

Curtis Akey (CA): October 2, 2006, Curtis Akey interviews Dr. Jack Van Lopik.

CA: This is obviously an oral history of the Louisiana Sea Grant, so I was wondering, obviously the first question would be is how did the Louisiana Sea Grant get its start?

Jack Van Lopik (JVL): Well, there's a lot of people involved with it. Of course, the first thing was that the Sea Grant National Act was passed in, what was it, '66 or something like that? So that opened it up to universities trying to become a Sea Grant program. Before they had the act, there wasn't any such thing. The first go around, lots of people involved from the standpoint of trying to get matching funds for the program, so there are a lot of people at the local level that we tried to work with to get money from the state to put up for hard cash matching because that was one thing that would certainly impress the federal people; if you could come up with cash to match what the federal money was going to put into it. So, we did a lot of talking with the legislators, both in the House and in the Senate down here in Louisiana. This was done not only by myself, but by the people like the chancellor, Paul Murrow, and the people that were involved with LSU at the time.

The key people, as far as the senators or the legislators, are Sammy Nunez, who was a senator at that time. He was instrumental in carrying the ball in the legislature as far as trying to get money into matching funds and also drum up interest on the part of other legislators, especially coastal legislators, for interest in the Sea Grant program. And, I guess other people in the Legislature who were key, were, Sammy was the guy in the Senate, but then there was Conway LeBleu, and I don't know exactly how you spell LeBleu, but Conway is pretty straightforward! And, Ed Skogin, and it was those two guys were in the House side, and they really carried the ball as far as getting the coastal people in the House in support of the program. The main thing we really wanted to do was to get, you know, state money to put forward, and we were able to get a matching appropriation. I think it was \$250,000 if I remember correctly, but that might not be right. A lot of the other programs would rely on in-kind contributions or time of people. And that was fine, that was legal, but it was more impressive when you could have money put aside for it.

In addition to that, we wanted LSU to establish, you know, a department of marine science or oceanography or something like this. So, the money was really needed to get some additional people at LSU that were really interested in marine and coastal activities. So, there were just a lot of people involved with it, in addition to Paul Murrow, who was the chancellor at that time, and Bill MacIntyre, who I'd known when I was here at LSU back in graduate school and I worked with the coastal studies institute at that time. Bill MacIntyre, and I were with Texas Instruments in Dallas then, and Bill called and was talking about the Sea Grant program and what they were trying to do here and asked if I would like to come back to LSU and help set the thing up. So, I came back from Texas Instruments in, I guess it was '68 and was on a two year leave of absence just to get the program started and to get some things going, and of course its 30-something years later, and I didn't go back to Dallas and Texas Instruments! It was initially set up how I was only really planning to come over here to spend a couple of years.

One of the reasons they were interested in my being involved was that Sea Grant was trying to get involvement of not just people in the academic community, but to get people from academia tied into real world problems, coastal zone management problems and things of that nature. So, really, what was needed was somebody that had some experience with the universities, with government and with coastal and marine problems, and coastal zone management was something that was coming along at that time too. I had to use, as far as coastal zone management, legislation was being passed in Congress and so it all sort of fit together and they needed somebody. I had worked with the Corps of Engineers in Vicksburg, Miss. six or seven years after I left LSU, had graduated from LSU, and then I worked with Texas Instruments in Dallas for about seven more years before '68 anyhow. So, I had background in both government and university and in the private sector, so it sort of a natural thing for what they were looking for at that time. It was a pretty exciting concept, trying to get all these things working and doing something worthwhile. But, I never intended to be here as long as I ended up being here, that was for sure!

So, I guess that's how the whole thing got started. The people seeing it was....one of the things that was different about it too was that most of the programs the university was working with a principle investigator or project guy that was in a particular field of science, or particular department, or a particular area of expertise. Where as what they were talking about with Sea Grant was across all different kinds of disciplines and a lot of different people involved, not only from the science and engineering part of the university but also from the law center and sociology and economics, you know, everything across the board in trying to get these things sort of a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach to a lot of the problems in the coastal zone. So, it made a lot of sense to try and get somebody that had some background in all these different areas to look at it. Not that it was easy to get to it, but at least it made some sense if you knew how they were thinking about some of these things! So that was really why I was involved with the start of it.

It wasn't all that easy in many respects because if you look at the university reward structure, as far as somebody who is in a department, an academic department, what they're doing, all their promotions and everything are pretty much based on what they are doing in a particular field or area. They did all of their promotions based on publications, and publications for the most part in a particular journal or a particular focus. And so, when they start all this stuff with multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and all these things, at that time, there wasn't that much available as far as either where they could publish things or how they could get rewarded if they got involved in something like this. So, it was in many respects, not really advantageous for a young assistant professor coming into the university to get involved with something like Sea Grant because that wasn't the way the reward structure was. So, the thing they really had to do in many instances was go to the people who were full professors, or established so they didn't have to worry about getting promoted or getting tenure or something like this. And then, when you go to them, why should they do this? Unless, you can promise them a lot of money to do this, to do what they wanted to do or do research. So, you know, it's a difficult thing to

get started, but that's how the thing really developed and why it took a lot of different people at a lot of different levels in the university and in the state and in state government to get something like Sea Grant going and getting together.

CA: That's a pretty concise history right there, I like that! Well, you said the National Act was passed in '66, and this came into effect in '68?

JVL: Yeah, I think as far as LSU's involvement was '68. You had to write a proposal and do some things, but I think the first report was, I've forgotten, either it was '66 or '68, but I'm pretty sure, well I didn't come until '68. The way it was first established was, I think there were four...I think there were three different levels of participation in a program. You could be in Sea Grant College, and in the initial legislation, or in the initial funding of the thing; there were four universities that were Sea Grant Colleges right from the start. They were in the legislation and it was set up that way. And then, there was a thing called, I think it was, Coherent Projects, or Coherent Program and individual projects, so there were different levels you could participate in the initial Sea Grant Program.

I think that the four original programs were at Texas A&M, Rhode Island, Maryland and Washington. I'm pretty sure that's right. They were Sea Grant colleges right from the start. They were set up as sort of the models of what the Sea Grant thing was going to be. They weren't at that time the models, but at least they were in a position where they could best do this kind of thing because they had a lot of people involved with marine, coastal, mainly, at that time, it was mainly deep water oceanography and a lot of things like that, so there were a lot of people who were really that much concerned about coastal and coastal problems. But, at least these people had some people on their faculties and in different departments that were focused on coastal type things. Of course, that's what most interested people in Louisiana. They were not all that interested in deep water oceanography. They were interested in the coastal thing, so that's what we tried to focus on down here.

CA: OK. Well, how important was it for Louisiana to get their start in the program? Or, how important was it for Louisiana and how important was it for the Sea Grant Program in general, the National Program, for them to get a branch down here?

JVL: Well, I think it was important from the standpoint that Louisiana had a lot of wetlands and if they were going to do something in coastal zone management or things that were beginning to get more and more attention, versus the deep water oceanography type stuff, it was very important that Louisiana, seeing that it had more wetlands that just about everybody else except Alaska. But, to have a program down here that dealt with the coastal zone and coastal wetlands, I don't know if the national office thought it was all that important. But, also at that time, it depends on who was in Congress and the interest of the various senators and people that were involved in pushing the legislation. And, at that time we had, who was it, oh I forgot who were all of senators and all of the people who were up in Congress, but we had some influential people up there in the Congress at

the time, so they were very interested in making sure that Louisiana was tied in the program.

CA: How many...Was Louisiana the first in the Gulf South? Did Mississippi, Alabama and Florida have them yet, or did they follow?

JVL: I'm not sure what the sequence was with that. Well, A&M was the only one in the Gulf that was in the original four. A&M had a big oceanographic program to begin with, and so that was the biggest one in the Gulf that was involved with the Sea Grant program at that time. I don't think Florida or Mississippi...I've forgotten when they came into the program, but it was certainly way after Texas A&M and I think Louisiana was probably, well in the Gulf, probably the third one. I don't know if Florida came in as a Sea Grant college. I mean, you had to come in at this Coherent Project or Coherent Program level and then go through, you know, that kind of working up the ladder and I've forgotten where the sequence came. All I remember is that A&M was the first one in the Gulf and I don't know where Florida was. Mississippi and Alabama were certainly after Louisiana coming into the program. I don't remember when Florida came in.

CA: In your view, alone, personally, what do you feel is the purpose of the Louisiana Sea Grant?

JVL: I think the real important thing was to try and get the capabilities of the university, and not just LSU because you were supposed to look at all of the universities in the states, and then try and get those capabilities available and academia applied to the marine and coastal problems that Louisiana, or that particular state, had. It was more a matter of identifying the capabilities in the universities. And then, the needs in the coastal marine communities and then working to either bring new people in, or to get the people that were there involved in it because in many cases, as I mentioned before, the people, professors, had their own sources of funding usually and different agencies were funding them, and you had to convince them why they should get involved with Sea Grant if they had their own money sources, and they were doing what they wanted to do, why would they come in with something like this? So, it was a matter of trying to convince me that it was very important to the state, otherwise indicating how this multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary thing would be a benefit to them or a benefit to somebody and convincing someone to be a part of the program.

CA: Have you guys ever worked with those agencies that the professors may have used in the past?

JVL: Oh yeah, a lot of the people that you got support, of course it wasn't so much, this program came through NOAA. That was a little bit different because there wasn't all that much support previously through NOAA for this kind of...for universities. Sea Grant was a major thing as far as NOAA was concerned because they didn't support that much in a way of university research. A lot of the stuff, of course, came from the National Science Foundation, and other agencies previous to Sea Grant. So, Sea Grant was important, not only from the standpoint of Louisiana because of the kind of research that Sea Grant

would support, but it was also sort of important to NOAA because it provided a window to the universities that NOAA did not have before. And I say a window, I mean a funding source if you get right down to it. At least they had money they could couple the activities, support this in theory. It's supposed to work so the money in Sea Grant could be spent through supplement and complement research that NOAA was conducting in their laboratories and government labs and agencies and so forth and it all fits together. Of course, it never works that way, but at least in theory, it made a lot of sense in trying to work these things together.

In some instances, it has worked. I think with the National Fisheries Service and a lot of the things related to seafood and so forth, there has been a lot of close cooperation and coupling with the federal agencies and state agencies and universities, and with coastal zone management coming along too. It worked well where you could get involved with federal, state, university and to some extent, the private sector. One of the problems, well not really a problem, but one of the things we decided on fairly early, and it wasn't just we that decided, when you talk about Louisiana back in the '60s and '50s, the only thing most people could think about was oil and gas. We could have gone to the oil companies and tried to work with them to try to set up something that would be a program, and could have done a lot of things. We could have gotten the private sector oil companies support to do it, but there was no real reason to do that. I mean, you can do that anyhow. This was something different. The oil companies were not necessarily interested in supporting the kind of coastal zone management type activities. They were more interested in engineering aspects of offshore platforms, and more engineering type things rather than the science and economics and other kinds of things that could be funded and conducted with Sea Grant's support.

CA: Well, you pretty much answered this already. You named a lot of the people who were influential in getting the Sea Grant started, such as the chancellor of the school, and Sammy Nunez and Conway LeBleu. Is there anybody else you feel...

JVL: Well, Bill MacIntyre, he was the key guy as far as the program, I mean on campus, is concerned. And Ed Skogin and Conway LeBleu in the House in addition to Nunez. Well, and also, you should probably mention that we had to also talk, we talked with Johnny Cox. At that time, he was the Ag chancellor, head of the Agriculture Center at LSU. And, Paul Hebert, who was the chancellor for the Law School because with Sea Grant, with all of these people involved with law and economics and extension and we were going to have marine agents and that involved, of course, the extension services. So, you had to get, not only the Baton Rouge chancellor involved, but these other chancellors, the Law chancellor and the AgCenter chancellor. So they were involved too. It was a matter of getting all of these people to at least agree that it was a good idea. Then, it was a matter of convincing them they shouldn't get all of the money! There wasn't that much money to go around to all of these things. There had to be some understanding that this was good, but that there was only so much money available and there's a way to go about writing proposals and how you get it. The Sea Grant thing, another thing that was a little bit difficult to get individual researchers interested in it was that it was different than the National Science Foundation guidelines and the way things

had to be proposed. The Sea Grant, and coming through NOAA which is a different federal agency, they had rules, regulations and guidelines that were different from what a normal, well I shouldn't say normal, but a university researcher was used to dealing with. So there were different approaches to getting the money, and different management constraints too that were not what an individual researcher was interested in. So in addition to this idea that you're not just a scientist working on something specifically that you want to do, you've got to cooperate not only with other scientists within the university, but you also have to really cooperate with the other scientists in federal agencies and federal laboratories and all this kind of stuff. In many cases a lot of university researchers were just turned off on all this kind of wonderful cooperation and procedures you had to go through to get money.

CA: And of course, you played a huge role in that as well. You can't shortchange yourself!

JVL: I had to convince them to do it, yeah!

CA: That's a pretty important part, I'd have to say. Now, as we just said, your role in getting it started, you took your two year leave of absence from Texas Instruments and you weren't even planning on staying here, but you have and you've been here this whole time. How has your role in Sea Grant changed, or how has it evolved over time?

JVL: Well, you know initially, as I pointed out, it was just getting people wanting to participate in something called Sea Grant and convincing. One of the ways that you really had to do it was to go the guys who had some stature in the university community and get them involved, so it was a real plus when you could get people, like MacIntyre, and other people, like Jim Coleman, and people who were getting money from other agencies and had a good scientific reputation in the academic world. To get them as project investigators or people that were working on Sea Grant projects, if you get those involved, then the younger researchers and assistant professors and people would come along wouldn't be hesitant, they wouldn't be as hesitant to get involved in something like this. They would look at these other guys who were getting money from a lot of different other sources and if they were doing it well then, it kind of sprinkled holy water on it as far as their activities were concerned.

CA: But, you're obviously not, I mean, I suppose to a certain extent, you're probably still getting some people involved in the program. Has that stayed the same over time?

JVL: Yeah, it pretty much has stayed the same. But, it's evolved. You're not, initially there was a lot of time and effort spent in getting all the chancellors and getting all the top-notch researchers and people to look at Sea Grant and look at it was a, well, number one, many of the established researchers or professors at that time looked at this as an applied research program. Which it really is. You are trying to solve real world problems and you're trying to do things that are important at the local level. It's not something that's just looked at as something that's great within a particular discipline or scientific area, so there was a lot of hesitancy, I think, on the part of many assistant and

associate professors to get involved with something like this unless you had some top level, full professors doing something in the Sea Grant that the lower echelons wouldn't get involved. And, you had to get the assistant professors in there, you had to get them to come along. So it was a matter of making sure that Sea Grant was recognized, although it was an applied research program, you had to make certain whatever was done was viewed as good science and good academic research. That was one of the things that had to be balanced.

CA: Well, my next question would be....well....you're answering a lot of these questions in your previous answers, which is excellent, but if there is anything else you would like to add to the difference between the Louisiana Sea Grant now and then, like the target audience for your research message and what kind of research was conducted then as compared to now, or is it the same?

**JVL:** Well, it has shifted to some extent. There was a lot, we spent a lot of time trying to do stuff, like for the oyster industry for the state because it an important part of Louisiana. We have not been successful, I don't think, in many instances because there just isn't a good coupling between what the oyster industry needs and what is available at the university. There was, for awhile, it changes depending on the composition in various departments within the university. There was one time a lot of people in the food science department, for example, that really were focused on doing something with oysters. And then, over time, they might change, or the composition of their faculty changes and then the industry kind of loses interest in what's going on there or they look at what you're doing, and they say 'you don't have anyone addressing our problems.' So, there is constantly an influx, in that there are changes within the industry itself depending on what research needs and requires. There are also the changes within the university faculty and capabilities and how to address these things, and you are constantly trying to come up with some way to balance this out and keep not only the professors happy, but also the constituents happy. Sometimes, there just isn't the right people available. But, that's one thing that Sea Grant can do, seeing that it is a network of these 30 universities across the states, if you've got problems, and you don't have the capabilities, you can work deals with other universities and get people from Texas or other places involved or have problems that relate to what the needs are in Louisiana, and vice versa. If they have some problems and they don't have the capabilities for them, there might be somebody at LSU who is an expert or could better address that problem. So that's one plus about the Sea Grant network. You can work these deals that come up with capabilities to address problems a single university or single state couldn't do.

CA: Does that happen quite often?

JVL: It varies, it comes and goes. It depends a lot on where the money is. If there is a problem that comes up that demands a real multidisciplinary thing and there's a source of funds, then it's easily brought about. It might take a little time to do it. But, there has to be something they can go after as far as funding is concerned.

CA: It's always about money, huh? That's unfortunate, but that's how the world works, I guess. Well, other than monetary issues, because that seems to be a major issue every once in a while, what are some other obstacles or things that Sea Grant has had to overcome in order to accomplish their goals, or finish their research or what not?

JVL: Well, I guess there aren't too many. It's just a matter of maintaining for a length of time that is necessary to reach conclusions or to do something, to put together the people, the laboratory facilities, the coupling the state and federal agencies. If you put something together to address a problem, and the problem is either being solved, or another more important problem comes along that you're supposed to address, it's hard to reconfigure what you've got set up, and then address it. So, there is a constant trying to balance these things so that you are meeting all of the constituents you need. And by constituency, that varies from state to state because, certainly, there's not oyster industries in every state and whereas when dealing with oysters, for example, in the Gulf, at least they have associations where the private sector groups can pretty much look at what you're doing and say what you are doing is worthwhile or not worthwhile or we don't want that. But, in some instances, like when coastal zone management was just being formed, you didn't really have anybody...you didn't have a body, like an organization you could go to and say 'ok, we would like to do this, is this important to you?' When we started out, and there wasn't any coastal zone management, they were just organizing this thing, it was hard to identify what was good, and if you start doing something, and then as the coastal zone management, or the laws were passed to set up coastal zone management activities, you got the state and federal agencies involved, then of course you had the groups you could work with. But, back in some of the initial stages when Sea Grant was involved, you were doing things that were really, some people might not have thought was all that important. But, the individual guy doing the research and the university of course thought it was the most important thing in the world he was doing.

CA: So, it's almost a subject of interest sometimes.

JVL: Yeah, and that's another thing. One of the problems the university has, or the industry, or private sector has with universities, is that it takes them so long to respond to things. If a business has a problem, they want it solved right away. They don't want somebody to say, 'ok, we'll write a proposal, do a three year study of it, and then provide you with the information.' They've got some problems they want solved right away. At least, that's part of what the Sea Grant thing, with the Advisory Service Agents and so forth, is part of their job too. It couples, and in theory, a lot of what research is done should be based on what the extension agents that you have set up through the marine extension agency, the kinds of things that they identify as research needs. And that sometimes works, and that sometimes doesn't. But, at least in theory it should go that way.

CA: Is that sometimes a problem? Considering, I mean, do they decide what kind of research they are going to do? Or is it kind of a group (decision)?

JVL: In the structure within the extension service, they have extension, or field agents, and then they have people back on the campus who are research people that are tied to some kind of, or tied to academic departments. So, they have research capabilities, I mean they have extension capabilities that the agents fulfill, and they have research posts, supposedly, back on the campus. And that has sort of evolved over the years too because initially, I don't think...the research people were not tied in to the academic departments on the campus, for example the agricultural center or food science or something. They were over in the extension program, but they weren't a part of the academic department, and that of course is bad! They really have to get together. So, they in the Ag Center, and eventually this was worked on, and I think it is still set up this way. Most of the specialists who were Ph. D. types with a background in a particular field in a scientific area or engineering area, they are also in an academic department. So, they are all pretty much tied together and they talk among one another, and it worked out a whole lot better than it did initially when it wasn't that arrangement at all when specialists were over in the extension program and they didn't have any ties to academic departments. That was a real problem for a long time.

CA: Yeah, that doesn't sound like would flow too well. Well, other than Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita and the stuff that the Sea Grant has done and is continuing to do, what other impacts has the Louisiana Sea Grant have on the Gulf Coast life?

JVL: Well, one of the things that is sort of strange, I was interested for a long time in getting, well not just the hard science type stuff to support it, but economics and sociology and things of this nature. We tried, well, like tourism development. We started talking with tourism development. There are all kinds of things in economics and sociology, and whenever you cut across everything. It's difficult to work with some of these agencies, or meet some of the state needs because you're just not structured to do that. It's hard to put together teams to do some things. So, but some of the stuff that was done was Mike Liffmann, he got involved with tourism development early on and they organized, well I forgot what it was called, but anyways it was a tourism organization within the state. It would hold annual meetings, and they would get all of the people that were involved in tourism and in state agencies and federal agencies and local tourism groups and so forth and they'd have meetings and the university people and the Sea Grant agents and the researchers who were interested in this kind of thing would at least talk and try to identify things so they could address needs to the tourism industry. And that's just one example. I'm sure you could give other examples in different areas beside tourism where that kind of thing goes on. But, tourism is a pretty good thing, and there, we have done things like, we supported the writing of a book, I've forgotten the name of...Frank...Frank DeCarl wrote a book called Soldiers or Southern Soldiers...I don't know, Soldiers, anyway, something Soldiers. But, we got the support for this book because we convinced the Sea Grant National people that this was really essential because of what it was going to do for tourism development. What DeCarl wanted to do was he wanted to look at historical literary figures in the past who had visited Louisiana and written about Louisiana back in the 1700s and 1800s and all this kind of stuff to see the places that they had visited back when they visited the state and wrote about them. He would go and look at things now and see how, and relate to this kind of thing. We

published, or we supported the publication of a book called whatever it was called, Soliders or something like that. That's kind of a different kind of a thing, it's something that no other, I don't think any, that just wouldn't have happened if wasn't for the interest that Sea Grant expressed in tourism in doing it because it just, there was nobody that would support that kind of stuff.

CA: Yeah, well that's amazing. When I think of the Sea Grant, I think only of the scientific aspect of it, you know, and that absolutely is just about the polar opposite of the science aspect, which is great, though, because it is very important. That's pretty interesting, I like that!

JVL: Oh, and we also published, like, a book...oh, Buddy Boldin, anyway, it looked at, again, from a tourism standpoint. It was, how New Orleans jazz, Dixieland music and so forth was developed in the state and the importance of that as far as the tourism is concerned. It's interesting because there is more interest in Europe, well there's a publication, a quarterly thing called New Orleans Music, and guess where's it's published. In London! There's more interest in traditional New Orleans jazz in Europe than there is in the United States. All the people in Germany and Sweden and all over there, they go nuts to come over to New Orleans and listen to all these jazz things and so forth, and there just isn't that interest in it in the States anymore. So, but that's where we've done some sort of strange things as far as supporting things that relate to the music and from the standpoint though really of tourism and tourism development. The sales of these things are really greater in Europe than any place in the United States.

CA: That's odd. Is there any sort of tourism relief effort that is going into effect now after the Hurricanes? I know a lot of the businesses are down. Is there any kind of effort to bring people back on you guys' part?

JVL: Well, we're trying to support some things that, you know, what is it...oh what's his name...Connick...

CA: Harry Connick.

JVL: Yeah, Harry Connick and Winston Marsalis, and they are trying to come up with this musician's village. They're trying to bring musicians back to New Orleans, and they're trying to get Habitat for Humanity to have a place for them to stay. They are trying to develop, I don't know, if we've given them any money as far as the program is concerned, but I've personally been trying to support that kind of thing to bring them back. Because, what is going to happen, or what has happened with all these traditional New Orleans music people are, you know, gone. They're all over now. They're up in Canada and Vancouver and in Europe and in all kinds of places. Unless there's something to get them back to New Orleans, a lot of them would like to come back, but they have to eat and they have to do something, and there's got to be something that develops. If it wasn't for the tourists from Europe coming in to listen to the music, the locals wouldn't listen to it, I don't think. So, it's sort of a complicated....how do you help them do something down there? How do you bring them back? So, we are, you know,

trying to work with some people. Butch Thompson, I don't know if you know who Butch Thompson is, but he's a piano player. He plays on Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion thing, and he's a piano player. Butch is interested in this kind of thing, in trying to keep some of these people, come back to New Orleans and do things. And there are several other people that are interested in trying to make sure that all of the musicians don't go away. Or at least, some of them have stayed back in New Orleans.

CA: Well, it's a huge part of the state's culture. I find this terribly interesting. I mean, I've only been here for a month or not even maybe, but I never knew that, you know. I never knew there was some sort of push to keep, you know, there is so much probably focused on the scientific aspect of this place, but you also have to think that most of the people are from this state, and you know, have a bond with the culture just as well as they do with the scientific aspect. Are you from here?

JVL: No, I'm from Michigan! But, it's interesting. The reason that I came to Louisiana was, well, I was interested in traditional jazz and really I came down to LSU to be near New Orleans. It's fairly strange now because the whole reason I came down here is just sort of gone. Of course, it's been here for the thirty something years, so that's fine, but still. The whole culture of everything of the music and so forth that was there, it's going to be really interesting to see what comes back and what stays and if it just goes away. Of course, a lot of the people in New Orleans are concerned about the same thing. What are they going to do? I don't know. It's a work in progress.

CA: I'm from New Orleans, and it kills me to hear that this isn't coming back, or this is coming back to a smaller sense than it was when it was here before the storm. It's tough. It's tough hearing about the loss the city has gone through. But, that's great to hear that you guys support that kind of stuff. That's terribly interesting. What kind of internal changes has the program gone through over the years?

JVL: Well, I guess, you mean from the standpoint of the focus of...

CA: Of research, or the overall purpose.

JVL: JVL: Well, I guess the thing, it's still, the real problem is it's still related to the wetlands or the coastal wetlands and what are our problems in the coastal areas and wetlands and of course, the change over time, and of course it's a lot different now with what they're addressing after Rita and Katrina as far as problems down there are concerned. But, the whole thing is still focused pretty much on coastal zone management, and I don't think that's changed at all.

What's going on within coastal zone management has changed. It's different than it was before you had fifteen feet of water covering everything. The situation right now is that there is a different set of problems that has to be addressed, but it still gets back to what has to be done to either maintain or to best utilize coastal Louisiana and how do you manage that. So that, and the technical or scientific or engineering aspects of that changed as everything else has changed. Before Rita and Katrina, you had one set of

tools, or something that you would really try to do from a scientific standpoint or an engineering standpoint. Now it's a completely different set of things. It's a matter of adjusting to this. I don't know if it's ever going to get put together, and you have the same problem at the federal, state and local levels that we were talking about. How does that fit together to address the problems? They haven't figured it out, so I don't know how we're going to figure it out if they can't figure it out so we can figure out how to address what they say are problems. You're chasing your tail on some of this stuff. You can make suggestions from a standpoint of strictly scientific or technical or engineering things that would be important. But, you don't really have any feel for how any of that stuff is going to be used from a governmental standpoint or a management standpoint because you don't know what that structure is. You don't know when FEMA and the state and these people are going to get together and the only thing that seems to come about right now is that individuals or individual communities or groups just do something. That's the way to get something done. But, how all of this fits together and what it's going to mean as far as a bigger picture is still unknown.

CA: What about the entire Sea Grant Program? Has that pretty much stayed the same?

JVL: Yeah, well, the National Program, the way the whole thing it is set up, has pretty much stayed the same. I don't think there would be any problems there. The one thing about, well, Sea Grant...it's a difficult thing as far as Sea Grant is concerned, and has been difficult for Sea Grant in many instances, is to keep support for the program. In many times in the past, either the President...I shouldn't say many times, but sometimes when the budget thing goes through, Sea Grant has been scheduled for elimination about two or three times, which is not bad if you look at it over thirty something years because most of them have thought about eliminating just about everything if you look back over thirty years! But, it's gotten a lot of Congressional support, but that has been saved several times because of particular individuals in the Congress who had been strongly supportive of it. But, some of these people have now died, or are no longer in office, and it's difficult to really see that there are some real heroes and real people in Congress or the Senate or the House that really stand up for the program if somebody said they wanted to eliminate it. So, it's hard to identify some of these guys in the past. Well, you know John Breaux was always very supportive of the program and we've had close contact with John on a lot of different things and Billy Tozan, and what is his name, Bennett Johnson, and so a lot of the people we work with have supported. And it works the same in other states. A lot of the people in Maryland and Virginia and Rhode Island, a lot of the guys that were really, some of the early developers or supporters of the Sea Grant program have either retired or they're dead or there's a whole new group coming along, so you're not quite sure what the support level is. If somebody, some place would make the decision to eliminate it, what would happen? It's hard to figure out right now.

CA: It's almost scary to know that the possibility is there.

JVL: But at least, the one thing that is different is now, Sea Grant before, well they have these things in legislation....well for a long time NOAA did not have what they call the Organic Act, which is something that really established in legislation. NOAA now has an

Organic Act and Sea Grant is part of this thing, so it's a little bit more difficult than it would have been ten years ago to eliminate something because it takes a lot of the people on both the Senate side and the House side to agree, and that doesn't happen.

CA: Is that what the Organic Act is about?

JVL: Well, it sets it up. There's a piece of legislation, there's an act that sets up the program, and NOAA has been set up under this authorization act, and so everything had been spelled out by the Congress. Initially, a lot of the way, or early on, Sea Grant had been established within NOAA. When you get something established within NOAA when NOAA didn't even have an Organic Act, it really is kind of sitting out there, you never know what's going to happen. It's a lot better situation as far as the long range in concerned. Now, of course what the folding level is going to be, you never know from one year to the next.

CA: And that's always been the case?

JVL: Yeah.

CA: OK. What do you feel is the most important aspect of the Sea Grant? Maybe, over time and currently.

JVL: Well, I guess the main thing is to effectively couple the capabilities available within the universities in a state with the problems with coastal areas, marine and coastal areas. I think there are a lot of capable people within universities that can do the state some good. It's a matter of getting them to address these problems and work on them. And, of course, in many cases, you end up with people with different views, of different parts of different universities with different people saying different things, which doesn't help very much. But, at least, that's the way science works. You're not going to find everybody agreeing on everything. It's a matter that you've got people thinking about things that are important to the coastal zones, to the coastal marine resources of Louisiana. If you don't have everybody thinking about it, you know, who knows what would happen to it. At least if you've got somebody, three or four people arguing about it, that's good.

CA: This is true! Other than the fact that it's on the Gulf Coast and we are dealing with, like you said the culture of the state, what is different about the Louisiana Sea Grant than other programs? Other, as in local programs?

JVL: Well, one thing that...it's not unique. But Sea Grant, when we got the special state appropriation in hard cash matching funds through the legislature to support it, that was a real plus for getting recognition from the federal level. There aren't too many programs, I don't know where it stands now, but back when that happened, I think we were the first program that really got a hard cash, state matching fund commitment; I think it was \$250,000, for the program. That really is something that isn't available to a lot of the different programs.

CA: And that was at the beginning? During the inception of the program?

JVL: Yeah. And it's held. It's always been supported.

CA: Has there been any programs that have been set up and then been removed around the country?

JVL: They've never been set up that way where there's a line item of appropriation at the state level that can provide, that I know of. It's usually handled, you usually end up being in other programs. It's handled like...the university gets money, or they get X number of dollars and it's up to the university or the Board of Regents or something at that level, a decision might be made at some of these other states, if Sea Grant were to continue to get money. If they get cut back at that higher level, Board of Regents level or something like that, you don't know what's going to happen. When it's set up so that the budget that the legislature passes, or a line item that says Sea Grant, or I don't know if it's still that way or not, but that's the way it was for awhile. It's a lot better situation to be in than other states. I think that's still fairly a unique program, although there might be others.

CA: Well, that's good to know. Some job security! Well the last question I have here is during the 38 year history of the Sea Grant, what is the single most important goal or piece of research that the program has accomplished, in your opinion?

JVL: I don't know about a single piece of research. I mean, there's nothing, I mean you could look at some of the stuff that's been supported and there have been patents awarded in food science and there are other things like that that relate to it. And there's stuff that has been done with kyten, a red dye stuff that you get out of crawfish shells or something like that. You can come up with kyten out of this. Kyten can be used for a lot of different purposes, and so there's some patents related to that that I think are fairly important. I think, in addition, there were some...we had great hopes for awhile for soft shell crawfish! That hasn't worked out as well as we thought, but we got a bunch of patents that relate to soft shell crawfish, that, for awhile we thought we would need. That just didn't sell too well, but there are several patents. Some of the work that was done was related to hurricane things.

Another thing that doesn't come out in any of this is the thing that we have set up with Sea Grant money that relates to these endowed professorships or endowed chairs, rather, which is kind of unique as far as Sea Grant in Louisiana. I don't know of any other program. It's really a part of this line item of appropriation, but there's money set up that comes to the University for an Endowed Chair. We got somebody from Tidewater when John LaBorde retired as chairman of the board of Tidewater. I don't know how long ago that was, but there is an endowed chair set up where there is \$600,000 a year that goes into this thing. And this is not just for LSU. The legislature or the Board of Regents has these things set up so that they can get endowed chairs. If the state can come up with \$600,000, I might have these figures backwards, but either the state has to come up with \$600,000 and then the university has to come up with support or some other place for

another \$400,000 so you have one million dollars. So you have the income from that million dollars invested, and it used to be enough to hire or fund an endowed chair, to bring a professor in as a visiting professor and pay his salary for a year. And now, you almost have to have two million dollars to get enough money from the interest to support something like this. But there is a thing with an endowed chair, and we've got one or two of these set up like that. And I think that's an important thing because we've brought in people from Australia, from Israel, from Germany and they've been here for, well it's set up for one semester at a time, but some of them will spend two semesters and then they'll go back. But at least, they will spend time at LSU working on problems that they are interested in or we wouldn't bring them over here. But they would address problems that are important to Louisiana, but we bring in people. Like the guy that came in from Australia, he was an expert on hurricane protection. He was looking at wind forces and things and the effect of wind on various structures and so on. He was here, but he was over in the college of engineering, but we paid his salary. The guy from Israel, I forgot exactly what he was concerned with, but then there was someone else who was more of an expert on coastal zone management things in Europe. But, we have this capability of bringing in visiting professors to spend about one semester. I think it's set up so it's easier to go from either one semester to two years or something like that, depending on whatever problem or whatever issue or whoever they are working with over here. It's set up so they can bring in this expertise from any place in the world and bring them over here for X number of months, or a couple of years, to work with someone in a department over here to address problems that are considered to be important. I think that's a real plus type thing that has happened with Sea Grant. Now, it's not just Sea Grant. The Board of Regents set up the program to have these endowed things. But, the fact that we got a couple of them set up to address marine and coastal problems is a thing of importance as far as Sea Grant is concerned.

CA: Yeah, that's great. That's a heck of an idea. And if worse comes to worse, you've always got the soft shell crawfish idea to fall back on!

JVL: That's right! That's right!

CA: With that soft shell crawfish idea, is it like creating soft shell crawfish?

JVL: Yeah, the guy over at engineering, I can't think of his name, but we had a thing set up. There was a private sector guy down in LaPlace, or some place down there, and he had this thing about the size of this room, but it was a flow through system, and water would just continually flow through this thing and the crawfish were spawned in some thing and the thing would go around and it would raise them and they'd come out the other end soft shelled. They would get them when they molted at the time, and they would fall on this belt, and they would come out of this machine. It was a wonderful thing! But the problem was, the market wasn't available for soft shell crawfish. No one had ever heard of soft shell crawfish! So, nobody, and no one could really develop the market for them. For awhile, we had these little plastic bags full of soft shell crawfish, and they were great in the way you'd fix them and everything. But, there wasn't any marketing effort that came out of this thing that developed a reason for doing it.

CA: That's too bad!

JVL: Yeah, and soft shell crawfish are great! I mean, they're just like shrimp.

CA: That's just interesting, that's a neat little piece of information. Well, I appreciate it, this is great, thank you very much!