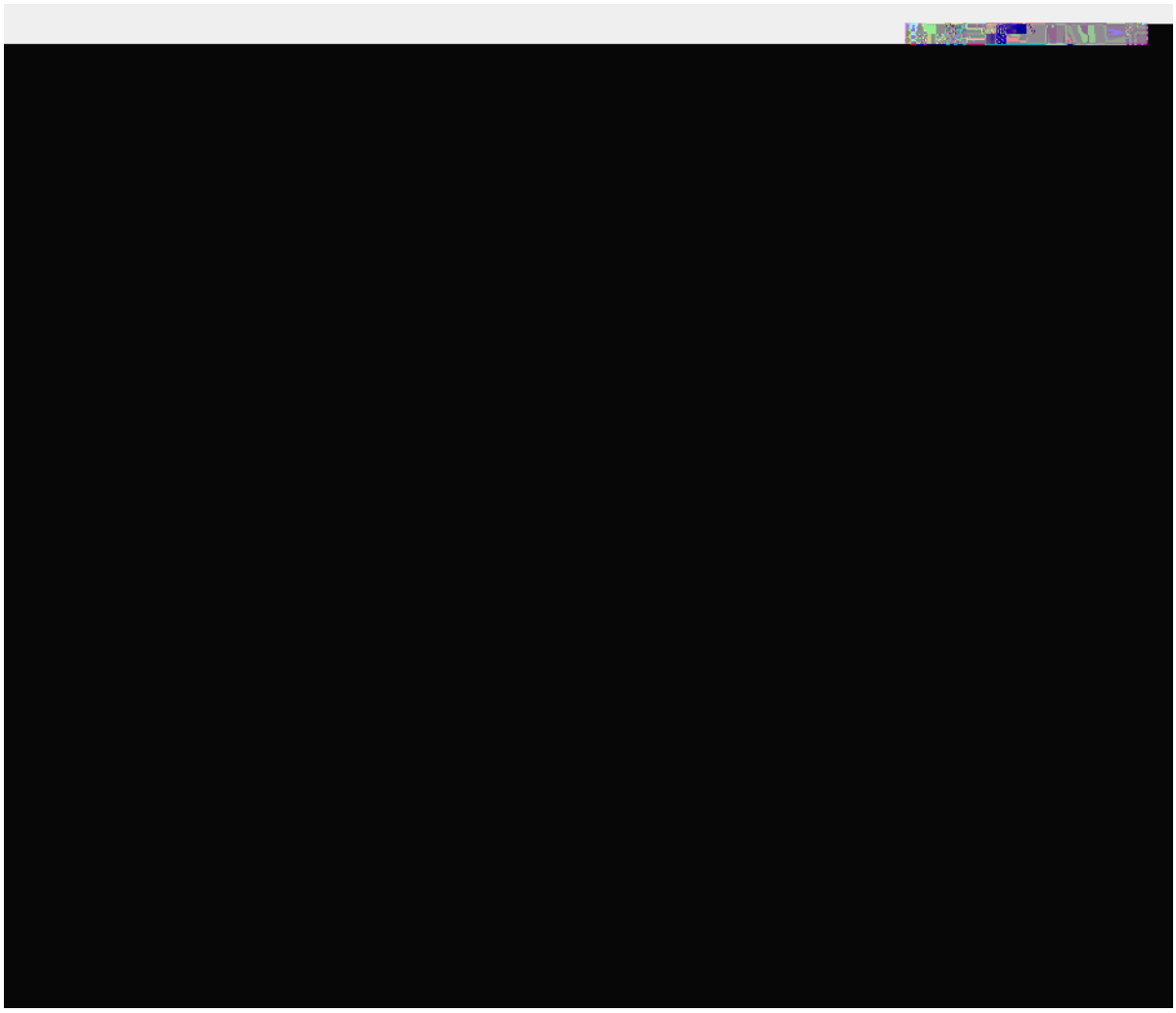
OCS Study
MMS 2004-051

History of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry in Southern Louisiana

Interim Report

Volume III: Samples of Interviews and Ethnographic Prefaces



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Volume III: Samples of Interviews and Ethnographic Prefaces

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Pre11

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Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

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CITATION

Suggested citation:

Austin, D. and T. McGuire. 2004. History of the offshore oil and gas industry in southern Louisiana: Interim report; Volume III: Samples of interviews and ethnographic prefaces. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA. OCS Study MMS 2004-051. 74 pp.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to study, document and explain the history and evolution of the

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1. Sample Photographs and Selections from Transcripts

1.1. Herb Barrett

Herb Barrett was born in Duncan, Oklahoma in 1928. He graduated from high school in 1946 and went to the University of Oklahoma to study petroleum engineering. He left after two years to take a job with Halliburton working in the machine shop. He moved to south Louisiana in 1949 and began working on boats. He stayed with Halliburton for 23 years. He then went to school to study mechanics and worked for Duplantis Trucking for 14 years.

1.1.1. Excerpt from Interview of January 28, 2002

HB (Herb Barrett): Number 1 is what was known as a super cementer. And it had the cab in front, cab over the truck and it had the 2 engines mounted behind and the engines were coupled where you could drive the truck over what's called a teaser engine, and you could run, it would normally run the 2 pumps by separate engines. But the 2 pumps could be run by one engine. One engine went out, you could still run both pumps out of one engine.

EB (Emily Bernier): What kind of engines were they?

HB: They were Detroit Diesels. Or GM's as we called them back then. And that was called a super cementer.

EB: Super cementer. How….

HB: Halliburton made 13 of them, and they originally came out in the oil show because the first one, saw it in 1947.

EB: Do you know what year this picture was taken?

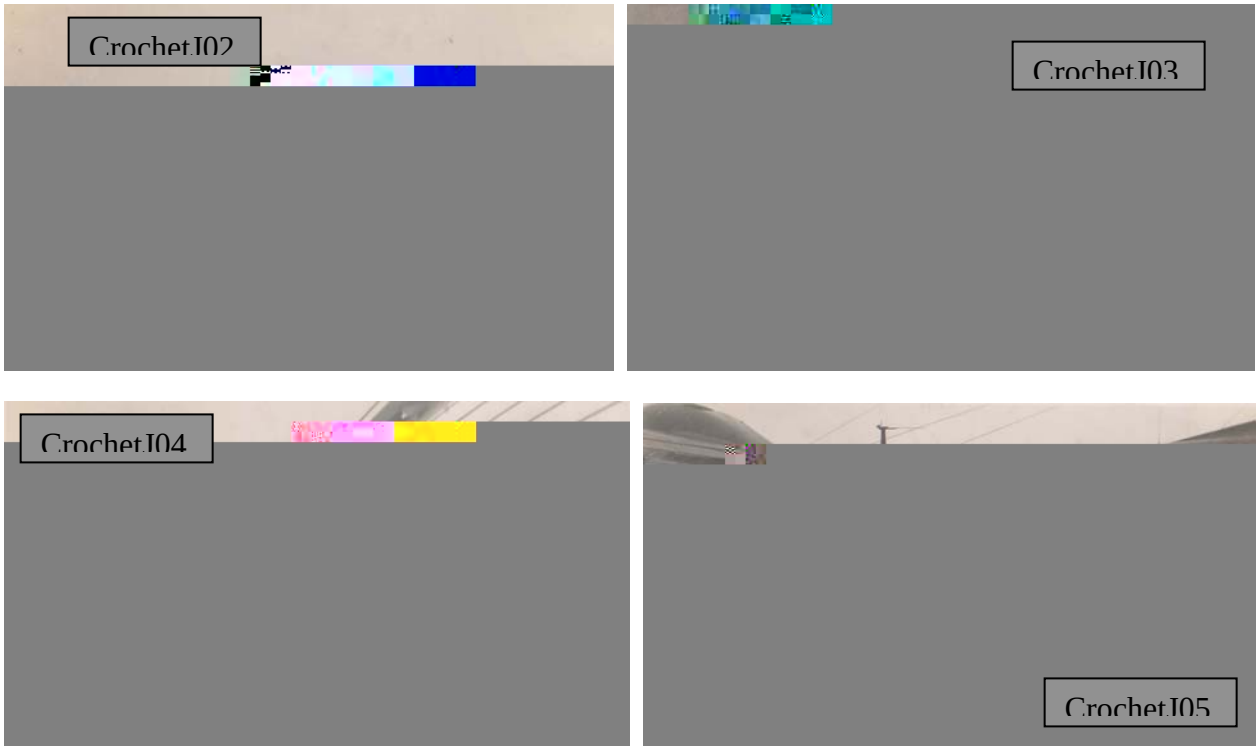
HB: This picture was taken about in either 1952 or 53.

EB: OK

HB: There were 3 of them in south LA. There was one in Houma, one in Lafayette, one in Lake Charles.

1.2. James "Peanut" Crochet

James “Peanut” Crochet was born in 1927. He was drafted into the service in 1944 and toured Marseilles and Belgium for 20 months. His first job was at a factory called "Weatherhead,” a canning factory in Houma, Louisiana. In 1949 he got a job with Kerr McGee as a flunkie and then moved onto roustabout after a year or so. After Kerr McGee he went to work inshore for Texaco. In the 1970's he worked as foreman for a few years. During the downturn of the early 1980's, he was transferred to work on a clean up barge by the name of Barge Lawrence.



1.2.1. Excerpt from Interview of July 25, 2001

AG (Andrew Gardner): Well here’s picture number 2. What are we looking at there?

JC (James Crochet): This is Lake Pelto field office, you see right there. They would figure out production and all of that. That’s where the supervisors met. That’s the office right here, where they would work at. We had about three or four of them working in there. That’s where we’d keep all the records and all of that.

AG: And so, do they sleep on there too?

JC: Yeah, they sleep – there’s a camp. You see, they got a walkway from the sleeping quarters that comes up into here, you see that? Right down there.

AG: So was the supervisor working at that office responsible for all those fields you just mentioned?

JC: No, they were responsible for that field, Pelto. Each field had their own office at the time.

AG: And that was built on pilings in, what, ten feet of water?

JC: Oh, we're looking, at that time, about ten feet, ten to fifteen feet. Right there.

AG: Well, this is probably a picture of the same thing right here

AG: And this is when you first started out there?

JC: Actually, this is when I come back from the service right here, this is when I first started. I was a flunkie before I was going out in the field, you see. I was a cook's helper.

AG: What was it like working in the kitchen? Did guys get along well?

JC: Oh, yeah. They was nice. Kitchen was open all the time.

AG: you guys must have been pretty busy in there.

JC: Yeah, that's some young men there. Fifty years, fifty two years ago there!

AG: Yeah, it says that picture was taken in 1951 right at the top.

JC: I was in my prime there. Let's see, I'm 74 now, 51 … 23! Wish I was back there!

DominiqueD06

DominiqueD07

1.3.1. Excerpt from Interview of January 21, 2002

EB (Emily Bernier): OK, number 4.

DD (Doughty Dominique): That's the old wooden derrick. You can see how prominent safety was, these chains were totally exposed here on the right. Whenever you were drilling, turning the rotary, that chain was doing that and if you ever got close enough you'd be part of it…

EB: So this thing right here sort of in the center right, these are the rotaries…

DD: That's a rotary. That's what turns the drill pipe when you're drilling. This is a….

EB: On the left.

DD: On the left, the bottom left, that's a joiner pipe in the right hole they called it. You can see a pair of pipe tongs holding it. What they would do when they would get this all the way down, then they would pull it up, and the joiner pipe that was at the bottom of this would become exposed. They'd unscrew the kelly, take that up, put it in there and extend it by 30 feet so you could drill an additional 30 feet. This is Dad, 2nd from the left. The other guys I don't really, really recognize. I don't remember him saying who they are. That's an old set of elevators, holding the pipe in the rat hole.

EB: Elevators, what are they?

DD: That's what you use to latch on the pipe to pick it up from the dirt.

EB: OK. So is this just equipment that wasn't being used right now just sitting there? Or do you think it was sitting there because they were going to use it soon?

DD: They were going to use it very soon. Probably as soon as they got this joiner pipe, they drilled it down, they would pick it up, break it off here, and pick that up, and screw it in there and extend it. And then start drilling again. And this was Blade Water, Blade Water Texas. I think Blade Water is a little north of Longview.(pause) No safety what so ever.

EB: It sure doesn't look like it. Did anyone get their overalls or anything caught in them…

DD: Oh, I'm sure they did, almost on a regular basis. Now they have to have guards over everything which is great. I mean it saves a lot of toes, and hands, and feet, and everything else.

EB: Right. Here's picture number 5.

DD: This is a picture of a barge with some guys working on it. My dad told me that this barge was taken in the Atchafalaya River here in south Louisiana. They were building, before he went to work for Gulf, they were in there building a location for Texaco if I remember right. But it's just a bunch, and I don't know who's who on there, I'm sure that Daddy's in there somewhere but I just don't know who he is.

EB: About what year would this be?

DD: Probably 19… I think he went to work for Gulf in 25, so this may be 24 or something like that. Maybe even 1923.

EB: And what is all this pipe here to the left?

DD: That's all drill pipe. It looks like drill pipe but it'd be either drill pipe or line pipe that would connect the well up to a battery to allow it to pull them up. But I would assume that's drill pipe. They're going to probably end up bulk loading that on the barge and it's going to float down here to the rig to be utilized there.

EB: And so this is an old wooden barge.

DD: Yeah, it looks like it. In fact those were fairly common when I was coming up back in those days.

EB: Oh, yeah.

DD: Yeah. They used haul sugarcane up and down Bayou LaFouche in these open barges, old wooden ones….

EB: And what is this thing right here that looks like a canon? To the right?

DD: …….. that's a pump, that's a pump. That's the flywheels on the pump, shoots the piston in and out, siphons water up. This is, this going into here is probably a relief. That's a water pump.

EB: When I was first looking at it I thought it was a canon. I was like what….

DD: Looks like wheels like a canon.

EB: Here's picture number 6.

EB: Yeah, real clear. Especially since this is how they did it in Texas, you know, and they don't have anything really similar in Louisiana. It was company camps from what I hear, where you stayed. Unlike this which seemed like it was a private venture.

DD: yeah, Gulf had camps in Venice also, Buras actually. In fact they had camps scattered all around but this was a private boarding house. It wasn't a company camp.

EB: OK, here's number 7.

DD: Orangefield.

EB: Orangefield.

DD: Probably a fireman or maybe even, see 4, 5, he may even been a landowner just hanging around. I think he might have been, he could have been I'd say that. I don't know that for sure. I know back then land owners stuck pretty close to the rig because they always thought they were getting cheated out of something.

EB: Were they?

DD: Maybe some did, maybe some, I don't know. I think in east Texas they had probably the biggest, one of the biggest scandals in the oil industry up to that time and maybe even now where they had to bring the Texas Rangers in to resolve it. People were putting flow lines in and putting a valve in there indicating it was open, it'd be closed, and be diverting oil to their own private tanks. It was a real crooked, crooked place. They were s

1.4.1. Excerpt from Interview of December 12, 2002

DF (Dale Fackler): My name's Dale Fackler with Solutions in Lafayette, Louisiana.

DA (Diane Austin): And today we're looking at some of the photos that you have. We're going to call this one number one. What are we looking at here?

DF: You're looking at a dry habitat that was used to make the first underwater hot tap saddle weld and it was being carried out by Ocean Systems Incorporated in Morgan City. They were a part of Union Carabide and they had a welding engineer from Lindy, a division of Union Carabide. And

removed and a valve and hot tapping machine is placed on the flange and then the hot tapping machine goes through the valve, cuts a coupon, an oval, a bent oval shaped metal cut out of the twelve inch line while pressure product is still flowing through the line. The coupon's extracted, the valve's closed, the machine bled down and removed and you're ready to tie the eight-inch, the new eight inch line into the twelve.

DA: And so at no point in that process do they stop the product flowing through the main pipeline?

DF: No that's why it's called a hot tap. This was the first one done sub sea.

DA: And so what we're looking at here is which part of that? That's the habitat or it's the hot tap machine?

DF: That is the habitat.

DF: Okay, this is on a drill ship, a drilling rig. This is the wench that these will [lower the bell].

DA: Okay so as we look then at the top of the photo the wench is just past, to the left of the center.

DF: Yes. The second wench that has the diving ability turns to lower the, all of the electrical and all of the air hoses and gas hoses.

DA: Okay and that's off on the right hand side.

DF: This is called the entrance lock and it has a top flange to set the bell in [place]. This picture shows the bell sitting down on the ground where tools are attached, the two divers that are going to dive get in the bell at that point- fully dressed and so forth. And the door would be sealed on the inside as well as on the outside. Now once the bell is lifted over the side of the vessel the wench would go to the bottom atmospheric, in other words wet because the interior door has no [seal so] that you could just open that door anytime. The exterior door, the one that closes up from the bottom, that one is sealed by water pressure outside. So as the bell goes down the inside door is not holding any pressure. It can be opened, go on down to the bottom then as gasses come out- oxygen, helium is added to the inside of the bell to pressurize it. It will rise until the bottom seal has greater pressure inside the bell than outside. One diver will assist the other…and there's communication with a secondary [device] to the diver who exits the bell.

DA: Can a diver inside the bell talk to the diver outside the bell?

DF: No, we've attempted at communication to do that but it doesn't work well. Maybe in saturation... In this case everything we relate through the person on the deck. He would say the diver needs some more slack …

DA: The person inside the bell can you talk and be heard or how does…?

DF: Yes. You just talk.

DA: Now is there an unscrambler attached somewhere to the valve that is what he's saying is understood at the top or?

DF: The unscrambler, the tone change is made in the radio topside. The person in the bell plus the diver are both [on helium]. There are two separate radios on two separate lines on the same radio or you can listen to one [on each line].

DA: When they're in the bell then can they talk to each other?

DF: Yes.

DA: If they're both in the bell…?

DF: Yes, if people are speaking with a helium voice in saturation it becomes this normal speaking out here. After being in there a few days, people who are familiar with helium speech that are on radio topside of the diver is used to that , his hearing is attuned to that type of voice. He doesn't have any trouble understanding. But to another person who walks in the room they can't believe what they [are hearing].

DA: Okay.

DF: Okay and this [bottom of photo] would be the decompression chamber. After they entered this they would remove their wetsuits or hot water suits or whatever.

DA: So they're removing their suits in the diving bell before they get into the chamber?

DF: In the entrance trunk, in this entrance trunk. They would go down a ladder into the inside and do this while the bell is sealed to the top. This is called the entrance trunk.

DA: Okay so that's the piece that's looking off towards the front towards us.

DF: Yes. Looking at it like this, this is sitting down in front.

DA: Okay.

DF: Then you have the same double door where you…, where they can open the door when the pressure's equal in the entrance lot to the chamber and they go inside and be on the little bubbles.

DA: And how long does a diver stay in the chamber?

DF: It depends on the depth of water. On, we've had bounce dives where people have to stay in the chamber fifteen, sixteen hours. But of course if this were a larger saturation facility they, two would get out and two would get in and two would [be working].

DA: Okay. This system looks pretty well engineered. Does it work most of the time or are there particular kinds of problems that would arise?

DF: It works most of the time. If you follow the maintenance schedule. On all equipment, there is a maintenance schedule for the wire that rings to lower the bell. There's a spelter socket on the end that attaches to the bell that has to be cut back at such and such a time. Pieces of cable have to be put into a laboratory strain test, make sure it's strong, the end for end cable on the wench on a schedule. Maintenance of all seals, valves, things like that. That's what the people are doing on board the drilling rig when they're not diving.

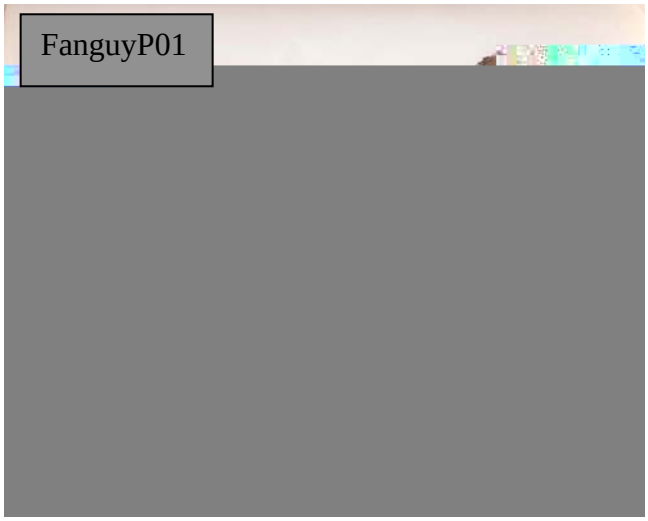
1.5. Philip Fanguy

Philip Fanguy got into the trucking business when he married the daughter of Elwin Duplantis, the founder of Duplantis Trucking, in 1957. Elwin started the company in 1936 with a dump truck and a shovel. He got into the oilfield trucking business by buying trucks from the New Orleans Department of Sanitation. Philip and both his brother-in-laws worked for Duplantis, and Philip now runs the company.

Note: Photos taken by Jesse Grice. The Grice Collection is now housed at the Morgan City Archives.

FanguyP02

FanguyP01



FanguyP04

1.5.1. Excerpt from Interview of April 10, 2002

EB (Emily Bernier): Oh, about what year is that, this number one? [Laughs] How about February 11th, 1958.

PF (Philip Fanguy): February 11th, 1958.

EB: And what is this a picture of?

PF: This is a picture of a mobile crane and they're handling casing. And this is the pipe that when they drill a hole through the earth that they put down into the hole and they start drilling within [a short distance] of this project.

EB: So the two pieces of pipe on the crane are casing?

PF: Casing.

EB: And then the pipe…so I mean the casing obviously has to be a lot bigger. We can tell with this guy in the white jacket down here in the corner how big…

PF: This is drill pipe.

EB: Oh the pipe on the…

PF: This is what's used with a drill bit to drill the inside of this into those.

EB: Okay and what are these three big…?

PF: These three things are blowout preventers. And these things are designed where this one stacks on top of this one.

EB: The one on the left?

PF: Then these two stack on top of this one. And these things have what they call rams in them and they close against this pipe to close, to keep…like if they did gas pressure. The gas pressure could just take this pipe and push it up. Well these preventers have these rams in it, they come on the side and squeeze against the pipe and hold it in place where they can't come up.

EB: And do those work all the time? I mean obviously not- there's blowouts but…

PF: Yeah they really do. The only time you have a blowout, which is very rare if they hit a gas pocket you know that they just didn't see in the <inaudible> work. You know that's always a possibility that they'll blowout but under normal conditions…if they have warnings that there's gas you know they can close these things off.

EB: Well it looks like Number Two is sort of similar. The date on this is 1970.

PF: This is the first wench that was built by a southern machine here in Houma and this wench was used for towing operations in Africa. This is one of the first offshore boats built also. And this boat was going to work in Africa.

EB: Do you know who built that boat?

PF: Halter Marine and Harvey that built this boat.

EB: Okay, so all that is drill pipe.

PF: Yes that's a drill pipe.

EB: And then here's the Duplantis truck off to the right. And you're loading the wench?

EB: That was Number Three. This is Number Four. Now this is when they're halfway putting it on okay. Were jobs like that dangerous? I mean were jobs like this one dangerous? I mean I know its just lift and put but that things so big.

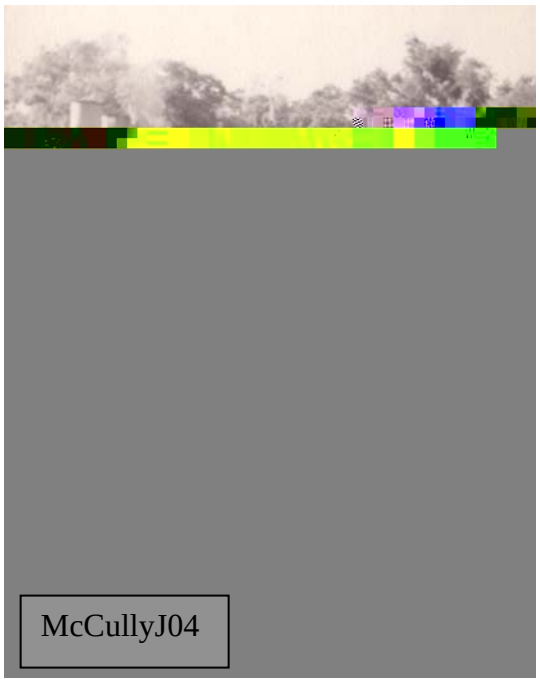
PF: Yeah you have to be very careful, really I mean when you're pulling with this type of weight you just have to be very careful.

EB: So, that was going over to Africa?

PF: Right.

1.6. Jack McCully

Jack McCully is a transplant from Texas. He worked for Abercrombie in Texas when he was 16. He began working with Humble in Texas and was then transferred to south Louisiana in the mid 1950's. Included are photos of steam rigs and discussion of drilling problems.



1.6.1. Excerpt from Interview of January 19, 2002

EB (Emily Bernier): OK, number 4.

JM (Jack McCully): That was when we were in Texas and I was on rig 1 right there, no that was rig 30. This is part of it right here too. We was all out here. This is the draw works right there; there was an old boy, T.C. Williams.

EB: So who is this gentleman standing to the….

JM: You don't recognize me?

EB: So this isn't rig number 1 in Texas this is rig 30?

JM: That's rig 30, that's the first rig I got on. I got on it and after they shut it down, I went to rig 1. That was a little rig; it had 3 boilers on it. That thing could only go about 8500 (feet down) it was a small rig. This one here we could go 13-14,000 you see.

EB: was this a steam rig? (Meaning rig 30).

JM: Yep, all these were steam rigs, rig 30, rig 1 rig 9 and rig 18 was all steam.

EB: OK. Number 5.

JM: This is 1955 we's over there in Texas right close to Raymond Person's Estate. He was that big Ford dealer in Houston, I don't know if you've ever heard of him or not but that's where we were drilling over on his place. This right here (6) this is all the same place right here.

EB: So this Number 5 here is this also a company car or…

JM: no, no that's one of the guys he drove his car out there.

EB: OK then the black car that says "Humble"…

JM: That one there was a crew car.

EB: So would y'all park somewhere and the crew car would pick you up?

JM: Yeah well see what it was we'd drive out with a company car and what they would do the other crew would take the comp car and go back. You see sometimes the guys would drive their cars out there but after they had that boiler explosion over there in Texas they asked people not to drive them. Some of them still did some of them still did drove their cars out there. One thing two see all these board rows (Number 1) the nails would sometimes would pop up like that (Number 4) and that was bad too for blowing your tires like that. That was another reason they didn't want people driving out there.

EB: So this is you in the middle on Number 5.

JM: On the end.

EB: Oh on the left on the end.

JM: This old boy named Jerry Lewis, the same kind of name that Jerry Lewis used to have, but he's gone now. He had the cancer in his head and they operated on him and the next thing I know he's gone, he's dead. This guy here, his name was PJ Palmer (right), he went back to Texas I believe it is. He came to Louisiana for a while and I think he's back over there again.

EB: OK, Number 6. Now this is the same rig 30 we've been looking at.

JM: This is the same rig right here, all this is the same rig. This is the doghouse.

EB: That's the doghouse on the far right?

JM: Yeah that's where we changed clothes and al

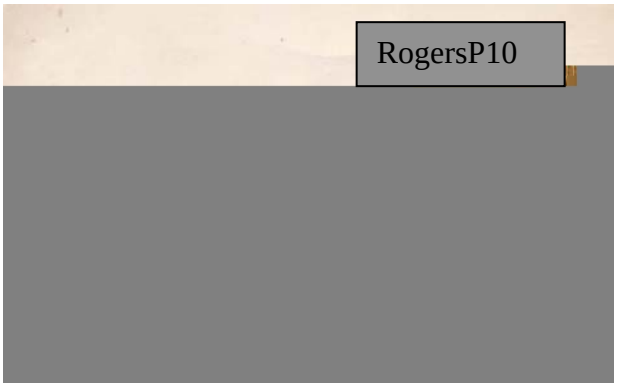
JM: this is the corner of me right there (far left). This is T.C. Williams and Jerry Lewis again and this is PJ Palmer. (Starting from the right). This is a good old boy called red eye Regan, he quit the company. This old boy here he retired the company and he's in bad shape. His wife died a few years back and he had one of his legs amputated because he was a diabetic. He's over in the hospital in Thibodaux and I think he's just hanging on. (Referring to another picture not in set) This is Harold Saunders right here (referring to another picture).

EB: Real quick, this picture 7 is this on rig 30?

JM: Yeah that's rig 30. All this is together here. This is offshore after I left there…

1.7. Pete Rogers

Pete Rogers was born in Patterson, Louisiana in 1914. He started work for Shell Oil in 1935 as part of an exploration crew, but they had a temporary layoff in 1940, and he decided to join the military for service. When he got back from the war in 1945, he joined the production department at Shell. He retired in 1976 after 35 years. Pete's photos show his work with the early exploration and seismograph crews. He worked with an instrument called the torsion balance - a German-designed machine that would soon become a relic in oilfield exploration.



RogersP09

1.7.1. Excerpt from Interview of January 16, 2002

AG: This is Number Nine, it looks like the same picture we were looking at close to it before.

PR: Yep, yep, yep that's the same thing.

AG: Walking through the, walking through, walking through the swamps, the marshes.

PR: Through the marshes. Heh.

AG: Here is Number Ten, it's somebody in a boat.

PR: Yep. We used pig hooks in the marsh, because they came in real handy, because the trappers made trenasses; those are little itty bitty canals, they made those canals by hand, so they could get to their traps. We used to use those trenasses instead of walking, and we used our pirogues to hold our equipment. You know, we benefited from the trappers.

AG: Fantastic! Now this is Number Eleven.

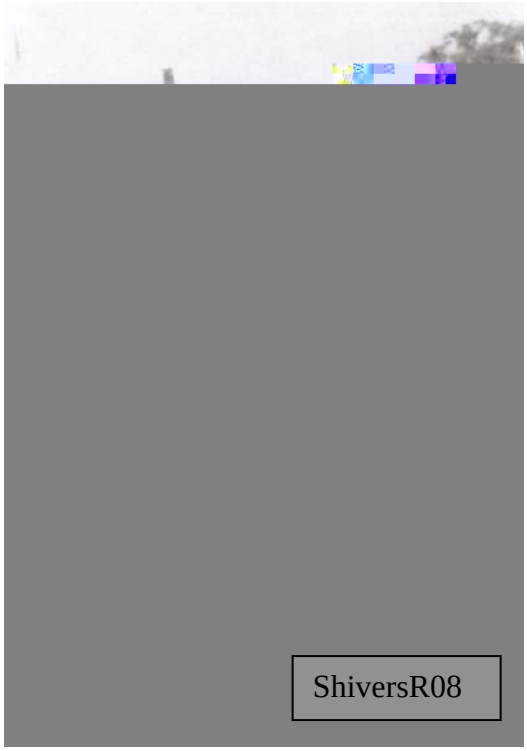
PR: Yep, that's holding our equipment in the sugarcane field, that's the Shell Oil Company vehicle. But I may not, maybe it was a Plymouth, an old Plymouth.

AG: Here's a good picture of the instruments set up, this is Number Twelve.

PR: Oh yes, it sure is, absolutely. In that marsh, to get a good foundation. You see this 2 by 2, you put three of them in the ground and sometimes you had to go as much as 15 feet deep to get a good, solid foundation otherwise, when you set the instrument up it would get out of level. We had a lot of stuff to haul.

1.8. Robert Shivers

Robert Shivers was born in Hull, Texas in 1929. His father built derricks for the Gulf Oil Company and later worked for the Sun Oil Company and for the Rio Bravo Oil Company. Robert stayed in Hull through the 11th grade of high school, and graduated in 1946. Then he went to the University of Texas, and finished in 1950. He began working in the oilfield in 1944 in Monroe City, Texas. Then in '52 he entered the Army. He got out in '54, at a time when the oilfield was cutting back. He built an office for a doctor and got into the home-building business. He moved to Morgan City, Louisiana in 1957, when it was a boomtown. Houses were in short supply at the time, so he settled there and began his business. Robert shared photos from his family's business in Hull.



ShiversR08

ShiversR10

ShiversR11

ShiversR12

1.8.1. Excerpt from Interview of January 12, 2002

AG (Andrew Gardner): Here is Number 8.

RS (Robert Shivers): Oh that is a roustabout crew I was working with. This man's name is Huffier but I said about Huffier. This man hurt his back and I had no doubt he had back injuries somehow and he was going to a ride to do his work, but on the way he would hook some boots like the rodeo (laughs).

AG: His back must have been all right at least part of the way ah. When did you figure that was taken?

RS: 1948

AG: '48

RS: Let me put ah…

AG: That is all right. I got it

RS: That was the summer I worked for Gilford

AG: That is a Gulf Oil roustabout crew boat?

RS: Yeah

…..

AG: OK so this is Number 10, that is a nice picture.

RS: Yes, that is my Grandpa right there.

AG: And what was his name again? OK let's just get it on the tape.

RS: His name was William Gilbert Shivers, but everyone called him Pa'. Do you see that access that has a 16' inch blade on it?

AG: Yeah.

RS: That is a broad axe and if you hack it, when you chopped it you called it hack it, so if you hack… and if you cut a tree that was mostly a pine tree cut one seven foot long of whatever and then you just hack it in a square across that and that was barely useful, but here it was a standard wooden, not a derrick, but a standard rig and that is what you used that broad axe for. This right here is like…

AG: On the left.

RS: Like <inaudible>. When he built those decks and called them up like him, two men on top and two on the bottom… the next level or whatever. This right here, you get up on the derrick and jump with a rope.

AG: Oh man (laughs).

RS: Well anyway…

AG: So this will be Number 11 then?

RS: Right, well this is obviously a production in Saratoga and that is my Grandpa right there, he's got a little mustache.

AG: Right as pie uh?

RS: Yeah. That is a contractor… I can't reckon. Well someone has his picture I got his name written on but ah that was his crew.

…..

AG: And we are going to call this one Number Twelve instead.

RS: OK, that was of course Hull, Texas, were I was born. This was about the time I was born and you could see Main Street and… you know, you need gravel and ….

AG: Right, right.

RS: Shells or whatever you need, look at those chains on there.

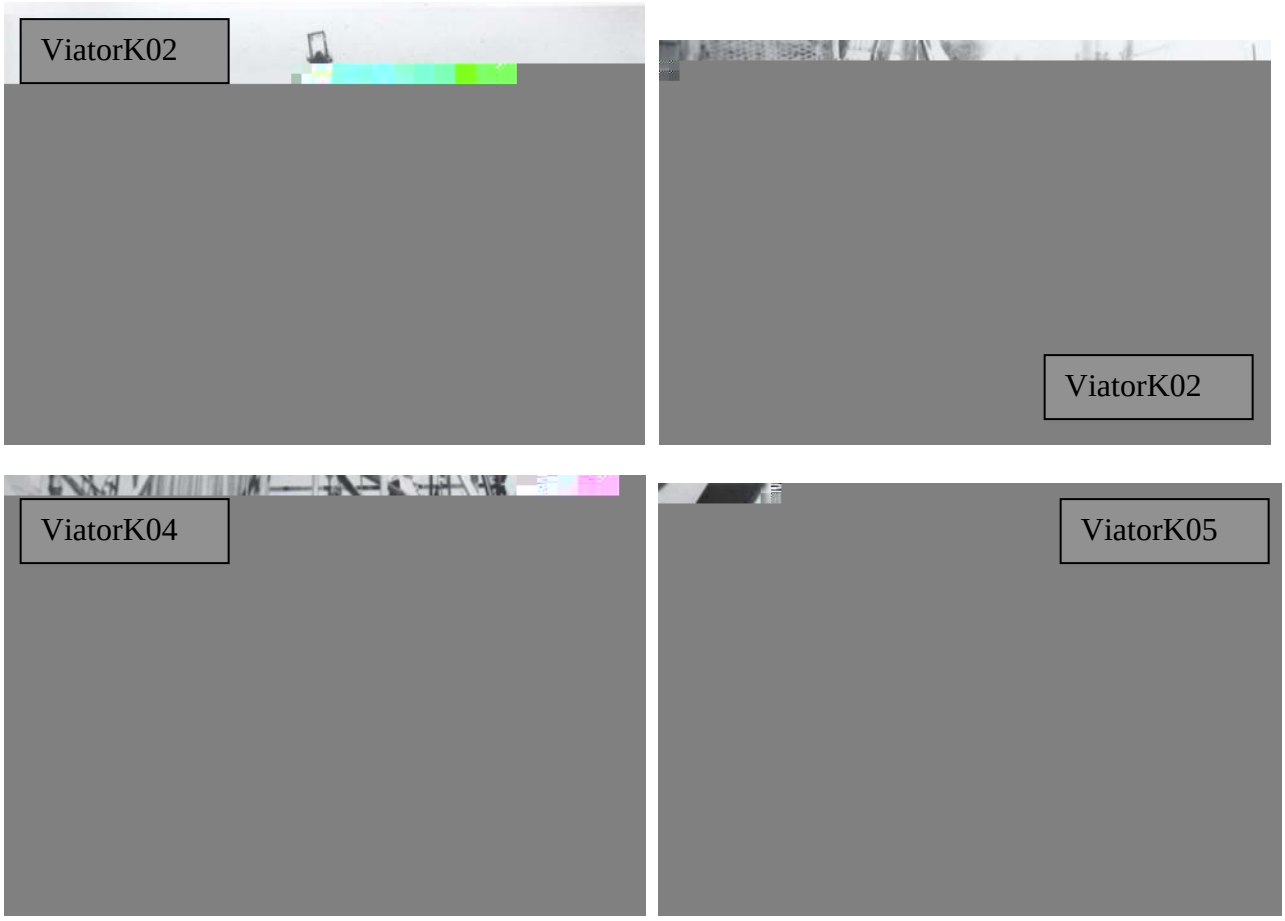
AG: Right.

RS: This fellow here delivered the mail down on Death Row you know, he had the ...

AG: Right, right, right.

RS: He had to pick up those by the depot and… Now he had to hold it to <inaudible> and Saratoga which was 7 miles away. He will pick it by the train and take it to…

AG: Right.



1.9.1. Excerpt from Interview of July 20, 2001

AG (Andrew Gardner): OK, we can move on to Number 2 then. This is the Shell rig Number 4, which is the first Shell rig you worked on?

KV (Kenneth Viator): That's right.

AG: What can you tell me about that?

KV: This was an inland barge, done most of the drilling inshore, on canals, had some canals drilled … dredged out so we could get to some locations.

AG: Was it a relatively new rig when you started working on it?

KV: No. This was an older rig, I think. Pretty old, because I don't remember if it was maybe three years after I was working on that rig they got rid of those inland rigs and they were sold. They got rid of all the onshore rigs and just kept the offshore rigs.

AG: You guys didn't stay on this rig?

KV: Yeah.

AG: You did?

KV: Right. This back part here is the living quarters. You had a living quarters on that rig, that's right. We had living quarters, and we'd sleep and eat and did everything on that rig for seven days. Seven days on and seven days off.

AG: Do you figure this is somewhere around Weeks Island this picture was taken?

KV: Well, I doh3]BT/TT2 1 aTw

2. Sample Ethnographic Prefaces and Summaries

2.1. Gerald Adkins

UA-0133; TM021

City: Houma, LA
Date: January 14, 2002
Interviewer: Tom McGuire
Format: 2 tapes, 3 sides

Ethnographic Preface:
Gerald Adkins, now retired, started working for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in 1963 at Grand Isle. Kerry St. Pé had referred us to him on a previous trip as one who knew a lot of the commercial fishermen in the area. I had called him several times in September 2001, but his "on-call" job forced him to cancel a couple of appointments: he drives vehicles around to car lots all over the region. He retired in 1997, and rather than return to his native Shreveport, he built a house in a new subdivision behind the shopping mall in Houma. His wife, Jane, a nurse, was home but did not participate in the interview.

The interview ranged across a number of topics dealing with W&F data collection and management, environmental changes and fluctuations, local entrepreneurs, and the differing propensities of shrimpers and oystermen to interact with the oil industry. He agreed with an impression I had been formulating: because of the greater degree of variability/volatility in shrimping (i.e., year-to-year changes in catches due to environmental factors), compared to the relatively steady nature of oyster harvests (function largely of how diligently an oysterman cared for his reefs/leases), shrimpers were more aggressive than oystermen in trying to find niches in the oil industry as it developed.

Summary:
Early years: graduated from college at Northern; in the 1960s, decline in shrimp production put pressure on W&F to study the problem; he went to work as biologist at the lab on Grand Terre Island off Grand Isle, doing basic research on shrimp biology/population dynamics, though his preference was for finfish research; passage of Public Law 88309 in 1966 provided research funds to all GOM coastal states; biologists in each of LA's 7 districts would select research; in 1966 he moved to Houma as District Biologist, until he retired.

Finfish research: stimulated when Florida clamped down on gillnets and the fear that Florida fishermen would bring "thousands of miles" of monofilamant nets into Louisiana waters; at the time, almost nothing was known about the magnitude of commercial and recreational fishing effort in the state; finfishing was only a supplemental activity, done in cold weather, by crabbers, shrimpers and oystermen; federal law prohibiting contraband fish shipments made it easier to get more reliable data on fishing effort.

Recreational fishermen: not powerful group in the 1970s, but in 1980s, the GCCA moved into Lake Charles from Texas and united all recreational fishermen, gaining power in legislature;

though "compromise" legislation - primarily outlawing unattended nets by both commercial and recreational fishermen, and restricting gillnets to mullet and a limited black drum fishery - the fishery is now "stable".

Impacts of oil activity: until 1972/1975, very little state regulation of activity; he did study of effects of canals and recommended that oil companies do directional drilling from central canals; his boss wouldn't let him publish recommendations because it implied added costs to oil companies; philosophy of little regulation was that "we have millions of acres of marsh;" canals disrupt natural water flow; offshore activity has little effect on fisheries, and rigs concentrate fish and thus make it easier for them to spawn; Houma Ship Channel increased in width from the original 150 feet to 1500 feet since banks were never stabilized; saltwater intrusion now impacting Houma's drinking water supply; Ellender got funding and Houma boomed with access for deepwater shipping; Houma Courier ran article on this 2 or 3 years ago.

Freshwater diversions: do some good in small areas, much major diversions, e.g., running the Mississippi down through Bayou Lafourche, resisted by landowners.

Effect of floods: 1973 to 1975 were flood years, displacing species

Ethnographic Preface:
Dr. Barrow received a BS in Petroleum Engineering at the University of Texas in 1945 and his Master's degree in Geology in 1948. He went on to complete his PhD in Geology at Stanford University in 1953. Even before completing his doctoral work, Dr. Barrow joined Humble Oil and Refining Company. He became president of that company less than 20 years later. When Humble was transformed into Exxon, he was elected senior vice president and member of the board of directors. He also served as CEO of Kennecott Corporation when it was acquired by Exxon. When Standard Oil of Ohio acquired Kennecott, Dr. Barrow led their exploration division and served as vice chairman and member of the board of directors of SOHIO. He retired again in 1985, but couldn't stay out of the oil business. He is currently president of T-Bar-X, Ltd., an oil and gas exploration company, and chairman of Tobin International.

Summary:
Interview begins with discussion of geologic studies offshore California in the 1950s. Talks about Humble Oil's analag 3-D seismic system developed in the early 1960s. Moves on to discussion of Humble's early offshore gravity surveys along the Gulf Coast in the 1930s. Shift in geologic thinking in the late 1950s and early 1960s from salt domes to lower relief fault features. Story

the interview. After the interview, we walked over the Chene's netshop, where Mr. Web goes many mornings to help make nets and get exercise (and, according to Ronald, play bourée). He owned a netshop for decades, but his primary business was boats, first tugboats after the war, then crewboats, then offshore boats. He serviced Humble Oil out of Grand Isle for 22 years. With only a 2nd-grade education, he is proud of a career of running boats, serving on bank boards of directors, making nets, and running a 100-acre crawfish farm up in Larose. He is still on Hibernia Bank's board, but he noted that board members don't make

Net business: used to buy trawl nets in Morgan City, but decided he could make them here; in 1950, Gulf coast shrimpers started fishing in Mexico - so many shrimp that the nets would break; always had 10-11 me

Oil Industry Work: Went to work for Mobil Oil after leaving the Army; worked offshore as galley hand, roustabout, and roughneck. Schedule of 7 days on, 7 days off; changed to 6 and 6, which paid less so went to work for Texaco in about 1955. Worked on Texaco rigs as roughneck, then as derrick man. Most rigs were steam back then be

Technical Changes over Time: Everything was done by hand when he started. Now rigs are much more modernized. Rigs have become more technically sophisticated as began drilling offshore in deeper and deeper waters. Lots of technical advances in equipment. Oilfield work has also become a lot safer. Progressed from on land drilling to offshore to deeper waters. Now can drill in 9000 feet of water. Communications have improved; now have fax machines, computers, and telephones on rigs.

Social Changes over Time: When he started working, most workers were not well educated. Soon people had to have a high school degree to get a job. Today, company jobs are hard to find; most work is through a contractor. From when he started work in 1954 until about 1975, oil jobs were very secure; "you had to really screw up to lose the job." But by the early 1980s, people had to worry about their jobs; companies were giving

production. Both still working for Texaco; one on offshore platform, one on inland lake barge. Describes processing oil and gas from various rigs, which is done at a "tank battery."

Work History: Got out of school in 1951. In Army from 1952 to 1953. Went to work for Mobil; worked in kitchen in 1953; worked as roughneck in 1954. Went to work for Texaco in 1954; worked as a derrick man on a rig for 15 years, from 1954 to 1969; mud engineer from 1969 to 1975; driller in 1976; drilling supervisor from 1976 until retirement. Paid by the hour until became drilling supervisor, which is salaried. Pay at all levels is pretty good. Last few years before retirement, he was a senior drilling supervisor in charge of all the rigs, working out of an office. Retired December 31, 1989.

Drilling Problems: Pipe getting stuck in hole. Drilling into pressure hole, which can kill a well. "There's always a problem" when drilling a well. Describes all the ways things can potentially go wrong. Time is money on a rig; expensive to run; need to drill as fast as possible. Describes potential problems. Problems are really common. Most dreaded problem is a well blowing out and catching fire. Describes more potential problems.

Training: Sent to school before becoming mud engineer, but the training was really a waste of time because he already knew most of the information. Talks about early mud engineering experience.

Worker Demographics: Most workers were from the area; some workers from northern Louisiana, Mississippi. When the boom started, most supervisors were from Texas. Few Cajun supervisors until about 10 years after drilling began in the area. Lots of workers from Many, Alexandria, and Bunkie; few from Mississippi and other states. Most early engineers from out-of-state, mostly from east coast and Texas; also some engineers from other countries. Crews from

Unionization: Oilfield might eventually unionize. Boom-bust cycles result in lots of hiring alternating with lots of layoffs. So workers might unionize to get more steady employment. Also, workers get paid less in Louisiana than in other areas so might unionize for better wages. 14 and 14 schedule attracts lots of people from other states; can fly back home during time off. Oilfield workers never needed to unionize because benefits accrued by unionized refinery workers were

in the military. Schlumberger was a very technology-oriented business and invented many oil field tools. Jay worked his way up to an electronics technician and retired in 1997.

Summary:
Early Life: Born in Golden Meadow, went to high school there. Father owned a bar and mother owned a jewelry store. Remembers the oil field workers feeling that they were really tough because of the nature of their jobs. Also, oystermen and shripmers at the bar, a fight every Saturday night. Remembers hearing stories about locals and outsiders not getting along but by the time he was in high school that wasn't the case. Went to college for awhile but didn't like it much so he went into the service.

Air Force: Went into Air Force and was trained in Radar. Wanted to get trained in something that would be useful and that he could make some money. Also had the draft so he wanted to go in before he was called. Never saw any combat but was in during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Then went back to Lousiana. Mother had someone who worked for Schlumberger come into her shop, she asked about a job for her son and this man told her to send him down.

Schlumberger: Didn't know much about the company before applying, knew that they were involved with technology and electronics. Didn't know it then but later learned that they used the same technology that NASA used but in the opposite direction. Began in 1965.

First Day: Applied for electronics but didn't have a job yet, wanted him to work in the field for a while. His first day he was sent offshore. Everything was on the job training, you learned from someone with more experience. Now they have schools for everything, from how to get on a boat to how to do your job. 3 man crew, 2 operators and an engineer. Had to ride a boat out because no helicopters yet, only a couple of hours at that time. Later even the helicopter rides were several hours because they were drilling so far out in the gulf. Was paid for "drive time."

Payment: Paid for the number of tools you ran in hole as well as a base salary, and then drive time. Base salary wasn't very much nor was the drive time. Incentive to run as many tools as possible.

Schlumberger Duties: Put a string of tools together and put them down the hole. It was induction and open hole work. Tool's purpose was to measure the dome as well. Good company for research and development, interested in finding out what was down there. The number of tools you use is the luck of the draw. You didn't have too much control over how many tools you'd use. If tools don't work you run the risk of getting kicked off the rig, didn't happen very often.

Personalities: It was "weird" how big a part personalities played in the oil field. If personalities didn't mesh that could make big problems. The company men had the biggest egos.

Crew: 3-person crew for Schlumberger. Sometimes you could have over 100 people on the rig depending on what was going on in the hole. Sometimes there would be too many people and there wouldn't be any place to sleep.

Hurricanes: Called in before hurricane. Some still waiting to the last moment. Didn't have all the technology to tell you when to leave. Each rig was different. Individual judgment as to when crews

went in. Usually was for the company's benefit, not yours. Wanted to make as much money as possible.

Retirement: Worked 1997, worked 32 years for them. Twice as busy as he was when he was working for them. Made lists of things he had to do and wanted to do. Drives to Chicago to see his daughter and her family every year a couple of times.

Operator: Was an operator for 4 months. Began getting familiar with the tools and making sure they work well. Enjoyed working in the field and thought it was extremely beneficial.

Dangerous situations: Had never been in one before. Getting on the platform was scary because of "the basket". Also talks about the Widow Maker being very dangerous. Learning was by watching

Offshore: After the first 4 months only went offshore as a trouble-shooter. He would take a tool with him to solve a problem. Would have to arrange for his travel back (not pay for it) sometimes

Laying off: Used to retire or get laid off only because of boom and busts or if you did something really wrong. Now that things are changing they are going more by evaluations, which is good and bad. If a man gets several bad evaluations, he can still get laid off even though he had 22 years.

2.6. Nelson Constant

UA-0080; DA004, DA050p

City: Thibodaux, LA
Date: July 23, 2001 and July 18, 2002
Interviewer: Diane Austin
Format: Tapes

Ethnographic Preface:
I was referred to Nelson Constant by his granddaughter, Alana Owens, who was working as an intern for the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. She accompanied me to the first interview. Nelson's wife sat at the kitchen table through most of the interview, but she did not say much. A couple of times she made a comment or two, but she asked that she not be recorded. Nelson had a notebook of photos from his work as a surveyor, and I visited him a second time to do a photo interview.

Nelson was born in 1914 and raised in Kramer, Louisiana. His childhood was unique because his mother was a teacher and ensured that he finished high school, even though it meant he had to live with several different aunts. He entered the oilfield after working in his daddy's store for several years and getting to know a party chief who did bus

wife; started $.60 an hour, shipyards paying $1.25; people came out and tried to unionize, would have been bad because needed flexibility; sometimes worked 10 hour days; like a family; no major changes; lots of tricks played - short sheeting, taking hinges off ice box, pack suitcase with canned goods; 3 blacks on crew; lived on little quarter boat behind theirs; workers from Kenner, swamp people, and they knew how to handle it; a few of the Texas college graduates would come out but then quit and went home

Swamp buggies: slot wheel buggies; Model B chassis with wheels and motor; could not cross bayou; then to iron craft built by Houme Marine about 1952-1953, would get stuck, had to walk the back wheels; talked company into renting Cheramie buggy (has photo); then track buggy with pontoons; film at Exxon plant in Baton Rouge of Party 10 working in Plaquemines

Work experiences: worked as boat driver on Shell job and then got Humble job; did everything by hand at first; would give crew a sketch of where to lay charges and they would go do it; usually brought quarter boats in harbor dur

stealing, could leave pocketbook on the bed; would help each other out if one had a heavy load; guys from Houston would come to the quarter boats and work there, two or three of them were very nice; no communication in the beginning unless we were close to Thibodaux; no phones in the community back then, no electricity; electricity came after they started getting jobs with the oil companies when people could pay for it; started working at 16 or 17 because already broken in in the swamp

2.7. Walt Daniels

UA-0241; DA077

City: Morgan City, LA
Date: November 21, 2002
Interviewer: Diane Austin
Format: 2 tapes

Ethnographic Preface:
I was referred to Walt Daniels by Steve Shirley. Dr. Daniels has been practicing medicine in Morgan City since 1961 and is also an active member of the civic community there. He was born and raised in Gadon, Louisiana where his father, one of the original West Texas rig builders, worked for Pure Oil Company. Dr. Daniels decided to become a physician because he disliked his early experiences working on the farm and in the oilfield and because of the positive influence of the physician in his hometown. He completed medical school and was accepted into the practice of Dr. Brownell, Morgan City's mayor and one of its

physicals that we would put men in 14 by 14 foot rooms, 8 at a time, did them like an army precondition physical

Early practice: Fees were low; Dr. Brownell was independently wealthy, a generous man; in 1961 the first visit was $3 and all others afterward $2; made a lot of house calls, calls to little boats on the bayou; oil business was a good old boy network; people in the oil business responsible for sending individuals for physicals, for industrial accidents had access to your ear, got to come in for their appointments early; offshore business was booming; had heard that some doctors had to go offshore to deal with injured people

First trip offshore: Shortly after arrived Dr. Brownell said have to go deal with diver injured in diving accident; he had city business so sent me

father had to drop out of school in 5th grade to go to work; mother went to 7th grade, all that was available, would read to me a lot; also had great teachers

Working in Morgan City: Never dreamed of leaving; none of children stayed; very rewarding to be a physician in a small town, financially, socially, individually; civic clubs have always been very active in Morgan City; no Medicare or Medicaid when first came; physicians gave lots of pro bono care; group of black people formed an organization to guarantee payment for all, even those who could not pay; learned industrial medicine by doing it; most of the stuff what would see elsewhere, except more trauma; went out and visited a couple of companies once a week to do physicals; now Industrial Medicine has become a specialty, due to the litigation factor in our society it has increased tremendously; not about care but about the paper trail

Gadon: Pure Oil had six houses, storage and office buildings, car garage, mechanic shop; had rope swing inside water tower; the lease where drilling went on was about a mile away, 8-10 rigs there; camp still in existence; oil people were held in high esteem in the community; they made more money than farmhands; Gadon was a relatively poor community; during WWII would have scrap metal drives, get metal from the drilling rigs; all inhabitants of the camp were Texans or Oklahomans except for one Cajun family; Texans and Cajuns got along pretty well, but there was always a distance; they were Protestant, others were Catholic.

2.8. E.J. Ellzey

UA-0213; TM049

City: Venice, LA
Date: July 19, 2002
Interviewer: Tom McGuire
Format: 1 tape

Ethnographic Preface:
On Bud Latham's suggestion, I looked up Mr. E.J, by dropping into the Ellzey Marine Hardware Store in Venice. His son-in-law, Ray, who now owns the operation with his wife, said the 80-year old usually comes into the store in the morning, and that he might talk to me. So I came back the next morning - no Ray, no E.J. I called EJ, and set up an appointment for the next morning. As it turned out, EJ had been visiting his wife in Belle Chasse, where she's undergoing treatment for cancer.

EJ was born 1922 in Jackson, Mississippi, where his father was a lawyer/judge and farmer. The family moved to Plaquemines Parish in 1933, settling on the other side of the river a few miles above Pointe a la Hache. There his father started to grow rice - running a pipe over the levee into the river to draw irrigation water. EJ had 2 sisters and 2 brothers, one of whom apparently died young. The family soon bought up some land in Venice and established a grocery store and post office. They ran a mail boat down to Port Eads, delivering groceries along the way. The father also owned a hotel in Venice. One of EJ's early ventures was road building in Venice using barges and barges of shell. He has 6 kids, one of whom is on the 25th floor of Chevron - a "troubleshooter" with degrees in engineering and business administration.

Summary:
Early days in Venice: native mostly French-speaking trappers, could make $5000/winter from it; if they had oil jobs, they would quit during season; 1-room school in Venice, then up to Buras for high school; fruit business was big; was a regular bus running down to Venice; in 1933, land for sale and people from all over bought it up.

River pilots: river and bar pilots, make $300,000/year; all "family," a closed group; have to put up $40,000 cash to get into associations; just recently hired first black man and woman; pilots work 2 weeks on, 2 off; big houses for them at Pilot Town, cisterns for water; bar pilots had camp at South Pass/Burrwood; state pilots are cheaper than association pilots.

Oil activity: oil field started in 1935/36; Texaco built dock on river; Gulf and Tidewater had big fields on land; Tidewater Oil Company had camp with cookhouse; Mr. Fitzgerald had fuel dock; Cenac Towing brought fuel in; local companies were mostly welders; Tom Popich's Offshore Shipyard now does mostly minor repair work; lots of blacks work for contracting firms in oil; use air boats now instead of marsh buggies.

Judge Perez: Judge had a plan to build fence around Fort St. Philip, across the river from Ft. Jackson, in incarcerate blacks - a mosquito-infested swampy area - but never went through with it; parish government got mad at judge so stopped maintaining the park set up for him as memorial; now apparently someone is cleaning it up; Chelon Perez (son) has cancer now; Clyde Giordano, a past parish president who is running again, is a Perez kin; Judge would visit Venice (present parish

A.O. Rappelet: Senator at that time, had a vision of developing a port at this site to accommodate the fishing industry; oil and gas was starting to develop. Some of the first offshore wells were off of this area, also take the banana trade from New Orleans, create a more efficient route for moving bananas. It took a little longer than he had anticipated to get the infrastructure in, to create this port, the trade went to Gulfport [Mississippi].

Infrastructure growth: Port developed over time; through the '60's ju

Role of offshore oil and gas - in almost all cases had visibility offshore; everything goes better in seawater because of conductivity; welds look better, slag cleans off far easier, mechanical properties are better; already had learned most significant things onshore; always more offshore work than onshore work; offshore made up about 99 percent of work; however, had depth differential - offshore down to 325'; example - replaced a member on Chevron's "Heidi," filled up a hole and butt welded a plate on it, brought in a new member; 15 years later all the other joints had failed, those put in and reinforced with double plates were in perfect condition.

Workers: trained our own divers; one year put 32 CBI experienced welders through diving training;

Global: went to work for Bill Doré; had done some work for them; he talked about buying D&W because he wanted underwater welding capability; I left D&W, sold my share, went to Global for 6 months, stayed 15 years; in 1989, we qualified a welding procedureur

competition with one exception - Oceaneering has

Summary:
Occupational history: Born in Lafayette, IN; came to Amelia from Oregon in 1946; dad died, mom kept rental house; graduated from high school at Morgan City High; first career job was as a bookkeeper for Buick agency; owner bought a boat, got into offshore business, moved it to Amelia; took job with pipe and supply company in Morgan City; then worked for hardware store; then got into diving business with a friend who had moved into rental house in Amelia; ended about 1986 with the downturn, had a few jobs; ended up at Morgan City Rental till retirement; took part-time job at the church

Desk and Derrick: Helped found club in 1966, with 43 members; goal to educate women about the

Working for diving company: Learn as you go; when you get in at the beginning you work a little harder and it all falls into place; divers had to call time in from offshore; never knew when the phone rang if someone had had an accident; never a dull moment; would send out divers according to the job, depended on depth of the water and type of job; would go to the boards and look for who was qualified for the job; would call till found a guy, or send someone out looking for him; hung out in barrooms; divers would work for whoever they could because they did not get paid unless they were offshore

Supply stores: Did inventory control and secretarial j

consider myself real fortunate for the fact that I have always been able to hold a good job, got paid good money for it, had good people to work for and have been able to stay right here."

2.12. Jim Perron

UA-0123; TM020

City: Lafayette, LA
Date: September 28, 2001
Interviewer: Tom McGuire
Format: 1 tape

Ethnographic Preface:
Mr. Perron, part of the network of Chevron retirees, was referred to me by Bill DeCells. I called to set up an appointment, introducing myself as from the University of Arizona. He asked if I was calling to recruit him to come out to coach football. As it turned out, he wanted to be a football coach/high school teacher, but, after working summers out of Grand Isle while going through college, he discovered he couldn't take a cut in pay from oil work to pursue that career. We arranged to meet at the Hilton in Lafayette, then went to his house for the interview. In the car, we chatted football: he mused that USL always schedules a big-time opponent to start off, but the kids get so beaten up that the team is ruined for the rest of the season. He and his wife live in a very attractive house in a small gated complex along the banks of the Vermillion River. The complex was built in the mid-1980s by Chevron for upper-level managers; with the downturn, the houses were put up for sale, and Jim purchased one with funds from his retirement package (he took the "lump sum" deal). At the end of the interview, he pulled out several packages of photos, some of himself and co-workers, some of early transport vessels, several of the fire on "C Structure" off Venice in 1970 - the last fire they could actually fight before MMS came in with requirements to drill relief wells. Jim's primary job was as a "safety engineer," which included many additional duties, one of which was to keep an eye on potential union organizing. He and his wife are both from Ville Platte, in Evangeline Parish, where his father had a farm; Jim still drives up there most mornings to look after it.

Jim graduated from Southern Louisiana University (now University of Louisiana - Lafayette) in English / History and went to work dockside at Chevron's Grand Isle operation in 1949. He began working offshore as a pumper/gauger when Chevron took over Gulf's leases. He was transferred to Leeville as a production clerk and then in 1962, to New Orleans as a safety engineer. His job responsibilities expanded to include environmental issues, and he stayed in New Orleans until his retirement.

Summary:
Early career: graduated from "SLI," which became USL (now UL-L) n English/History; went to work "dockside" at Chevron's Grand Isle operation in 1949 as "casual" employee, $12/day; married his wife who started teaching school on G.I.; started as pumper gauger/relief pumper offshore when Chevron took over Gulf leases; transferred to Leeville as production clerk, then to New Orleans in 1960 as safety engineer.

Servicing drilling rigs/platforms: on LST's captain, mate, engineer were company people; big tugs would haul the motorless LSTs; then motors installed; then self-contained drilling rigs; since mid-1960s, most crew transfers were by helicopter - safer since, before then, "we were doing boat transfers when we shouldn't have;" Chevron had no weather forecaster, so would contract with Humble's man.

Oil company mergers/acquisitions: in the 1980s, Chevron was poised to acquire Getty but Texaco got it; CEO said we'll acquire next company - Gulf; Gulf had an extensive training program, which Chevron kept up after acquisition.

Chevron Retirement Group: most active of any company; 100 chapters; he was president of Lafayette group; impressed that Ken Deer, company CEO, would meet with

Ethnographic Preface:
I met Russell through my presentation to the Morgan City/Houma group of the Shell Retirees' Group. He is the president of the group and was the host of the meeting. Afterwards, I made arrangements to meet him in Houma for an interview. He provides descriptions of his work, the regulatory environment in which he worked, the kind of laborers Shell employed, and so on. Like many of his generation, he perceived a change in company/labor relations near the end of his career, and he describes this well near the end of the interview. I returned to Russell's house the next day for an additional interview based on the photographs he loaned to the project.

Russell was born in 1928 and raised in Houma, spent some of his summers as a young man working for Texaco, and eventually found employment with GSI, a geographical surveying company with an office in Houma. To get this work, he utilized his training in the military. GSI was steady work, but the pay didn't compare to working for one of the majors, and he finally found his way to Shell Oil Company, where he finished his career. Most of his time was spent in surveying and seismic work, with a focus on surveying. He eventually became responsible for Shell's surveying activity in much of the Eastern US.

Summary:
Early history: Russell was born near Houma and grew up here as well. He describes the various bayous that comprise Houma, and the periodic floods. He was born in 1928 and was a young boy during the Depression. He talks about the hard times of the Depression. His father had no

College: When he got back from the war, he went to Nicholls State, and was in the first class there. He took some classes in architectural drawing. It was a two-year college at the time, and he went with his cohort to LSU. He stayed there two semesters and then left. He worked for seismic companies during the summer - he was "picking records" - finding the faults on the seismic reports and sending them to the analysts. This summer work was for GSI.

Surveying: He came back from LSU as a surveyor. He stayed with GSI for a while, and he began to get tired of working in the field with the offshore crew. He came back and worked in the Houma office. Then he went to work for Shell. At the time, GSI was still mostly working inshore. They started working offshore in '45, about when he started working for them. Deeper waters were where the companies wanted them to go. They were working for California Company, Shell, Texaco - that's where they wanted them to go. They weren't equipped for deep water, but they could do the shallow areas. They were limited by the line of sight to the towers on shore.

Shell: In 1956 he went to work for Shell. GSI was not a good paying company. His father worked for them too, and retired with no pension, no security. Shell was altogether different. Shell came to his office to interview him and sign him up. And all the companies weren't the same: Shell was well ahead of the others with the savings plans a

Away from the Gulf: He talks about the Atlantic and other places Shell was working. They released the East Coast for exploration, and Shell did what they have to see if there was oil out there. They had to watch out for telephone cables going to Europe. They also had to do archeological surveys - they couldn't drill within 500 feet of any anomaly - sunken ships and so on. They found all kinds of stuff down there.

Regulations: We talk about the change in the regulatory structure and how it affected his work. He talks more about the marine archeologists that were required. He tells a story of a diver that went down there and got scared - it must have been his first dive. The feds made them draw circles around anomalies, the states made them go look at what was down there.

Dumping: Back in the old days, anything you didn't want went overboard. There was trash everywhere, and everybody dumped everything overboard. Shell emerged as a leader, though - they mandated that the boats that worked for Shell had to be clean when they were working out there.

Loyalty: We talk about company loyalty. Shell did a good job of recognizing people for service. And even the departments within Shell would do stuff like this. The savings plans were also part of this. And the matching savings plan from Shell was much better than the other companies. They would redistribute 1% of the company profits, too. The job changed in the end, though. You weren't treated the same. Everything came down to the bottom dollar. Companies were merging. It just wasn't the same.

Reflections: The oil industry has been a big plus for the people of South Louisiana, but everything that's going on now, they say, is the fault of the oil industry. Yet everybody here benefited from the oil industry, and now they're suing.

One of his sons went into fabrication, one son is a contractor, and the last is an A/C contractor. One of his daughters owns a computer company in Austin, and there's one here in town, and a third in New Orleans.

2.14. Mary Samaha

UA-0057; EB004, EB029

City: Houma, LA
Date: July 16, 2002 and January 22, 2002
Interviewer: Emily Bernier
Format: 1 CD no problems. 1 tape: difficult to hear when all participants talk at once.

Ethnographic Preface:
Mrs. Mary Samaha was born in 1930. She is active in many different organizations, clubs and groups. She approached Andrew Gardner at an oilfield workers meeting in New Orleans expressing interest in talking with someone about her experiences growing up in the oilfield with her step-father, Escoe "Joe" Benton. She lives in a newer part of Houma, LA. in a large modern house. Her husband, M.J., was present for most of the interview. He would add things that Mary wouldn't, such as reiterating time and again how important Mary was to Joe as well as how much work she

did while working in the company. M.J. also worked in the oilfield. He worked at Shell in the exploration department for 36 years. Mary is a master gardener and does a lot of community outreach work, mainly in the field of community education concerning environmental issues

In the second interview, I asked Mary about the growth of Houma and how local businesses associated with the oilfield contributed to the transformation of Houma from a small fishing town into a thriving oil town. I acquired the names of five businesses that began in the 1950's and are

Contractors: all of the workers would change who they worked for quite a bit. Was working for Penrod Drilling Co. when they went offshore. He was 50 years old at this time and the life was taking its toll on his body.

Starting a business: Began a tong business because he'd made lots of contacts during his years in the oil field and had worked himself up to a tool pusher. She worked for Jerry almost the entirety of the life of the business. Had offices all over Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. He had several planes and made quite a name for himself. All he knew was oil but he couldn't do the hard work anymore. Only had a 4th grade education but knew every aspect of the oil industry. One of his friends went into the tong business and asked for help.

Raising a family: Mary didn't want her kids to move around like that so she set up a stable life in Houma. She and M.J. had 8 kids. M.J. got tired of the life because he knew that Mary was raising the kids by herself.

Description of different companies: all separate, drilling, exploration, land crews, etc. After awhile the large companies began merging the different departments.

Old steam rigs: Remembers seeing the wooden structures from the old derricks. Mary talks about going out on the rigs to bring her stepfather lunch or dinner. The noise still rings in her head. Remembers all the boards they laid to walk around the drilling rig, was afraid to fall when she was little.

Accidents: Says there were no safety measures in the 40's. Jerry lost a thumb, but that was the only accident he ever had. No benefits or compensation. Her brother was hurt and laid up for over a year, this was about 30 years ago.

Oil field slump: They sold the business to Frank"s Casing business in 1992 because things had gotten hard and Jerry was really old at this point.

Life since the business: Jerry died in 1997. He was the oldest of 11 children and left home at age 13 to work. Got involved with the moonshiners and almost died. Went to Beaumont, TX. and began working for the oil industry when he was 16. His brother wrote a book, "Last of the Covered Wagons" by Phillip Benton.

Regulations/safety: There was a need but they went overboard. From one extreme to another with OSHA. It was impossible to follow every single little thing. Most ridiculous rule was wearing safety harnesses in the derrick that caused accidents because they were in the way. Hard to enforce rules when rules seemingly hampered jobs. Environmental regulations were horrendous. They had 18-wheelers and said it was impossible to keep every drop in. Biggest problem was getting rid of the oil. Constantly painting the machinery. Before regulations people were not that interested in environment. Mary, as office manager, would get the info but Jerry said it was crap. Insurance people just wanted to keep costs down. Thinks that many turned their heads because the most important thing was oil. Knows that the oil companies ravished the environment. Small companies

not interested in the environment because it was too expensive to keep up. At first, OSHA told you what you couldn't do but not how to go about putting regulations into action.

Has oil field been good for South Louisiana?: Yes, it provided industry and money for a group of people who didn't have anything else. LA should be getting money from oil companies to rebuild the coastlines. Says that politicians messed the environment up. Brought a lot of money into the state, which helped the growth of the state.

2.15. Joseph Schouest

UA-0177; DA041, DA045, DA047p

City: Covington, LA
Date: March 16, 2002
Interviewer: Diane Austin
Format: 2 tapes. Some noise in the early part due to conversation between Joe's wife and a friend.

Ethnographic Preface:
I met Joe Schouest at the divers' reunion on March 10, 2002. Several people told me I would have to meet and talk with Joe, and a couple told me the story of the diving accident in which he lost most of his right hand, before I actually got the chance to talk with him. He wore a blue leather glove on his right hand but did not say anything about his injury. He told me that he had saved over

around the clock on 8 hour bell runs; the chamber remained on the deck; divers working at 400' would be pressurized to 350' so they could make a 50' excursion and to allow for wave action; the bell would not be on the bottom; maintain at least a 25' height so the diver would not get crushed getting in ant out of the bell; when finished have 4-5 days decompression; bell comes back up to the A frame, attaches to flange and is bolted, pressure between the bell and chamber is equalized and divers exchange positions; had medical lock through which food and medicines would pass; had phones to talk to people in the Dog House (where instrument techs work) or off the ship; 6 divers and 1 tender in the sat unit

Personal history: born September 24, 1929 in New Orleans; worked for Taylor 1960-1987; got started in diving in 1957 through a friend who owned Graffinini Marine Diving Co.; doing most of the river work in the Mississippi River; with Taylor dove all over the world; got into diving from the Merchant Marine; was a seaman and looking for a job; had seen a program on Jacques Cousteau, thought it was interesting, saw Graffinini was in the business; they had gone to boarding school together at Holy Cross College, Joe called him up and the next day was hired on the spot; started tending and he broke Joe out; work got slow so moved to Taylor

Type of work: insurance jobs, sunken barges, underwater burning, salvage; did a lot of river work; for Taylor was construction dive

can make 2 40' dives then have to wait another 6 hours; takes a long time to get flange together; moved to North Sea, rented house, would come back if closed up for the year, but had it worked out so they worked year round over there; barges, tug boats, supply boats much bigger

Diving conditions in North Sea: danger in rough seas is at the surface when try to get on and up the ladder and in the current; come up and are so cold you can't feel the line, if it slips away the current sends you straight to the surface; use all your decompression time trying to get back on the ship into the chamber; barges carried 2 to 12 divers, worked all shif

of weeks you'd go in, "no wrinkles in your belly," give somebody else a chance to make some money

Do it again?: no problem (laughs); don't' think you're going to see it again; we traveled all over the world; I love diving, I'd dive for nothing, sometimes I've done it; like the challenge; couldn't do the North Sea again, "that's a young man's game"

Equipment: in the beginning owned own, had little compressor, could put 125 pounds in the reserve tank, getting too deep; could get out there and compressor not work or radio not start; Mark had been a Navy diver, started getting the big compressors; his motto was to keep 100 pounds of pressure over bottom pressure; at first would pay us for our equipment, then when we didn't need them anymore he bought our equipment; I bought my equipment when I worked for Graffinini; every diver would like to have his own; throw your equipment in the back of a truck, go search the bars for your tender; if couldn't find him, go to the bars in the French Quarter, call out, "Anybody want to tend me?"

Getting work: phone would ring, keep in touch regularly; I'd call every hour on the hour; had to stay in touch that way if you wanted the job; if get on as a barge diver, you had a job for the season, from March/April till November; as time went on, seniority increased, stayed on that barge and

Safety: used to do a lot of experimental diving for the Navy, checking out different equipment, showing them how it can work; Navy divers wouldn't do some things, so we'd do it; at Taylor Diving the Navy master divers would come out and see what we're doing, shake their heads, "No way we'd do this in the Navy"; that's what you had to do to get the job done; some innovations, like frying pan shaped O ring to use in flange groove and help keep divers from losing fingers; new wrenches; was concerned about safety, but in commercial diving if you are going to think about safety you are not going to get anything done; offshore, everything around you is dangerous; you've got to take your chances there; "I think we put more safety into the diving equipment and all than we put into the job"

Incidents: lost tip of finger when setting a dredge; crane operator aboard drunk with only a few hours of sleep; beginning of season, people are off, takes them awhile to get back into the swing; the rest of the people are new; first 3 months you are going to have close calls; sand bag dropped on me, sprained both ankles

Attitude toward work: whole time I was diving I loved it; why I was good at it; always followed the job, would jump overboard if they needed help; I'd tell my tenders, if you see you can help these people, do it; don't wait for them to ask you

Relationship with engineers: got along alright; came up with habitat for hyperbaric welding; then would weld the pipe instead of putting on a flange; we'd make suggestions to the engineers; they'd listen and come up with some ideas of their own to help the divers; inside burnoff, dangerous; standing inside; first time I did it I went head first, tied my hose to my feet, my body was in one section in case the pipe shifted; was very uncomfortable; engineers made donut shape with explosives; would cut the pipe like a saw; big safety device for the diver; got the same pay putting the donut in as burning off the pipe; happened late 1970's, early 1980's; some divers had specialties, became known across Gulf; we learned from accidents; example of diver who burned himself up in the chamber; don't look for safety or you are not going to get anything done

After retirement: never went back out; a lot of times I think I could go back and help but never did. spapecialties,

valuable sections here, including a description of the changing labor pool, the impact of environmental regulations upon business, the difficulties incurred by hiring Blacks, and the importance of safety in getting contracts.

Jerry's grandfather moved from Texas to the region (via northern Louisiana) as part of his employment from Texaco. His grandfather ended up being in charge of the entire district for Texaco and is well known by the Texaco employees I interviewed. Jerry's father and uncle broke away from Texaco and started a variety of different businesses, the most successful of which was Bayou Pipe Coating.

Summary:
Family and business: Grandfather started working for Texaco in 1908, family moved from Texas to northern Louisiana to southern Louisiana. Jerry talks about the report that's somewhere in his office about a blowout in Vermillion Bay. Back then they were working with shrimpboats and wooden barges … he remembers going down to look at the blowout as a boy. Back then when a well came in, they'd just let it blow. Photograph of RC Stewart, his dad's boss at Texaco. Jerry talks about the history of his dad, who left Texaco to form welding company, built a big business. Jerry had a college education, he had an offer for work from Chevron at $300 a month, Texaco offered $275. His dad said he should work for the family company, but Jerry and his wife didn't want to move all over the place, and if you don't move you don't get promoted. So they stayed. Photo of the New Iberia toolpushers that his grandfather brought down from northern Louisiana, East Texas, Arkansas. They ended up staying. They're all dead now.

Two districts: Houma and New Iberia. Describes districts. His uncle graduated from LSU in 1936, he was superintendent in Houma, and then he moved to the corporate office in New Orleans. He died at an early age. Up north, you didn't have productive wells like you had down here. Jerry moved here as a senior in high school. Went to college, went into the service in 46, then back to college after four years. Wanted to be a pilot, but ended up being a gunner because of a heart murmur.

Jerry's companies: When he got back from the service, oil was in full swing. It started pretty good in the 40's and 50's. There were lulls … his business history. Started bulding tanks, then got into welding. Started as a shack under the oak tree across the street. They kept expanding, but they kept the original office. They went into a new business at the port, putting concrete on pipe. They brought the old office down there. Bayou pipe was a later venture. Didn't start that until 72. Before that, they started building tanks, then they formed Bayou Welding, then they got bulldozers and laying pipelines. Had 150 people by the 50's. Then they got into swabbing. Description of swabbing. Also had steamers to melt the paraffin in flow lines. Then they started laying natural gas line on a contract with St. Martin Parish. They sold out that gas company because the regulations were too much. They also started a geophysical supply company … they just closed last week. Also went into the quarterboat business, they would rent quarterboats to geophysical crews in the 50s.

Bayou Pipe: They started a business building tank battery barges. Barges with tanks on them. Moved to the port in the 1972 when they went into the pipecoating business. Laying pipelines in the water, and they got up to 250 employees. Business grew fast. Then they started selling the other businesses.

Keys to entrepreneurship: Hard work. You have to have connections as well. You gotta know what you're doing. Last couple of years have been rough. Tried it all. Jerry served on a bank board for years. Finance is one of the most important aspects. It was hard as a Texan in the early days. They didn't care for oilfield trash back when his grandfather was here. People got over that when the oilmen started employing everybody. Oil business kept south Louisiana up. Trapping and sugarcane wouldn't have done it.

Environment: Oil industry gets a bad rap. They clean it up. Fishing has never been better, and we have thousands of wells. Talks about environment and pollution. Used to be when we'd swab them, they'd throw it overboard. The environment is fine. Only bad thing was when they dredged the canals, the waves and stuff, lost land. Environmental regulations became a problem in the 1980's. The state got rougher with regulations. It wasn't that they were polluting on purpose. OSHA man was so weighed down with gear, too ridiculous. People get hurt once in a while in the oilfield. Some of the rules are ridiculous.

Labor: The labor pool around here was pretty good, but in recent years, the quality declined. The Blacks they get today are not hard workers. It used to be better. You want somebody who can think. They have one guy in a safety office, and two guys who do nothing but patrol the yard. If your safety record isn't good, you won't get to bid on contracts. They shut the plant down to have safety meetings. Used to hire employees, but started using contractors recently. Talks about the ways that contractors save the company money. Started in the eighties. Lots of advantages to contract labor. And if there are good ones, they

Ethnographic Preface:
I was referred to Bill Wilson by Harry LeBoeuf. Bill and Harry are among the few supervisors and managers employed by Texaco's Morgan City office who have remained in the community. When I called Bill, he said that he had talked with Andrew and agreed to do an interview but never heard

superintendent but on probation; spent first day at Ivanhoe Landing as welder's helper; handed the welder his rods, chipped flak after he made the welds; was put on the "xtry board" for anyone who was shorthanded; no days off, told maybe someday he would become a permanent employee; a few days later was put on a drilling rig as a roughneck; spent two years floating from one crew to another - pile driving, rig building, roustabout, flunky; worked 6 and 6; told the drilling superintendent was in debt and wanted as much overtime as possible; kept going out of necessity; sports and an autocratic daddy taught never to give up; was raised in hard times; that became a part of our way of life, you did whatever it took to achieve the goals you set out to achieve; finally got a job as a permanent roughneck

Career with Texaco: Worked as roughneck, derrickman, hurt back in accident and was put in production; made a gauger/pumper; spent five years in West Cote Blanche bay in New Iberia District; offshore district began to kick off; ended up in Morgan City; along with Harry LeBoeuf got shot at production foreman; started setting up shore base for drilling operations, was asked to come in and set up shore base; came in; got used to being home with family; long hours and hard work, loading boats, handling logistics, was a new challenge and enjoyed being home with wife and children every night; stayed as yard foreman; warehoused pipe; in the old days Texaco had warehouses and a dock; offshore vessels came in to be loaded with supplies and materials; at the shore base handled procurements, loading, logistics of boat and helicopter transportation; contracted out for all the equipment; 8 or 9 years later consolidated and created the Materials/Logistics Department; went from yard foreman to assistant district supervisor of materials; left and went to Africa to set up materials handling off coast of Ghana, was assistant supervisor of materials over there; had to demonstrate could do the job even without college degree; went for three months to set up operations to drill three wells off coast of Ghana; got promoted to District Materials Supervisor after returning to Morgan City

Move to New Orleans: Former District Materials Supervisor had been transferred to New York, then to New Iberia as vice president over Eastern Region over Texaco; he invited Bill to Division Office in New Orleans; did not have the formal education, they wanted a master's degree in business; he got that waived and Bill moved into the executive level; quite an experience; started downsizing, consolidated New Iberia, Morgan City, Harvey, and Houma offices into the Morgan City offices; the company had a human side to

Texaco career: Ended up in a win-win situation in my career; worked hard every day I worked for Texaco, never ran the company down, never bought gas from any other company; then when flying in Texaco planes saw them stop and refuel with gas that was not Texaco; change occurred when the technology age started coming in; had to have more technical employees, no loyalty either way; can't plan on a career with Texaco any more; retired when at the top of career and did not like the direction the company was moving; management people were raised in a house of plenty, brought a lot of good things and a philosophy detrimental to the longevity of the company; they built up the company to sell it off; in the past Texaco had an austerity program, employees had to turn in used pencil to get a new one; the philosophy was if you take care of the pennies the dollars will take care of themselves

Overseeing purchasing: Lots of extravagance going on in service companies, but not for me; lived in a glass house; guy who hired me was a reorganizer, could take a poor organization and make it efficient; lots of waste in entertainment, some in Texaco; boss centralized procurement to take a lot of that out, took buying out of the field; knew he could trust me

Business operations: Texaco would put technical and nontechnical person side-by-side on the same job, until about 1990; started going more with the technology, probably a wrong thing to do; when in the field, at night, we'd go out and try to figure out how to get better lift on the wells, how to produce less water; engineer and operator worked together to come up with solution; would experiment to see if we could get them to produce more; engineer motivated by certain desire to want to achieve the impossible; I've always had the philosophy everything can be improved on; had excellent high school teachers; no one failed, teachers made you get it; also learned a lot in sports

Morgan City: Industry affected Morgan City; departed in

Religious services offshore: Served on committee of Southern Baptists, worked with representatives of state convention to try to set something up, but liability prevented it; ministry was thinking of renting a helicopter but could not resolve economic issues; decided to try to use video; ended up letting it be on volunteer basis; was involved in study in the mid- to late-1970s; local church tried to work with peoples' schedules to arrange meetings when people inshore; harder for city activities because people work for different companies on different schedules; guys who worked opposite schedules would team up to do volunteer work

Surviving difficult times: Almost missed the birth of third child, weather sometimes prevented flying; missed lots of things that normally would have done with family; did not have communication with family back home; wife was not expected to disturb her husband unless it was an extreme emergency - death or near death; wife had to take a stronger role in raising the family; survived by the Grace of God; "You just did what you had to do;" my situation complicated by severe business loss; didn't want to declare bankruptcy; people trusted me to pay it back, that was my upbringing; that was the mindset of everybody in the area I was raised, not just me

Reflections: Absolutely would do it again; the experience and the knowledge gained from those experiences could never have been learned anywhere else; no regrets; it was a learning experience the whole time.

The Department of t[illegible]or Mission

As the Nation's princip[illegible]nservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationa[illegible]owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land [illegible]nd water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the enviro[illegible]mental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for th[illegible]njoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and m[illegible]l resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all [illegible]ple by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The Departm[illegible]has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for pe[illegible]e in island territories under U.S. administration.

[illegible]he Minerals Management Service Mission

As a bureau of the Department of the Interior, the Minerals Management Service's (MMS)

[illegible] from the Federal OCS and onshore Federal and Indian

The MMS strives to fulfill its responsibilities through the general guiding [illegible] of: (1) being responsive to the public's concerns and interests by maintaining [illegible] parties and (2) carrying out its programs with [illegible] by lendi[illegible]