

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Daniel L. Pavlas**

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Interviewers: Jane Goodsill and Bradley Stavinoha

Transcriber: Sylvia Vacek

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17 Pages



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Transcript

GOODSILL: Today is April 29, 2016; my name is Jane Goodsill, and I interviewing Dan Pavlas for the first time in Needville, Texas, for the Fort Bend County Historical Commission.

Let's start with your date of birth.

PAVLAS: I was born July 3, 1930.

GOODSILL: How did your family get to America?

PAVLAS: My dad and mom were born here, but my grandpas from both sides came here from Czechoslovakia, I don't remember what year. My father was Julius Pavlas and my mother was Frances Brazda.

My grandpa's last name was Felix from Czechoslovakia. He lost his wife and remarried and I don't know who he remarried to be honest, I wasn't here at the time [both chuckle].

GOODSILL: So Felix came to America. Do you know the story on how he came?

PAVLAS: No, ma'am, I sure don't. I'm sure they landed in Galveston and migrated down to Fayette County.

GOODSILL: Is that where your father, Julius was born?

PAVLAS: Yes, and I think the Brazda family did the same thing. They moved to a place called Engle near Praha.

GOODSILL: What was Frances' father's name, do you know?

PAVLAS: Joe.

GOODSILL: So Joe was the grandfather, then Frances and then came your wife. What is your wife's name?

PAVLAS: Gloria Hurta.

GOODSILL: Good. Which family do you want to start with?

PAVLAS: I am really not up and up too much on grandpa Felix, except he had a polka band called Bass Band. They played marches and some of the Strauss. He wrote a lot of the music with a feather (quill). In those years there weren't any pens, so he dipped the feather in the ink. I don't think my dad was born at this time but when my dad was nine, he picked up a trumpet.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A quill pen is a writing implement made from a moulted flight feather (preferably a primary wing-feather) of a large bird. Quills were used for writing with ink before the invention of the dip pen, the metal-nibbed pen, the fountain pen, and, eventually, the ballpoint pen.

According to the Supreme Court Historical Society, 20 goose-quill pens, neatly crossed, are placed at the four counsel tables each day the U. S. Supreme Court is in session. Most lawyers appear before the Court only once, and gladly take the quills home as souvenirs." This has been done since the earliest sessions of the Court.



-- *Wikipedia*

I have an Uncle Adolph who is second oldest in that family, and then Uncle Willie and there was Uncle Rudolph, he was the oldest, and Uncle Louis.

GOODSILL: So Felix had a bass band. Where did they play?

PAVLAS: They played mostly at church and bazaars and picnics.

GOODSILL: Is this how he made his living or was it just for fun?

PAVLAS: They were all farming. I had part of the farm, but I sold my part to my youngest son, Darryl.

GOODSILL: He was the first in the generation that you knew that started playing music. Did you father play music as well?

PAVLAS: Definitely.

GOODSILL: Tell me about that.

PAVLAS: He was nine years old and I remember my mother telling me about my dad playing with different bands when he was nine in shorts and everybody else was dressed up in long pants. He played with a group called the Frank Starry Bass Band from Flatonia, Texas.

I remember them telling me that when it was field work time they would send daddy home at night, 10 or 11 o'clock, to go practice. He got to be pretty good and was the leader of the Goldchain Bohemians later on.

GOODSILL: Really, the Goldchain Bohemians, around 1935.

PAVLAS: That's when they got put on the radio. There is a whole story on how he got auditioned in San Antonio and they won the contest. Then they had to go back and some of the guys didn't want to go back so he had to drum up some new musicians and he got these guys to go. It was a band called Lee Prause with Big Lee on the trombone. He had a big time band; I guess that's what you would call it. He played mostly modern music. Mr. Closel had a band and he also is a music instructor down there in Schulenburg.

GOODSILL: Did they become pretty famous?

PAVLAS: Pretty much. Well, according to his schedule, I think they played 14 nights in a row. They had a bus, they were contracted out by Universal Mills out of Fort Worth who produced Gold Chain flour and Red Chain feeds, cattle feeds and so they needed a band.

GOODSILL: Why did they need a band?

PAVLAS: For commercials. They wanted a radio program. At that time, Bob Wills was going strong, Texas Play Boys and Sons of the Pioneers. They auditioned in San Antonio and they got called back for another audition but some of the guys didn't want to go, so he picked up all these guys and they said, "We will go," so they went over there and won the contest.

GOODSILL: Did that turn into a full time gig for them?

PAVLAS: Yes, it did. They did advertising and commercials. They had radio programs every morning from 8 o'clock to 8:15. They would go to Schulenburg to the Cosey Theater and play live and this was all transmitted on the telephone to stations in San Antonio from Schulenburg, Dallas, Corpus, and Houston. Then on Sundays they would play from 1 to 1:45, forty-five minutes. The first program was in November 1935. They went on every day and every night and they shut the season down to play for them in June or May of 1937. So all this time we were living at the farm and he had to get to Schulenburg on country muddy roads, so he quit farming and we moved to Engle. My mother's brother had a house there and grandpa, her daddy, had a house, so we moved into that house and he had access to get to town every day.

GOODSILL: Excellent. He must have loved making his living doing music? [Both laughing]

PAVLAS: It was fun even for us. I remember one Easter he came home and us kids had picked a #3 tub full of bluebonnets and what they call red blankets and we made a nest and he had a big chocolate rabbit, I mean it was huge and it was hollow inside, and all four of us kids got a chocolate rabbit that he brought home. So that was good – he made quite a bit of money.

GOODSILL: So when that finished, what did he do to make a living?

PAVLAS: He changed bands. From there he went to a western band. There were four brothers in Holstein, Texas, which is near LaGrange, and they were the Havelka Brothers. They all were musically inclined and so they started a country band. Daddy dropped the coronet because he had periodontitis in his teeth, so he couldn't play his trumpet with compression type.

Daddy had to blow hard. So he lost his teeth and I remember when I was a little boy, we had to come all the way to Boling. At that time, there was a dentist here in Boling and he pulled his teeth and they had a bottle of whiskey and that was the only deadening stuff they had. Anyhow, he picked up the accordion and he started playing the accordion.

GOODSILL: He was very musical.

PAVLAS: That was during World War II. They were making *beaucoup* (translation: a lot) money.

GOODSILL: People wanted entertainment.

PAVLAS: Absolutely. Good bands were hard to find.

GOODSILL: This was your daddy's full time job as a musician?

PAVLAS: Yes. The accordion is on display right now and I wound up with it. After a bunch of abuse I donated it to the Schulenburg Polka Museum.

GOODSILL: That's nice.

PAVLAS: When he went country western, we went back to the farm. When the radio job ceased we moved from Engle back to the farm. The guy that was renting the farm was doing a sorry job, he wasn't chopping no cotton and let everything grow up with weeds. Daddy didn't like that at all, so we moved back over there and he was farming and playing.

He had a good drummer named, Emil Palmer. Mr. Palmer decided he didn't want to play anymore and this was on a Saturday and my daddy had a job in Dime Box, Texas. I was 17 or so I think, and he said, "I don't have a drummer but Mr. Palmer said we could use his drums, so YOU are the drummer." I said, "I hadn't played any drums!" He said, "You will learn."

He picked up his accordion for two hours and we played in the hall in our house. He played all these different kind of polka and waltzes and some modern and each song had a different beat which I had to learn, he showed me how to do it. So after two hours he said, "Okay, you are good." So we got into the car and drove through Schulenburg, LaGrange, and Giddings, turned right in Giddings to Dime Box. We got there and had a real good crowd. After the dance I got \$6.25 [both chuckle], my part.

GOODSILL: Were you rich?

PAVLAS: There was an all-night cafe in Giddings and we stopped over there and I had a bowl of chili and a glass of milk for a quarter. I came home with six bucks. [Both laughing] It was the best day of my life. The most money I had ever made. It was fun.

GOODSILL: Did you start playing music from then on?

PAVLAS: Well, not at that time. I played with dad on whatever gigs he had. Then I got married in '53 to my wife Gloria.

STAVINOHA: Why don't you tell us about Korea?

PAVLAS: Well, in July of '52, I got drafted and there were 88 of us at the induction center on Fannin Street in Houston. Some of the guys I knew, some were from Fayetteville and LaGrange, and there was one, Bob Lilly from Flatonia. We were all standing there in formation and this guy walks in and said, "OK, not all of y'all are going into the Army. I need 13 guys for the Marines. Do I have any volunteers?" Lilly rose up his hand. So he picked out 15 guys. I was hiding.

I did not want to go to the Marines, and he said, "Are you coming with me? The rest of y'all go down to the train station and get on the train there." So we wound up at Fort Sam Houston for three days of processing. After that we kind of split up, but most of us went to Fort Bliss in El Paso and there was snow on the ground in February there. So we got there, Logan Heights was what they called it, for basic training. We left at 3 a.m. in the morning and you go in the drill field and you pick your gun and you run around for about an hour and half. 5 o'clock you lay the gun down and you go eat breakfast. So we went through basic training there and after six or eight weeks of that you wound up down below at advanced training there and they put me in radio communications.

I had two weeks furlough after that because we were through with advanced basic. My favorite uncle was in town and we drank a few beers there and I had a date that night in LaGrange and I said, "I need to go home and change clothes." I left and went back through Schulenburg. This guy made it a habit of driving to town and staying there all day with a couple of mules and a wagon. No tail light, no nothing and I was barreling out of Schulenburg into LaGrange and I topped the hill over there and there he was.

I am going pretty fast and I could not stop in time. I slid with my brakes and I hit him. I saw him fly over the windshield. Well, it was a shock to me! I wound up on the side and I had a two door car and one door is on the ground and the other one is up there and for God sake I couldn't get it open. So I crawled in the back seat and rolled the window down and here came a car toward me. I said, "Oh, no." and those Schlender boys were just leaving and they saw what had happened. They ran out there right quick and flagged that car down. I got out of there and of course here come the police [both laughing] and I tell you what, I am in the service. "I got orders to leave for San Francisco and then to Korea." The officer said, "You are not going anywhere. Your car skidded 121 feet, you killed a mule and the other one is cut up pretty bad and the man is laying out there on the highway. He is unconscious; I don't know what is going to happen to him."

So they put me in the back of that police car and here I go, thinking they might put me in jail at Schulenburg. When we get to town, he said, "Where do you want to get out?" Frank's Place was right there on the corner, so I said, "I will get out right here." He let me out. So I called some of my friends in Engle and daddy and Mr. Irvin Stavinoha came and picked me up. I caught the train in Sealy, Texas, that took me to San Francisco and met all of my buddies that I took basic with and got on the *USS Mann*, a beautiful ship, a double decker.

After 13 days on the water, we wound up in Fusan, Korea. We got off the ship there and they put us on a train and we left Fusan bound for Seoul, the capital of Korea. We get down there and they sorted everybody out. Eight of us wound up together and I didn't know any of these guys, got on trucks and took us to the front line.

I wound up at the 25th Infantry Division, 21st Triple A. It is an aircraft division, three miles behind the front line. There is an ammo track there so I was radio operator for a pretty good while, and after that I became a jeep driver. I drove a Major Ted Winkle and we visited every battery on the front line almost every day unless he had a meeting with the Turks.

GOODSILL: Did you like that job?

PAVLAS: Yes, I did. We washed our jeep down at the river, kept it cleaned and he liked that and I tried to stay dressed nice, just for him.

We rarely had to shoot anything but we had the gun there ready to go. We relayed radio messages to all four batteries, Abel, Baker, Charlie and Dog. We had radio contact with them all the time, and somebody was on duty at all times.

But to get to the bad part, which I will never forget, I drove him for a few months. On Christmas Eve, you got a picture of this, Christmas Eve at 11:30 at night and me and a buddy of mine, Anthony, were sitting on the hillside behind the tents. We were still at headquarters and we had a bottle of Canadian Club and we were singing, because it is Christmas 1952.

So here comes my major climbing up the hill. I saw that big star on his helmet and he said, "PFC Pavlas," I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Go to the motor pool, they are waiting on you, and take a half track." A half track is a truck and half tank and on the back of it, it's got a turret and there are four 50 caliber machine guns on the back. "We had just had a direct hit in Baker battery, killed the gunner and the driver; you need to take a half track back and replace the one that was hit, which is 11 miles up there." "Well, sir, can I have a shotgun rider or somebody to go with me?" "We don't have anybody available. You have to do it on your own and don't waste no time. Get your luggage, your duffle bag, your gun, and get down there in the motor pool, get on that thing and get going." "Yes, sir." My buddy said, "Hey Pav, (they called me Pav) take it easy and good luck."

I got down to the motor pool; they had that half-track ready. Of course there is snow everywhere, you know in December. So I get out and find the road out of the compound and I start going. I am maintaining speed about 10 to 15 miles per hour, which is about top speed for a half track [laughing]. I am going minding my own business and about three miles down the road, WOOF, the shell hit right in front of me in the ditch on the right side. I couldn't figure out what the hell that was, so I keep on going. It didn't take a couple of seconds, WOOF, another one in the left ditch and that stopped me. God was with me.

The third one would have been right on top of me if I had kept on going. So I hooked a left and got into that ditch and went around that hole, got across on the other side of that hole, and it dawned on me, "Hey, basic training, slow, fast, slow, fast. I did that for the rest of the way and they quit shooting at me. Finally after five miles, I start climbing up the hill where Baker Battery was and those guys were waiting on me.

Each half track had a winch in the front of it, so I pulled the winch out and didn't even get mine turned around and backed up in that hole and somebody climbed up, another gunner, and started shooting. I stayed on the line for six months [both laughing] drawing combat pay and just doing my thing.

GOODSILL: What was your thing?

PAVLAS: We couldn't shoot at them, we would see them in the daytime and I am sure they saw us but we had to wait for orders to shoot. You cannot fire anything until you are told to fire. So we were just eating and living in a hole and once a week they would come and pick us up in the truck, take us down to the river and we could take a bath and clean up and sometimes they had showers.

GOODSILL: Cold.

PAVLAS: Cold, yes. But the people at that time they lived in huts and this is a one room hut and you walk in the front and there is nothing in there but a hole in the corner, about 3 foot by 3 foot, probably about 3 or 4 feet deep, that is their urinal. Once or twice a week they would come out with an oxen and a big wooden cart and dipped that out and take it out to the rice field. That's how those people lived.

So I stayed there for six months and got my 36 points and came home in October on the *USS Pope*. There were six hundred of our guys that were prisoners up there on the same ship and they were roped off on top deck.

GOODSILL: Why? Were you not supposed to talk to the POW's?

PAVLAS: They didn't want us talking to the guys.

GOODSILL: Why?

PAVLAS: Just military. I got discharged in October.

GOODSILL: After all that war pay, you might be rich.

PAVLAS: I was getting 60 dollars a month, combat pay while I was sitting in that hole. So I had \$1,200 dollars when I got out and bought a car, [both laughing] a '53 Ford, standard shift, Crown Victoria, beautiful car.

STAVINOHA: When you were growing up, did you speak Czech or English?

PAVLAS: Oh, we talked Czech, yes we did.

STAVINOHA: English or Czech at school?

PAVLAS: School was English.

GOODSILL: So you come home and buy a car.

PAVLAS: So I came home and bought a car and my youngest sister was waiting for me to come home from overseas. She was dating, and they were going to have a wedding in the fall in Needville.

So that wedding day, me and my brother were in town drinking beer and I said, "Man we don't have a gift or anything." But we knew Edna Schmik that worked at the drug store down there. So we went into the drug store and bought a nice dish and I remember it cost a bunch of money, but we didn't care.

So we got there before intermission time, at the American Legion Hall, and there was this good-looking gal dancing. I told my brother, "Hot damn, look at that!" And he said, "Go get her. So I went and tagged in. In those years you could tag in, cut in on people, so I cut in on her. We danced. I had on a navy blue sports coat and gray pants. I was looking good.

It didn't take long, that guy came back and cut in on me. I went back and cut in and he let go. I am not going to mention his name. It didn't take any time he came back and cut in on me. I said, "Hey, buddy this is not going to work. You need to go sit down or go find somebody else." Gloria said, "You shouldn't do that, it makes me look bad." "No, you are looking good with me!" [both laughing].

GOODSILL: And you married her?

PAVLAS: We got married July 9, 1955. Right here at St. Michael's.

GOODSILL: So what kind of work did you do?

PAVLAS: At that time I worked for Hurta Truck Line based out of Weimar. They had a line from Houston to San Antonio and in between. So I worked there before I got drafted and after I got back I was still driving pick-up and delivery for them in Houston. One day I am at Humble Oil and Refinery on my route, loading up tires and batteries when this big fellow, Alfred Dietrich, who was a big football star for A&M, came out there and said, "How would you like to come to work for Humble Oil? We need guys like you." Because I worked like a mule; I am used to hard work. I said, "I can I start in the morning."

He said, "No, [laughing] first of all, you have to take a physical downtown. If you pass then notify your boss and give him two weeks' notice. After two weeks you come and work for us." So I did that, my boss at the truck line, Mr. Otto Seiler, was one of the best. He was a jolly fellow, but he loved his beer.

So I got on with Humble Oil in July, 1956, and I was what they called a state truck driver, delivering tires, batteries, automobile accessories, cases of oil and lube oil. I drove a truck that had 580 gallons of diesel fuel on the back. Nobody wanted that job.

GOODSILL: Why didn't anyone want that job?

PAVLAS: It's nasty, diesel, it's greasy and slick, and pumping in a ship and a lot of times a ship would be in port and they would order 400 or 500 gallons of galley fuel, which they called diesel fuel. Anyhow, I did that and then after a while they said, "Why don't you drive a tank truck? "I don't know, I have never driven an 18-wheeler." So he said, "You need to go." So I did. I transferred over there and drove an 18-wheeler.

GOODSILL: I bet there was a pay raise with that?

PAVLAS: It was shift work, which I did not like. Over there I had a day job. I don't remember what the pay raise was.

STAVINOHA: Did you play music at this time?

PAVLAS: I did. I played music with Frank Nietche and Karl Matejka. Let me tell you something. One day I was sitting at home at 8 PM and the phone rang. I picked it up and this guy said, "Are you Dan Pavlas?" He told me who he was and he was in bad need of a drummer.

GOODSILL: Again you got called as a drummer.

PAVLAS: I did play pretty good drums in those years. He saw me at Houston Ziegler Pop, a big German outfit. He said, "You are going to rehearse or record in the daytime and play five nights a week and get paid every week. Pay is good and the pay is there." At that time I had two sons and I said, "Let me think about this." The next day I called him back and said the wife and I talked about it and it is just too much for me being away from my family almost every night and I was not going to do it. So after that, I still played with Karl Matejka.

My sons were two years apart. Greg got a trumpet for his birthday and two years later, David got a saxophone for his birthday. So they had their instruments with them when we dropped them off while my wife and I went on vacation. While we were gone, my dad wrote out first and second part to "If I Was a Bird Polka."

When we got back, the boys couldn't wait to show us what they could do. They pulled out that music and started playing beautiful harmony. At that time I was playing drums messing around the house and they said, "Dad, you need to get an accordion."

Well, Mike Guest found one down the street, a nice Riccordi and it was a good looking accordion. I brought it home and started messing around with it and got to playing by memory. Mike came along and some guys and we started messing around at beer joints. This Spanish guy came over and wanted to know if we knew *Rancho Roundy*. It is a Spanish Polka.

The boys were probably like 14, so they started playing it and he came over and dropped a \$20 bill [laughing]. Oh, my goodness, they thought the world! "Can we play that all night?" [all laughing]. So we picked up a little money like that, for weddings and anniversaries.

Polka music was kind of dying out. So they said "We need to get some guitars." Greg picked up a steel guitar, David on a standard guitar and Darryl was already on drums. Mike picked up bass guitar and we started playing country music. You ought to hear my band. We made one record; it has two polkas and a waltz on it. Beautiful, nice songs.

GOODSILL: You don't still play?

PAVLAS: I mess around with it a little bit.

GOODSILL: But you don't go to any places to play?

PAVLAS: When Bradley wants me, I go. We make reunions but they don't want music. They say it is too loud and people don't get to visit. That's okay. I am glad to have a break.

But anyhow, Curtis Seaman, a district chief for the Houston Fire Department, had a retirement party on the 16th of this month. His brother, Frank, a preacher, played with us and Larry Candy played saxophone. So we had fun.

GOODSILL: It must have been fun playing with your sons.

PAVLAS: It was and we were so busy. Sometimes we had three jobs in three nights.

GOODSILL: You kept your full time job the whole time?

PAVLAS: Absolutely. I was a tanker driver, transport for Exxon. At first our tankers were 6,010 gallons and everything got bigger and bigger, so at the end our tanker trucks were holding 9,100 gallons of gasoline in five different compartments.

GOODSILL: Did that make it harder to drive?

PAVLAS: Not really. Now I look back, how in the heck did I do that?

GOODSILL: Did it take a lot of strength to be that kind of a driver?

PAVLAS: Power steering. We had all good equipment. We drove Mack's, Peterbilt's, and Freight Liners. We were always in competition with Dallas. Dallas had run about three million gallons of gas one month with one truck and my boss did not like that. He said, "We got to do better, we got to beat them." He picked up Ray Meyer, another guy and me and we stayed on that one truck, and we would haul like six loads a shift. 12 hour shifts, six in the daytime and six at night, so that is 12 loads in one day.

In March 1963 we hauled over three million gallons of gas. We shut them up over there in Dallas and that was the end of that. I became part time dispatcher after that.

GOODSILL: I bet you were good as a dispatcher.

PAVLAS: I was pretty good. I knew the city, I knew Houston from A to Z, and after that I made Fleet Safety Supervisor and driver trainer after that.

One morning, about 5 AM, I got to work and we had a bottom loading truck ready to load. I set a compartment at 2,000 gallons and it was an 18 tank compartment. The fuel didn't quit fit and it spewed all over me.

I was standing in the middle of it soaked with gasoline. I ran by and hit the panic button. I couldn't catch my breath because my lungs were full of gas. I could not get oxygen and they drug me under a shower and that really cut my air off. I hit one of them in the jaw and walked back to the station gasping for air. I finally got enough oxygen in my lungs to walk back to the office and told my boss, "You can have this job, I am through." He said, "What happened?" "I spilled 100 gallons."

They put me on as a driver trainer, with a company car. I had San Antonio and all of South Texas in my jurisdiction. One time I flew to L. A., San Francisco, Seattle and Phoenix all in one-week span. I did pretty well and I had fun.

Exxon asked me to retire at 53 years old after 28 years of service. They paid me a year salary. I had kids in high school, kids in college, my wife was working. I wasn't ready to retire so I started building stuff.

Then I developed throat cancer, in the vocal cord and I had 54 treatments of radiation with Dr. Rosenthal, a little short guy, who had a handle bar mustache, just the sweetest guy you ever saw at Rosewood Hospital on Westheimer. I went there every day except Saturday and Sunday for six weeks. They apparently got it all, I lost my voice but I still try to sing in the church.

My wife had six acres here in Needville and we bought her sister's six acres. That kept me busy. But you know at 53 years old, you do not get any kind of insurance until you get Medicare. So we were hurting and she quit her job when we moved here in '89. The bank account is going to the dogs.

My sister had retired at Sun and she worked at Sugar Land off of Highway 6 and she told me they needed a van driver to drive those kids paying \$1,000 a month. I get a call one day from Mr. Stavinoha, who owned Lad Pack. His driver, Rudy Paweleck, wants to retire and he needed someone that can talk Czech. I told Mr. Lad that I never sold sausage. "Yeah, but you talk good Czech and I need somebody like that." I said, "I can't do it, I am working for the school," and I told him to try and get somebody else. Three days later he called me back, "Daniel I can't find anybody, I need you now." I said, "OK, what does it consist of?" "Three days a week, you got a route selling sausage to Kroger and different places."

GOODSILL: Sell or deliver it?

PAVLAS: Deliver and sell.

GOODSILL: Why did you need to speak Czech?

PAVLAS: Well, some of these people in rural places, they liked you to talk Czech, and it worked. I did that for three years.

GOODSILL: That sounds like it would be fun.

PAVLAS: It was. I really enjoyed that because I got all the sausage I ever needed.

GOODSILL: You got to go back to your home language.

PAVLAS: That is another thing, when I got home from the service, I could not talk Czech because overseas there was nobody to talk Czech to. I had to stutter and think a while when I talked to my mom. She got a little mad thinking I was ashamed of my heritage. "No Mom, I have to think about it. I have not spoken that stuff for a year and I cannot grasp it right now."

GOODSILL: When you look back, what do you think is the most fun time of your life?

PAVLAS: I am 85 and I enjoyed every year of my life. I tell my wife many, many, many times that if I pass away tonight I will be happy. I have had my share of bad luck; two hip operations, one neck surgery, two back surgeries, I fought cancer in '74. They cut me real deep and I don't remember what year that was. So I have had my share of hard luck but the best years of my life, I guess would be raising five children. I enjoyed that.

GOODSILL: Will you tell us the names of your kids in order?

PAVLAS: My oldest son is Gregory, Greg is what we call him, he made one "B" all the way through Scarborough High School, got a Jesse Jones Scholarship for \$3,000 each year and he was salutatorian at Scarborough. He went to A&M and got a 3.69 average for four years. He made the Dean's List, every semester and got a job from Vector Power as an engineer. He was 16th out of 65 engineers in his class. We are proud of all our kids. Greg is still with Vector and he has a crew below him at the power plant in Bay City. He is married and got two kids. Are you ready for the next one?

GOODSILL: Ready.

PAVLAS: The next one is David, a smart boy, too. We sent him to A&M and he made good grades there, but never made the Dean's List. He majored and got a degree in business administration. He worked for Prudential Insurance for a while but is now with Toyota in the insurance department working with dealers not the public. He has three girls, one and a set of twins.

After that, we got a daughter, Trisha, she is special. She went to A&M and got a degree in teaching. She taught for several years and got promoted to assistant principal and then principal. She started some more education and got her master's degree but was not happy with that. So she went and got a Ph.D. in education. She is assistant superintendent at Crosby High School. She is wonderful and has one daughter.

Darryl is the youngest boy. He is an artist. In his portfolio he's got Tom Landry, Bob Lilly, Roger Staubach, and President Kennedy. He loves to draw horses with a pencil. He went to A&M but after a year and a half, he dropped out. He enrolled at the Houston Art Institute and he did great. Got all kinds of certificates. He knew some people at Fluor and got a job there. He told me the other day he has 25 years there. He is a computer draftsman. He has people below him. He has three girls. One is married now, the oldest one.

Then we take a break from having children for ten years. Then bingo, here comes Danette. We pulled her out of school in Houston and transferred her here to Needville. It was kind of hard for her, because she is the kind of girl that makes friends with everybody. She just has that kind of personality. She went to U of H and got a degree in communications. She is married, her husband is a sound engineer and he travels with different rock groups. They have one son.

When I was in primer I was tutored at home with my oldest sister. They moved me over from primer from first grade to second grade. So it is different things in life that you pick up on that is your talent. In high school I could sing. Schulenburg High School had probably 200 to 300 students and on Monday mornings we would have an assembly in the auditorium and they would always ask me to sing. Me and Danny Adicek. I remember singing Blue Skies. Now all of them are gone.

Me and my sister would sing some Czech songs on the stage. The kids loved it and everybody loved it. They made me the official song leader of the whole school. When we had our country band we were even called back to play a prom at Schulenburg High School.

GOODSILL: I love to hear your wonderful stories.

PAVLAS: Like I said a while ago, if I pass away tonight, I have had my fun and I have enjoyed it. My wife, Gloria, did not belong to the church and at that time we were pretty strict. Gloria and I were dating for about a year and half. I told her, "You know I love you and I would hate to lose you but we can't get married in a split church." So we broke up for two weeks. I got a letter in the mail from her that said that she had talked to the priest and was joining the church. "Will you come back?" Man, I got in that '53 Ford and drove down here fast! [both laughing]

PAVLAS: I have written the memories of my life. If you read it page by page, it will tell you how I got started, what kind of house I lived in and things that happened when I was a little boy.

Interview Ends.