old that he had this hemophilia. Jimmy was younger. I would say he didn't have to do as much as I did with the house because he was the baby. He was a boy and we played Red Rover, Red Rover, let so and so come over, and we played Jacks when it was raining. We played cards and battle.

Career

ES: I taught school here 26 years, no 33 years, 26 at one school and 7 at another school.

[Why did you become a physical education teacher?]

ES: Well, I liked it from probably when I was a kid playing ball with the boys and some of the girls I guess played, but mostly played with the guys in the streets, because we could play in the streets in those days, and then when I went to junior high school, started playing volleyball and then on into high school, but I didn't get to play until my senior year because I had a setback with an illness between my junior and senior year where it was nephritis, and then I was always real close with the physical education teacher, Ms. Juanita Donovan, and she somehow got me a \$100.00 scholarship to college, and so I went off to college and I didn't know what college was about even in those days, in the early 50s, so that's how I got interested in majoring in physical education and got a second degree in biology. So, I could have taught both but they needed physical education teachers in Houston, and I had the first blind girl that was at my school. It was the first blind girl to go to any of the HISD high schools. And she was in my class, and I put her on the line, and you had 60 some odd students sitting here and she got up and she had pulled pretty good, and I went up behind her and I adjusted either this one or this one. She had done a good pull but I adjusted just a little bitty bit and I said, "Do not move anything. Just let go of your fingers." And she did, and guess what?

Anna Thomas: Bullseye.

ES: Bullseye. Her first arrow was a bullseye, and so you've got all the students thinking, "Oh, she can do it, I guess I can do it." I don't know, but anyway it was an exciting time when you saw somebody improving, some other kid never knew how to hold a bat or holding a, oh here's one, no you got to put it back, you've got to have some back swing you know. So, yeah, teaching was exciting. I enjoyed my years of teaching.

Janice

ES: I was living at the time, out on the north side with a friend of mine named Patsy Ralph, but then when Janice needed a place to live we moved her out to the north side with us, and that's when Janice decided she would kiss me on the forehead or on the mouth one morning and that's how we got sort of started, and after that, that was 1965, October 1965 when we got together.

Camping Adventures

ES: Janice and I traveled in five different campers since '75 and we would go take 2 weeks or 3 weeks and depending on her vacation because I usually had all summer, so we would collect these little emblems that you nail on a stick, and then my aunt, when she would go to different places like Austria and different places, she would bring me back some, and but most of them I obtained myself in Yosemite and Glacier National Park, and Appalachian Trail and Lyndon Baines Johnson and Palo Duro Canyon and Seminole Canyon, and just every state park or national park that we've been in through the years. I've picked up one and put it on different sticks.

AS: That's neat.

ES: That's how I sort of got my name Snake Stick, which is my email, and I used to catch some snakes with it because it had a fork in it, and then I just carried it everywhere I've been walking all these years, all over the United States and all over. RV women with me, and everybody always has to stop and ask me what it's about and look at all the things that are on it and where we've been.

Home Life

ES: You know life is, it's moving right along. It's business and working and keeping this house up, and the windows, Janice made the wood and she cut out every one of those pieces and put them together and soldered them, and it's real glass. It's not, you know you've seen people paint glass, but each one of those pieces are cut out and soldered together. I said I wanted to make it like yesterday, today and tomorrow because there are some plants where at one point of their life, they're one color and the next day they're another color, and the next day they're another color, so that's why we have the different purple and pink and pink flowers. It was yesterday, today and tomorrow. Janice delivered all 300 houses in front of us, and so a lot of the people would come by and if the lights are on, they could see them, and know that she was a talented person.

Scottie Dogs

ES: We've had five and I don't know everybody would give me Scotty dogs and of course I had the pictures of my very first one which that was the period when I got my first one was 62. That's right after Jimmy had left me and you wanted to have some kind of companionship, and so the dog was it and he went with me everywhere. A lot of my dogs I had taken to school with me. I would just tie them to my desk if we had an office for PE. It wasn't like I had a classroom so I would tie him there or put him in the bathroom, and on my break, as I had an hour break, I would take him and walk him around the track or take him outside. And I don't know all my father, my mother, my sister, my brother, myself, we've all been called Scotties at certain period of time in our life, and Scotty dog mats and Scotty dog doorknockers to keep the doors open, and then I started collecting them for Christmas, and one Christmas it was a big, big tree which we put here, and I put so many Scotties on it. I think there were 88 Scotty dogs -

AS: Oh my God!

ES: at that time, and then there were probably some more in the box now, but I would have everybody that came over just to see the tree and have parties and things that we did have. Santa Claus was a special time at our house. My sister, she would spend a lot of money on us two, because a lot of people thought my sister was our mother because different places my sister would take us, and they thought she was our mother, but she would wrap us up a lot of different things for Christmas, and we had one tree in the corner that somehow the electrician had put in a plug and it bypassed the box. So, it was on a free electrical place, and so we'd always had our Christmas tree in that corner, bypass the box. So, we had good times at Christmas, being that my grandmother and them always came Christmas Eve with my mother's with chicken and spaghetti, and everybody came over to our house on Christmas Eve, and then we'd always go back to Park Place to my aunt's house to have eggnog, which we were not privileged to have of course because my uncle had put a lot of booze in it, but my aunt always made exception for the kids' eggnog. And, my aunts and uncles all lived real close together. One lived facing this street, Glover, and then behind that was my grandmother's little house after we moved her back to Houston, and then my Aunt Flora built the house facing the other street, the one with that taught school, and she finally did get her house. But I don't know just, got potholders for Scotty dogs, but Christmas, I just loved Christmas.

Activism

ES: Well most of my activism didn't take place until after I retired of course, and because I had ten breast operations through the years, and starting in 1966, they were all benign, and somebody said let's start giving lesbians mammograms, so we got together and we got M.D. Anderson to come with their truck and then we had people in all kinds of buildings, all kinds of places around the city, up on the stage at the multi-service center, and put a little curtain up for the girls to get draped, and I was on the board there for then 20 years and I worked with them to have free mammograms for the lesbians it was at. Anybody could come in. They didn't have to say they were lesbians, but they had to be insurance poor so to speak, and then we not only started mammograms we started doing pap smears. So then we got involved with Legacy and they started doing our pap smears, and then I had known about assistHERS and so when I stopped doing LHI when I realized it had a strong person to take the helm, and I said well I'll go to Sisters because I know they need people, and so then I got on one team and then I think I probably went to two lesbian organizations at their national gathering. In Minneapolis. SPRY

was seniors preparing for the rainbow years and we used to meet at the Montrose Counseling Center every Monday and talk about some subjects that was be it you know, what's going on in your life or you know, is there a game going on or talk about death and dying and burial or how you felt the day we always did a check in, how you feeling this week or is it, you know, what kind of problems are you having at home?

Athletic Career

ES: When I was 55 and that's about when I retired when I was 55, right after that I found out about the senior games so then and they had the games so I could participate in all of the different sports and I won medals but then there was shot discus and javelin which I had never really done. I had tried to teach one of the boys that was out shoot, trying to do shot at school one time and then the discus and so I had won shot discus and javelin, and I won the table tennis and we played singles. We played doubles and like I said, I have like 300 medals on the sports locally from the different sports, table tennis and the shot discus and javelin and that was the, they're all under the bed just about. Then from there, you progressed to state meet, I would play and get a few medals and I don't know what all, and in state.

[How do you view your athletic accomplishments over the last 20 years?]

ES: Oh, it's just been fun. I guess I do love to win. I go for the gold always, you know. And you always think, gosh, I wish I lived back when, you know? When they had real competition in college, you know, and they have the softball now and they have the national pro fast pitch teams and gosh, wouldn't you love to be on one of those teams and even though they probably still only make pendants amount of money, you know, that they would still be wonderful to be able to, I guess to traveling and play the sports that you love and so that's how I did with my senior games. I just loved to compete because I taught most, well I have, I taught all of those different sports to 300 students a day and I hope that they all remember me trying to teach them the right way to play and the right skills to be able to play the games competitively.

AS: All right, well I think that's, that's all I got.

ES: That's all, that's all I can think of really, I guess.

AS: Okay, cool, well thank you so much.

ES: And thank you. It, it's been –

AS: I enjoyed all of it.

ES: I have too.