

## Interview with Robert A. Young

**Interviewer: Karen Yancy**

**Transcriber: Karen Yancy**

**Date of Interview: July 21, 1987**

**Location: Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative, Gonzales, TX**

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*Begin Tape 1, Side 1*

**Karen Yancy:** This is Karen Yancy. Today is July 21, 1987, and I'm conducting an oral interview with Mr. Robert A. Young, director of Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative [GVEC] at Gonzales, Texas.

Why did you become a director? What made you want to become a director?

**Robert A. Young:** I thought it was a way that I could fulfill my civic duty. I was pleased that my friends nominated me, and I guess being a full-time rancher, you do have some spare time.

**Yancy:** What experience did you bring to the board of directors?

**Young:** I had two hitches in the military, in World War II and in Korea. I worked my way up through the ranks of a very large drilling company. It took me seventeen years, starting out as a roughneck until I was made president. I have a Bachelor of Science degree, and I owned my own tugboat company in South Louisiana, in which I was towing equipment worldwide, and I have run my own ranch for the past seventeen years. It's a pretty varied background.

**Yancy:** How many years have you served as a director, and in what year did you begin serving?

**Young:** I started in July 1986. I've just completed by first year.

**Yancy:** What kind of time commitment is involved in being a director? How long does it take to prepare for a meeting, and when do you get the materials?

**Young:** We usually get the agenda and the material to be covered about four days prior to the meeting date, and I would say that I generally spend about an hour going over that, but due to the unusual nature of some of the landmark decisions the board has had to make in the past six months, there has been considerably more time than usual. We've had special meetings, but I would say in normal times, we're in meetings about eight hours a month.

**Yancy:** What area do you represent?

**Young:** I'm in District Four.

**Yancy:** What are your responsibilities as a director? What are the week-to-week commitments?

**Young:** We are responsible for policy for employees and management, and I would say that, in a way, it's almost like a political job. In my district, I have a constituency that calls on me when they have problems.

**Yancy:** What kind of problems do they approach you with?

**Young:** When they've had outages or problems with their bill that they don't seem to be able to get straight to their satisfaction.

**Yancy:** So they'll come to you instead of going to the manager or others or—?

**Young:** I would say that I would be a second resort because the management is good at solving their problems, and it is very rare that I get a call.

**Yancy:** I know you get a stipend, but what kind of personal satisfaction do you get as a representative of the Co-op members?

**Young:** I think, in a rural area, it is a prestigious position—more so than it would be in a city.

**Yancy:** Are you more willing to contact the general manager and the division heads with electrical problems you encounter in your business or home than you were before you became a director?

**Young:** I would say, generally, yes, but it is only because I'm better acquainted with them and know where to go with problems.

**Yancy:** Other co-ops tend to have very argumentative board meetings, but GVEC doesn't. This is a mark of a successful enterprise. In your opinion, why doesn't GVEC experience these problems? Is it the relationship the board has with management or some other reason?

**Young:** I think management's preparation of the material that the board needs to act on has been outstanding, and there is very little cause for argument. We do have differences, but they are very rare.

**Yancy:** GVEC has a good consumer relationship. To what do you contribute this goodwill?

**Young:** Good management.

**Yancy:** In talking with GVEC employees, the Co-op seems to be one big happy "family." What do you think of using the word "family" in the book's subtitle to describe GVEC? Do you think GVEC is one big family?

**Young:** I think it really is. I've been in other companies that were that way too—previously it had to do with being a family because we would move from one location to another, and we

would be the new boys in town, especially in the drilling business. Sometimes there would be twenty-five or thirty of us that would descend on a small town, but here, where it is permanently situated, I think that there is a real esprit de corps in this company that you can find.

**Yancy:** What do you see at the future of GVEC?

**Young:** I think given the freedoms that we've gained by getting out from under the control of REA [Rural Electric Administration] and some of their restrictions, there is no limit to what we can do.

**Yancy:** What are the aspirations of the board? What are the goals? Do you have a future goal that you are aiming at or—?

**Young:** I'm going to plead ignorance there. I haven't been around long enough to say what the long-range plans of the Co-op are.

**Yancy:** Okay, well, that's all the questions I have. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

**Young:** No, I would be interested to hear what others have to say. Will I get a full transcript or just my own?

**Yancy:** You'll get a transcript of your own interview, and then there will be other parts that will seep into the book. The other transcripts and a transcript will be given to GVEC, of all of them and a recording of all the interviews. Thank you.

*End of interview*