



ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

in Celebration of the
City of Sugar Land
60th Anniversary



CITY OF SUGAR LAND

Kenneth Hall

Retired Pro
Football Player,
High School
Football's
Sugar Land
Express



HARGROVE: Where were you born?

HALL: Madisonville, Texas.

HARGROVE: And when did you come to Sugar Land?

HALL: When I was three months old, which was March of 1936.

HARGROVE: And what brought your family to Fort Bend County?

HALL: Work. My dad was able to find work at the Imperial Sugar Company.

HARGROVE: What kind of work did your grandparents do?

HALL: On my mother's side, her dad was a rancher--a cowman--in Madisonville. My dad was really raised in Huntsville and Bedias and

North Zulch and those little towns out there. He was part farmer and part filling-station owner. They called them filling stations back in those days.

HARGROVE: Where did you live in Sugar Land?

HALL: 1177 Brooks Street when we first moved here. We lived in that house as a single family for a while. When things got tough two families that lived in that 600 square foot house. We did that twice, with two different families. They ended up being VERY close friends and one of them, who was my age at the time (three-four-five years old) is here today, Carlos Tarver. My dad worked for the Imperial Sugar for thirty-six years.

HARGROVE: What was a normal day like in your childhood?

HALL: Rough and tumble with young friends. We'd go fishing, we played ball. We always had duties to do around the house. No television, very little radio. You made up your own games and played them as best you knew how. Made up your own rules. Seemed like everybody got along. If you had an argument, you argued about it

and got over it and then you were best friends again. So it was a simple life, but it was a good life. No one had much money back in those days. My dad made eleven cents an hour and worked about ten hours a day. He later found he needed another job, so he ran for Constable and was Constable. And was Deputy Sheriff at one time. He ended up being superintendent of the Labor Department for Imperial Sugar.

HARGROVE: Tell me about what the students did for recreation.

HALL: Well, as we grew older, you made up most of your own recreation, until you got into high school. It certainly wasn't like it is today, where you've got three and four-year olds who are on organized soccer teams, got uniforms and coaches and the parents are there and the support is there. You made up your own little games in your own little neighborhood and you played them. You'd get tired at night but there was always something you felt like you wanted to do, just before bedtime. So maybe you'd go out with an old board or something and swat fireflies, standing in the back of an old horse trailer or something. Those things consumed the day. But we DID have fishing holes, crawfish holes. We rested in the afternoon. In those days polio was a big factor in our lives, and our parents were heeding what the doctor's advice was; to keep you child inside in the afternoons and make them rest. Polio came along when I was a young boy and it affected one of my friends. We worried about that a great deal. So it slowed things down. We learned to ride bicycles, we learned to swim and we rode stick horses instead of real horses. Generally it was good, happy fun.

HARGROVE: Tell me about extracurricular activities in school.

HALL: Well, sports was one thing. But I also enjoyed music. I played trumpet in the band from 6th grade through 12th. Anything else that someone wanted to do or had to do, if I could do it, I would pitch in and help out.

HARGROVE: And you were a football player?

HALL: I was a football player, basketball player, ran track.

HARGROVE: And you were a star!

HALL: Well, that's what some people say.

HARGROVE: I think you were a star! (both chuckle)

HALL: Well, in football, it takes a team to be a star, so I had a lot of support there. Track was as much of an individual sport as I played. I enjoyed that. Then we had relays, which are team events. And basketball is a team sport. I was blessed by God with certain talents. And He recognized that there was a need for it so He put me where I needed to be and I tried to do what He asked me to do.

HARGROVE: Did you go to the State Championship when you were playing football?

HALL: We could not go to State. We were a smaller school, but we always went as far as we could go, as the rules would let us. We won three regional titles, my sophomore,

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junior and senior year. My sophomore and junior years, we won a state title in track. In track, they would allow you to go to State. So we won State those two years, which was a fun. It hadn't been done in many years.

HARGROVE: Do you know of any of your classmates that married people from within the class or older?

HALL: I married an older woman. Gloria Ross was a year and a half older than I but she went to Sugar Land School. She was valedictorian of her class, Class of 1952. I was third in my class. We had 24 and I don't know whether we had anybody marry within the class or not. Within the school, yes.

HARGROVE: Did any of your classmates go to college?

HALL: Yes, several did go to college and did well.

HARGROVE: And what about the service?

HALL: There were some who went into the service.

HARGROVE: Do you have any children?

HALL: I have two sons. Chuck and Michael. They live in California. They spent their first nine and twelve years here and then we moved to California. They grew up there and married California girls. The oldest one has three children the youngest one has two. And the oldest child of the oldest is going to make great-grandparents out of us REAL soon. We're looking forward to that new experience. But they're all doing well and moved right along. They're all very bright and very industrious and they're doing well.

HARGROVE: Do you have a favorite memory of Sugar Land?

HALL: I think everything I ever touched in Sugar Land, at some point, from that point to now, has touched something in my life. That was the grassroots of growing up in a way that I wish kids could grow up today. It was wonderful. No regrets.

HARGROVE: You knew everyone in school?

HALL: I knew everyone in school. I knew where most everyone in town lived. You put a name out there and I'll probably give you their home address. And if I knew them a little bit better than I knew some others, I probably knew their three-digit phone number.

HARGROVE: (laughs) Do you any photographs or documents that we can make copies of to go along with your story?

HALL: Well, over time, there've been SO many photographs and documents. They named a subdivision in my name. They put my name on a football stadium. They made a trophy for the best high school football player in the nation in my likeness. They've done some wonderful things, and it's all because of being in Sugar Land. All because of a team that was superior to most in many, many ways. Not just on the football field. They are wonderful memories. And I'd rather those people keep them in a sacred place than me have them where others can't see them if they wanted to. I'm in the Texas Football and Sports Hall of Fame, the National Hall of Fame. I don't have any certificates for that. They have them, and that's where they should be.

HARGROVE: Anything else you want to tell me about Sugar Land?

HALL: Well, it's a place that has changed dramatically. I still see some of the old and I have wonderful memories of the old. I like to see a town's progress, but progress in a manner in which they grow slowly, so they get everything right the first time. I worry about little towns like Sugar Land (which is not small any more) that DO grow too fast and then if the economy has a downward spiral some would suffer and we'd lose the momentum. But we're Americans and we will survive, and we will come forth, probably better than we were before. But it's going to take a VERY long time. I hope you and I are around to see it make that turn. But it's a wonderful place. Sugar Land has a mystique about it that no other little town has. And if people would delve into the history, back to the plantation days, they could see how it has grown and made men, who made other men, who made other men and women prosper--do well. And be proud of who they are. I am.

HARGROVE: I thank you so much for the interview. I sure appreciate it. And I enjoyed meeting you, very much.

HALL: Thank you. It's been my pleasure.

Personal note written by Ken Hall to the Fort Bend County Historical Commission on 3-1-2017:

Thank you and the Historical Commission for your diligence in recouping the history of those people who helped create the company town of Sugar Land. Just like football - it takes more than eleven to make a team.

May God Bless you in your organized effort.

Forever, Ken Hall

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