

**LESLIE ALAMAN
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
(Gayle W. Hanson, Interviewer)**

Leslie Alaman Interview – Lake Como Community, Fort Worth, Tarrant, Texas

Hanson: What is your name?

Alaman: Leslie Alaman

Hanson: What is your address?

Alaman: The address I had here was 5929 Goodman [Avenue], Fort Worth, Texas 76107.

Hanson: Were you born in Texas?

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: Were you born in Fort Worth?

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: What hospital?

Alaman: St. Joseph.

Hanson: How old are you?

Alaman: I'm 71 years old.

Hanson: What was your birthdate?

Alaman: March 16, 1950.

Hanson: And your parents names?

Alaman: My Dad's name was Lawrence, and my Mother's name was Wilba Alaman.

Hanson: Are you married?

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: What is your spouse's name?

Alaman: Patricia.

Hanson: What was her maiden name?

Alaman: Patricia Johnson.

Hanson: Was she in Como?

Alaman: No. She was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Hanson: How did you meet her?

Alaman: We met at church. She left Pine Bluff and moved to Austin, Texas, then moved from Austin, moved from Austin to Dallas. And I met her at Monger Avenue Baptist Church. It's in northeast Dallas.

Hanson: Did you have children?

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: How many?

Alaman: I have two from a previous marriage and we have two, a boy and a girl.

Hanson: And their names?

Alaman: My oldest is about 45 years old. His name is Leslie Betran and his sister's name is Ashley Burnett (?). The son from my current marriage is Lemuel Corban. And my youngest daughter, her name is Dorothy Dumaras.

Hanson: What is or was your occupation?

Alaman: Most of my life it was in logistics and delivery. I retired from Fed Ex. I had two jobs before that. I'm back now doing now what I did then after I retired from the City of Dallas. I started another little company. I'm a contractor. So, I'm still delivering. I'm just doing it for myself.

Hanson: Ok, so you work for Fed Ex and I'm also retired from the City of Dallas. At the City of Dallas what was your occupation?

Alaman: I was a airfield maintenance technician. I worked at Love Field.

Hanson: What was your mother's name?

Alaman: Wilba Justine Alaman. But she went by Wilba Burton Alaman because that was her maiden name.

Hanson: And she was born ni what city?

Alaman: She was born in Itasca, Texas.

Hanson: Your father's name?

Alaman: My father's name was Lawrence. He had no middle name.

Hanson: And he was born where?

Alaman: He was born in Bastrop, Texas.

Hanson: Oh, yeah! I have folks in Bastrop!

Tell me where your grandparents were born.

Alaman: My grandparents on my father's side. My grandfather's name was Leon. He had no middle name. And my grandmother was named Melviny Sims.

Hanson: And your grandparents on your maternal side?

Alaman: On my mother's side, it was Jordan Washington Burton. He was a pastor out here (Como) for 46 years. And he buried four wives.

Hanson: Now which was the grandmother that was related to you?

Alaman: Her name was Bertha.

Hanson: What was her maiden name?

Alaman: I don't know Bertha's maiden name.

Hanson: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Alaman: Yes, I had two brothers.

Hanson: Two brothers? And their names were?

Alaman: The one next to me was Lloyd Earl. And the oldest Lawrence Burton Alaman.

Hanson: That Lawrence comes a long way doesn't it!

Alaman: Actually there are a lot of "Ls". My grandfather's name was Leon. My dad is Lawrence. My brother, Lawrence. My brother, Lloyd. Leslie. My oldest son, Leslie. My second son, Lemuel. And I think it stops there.

Alaman: My grandson had two kids, and he named one Leslie, III.

Hanson: I know that your family was religious because...

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: Most of our families were church people.

What did you Dad do for a living?

Alaman: My dad worked at Swift's meat packing company on the Northside. When he retired from Swift's, he went to a place called Texas Bronze and he worked there until he died.

Hanson: And your mother?

Alaman: My mother was a stay-at-home mom. My daddy worked, and then after awhile she opened up or managed a day care center.

Hanson: Was it in Como?

Alaman: Yeah!

Hanson: Where?

Alaman: One was down on Wellesley Street, close to the park. And then after awhile, they opened one right up here on Libbey Street. She managed that and me and my brother we were in charge of keeping the floors clean and everything tight. It was walking distance from our home.

Hanson: Did you guys have any pets?

Alaman: We had one pet! His name was Prince Lucky Seven. I don't know where that came from. He was a German Shepherd. We had one other dog after that. Because Prince just wandered off somewhere, when it was time for him. He just wandered off somewhere and we never saw him again.

And my mother got another dog, and he ran out in the street and go run over.

Hanson: Did your family ever talk about the Great Depression when you were growing up?

Alaman: Not really! They didn't tell us much about it. I really don't know how they made it on Dad's salary. It has to be the grace of God and my mother's money management. Other than that, they never told us what they went through. A lot of the stories came from my grandparents. My mother's dad was Pastor Burton. He had some stories.

Hanson: When you were growing up, did you live in a house, an apartment or?

Alaman: We lived in a house?

Hanson: How big was it?

Alaman: It was a good size house. It started out as a three-bedroom, and they took the wall out and made it into a two-bedroom. The one when my parents left, then the one room where my two brothers and myself slept. It only had one bathroom and it was a house that my mother's father gave her. There were four siblings. My mother had two sisters and a brother. And my grandfather gave each one a house.

Hanson: Was this in Como? What street?

Alaman: Ours on Goodman [Avenue]. My uncle's house was also on Goodman in a different block. But the two houses that he gave my aunts were right next to each other on Libbey [Avenue].

Hanson: So, like a total number of years that your family has been in the Como area?

Alaman: My grandfather owned a lot of houses out here.

Hanson: Was he a realtor?

Alaman: I can't say that. He started preaching at the age of 19. He passed when he was 90. But he had all these houses long before my time or my brother's time. But he had them all and ended up selling the majority of them and kept four for his kids.

Hanson: Who was your best friend?

Alaman: As a child, my best friends were my brothers. After awhile there were a couple of people, a family who moved in. Their grandparents lived two doors from us. And they lived on Libbey Avenue. And then after their grandparents passed, they moved into the grandparents house. We spent loads of time. It was two brothers and a sister. The sister finished high school with my oldest brother. Her name was Jane Marshall.

The two guys and I all played sports together. The brother's name was James Marshall and other brother was Kim Marshall and they were real fair skinned. And their hair was really curly. They were black to the bone. We did a lot of stuff together. We did a lot of music together. We spent a lot of time on the school campus playing basketball.

Hanson: Did you have a nickname when you were growing up?

Alaman: No, I didn't.

Hanson: Do you remember having the chickenpox, mumps, or measles? Any of the childhood diseases?

Alaman: I had chickenpox and measles. I never had the mumps.

Hanson: How was the neighborhood lit? Street lamps or porch lights?

Alaman: Mostly street lamps. There were porch lights. The street lamps let us know when we had to be home.

Hanson: Yes, I got the same feeling.

Alaman: Street lamps along Gilford Road and the High School was lit up was pretty much where the street lights were.

Hanson: Yes! I remember that! You had home before the street light came on.

My mother lived on Humbert Street and my great-grandparents lived on Kilpatrick Avenue in the 5900 block. I remember leaving my mother's house to go to my grandparents house because I was in high school and their house was close to the high school.

One evening I was walking to my grandparents house and one of these good sisters was sitting out on the porch. She yelled at me, "Gayle, you better get on home. I going to call your Mama and Grandmother you're walking these streets and its getting dark."

Alaman: Yeah, it took a village.

Hanson: It did!

Ok. Did you ever go downtown Fort Worth and what mode of transportation did you take?

Alaman: I took a bus many times, but I also didn't go downtown without my parents.

Hanson: Yes! Yes!

Alaman: When I went downtown I would to the Tandy's and Leonard Brothers stores with my mom.

Hanson: And when you got there you were always told, "Now, you stay close to me."

Alaman: I got lost down there. I got lost in Leonard Brothers. And right when they found me and took me to the office. Then they made announcements and everything was alright. I just got away from her.

Hanson: Well, I already know that the neighborhood was a good place. You could just walk around. It's just like you said everyone looked out for each other.

Was there a perfect or special day in your life as a child?

Alaman: I'm really enjoying There was a lot of days that I thought were just great days. I can't pinpoint any of them. There were also a lot of days that had bad memories.

When my granddaddy died was a bad day. I remember the day John F. Kennedy died.

Hanson: I remember that day. I believe we were in the school auditorium watching Kennedy on a television. The TV was on the stage. Kennedy was shot and teachers started running and grabbing all the children trying to get them back to classrooms.

And I remember after school was let out and I was talking through the neighborhood. It was so quiet. It was very eerie.

Hanson: What were the neighborhood landmarks that you remember?

Alaman: The Como Park, the Shelter House which was right there on the Lake. In the summertime they would pull out the juke box and we'd dance.

The other place was the school campuses—elementary and the high school.

Zion Baptist Church - Where grandfather pastored that church. Zion, Pleasant Mount Gilead, Strangers Rest and Como First Baptist. The pastor of Como First Baptist came from Zion.

Rising Star was in Como but we didn't keep up with churches that weren't Baptist. I don't know if Rising Star was Baptist or not. I don't think Rising Star had been started again? I don't know.

There was a Church of Christ that set there next to Como First Baptist which was close a church on Bonnell Avenue. Thomas was the pastor.

Hanson: Do you remember any of the businesses?

Alaman: Wine's Cleaners.

Hanson: Technically, Bonnell and Horne streets were the main business district.

Alaman: It was like downtown. Downtown Como! And you had Bill Sodd's (grocery). And we had Alexander's (grocery). And you had the pool hall. And Wilson's Upholstrey which used to be the movie theatre.

Hanson: Yes, and the movie theatre, at one time, my grandparents Harry T. and Bessie Williams owned it and their restaurant (Princess Eats) next door, close to the Red Rooster Liquor Store.

Alaman: Do you remember Smith's Shoe Shop? It was on Bonnell Street close to the Church of Christ Church. They would have parties upstairs in Smith's Shoe Shop. I had my sixteenth birthday party up there.

Hanson: You went to Como Elementary School?

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: Did you go to Como Jr.-Sr. High School

Alaman: Yes! I went to all Como schools from beginning to end.

Hanson: Did you walk to school?

Alaman: I was one block away.

Hanson: What did you do in the summertime when school was out?

Alaman: I played in the yard. There were times when my dad took us to Wichita Falls [Texas] where his brother lived. His brother had three kids and my dad had three. His brother had two boys and a girl. They were until this day he's my favorite. He's my dad. We talk on the phone all the time even right now. He's about two or three years older than me. And he's very active also and he's retired living quite comfortably. And we talk all the time. Our wives are the best of friends. He's my guy!

Hanson: What's his name?

Alaman: His name is Roy Marcus Alaman.

Hanson: You're cousin.

Alaman: ...Booker T. Washington in Wichita Falls, Texas and shortly after that he moved Los Angeles, California. That's where he is right now.

Hanson: What birthday do you remember the most from your youth?

Alaman: I'm kinda of remembering the 16th birthday.

Hanson: At Christmas time what was the gift that stuck in your mind that you received?

Alaman: A drum set! And a bicycle!

Hanson: Do you remember what were the high school mascots?

Alaman: The Como Lions!

Hanson: What were the colors?

Alaman: Purple and Gold!

Hanson: Do you remember the names of your teachers?

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: Did you go to the Prom?

Alaman: The first year... As a matter of fact I went both years with the same girl. Her name was Shirley Wilson. Her daddy had an upholstery business, Wilson Upholstrey was down in the old Como Theatre.

Hanson: Who was the school principal at that time?

Alaman: Oscar Williams and then after Oscar Williams it was Mr. Byrd.

Hanson: Was Assistant Principal [Robinette] Spates still there?

Alaman: Spates was still there. My mother and I, Ms. Spates had a daughter and they had a football game. My brother was in the band. We had a football game in Denton, Texas and it was so cold. And the cheerleaders began to pass out. My mother and I rode with Ms. Spates and her daughter. They had a station wagon. Her daughter and I were in the back and we moved up with them. It was so, so, cold. Mouths were sticking to the instrument mouth piece.

Hanson: How did you spend your weekends when you were growing up?

Alaman: The guys I hung out the most were my brothers. Right now, one is Atlanta, Georgia and one is in Richardson, Texas. We talk on the phone since we're not in the same place.

But we played a lot of basketball. We'd met up with guys in the area and go to the school campus. We'd pair off. We played football. We played basketball. Take the tennis rackets down there and hit the ball off the walls. We just hung around in the area. We played a lot of ball.

Hanson: Have you attended any of the high school alumni reunions?

Alaman: Yes!

Hanson: Did you have a girlfriend?

Alaman: Yes. I wasn't what they called a "player". The first real girlfriend I had for three or four years was Diane Woods. And that was because they lived across the school campus and I played basketball with her brother, Dennis Woods.

But shortly after we broke up, I did the next four or five years with Shirley Wilson (?)

Hanson: Was there a student you admired more than any other student?

Alaman: I admired John Douglas and Theo_____. I admired a lot of the guys who were athletes.

Hanson: What was your first job?

Alaman: As I recall, my first real job. I remembers two. I don't remember which came first. But actually three. Two of them were with the City of Fort Worth. One was as a tire changer on the police cars. One was at the Water Department. I think that was later on. But did one where I, I hated it. It was a linen company with the National Linen Service. And I had all the black rest homes. And the stench was horrible. I'd have to sack up all that stuff. And then most of the time it was moist and carried on top of the trucks. I couldn't stand that job. That was one of my first jobs.

Hanson: What was you final job before you retired?

Alaman: When I retired, I was working in Love Field as a technician. It was really a fun kind of job. The City has to keep training you. So they will kick you out the door. Whatever you are doing pray and you've got to go sit up and they exercise in honor everything and they honor everything with food. And they give you pens if you've been there five years. So, you spend a lot of time working, but a lot times you're not working. But it was so fascinating being that close to those planes to be there. Being on top of those planes all the time, you had to be very, very careful because there were rules.

Hanson: Who was your first love?

Alaman: I guess it had to be Diane [Woods].

Hanson: When you married, where did you go on your honeymoon?

Alaman: The first marriage with Sharon Rutherford, who was from Hawkins, Texas. Hawkins, Texas is the home of Jarvis Christian College. I had relative who live there that she knew because he taught tennis and she played tennis. But we went to for the honeymoon to Lake Tawonkonee. Her mother had gotten us cabin.

This marriage that I'm in now, we didn't go directly on a honeymoon. We had to go directly back to work. We ended up in a lot of things since then—Vegas, Cruises.

Hanson: What did you like best about your spouse?

Alaman: What I like about her is "no nonsense." Guys would come up. She smiles a lot and laughs a lot. But guys and girls, ladies and gentlemen now, they feel like if you can get the person that you're talking to smile or the laugh, then you're in. Then they make that mistake with her, and then they cross the line. She immediately gets them back on that side of the line. I didn't have it with my first wife.

Hanson: How old were you when you married your first wife?

Alaman: The first wife? I was 25. I had my first kid when I was 26 and the second one at 27.

Hanson: Where did you live during your first marriage?

Alaman: We lived in an apartment.

Hanson: Was it in Como?

Alaman: No, we lived in Dallas. We stayed there awhile and then we rented a house in East Dallas on Garrett Street.

Hanson: Which hospital were your children born in?

Alaman: The first two were born in Baylor Hospital in Dallas. The second two were born in Dallas Methodist in Dallas.

Hanson: How long did you live in Dallas?

Alaman: I moved to Dallas in 1974. I've been in Dallas ever since.

Hanson: What were the names of your children?

Alaman: Leslie Latran, Asa Lynette, Corban, Markus Demarse (check birth records)

Hanson: What was the best part of being a parent?

Alaman: The best is watching them grow and to develop. Seeing what they really want to turn out to be.

The worst is maybe some not turning out to be what you wanted them to be. And not being ambitious enough to go and do some of the things that I thought they were going to do. Two of my kids were born August and two of my kids were born in

February. The two born in February are struggling today. The two that were born in August are very successful.

Hanson: What one thing would you do differently if you could re-live your parenting years over? Would you have done anything different?

Alaman: Yes, I would have done somethings different. I would have spent less time working and more time building them.

Hanson: What was your favorite book? Favorite song.

Alaman: One of my favorite songs was “The Girl Is Alright.”

Hanson: Favorite movie?

Alaman: Ben Hur! And I saw that movie, as I recall, at the Como Theatre. I’ll never forget that night. My whole family went that night.

Hanson: What is your favorite season?

Alaman: My favorite is Spring or Fall. I really enjoy springtime. It’s not too hot or too cold.

Hanson: Who is your favorite star?

Alaman: Sidney Poitier and Bill Cosby.

Hanson: Best Friends?

Alaman: Michael and Kermit Jenkins

Hanson: Favorite holiday?

Alaman: Growing up my favorite holiday was Halloween. As an adult Christmas is my favorite.

Hanson: You’re favorite restaurant?

Alanan: It was on the South Side of Fort Worth.

Hanson: What was your favorite color?

Alaman: Growing up it was red. Now its blue and black. It depends on what I’m doing. Clothing I kinda like blue. If I buy a vehicle, I want it to be white or black. I like black clothing, also.

Hanson: What is your favorite time of the day?

Alaman: Early afternoon.

Hanson: What was the best day of your life?

Alaman: When I graduated from high school. It was a fun day! And my kids!

Hanson: What was the best year of your life?

Alaman: The best year of my life might have been in 1980.

Hanson: What happened in 1980?

Alaman: I was the tool manager. But I was working at Gordon Jewelers and I made a lot of money. I had a very nice automobile. I was living by myself. I was alone and anything I wanted I could get. And everything I had was glad about. 1980 was one of my best years.

Hanson: How would you describe your community? Was it rural, suburban, or urban?

Alaman: A mixture of suburban and urban.

Hanson: Did you have a community newspaper?

Alaman: Yes! My mother wrote in it! My mother was one of the editors. Lake Como Weekly. My mother wrote the article, "Just Chatin".

Hanson: Did the community have public transportation?

Alaman: The Subway later called Fort Worth City bus.

Hanson: What business do you think of when you think about Downtown?

Alaman: Leonard Brothers, the CNB (Continental National Bank). On top of the bank was this huge clock that turned around. And on two sides it was a square and on two sides of the square it was digital clock and on the other two sides of the square it had big letters "CNB".

I remember that well!

Hanson: What was the most popular park in your town?

Alaman: Como Park. I also enjoyed Greenway Park.

Hanson: Who taught you drive?

Alaman: I had an uncle. My mother's baby sister, a highly educated woman. At the time she married a man who was a captain in the Army. He was stationed in Fort _____, California. His name is William J. (Uncle Bill J.) Story (?) He was from Atlanta, Georgia. And we would always go out to my mom's aunt in Houston. She would come here on the train and pick up me and my brother, we'd go to California. And we would stay in Base housing.

And he would let us drive from Monterey to Seaside. He let my brother drive from Monterey to Panther. He had to go inspect Camp P_____ was a long way away. But he let us drive a lot. When I got ready to get my license at 16 he was instrumental in me getting that done. Uncle Bill J.

My mother's brother is was kinda tight too cause he had another agenda. He was still running around. It was mostly that. When I got my license we were in a Voxwagon. And after we'd gotten our license and the thing was done and we were on our way home.

Hanson: When did you get your first car?

Alaman: I was about 19. But when I got my license at 16.

We were sitting at the corner of Lancaster and Riverside Drive. We were sitting at the light waiting on it to turn green and we began hearing tires screeching. It was a guy in a mustang. He hit us in the back and knocked us out into the street on the other side of Riverside Drive.

And you know that the engine on that car is in the back. We didn't have enough sense to sue. So, we didn't know anything about suing someone.

Hanson: How much did a tank of gas cost at that time?

Alaman: About 25 cents a gallon, then they would have a gas war and it would jump down to about 17 cents. And my brother and I, we ran around together a lot. We would put in \$2.00 worth of gas and then we'd go to Griff's Burger Bar and get two burgers, some fries and a shake and still have money to put in our pockets.

Hanson: What was your favorite driving song?

Alaman: At that young age, I was too stupid to know there was such a thing as a driving song. I didn't have a car, so it really didn't matter. We listen to KNOK until the sun went down, then we switched over to KFJZ. That was all we had.

Hanson: Who taught you to ride a bike?

Alaman: My brother!

Hanson: What color was your bike?

Alaman: I don't know. I learned before the Swinn, so I learned on my brother's bike. I know that when they were riding the bikes, there were times when everybody would get together in our area. My oldest brother, Lawrence, would be on skates. Lloyd would be on the bike, and I'd be on a tricycle.

My grandfather would eat at our home. Every morning he would eat salmon croquet, eggs, toast, and coffee. My mother made it, because he'd buried his fourth wife because he was alone. And he'd come up and do that.

I left my bike behind his '54 Cadillac. I was six years old. I left my car behind his car and he ran over it. He didn't know it was back there. He ran over it! And I loved that thang!

Hanson: Did you name your bicycle?

Alaman: "Nope!"

Hanson: Looking back on 2020 hindsight, what was your favorite year? Or your favorite age?

Alaman: When I was sixteen back in 1966. At sixteen was also the year I lost my granddad. But is the year that I remember a lot. It was a lot going on then, both good and indifferent.

Hanson: What was the most important date in your personal history?

Alaman: There were so many things. Living in Como was best thing that could ever happen to me. It was just the place to be. I loved it!

When my mother's brother taught school in Como and then he was a coach. Then he left and went to Dunbar High School.

My mother wanted me to go to Dunbar.? So, I could ride with him. I said, "No, I ain't feeling that."

Hanson: What is the hardest thing you ever had to do?

Alaman: In Como the hardest thing I had to do was sit through a four-hour funeral when my Granddad died.

Hanson: What was the first funeral you attended?

Alaman: One of my grandfather's favorite deacon—Mr. Wilder.

Hanson: When do you first remember feeling like an adult?

Alaman: Right after I finished high school and I started working at Swift's Packing Company with my Dad.

For a long time, my brothers had their two cars, and they were hanging together. But I couldn't. Then right at my job, I didn't have no car, but I could go to the clubs with them and so I felt grown then. They took me in and accepted me. Hey, we're gone to all do this and we're gone to all drink together. And I felt good about that!

Hanson: If you could change anything about your life, what would you change?

Alaman: I would do whatever it took to go college.

Hanson: Do you like your name? If you could, what name would you have chosen?

Alaman: No! That's all I know. I never disliked my name. My wife's name is Pat. When we go to restaurants and they say...we're waiting on a table. They'd say, Pat..., then they'll call me Pat. (?)

Hanson: If you had all the time in the world, what would you do?

Alaman: If I had all the time in the world? Well, at this age I'd do so much. I'd go back to school. I'd make sure I'd have all my ducks in a row. I'd try to fix that situation with my two older kids. I don't know. There is so much.

Hanson: What was there one moment in your life that changed everything for you?

Alaman: It keeps rolling back to when my granddad died. I was in the middle of some things. I was in the middle of taking piano lessons. I was in the middle of doing some things. And his dying threw all of that off. And some of that stuff I could get back to it.

And as I look back on it, I would go back and do those things that I was able to do. I still looking at some things that's going to enable me to...things that I can fix.

A light switch went off and it controlled a bunch of different lights, and I can't get all the lights back on. I've never been able to. I'm enjoying life. It could have been better.

Hanson: Thank you for sharing your life story.