

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Sandra Startz**

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Transcript

MATTHEWS: My name is Jesse Matthews. I am with the Fort Bend County Historical Commission Oral History Committee. We are here today talking to Sandra Startz, who headed up the Red Cross in Fort Bend County from 1980 to 2011. We welcome Sandra and her story today. We want to find out a little bit about how your family came to Fort Bend County and how you became head of the Red Cross.

STARTZ: My great-grandparents immigrated to Fort Bend County from Germany. My great-grandfather was William Tielke. His wife was Caroline Thielman. The story is that they drifted around Fort Bend County and then found one another and married. They settled in Needville area and farmed.

GOODSILL: Where did they come from in Germany?



Sandra's ancestors in a photo dated 1938. Top row: Eric & Emma Bremer, Henry & Olivia, Albin & Emma. Middle: Anna & Erich, Willie & Martha Weighat, John & Emma, Willie & Minnie Tielke (grandparents). Front: Emma & Fritz, Caroline & William Tielke (great grandparents), Zelma & Fritz Oberhoff.

STARTZ: You know I am not positive; but they came on ships through Galveston, as many of the German immigrants did during that time. My grandfather, William Tielke, was one of their sons. He married my grandmother, Minnie Miller. They had a number of children. My dad, Leroy William Tielke, is their oldest son born in 1918.



Pictured (l-r) are Sandra's uncles Raymond and Melvin, her dad, Leroy, and her Aunt Viola, ca. 1925.

My grandparents would have been born around the 1880, 1870, something like that. My dad was the oldest son. His siblings were Viola, Melvin, Raymond, and Lumnie. Sadly, Lumnie passed away when she was just a small child from diphtheria. After that, they had my aunt Oralie then Caroline was born. My dad was already married to my mother and had a child of their own when his mother had another baby, Marjorie.

MATTHEWS: That brings the total to how many kids?

STARTZ: Eight. Again, eight children wasn't uncommon back then! It was a farming family and you needed hands to take care of things! They did well in the area.

My mother was Alice Preuss Tielke. Her parents were Martin Preuss and Elsbeth Loesch Preuss. They came here from the Prairie Hill community, up in the Brenham area. They had three children, Alice, a daughter who died and Wilma, who grew up to marry Pete Mesecke.

My mother and dad met out at the old Fairchilds Hall in Fairchilds, Texas at a dance. My dad always told us, "I saw this skinny looking girl across the hall and then she turned around and I fell in love." They danced that night away. Dad took her home in the horse and buggy because they didn't have an automobile. Then he courted her.

Uncle Pete was courting Aunt Wilma at the time, and Pete and Wilma wanted to get married. Mother did not want to get married, but she was the older sister. The parents wouldn't let Wilma marry until my mother married. My mother was a little bit more free spirited and was a very independent woman. I mean VERY independent, especially for that time and age. Anyway, she finally agreed to marry my dad and they had a double wedding. That was, I believe, during the war time. Mother and Wilma married on the same day.

My sister was born in 1941. Then my sister Jeanette was born. My brother Troy was born July of 43. I was born in November of 1951. My brother Gary was born January of 1953. My grandfather, Martin, passed away August of 51, before I was born. My parents lived in Beasley. Dad farmed. He also had a gas station out there for a long time. My mother had kind of a little beer joint next to the gas station. We could run up there during the day. This was a country beer joint where the farmers went. They played some dominoes, drank a beer, and stuff like that. It was a very family-oriented place. Beasley was a really small town.

There were a lot of churches. Everything centered around family and church. There was the Baptist church, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Friedens United Church of Christ, and Peace of Hope Lutheran Church out of there.

MATTHEWS: I find it interesting the variety of churches in such a small place. I thought most people would have been Catholic.

STARTZ: No. My family primarily belonged to the Emmanuel United Church of Christ in Needville. That's pretty much where everybody was married and buried. I grew up in Beasley. There are two cotton gins. I always remember riding with daddy in the truck pulling those trailers to the cotton gin.

MATTHEWS: So the primary crop that your dad grew was cotton?

STARTZ: Cotton, corn, maize, things like that. We would drive out to Needville to grandma and grandpa's farm because as grandpa aged, daddy did the farming. That was always a lot of fun because we ran through the chicken yard and chased the chickens. There was a pond, too.

MATTHEWS: Somewhere along the line your dad became the Fire Chief of Beasley?

STARTZ: Yes. He was a charter member of the Beasley Volunteer Fire Department. I believe Mr. Hoffman was chief before him and then my dad became fire chief. When dad retired from the State Highway Department Dale Lindemann became the fire chief and is still the fire chief today. So Beasley has only had three fire chiefs!

MATTHEWS: When your dad was fire chief of Beasley sometimes he had to take you with him?

STARTZ: Yeah. This is a small town, and my mother worked. So if my mother or my grandmother were not home to watch my little brother and me, occasionally, Gary and I got thrown into the fire truck and went off to a fire with my dad (laughs), which we know wouldn't happen now. It didn't happen often then, but on occasion we had to ride in the fire truck. We were strictly told to stay in that truck! You didn't move. Gary and I knew if we moved, our butts would be paddled, so we stayed in the truck.

It wasn't a very big truck. It was more a tanker. Remember it is a rural area and you had to haul water. It did have a cab on the front of it. There was a fire station, but it wasn't manned during the day. At different spots in the town there was a phone and a fire button on the wall. There was a fire phone in our kitchen. You didn't touch the fire phone! When you mashed the button on the wall the fire horn would go off. So you would go to the fire department then and the guys would pick up the phone. The person on the fire phone would stay on it and tell them where the fire was.

MATTHEWS: What kind of skills did your father have that made him gravitate towards fire chief, fire fighting?

STARTZ: Just a community desire to do it. It was needed in the community. I don't know that he had any formal training because back then you had a truck, you had a hose, and you put water on things.

You could have a house fire. It could be a fire on the side of the road. It could be a field that caught on fire. You know the old saying — don't play with matches. I can tell you it is really true because my little neighbor girls, Michaelis's girls, Kathy and Brenda, and I were playing frontier girls. We were pretending to have a wagon.

We wanted a little camp fire! So we piled up some grasses and I snuck in the house. Grandma Pruess was home, I remember. I snuck out a box of matches, and we set that little pile of grasses to flame.

Of course, it spread out a little bit (laughing). Michaelis' mother saw us and she got the little fire put out. But she called my daddy. (chuckling) Let's say, I didn't sit for a couple of days because I knew better and all.

MATTHEWS: Can you tell me the story about somebody that almost set a tank on fire.

STARTZ: It was one of the days of the Beasley Catholic Church bazaar. I had been up there, and I saw some sort of smoke looking stuff at our house. I walked on over there, and apparently my brother and another little boy had smoked a cigarette and dropped it around that tank and it was in flames. It was like a diesel tank. To fill your truck, you had a tank at home. I didn't know what to do, I was so scared. To my like 12-year-old eyes it was going to explode and burn the town down! I went in the house and pressed the fire whistle.

You know, you're a kid and you don't know what else to do. I did pick up the phone. I should have used our house phone to call the number but in my excitement I didn't. That is not the proper way to do it. You have to do it the proper way (chuckles). Apparently, we had trouble with setting little fires when we were young (laughs).

MATTHEWS: Where did you wind up going to school?

STARTZ: I started school in Beasley. I went to a four-room school house that had five grades in it. We didn't have kindergarten then, we started in first grade. Second grade, we had Mrs. Orrick as our teacher. In the third grade, we had Miss Claudia Anderson. The third and fourth grade were together in the classroom, so part of the time she was teaching the third grade, part of the time the fourth grade. When I was in the fifth grade, the fourth and fifth graders were together with Mr. Roger Adamson. He is the father of Roland Adamson and the grandfather of Roger Adamson, who are both with the George Foundation. Mr. Adamson not only taught us fourth and fifth grade, he also was our school.

MATTHEWS: Your father spoke German?

STARTZ: Yes. German was a prominent language in the Needville area. As a child, my father only spoke German. He was eight years old before he learned English. He learned English because a cousin came and worked on the farm one summer and taught him English. That's when he was able to go to school because back then if you didn't know English you couldn't go to school.

People talk nowadays about immigrants assimilating but way back when my great-grandparents immigrated, German was a primary language to them. English was not my father's first language. I didn't speak German because they didn't want us speaking German.

GOODSILL: Did your father speak with an accent?

STARTZ: No, not at all. I think it is because once he learned English and was in school that became his predominant language. He was the oldest child and he had a lot of little sisters. They told me how he would sit on the porch in the evenings with his little sisters and sing to them in German. My dad died with complications after a broken hip. We think it was a blood clot that broke loose. On the night that my dad died, Caroline was sitting in his hospital room holding his hand and singing him the songs in German that he used to sing to her. It was very tender and sweet to sit there and watch them hold hands and sing to him. Just very beautiful.

GOODSILL: What kind of personality did your father have?

STARTZ: My dad was a happy person and a hard worker. He enjoyed life. He and mother went dancing. Actually, on their tombstone it says they danced through life with love. They loved to go out and dance. Polka, waltzes, whatever they could dance they were dancing. They both enjoyed life, they enjoyed people.

Mother was a happy woman, too. I was born when she was 35 or 36 years old. My brother and I were their second set. My sister and brother were older. I can remember mother working all day and coming home and sitting in this swivel rocker and either Gary or I always plopped up in her lap. She was very good about holding us and rocking us.

MATTHEWS: You went to grade school in Beasley. When did you come to Rosenberg?

STARTZ: Beasley through fifth grade. In the sixth grade we came to Rosenberg to school to Taylor Ray. The downstairs had some fifth graders, but the second and third story of the old Taylor Ray had the sixth graders.

MATTHEWS: The old Taylor Ray, is the school still there?

STARTZ: No, I think it was on Eighth Street, Avenue H and I. It was there, and then it was torn down. It is a shopping center there now. I think Mr. Galloway was our principal at that time. That was the first time I came to town for school. It was about a 20 minute ride on the bus.

I guess the kids in the country were picked up at home, but all the kids that lived in town went to the Beasley Elementary School for pick up. It was two buses. They dropped us off at the old Taylor Ray and then it went to the Lamar Junior High and Lamar High School.

The first job that I had was babysitting the Harris children across the street. Max and Reece Harris lived across the street from us and they had two children, Max, Jr. and Douglas. I would babysit when the parents went out at night. The kids were great. I always enjoyed them. Then one summer — I guess I was seventh grade, maybe eighth grade at the oldest — and my dad came home and said Mrs. Matheaus needed somebody to watch the kids this summer. So, Monday through Friday and half a day on Saturday I went to the Matheaus's house and watched their three children. I would babysit them in the summers and then through the school year I would still go on Saturday for the half day while their mother worked at the bank. During high school, I worked at Miller's Pharmacy in Rosenberg. It used to be on the corner of Third Street where Dostal's Jewelry is now.

I worked as the cashier, and they had a cosmetic's counter. So, you would go behind the cosmetic's counter and do cosmetics for people. That was the fun part! Mr. Miller liked the shelves clean. We were constantly taking everything off the shelf, dusting the shelf, and putting everything back on the shelf. Merle Litvik worked the soda fountain, whenever she got off work the girls and I would take turns running to the soda fountain and doing the Cokes and the malts and what have you. That was a lot of fun. The way Sandy McGee got her start was pulling some sodas and stuff over there also. She was Sandy Snell then. But we all learned to make malts there. They make the best malts.

MATTHEWS: You went to college?

STARTZ: Yes. First I went to a technical school in Dallas for a year to learn to do keypunching. I should not do Keypunch. I should not type! That is not for me. But I finished the course and came home and got my real estate license. I was only 20 years old and I had to have a release of minority for it because at that time you had to be 21. I sold a few but it was not enough to support myself.

Then I went to Louisiana State University at Alexandria. I started working on my basic college credits. I worked for Rapides Parish General Hospital as a nurse's aide at night. I was there for about a year. It was really far from home! I came back home, and I went to Polly Ryon Hospital because I knew how to be a nurses' aide.

I was paying for my own schooling and it was hard working full time and going to school. At Polly Ryon the nurses there said, "You are good with you patients." At that time, there was a Polly Ryon School of Vocational Nursing. I was offered a scholarship there by the LVN Association so I went.

This would be early 70s. I did my nursing license and passed my state board. That's where I really fit. I am more of a caregiver type person. I went to work at Richmond State School for several years and worked in HMR.

That's a tough field! I was a Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN). I started out as the unit nurse, so I had Leon and Neches units. This was the younger children's units, say age five and up to eighteen or so, maybe a few in there early 20s. Each building had four pods with about 30 children assigned to each pod. So I would see 240 people. I would talk to the aides that worked with them and the medication attendants to see who's sick, who's not sick. Then you would go ahead and take all the sick ones to sick call in the morning and get their prescriptions filled at the pharmacy on site and make sure they had their first dose with no reactions. Then you had to do your charting to ensure that there was a trail that they went to the doctor, that they had medication, that the medication attendants understood any side effects and things like that. They had a doctor there, and they also had a psychiatrist, Dr. Deward Bok

GOODSILL: Did you ever run into Dr. Stanley Thompson?

STARTZ: Yes, because of his wife Lila. I went to high school with their daughter, Judy. She recently passed. She was a lovely girl. Lila and Stanley were very supportive when we started the Red Cross. Just lovely, lovely, lovely people. I can't say enough about them.

I went to work in the infirmary where the sicker kids would go. That was really critical because some had poor communication skills with their handicaps. You had to really be on top of things. Some kids had chronic conditions.

I can remember a young girl who had hydrocephalus, and her head was very large. You had to be so careful turning her and caring for her. You really have to respect the aides out there that worked with them. We had to watch out for bedsores not just on her body but her head. You could have some very fragile patients. That work was very, very rewarding.

MATTHEWS: So, who finally approached you and said you know what you ought to run is the Red Cross.

STARTZ: There was an ad in the paper for someone to work for the Red Cross here. So, I answered the ad in the paper. I went into Houston and I was interviewed by Jim Krueger, Sherman Fant, and Dick Bolyard.

MATTHEWS: This is the Greater Houston Area Red Cross?

STARTZ: The Red Cross in Fort Bend had been an independent chapter and Houston had been an independent chapter. Mr. August Meyer was the driving force of Red Cross in this community as far as making sure we had funding, getting things done, heavy involvement. Mr. August Meyer and a number of the people were critical volunteers at that time but they were aging. There weren't a lot of young people coming up and stepping into the shoes of those leaders.

August came from a prominent family in Fort Bend County. He had a gentleman that worked for him at the bank, which used to be First National of Richmond, I think. Bob and Kim Rheumann and some of the other volunteers decided that they needed more support and so they talked to the Houston chapter of the Red Cross about merging the Fort Bend chapter with the Houston chapter. That happened in July of 1980. I was hired in August of 1980.

Like I said, these three gentlemen were interviewing me, and it was going okay. It wasn't great. One of them made a derogatory remark about the town of Needville. It very much upset me, and I popped my hand (makes a popping sound on table with her hand) on the table and I informed him that's where my family was from and Needville was a very good town and I didn't appreciate his remark. The interview kind of went on and I kept thinking, "Well I just blew that. You know, that's the end of that!" But I got home and the next day they called me and said would you come back for another interview. We have narrowed it down to three people I went back in for an interview the next day.



*Texas Historic Marker #9052
installed 250' on SH 36 250' north of
the junction of FM 1236 in 1971.
--Atlas - Texas Historical Sites*

At that time, they were calling it a coordinator, to coordinate the services. Within a week or so, I had the job. I was to start on a Monday. But on that Friday, they called me and they said, "Do you think you can start tomorrow morning? There's a hurricane coming in.

There is going to have to be a shelter opened in Fort Bend and we have a man Cecil Rourke from Oklahoma City who is coming in to run the shelter and we want you to get some experience.” So, I said, “Okay!” in my perky little voice and I said, “Where do I go?” They said, “The new county jail in Richmond.” It’s part of the new jail on Ransom Road near the Justice Center on Williams Way. It wasn’t even opened yet as a jail. It was still under construction. But Jody Stavinoha was our judge and he was very community minded. He said, “We need to open this big building. We don’t know how many people we will get.”

I was told to get there at six in the morning. When I walked in Cecil Rourke looked at me and he said, “You’ve got 670 some odd people in this shelter, you need to feed them breakfast.”

GOODSILL: Do you know how to cook, Sandra? (laughing)

STARTZ: No. There was no finished kitchen in there. So, I got on the phone and I called every store and donut shop in the area. We got donuts, milk and juice to feed people.

MATTHEWS: Welcome to the Red Cross.

STARTZ: Yeah. It was about 9:00, 9:30 AM or so and I was wiping tables thinking, “Oh, my God. I hope I can go home so I can tell my husband I want to quit.” (chuckling) He walked up to me and he said, “What are you going to feed them for lunch?” I called McDonalds and we put in a very large order.

GOODSILL: Did you have a budget?

STARTZ: No! They just told me to get food. McDonalds actually donated it and brought it over. So that was great. Anyway, I am wiping tables around 2:30 or 3:00 PM and he walked up and I went, “Oh, now I’ve got to feed them dinner?” “Yep.” So, we called in the largest fried order of chicken to go that that Churches had ever seen. Mr. Rhueman’s wife and I got this big Red Cross van and we went to the chicken place . Do you know what happens when they put 670 some odd orders of chicken in the van? It steams. It’s greasy steam. Sarah and I had this greasy skin and hair and everything. We got the food there, fed everybody, and cleaned up. They let me go around midnight but told me to come back at 6:00 in the morning.

Well, thank God the hurricane didn't hit here. Everybody could go home the next day. We had donuts, and coffee, and juice again. Then you've got cots and blankets that have to be folded up and everything cleaned up. My oldest son was 18 months or so old at that point. My husband had brought him up to the shelter. He saw all these cots and all these people laying down. (This happened not just that day, but numerous times through his life as we had emergencies.) The boys had in their head that every night their mother tucked everybody in and said prayers with them. Their understanding was, dad is going to take care of you, Moms got to take care of everyone else.

After that, Mr. Roark and I had to do paperwork. That was day three. He handed me two binders. Each was about six to eight inches thick. He said, "This is the three thousand series of the Red Cross bible for disaster. You need to read this." I promise you, I spent months reading that to understand the process of handling a disaster in your community or on the larger scale.

MATTHEWS: There have been several disasters over your period of time. But the Red Cross doesn't only do disasters.

STARTZ: We do one-family fires. This is where a family in the community has a fire. Say they have no insurance and no resources. The Red Cross will help them with a place to stay that night, immediate food and clothing. Did they lose critical medication such as an inhaler for asthma, their blood pressure or diabetes medicine? We work with them to get those basics and restore them on a pretty much immediate basis.

MATTHEWS: And with the military?

STARTZ: Yes, The American Red Cross is chartered by Congress to provide services to the military. This relates primarily to communication services. Times have changed as we all know. Back in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War people didn't have phones, cell phones, computers, or things like that. The Red Cross is a verifying agency in an emergency. If military personnel in the U. S. or overseas and have a family member pass away, the family calls the Red Cross. The Red Cross verifies the death through the funeral home or the doctor then we send a message to the Red Cross that is embedded with that base. There is usually a Red Cross representative at the base or in the area.

The Red Cross has a 1-800 number, so any time night or day you can call and to get someone to help a loved one receive a message or report an illness or something like this. A lot of times it is a death of a mother or father, or a family member. They would contact the commanding officer who would bring the serviceman in and give him the news and either grant him leave or not depending on things. The death and illnesses are always rough, but births were wonderful! When a woman would give birth we would send the birth announcement to the serviceman. That was really, really joyful.

MATTHEWS: Sandra, did you work at the Red Cross for 31 years. Has the Red Cross remained pretty stable with what it was doing 30 years ago to what it is doing now?

STARTZ: As always things change, so how we do things changes. Thirty years ago it was all done by telephone. The duties have pretty much stayed the same though but how you communicate is different. As time went we refined our processes to deliver services more cost effectively.

Whenever I started with the Red Cross, I covered Fort Bend County. The Fort Bend Chapter of the Red Cross had merged into Greater Houston Area Chapter. But the east Wharton County Chapter and the west Wharton County of the Red Cross Chapter merged also. So, I had Wharton and Fort Bend County. After that, we merged in Waller, Austin, and Washington counties. So, I was covering all those counties.

I think they moved me up to Director then. We hired Melba Ashley, I don't remember if her title was secretary or administrative assistant. She worked part-time. But we covered all of those areas. When I say we it really was the volunteers because obviously we can't go every place every time there is a fire. We had volunteers that we trained in each community who did the work. Red Cross is a volunteer driven organization, so you have very few staff persons compared to volunteers.

This year it was growing so much then we hired a coordinator in Waller County. Then she covered Waller, Austin, and Washington. I covered Fort Bend and Wharton. Then we opened up other branches. Eventually the Greater Houston Area Chapter had like 16 counties and 13 offices. We released Wharton County. It went to another area after a while. Then Houston grew, everything grew. So they made two managing directors, myself and Fran Parent. I had directors in various offices. But I had Brazoria, Fort Bend, Wharton, Colorado, Waller, Brenham. And then I had Sunnyside. I had a director in Brenham. I had one in Waller. I had one in Brazoria, Montgomery County and Sunnyside.

This was happening in the 1990s and 2000s. Eventually the other managing director left and for about the last year, year and a half I supervised 13 offices. We still had our central office in Houston that oversaw everything, but then the branch operations I was overseeing.

GOODSILL: So early in your career where you were giving care and you eventually moved to an administration position. Did you have skills for that?

STARTZ: I think you developed them. I continued to go to college off and on after my LVN. And the Red Cross national office had trainings. I went into one training program that was a leadership development program. I went once a month for about four months for a week at a time. My group went to Portland, Oregon. It was a development of leadership skills to help our chapter, our organization to move into the 21st century.

GOODSILL: I think of Red Cross as being something that's primarily active during emergencies, but from an administrative point of view it is a constant work between and after the emergency?

STARTZ: Yes. Because you have to be prepared. We were recruiting volunteers. We were training volunteers in damage assessment, mass care, nursing services. We developed partnerships--the Fort Bend school district, Lamar school district and Needville also. We worked very closely with them. We provided CPR First Aid training. Jessie, you did a lot of CPR First Aid training and not just to the staff but to the students within the school.

But Red Cross did a big push here and across the U. S. for health and safety training. It was CPR, First Aid. When a person drops in a heart attack or some sort of emergency, you can't wait until EMS gets there. First Aid needs to start right away. CPR needs to start right away. The sooner care is given, the more viable the patient becomes. Here in Fort Bend County we trained in CPR, First Aid. It was incredible how many times someone would use the skill. We'd hear about it from the Fire Department or from EMS. We also taught Learn to Swim.

GOODSILL: Let me interview the interviewer first. Jesse, you were a Red Cross volunteer? How did you get involved with that?

MATTHEWS: My daddy was a sponsor. I wanted to be involved in what was happening. I learned CPR training through the Red Cross. Then I taught it. Then I got involved with the Fire Department.

GOODSILL: In 2004 you received appreciation from Red Cross for contributing 300 hours of outstanding volunteer service.

MATTHEWS: Mostly CPR training.

GOODSILL: Wow. You must have trained a lot of people. Sandra, how did the Red Cross get all these people to attend these classes that Jessie taught?

STARTZ: We'd put little ads in the paper—Learn CPR. Then we would watch the students in the CPR classes. If they had exceptional skills. We'd ask them, "Are you interested in becoming a CPR instructor?" People would!

MATTHEWS: It was amazing. I remember teaching a lot of hygienist and some doctors too. They have to renew their license all the time. I got kind of known the dental field, dentists would tell other dentists. Get this guy to teach your staff.

STARTZ: In the state of Texas a dental hygienist has to have good CPR certification to renew their dental license.

GOODSILL: So, they can do that through the Red Cross. Do they have to pay for that?

STARTZ: Yes, because there are books and you've got to clean the equipment to keep it safe. Jessie was an incredible volunteer because there's that dedication to serving the community not just through the Fire Department but through the Red Cross. Jessie is the epitome of what not just a Red Cross volunteer is but what any volunteer is in his time and dedication that he gave to the community. He cared. He truly cared about getting people to learn CPR because as a first responder with the Fire Department he saw the difference if people were standing there helplessly or if they were working to save their family member.

MATTHEWS: What are you doing now that you are retired?

STARTZ: I was a member of the national Red Cross's Disaster Human Services Team. I tried to stay local but did some national jobs that were local to us. When a disaster is beyond the scope of what the local office can handle, they bring in volunteers. It becomes a national job then. They bring in volunteers from all over the nation. The last time one I did was Hurricane Ike. After we were safe in Fort Bend County, national sent me to Galveston. I spent three weeks in their office of Emergency Management as their Red Cross liaison making sure the county got the Red Cross services that they needed.

GOODSILL: That must have been VERY intense. Because Galveston was hit very hard by Ike.

MATTHEWS: You think that was your biggest disaster during your reign?

STARTZ: I think every disaster. It is such a life changer. But that was one of the biggest ones. I was sleeping in the League City OEM (Office of Emergency Management) and a lot of the other workers had lost their homes. They had lost homes! They had lost jobs! Their family members may have lost a job. And they were there doing their job, providing critical services while their own home or part of their extended family had lost so much. It was really amazing.

MATTHEWS: Do you have any idea how many volunteers you ever had at any one time?

STARTZ: Oh gosh. We generally had around a thousand volunteers in Fort Bend. I mean active at a time. When I first started there were about 75 volunteers in the community. We then grew to about a thousand volunteers. We trained all of the Fort Bend and Lamar school nurses in disaster health services. So, all of those nurses came out and volunteered when we had big disasters. The Lamar Consolidated CISD let us train their principals and assistant principals in shelter management because they were used to managing large crowds. All these volunteers were critical to making the Red Cross run in the community.

The Southwest Branch covered Fort Bend, Wharton, Colorado, Waller, Austin, Washington. When I first started it was Fort Bend and Wharton. Then we added the others. And then they shrunk me back down to Fort Bend, Wharton because we opened other offices. When my job changed, I wound up supervising six offices and then supervising 11 offices—it was 13 counties and 11 offices in all. The whole time we had the chapter headquarters in Houston on the Southwest freeway.

GOODSILL: Where is the Red Cross office located in Fort Bend County?

STARTZ: We were in the Reece building originally. It was a one room office. Then we moved to a building on Highway 90 in Richmond, it was Seewee Travel Agency. We had three offices and a classroom. Then we moved over on Eighth Street and we had four offices and a classroom and two storage room. Then we moved to Dr. Kleinman's office when he retired his building over on Wilson Drive. He let us have it for the cost of taxes every year. He maintained the building.

We had the building and used it for a number of years. Then he wanted to sell it. We thought about buying it but it needed a lot of work. The Women's Center has it now. We moved over into a building off Avenue H in Rosenberg.

After that we raised the money to buy a building on 2218. It was the Terra Flora Shop. Alice Kocurek owned it. She was very sentimental about that building because she and her brother had built it. She wanted it to be able to do good in the community. So, she sold it to us for not a lot of money. She said she felt good about Red Cross being there and serving the community. We remodeled and that is where the office is today.

GOODSILL: You never told us your husband or children's names.

STARTZ: My husband is Lewis Startz. We have been married 41 and a half years. We have three children. My oldest son is Dax. He is 37. He is married to Collete and they have a daughter, Kaylee, who is ten. They are expecting a baby in August. Dax is ex-Army. His wife Collete was also in the army. They were both in the Old Guard in Washington D.C. He was in the caisson unit; at Arlington Cemetery the guys on horses with the caisson behind them, that was my son. And his wife was an MP in the Old Guard. So, the Army really did issue him a wife.

Reed is married to Darcy. He is an art teacher. She is a science teacher. They have four children—Keegan, Logan, Davon, and Gracie. I have a younger son, Ross, who is at Texas State. He is a political science major.

GOODSILL: Your mom and dad would have been proud of the work you did and they would have been amazed!

STARTZ: They were just such good, kind people.

GOODSILL: They probably would have liked it that you entered into a career that was truly a helping career.

STARTZ: I think so.

GOODSILL: Anything you want to tell people about volunteering or donating to the Red Cross?

STARTZ: I think people should look deeper in their hearts and consider volunteering and helping make our community better. Be it the Red Cross, which you know of course is my agency of choice, but any of the organizations here in Fort Bend County, volunteering, donating to them. It is very critical to the strength of our community. I think it is like a piece of cloth, the tighter the weave, the stronger the cloth. The more involvement we have as individuals in our community, the stronger the fabric of our community.

You can volunteer at your child's school or your grandchild's school. You can go to your church and volunteer. There are many, many ways to volunteer. And even just as an individual. You may not want to affiliate with an organization, or church, or school. But as an individual you can go out and support and help other people in the community.

GOODSILL: Thank you, Sandra.

Interview ends