

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*

Interviewees: **Bill Hartman**

Interview Date: 5/14/2015

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Project / Group: Hartman Newspapers, Inc.

17 Pages



This oral history is copyrighted 2017, 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

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.



*Bill Hartman*

*Transcript*

GOODSILL: Please tell me about your connection to Fort Bend County.

HARTMAN: As a youngster I used to come to Fort Bend County with my father. His company was involved with the newspapers in Fort Bend County. I moved to Richmond, to live, in 1977. If you say it fast, it doesn't sound like a long time ago, but when you subtract it, it's a little bit longer time.

GOODSILL: What was your father's name?

HARTMAN: Fred Hartman. He lived in Baytown.

GOODSILL: In what kind of newspapers was he involved?

HARTMAN: He ran The Baytown Sun, a community newspaper. He was the editor and publisher of it for about 35 years. He was involved with a family who owned newspapers throughout Texas and a good bit of the South. He was responsible for the Texas papers that they owned.

GOODSILL: And what was your mother's name?

HARTMAN: Justine Elizabeth Black; she went by Betty. She was from La Porte, Texas.

GOODSILL: Did you have brothers and sisters?

HARTMAN: I have a sister, Mary Brown Cody, who is two and a half years older than I am. She still resides in Baytown.

GOODSILL: You moved to Richmond in 1977.

HARTMAN: Yes. We started Hartman Newspapers Inc. in 1974 while we were living in Beaumont. I was the editor and publisher of the Beaumont Enterprise and Journal for four years and then had the opportunity to buy the Fort Bend Herald Coaster and a couple of other newspapers from the Carmage Walls family that owned them. We had been involved with them professionally for many years.

GOODSILL: How old were you at that time?

HARTMAN: I was born on July 19, 1941 so that made me about 36 in 1977.

GOODSILL: And what was your job when you got those newspapers? What exactly did you do?

HARTMAN: Well, we bought seven newspapers at one time and we operated them out of Beaumont, but we had a printing company in Rosenberg where four or five of our papers were printed. There was no reason for us to live in Beaumont. We have some papers in the northern part of the state, such as Henderson in East Texas and outside of Dallas in Kaufman and Terrell, Texas. It was inconvenient to live in Beaumont and it was convenient to move over here. So we did.

Right now we have a dozen newspapers of various sizes: small dailies, semi-weeklies, two weeklies and a couple of printing companies as well. Each of the operations has its own person who is responsible for it. We have the accounting office here in Rosenberg. When I moved to Richmond in 1977, we set up an accounting and management office in Rosenberg. We've been doing the accounting work for our papers since then.

GOODSILL: At that time, were you doing a little bit of everything or did you have a specialized job?

HARTMAN: I was doing a little bit of everything. The main thing I was doing was being sure we could pay for ourselves. We've been very fortunate in that we have many long-term employees, and several have been with us from the beginning. We're awfully proud of them. I think the shortest tenured person we have running a newspaper is probably in the six to seven years. We have some who have been with us for 25 or 30 years.

GOODSILL: Has the news business changed very much?

HARTMAN: It has. Technology and social media have affected larger newspapers much more than it has community newspapers. We know what our niche is. We're not going to out-Chronicle the Chronicle, or out-Dallas the Dallas News, but they can't do what we do, either. We concentrate on providing local coverage. We like to consider ourselves a voice for the public schools in our communities. It's hard for the bigger papers to cover garden clubs and church organizations, weddings and engagements, and county and city news because there are just too many small communities around the big metropolitan areas.

GOODSILL: So your Fort Bend newspaper has had different names or always the same names since 1977.

HARTMAN: We've had two names. It was the Herald Coaster, which was actually a combination of two papers that merged long before I got here. One was the Texas Coaster and the other was the Herald. We elected to rebrand the paper, probably 15 years ago. On our masthead, it's called the Fort Bend Herald and underneath that 'and the Texas Coaster'.

GOODSILL: Which communities do you serve?

HARTMAN: We serve western Fort Bend County. If you follow the line of the Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, that is one of our boundaries with the exception that we are also heavily involved in Needville and we go as far west as the Wallis area which includes the Brazos School District. So we're involved in three school districts. We also cover a portion of the Fort Bend School District, but only the high school that overlaps the residential areas of Pecan Grove.

GOODSILL: And this is the headquarters for it all?

HARTMAN: Yeah, I guess you could call it the headquarters. We have six people in this office.

GOODSILL: Do you have reporters in this office?

HARTMAN: No, not in this office. Each paper has its own reporters, editor and publisher, and each paper operates independently of the others. We only come together whenever we need to come together. But we all try to follow the same concept in each community.

GOODSILL: So, how many papers do you have?

HARTMAN: Twelve. They all have different names. The Terrell Tribune is east of Dallas; Kaufman Herald is east of Dallas; the Henderson Daily News is in deep East Texas; the Alvin Sun Advertiser is in the Alvin-Pearland area. We have papers in Port Lavaca, Brenham, and Rockport.

GOODSILL: So your job is to do the accounting and the management.

HARTMAN: And we are available to them 24 hours a day for troubleshooting. The president of our company is Clyde King. Between the two of us, we have something like 100 years of newspaper management experience. I'm not saying we know everything there is to know, but we can bluff people into thinking we do! (laughter)

GOODSILL: Has running all these newspapers given you very much time to do other things in the community?

HARTMAN: Yes. That's the best part of it, because we do have good people. Once we get them we work at keeping them. We've been successful at that.

In all the communities where we have newspapers we make it a part of our publishers and editors jobs take part in civic activities.

GOODSILL: What are some of the things you have chosen to be involved in?

HARTMAN: Some of them I've chosen and some have been chosen for me. In 1986, a group of people decided that Fort Bend County needed to have an organization to help control growth and encourage growth in a good way. We tried to stay away from smokestacks coming in and tried to go for the more modern type businesses and industries, some located on the north and northwestern and some on the southern side of Harris County. Not the smokestacks that are on the east and southeast side. We wanted to keep a clean and healthy community. So 1986 was the birth of the Fort Bend Economic Development Council, which has an office in Sugar Land but serves all of Fort Bend County, and overlaps into Katy, which is actually in three counties. We have a complete inventory of every piece of land that's available to people. Many of the cities now have set up their own economic development organizations, but they still look to us for the heavy lifting.

Our initial chairman was Fred Davenport, who was the regional manager for Houston Lighting and Power Company. Unfortunately, Fred was transferred to Austin about a month and a half into this program so they asked me if I would do it. So for the first four years, I was the organizing chairman of the EDC. I think we've had six or seven chairmen since then. That's one of the activities that took up a good bit of my time. It was fun because at the outset we had to introduce ourselves to people and explain what we were trying to do. We weren't trying to compete with them - not Rosenberg against Stafford, Missouri City against Sugar Land. What we were trying to do was have Fort Bend County compete against Montgomery County, against Brazoria County, against Harris County, against Austin County. We wanted people coming here and we wanted them to go where they felt most comfortable and was best suited to their businesses. It was interesting trying to convince people in the county that they weren't competing against each other, that we were all in this pot together.

GOODSILL: So it started with education?

HARTMAN: Oh, it did. And we were accused of a lot of things that we had never discussed - never even thought about! We were cussed and discussed. But it came along and after a couple of years people began to think, 'Well, maybe this IS going to work.' Off the top of my head I don't have the number of businesses that have come here as a result of the EDC of Fort Bend County. We stopped counting after the first 100. All these shopping centers and new businesses and manufacturing plants didn't just happen.

GOODSILL: Did the EDC actively recruit different businesses?

HARTMAN: Absolutely, within the county but mainly from outside the county. We would find prime people in Houston who we knew were getting ready to make some kind of a move, whether they needed a bigger space, or different transportation needs, we would be on them like a tick on a dog, trying to sell them on Fort Bend County. And it's a never-ending proposition. We are still doing it.

GOODSILL: Are you still on the Board?

HARTMAN: I am not. I figured after the first 25 years, I had served my time.

GOODSILL: That work used a lot of your skills?

HARTMAN: I don't know how many skills it used. The first couple of years we got by having a bigger line of bull than most people did.

GOODSILL: Well, that could be called a skill!

HARTMAN: (laughs) We called it skill rather than bull. It was a very interesting start-up situation. You'd be surprised at the number of people who wouldn't give you the time of day when we started, but now say they were part of the organizing group that made the EDC go. That's fine. There's no pride of ownership with the EDC here so we'll pass it to whoever wants it.

GOODSILL: It was a good way for you to get involved with the community as well.

HARTMAN: It was. I had gotten involved in what was then the Rose-Rich Chamber of Commerce. I think it was in 1982 I was president of the Chamber and I was also President of the Rosenberg Rotary. The Fort Bend County Fair was another one. I had a couple of friends who were on the Board and they asked me if I would like to be on the board. Finally I did join. And it was fun.

GOODSILL: How was it fun?

HARTMAN: When my involvement started, it was a three-day fair. And it's not because of anything I did, but it has now turned into a weeklong proposition. It is the largest county fair in Texas as far as revenues from the sales of the youngsters' animals. It has gone over a million dollars. We're not trying to compare it to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. But the kids who participate continue year after year. This is still a very rich and productive farming and ranching area. Particularly in the western side of the county where we still have some open land. The fairgrounds are just outside of Rosenberg but it attracts kids from all over the county, all the schools. Which probably best explains Fort Bend County.

I'd like to give you an example of the growth we've had. When I moved to Fort Bend County in 1977, there was one high school in Fort Bend ISD; there was one high school in Katy ISD; there was one high school in Lamar Consolidated ISD. Today there are 12 high schools in FBISD on the eastern side of the county; Katy has 7 high schools and Lamar Consolidated has 5 high schools. Needville has a new high school building and their schools are growing like crazy. A new high school is open in Fulshear which one day may end up being the largest city in Fort Bend County. Right now it has about 1,800 people but it has land, opportunity and plenty of room to grow out there. It's on the way west but it connects to rail lines, it connects to highways and our predictions are it will be the next super town of Fort Bend County.

GOODSILL: Do you think that the agricultural traditions will be continued in Fort Bend County?

HARTMAN: I hope so. There are a lot of old-line families who have been here forever and ever, and I think that's wonderful because they have found a way to pass land from generation to generation. I think those people have no interest in having some big industry on their land. I think they'd rather have corn or maize/milo or some other product. Rice is a giant product in this area. There are places in Sugar Land such as the Sweetwater area that used to be rice fields. I don't see that happening very quickly in the western side of the county. Eventually it may be developed but I don't think it will happen nearly as fast as it has on the east side of the county.

GOODSILL: And you sort of hope not!

HARTMAN: Right. All the people bring a lot of opportunity but they also bring a lot of problems as well. You have to be able to move people. The infrastructure of the county goes about 100 miles an hour every day, trying to build roads and keep water and sewer available. Water is the single biggest commodity that we are going to be looking for in the future. Finding water to keep from having to pull it up from out of the ground is a big challenge. So far the cities in Fort Bend County have met the challenge and are building new water facilities or they are using water from the Brazos River. There are various contracts where people are providing water that have large watersheds and are sending it to Fort Bend County.

GOODSILL: Did you learn something about that during your tenure with EDC?

HARTMAN: That, and at nearly every meeting of any governmental body that we cover, water is a topic. So we felt like we needed to know the whats, wheres and whys about water. Without water, you can't exist. I can remember back in 1960, I worked at the Brazosport Facts in Freeport. Vice President Lyndon Johnson came down there and turned the key on a desalinization plant that was being built. They were using water from the Gulf. But the process wasn't really 100% reliable and it lasted only a couple of years. Now desalinization happens on a regular basis. It happens at our International Space Station, where they take water and recycle it. It doesn't matter how many times it is recycled. It comes out as pure as it was the first time because the technology is so great now.

GOODSILL: I heard somebody talking about water, saying it should be considered in the same way as mineral rights are considered.

HARTMAN: It can, but a lot of it is controlled by county subsidence districts. They have the authority through legislation to limit the amount of withdrawal from underground water availability.

GOODSILL: It's quite a trick to provide all the water people want and to avoid subsidence and drought and overuse.

HARTMAN: It's a fine balance between having enough and overuse. We don't want to sink to where the water is. We want the water to come up to us. And it will. It regenerates itself.

GOODSILL: But it takes a long time - years and years.



HARTMAN: It does. But evidently we've got a little time on our hands so hopefully our water table will be sufficient, or at least the water availability. Richmond and Rosenberg are getting water from the Brazos River. Lord knows where it comes from. The floods in Dallas and in Central Texas this last couple of weeks - we'll see that water in another two or three days, right out here at the Brazos River.

Six years ago they had tremendous floods in Central Texas and all that goes through the Brazos River Authority in Waco. They have gates that control how much water moves out of the lakes. When the lakes get to a point where they are about to overflow, they open the gates a level or two. If it is a tremendous amount, they will open the gates completely. That sends all the water headed this way. They actually found identifiable objects from Central Texas twenty-four miles out into the Gulf of Mexico. They came down the Brazos and had enough force to make it that far out into the Gulf. It seems impossible but it's true. Water is a tremendous force.

GOODSILL: And it all flows down into the Gulf. And then it's no longer fresh.

HARTMAN: That's right. And then you have to bring it back and run it through desalinization. They are short-circuiting some of that water, capturing it before it ever gets to the Gulf. It will just be brackish by then and it's much more convenient to desalinate it.

GOODSILL: Okay, we have the newspaper business, we have Economic Development, the Rose-Rich Chamber, and the Rotary Club. What else were you involved with?

HARTMAN: For twenty some odd years I was on the Board of Directors of Polly Ryon Memorial Hospital in Richmond. It is now called Oakbend. I was also a vice chairman of the Volunteer Services Council of the Richmond State School. I don't know why everybody thinks they have to rebrand things after 'x' period of time. It just makes it that much harder to remember who is what and where they are located.

GOODSILL: What did the volunteer services council do?

HARTMAN: We were a group who worked with the administration of the Richmond State School and we created activities that provided some funding for programs and physical needs that the clients couldn't get from the state appropriation. It was a second type of appropriation that we would raise locally.

GOODSILL: That's different from the other things you were involved in.

HARTMAN: Herb Appel had the greatest line on that. He said, 'When you can't help somebody who can't help themselves, something is wrong with you.' That was our attitude. I wish that attitude permeated into more activities, instead of everybody being so selfish. I'd rather they'd be selfless. I think we'd do better.

GOODSILL: Do you have a family?

HARTMAN: I have three children, two sons and a daughter. All three of them are involved with me in ownership of our newspaper company. Fred lives in Austin now, Lee lives here and is publisher of the Fort Bend Herald, and Elizabeth Sansone, who also lives here, is the caboose. My second wife's name is Laura. We had a merged marriage and next week will be our 11-year anniversary. We went into the merged marriage with a Jack Russell terrier and two grandchildren. Now we have a Jack Russell terrier, a Schnauzer, and 11 grandchildren, including three sets of twins. And there is no history of any twins in either of our families.

GOODSILL: Did any of your children or grandchildren become involved with the Fort Bend County Fair?

HARTMAN: They haven't been on the board but I venture to say that there never was a year that passed that Fred, Lee and Elizabeth weren't out at the auction bidding on animals to help support the kids.

GOODSILL: So some of the things you have done have inadvertently had an impact on your immediate family.

HARTMAN: I hope so. Fred and Lee have been working with our company for a long time. Elizabeth's husband, Chris Sansone, worked for us for about 15 years, but he and Elizabeth have done really well in the real estate business. They have their own real estate company. Elizabeth and Lee live five blocks from each other, and Fred's in Austin.

GOODSILL: Anything else you want to tell us about?

HARTMAN: This is an interesting deal. I went to Baylor University as a Presbyterian rather than a Baptist, and I came out of Baylor as a Methodist. (laughter)

GOODSILL: Do you want to tell us the story about that?!

HARTMAN: I grew up in the Presbyterian Church. It's a misnomer that you have to be deeply involved in the Baptist religion to go to Baylor. They don't turn you away if you're not a Baptist. When I was up there I volunteered at the Methodist Children's Home in Waco and got interested in what they were doing for kids. When we moved over here, most of the people we met early on seemed to be members of St. John's United Methodist Church in Richmond, so we joined it. So I've been an ecumenical movement in my own right.

GOODSILL: You do seem to have quite a social conscience. It's important to you to contribute?

HARTMAN: It is. And I think it's important for everybody to take part in his or her community. It's only going to be as good as you make it. Today I'm a little disappointed that too much of our time is spent hurrying from place to place and we don't take time to look around and smell the flowers. I think that's important as well.

GOODSILL: Could you be more specific?

HARTMAN: When I was a kid growing up, we were awakened one morning by a noise under our house. I was probably five or six years old. My mother and dad went outside and our next-door neighbor was under our house with a welding tool, thawing our pipes because we'd had a severe freeze the night before. He wasn't asked to. He just did it. I'm not sure people even know their neighbors today.

GOODSILL: Or know how to use a welding torch.

HARTMAN: They would probably do their own and forget it. We go home and lock our doors. I think we ought to have that National Night Out every month where everybody in the neighborhood gets together and has a weenie roast.

GOODSILL: When we didn't have TV we talked to our neighbors, walked on the sidewalk, greeted each other, read more books.

HARTMAN: We went on our second full-blown family vacation about 2 summers ago - 16 people. We rented a house in Florida and for the first couple of days I noticed a little wad of people in this corner and a little wad of people in that corner or individuals and they were all sitting there fiddling with their phones or the iPads or computers.

One day I got a wicker basket, held it out, and said, 'Put 'em in. We're not going to do this anymore. I'll give them back to you when we leave or if there's an emergency you can come check it out for a while. But if you want to stay here, put your phones away.' It was amazing, once people start talking, how much they have in common. And this was a family! It wasn't like they were 16 strangers but they had turned into 16 strangers. If we ever do it again, they know there will be a box at the front door. If the world blows up, somebody will let us know.

You meet a lot of interesting people in this business. We cover all the school board meetings, the various city councils, the county commissioners meetings and you get to know a lot of people. I don't care if you're going to make a career out of the newspaper business or not, but if you spend a year or two around one, it makes everything else you're going to do that much easier. You learn how to talk to people; you learn how to write what happened. You see what an entrée it gives you to be able to call somebody and tell them you're with the newspaper. They'll stop what they are doing and they will talk to you. You can carry these skills into any job. The best part is learning how to talk to people. That is becoming a lost art. Everybody has his or her head buried in a computer. I think if I came back in a second life, I'd want to come back as an ophthalmologist because everybody is going to need one. They won't be able to see past the end of their noses! (laughter)

From a background standpoint, I think the first event I ever covered, at age thirteen, was a junior high track meet. I have written several columns about this. I still see the guy that I ended up graduating from high school in Baytown with, and he is on the reunion committee. I see him every five years at a reunion. He never fails to mention the story I wrote about his winning a race at a track meet.

GOODSILL: When you look back on it now, was it a pretty decent article?

HARTMAN: No, I got the winners right but I believe it could have been written better. (laughing)

GOODSILL: But good for you for making a good try, at age thirteen.

HARTMAN: I write a column every Sunday. As soon as I finish it, I send it to four of my colleagues plus a couple of family members to look it over for punctuation and spelling and making sure I have dates right. We don't mind editing each other. That's something we don't generally let other people do in newspaper interviews. When they talk to us, they need to be careful what they say because what they say is what's going in the paper.

When I was at Baylor I majored in business administration but got my journalism degree in Baytown, coming up as a kid. We had a managing editor at the time that I knew for nearly 50 years and I was never able to find a word that he could not spell. And I worked my brains out trying to find one.

GOODSILL: Did you become a good speller?

HARTMAN: I was nowhere near his league. Nobody uses a dictionary anymore. I'm told spell-check is about 85% accurate. You need to be careful just relying on spell-check. And when you write something and it doesn't come up with a red line under it, that doesn't mean it's correct.

GOODSILL: So the degree in business was helpful to you.

HARTMAN: It was. I had an interesting degree plan at Baylor. I'm not sure they ever had it before and I'm not sure they had it after that. It wasn't a BBA, a Bachelor of Business Administration, but a BA with a major in business. To be a major you had to take eight or ten of the same core subjects. I took two courses of everything offered in the school of business and they turned that into a degree plan for me.

GOODSILL: You must have had some persuasive skills back then!

HARTMAN: It was a little bit more of that bull stuff, coming out earlier!

GOODSILL: In a career like yours, you need to have the business education so you can manage and make it work economically. For example, contributing to the Economic Development Council takes a business mind. It also helps to have some social skills and be articulate.

HARTMAN: It does. People have misunderstood this statement that I have made about the newspaper business. I always say 'newspaper' and 'business' because we have to be a successful business in order to have a successful newspaper.

GOODSILL: You really can't have a newspaper unless you are successful.

HARTMAN: You've got to be able to make a little money doing it. I'd like to say we're a public service for people, but public service things are financed by people. The last thing anybody should ever want for us would our being a subsidized newspaper. If we can't wear long pants and take care of ourselves, then something's not right.

GOODSILL: It changes the caliber of the news.

HARTMAN: Sure it does. And I'm happy to report that we don't have outside influences telling us what we need to do and we don't need to do. A lot of people try, but that doesn't work.

GOODSILL: If you could look into a crystal ball, do you think community newspapers will be on-going in the future?

HARTMAN: Yes, ma'am. I can't tell you exactly what form they are going to be in; printed or digital. We have both. I think it will be in both forms because we have an older audience of subscribers. But I don't think I can name anybody who is getting younger. So there is always going to be a more mature older audience. That may sound like a strange way to look at it, but I wasn't always old. Our more mature audience are the ones who are our regular subscribers. We sell a ton of newspapers on the news racks as well. I don't know how you count digital subscribers when they go by hits.

We've got one grandson who will be eight in June. When he was three, he took my first 'fancy' phone and I don't have the faintest idea what he did, but within about three or four pops, there was a train running across my phone. He had gotten into some app - and he couldn't read - but there was a series of trains running across my screen. I asked him how he did it and he said he didn't know. But he did know - he just didn't know how to explain how he did it.

We have two types of subscriptions and if you take a digital subscription, you are also eligible to receive the print version. If you subscribe to the print copy, you are eligible to get the digital version at no additional charge. It's amazing. If you give something away, people will generally take it. We have right at 7,000 print subscribers and we probably don't have 700 of them who take advantage of the digital part. You can explain to them that if it is raining and your paper gets wet, if your paper doesn't show up, if you are on vacation, we have an e-edition and it's an exact duplicate of the print edition. You just expand it and it will reproduce on your phone, iPad or computer. I don't have the ability to read it when it's on the telephone. That's where that ophthalmology degree would come in handy. But it's great on an iPad, laptop or a desktop.

There is one thing that I have never seen, and that is a computer screen inside anybody's scrapbook. Believe it or not, people still keep scrapbooks. Maybe scrapbooks are now on that cloud that people keep talking about. I've never visited that cloud. They keep saying all our stuff is on the cloud but I just hope it never rains. (laughter)

When I got out of Baylor, my first job was as the editor and publisher of a small weekly newspaper in La Porte. I was born in La Porte where my parents were living. I lived there until I was three, and then we moved across the Ship Channel to Baytown. When I finished Baylor in 1962, I moved to the Bayshore Sun in La Porte. From there I went to Baytown for about five more years. I had grown up at the Baytown Sun and from late 1970 to 1974, I was in Beaumont with the Beaumont Enterprise and Journal.

GOODSILL: Were you setting off on your own? Was it a big move to relocate here and take over or was your father saying, 'Here'?

HARTMAN: No, he didn't say it because he wasn't involved. The people our family had been involved with, Mr. and Mrs. Walls, wife, made seven newspapers available to me to purchase. They gave me a 20-year payout on them, based on a formula. I'm happy to say we got it done in about half that time.

GOODSILL: So you really were setting out on your own in 1977? Did you have little children at that time?

HARTMAN: Yes. The only paper that we were involved with was within two hours of Beaumont – a paper in Liberty, Texas. It took me two hours to get to Hobby airport so I could go to some of the newspapers in the northern part of the state. I had two sons in Little League and they were playing four nights a week. So I would fly to Dallas to go to Terrell, Kaufman, and McKinney. Then I'd catch a plane back to see a Little League game and then drive back to catch another. We moved over here because it would be closer to our newspapers and be just as easy to go to Hobby. Two weeks after we moved over here from Beaumont, Southwest Airlines moved an operation into Beaumont. (laughing)

GOODSILL: However, life turned out pretty well for you in Fort Bend County.

HARTMAN: It did!

GOODSILL: I wonder what your life would have been like if you had stayed in Beaumont?

HARTMAN: I don't think we could have stayed there too much longer because we moved at just the right time for our kids' ages. If we had waited another two or three years, it would have been hard.

GOODSILL: And they had opportunities here that they might not have had in Beaumont?

HARTMAN: Right. They kind of moped around for a couple of days but it didn't take very long for them to find friends. Lee, the younger son, still had two years of Little League left. Elizabeth was about three years old. She'd wake up every morning and she didn't care where she was as long as she could get up and go play somewhere.

There have been a couple of professional affiliations. I wasn't always this old! When I moved to Beaumont to run the paper, I was 29 years old, which was pretty young for a paper that size. I look back at some pictures that were taken and I looked like I was about 16! In 1977, I was president of the Texas Daily Newspaper Association, which was an interesting deal. In 1968 or 1969, my father had been president and sometime in the 1980s, my son, Fred, became president of it. So three members of the family have been president of the Texas Daily Newspaper Association.

Another thing I inherited from my father was a love of baseball. He grew up in Marlin, Texas, near Waco. From 1913 through 1919, the New York Giants had spring training in Marlin, Texas. It was a little, bitty community, but they built three ballparks because they had two other major league teams that came there. They would get on a train that came through Marlin and they would go to Austin and play exhibition games, they would go to Waco and play, and Dallas and play, but they would come back to Marlin. And that was because the manager of the team, John McGraw, fell in love with the little community of Marlin. And that was because Marlin had hot mineral baths, with natural water. It was promoted that it had rejuvenation powers, and he was convinced it did. All I can tell you is that if you took a drink of it, you'd better have your own plans made pretty quickly because it would work!

My father became a baseball nut and I kind of followed in his footsteps on that. We both have been president of the Houston chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America. I've held that position for the past five years. This is the organization that votes baseball players into the Hall of Fame. You have to be a member for ten years to qualify to vote. I just completed my 26th vote this past year. So that's been fun. I think from a civic standpoint in Fort Bend County, there are probably some other things that we've done, but the biggest thing that we like to do is to promote others to do things. I don't take much pleasure being the one in the spotlight doing something.

I prefer to write and take photos of other people doing something. That's the job. We don't want to be the news; we want to be the one sharing the news of what somebody else has done. If someone has the type of ego that they need to be at the front of the line, then they may have difficulty in this business.



I like to write about some 13-year old kid who just hit a home run, or a kid who was the star in the school play than anything else. And that's what differentiates our size of newspaper from others, and that's why I think there is a good future for community newspapers. The communities keep getting bigger but humans seem to seek connection and information about their communities.

GOODSILL: Thank you. It has been a pleasure talking to you.

Interview ends