

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Joe Gurecky**

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Interviewer: Roberta Terrell

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Comments: Interviewed at the Gurecky's home in Rosenberg, Texas. Doris Gurecky also participated in the interview. 20 Pages



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Transcript

TERRELL: We are going to start with some basic biographical information, where and when were you born?

GURECKY: Actually I was born in the hospital in Sugar Land although my parents lived on a farm in Fairchild. Born on January 6, 1938, one day before Doris [his wife, who is sitting in on this interview].

TERRELL: Yea I was going to ask if it was the same day as Doris.

DORIS GURECKY: No, I married an older man.

TERRELL: Oh that's great. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

GURECKY: The first two of the siblings were girls and then my twin brothers were born and I was the baby of the family. I was number five.

TERRELL: What were their names?

GURECKY: The oldest siblings was Emma who ended up marrying Jerome Kulcak. The other sister Olga Marie also married a Kulcak. So two brothers married two sisters. My brothers were Laddie Gurecky and he died in 1967 in a car accident with my father. The other twin was Leonard Gurecky and he lives here in Rosenberg. My father was killed in that same car accident, on Easter Sunday. A beautiful sun shinny day. Actually there were never any legal issues, the insurance company settled up with everybody the best they could because no one was ever proven they were in the right or wrong. It's just one of those things that happened. We were all relatives even in the other car we were kin. We were like distant cousins and we all grew up in the same neighborhood and the car accident happened about a mile from each of the houses that the respective people lived in. In the other car there were three people. A young couple and their baby died in the front seat and two little boys in the back seat survived.

DORIS GURECKY: There were five in the car, the mother, the daddy, the baby and the two boys.

TERRELL: Tragic.

GURECKY: It was very tragic.

GURECKY: I don't know too much. All I know they came in through Galveston and it must have been in the early 1900's. From Galveston I never heard anything other than the fact, that my mother's family moved to Ammansville near Schulenburg to a farm. My father's parents came again through Galveston, but they settled in the El Campo/Taiton area as farmers. Both sides of my grandparents came here for fertile land and the opportunity for them to own land. That was very precious to them. They had to be landowners.

TERRELL: What did they come from?

GURECKY: My great-grandfather came from Frydek Mistek in Czechoslovakia. Don't ask me how to spell Frydek Mistek.

TERRELL: Doris, were your paternal grandparents from Czechoslovakia?

DORIS GURECKY: Yes they were. They came from Hostalkova, near Frydek Mistek.

GURECKY: My great grandparents came in to Galveston and as far as I know all of the siblings were born in the United States. On my father's side, the Gurecky side, the great grandfather and then my grandfather they came from Europe. My dad and his siblings were born here in the states in the El Campo area, Taiton. I was born in Sugar Land.

TERRELL: What brought your parents here?

GURECKY: I never really heard about my parents growing up in Ammansville. I don't know how they met. I would assume through some church activities or weddings or reunions.

TERRELL: What sort of work did your father and your grandfather do?

GURECKY: We were all farmers, cotton farmers, corn, milo and raised cattle.

TERRELL: Did you have chickens?

GURECKY: Oh yes, we had chickens, geese, guineas any kind of animal... we had pigeons.

TERRELL: Did you ride horseback.

GURECKY: Actually I would ride horseback when I started dating Doris because her father had a horse. He worked cattle with a horse. My father did have a horse when I was a little bitty boy. He really wasn't into cattle on a large scale so he really didn't need a horse. By the time I was born, tractors were coming into being to work the soil. So I was born at that time when they were phasing out the horses to pull the plows and I was too young to learn to ride a horse. But after I started dating Doris I would enjoy going to her house and saddling up Joker and just go riding in a pasture. I enjoyed riding the horse but never became a real good cowboy.

TERRELL: What kind of work did your mother and grandmother do?

GURECKY: Both of them were homemakers. They would cook the meals and tend to the children. When they had extra time they would come out and help whatever few hours they could in the field. My mother, was the second oldest in the family and so until her other siblings came along she was like a little boy, she had to work, bale hay and do the work that men were doing.

TERRELL: Did you help with the chores?

GURECKY: Most definitely we had chores that we had to do before the school bus picked us up and took us to school. When we got off that school bus, trust me, my daddy and my mother had things lined up. I probably grumbled when I had to do chores, but I look back now and if I had a choice to live what the kids are going through now versus what I went through it was worth it. Chores taught us the value of hard work and I think all my family were very successful and it was because of the basic upbringing we had.

TERRELL: The work ethic.

GURECKY: The work ethic and of course also both side of my family they were very strong Christian people and attended church every Sunday. And like Doris said earlier, work was not to be done on Sunday other than necessary work. So there was a lot of time for visitors to come over to our home or we would go to someone else's home. All the cousins would get together and have a good time playing games that didn't involve purchasing any kind of toy it was just things we had around the house that we played with or we made. We played war games. I grew up when World War II was going on and we would play soldiers and make sticks and pretended it was a gun.

We played soldiers just like you play cops and robbers and all these other games kids play such as hide and go seek and jump rope and basketball and baseball. We played quite a bit of baseball, softball actually. We had a football that all of us had to share, the one thing in those days there wasn't very many toys and kids had to learn to share. Bicycles you didn't have... you couldn't afford a bicycle for every child so we would share them. It was a great life.

TERRELL: You mentioned chores before school, what did those include?

GURECKY: Feeding all the animals. We had a lot of animals on the farm. My dad would usually milk the cows because we weren't strong enough, and I never really learned the art of drawing milk from a cow. While he was milking the cows we would be putting hay into the pens. We had baby chicks that had to be fed and watered every morning. . Eggs had to be harvested... chickens and sheep had to be fed.

TERRELL: Did you have FFA project?

GURECKY: I wasn't in FFA, I was in the 4H club and yes we had projects. We would build things. My 4H Club teacher taught us a lot about animals that maybe our parents didn't know, like caponizing a rooster. Through school, we learned what was possible. Life... I want to say life lessons.. There were things you needed in life to know.

TERRELL: Did you grow up in one house?

GURECKY: Actually no, my parents were share croppers on the Booth ranch... at the Booth estate. Mr. Tom Booth, decided when the German and Czech people started migrating to this area, that the Booths would share the ranch with a young couple. They divided out about a hundred acres and built a four room house and a small barn.

My Uncle Evan, who was the elder of the family, got married and lived as a share cropper on that first piece of property that Mr. Booth subdivided out of his ranch. Then he divided another hundred acres and built a four room house and barn. My mother, who was the second oldest in the family, when she got married she moved in that house. The other siblings lived around the community and were also share croppers but not on the Booth Ranch. The Booth Ranch had a lot of share croppers including my parents and my uncle Evan. We lived in that brand new simple four room house. You've got to keep in mind that my mother and daddy had five children in that house. We moved from that house when I was about six years old so they lived about sixteen or eighteen years on that ranch as share croppers.

Then Dad moved us across the road. I guarantee it wasn't more than about three hundred yards, about (laughing) three football fields, we moved onto my grandfather's land that he had settled before the Booths had ever divided their ranch. My dad bought that farm in 1945. It was a hundred and one acres I believe. That's right after the war. We moved from being share croppers and now my dad was a land owner just three hundred yards away. That's the only time we moved. My parents stayed on that farm until my father died in 1976. Then my mother didn't want to live out there by herself, so we built her a house in Rosenberg.

TERRELL: Your Uncle Evan's last name was?

GURECKY: Evan Stavinoha

TERRELL: What families live near you?

GURECKY: We had at least three families, from my mother's side, that lived within a mile radius of our farm.

TERRELL: Was her maiden name Stavinoha?

GURECKY: Yes, Stavinoha. In that Stavinoha family there were eight siblings and on the Gurecky side I had seven aunts and uncles.

Of course there was my father Joe Gurecky, and his brothers Ludwig Gurecky and Charles Gurecky. Charles died when he was about seventeen or eighteen years old in a one-car accident. The girls in that family were Louise who married an Orsak, Betty who married a Popek and Mary who married a Vacek. That is the Gurecky side of the family.

On the Stavinoha side of the family: Evan Stavinoha was the oldest, then my mother Mary Stavinoha, now Gurecky, there was Lad Stavinoha who had the meat market and slaughter house in Needville for a bunch of years, Alfonse Stavinoha, Vojt, and Viola who married a Hundl, Eleanor who married a Ernest, and Arnold Stavinoha, who was in the Air Force and died in World War Two.

TERRELL: Where did your family shop?

GURECKY: Just for the really basic things, we lived about a mile and a quarter from Fairchild that had a really nice general store that provided staples for the local farmers. Naturally when it became beyond the country store, we would go to Needville and to Rosenberg.

About one time a year Mother would go to Houston shopping at maybe Sears on South Main. As the family grew, whatever their need were you could do a lot of your clothes purchasing in Needville and Rosenberg. Since Needville was where our church was located, we would go to Needville more often than to Rosenberg.

TERRELL: Where did you go to church?

GURECKY: In Needville at Saint Michaels Catholic Church. Doris and I were married in that church.

TERRELL: Did you go to church any other days of the week?

GURECKY: Oh yes, during Lent there was always church on Fridays. We didn't have that many events going on during the week. It was either Friday, Good Friday Stations of the Cross and then Sunday mass. We didn't have Saturday mass in the early days. Usually it was just one mass. The priest also went to Damon. He had to serve two parishes so he would alternate between Damon and Needville.

TERRELL: Can you tell me how the town of Fairchild was set up? What do you remember?

GURECKY: There was a general store, a service station where they sold fuel to the automobiles and pickups as well as to the farmers. There were two cotton gins that were built on what they call a co-op basis ... the farmers got together and formed two co-ops and each co-op built a cotton gin. Don't ask me why they had to have two... .. perhaps they just needed another gin and they formed the co-op and then built the second gin. Today there is only one gin left and its been highly improved. It can gin cotton so much faster than the old days and do a better job. There were always three saloons that I can remember in the little town of Fairchild. Three saloons and they all made a comfortable living. Then there was a beef club. Some people don't know what a beef club is. You didn't have refrigeration in the old days so it was hard to preserve the meat when you, killed a whole calf. A small family could not eat a whole calf, so they formed a club. A membership limited the number of people who could participate and could consume about three hundred pounds of beef every week.

Every Saturday a calf was butchered by a member and donated to the club. Then one or two of the members would volunteer their time and cut up the meat in portions so everybody got an equal portion in quantity and weight as best they could. If you were not a farmer and you couldn't raise your own calf to donate to the club, you would buy a calf from someone else and then it would be butchered that morning. By evening member families would be eating that meat. So that always gave us a week's supply of fresh healthy meat all year round without refrigeration.

TERRELL: No money changed hands?

GURECKY: The membership of the club had to spend some money and they all pooled their money together, each one gave maybe fifty dollars or ten dollars or what ever it was and they built a little 12 foot by 16 foot building where they would cut up the meat by hand. We didn't have electric saws or grinders. They would cut it up and kind of stage it then people knew after four o'clock they could come pick up their meat. They would start showing up... I remember one little lady she was kin to us and she would just put a little galvanized bucket on her little elbow and what ever little rag to cover it; and she would walk about two miles to pick up the meat and then walk about two miles back to her house on Booth Line Road. Her name was Bessie Horelica and she just covered up that meat with that little towel so the flies wouldn't bother it and she'd walk back to the house with it. Cars were available but for whatever purpose she didn't drive. Women in those days just let the men do the driving. Perhaps it was just too difficult to crank the engines or whatever, I don't know. Anyway that beef club was a very good way to share and have good fresh meat for the whole community.

TERRELL: So it wasn't wrapped, they just got their meat in a bucket.

GURECKY: You had to bring your own container kind of like you would bring your own shopping bag. (laughing) Some of the ladies would come with a roasting pan. Some would carry in a little clean bucket since there were no plastic bags of any kind.

TERRELL: What did your family do for entertainment? Did you go to the movies?

GURECKY: Not as much as Doris... we were not that affluent, we were poor (laughing). Oh yes you know there were movies like "Francis the talking mule" and Lou Costello. We wouldn't miss those. My dad wasn't that much into western like Doris' dad was but we went to a few western movies. Other than that, there were a lot of weddings. The communities were involved in weddings at the church.

People came together and they never seemed to be a hurry to go home after church. They would stand around on the outside and just talk and talk for thirty minutes or an hour or more sometimes just visiting and catching up on the latest because there were no telephones in that community. Telephones were available in the cities when I was growing up but we didn't have a phone.

TERRELL: Did you have a phone Doris?

DORIS GURECKY: No we did not.

GURECKY: That was one thing that also a small thing but an important thing. You didn't have the opportunity to call your girlfriend on a phone to make a date or to change a date . Once you committed to a date it stayed that way. Because there was no way to communicate unless you were in school together. Usually if you kind of liked a girl or she kind of liked you she would accept the date for next Sunday or next Saturday for the movie or what ever. So we would have to plan ahead and know that we would be available to have a date. If there was a wedding that day or something going on in her family, well she would know about it so she would say, "I'm sorry but next week we are going to be traveling or going to see somebody in Corpus". It was good we didn't have the convenience of the phone; of course it wasn't good needing information. There was no way of getting a message to you unless somebody road a horse back or came into a car to deliver it. Usually I'm thinking of terms of someone passing away. So word would have to be gotten out from one person to the other. No phone taught us to discipline ourselves to commit and that was it. If you failed to show up I can assure you that girl would never date you again. (laughter)

TERRELL: Tell her friends not to, too.

GURECKY: That's right. You'd be black balled.

TERRELL: Tell me about your schooling.

GURECKY: Schooling was great, it was about a mile from our house for me. It was a school where my older siblings had all attended and my mother too. It was there in Fairchild it was called Concord School. My mother went to school there and her siblings, my sisters and brothers and I went there. Best I remember some rode horse back to school but we walked since we weren't that far or Dad would take us when the weather was real real bad. But most of the time we walked and we kind of formed a group.

I mean somebody further from the school obviously had to start walking earlier than those living closer. As you walked down those roads you'd pick up the next house of kids and the next thing you know you'd be twelve or fifteen kids walking to the school. Each house was maybe a quarter of a mile apart and it wasn't any big ranches out there so we were all kids of farmers and knew each other and that's how we went to school. It was two rooms, and at one time you could attend all the way to high school there. Well, my sisters went there until high school and then they took the bus to Richmond. Emma graduated from Richmond High School. My brothers and I and my second sister graduated from Needville High School. My sister was in the first graduating class in 1948. It is when Needville became an independent school district. Prior to 1948 kids who went to high school had to go to Richmond or Rosenberg high school.

But anyway that Concord school was two rooms. One through four in one class room and four through eight in the other one. It was just a country school and the teachers lived on the property. In most cases there were lady teachers and the farmers had built them a house. A small comfortable two or three room house on the property where the school was located. If the teachers were husband and wife that was nice to. The more I remember, most of the teachers were females.

GURECKY: The local farmers would assist these young teachers by going out harvesting wood because the school needed wood for their big burners to keep the rooms of the school warm. Also the teachers would need wood. I remember my Dad and the neighbors would volunteer to go cut the wood and stack it by the house so they would be comfortable. I guess the Europeans that came here valued public education! I don't know how to say it ... they strongly encouraged that you go to school. It wasn't, "Well I'll go to about the sixth or seventh grade then drop out". We have to admire the Europeans when they came here that they were encouraging their kids to really get educated.

TERRELL: How did the races get along where you lived?

GURECKY: There were black families that lived in our community. I remember in the Fairchild area there were probably five or six or seven black families that lived there. They were treated very well they were usually... not usually, they would always work. They weren't share croppers but the farmer would build them a home and they'd live on the farm. I'm sure there was some compensation that he gave them but he provided them a roof and they raised their families. They would marry and have children and lived on the farm with the land owner and they were our neighbors. But they weren't allowed to go to the same school, which was sad, but we didn't think nothing of it.

TERRELL: Did you play with them?

GURECKY: Oh yes, but when it came to school it was sad... that they didn't ... we didn't see it as anything wrong; it was just a way of life. It was acceptable, they were happy and their children went to a separate school and we went to different schools until integration when we started taking the kids into our public schools. That would have been in the sixties.

Families who were somewhat financially better off had more property but maybe didn't have a large family. In large families those kids were assets; they worked. They worked very hard and if you didn't have a family then, kind of like Doris' dad who took in the little 13-year-old boy. He had two daughters and it was like "I could really use a man around this farm". So 13-year-old William (Red) Faniel moved in on the farm and had a house of his own. If he would have married he would have had children. His brothers did the same thing; they lived with white people and they had families and their kids went to school it was just one of those things.

TERRELL: Did you go to college?

GURECKY: Actually no, Doris went to business school; I went to trade school after I got out of high school for a while. I did try to do some night work in Wharton Junior College after we were married and had children. I was working in Houston but living in Rosenberg and farming. I was just meeting myself coming and going. Then there was a terrible accident one night coming from Wharton that happened just a few minutes before I got to the scene of the accident. I saw a lady that had been killed and that was it. I said "Doris, I can't do this anymore because I'm going to fall asleep one day and I'll end up like her". So I didn't continue night school.

TERRELL: What did you learn in trade school?

GURECKY: To be a machinist, I learned a machining trade. I spent twenty-seven years working for Baroid Oil Field Services. After twenty-seven years, the recession of the early eighties happened. The petroleum industry in Houston was hit very severely. There was a lot of plant closures and companies shutting down. I was manufacturing manager having worked my way up from a trainee right out of trade school with two hundred people reporting to me. In 1982 I had to layoff a 160 of those employees. Three months later I had to layoff the other forty. Here I was the one who had a job and yet I volunteered to leave the company and start my own company. It was a big move for us.

But the decision was based on the fact that we didn't want to move from Rosenberg. The job would have been way up by the Intercontinental Airport . There was no North Belt freeway at that time so you had to go through down town Houston to get there. It was fifty some odd miles to travel in traffic and I just couldn't see myself doing that. I felt like we will start a little infant company and I'll farm on the side. I was farming at that time also and had some cattle and said, "You know we'll make it". I had a vision that on days like today I would work in the shop and on a good day I would be at the farm. But that sure didn't last very long.

TERRELL: What year did you start your company?

GURECKY: The company was started March of 1983.

TERRELL: And it's grown.

GURECKY: Very much so. It really and truly... I have to admit that was not something Doris and I saw. That the company would grow to the size it is today. But we worked hard at it.



TERRELL: I know that when the economy took a downturn that you all went to great lengths not to lay anybody off. I guess after you've seen or did what you had did at Baroid played a factor.

GURECKY: Let's say out of the 200 people, the first 160 I had to lay off. That was tough. But the last forty of us that were left, we were the ones who started that company. We saw it grow from a little bitty company to a large company and I just couldn't... when it got down to that "fortunate forty as we called ourselves", I just couldn't see myself standing up there knowing that I'm going to send thirty of them home and I'm staying with my eleven people. I decided it was going to be a whole lot easier to make the announcement that I was leaving with them.

TERRELL: How many employees do you have today?

GURECKY: We were up as high eighty I think now we are down, we had some attrition ... we are down to probably 75 or 76 right now.

TERRELL: I know Doris has worked along with you.

GURECKY: Absolutely, very much so. (laughing). It's not my company it's our company.

TERRELL: What is the name of the company?

GURECKY: At the time we just decided to call it Gurecky Manufacturing Service because we do not do any engineering or design work here. We don't have any engineers on the payroll. We get bills of material, which is a list of material needed to perform the work, and blue prints from our customers and we custom build that part to their specifications. Schlumberger and Halliburton are our two largest customers and thank God for them.

We have to work very very hard to stay in good graces with them because they are very difficult to work for because they expect, and should rightly expect, that everything we build to be of superb quality. The parts have to be very very special made. I told the guys right away we are not going to be a production shop; we are going to be a specialty shop building something very special they can't afford to send it to other countries. That's what we built our business on - quality. We are very proud that we have just been certified as a ISO 9000 company which is a very prestigious signature meaning that you are a top rated company.

TERRELL: Congratulations.

GURECKY: Thank you, thank you.

TERRELL: When did you become interested in politics? I know you ran for city council and what year was that.

GURECKY: If Cliff [Terrell] was here he would remember. I guess when I started getting interested in politics is when I didn't have to commute to Houston to work and I started living and working in Rosenberg. That would have been in the early eighties and there were things... and I got interested and wanted to know how the county spends their money, how the schools spend their money from bond elections. We didn't want to call ourselves watchdogs but lots of people would say ya'll are just a bunch of watchdogs. No, we were just concerned and wanted to hold government accountable. That the monies we were sending to the county the schools and to the cities were being spent right.

So five of us started: Arthur Mahlman, Herb Phelan, Theresa Laia from Sugar Land, Brian Gaston from Sugar Land and myself. We formed a little group we called ourselves the Fort Bend Tax Payers Coalition. That little coalition grew and grew and grew. We were in for quite a while; I would say what eight years at least before the coalition broke up.

The Werlla brothers and very prominent farmers and business owners all liked what we were doing. We would have monthly meetings and used the library to meet and we were out in the open. Bob Hanel followed us very closely with reporting on the coalition. When the county would have their budget meetings some of us from the coalition, maybe Doris and myself or somebody else, would go and just sit there. Most of the time we didn't know what the heck they were even talking about perhaps but at least we were there our face and ears were there. Suddenly people starting acting a little different like what are they doing here? Well, they are the taxpayers coalition. Oh really. One of the things I give Arthur Mahlman credit for was the need for the county to try to reduce cost by having a unified road system.

Up until that time all four Commissioners were in charge of a Precinct and each had their own maintainers, bulldozers and other equipment. We were duplicating this equipment like crazy, it wasn't being utilized fully and we were still operating like they did in the horse and buggy days. , They needed four county barns and four of each piece of equipment back then. When everything was done with mules and horses you could only travel so much a day so far from home base and then the horse had to be back in the barn for the night and the next morning you take him out again. So what happened, we were just duplicating a lot of equipment when it could have been loaded on the truck and within an hour been taking to the other end of the county and the Commissioners could share.

Every Commissioner had his own toys; we said no, "Let's put these toys in one big facility plus you hire one person to oversee the whole thing. Besides, you Commissioners are voted in office, not because of your skills on building bridges and roads, you're a representative of the County. Let's have one person that oversees all the equipment in the county."

TERRELL: Is that Road and Bridge?

GURECKY: Yes, Road and Bridge We saw where Bell County was doing this unified road system and we pushed hard to get it. There was a lot of resentment; they didn't want to go that route. But then finally they realized it would be a better way and so today we have a Unified Road System. I think it is a very efficient method and that's why you see these blue trucks driving all over the county because they can move so easily and help each other out and save the county a bunch of money. Same with school bonds, we would sit in on school board meetings. The Tax Payers Coalition was a very good, conscientious group of people with membership probably up to up... best I remember over a 100 people.

TERRELL: You have a propensity to grow things. It gets bigger and bigger.

GURECKY: (chuckling) I had a boss that use to hold me back - Mr. Lipmen. I would be sitting here like I am talking to you and tell him all my plans, what I wanted to do as Manufacturing Manager. I would tell him about what are we going to do with these 200 people and the equipment we want to build. He would sit there smoking and listening to me; he was a very good supervisor, a good man. A hard man but a good man. He'd listen to me and then when I got through talking he said, "Well now Joe, don't mix up more malt than you can drink". (laughter). I don't have to explain that.

TERRELL: Sage advice.

TERRELL: So you went from there to City Council?

GURECKY: That's kind of why we got so involved with the cities and the county. I remember Dianne Wilson and people like that just begging me to run for office. They said, "Look we'll pay you, you don't have to work for free like the mayor or councilman." We got pretty close to the operations on how the governments are working. I didn't run with an agenda and I didn't run against anyone. I was fortunate that Dorothy Ryan wanted to run for another position. I lived in her district and she was going to leave that chair open for who ever wanted to run for it. So I decided that I would seek that position and not have to be dealing with running against another person or a friend. Next thing you know Brian Gaston had an opportunity to fill a position on the Sugar Land City Council. Arthur Mahlman was aging and wanted to slow down. Theresa kind of stayed to keep the ship afloat. We started spinning off doing other things and obviously, as a councilperson, I couldn't belong to that organization I founded; it would be a conflict of interest. I served on council for four years and Dorothy wanted to resign from the Mayor's position. Again she confided in me that she would quit so that gave me a chance to prepare my self and seek that position. That started my twelve-year tenure in the Mayor's position.

TERRELL: Are you enjoying retirement?

GURECKY: Absolutely! After sixteen years it becomes a way of life. You don't even realize that you're serving, it's just another job. I enjoyed the accomplishments. I didn't keep score exactly on how we were doing but I felt we were progressing and I felt good about my position on council. We did a lot of good things and I'm sure there are a lot of things we wish now we could of done better. I think Brazos Town Center is one of my biggest accomplishments.

There were a lot of people who didn't understand that we were creating a Public/Private partnership; meaning we were going to use tax payer money in a venture with a private corporation. A couple of cities were doing it, Sugar Land did it before we were doing it. But when we tried to introduce that to Rosenberg (chuckle) it was like, "What are these boys going to do". We were able to get it done and it never cost the city a penny. The people who were going to lend the partnership the money wanted to know if Rosenberg was committed. We had to pledge I think it was like seven million dollars which is a whole lot of money, but look what we have out there now.

TERRELL: You grew that too.

GURECKY: It's just been wonderful. Sales tax revenue has just been extremely helpful for Rosenberg. Well that's how, we get into politics. Really to be honest with you, the thing that prompted me from the very beginning to decide to seek the office was when Dorothy Ryan told me that she was [not?] going to run for the Mayor's job. I really didn't want to do it. It never was part of my long-range plan but I was attending council meetings for two years before Dorothy decided to resign and I did it only because I got to liking what government was doing. I got a better understanding and became less critical. The decision to run was based on this.

I didn't serve in the military. I was eligible for the draft and my brother was drafted. But we had a baby eleven months after we were married so Uncle Sam didn't want me with a family. He just left me alone and there wasn't any conflict going on at that particular part in my life. I said, "I can do two years as a councilman since my brother had to do two years in the military." Well I got two years and two years more then I got the Mayor's position and it just kept going. Honestly, I just felt I could do my share for the community and serve.

TERRELL: Are you affiliated with any organizations now?

GURECKY: Oh yes, one that I'm most proud of, I'm in the seventh year now, I was appointed by Governor Perry for six years to serve as a regent for Texas State Technical College.. Then I was reappointed about a year and a half ago for another six years. (laughing) Doris is going to get somebody to drive me around because I'll be in my eighties. I was always very supportive of technical training working with Cliff [Terrell] on the Wharton Junior College campus.

Dean Leaman, Dorothy and Jack Mishka and so many of us worked so hard to get that going. When I worked at Baroid we would go to Waco and recruit welders, machinist and electronic. I sit on the Wharton Junior College Foundation as a board member, not the school board, but the Foundation board.

DORIS GURECKY: Gulf Coast Medical Foundation

GURECKY: That's right, for a couple of years now I have been with the Gulf Coast Medical Foundation. It is a small foundation that spun off from the Gulf Coast Hospital I'm not really sure how they came into the money but the foundation is not anything like the George Foundation. We are only about \$18 or \$19 million dollars but we take those and investments and give money to different nonprofits in Fort Bend County, Matagorda County, Jackson County and I think Brazoria County. It's interesting to sit of the board and allocate this money.

DORIS GURECKY: Director at New First National Bank

GURECKY: Yes I'm director, the first person from outside the Stovall family to serve on the board of New First National Bank and especially from outside the county. Outside of El Campo. I was on the Oak Bend Hospital Board for a six years and term-limited out. During that time I was also serving on the Poly Ryon Foundation and still serve on it.

DORIS GURECKY: Meals on wheels.

GURECKY: Yes, I serve on the Fort Bend Seniors, which is Meals on Wheels. It keeps us busy.

TERRELL: Sounds like you're busy. Doris, are you affiliated with some organizations also?

DORIS GURECKY: I was on the Lamar Education Awards Foundation Board (LEAF) and am not on any boards right now.

TERRELL: Have I forgotten to ask you something that you would like to add?

GURECKY: I'm sure there is a lot more we could cover but it's good. I enjoyed it. We were involved in a lot of things, a lot of things. Talking about changes, we have come a long way with transportation. Y'all were talking about the mud road and communication. I think we talked about the telephones and the televisions that we didn't have.

TERRELL: When did you first get a TV?

GURECKY: I want to say 1956.

DORIS GURECKY: We probably had one a little bit sooner. People who owned the grocery store had one and they were family friends. We would go there every Friday night to watch wrestling. (laughing) Of course the kids would play and the grown ups would watch wrestling.

TERRELL: We went down the street to watch the Lone Ranger.

GURECKY: Beside transportation and communication, growth is something that we both witnessed... a tremendous amount of growth in Fort Bend County. Being in public office, I appreciate the concerns about things like water. Everybody is happy because all these people are coming to Texas; but something we better not loose sight of is, when those people come they are going to be needing services - natural resources. I just hope we are smart enough to continue to strive to solve these issues before they become a serious problem. That's with anything though, anytime you experience growth there is risk involved.

We endured without having air conditioning, we never knew what we were missing; and we grew up with home made shorts - boxer shorts. Boys never had any fancy ones ... when we had PE we were kind of ashamed to have to take some off our clothes (laughing) because the other kids had bought under clothes and we had home made.

TERRELL: Your mother sewed?

GURECKY: Oh yes.

TERRELL: Did your mother sew?

DORIS GURECKY: Most definitely.

GURECKY: Shirts and the girls dresses. Doris' mother was a superb seamstress and she could just look at what you have on, then go home and duplicate it. I don't know how she did it. She didn't use a pattern, she just had that natural talent, like an artist. We married so young and had children we couldn't afford to go to the store and buy clothes. Yet our children, the girls, were always well-dressed because grandma made those little dresses and she enjoyed doing it. We were thankful that we had grandma because we didn't have money to buy it.

TERRELL: What an asset. If you can't think of anything else then I'll end this interview but it was certainly interesting. I enjoyed it.

GURECKY: And I might add it's Doris and Joe's interview because it was unfair that you interviewed her first.

DORIS GURECKY: Yes it was!

GURECKY: But if I had gone first then she wouldn't have anything to talk about (laughing) because she always says you don't ever let me talk. [all chuckle]

TERRELL: So I did a good thing.

Interview ends.