

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **George R. Lasher**

Interview Date: 12/08/2014

Interviewer: Jane Goodsell

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: Historical Commission Office, Fort Bend County
Court House, Richmond, Texas

17 Pages



This oral history is copyrighted 2018, by the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. All Rights Reserved. For information contact: Fort Bend County Historical Commission, Attn: Chairman-Oral History Committee, 301 Jackson St., Richmond, TX, 77469.

Terms and Conditions

These oral histories do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the County Historical Commission or Fort Bend County. This file may not be modified or changed in any way without the express written permission of the Fort Bend County Historical Commission.

This file may not be redistributed for profit.

Please do not 'hot link' to this file.

Please do not repost this file.



Transcript

GOODSILL: George, will you tell me how you or your family got to Fort Bend County?

LASHER: My dad was a weatherman for CBS for a number of years. Before we moved to Texas, we were in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and in 1961 we moved to Houston. In 1964 we moved to Sugar Land and lived on Oyster Creek Drive. He continued to do the 6 p. m. and 10 p. m. weather for Channel 11 up until his death in 1971. His name was Sid Lasher, actually Myron Sidney Lasher, but he didn't use Myron. He was a Yankee who came down to Texas because he fell in love with my mother. He was from Medina, New York, which is not far from Rochester. When they moved down to Texas in 1961, they had been all over. He had been in World War II and he served in the Korean War. I was born in Puerto Rico while he was stationed at Ramey Air Force Base in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico during the Korean War.



George's parents, Pat and Sid Lasher, the popular KHOU weatherman, getting familiar with Gillory's Grocery Store back in the day.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Ramey Air Force Base, now Rafael Hernández Airport located in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, is a joint civil-military airport. It is named after the Puerto Rican composer Rafael Hernández Marín and is the second largest international airport in Puerto Rico. It is also home to Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen.

GOODSILL: Were you the first child?

LASHER: No, I have a sister who is eight years older than I, Frances. She lives in Florida. My mother died about four years ago (2011). In 1971 dad died in between his 6 p. m. and 10 p. m. weather broadcasts! He had had a sandwich and was watching Cannon (the television show) when his fatal heart attack occurred. He died in seconds. They said if he had been on an operating table at the time there would have been nothing they could have done. It was quick, and that's a nice way to go.

GOODSILL: Bummer for the person who had to take over the 10 p. m. broadcast!

LASHER: The person who took over the evening broadcast was Jerry Dale, and Jerry had a very short time as the weatherman. Doug Brown replaced him not long thereafter. Doug was a great guy. He did the weather for a while for Channel 11 and then moved over to Channel 13 where he worked for many years.

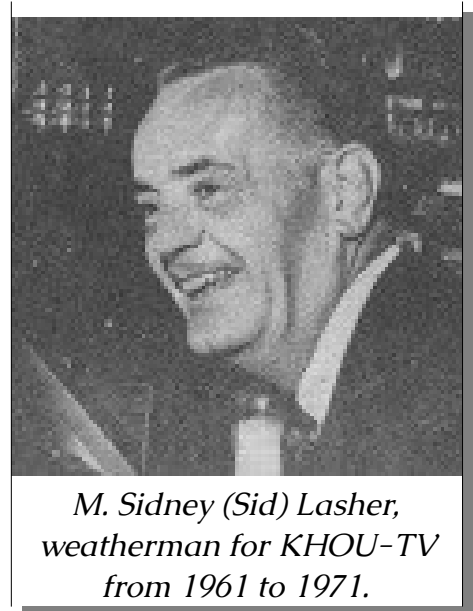
GOODSILL: What was your mother's name?

LASHER: Pat. Well, that's what she went by. Her name was Lavonia Odessa Patton and Pat came from her last name. She and my father were married in 1941, I think. My sister was born in 1943. I was born on August 15th, 1951.

GOODSILL: So, your dad was in broadcasting and you were in broadcasting?

LASHER: Right. It's funny. I never wanted to follow in my father's footsteps. When I was young I wanted to be a fireman or a race car driver. My dad took me to my first race in Tulsa, Oklahoma at Tulsa World Speedway. I was immediately hooked, watching these midget race cars going around this dirt track, slinging mud. It was just the most exciting thing for a five-year-old boy! But as I got older, it became something that was just natural. A lot of people have a real horror of the idea of getting up in front of people and giving a speech, whether it's five or six people, or several thousand people. Their knees start to shake, they break out in a sweat and it's not at all uncommon for people to have horrible, horrible stage fright. I never did. It was just the most natural thing in the world for me.

I was told, "You've got five minutes to prepare and you'll be speaking in front of 60,000 people", I would immediately be energized at the idea. I would be thrilled! The worst thing that could happen would be that I would get up there and make a fool of myself, and I'm comfortable with the fact that I'm pretty much a fool anyway. That's the attitude you have to take. It was the attitude my dad had. He never thought of himself as being special, but he was. He never acted as if he was special. That was why people appreciated him so much. He had a great career in television.



He was the most popular television weatherman in Houston history. Over 51% of the people watching television at the times he was on, they were watching him. The rest of the channels divided the other 49%. Nobody has ever had ratings that high. Again, it was just because of who he was.

I was given the chance in 1975 to do weather at Channel 11. I turned it down. I had been in radio for a while. They heard me and said, "We think you can do this, also", but it was obvious they just wanted me to ride on his coattails. I didn't feel comfortable with that. If I failed, it would have darkened his name somewhat, and I wasn't going to do that.

GOODSILL: Tell me how accurate weather forecasting was, back in those days.

LASHER: Just about as accurate as it is now. In the Houston area, for any weatherperson to say, "I can accurately predict the weather five days in advance", that person is a fool. It cannot be done because you never know how much influence the Gulf trade winds are going to have on an incoming northern incursion of air. It may be strong enough to stop that front coming this way, and then again, it may not be. As much as they believe they can forecast, they cannot forecast more than two to three days.

GOODSILL: I was under the impression that with the new technology, that weather forecasting might be more accurate.

LASHER: It is slightly more accurate than it was forty years ago, but only slightly. Forty years ago they knew there was a front coming down from Minnesota and they knew it would get here probably in two or three days. But they didn't know then and they don't know now whether or not it will come in or be stopped by the Gulf trade winds. It's certainly still a guessing game to some degree. They just have a lot more equipment to be able to make their guesses, but it still is a guessing game.

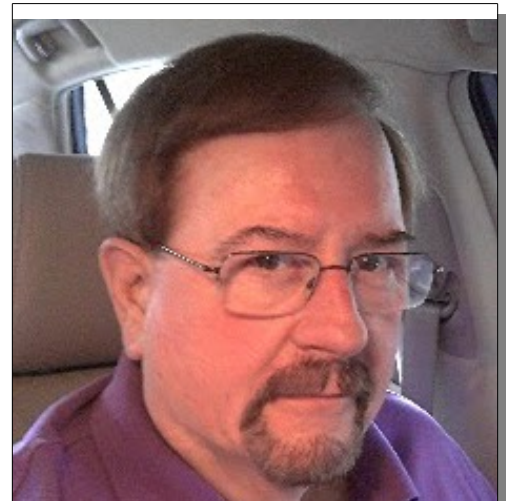
GOODSILL: Tell us about your career in radio.

LASHER: I started in radio in 1970 with KFRD-AM in Rosenberg. KFRD loosely stood for Cotton Fields and Rural Districts. That's what the call letters loosely stood for. There were a lot of gentlemen who had paved the way for radio in Fort Bend County. Ben Oldag, who was the morning personality for years on KTRH radio, did the farm reports. He did the morning show where they talked about flowers and how to grow your garden. He gave wonderful advice. My dad actually did that kind of thing on television for a while. But Ben Oldag was as good a morning personality for the garden type show as anybody who ever lived. He was fantastic. He was also on KFRD. Other gentlemen who worked at KFRD included Frank Wood, the chief engineer. He was one of the engineers for Channel 8, the public television station for the University of Houston. Frank was sensational – a kind, caring fellow. He took a lot of personal interest in KFRD, this little station out on the outskirts of Houston.

Nowadays we're much closer to Houston than we were back then, the Southwest Freeway having grown so much. But he did a great job of taking care of that station and making it sound as good as a little station could back then. Some of the other people there were George Thompson, Bill Sloan, and Paul Collins. George Thompson was the sports director who later became the manager of the station. Bill Sloan was the manager of the station when I first began to work there. Then Bill stepped back, partially of his own volition. George Thompson became the station manager. Paul Collins was a program director. He walked on crutches because he had polio as a youngster and his legs were of no use. He and Ben Oldag had the greatest radio voices, those rich, deep tones, that so many people were used to hearing back in the early days of radio.

GOODSILL: Isn't that wonderful that he couldn't use one part of his body but learned to use another part?

LASHER: Yes. Paul was a remarkable individual. He's not with us any longer. Paul died a number of years ago. But he was just a wonderful guy. All of these people were so kind to me. As I think back on it, I was 20 then and now I'm 63, and I think of how it could have been SO different. How they might have been, "Well, here's a guy, weatherman's son from Channel 11, and he's getting the job just because of his daddy. He's going to expect special treatment." There was never any of that. From Day 1, they were wonderful to me. I NEVER worked in a place where you feel real care and concern as much as I did there.



George Lasher enjoyed success in sales and as a communicator. He played drums with several bands and writes music.

GOODSILL: What was your job and what was your learning curve?

LASHER: The first day that I walked in to KFRD, Bill Sloan, the manager, asked me to do a reading of a piece of news copy, just to see if I could manage to say a few sentences without falling all over my tongue. He gave me an obituary notice to read. Somebody had died and they were going to be interred in the W.O.W. Cemetery. I looked at that and read it as the "wow cemetery." He had a smirk on his face, and I looked up and saw it.

“Was that okay?”, I asked. He said, “Well, in the future, you'll probably want to refer to that as the W-O-W Cemetery not the ‘wow’ cemetery. I said, “Oh, okay. I thought it might be a misprint or something with the periods in between there.” He said, “Other than that, you did okay.” My dad was not the kind of father who would make you practice things so you would become what he wanted you to be. But speech was important to him so he wanted it to be important to me also.

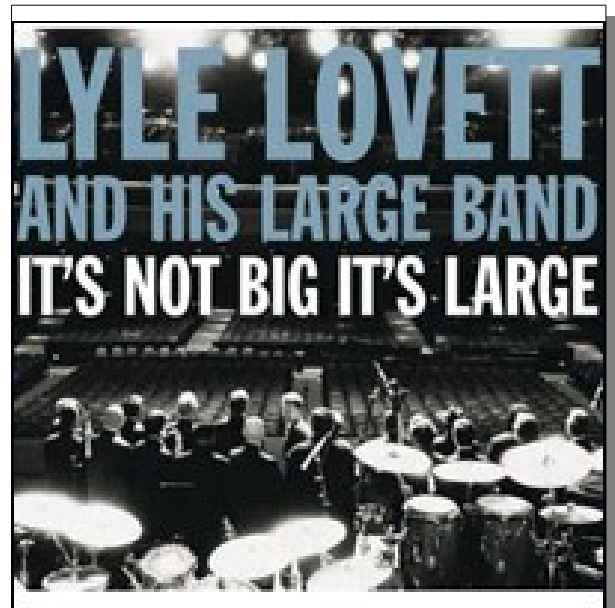
GOODSILL: How did he teach you?

LASHER: When I would say a word incorrectly, he would say, “No, that's said this way. Say it with me.”

GOODSILL: How about the tone and the depth? Did you have voice lessons of any kind?

LASHER: Not really, no. My voice was never going to be like his. He had one of those rich voices also. My voice isn't bad but it has a little bit of a nasal quality to it whereas his did not. But he wanted to make sure that I didn't sound like somebody who didn't know the area.

Lyle Lovett, a pretty well known country music musician, wrote a song called South Texas Girl in which he mentions my dad. He says in the song that he learned how to pronounce many of the Texas cities and counties by listening to Sid Lasher on television. I thought that was pretty cool. He was one of my favorites even before he did that. My sister called me up one day and said, “Did you know Lyle Lovett wrote a song that talks about our dad?” I said, “NO!” She said, “Well, look up the song South Texas Woman.” I believe it's on the album 'It's Not Big, It's Large' which is in reference to his band. He doesn't like his band to be called a Big Band. It's 'Lyle Lovett and his Large Band'. He's a unique individual. I was so impressed that he had done that, the next time he had a



Lyle Lovett mentions George's dad, Sid, in the song 'South Texas Woman' on his album 'It's Not Big, It's Large'.

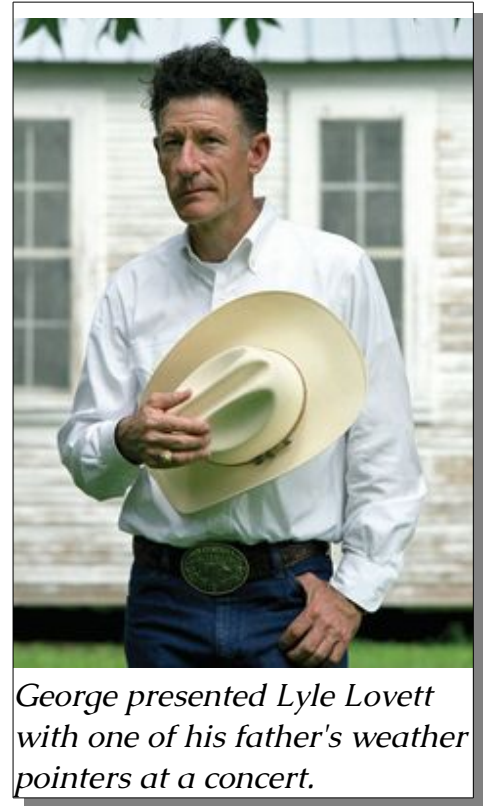
concert at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion in the Woodlands, my wife and I went and I took one of my dad's old weather pointers, thinking maybe Lyle would like that.

I asked one of the ushers if there was any way they could communicate to Mr. Lovett that Sid Lasher's son is here this evening and would like to present him with one of Sid Lasher's weather-pointers. They were beautiful sticks, custom made of different colors of wood. Some were in the shape of an arrow, some just a sharp pointer like a letter opener. The usher disappeared after I made that request. When he came back, he said, "Mr. Lovett would very much like to see you." So I went down to his dressing room and there he was, talking with someone. The usher said, "This is the gentleman." He turns around and says, "I understand you brought something for me." I held out the stick and he looked like I was handing him a stick of solid gold. He said, "You can't even begin to imagine what this means to me. I will put this on my mantel at home because it takes me back to my childhood. I will really treasure this." Wasn't that cool? My wife and I both really appreciated his gesture.

He asked where we were sitting and I told him we were kind of in the back of the seated area before you get to The Hill where people sit on the grass. He said, "That's not going to do." He said to the usher, "Please make sure they are front row, dead center." So they set up special chairs for us. During the show he stopped and held up the stick and told the audience I had brought that to him. The really neat thing is that so many people remembered my dad. There was wonderful, warm applause when they heard his name.

Getting back to KFRD, the people there didn't treat me as if I were special. They were just great people. I would recommend that if you have a chance, try to get in touch with Sophie Tielke who married Ben Oldag, so her last name would be Oldag. I think you know Tim Cumings at the newspaper. Tim would be able to get you in touch with Sophie. She's going to know more than I do about the radio station.

Sophie was there longer than I was, and she was an integral to the decision making – not actually a manager, but close to it. I don't know what you would call her position because she would have been considered a manager, and probably would have become a manager, if not for the belief that 'the manager has to be a man'.



George presented Lyle Lovett with one of his father's weather pointers at a concert.

GOODSILL: What was your job?

LASHER: I was originally a late-night announcer. I started out just on the weekends and then the guy who worked the evenings, Tom Miller I think was his name, also sold cars at Hopmann Chevrolet. But Tom left and I don't know where he went. Then I became a full-time evening employee. I was a DJ and read the news.

GOODSILL: So this station didn't have just farm news?

LASHER: No, they also had music, mostly country, and sports reporting. During the day they would have Czech polkas along with the country music. Joe Gavronovic was the guy who played the polka records, and he taught me a few words of Czech. He was just the greatest guy. He spoke with a pretty good Czech accent.

GOODSILL: That must have been popular with your listeners.

LASHER: Oh, very. Rosenberg had a large Czech population back in the early 1970s. A lot of Czech people settled in Fort Bend County, so he was very popular. He was a sweet person. I never heard anybody say a bad word about Joe. Anther guy who was on the station was Norman Barnes who some people may remember. He was one of the most talented tuba players you'll ever hear of. Some people say a trumpet player is really talented if he can do what's called 'triple tonguing'. Nobody triple tongues on a tuba, but Norman Barnes could! He was one of the morning personalities.

GOODSILL: Did he talk as well as play?

LASHER: Yes. At the radio station he was like a DJ and he would play polka records and country music. In the evenings, I pretty much played just country music and on the weekends, on Saturday night I had a show of rock and roll music called 'The Sounds of Today'.

GOODSILL: You were getting it modern because you were the young kid! How was that received?

LASHER: Pretty darned well by the young people in the area!

GOODSILL: Young and old were listening to radio?

LASHER: The old people didn't listen to much rock and roll but they enjoyed the country music during the week. KFRD was the kind of station that tried to be many things to many different segments of the population. They recognized they were Fort Bend County's voice so they would do things like the farm reports, local news, play the music that would appeal to the Czech people and country music for the average Joe. They tried hard to be something for everybody.

GOODSILL: Did they cover national issues as well?

LASHER: We covered national news and sports. We covered local sports as well. That was one of the big things for the radio station. I used to do play-by-play along with George Thompson, for the Lamar Mustang games.

GOODSILL: That was during the Vietnam conflict. Was there any talk about the war?

LASHER: That's a memorable moment in my life. Radio stations at that time had teletype machines. These machines would get feeds from the Associated Press and different news resources; it would come across these sheets of paper. You would rip it off and have the sports section, a section for the weather, etc. It would all come off in different segments. I can remember so clearly, getting into that little tiny room where the teletype machine was and watching it roll out the draft lottery numbers by birth date. If your number was 150 or lower, chances were pretty strong you were going to go to Vietnam. Certainly if you were 100 or lower. I was watching this machine spit these birth dates and numbers associated with them, knowing that my future and maybe my life depended on what number August 15th was. It gets to August 14th and spits out '3'. I'm thinking, "Well, this is it; I'm going to Vietnam." Then it says August 15th - '340'. WHEW! (laughter)

So I saw my life flashing before my eyes one moment and then this tremendous relief, but also the realization that many of my friends were not so relieved. I had friends who went over and didn't come back and others that came back profoundly changed, either physically, mentally or both. Those were rough times. Broadcasting about the war from KFRD was different than it would have been from KTRH. A person listening here in Fort Bend County would have felt a closeness to the person reading the news that they wouldn't feel from KTRH or some of the Houston stations. That guy reading the news here in Fort Bend County was one of them. We were all Fort Bend County residents and we all cared about Fort Bend County, even I did at the tender age of 20.

Fort Bend County was special to me. I loved being able to go over to the old bowling alley that was right across the street from the radio station – it's long gone now – but my dad and I had gone bowling at that place. There was a feeling about Rosenberg and Richmond and Fort Bend County in general that we are NOT Houstonians and we are proud of it.

GOODSILL: What was the difference in reporting on the news?

LASHER: The difference was that the person who was reading it didn't read it with the cold objectivity of a national, big shot personality. He was reading as if he were talking about things that were happening to his friends and his family. You could feel that. There was a definite difference. Our local news was like Houston news. We had obituaries read on the air and chances are you knew that person. Many of the people who listened to KFRD did specifically listen for the obituaries, just as today many of the people, elderly people especially, who read the Fort Bend Herald to find out who among their friends may have passed away. So there was a different air, completely, about that radio station. It did not sound or feel like the Houston stations. It felt and sounded different. It felt local and that was important to all of us. That's one of the major things that we were really proud of at that station.

Part of the day we had Hispanic programming. Again, the station attempted, and it may have been its undoing ultimately, to be all things to all people. For the Hispanic programming, they had Maruca (Mary) Tijerina who I believe recently passed away, and her father, Gonzalo Rodriguez, who was like a grandfather to me. A lot of people might think, "Well, you had your Spanish side and your English-speaking side, but maybe there was a little conflict or friction between them", but that wasn't the case at all. Not at all. It was a family.

Every once in a while the Hispanic side would have one of the English speaking people come over and do a guest spot, a cross-promotion type thing. Sometimes I would have one of the Hispanic people come over and talk with me. I remember one day Mauro Villarreal, who works at Dillard's now in the men's department, had me over on his show and it was a REALLY cold day. I spoke a little Spanish but not very much and had no idea what I was saying when I said, "Man, it is el coolo out there today." Well, 'coolo' is Spanish for your posterior. You couldn't say that on the radio in 1971-1972! He got this sick look on his face when I said that, and I said, "WHAT?" He said, "You can't SAY that on the radio." He couldn't say what I couldn't say! It kind of stunned him for a moment.

So we went to a commercial and he explained it to me. Of course, you can say those things now on television and radio. You can say a lot more than that! But back then, you couldn't do that.

GOODSILL: You said that the Spanish program, possibly, was the undoing of the radio station. Why?

LASHER: Well, not just the Spanish. The Czech, AND the trying to be all things and not concentrating on one thing. You were constantly turning off your audience at different times of the day. People would tune in for 'this' and then they were gone.

GOODSILL: So they are not hearing all your commercials?

LASHER: Right. What happened eventually was that KFRD was bought and sold in the mid-1980s. I'm not sure when. I left in 1978 to be the program director of a couple of radio stations in the Texas panhandle. I don't regret that but on the other hand I kind of do. Paul Collins was the program director here and I didn't want to push to take Paul's job, and that would have been the next step for my continued growth. I didn't want to take Paul's job.

GOODSILL: So you went to the Panhandle and took someone's job, someone you didn't know. (laughing)

LASHER: Yeah. Somehow that made it better. (laughter) Paul was just such a great guy. There's another guy who can tell you a lot about KFRD named Bud Smith. While I had been 'growing' at the station, I was moved from nighttime to morning drive time, which is the most desirable. The guy who came in and took over at night was Bud Smith. I don't know his phone number off the top of my head but every so often I bump into him. I think I know some people who do know how to get in touch with him. I'll try to get that for you. When I got promoted to the morning shift, Norman Burns had left. I was as happy as I could be to go to the morning shift, with the title of Chief Announcer - whooooo. There was a raise associated with that and I took on more sports reporting duties. I got interviews with all the different athletic coaches around the area, depending on what season it was. It was a pretty good show. I did a lot of research and really enjoyed that. I've always loved sports.

GOODSILL: Tell us what happens with the research behind the scenes.

LASHER: You hear an awful lot of broadcasts where an announcer sounds so incredibly knowledgeable when you're watching a TV or listening to a radio broadcast. "My goodness, how could somebody know so much about a team?" Especially in the cases of national broadcasts where they are doing a different team every week. Well, they have somebody constantly feeding them information in their ear. We didn't have that! If we were going to sound knowledgeable, we had to do the research, and that research included calling the coaches, doing interviews with the players if the coach would allow it, and then trying to collate all of this and remember it in the course of the game, so you could say things that were relevant and would interest the audience. I'm somewhat partial, but I think we had some of the greatest broadcasts of high school football games in the 1970s for mid-to-small market radio stations.

GOODSILL: And your listeners loved it.

LASHER: They did! They really enjoyed it and the station made a lot of money from selling the advertising for those broadcasts.

GOODSILL: So you were watching the game and doing the play-by-play?

LASHER: I'm at the game, sitting in the press box, watching the game take place and describing pretty darned well on to the audience what's going.

GOODSILL: Was that fun for you?

LASHER: Oh, it was a ball. I've never enjoyed anything else that much. It's a lot of fun to do that, especially if you've done the research. Now, conversely, it could be the most horrifying things in the world if you haven't done the research. "The center snaps the ball to the quarterback", and you don't know their names. "Some guy out on the far corner catches it and he's running, and he gets hit and he drops the ball." You've GOT to be able to say, "Rogers takes the snap from the center. He goes back and is looking for an open receiver. He sees Johnson over in the far corner, etc." You've got to know the names of the people, not just their numbers. Then it brings so much more to the broadcast when Johnson catches it for a great touchdown, you're able to say, "He ran that into the end zone; nobody was even near him. And there he is celebrating; I bet he is feeling like his favorite player, so-and-so. He talked about him in an interview this last week, saying he wished he could reach that level some day." If you know these things about the different players, then you can personalize the broadcast in a way that makes it a lot more fun to listen to.

GOODSILL: These were all high school players?

LASHER: Yes. Some of them went on to the NFL.

GOODSILL: Your audience must have loved this!

LASHER: Well, again, we hope so. That certainly was what we were hoping. Ernest Jackson, who went on to play football in College Station was All Southwest Conference at Texas A & M, All-Pro in the NFL, and a big star for Lamar Consolidated in the mid-to-late 1970s. He was an amazing running back. Everybody in the stadium would know he was going to get the ball and yet he would still plow right through or over the people. He was a sensational football player. It was really fun to be able to personalize these broadcasts for folks.

There's a lot more downtime in a baseball broadcast than in some other sports. You've got the pitcher staring at his catcher, getting the signals and you have the time to be able to interject little things about the players and their lives that you normally wouldn't have in a 'faster' sport such as basketball. In basketball you have very little time because it is fast-moving.

My favorite memory of all the years that I was at KFRD was doing a girls' softball championship play-off broadcast that was going out to a lot of stations all over Texas. The game was broadcast from Victoria, Texas. The pitcher for the local team was Julia Chovanec and five minutes before broadcast time, her grandparents knocked on the back door of the broadcast booth. I opened the door and there are these two sweet, older people standing there, holding hands. The gentleman had a slight shake, indicative of his age, and they were there to make sure I did not butcher her name. He said, "It's pronounced as though there is an 'h' at the end but there is no 'h'". I told them they didn't have anything to worry about because I was from Rosenberg where we had a large Czechoslovakian population and I was very used to saying Czech names. As a matter of fact, I promised them that I was going to really go overboard and make that little girl sound like she was a world champion. They were just delighted and then went off to sit in the stands and watch the game.

So it comes time to do the line-ups for the broadcast, and I'm saying, "Batting 7th is so-and-so, batting 8th is so-and-so, and batting 9th and on the mound tonight, pissing for the Demons, Julia Chovanec. I wanted to tear my tongue out and just stomp on it. I wanted to end my ability to speak. I had said her name right but I had said something preceding that, that I couldn't believe I had said.

The worst thing in the world, my brain is screaming, "Go back, you idiot, go back, re-say it" but no, no, don't re-say it, because then everybody is going to know that I said it instead of thinking, "Wait a minute. Did he say that?" Well, the worst thing in the world would be to go back and say it again, but your brain is screaming for you to do it. You've got this immediate nausea. I had visions in my head of the sweet little man and woman clutching their chests and falling over in the stands. Which didn't happen, thank God. Virtually nobody caught it. I mean NOBODY. I paused but it was very, very quick. Even the person sitting with me in the booth didn't catch it.

I'm sitting there thinking, "Did I get away with this?" I got back to the radio station that night and as I walk in, George Thompson is clapping his hands. I said, "Oh, you listened?" George didn't always listen to the broadcasts but he had listened to that one. He said, "Good job. Especially when you were announcing the pitcher for the local team." I say, "Ooooh." He said, "Yeah, I heard THAT." I said, "Well, you must be about the only person, because nobody else has mentioned it." He says, "Yeah, you did okay. You went through it and you didn't try to say it again." So to this day, that is my favorite or most horrifying blooper that I ever made. The grandparents never came up and said, "You ruined us forever" or anything like that. Very few people caught it. Bloopers are something that happen in small time or medium market radio, far more than on the bigger stations. Bigger stations never are actually broadcasting live. They all have a 7-second delay so they can kill anything that accidentally happens. All these talk shows that you hear have the 7-second delay in case some idiot gets on there. They can bleep out whatever is said that is objectionable. For a small market station, bloopers are fun little remembrances that happened from time to time.

GOODSILL: Everybody has them.

LASHER: Yes, everybody does. Even the most talented people will fall all over their tongue or get blinded by their tongue occasionally.

GOODSILL: So, you've now gone up to the Panhandle. How long did you stay there? How did you get back to Fort Bend County?

LASHER: It was a horrible mistake. I don't have anything against the people in the Panhandle. They are wonderful people. But let's face it. There is a lot more to do when you are a stone's throw from Houston and a stone's throw from the Gulf of Mexico.

There's more to do and see, and a lot more fun to be had. "What do you want to do today? Watch the grass grow?" Well, there's not much of that up there either! "Watch a tumbleweed?" It was bitterly cold in the winter. I was in Borger, Texas, just north of Amarillo. Horrible, horrible decision in the long run.

GOODSILL: How long did you stay?

LASHER: Just a year. Then they sold the station. Typically in the radio business, when a new owner comes in, they usually clean house and want their own people and their own format. We had taken a station that wasn't doing really well financially and had turned it into a very viable commodity. So it became salable and was sold. I had decided that at that point, small to medium market radio is a situation where you are here today and gone tomorrow at the whim of whomever is buying or selling the station. So I decided to get out of radio and concentrate on some other, more stable type of business.

GOODSILL: I'm curious to know what that was.

LASHER: I had been a bowler ever since the age of 8. I was a really good bowler, so I became the manager of a bowling alley in Houston. My wife and I came back to Houston. I worked for the Fairlanes Corporation, at first as a troubleshooter. I would go around to different 'houses' in the Houston area and discuss problems with the industries that had leagues and maybe they weren't happy with how things were being done. I would address their concerns and help the manager to resolve the differences. Then I got a chance to manage one of the alleys (houses). That was good for two or three years. Then I moved into the cable TV business in 1982. Cable was pretty new then. It wasn't sales, it was order-taking! Somebody would hear that the cable man was on the street and everybody would come running. That was a pretty easy job. It didn't stay that way forever. It got to be really competitive with the satellite dish industry.

There are so many different ways to get entertainment nowadays other than cable that it is no longer an easy sale. I did that for five or six years. Then I got into the furniture industry. I worked for Superior Waterbeds and later on for Louis Shanks. Then I got into the electricity industry. I was a sales manager for Tara Energy, which is a statewide company for retail electricity. We serve both residences and large industries. That was rewarding financially and they were good people at Tara. I enjoyed that. Finally I slowed down a little bit, am semi-retired, and went to work for the Fort Bend Herald.

GOODSILL: What do you do at the Herald?

LASHER: I sell advertising. They have the newspaper and four magazines that serve Pecan Grove, Greatwood, New Territory and the Fulshear area. The Fort Bend Herald has been business continuously since 1892, not always under that name. That's a long time. The Hartman family has done a marvelous job of keeping the paper profitable in a time when so many newspapers are failing, all across the country. Reading habits and the habits for getting information are moving toward just the Internet. These people continue to do a great job with a print format. They aren't just selling print. They also have a website where they have Internet advertising as well. Their website, fortbendherald.com, is one of the top five websites in all of Fort Bend County. Literally thousands of different people visit that site every month. I think it's thirty to forty thousand different people visit that site every month. Not the same people, different people. Evidently it's a very good source for people or they wouldn't come to it.

GOODSILL: Do you enjoy this job?

LASHER: It's the closest thing that I've had to the old experience at KFRD where things felt like family. I want to congratulate Bill Hartman and Fred and Lee. They have done a wonderful job of creating a very good atmosphere. They could have made a lot of decisions that would have made everything more sterile and more like the 'big guys'. They have done a marvelous job of being able to retain the country feel. That's not an easy thing to do. I feel fortunate to be working there and hope to be able to stay there for at least two or three more years before I do finally stop working and follow my own interests. I play drums and have been since I was 13 years old. My dad got me a set of drums for my 13th birthday so I've been playing drums for 50 years. And I'm a good drummer!

GOODSILL: What will you do with that passion?

LASHER: I get with other friends who have been in bands. I've played in some bands, off and on, over the years. We get together and play some music from time to time. We just enjoy the creation of music for ourselves. Every once in a great while a situation comes along where you are able to go out and play in public with some folks and it's fun. It's not taken seriously to where you have to spend too much time with it. You spend as much time as you want. And it's comfortable. That's a good thing. The other thing that I do is try to be a good husband. I've been married since October 21, 1972 to Rebecca Evans. That's a long time. We never had kids. We chose not to for health reasons on her part. She's been a diabetic since she was five years old.

I can remember when we were getting ready to get married, my doctor advised me not to marry her. He said "She'll never live past 45." I said, "Well, yeah, so? I'll still have the woman that I love rather than having to settle for somebody else." The same thing was true when it came to the decision about children. Becky told me, "You don't want to marry me. I'm probably not going to have children." I said, "Well, what good is it to marry someone that's not the woman that you want, just because of that?" I've been happy to have her! So many of our friends are jealous because the dynamic of a marriage changes radically, sometimes not so much for the good, when you have several kids and they play the parents against each other. I'm not saying anything against people who make the decision to have children. That's great, but this has worked well for us.

GOODSILL: This has been a very good interview. Is there anything else that you can think of that I didn't ask?

LASHER: No, not right at the moment. Oh, one other thing about KFRD. Cole McClellan was an assistant engineer and he would go up to the top of the KFRD tower to replace the light. He would drink a 6-pack before he would go up there. I'd look at him and say, "You've GOT to be kidding. You can't go up there after having drunk a 6-pack." He'd say, "Well, I can't go up there sober."

GOODSILL: Was he afraid of heights?

LASHER: Yes! (laughter) I've never been sure if he was kidding or not. But he's still alive and works at the University of Texas as a technical adviser for all of their electronics. He's been very successful.

Interview ends