

Interview with Fannie Mae Logan

Interviewer: Karen Yancy

Transcriber: Karen Yancy

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Location: Ms. Logan's Home, Gonzales, TX

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Karen Yancy: This is Karen Yancy. Today is November 18, 1986, and I'm conducting an oral interview with Mrs. Fannie Mae Logan, retired employee of Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative [GVEC] at Gonzales, Texas.

What experience did you bring to GVEC, and what were the years that you worked there?

Fannie Mae Logan: I started working there in October 1959, and I retired on December 31, 1980. I had reached the age of social security (Logan and Yancy laugh) and retirement, so I felt that I wanted a few years just to relax and enjoy my children and my church.

Yancy: Good. What previous experience had you had?

Logan: Not very much. I worked at Texas Department of Public Welfare for a couple of years—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —prior to my going to GVEC. I had been a housewife for seventeen years.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Unfortunately, I was divorced and was forced to go back to work because I had two young sons, ten and fifteen at the time. I was a farmer's daughter, and at the time I should have gone to college. My dad couldn't afford to send me back then, which I think is very unfortunate; girls didn't work.

Yancy: No, they didn't.

Logan: They really didn't. If they did, they were sort of looked down on, which I think wrong, but that's the way my parents felt about it.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: I didn't go to college. I finished high school here in Gonzales, and then after I found that I needed to go to work. I went to Baldwin's Business College, over in Yoakum, because that was the nearest college to Gonzales.

Yancy: Yeah, to get the experience.

Logan: To learn office work, and luckily I went for six months and completed the secretarial work. Bookkeeping wasn't my bag of tea, so I dropped that course.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: I decided to drop bookkeeping and just really concentrate on doing general office work. I had filing and Stenoscrypt, which is a quick version of shorthand. I had a lot of typing because when I finished high school in 1933, Spanish or French was required, and I took Spanish and didn't have time for bookkeeping or any type of secretarial training in high school.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: I went to school in 1956, for six months over at Baldwin's, and then I worked for the Department of Public Welfare for a couple of years. One of the workers there found that this job was open up at GVEC.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: He realized my responsibility of having two kids to raises so he suggested that I go up and apply for the job, which I did. At that time, Mr. F. N. Stubbs was assistant general manager, and I started working under him. The fact that I had Stenoscrypt and liked it helped. When I went in for an interview, I was forty years old and was nervous because I had not worked out that much. Mr. Stubbs asked that I take paragraph in shorthand. So I did, but luckily (Logan and Yancy laugh) I could read it back. (Logan and Yancy laugh) So I got the job and started out with him. He is an engineer and now general manager over at Wharton Electric Co-op. He was very, very, very particular with his work. I have done more letters and thrown (Logan and Yancy laugh) more letters away—

Yancy: Away.

Logan: If I left a period or comma out, I had to redo the letter. Now, I've always been pretty good in spelling.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: In fact, Mr. Hines would holler out and say, "Fannie Mae, how do you spell so-and-so?" (Logan and Yancy laugh)

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: I worked under General Manager Doyle Hines at the time I retired. I worked under Mr. Stubbs at the time. I went to work at the Co-op; their offices were [on] St. Paul Street, and I think I'm right in saying that at that time we had between fifty and sixty employees total.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: Now, as I understand, there's more than 170 employees. The Co-op has really grown, and I can say in all sincerity, they have the nicest people to work for—you would ever want to work with.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: I really enjoyed working there, but it had come to the point in time that they were not, at that particular time I retired, they were not hiring extra people, and I was having to do my work plus some extra.

Yancy: Extra, yeah.

Logan: And because of this—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —high fuel situation and everything—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: And as I said, because I had reached the age that I felt that I needed to slow down and everything, I just thought, Well, why not?

Yancy: You might as well enjoy—

Logan: Enjoy, you know, life.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: And so I retired then, but we had the offices down here on St. Paul until 1965, and then we moved into our new building on 90A bypass. We had all the headaches of getting the soil tested and all that stuff and of getting the new building built.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Mr. Stubbs—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: Because he was an engineer and all this, and it was a lot of headaches, but it certainly was nice then to move into a new office. We moved there in June of '65 and stayed there, in fact, I stayed in the same office until I retired.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Mr. Stubbs found that he was not going to step into the general manager's position at GVEC, so when he had an opportunity to go to Wharton Electric Co-op as general manager, he took the job.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: When Mr. O.W. Davis retired as general manager, Mr. Hines stepped into the general manager's office. [Mr. Hines worked in Member Services at GVEC] Leon Netardus was at that time the administrative assistant.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: [Netardus] came into our office, and then for a while Mr. Davis still had his secretary, Opal Gibson, and she was there, I guess—well, I guess the time doesn't matter when she tired. She retired about six or eight years before I did.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: And when she retired, I stepped into the job as general manager's secretary, and then when they did a position evaluation, my title changed to administrative secretary. I was just a secretary to the assistant general manager up until that time. In fact, Leon Netardus served in the same job that Mr. Stubbs served under, but his title was administrative assistant.

Pause while Logan answers the phone.

Logan: Anyway, Opal remained Mr. Davis's secretary until she retired.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: I think she retired in '74, but then I applied for the job and got the job, and then Patsy Behrent moved in the office with me. She did all the insure while I was there, and I don't recall her title just now, but at that point it doesn't matter, I don't imagine.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: I can sincerely say that Doyle Hines is one of the nicest men you would ever meet. Have you met him?

Yancy: Yes.

Logan: And he was super to me. He just did so many nice things that I shall never forget. One [thing] I can say about him, he is just as nice to his janitor as he would be to the governor if he walked in.

Yancy: Um.

Logan: Just as considerate. Mr. Louis Eckols works near our office as electric system manager. Of course, they've had really a turnover since I retired there, which is very good. When I was there, downstairs was all line department—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Now they have all their offices over in the new building.

Yancy: Right.

Logan: —and it's just how they progressed.

Yancy: How did GVEC grow and change from when you first started working there to when you retired?

Logan: Well, they created new jobs that were necessary and built an office in Schertz; they already had an office in Seguin—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —but under the leadership of Mr. H.A. Ulbrecht, they did very well. Of course, both of those offices were still under the supervision of GVEC.

Yancy: GVEC.

Logan: Leon told me not long ago that, well, Mr. Ulbrecht retired way before I did, but he said now that Thomas Coor has his job. I don't know if his title is district manager or just what. Clarence Hallmark could tell you that.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: Thomas Coor, we always called him, is in charge of his group on people in the Seguin office.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Whereas before, Logan was the business manager. His title changed to business manager.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: After Mr. Schultz retired as office manager, and he was in charge of the Seguin group, and actually too, I was there when the first bookkeeping section went into IBM, with—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: —computers and all that, and that was really a drastic change for everyone. Those girls went to school, and they had the programmers come down, you know, the men that did all the—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: —programming for them for months, until our girls knew the ropes, and also, of course Leon had to learn it too—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —and Leon is very smart, but it was just a new ballgame for all of us.

Yancy: Oh, yeah.

Logan: I say for all of us because it's still new for me. (Logan and Yancy laugh). But anyway, it just really—the Co-op has really grown by leaps and bounds. Now, I don't know how many miles of line they have now, but they started out with, of course, from scratch—

Yancy: Scratch.

Logan: —and they have just really grown. I was raised out at Whitesboro, Texas, and I remember in 1937, when we first got electricity.

Yancy: What was that like?

Logan: It was wonderful. We had battery-operated radios before, and we had Coleman, and those that could afford it had Coleman lights.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Most of us had coal oil lights; well, we did have some Coleman lights, and some of our neighbors that were a little more off well off financially than we were had Carbide lights.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: They had this system with Carbide lights, but it was so great to have a radio. In fact, at first we didn't have a radio, and we'd go to our neighbors on Saturday evening, and that was real fun to go listen to their radio and all this.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: And then, of course, we eventually got radios, and then after I got married and my husband was in the service—well, when he went into the service, I went to live with my parents, but before he had to go into the service because of course he was married and we had children. He didn't have to go until the very last, but we lived on a farm out at Whitesboro, my husband and I, and we just had one son then. And we had bought our first television, and we were one of the few that had televisions, like in, let's see, Jim's forty—he was born—well, Obert was born in '41, and I think it was about '47 when we got our first television, and that was great, you know, but it was just so good. Our kiddos now don't realize how good they have it.

Yancy: Yeah, that's true.

Logan: And we don't either, until the electricity goes off (Logan and Yancy laugh) occasionally, but, by the way, I am on city electricity—

Yancy: Electricity.

Logan: —but the Co-op electricity goes off too—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —because of snakes and variant weather and whatever—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —because we can't determine how it's going to be all the time.

Yancy: Oh, no, unh-uh.

Logan: You know, just whatever.

Yancy: You were saying that when you moved to the new headquarters out here, that it created a lot of havoc. What sort of havoc? What sort of problems?

Logan: Well, I don't think it necessarily created a lot of havoc. I don't think that would be the word. I think it was a wonderful thing that we moved.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: The reason that we had to move, we were just all jammed in there and the workload was expanding. We were building new lines, and we were just all just stacked, and it was—we did realize it because we were there.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: But when we got into our new building, and in every division we had engineering, we had member services, and we had the line department and management. I was in management.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: We had our own separate offices; we had our own boardroom. Of course, we did down here too, but it was used for other functions, and it was just; well, it's just—have you seen it? Seen that building down here on St. Paul?

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Well, it's just very small compared to our new offices, and it was just a nice thing to have all that—

Yancy: Extra room.

Logan: Extra room, and the modern conveniences. We had, of course, piped music and—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —and completely air-conditioned; well, this building was air-conditioned, but it was just great not to be stepping on each other.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: But, really, the co-ops have always worked well with other corporations and other businesses, and they still do.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: And I think—like I said, I think electricity just been best thing for those of us that had to do without it.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: We really do appreciate, know how to appreciate it.

Yancy: What sort of problems might have created disruption in the office routine?

Logan: Occasionally, we would have some of our members that didn't understand what really was going on and how our rules and so forth worked. They'd get really upset, and they would come in and talk with Mr. Hines, and he would look into every inch of their problem, and if it were our fault, well, he corrected it, and if it were—if they didn't understand, he painted them such a picture that they could understand the problem.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: But they—I don't really know offhand; I can't just think of any special problems, except when they thought their bills were too high, and on occasion we've had a few that would rig their meters—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: —and get upset because the Co-op men would find them out.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: But Doyle has always been so honest about the whole situation—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —and still is, and really, the truth is the best thing in the long run, and a lot of it was just—and like I said, we have had some cranky customers.

Yancy: Oh, yeah.

Logan: We had one businessman over in Schertz that would just tear all of the superiors apart, and finally Mr. Hines had his phone tapped and made a tape of the conversation between he and this gentleman, and the board told him that he did not have to listen to that ugly, vulgar language that he was—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —giving, because, actually, I don't know offhand the problems—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: —that were involved at the time.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: But he just, oh—he'd get upset if it was right or if it was wrong. He was just that type, that's cantankerous, but I think he perhaps was the one person that used to cause a lot of problems.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: And I don't think I need to call his name.

Yancy: No.

Logan: But, I know if you would ask Clarence, he could tell you immediately his name. (Logan and Yancy laugh)

Yancy: What are some of your earliest memories at work?

Logan: Well, I think because I had not worked ever, I would get sort of upset if I didn't get my work just like I thought it should be and out on time. I don't know just exactly how to say it,

except I have, and I hope I'm not saying this, because I don't want to imply that I think I was Miss Goody Two-shoes—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —and could do it perfectly.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: But I've always been real—I was always real concerned about trying to do the best I could.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: And I know I had a problem because, like I said, I've been a housewife seventeen years before I went back to school and—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —jumped back into the working world, or jumped into the working world.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: But, with the help of all my fellow employees and everyone, they just really—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —made it good.

Yancy: Are there any humorous events you remember?

Logan: Well, yes, I've always, and I think I used to laugh to keep from crying because I felt that I just had the nicest husband in the world, and it just all turned out so wrong—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —that I used to tell jokes just to, I guess, to keep from crying.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: And I didn't realize at the time, and some of them weren't too nice, but I really did try to just tell them to the girls at coffee, and of course, the news, they'd tell their husbands, and the news would get around. So one Christmas they gave me a clean joke book for Christmas at the Christmas party, (Yancy laughs) and frankly I was embarrassed because I thought, Well they're all trying to tell me something. So I turned off the jokes because I didn't mean for them to get out of hand, and I don't think they meant for them to because they still say, "Well, Fannie Mae, don't you know some good jokes to tell us." (Logan and Yancy laugh) And I said, "No, I don't

want that to be said, I need to have some nice things said about me.” (Logan and Yancy laugh) I think that was one of the funny, you know, one of the times that—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —that we—I always loved all those girls, and of course, I was much older but I always tried to stay young with them.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: I don’t mean try to dress young.

Yancy: Oh, yeah.

Logan: Or whatever, because I had two grown sons.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: But if they had problems, I liked to try to listen to them and try to give them a helping hand—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —instead of push them down, you know?

Yancy: Oh, yes.

Logan: Because, as I said, I know I wasn’t perfect when I was young, and still am not. (Logan and Yancy laugh)

Yancy: No one is.

Logan: As Doris Super, a little girl from Shiner that used to work up there, [she] was cute as she could be, and she would say things because she was German or Czechoslovakian, I guess—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —differently from us.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: And she had made a mistake one particular day, and she said, “You know what girls, I’m going to turn my leaf over.” (Logan and Yancy laugh) Instead of turning over a new leaf.

Yancy: New leaf.

Logan: Well, she was going to turn her leaf over. So, we always—that’s what I’ve tried to do maybe, but I really can’t say enough nice things about the Co-op.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: They were super.

Yancy: In retrospect, how do you regard your years at GVEC? Was it fun to work there, frustrating, etcetera, and why? I gather it was fun just from the way you're talking.

Logan: It was fun, and yet we had our serious times that we really knew we had to get our work done.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: Period. I know Mr. Hines would be the first to tell you that my talking was my worst enemy. (Logan and Yancy laugh) And I have such a gravel, gritty voice that it would just carry all over the place, and to try to whisper, that's worse than ever. And I got in more trouble for talking, but I did get my work done, and, as I said, we had fun. We had fun times, and, in fact, I felt real sort of flattered; I saw Mr. Hines at one of the plays that they have down here, and he said, "You haven't been to see us in a long time." [He] said, "Come up and see our new dig." They had changed all around—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —and so I was real glad to know that he and they are—like I said, they are so nice to me still, but I don't go up there very much because everyone is busy.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: I decided a couple of years ago that I was tired of—I had caught up with my cleaning house, and (Logan and Yancy laugh) I have taken some real nice trips—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —that I wouldn't if—get back to work, so I'm doing alternations now and thoroughly enjoying it.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: I can run get it and bring it home and watch my soaps and stories and news and whatever.

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: And I enjoy doing my church work, too. I'll have to admit I don't do as I should but—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: I do enjoy my circle and friends at the circle. In fact, I just like people, period. I really do.

Yancy: Is there anyone else you can think of that I should interview? I've interviewed Mr. Davis, Mr. Siepmann, and Grace Willman. Can you think of anyone else? Other retired—other employees or consumers or anyone special?

Logan: Well, I'll tell you who would be good, Harold Brunes. Harold Brunes would be excellent to interview. I suggested to Clarence when he called that you interview Opal because she's very interesting to talk with.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: But she's in California now with her daughter, and of course, Harold just recently retired, and he could really give you the information you need on—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —the growth of Co-op—

Yancy: Yeah.

Logan: —and the specifics of it; you know, answer you real intelligently (Logan and Yancy laugh) as to their work—

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: —and what they are doing, and so forth. But I have enjoyed retirement, but I do miss all the girls and the guys up there.

Yancy: Yeah, well.

Logan: I still get a nice hug from them, (Logan and Yancy laugh) and, of course, you know, we like that.

Yancy: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, I don't have any more questions. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Logan: No, other than those twenty-one years were very happy years, and they were years that meant so much because I really needed to work at the time, and I felt that I had the support of the whole Co-op behind me, and it was just a real nice experience, and it was difficult to leave, but life has to go on.

Yancy: Mm-hmm.

Logan: And I felt like the younger girls could step in and do my job, and they are very capable, and it just was a real nice experience, and I would like to say that they were all just very, very good to me.

End of interview