Stuart Place, Its People and Its History
Norman Rozeff
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Part I: Area's Earliest Occupation Goes Back a Long Way

The Stuart Place Tract was a 10,000 acre subdivision whose eastern boundary was approximately two miles west of the center of Harlingen at the intersection of Jackson Avenue and Commerce Street. Established around 1918, recent decades have seen it re-subdivided into numerous development parcels that, while primarily for residences, also include business and industrial lots, and recreational vehicle parks.

One of the first settler families in what would become the Stuart Place Tract is the Gutierrez family. The family has its origins in Amozoc Puebla, Mexico. Secundio’s father, Manuel brought the family to Brownsville in 1862 due unrest in Mexico. Soon after he moved to northern Cameron County where he and his teenage son found work on different ranches. At age 22, Secundio was married by Father Keralum to Guadelupe (Lupita) Loya Loya. The ceremony took place on the El Mameado Ranch which was 2.7 miles north of FM 498 on an extension of FM 507. They settled in La Jarita, which is on FM 1420, and in 1876 start a succession of nine children. In 1890 they moved to La Crucita Ranch. This ranch incorporated three smaller ones – La Crucita, El Gigante, and La India. Its initial acquisition was by Manuel Gutierrez. At this, their second home, they had four more children. The ranch encompassed Surveys 39, 40, 293, 294, and 295. These parcels are presently bounded on the south by the Arroyo Colorado, the north by Garrett Road, the east by Tucker Road and the west by Altas Palmas Road. What is now Dilworth Road cut through the ranch and led to a low water crossing of the arroyo and on to Turner Road leading to the Military Road. The shallow ford is mentioned in several histories as Paso de Gigantes. This crossing, among others, provided a route to go on to Brownsville.

A lengthy drought that culminated in intensity in 1896 dried up the rangeland of South Texas and killed the livestock of the Gutierrez family among many others. The below-average region rainfall actually extended from 1893 through 1902. Survey 39 later fell into the hands of the Georgetown Railroad Company and eventually was subdivided by the developer F. Z. Bishop of Corpus Christi. Survey 40 came into the possession of G. S. Dorough and 294 Dayton Moses. 293 and 295 were bought by the Corpus Christi, San Diego and Rio Grande Narrow Gauge Railroad Company.

In 1905 the Secundio (Papa) Gutierrez family moved to a homestead at 313 W. Van Buren, Harlingen. Secundio after selling the ranch would close his general store in that area and later commence a bakery on W. Van Buren, then open a dry goods and grocery store on W. Harrison. Rosaura Gutierrez is the daughter of Eugenio, one of the 13 children. For many years she faithfully served on the Cameron County Historical Commission, among her many other activities. Joseph Muniz, assistant Harlingen librarian, is the great grandson of Petra, the sister born the year before Eugenio was in 1885. The George Gutierrez, Jr. Middle School is named after a Vietnam hero descendant as is the former Diaz Park along W. Harrison Avenue.
By 1898 other early settlers were in the northeast section of the tract. Three families come to western Cameron County from the Indian Territory (Oklahoma). The Jesse Thomas Avary family had two small daughters and a son, Henry Avary, was to be born in the area (now known as Palm Valley) where the Avarys constructed a home. At a 2003 reunion Margaret Fox, a 1935 Harlingen High School graduate and descendent of the Avarys related an oral history. She recounted that 15 families were on their way to Veracruz, Mexico from Oklahoma. Their plans were to embark for Brazil, where each family was to be awarded 694 acres. While camped in the Lower Rio Grande Valley the Avarys were robbed, so they did not continue onward. (Grandson Jesse Reynolds of Primera says the robbery story may be an embellishment and that it is more likely that border difficulties upon trying to enter Mexico may have discouraged the family from traveling further.) The family patriarch, T. S.(also known as Jesse Thomas) Avary (1/29/69- 4/8/16), is buried in the Harlingen City Cemetery as is Catherine E. Boteler Avary (6/4/46-12/16/18), "Tender Mother and Faithful Friend."

The Avarys purchased a half section of land in what is now Palm Valley and later bought a second half section bringing their total to 640 acres. On it they built a log cabin. In 1901 they went back to Oklahoma but in 1905 returned by train to their old homestead. From her obituary, a young Avary coming here in a covered wagon to near the Wilson Tract from Winnemook, OK was to be Mrs. Vernie Belle Avary Payne. Born 9/7/95 she is to die at age 66 on 3/27/62. After marriage she moved to Mercedes, but on 1/1/43 became postmistress of the Combes Post Office. This member of the First Methodist Church, Combes left two sons, one of whom was J. Paul Payne of Harlingen.

It is in 1912 that Robert Terry Stuart of Kaufman County, TX first came to the Valley. His development work starts in 1916 with investments near Harlingen, Brownsville, Ercouch, and tracts near Mercedes and Mission. He was born near Terrill in Kaufman County, TX on 1/24/1880. His parents were Texas born, his grandparents having said come here from Scotland (perhaps via Arkansas) when Texas was a republic. He was educated at the Sam Houston School in Huntsville and the M&F Institute, Chicago. In Oklahoma City he became president of the Mid-Continental Life Insurance Co. and the Robert T. Stuart and Co. Investment Banks. He married Maude Elizabeth McKebbons 6/30/1904. By the U.S. 1920 Oklahoma City census indications are that at that time he was married to Roberta Stuart, a Texan. At the time of the census both were 39 years of age. In 1931 he is to remarry again, this time to Ida Freeny. Two years later they will welcome a son, Robert (Bob)Terry Stuart II. Bob was to die at age 68 in 2001. Ida was born in Caddo, OK on 9/2/1900. She inherited the Freeny Ranch in Oklahoma from her father Judge Robert Clay Freeny. It had been established by her grandfather in Indian Territory in 1868 and is the oldest ranch in the state. Upon her marriage it became the Stuart Ranch which still exists today. Bob's daughter Terry Stuart Forst helps operate it. On 2/13/13 the estate of George M. Briggs, who died 12/9/1912, sells to Thomas F. Lee and the Lee Land Company and Robert Terry and Champ Terry Stuart large acreages west of Harlingen. This will become known as the Stuart Place Subdivision having its north border at what is now Wilson Road, its south border at the Arroyo Colorado, its west border at Tamm Lane and its east border around Paloma Lane. When George M. Briggs died the estate was willed according to deed records (December 1918) to Annie, wife of B.F. Stuart. The executors were B.F. Stuart and George T. White, Asst. Mgr. Bank of California in Seattle, WA. Annie was named Principal Executrix, no bond. The
estate was divided into three equal shares among three direct heirs who were George M. Stuart Jr., his son B.F. Stuart, and his daughter Mrs. Flora Barber, wife of V.H. Barber of Reno, Nevada. By January 28, 1913 Flora had died and the will was revised.

Champ Terry Stuart had four, possibly five, children with Elizabeth Raines. They were Robert Terry, b. 1880, Kaufman County, TX, d. 1957 likely in OK; Margaret, b. ca. 1892, TX, married to Raymond C. Gee, d. ?; Hesta, b. ca. 1897 or 1898, married Woods Christian about 1923, d. 1965, Tarrant Cty., OK; Otis Edmond, b. 1887 or 1888, d. 1950, Hidalgo Cty., TX. A 1910 census of Jackson, OK, where Champ is a stockman, lists a son Homer b. ca. 1886.

Prior to 1917 Thomas F. Lee had purchased a sizeable parcel of land just west of Harlingen with the intention of subdividing it. To attract buyers he built an impressive two-story community clubhouse at "Leeland." When the Stuarts later purchased Lee's holdings, the building became the Stuart Place Community Club and the site of many social activities. It is still there at 7901 West Business 83 and currently serves as the office for a mobile home park to its south. By 1917 Thomas F. Lee is heavily promoting sales of his farmland west of Harlingen. His Lee Land Company has offices in what he calls Leeland (now the Stuart Place area south of West Business 83), Dallas, Oklahoma City, and St. Louis. He is utilizing excursions to generate sales. One brochure exclaims "Our luxurious private steel Pullman car leaves the Union Station, St. Louis, the first and third Tuesdays of each month for the Home of the Golden Fruit--Leeland--the heart of the Rio Grande Valley." His brochure titles are "The Magic Valley", "Telephone for Rain", "Golden Fruit", Harvest at Christmas Time", and "My Southern Home."

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Part II: The Dynamic Stuarts Come to the Valley

It is in 1916 that Otis Edmond (O. E.). Stuart came to the Valley. He and his brother, R.T. Stuart, were later to develop and promote Stuart Place with its 10,000 acres, probably the largest individually owned agricultural and citrus fruit property in South Texas. The brand names that they utilized were Stuart's Premium and Stuart's Tree Ripened. The company's two packing sheds handling produce have a total of 10,000 square feet. R. T. is, in this year, a resident of Oklahoma City and president of the Mid-Continental Life Insurance Co. (of Oklahoma). O.E. is its treasurer. In 1918 O.E. is selling land via the American Land Corp and is vice president of R.T. Stuart & Co. By 1930 the former entity is named the American Land Company with I.W. Wine, manager. Otis was either a widower or had a divorce, for he later brought to the Valley a daughter, Mary Kelsey Stuart, who was born 6/9/1914 in Bridgeport, CT. Grace Enos Burgess with her oldest child, Jeanne LaVerrier Burgess (b.1915) and her younger brother, Leslie Verry Burgess (b.11/30/19, d. June 1986) are in the Valley by September 1924. Jeanne had started her schooling in January 1922 at the Rose City Park School in Portland, Oregon. Grace's family, including her grandfather, William Augustus Verry, were pioneer settlers and farmers in Tazewell County, Illinois. Grace is the widow of a preacher. How Otis and the petit, attractive Grace met is unknown, but they were
married in September 1926. Within several years Otis adopted Leslie and Jeanne, and their surname changed to Stuart.

One of Otis's business enterprises as gleaned from a business letterhead says American Investment Corporation of Texas, Established 1900, Capital Paid Up $500,000, Harlingen Texas. Its officers are listed as O. E. Stuart, president; D. W. Schuepbach, secretary; R.T. Stuart, treasurer and chairman of the board; Al Parker, sales manager. Directors are Raymond C. Gee, V.P. Fort Worth National Bank; Woods Christian, President First National Bank of Brownsville, Texas.

It is in the year 1918 that Myra Deeder and Fred Crawford Doane arrived to take up farming in Stuart Place. He will farm citrus and other crops here and around Combes. With them is daughter Margaret Louise (born 7/13/06 in Pikes County, IL) and perhaps sister Wilma and brothers Kitchel Fred and Kermit Carl. Margaret will attend Stuart Place School then go on to obtain a teaching degree from South Texas State Teachers College in Kingsville where she will meet and marry Gustav E. Miller. He will die in 1974, and she, an active member of the First Christian Church, at age 99 on 5/21/06. Surviving are her daughter Annelle Doane Clausen and son Bruce. Annelle becomes well known for her genealogy and history activities including a weekly column in the Valley Morning Star.

1918 was the year that Alonzo Thomas Withers and his wife Hettie Alice settled in Stuart Place. They brought with them baby daughter Sarah Kathryn who had been born in Marceline, Mo on 10/5/1917. She would be graduated from the Stuart Place School in 1936. She would be employed by Dan Murphy of the Magnolia Oil Company of Harlingen in the late 1930s and early 1940. Later in her life she would work for the First National Bank of Harlingen, and the Rio Grande Building and Loan Association from 1951 to 1976. She married Martin B. Perkins in 1941. He was on his 15th mission when he was shot down over Germany and as a result died in 1944. She married Marvin E. Day in 1947 and bore him a daughter, Mary Alice (later Qualls). She divorced him in 1951 and married Roger Hampton in 1976. He was to die in 1985 and Sarah 4/30/08.

Some time before 1920, the population of rural Leeland to the west of Harlingen had grown enough that a school was warranted. A frame building consisting of two large rooms to serve all grades was erected at the corner of what is now HYW. Business 83 and Altas Palmas Road. Before 1923 this facility was being outgrown by the rising student population, so a one-room frame building was added to hold the first and second grades. It is around this year that Samuel Emmons Van Burkleo, wife Mary Jane Penn, and children Ben, Elizabeth, Dora, Hugh Perry, Christina, and Tracy move to Stuart Place from Altus, Oklahoma. He will become a teacher at the school.

In November 1920 after viewing the land offered for sale, wheat farmer Joseph J. Garrett comes back to the Harlingen area where he takes up farming southwest of town. He and his family have taken 11 days to travel from Wakita, Oklahoma to the Valley. He is the oldest resident of the area as attested by the fact that Judge Dancy names Garrett Road after him. Wed 10/2/01, he and his wife Grace will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary in October 1961. Their adopted daughter upon marriage to Talmadge will become Mrs. Ruth Franklin whose mentally challenged son is Dwayne. J.J., who was vice-president of the Stuart Place School Board when it first commenced in 1923, is to die in 1967 and Grace in 1971. Both are buried in Restlawn Memorial Cemetery near La Feria.
Traveling with the Garrett family is Wakita businessman Charles Rollie Guthrie, his wife Maude Edna Thompson Guthrie, 15 year old Viola born in a log cabin at Dillon, Colorado and perhaps her some of her siblings including brothers Floyd and Leonard and sisters Geneviere and Juanita. Having moved to Oklahoma in 1910 the family left Wakita, OK to come to the Valley and settle on land purchased in Stuart Place. Viola, one brother and her sisters attended the Stuart Place School where Viola was among those in the first graduating class of the school in 1924. On the 75th anniversary of the school in March 1999 she was honored as the only surviving member of her class. She went on to San Marcos Teachers College and Texas A & I University, teaching first graders back in the Stuart Place school for three years upon being graduated. She married Clovis E. Johnson on 4/17/34 in Raymondville. He was to die in 1970 as would all of Viola's siblings before she succumbed at age 99 on 2/24/05. She had no children but did have numerous nieces and nephews. She worked at Montgomery Ward, the St. Paul Lutheran Church and the Judy-Lin Motel, and was a member of the Church of Christ as well as the Valley Baptist Hospital Auxiliary. Descendents Matthew and Catherine Weber, great-great grandchildren, of Charles and Maude still live on the original farm property.

It is the fall of this year that Oyer Robert Burns and his wife Nora Belle Hitt Burns together with their children O.J., Ethelene, and Ray move to the Stuart Place area. They had been married in 1911. Five more of their children were to be born there. Also coming with them were Mr. Burn's brothers Clyde and Troy and his nephew Landers Walker. They had shipped all of their possessions here by rail. These included horses, cows, hogs, chickens and one billy goat. Oyer was employed by the Stuart Land Company as a foreman in charge of land clearing and preparation of farm plots. Large plows pulled by eight mules were used to turn the soil. The laborers were primarily "wetbacks." It was in 1925 that the Burns planted trees along Fair Park Drive, Harlingen in order to beautify the area. For sixteen years the Burns lived in company housing. When Oyer retired he built a home on his son Frank's ranch in Primera near the Wilson School. While he died in 1957, his wife, who was born in Tyler on 1/24/1891, would live on to celebrate her 95th birthday in 1986.

On 6/19/21 a $50,000 bond issue is voted by Stuart Place residents to construct a schoolhouse. It will be paid for by a 75 cent per $100 property valuation tax increase according to Cameron County School Superintendent P. D. Kennamer. Bob and O. E. Stuart donate 10 acres of land for its site. The school is scheduled to be completed by January 1, 1922. Mrs. Hugh Fitzgerald is president of the board and Mrs. R. D. Corn secretary. The former is one of the few women in the state to hold such a position. B. A. Elwing and Roy Mulhausen, architects of San Benito and Harlingen, have submitted plans for a modern building to serve the 185 scholars presently enrolled in the district. The same architects have designed the $50,000 new Harlingen High School. The 216' x 145' Stuart Place structure will have two wings each holding eight classrooms and be constructed by W. T. Liston and Son. The LRGV Citrus Growers Exchange is organized on 5/23/22 by O. E. Stuart, vice president of the Stuart Place Marketing Organization. Nine hundred growers are to participate in it. A supplement to Monty's Monthly in 1922 is titled "The Citrus Tree, Facts and Potentials of the Lower Rio Grande Valley's Great Industry." An ad on its back cover is for the Lower Rio Grande Citrus Exchange, obviously shortened from the above.
Its notes as its officers: J. A. Hickman, president; O. E. Stuart, vice president; H. H. Banker, Secretary; and directors R. J. Thomas, A. H. Kalbfleisch, W. A. Comp, D. A. Cleveland W. G. Rice, and Charles Volz.

In the Lee Land Tract by 6/8/22, land is being leased for oil and gas exploration, but 5,000 acres are needed before a driller will come in.

By 12/19/22, with W. T. Hodge originating the idea, the Valley Mid-Winter Fair is officially commenced in Harlingen to celebrate and promote agriculture. In this, and the next four years, Bob Stuart of Stuart Place works diligently to promote the success of the fair. In a looser manner a fair was conducted in the winter of 1921 and featured a parade which would become an annual attraction. A series of post cards document the parade and its viewers. Assisting Stuart in the 1924 fair are Will G. Fields, manager; Sam Botts, treasurer; Dr. J. T. Traylor, veterinarian. On the executive committee this year are John T. Lomax, S. Findlay Ewing, H. H. Burchard, R.T. Stuart, Al Parker, J. R. Roberts and Sam Botts. By 1929 when Sam Botts is Fair president and John Floor its secretary the program lists it as the Ninth Annual Fair. One Harlingen Star item in 1921 notes a C of C meetings concerning the fair. Held annually at the end of November or first two weeks of December, it continues annually through 1950. The week-long fair is a major event for Harlingen and opens with a festive parade. Its location by 1930 is Fair Park Blvd. near the present Municipal Auditorium. The fair then uses Lon C. Hill's spacious barn built at Fair Park for its office and headquarters. Hill constructed the barn of brick from his own brick plant on the arroyo.

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Part III: The Community and Its Schools Grow

The building at 2 ½ Miles West Business 83 which housed the Lone Star Restaurant and once was the Sorrento Restaurant is an historic one. Initially, likely a large white- painted stucco two story, it was constructed in 1923 for Hesta Stuart Christian, a daughter of Champ Terry Stuart and sister of Robert Terry Stuart, the principle in the development of the Stuart Tract. She married Woods Christian in 1923. The property extended all the way south to the arroyo and was mostly brush. Cattle were run on it. The Stuart Place School was dedicated in 1923. On the stone monument commemorating it are inscribed the names of the school board. They are: O.E. Stuart, president, J. J. Garrett, vice-president, Mrs. Hugh Fitzgerald, Secretary, W.H. Maupin, I.B. Corns, and H.C. West. A year later with the first graduated class comes the school's first edition of its annual, "Hoja de Palma". The school building will become the gathering place for the rural residents of the area and even be used for church activities. By 1928 the school will be fully accredited.

In the year 1925 Stuart Place is being promoted by the Stuart Place Demonstration Club. It is joined the next year by the Clio Demonstration Club and in 1928 by the South O' Harlingen Demonstration Club.

At the PTA meeting of 10/8/26 Supt. Butler of the Stuart Place School notes that the addition of four more credits this school year will bring the total to 17 ½ or 18.
The Harlingen High School 1927 graduating class has its banquet at the Reese-Wil-Mond Hotel then travels to the Stuart Place Clubhouse to hold its Senior Dance. The United Growers Exchange of Harlingen completes a fruit packing shed at Stuart Place on 10/4/28. It will be operated by Wallace, Shannon & Co.

In a pre-Christmas November 1928 sale Harper and Fitzgerald, packers and shippers of fruit along the rail line at Stuart Place, advertise gift fruit boxes for $1.50 and up.

I.B. Corns of Stuart Place was named one of ten master farmers in the state on 12/14/28. A native of Indiana and a Purdue University graduate he came to the Valley nine years ago and cleared his 40-acre parcel then maximized its productivity.

A sad note was written when Lee Holloway a, Stuart Place grad and a basketball team player between the years 1929 and 1931, when only 11 grades were offered, died shortly after graduation of meningitis.

Jack Funk's father had come here in 1923 and bought 40 acres at Stuart Place on Palm Drive. It required clearing and was then used to raise vegetables. Three years after his 1931 arrival Jack graduated Stuart Place High School along with his future wife Loyce. He worked for the Producers Gin Co. on Commerce Street in 1937, enlisted in the Navy, and after the war commenced farming east of Lyford before investing in the Sebastian Cotton Gin Co. His two sons Jerry and Tommy became successful cotton and sugarcane farmers and ginners. Tommy was recognized across the country as president for some years of the National Cotton Council.

In memory of Elizabeth Raines Stuart, Champ Stuart's wife, members of the family who founded the Stuart Place development dedicate, on 1/4/31, a pipe organ to the First Methodist Church South.

The Otis Stuart children attend the Stuart Place School from its earliest days. At the time Texas grade schools only have eleven grades. Kelsey will not complete her grade school days here because her parents send her on to St. Mary's Hall preparatory in San Antonio to ensure that she is prepared for college. She apparently is the proverbial "handful" as a teenager. While she does well at St. Mary's the headmistress indicates that she needs additional work if she is to be accepted in a New England woman's college. Kelsey, in 1932, instead opts for the University of Texas and receives her degree from it in June 1936.

Jeanne takes another route to college. She attends St. Mary's for one year in 1930-31 and returns to the Stuart Place School. In the years 1933-34 and 34-35 she attends Brownsville Junior College then enters the Incarnate Word College in San Antonio. From it she transfers to the H. Sophie Newcombe Memorial College of Tulane University of Louisiana, New Orleans. She receives her BA degree from this school on 6/8/38.

Brother Leslie in the meantime is attending Texas A & M College where he is a senior in 1937-38.

Both Kelsey and Jeanne will have long careers as teachers while Leslie will go on to farm, own a citrus grove in Mission, and operate a grove care service called La Homa Development & Care Corp., Mission. Kelsey will have local teaching jobs in Mission, Mercedes, and Harlingen. In World War II she joins the Navy and is commissioned as an officer in the Waves.

In the early 1930s some of the senior high teachers at Stuart Place include: Mrs. R. E. Rader, trigonometry; V. G. Morrell, history; Margaret Thompson, chemistry; Mattie Belle McIntire, physical ed; Mrs. Mary(?) Davis, chemistry 5; D. M. Denton, civics;
Aleen Coe Hamilton, English; and C. Neighbors, typing. Other teachers and homeroom counselors include Joe H. Wilson, Mrs. Jesse K. Liddell, Mrs. C. Fullick, and Mrs. Saunders. Mr. Denton is the school principal. Also teachers at this time or later were Johnnie Estelle Davis and Mary Elizabeth Mitchell.

In 1935 the Stuart Place Citrus Association shed burns down with a loss of $22,330 for the property and $23,134 for its contents.

In 1944 Kelsey Stuart is to meet and fall in love with Dale Fullenwider (b. 8/23/14, d. 4/5/96). He is a private at the Harlingen Army Air Field. He resided in Sun Valley, Idaho and had attended the University of Montana. They are married in the Stuart mansion at ¼ mile South Dilworth Road on 1/20/45. Though the marriage is short-lived, it produces one child, Fran, in November 1945.

Leslie apparently married in the early 1940s. His bride was Jane Lee Joyner, the daughter of Mrs. Oscar N. Joyner of Harlingen. The marriage and reception take place in the bride's residence at 613 E. Taylor Avenue, Harlingen. They will have two children, Terry Edmond, b. 1951 and Leslie Joyner, b. 1944, d. 1977.

In 1945 a short hagiography written by Henry G. Bennett is published. It is titled "This is Colonel Stuart, A Gentleman from Texas." It briefly extols the career of Robert Terry Stuart. He began as a salesman for the Pacific Mutual Insurance Co. in 1904 and a year later joined Equitable Life only to return to Pacific. He was a top salesman. At age 28 he became owner and president of American Home Life Insurance at Fort Worth but was to sell it in a few years to organize the Bankers Trust Co. Upon visiting the Valley he was quoted as saying "It is the apple of my Texas eye." In 1916 he sold his Dallas bank holdings and established the Mid-Continental Life Insurance Co. of Muskogee (OK). On April 1, 1926 he started construction of a $1/2 million home for the company in Oklahoma City. This handsome four-story building with a raised basement had in it an apartment to become his family residence. Located at the corner of 14th Street and Classen Blvd. this building is currently the home of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

This was written of his Valley holding: "Stuart Place at Harlingen is his largest development—a Texas Shangri La that runs the full gamut of ranching and farming interests…livestock, citrus, fine houses and game refuges. This tract of land originally included 11,122 acres and is one of the finest showplaces in the entire region." The Brahman Farm is later established by the Stuarts on the tract.

Zora Belle Moore Cope began teaching bilingual education to 9 to 13 year olds at the Stuart Place School in 1948. She did this for the years 1948 then taught fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in English. She had been graduated from San Marcos State Teacher's College with a degree in education and also a Master's Degree. She had come to Harlingen as a ten year old in 1925 with her parents Levy and Pearl Moore. Born in Floresville 4/28/15, she was to die 11/29/04 at age 89. Preceding her in death were her parents, her brothers William Presley Moore, Elvin Moore, Benjamin Yancy Moore, and Earl Moore; sisters Lillie McCarty, Jesse Stokes, and Nancy Riley. She worked as an elementary supervisor in the San Benito district and was then principal of the Fred Booth School before retiring in 1966 at age 70. In retirement she continued to teach, this time Adult Education for Spanish-speakers trying to learn English. Two children survived her. They are Jane Evelyn Dunn of Simonton and Richard Moore Cope of Victoria.

The Stuart Place Garden Club is formed on 2/16/49.
By 1950 the Harlingen school system has 5,662 students. This year sees the final integration of the Stuart Place School and the Wilson School of Primera into the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District. In this year also that O. E. Stuart is to die.

In the decade of the 50s some principals at the Stuart Place School are R. L. Nelson in 1952; Douglas E. Giles, 1956 (his wife Shirley M. is also a teacher, and they reside on Doane Road in the Stuart Place area); and Bobby Jo Southward, 1956-58.

In 1954, the never married Jeanne Stuart decides to accept a position as a teacher at an American dependents' school in Europe. It is the cold war period and American servicemen are stationed throughout this continent. Her first class will be 31 third graders. She is soon joined by sister Kelsey, who will teach two years in France and five years in England.

When the RGV Federation of Women's Clubs celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1963 a woman from Harlingen had often been its leader. These included Mrs. J. J. (Katherine) Murray (1933-35), whose husband was deputy collector of Cameron County Water District No. 1; Mrs. O. E. (Grace) Stuart (1939-44), whose husband was president of the American Land Co.

On May 31, 1963 Kelsey Stuart Fullenwider is to die suddenly of a heart attack at age 48. She was teaching at the American Dependents' School, Northwood, Middlesex, England. Her body is brought home for burial. Many attend her funeral service at St. Alban’s Episcopal Church in Harlingen. The loss may have been too traumatic for her sister Jeanne, for several weeks later she is hospitalized in Harlingen for ulcers. In June 1960 Kelsey's daughter, Fran, had been graduated from the 9th grade at the Bushy Hall American School in Bushy, Watford, England. She returned to Europe after her mother's death and was deeply involved with the theater. This included her time at the University of Maryland satellite campus in Munich, Germany and in 1965 with groups in England. She was pursued in letters from the United States by Gregg Lee, a longtime friend. With correspondence ending in 1965 it is unknown what transpired from this friendship. Fran would appear in minor roles in some very "far out" films. Grossly overweight, she became a media fascination after appearing in the cultish classic "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." She died of a coronary attack at age 51.

Around 1965 the old Wilson School at Primera is closed. Its elementary school students are bussed to either the Dishman or Stuart Place School. Higher-grade students go into Harlingen.

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Part IV: The Palm Valley Entity Transforms the Tract

The former Stuart Place Clubhouse at 7901 W. Business 83 is on Block 36, Section 139-198, 55.6 acres platted in 1921. It appears to have stayed in the hands of the Stuart family until 1969 when one McKinney purchased it from grandson, Christian Stuart. It and just under six acres was purchased by Charles and by Sonya Strader in 1981. The acreage
behind the old clubhouse was converted into a mobile home/RV park. In 2000 Mrs. Strader extensively renovated/restored the structure including leveling it.

On 1/12/59 a press release notes that $600,000 is planned for construction for Harvey Richards Field in the north end of the Stuart Place Subdivision. One half will come from the Federal Aeronautical Administration and one half locally according to C. Grant Klopenstein, chairman of the Harlingen Airport Board.

On 4/30/60 the Harvey Richard Municipal Airport is dedicated with its $70,000 terminal building that is but part of a $400,000 improvement program. Congressman Joe M. Kilgore gives the dedicatory address. Trans-Texas Airways is to move here on 7/1/60.

In late 1962 when the U.S. Air Force closes its operations at the Harlingen Air Force Base on the northwest side and close to the center of the city, city fathers opt to move the commercial air operations to this much larger field. Harvey Richards Field then becomes obsolete.

In 1967 the 300 or so members of the Harlingen Country Club offer the city, actually the Harlingen Development Corp., its burned out clubhouse and 3 ½ acres next to the municipal golf course plus $133,650 for the 150 acre site of the former Harvey Richards Field. Matt F. Gorges is secretary of the club at the time and also a member of the HDC. This will foresee a later major development in the Stuart Tract.

After obtaining 150 acres in what is to become Palm Valley Estates, the club in 1968 under its president Neal Bonner has contractor Frank Parker build a very stylish and enduring clubhouse. In late July 1969 with Matt Gorges as president, the club opens, and the course is inaugurated under its golf pro George McKay. The first golfers play the course on July 19, 1969.

By February 1971 Palm Valley Estates is going up, primarily of the south side, on 233 acres of the 383 acres located in the northeast side of the Stuart Place Subdivision. The clubhouse for its 150 acres golf course was completed last year. Van C. Snell leads the Harlingen Development Co. (HDC) group. On its steering committee are Newton Liddell, James Alexander, Hill Cocke, Sr., Fred Flynn, Karl Gibbons, Evan Hurst, and Frank Parker. The company was formed to develop, improve, and sell the balance of 233 acres for cottages, homes, town houses and other facilities. It already has 23 two-bedroom cottages plus 12 larger homes. Ninety of 200 home sites included in the first three units have been sold and a fourth with about 100 lots is being prepared. All have underground utilities.

On 4/1/76 the HDC sells the remaining unsold lots to developer Max Jones, who then foots the bills for security, trash pickup, and streetlights.

On 11/3/73 the Palm Valley Home Owners Association is formed with its first board members being Ed Marcum, Willis Jondal, Wilson Palmer, Malcolm Adams, and Eloise Goulet. Jack Funk had been chairman of the Palm Valley Estate Utility District. The HDC is anxious to exit the home real estate business. On 4/1/76 it sells the remaining unsold lots to developer Max Jones, who then foots the bills for security, trash pickup, and streetlights.

The community continues to grow with the continuing construction of upscale homes, townhouse and condominiums. Wanting to maintain its independence and possibly fearful that its neighbor, Harlingen, might absorb it, the town holds an election to incorporate itself. The vote to do so is 197 in favor and 160 opposed. A general law form
of government is set up. On 9/16/80 the City of Palm Valley with 383 acres, 150 which are in the golf course, is incorporated and in 1981 the city is granted a charter by the state. The property values at the time are $15,124,855. By 1998 the property values will have risen to $81,356,861. The census of year 2000 shows 1,299 people in the community.

Some of the individuals who have served as the city's mayor are Bliss Clark, John Puhl (who served for 10 years), Charles Burd, James Matz, and Dean Hall. It is proposed on 1/15/81 by Lubunski Associates that the Stuart Place School be demolished and replaced by a new 20-unit classroom building. The 57-year old structure is deemed too costly to renovate. It currently serves 503 students in overcrowded classrooms. It is demolished, save for the retention of its original entrance and entrance hall.

As the 21st Century commences in 2001, the Stuart Place Tract sees a quantum leap in the number of residences built upon it and the continuation of this trend. Along the west side of Stuart Place Road across from Palm Valley commercial firms and strip malls are constructed. In late 2007 the state widens and repaves this road from HWY 83 to Wilson Road. Earlier, the north border of the tract, Wilson Road, had also been widened and repaved to provide a major east-west thoroughfare. HWY 83 and Business 83 that split the tract in two were also extensively improved in the years 2006-2008. The latter was widened to five lanes and sidewalks constructed on its south side. Another indication of the population growth in this area is that in 2006 the Moises Vela Middle School is constructed on Palm Blvd, just south of Business 83. Its construction required $13 million.

By late 2004 the greatly growing school population has put the district under a strain. Construction projects under way include: Austin and Bowie Elementary Schools, classroom renovations by 1/05; Stuart Place and Wilson Elementary schools.

It is on 3/29/08, at age 59, that Cheryl Card Gray, daughter of former Mayor Bill Card and Garrison Card dies after a long battle with cancer. Thirty-five years of her life were with the HCISD. She was the first director of the HOSTS Program and for 18 years principal of the Stuart Place Elementary School, ending here in 2004. She leaves behind her husband Harold Gray, her parents, and siblings. Her successor as principal is Vivian Bauer.

When Hurricane Dolly hit South Texas on 8/23/08, its winds of up to 85 mph took their toll. The clubhouse/restaurant/meeting building of the Harlingen Country Club in Palm Valley was considerably damaged. It was decided to demolish the structure and build a new but smaller facility. The hacienda-style clubhouse opened on October 2010.