

ALLEN ENSMINGER

Track 01:

NOTHING

Track 02:

Don Davis: And on the Vermillion Corporation's property, Exxon, they had found natural gas, but there was a shortage of pipe. So they used the casings of blockbuster bombs. Welded them together, and to date, it's still carrying 3,000 PSI and you think about it, that bomb casing may have been a half inch thick if you think about it. It was solid brass...I mean the line's probably worth more than the natural gas going through it. But it's that kind of innovation that you just can't find—I mean I know a little bit about the tréance machine, I know a little bit about ditch diggers, I've seen them on the Delta Plain, you're the first person to ever give me a clue that they were on the Chenier plain as well. Mud boats tend to focus on the Chenier Plain, not on the Delta Plain. The Delta Plain, they got very early use of airboats. Okay? Carl?

Brasseaux: Yes sir, I just need to find the mic stand and we're good.

D: Okay, and the mic stand, I can get for you so...

Allen: Well, we really messed up in our family. My wife's grandmother would not speak English. She could but she wouldn't. And the only time she would ever talk to me after Meryl and I got married was if we was in the room by ourselves. And she'd carry on a conversation. But boy, you let somebody touch that doorknob and that ended her English. And we never recorded one single story that that old lady had and she died at 94, [INAUDIBLE] herself, right on up, so we really kicked ourselves, but I've got a brother that is 90. We're doing the same thing with him, he's the only one of the older family members that came down from Colorado, and he was 17 so he remembers cutting broom corn and all this that and the other. The rest of us was too young to know, or dead and gone.

B: Well, that's why we're trying to do this, is to record as much as we can as quickly as we can.

Track 03:

B: Because as Don said, we've learned some very painful lessons thanks to the storms of the past few years.

A: Yeah, those hurricanes have...you know, the artifact that really came home to roost was [carved decoys]. You know all of these local communities had a [carver] in it that excelled in duck decoys, and found out that they could sell 'em. The [LaNasa] hardware people there in New Orleans, said that years ago they had Mitchell [LeFawn] send two or three of those old carvers from down in the upper end of Plaquemine Parish that carved decoys and they'd [mine] from 'em and resell 'em there in the harbor. And when my office was there at 400 Royal, it was in walking distance, and I'd go over a lot of times—they still had fairly good representation of those decoys sittin' around in the hardware stores' displays and they actually gave me some of 'em. I had a pirogue in my office—a wooden cypress pirogue—had

about 100 decoys in it and I moved back to the hills and I sold them to a local boy down there in Lafitte. And I knew there was no point in haulin' 'em over here into [Wool Guard] Parish and hidin' 'em.

D: Where was that hardware store?

A: It was in the French Market Area down there, almost straight across the street from that Café du Monde, right there and it's over on [INAUDIBLE] street across from that.

B: You remember the approximate years?

A: Uh, yeah, they went out of business in...I would say, the late 70's. 81 or 82 is when they closed down. And they gave me a bunch of their cards that they had in the hooks and I had a bunch of wooden freshwater lures, and I've got those in a shadow box and those old [pook] cards came out the inside of one of their cabinets at the hardware store. But the one thing they did have and sold and called me and wanted to know if I wanted one of 'em, they got to diggin' around in the old hardware store and found two 20 gauge, model 70 pump guns. And still in the original boxes and sold 'em for \$125 a piece.

D: Woah.

A: But \$125 in those days was too much for me to buy a gun that I didn't need.

D: Now have you ever heard of something called a Cajun shotgun?

A: I've heard those comments, I have no explanation for it, I don't know that it was a punt gun, uh, Dave Hall, as you probably recall was a federal agent in that military. Dave and several of those decoy carvers that he became very friendly with, always contended that the pump gun never really was used down here in the south. That the ducks didn't [wild up] like they do on Chesapeake Bay and what have you.

D: Well I've only, Allen, heard of one reference. And it was a reference that was one person that used a punt gun at Raceland but you need more than—you need some corroborating evidence.

A: Right.

D: But unlike you, I have never heard, seen, anybody talk about punt guns. Now shotguns, yeah, they were masters of that.

A: Yeah, and actually, I think there are some records of them with the extended magazine on 'em, where they'd hold 10-12 shot shells, uh huh. But uh, up in the northeast, Chesapeake Bay, obviously—

Track 04:

A: They killed a lot of Redheads and Canvas Backs up there. And those birds, [Ben Dymers], you could kindly harass 'em until they'd wad up. And you could even either drive 'em close to your punt gun, or float down on top of 'em and then shoot and kill 25 or 30 in one bullet.

D: Now, you came to Wildlife and Fisheries about the time when Ted O'Neal—there were other agents that remember when you walked the marsh. Do you remember any stories about commercial duck hunting? Of course it ended with the Lacey Act, but there are still some legends out there.

A: Oh, there was commercial duck hunting, Don, when I went to work in the department. There was families that were still **pickin'** ducks and they happened to have a few extra ducks it wasn't a big deal that they sold **'em** to—

B: Now they're selling them locally or still transporting them to a railhead?

A: They were selling **'em** basically locally, and matter of fact, one of my earliest enforcement involvements, we got involved in that sting on—group of guys that were selling ducks to the peanut salesmen and all this that and the other. And U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had pulled that thing off. I would think that that was probably in 68 or 9, a time, or maybe a little earlier than that, maybe 64 or 5, and these peanut salesmen, went all through coastal area and bought ducks and documented them and they went back out after establishing a pattern of buying ducks from individuals and got about 40 or 50 of us in the department together and we all went to our assigned site on that particular morning and arrested I think 125 people.

D: Hm.

A: From down here in Cameron Parish all the way to the mouth of the river.

B: Do you have any idea how many ducks were involved?

A: Probably a couple thousand or more. And some of those people were guides at these commercial clubs, and what I could gather **outta** the conversation with some of those guys, they were [extra] birds that the guests or the clients had killed over the bag limit, or they were species that they wasn't interested in—all they wanted was [10-tailed] mallards, the big ducks, [sell **'em** out and take 'em home] but the guides had the rest of **'em** and they had all the ducks they wanted to eat anyway, so they would just sell **'em**, for **makin'** some extra money.

D: Well Carl and I have been to Lake Arthur, and Lake Arthur was a center for bringing in ducks and this was when commercial hunting was legal. They also had the Dudley Camp that eventually marked into [Port à Lac à Scene], and these were a lot larger operations than people perceived. And the reason we're bringing it up, when you were working in fur division—I **wanna** make up some numbers but I **wanna** make sure I'm close, how many licensed trappers did you have? Rough number.

A: I think we can pretty well confirm that we had a bout 12-14,000 trappers—trapping licenses sold each year. And I think [Shopwreck] and Noel Kindler have accurate numbers from the department files and the years that those license were sold. So I think you got some good hard figures there. We may have had as many as 20-21,000 licensed sales—that number for some reason popped in my head, there.

D: Well here's a question for you: Let's go to 1930, all right? Muskrat had become an important har—

Track 05:

D: —vestable species, Nutria were beginning to make [in-roads], would say that it was fair that in the 1930's we had 5,000 trappers?

A: Oh, I think we had more than that. I think we had 18 or 20,000 trappers at that time. And severance tax on fur came into being down there—again you'd have to dig into those records, but—I have the impression that the severance tax on fur was

imposed on the dealer because that was the first easy point of commerce where you could actually get it all together and, "Okay, you gonna ship out x-number of skins, at one penny a piece, that's x-number of dollars." And it was easier to assess that tax there than it would be on a trapper. If you had 20,000 trappers out here trapping, you could never collect any income from it. But if you could tax their fur, at the dealer level, then the dealer—all he did was just reduce the value of what he paid for it and get back to it.

D: See if this makes sense to you: Let's say, pre-1930, and let's use, rather than 20,000—just for sake of discussion—10,000. Pre-1930, in these marshes that we see in front of us, we have 10,000 trappers. Well that was a time when entire families went into the marsh. And let's say the family size was four.

A: I'd push that on up to six.

D: Alright, let's say six. We're now talkin' 60-80,000 people that—

A: That's a good number.

D: That is the population of several parishes. The reason it's important to Carl and I, when you talk about the marshes pre-1930, there's still this notion, there's nobody out here! Yet you lived it, we're learning about it, we're talking about perhaps as many as 60,000—let's call 'em transients—come in, they harvest from a site and they go back. Allen, those are monumental numbers pre-1930!

A: It sure was. We just crossed the Intercoastal Canal there. That is the sight of upper west Louisiana timber canal that extended from Lake Charles over to [Horence], Texas. And as that name signified, it probably was the major commercial product that was hauled from one center of population, Lake Charles to Orange, and Beaumont area. But these marshes that we're driving through here now, were all productive cattle areas and still are. There's cattle grazing all over this prairie, up here, and this is kinda the interface between high land that extended south of DeQuincy down to Lake Charles/Sulfur area, and then tapered off into the marsh itself. And these marshlands were by and large just considered as wastelands to developers. The only thing they were interested in was land that you could farm and [by the end of **collovation**].

D: Now would this be [Pythine]?

A: This was a freshwater marsh. It sure was. And of course, you see these big liquefying natural gas plants now, showing up down here—this is an interesting area right here, you see that pipe coming to the road there? The brown pipe? That's a discharge pipe that was installed when they dredged the dock facilities here for the ship to come up the—to unload his liquid—natural gas. And when they put that in there, they decided to leave it in place, because they anticipated needing to dredge again, and they'd actually used it I think, a couple of times. But the discharge is way out here in the middle of this open marsh and recently I flew over this thing and the discharge site demonstrates to me, at least, that we need to get our engineers off of this idea when you dredge and fill that you need a containment area. We're wasting the value of our dredging money, building these little boxes to pump the mud into. Just find a deteriorated marsh somewhere and pump it, and leave that discharge pipe there, go back periodically, re-pump that area.

D: Agreed.

A: And utilize it.

D: There was a sign back there called the Cardinal Club. Is that a hunting club?

A: That's a duck-hunting club, right. And uh, hydrology, in this basin, and—I say this basin—these basins, but the Calcaous Sabine has a fantastic history. Up until the early 1900's, the only real deep water port along the Gulf of Mexico, Northern Gulf, was a channel that was dug across a bar at the Sabine River mouth, down at the Sabine pass and I think that could be traced back to the 1880's or 90's, when that bar was deepened to allow bigger sailing vessels to come across there in steam ships.

There's an oil field right in the south edge of Lake Charles that was developed in the 20's, and for some reason, it's Bayou LaFourche, and they're very confusing. You can think about the present day Bayou LaFourche, but it was in effect that place was called Bayou LaFourche too. But that stimulated development of a deep-water navigation artery from the Gulf up to Lake Charles, prior to the war. And that natural saltwater barrier, at that mound and allowed salinities to come up at the north end of this lake. These big open-water areas that we'll see out here today are a direct result of that change in hydrology. Albeit, it was necessary for commerce. And it was a good idea and what have you. When you look at more modern things that we've done, you look at the MRGO down there, that one was a debacle of greatest magnitude. But based on what a whole group of us had observed, around some of these other channels in 1957 the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries developed a letter of objection type thing to the MRGOB and construction and everybody said, "Well how in the world did y'all anticipate what was gonna happen?" Well everybody knew that Cypress trees couldn't tolerate really high salinities. And all of those freshwater plant communities in the upper end of St. Bernhard and Plaquemine Parish would likely to be impacted. And we put that in writing and submitted that thing to the Corp. of Engineers. And I thought they were gonna tar and feather everybody that worked for Wildlife and Fisheries every time you went to a public meeting because we came across as being a bunch of objectionists to development, and people in that area making a living, and all this that and the other. The only mistake we made, we anticipated it would take 10 or 15 years for it to start impacting the area, and that it could be fixed for about \$300 an acre, that was based on what we were doing at Rockefeller Refuge over here on this end of the state. It happened almost overnight, started seeing dead Cypress trees within two years after it was built, and you can't re-fix it for 100 million dollars. Just enormous amount of money to try and fix that marsh in spite of the fact that the Corp. of Engineers has finally capitulated in allowing it to be blocked off. That waterway will continue to be a disastrous influence on southeast Louisiana, way into the remainder of this century, I think.

D: Now that, the MRGO is right up against that area that was settled by a group we call [Es Linos]. And Es Linos have always been, for lack of a better term; let's just call 'em "People of the Land."

A: Yeah.

D: Can you comment a little bit about their trapping and their trapping expertise, and how they move fur, and the fur buyers—just what you recall.

A: Well that group of people—and that was one of those group of people, or trappers, that I interviewed in... '54 and '55 here, and met the present-day owners of [Delacroix] corporation. Dot Binge was a young girl in those days, she's now my age, but anyway, Dot's family is the Binges and they own the [Delacroix] Corporation down there, and you're right, they were big trappers and had a lot of families associated with their properties and I think that Dot would be one that would really be helpful to you in y'all's efforts here. Their son, Mike Binge, is the state Chairman of Ducks Unlimited. Very, very gregarious guy, and a wonderful source of information for you. But in—back on this end of the state here, the breaching of those two saltwater bars, or channel bars, allowed salinity to penetrate up into these watersheds.

B: The Calcasieu and the Sabine?

A: And the Sabine, both. Calcasieu was aggravated because it's a relatively small watershed. The Calcasieu River originates in there north of Lee's Ville, meanders down through the Oakdale/Oberlin area, down into this upper end of Calcasieu Lake. Sabine was fed by the Natches and Sabine Rivers both so it has a much larger watershed that extends way on up in east Texas, almost to Shreveport. And of course, that watershed has been severely influenced by the construction of [Toledo] Bend, a huge impoundment up there of hydroelectric impoundment, has really influenced the normal hydrology at the lower end of the Sabine River. Along comes bigger and better towing equipment, and the demand and need for better inland transportation. So in the 30's the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway was conceived and implemented. And throughout its length it utilized some old canal systems that had been building [claw mill times] to aid navigation. They enlarged the size of them and the depth of them and are continued—right on to today to do that. But, in this basin here, the Calcasieu-Sabine, that connection between the area over there around orange and Lake Charles, allowed for a circulation of higher saline water that was brought up into those basins and to the point where by the 40's, in the case of the Calcasieu area, water in the river itself was being backed up; was being, I guess polluted with salt to the point where the people up around Kinder, to the north of Lake Charles was using that water for rice irrigation and it was too salty for 'em and they were beginning to see some impact to their rice fields. They got busy and got to congressmen in the Louisiana legislature to build a saltwater barrier north of Lake Charles across the Calcasieu River to prevent that salinity from encroaching up that waterway. It wasn't an environmental thing or anything else; it was a bunch of farmers. [Didn't want it]. They also—the group also was instrumental in getting the Corps of Engineers to build a catfish [locks] which are on the Mermentau River north of Little Chenier because it was backing up through the Mermentau getting through to White Lake and White Lake and the Mermentau system was heavily used for rice irrigation and today, almost all of our rice is irrigated with individual wells. And of course back in the 20's and 30's, that was outta the question to drill a ten-inch or 20-inch well to pump for rice, it just wasn't economically viable to do it. But those hydrologic manipulations are gonna be viewed out here after all as probably one of the worst things we've ever done to this whole section of the state. Some of it can be reversed but given the influence that fisheries has had on permitting and land management I don't think we'll ever see it change much. But I've always, at

these meetings we go to, I come out of there as a mad dog, you know, "That old fool don't know what the hell he's talking about." But when you get right down to it, you can't sell a duck. You can't sell a deer. And boy, you can't sell a nutria because there's no market for the fur. But you can sell all the crab and shrimp you can catch and you don't have five cents worth of investment in the production of that resource. That resource is a free resource by little old trawl license, and renew it, and what have you, and you go tank up your boat and you get to the [point] where the diesel is four dollars a gallon, you quit trawlin', but [the bible] just said that the shrimper don't own nothin'. He—even the dirt under his fingernails belongs to somebody else. That's kinda crude way to put it but, when you get right down to it, it's the only resource that—very little is done to manage for it, and these deteriorating marshes have been—has produced an abundance of [detrital] material which flows into that food chain—this old plankton and all this that and the other that goes into the production of shrimp and crabs. And to get those individuals, those people that are harvesting to pay anything, to manage land, is next to impossible to do. So you end up with these grandiose federal programs—federal and state programs to improve that old nasty landowner's property so that he can make more money on these duck leases, yeah I mean it's a vicious cycle in the mind of a lot of people that were wasting tax-payer's money on private property.

D: Now, with—

B: No, before you start with that, would you mind turning it down one? Not all the way off, just one, so we don't have as much ambient noise.

D: The other thing though, with 2005 and 2008 hurricane seasons, when we had four storms—and we won't be climatologists, we're gonna be just folks, those were bad storms.

A: Those were bad storms, but—

D: Do you begin to see where mindsets, and the policies, beginning to understand that land, whoever owns it, is important to guarantee the security of the people—we're gonna say—that live up on the Pleistocene, you know, out of the marsh, in what you call that transition zone. Do you start—do you see that we may be moving to a position where we're going to reassess how we look at this land?

A: I think it's already obvious, Don. We—I live up in [Bullguard], hundred feet above sea level, half a dozen people on my road now are from Grand Chenier. Those people are a younger generation of the people that went through hurricane Audrey—their parents did, and then along comes Rita, and Ike, and Gustav, and all of these modern-day storms that—and here again, we're not climatologists but they were not really big storms in the context of old storms. The least little bit of a storm can really cause tremendous problems. Let's see Don, we wanna turn here.

D: Okay. Not a problem.

A: Give ya a lot of heads up. We're gonna turn here in the edge of Hackberry.

D: Alright.

A: And go out here, there's a road built across a big water area, which is one of those deteriorated areas that we were talking about. When I was in college at McNeese in

the 1940's, some of my classmates had access down here, through their family's hunting club or what have you, and they were catching bass in these trapping ditches. Today, we've got thousands of acres of open water, saltwater areas, that have been created, and as you see right here, where we are, these bunch of dead trees are a product of saltwater impounding in here from these recent storm events: Rita, and then more recently in Ike. But here is the first indication of that plot [sing]: you see the difference in elevation in these hills? This [Pliocene], protruding up out of the surrounding wetlands, here is quite oval. It's, in geological terms, the Pliocene was the last land form following the last ice age 20,000 years ago or what have you. But, this high ground has been utilized for probably 700 years as cattle ranching and living sites.

D: Most of the cattle—I call it Brahma, I've heard it called Brehma—

A: Yeah.

D: Mix or pure bred?

A: They were all mixed cattle—Durhem, the old—Durhem blood lines were common mixed in there—give 'em the red color, brown, swiss cattle were brought in as milk cows, and a lot of their progeny are mixed into these modern-day cattle for the milking ability, but mainly Brahma.

B: But before the introduction of these strains from the outside, do you have any idea what the original stock looked like?

A: I think that those early colonials that came in here were using milking bloodline, because you gotta remember, they didn't have a Wal-Mart next door, and they had to have a cow that would produce a calf for 'em and milk. And of course, you could only feed 10-12 milk cows, and you need the calves from those cows in between keeping a heifer now and then to eventually replace a milk cow. But I think that probably Jersey and some of the [Ayshires], European breeds, were the original stock, and of course, then the longhorn—I guess that evolution would be the right term—some of those cattle were over in this part of the country, but when I first came down here and [find] these marshes it was all crossbred Braymer, and you still see a lot of these Brennel-looking cattle in this herd right here, and bald-faced with the Angus—that old cow right there with the white face and the horns; pretty common, modern-day Braymer, extraction. Mr. Moore, who's probably—we're gonna visit him today—brought in some cattle...he brought in some [Cousaret Braymers] from South America, Brazil or Argentina, I don't know exactly when that occurred, but based on his grandson, Roussier Odom, who was born in the early 30's, they had some of those cattle when he was a young man, so I would think that they probably occurred in the 20's or so.

D: Well, when you were growing up did you remember ever seeing any Creole ponies?

A: Well, we had little old...oh I guess, Mustang type horse that we bought when we came to Louisiana. We—as I indicated to you guys earlier—our family, my mother, and dad, and family, came to Louisiana in 1936. As the result of a prospectus circulated all through the dust bowl country, up here in the pan-handle—Oklahoma, southwestern Kansas, south eastern Kansas, eastern Colorado—to attract farmers to come down to Louisiana and buy these [cut off er] long-leaf pine areas. When we left

Colorado, we had milk cows, and mother and dad had milk, and sold cream, and all this, that, and the other, and had draft horses to plow with. Well, we didn't bring any of those on that first immigration, we ended up down here in the T-model truck with our household goods. But, one of my older brothers, who is still alive, came down a couple of years later and brought some bigger horses down—cow horses and one big ole draft horse. 'Course those horses had some utility here, but they didn't climatize very well, it took a lot of feed to keep that big animal going. And I think that that counted for the development of these lesser draft-type horses, and more toward a cow pony type of animal. This road was built in here by Shell Oil Company, who has a big field back in here in Black Bayou, and it was built to get around the ferry that crossed the Intercoastal Canal up here. Because it had a fire back there and when they'd come down to go fight the fire, the prairie cable broke and all the sudden they were—so after that they built this road, across to give 'em access in here. This is a canal called the [Ricaid] Canal. And over to our right, there's a water control structure over here that was built as one of the early [quipper] projects at Coastal Wetland Planning Protection and Restoration Act. Why don't we stop right here on the bridge and you can see that structure over there. I wanna take a water salinity rigging while we stop here and take a look at these little birds that are flying around here, Don, those are barn swallows, and when I was in school at LSU in the 50's, there was a couple of colonies of those documented in Louisiana, one of 'em up near [Marouche], Louisiana. My—the [Barhams], whose son is now the secretary of Wildlife and Fisheries, and had a camp out at Grand Pass. Now that bird is as common as it can be. All up and down the country, all under the interstate highway. And there's a group of 'em nesting under this bridge that we're sitting on here, at the [Rockaid] Canal. But uh, this canal is bringing salinities in and out of this country. The concept of that structure was that that would reduce the movement of salinity down in the lower end here. Well, unfortunately, a tremendous amount of money has been wasted in trying to monitor these things. That's a data-collection unit that was put in years ago, and I don't think they've had more than 10 or 15 days of continual data collection in it since it was built. Just wasting money...

B: Well, can I getcha to repeat what you're reading sir?

A: Yeah!

D: Well why don't we go right here, I'm gonna get out and take a photograph or two, and Carl can ask you some questions, we can pull right here right out of the way, and I'm gonna just uh...

A: Here again we've come out on top of this elevated Pliocene outcry...You know, the [Reitke] ditch area was turned into a saltwater intrusion channel following the breaching of that bar down in Cameron, allowed salinities to encroach into this freshwater ecosystem up here and killed out thousands of acres of vegetation. A lot of the—well, a lot—some of the technicians working in the field at that time understood that it was saltwater influence. Others wanted a more obvious and easy to blame issue and they thought it was a disease of salt grass. Well salt grass was a massive stand of vegetation that covered thousands of acres and it had low

tolerance to salinity. But there was always some of those indications that it may have been a blight or something that got into that particular species of grass. Which is wasn't. It was purely an impact from salinity, and it was a pollution thing—sodium chloride. That killed those plants. Hurricane Audrey in 1957 came through this country and overnight we had big open water areas where the salt grass had been swept off. And some technical papers showed up that the storms scoured it out. Hell it was dead—it was just sittin' there waiting for something to transport it. Which Audrey did. But today we can't possibly restore these marshes out here without getting the water off of the surface. Over the length of time that has occurred since Hurricane Audrey in '57 and today, we've had millions of tons of detrital material—or old decomposed marsh—material floated out of here without going tides. So to get a surface out there where plants can grow again is either through mechanical dredging and fill, or through some kind of a massive draw down of water out of these areas through pumping our gravity draining. Well, you get into that, you're talking about huge, huge amounts of money to get the stage to be able to grow grass again. Well what are you gonna get out of that grass you grow? You can't graze cows out in there, you can't sell grass seed for human food except wheat and corn and some of those—well that ain't gonna grow out here and...so there's no economic incentive or need to try and rebuild these marshes except for storm protection. Migratory waterfowl haven't [died] and what have you, so it gets down to the point where it's gonna be questionable whether we can justify expenditures of huge amounts of public money trying to restore these for ecological purposes. Don, let's drive around the corner and I think we'll be able to see some of them now, before we go, this little elevated site here suggests something. And to me what this probably is, is an outcropping of a dome. This is probably one of those [sub-surface] dome sites, salt pillars that shoved up through the crust of the earth and elevated this area and there's hundreds of those up and down the Louisiana coast, and associated with those domes were sub-surface fault movements. And I've got one here that's a classic as we [exist]—that blue area on that is an area adjacent to and active oil field at Johnson Bayou. Johnson Bayou is this community here along the Gulf of Mexico. This is the old Cameron Meadows oil field that was discovered in the 19—late 1920's and early 30's, developed Exxon, and Mobile Oil had a big oil field there. And following the 1964 earthquake in Alaska, this fault movement here started to show up on the surface in the Plank communities and the down throw side of that fault line is now about two feet of water and the up throw side is still and intact marsh area. And it's one of the graphic photographic sites where that's visible. And there's dozens of them over in there east of Baton Rouge and that [Maurepas] swamp area south of Springfield—Dr. [Gaglien] and others have identified 10 or 12 fault movement sites in that general complex and what have you, so this has been going on forever, has probably little or nothing to do with extraction of oil and gas products out of the formations down there, but it's strictly a movement of the fault itself.

D: Now, it's interesting...we just got off 370, we've gone about three miles, here's something called "The Creole Fin and Feathers," which I'm assuming is a hunting club of some [sign].

A: That's right. Yep.

D: We have a dead end sign and it's almost ten miles to their site.

A: [Chuckling] That's right, it's at their huntin' club!

D: This is a long dead end!

A: That's a long dead end. Well, when you around this corner you'll see why it's a dead end, there's a big gate up there!

D: Oh okay! Now this is all Shell originally? This was a Shell oil field?

A: Oh, yeah. Yeah I think Shell was the main company that was developed back here and this access road, as I pointed out, was a necessity to access back to the oil and gas field...old house right here that probably has been used forever as a cowboy camp and the debris across the road here from it is remains from Ike...it uh, wiped out the furniture.

D: So Ike flooded this?

A: Yes, yeah. Ike put water over gum cove ridge that we'll see back there, uh—

B: Now is this the first time Gum Cove Ridge has flooded?

A: Yes, it is, and as far as the histories of Mr. Odom's family, who have been here since back in the 20's or earlier that they ever had water in the yard at the main house that we'll see over there today as we drive back here on Gum Cove. And Ike—the influence of it in my opinion is just exactly like it has been all along the coast. When you remove all of that storm protection south of you, you are in essence, on the edge of the Gulf, and when you look at this [Petter] Refuge south of this area, it's big open water areas...but that's, uh, the bypass road.

D: Hehehe. [It's also Rumley] get a picture.

A: Yeah, go ahead, oh—

D: I'm gonna get me a picture here if I can figure out how to [INAUDIBLE] some of the lens [junk].

A: It may be more important to get the picture when we come out if they lock this one.

D: [AHAHAHAH] I bet you got a key.

A: I used to know the combination, I hope it's still the same. Okay...But if I don't have the combination, I know a secretary in Orange that knows it.

D: Daihatsu. Now that doesn't sound like a Yankee name.

A: Sounds like somebody from the Orient!

D: Hehah.

A: ...We had a lot of activity with regard to land ownership within the last 15 years as Exxon-Mobil and [Amoco], and others sold out, rearranged their portfolio, and what have you, and had acreage available for sale. And a lot of people who had money came on the scene and bought up tracts of some of this land for duck-hunting purposes. And I think this is what we're seeing here, this was a hunting operation. But now we're getting ready to go out into an eye-opening area. It's just an area that just makes me want to cry, because this was all a vegetative marsh in the middle of the 1900's. When I came on board this was still—had grass on it. And [INAUDIBLE] Hurricane Audrey had [occurred, Audrey] just swept all that salt grass off the surface, which is big open water areas, and they was easy for people to say, "Well it was the storm." It was not. It was a prior hydrologic manipulation that had taken place that had let saltwater get into these real remote marsh areas.

B: So it was already dead when—?

A: Yes sir, it's dead. That's right, I walked around in some of that dead [saw] grass before the storm, and after the storm it was just big open lakes like this one we're driving through right here. And I hate to be a [pessimist], but I don't know how you're ever gonna get that back in grass. [That was token that water off it]. Well, pump it off where in the Hell you gonna put it, and how you gonna keep it off there once you get it dry? 'Cause the next big tropical or equinox event is gonna re-flood it with brackish and saline water.

D: Well, you've got this road, and you have this little road here that's derelict, they also are interrupting hydrology...

A: [Chuckling] Thank God! You know, we've got to make up our minds to take a look at these sites basin by basin.

D: Exactly!

A: And sit down and say, "Okay, now here is the day, we got to make up our mind. Here's how we're gonna work on this basin." And once we've signed that paper, tell National Marine Fisheries, "Get your ass back in Gulf out there where you belong, and let's manage this track of land for cattle and waterfowl and wetlands protection of lands and what have you—pull on around the corner—

D: I wanna see if I can read that name on that well-head.

B&A: Texas Petroleum.

D: Mrs...no...Mrs. J. Watkins. Hello! Excuse me, excuse me, I thought—my eyes are bad but they're not that bad.

A: The Watkins family were early investors. And everybody laughed at them buying that old wasteland, "Never gonna amount to nothin', you can't farm that." [Angeline] bore out that hole right there in one day's production and their ancestor had made in the history of the family.

B: Yep.

A: And you can't blame 'em for it! I mean, Hell they—often said, if you look around the room at one of these [quip room] meetings, those kids sittin' around there making all these monumental decisions all got their education because their grandpa had sense enough to buy a piece of land. That had some income for 'em to go to college. I was lucky enough to make enough money pipe-lining to pay for mine but I didn't drive no GTO to college either. I hitch-hiked from De Ridder to Baton Rouge.

B: Well, the two people in the car here with you both worked their way through so...

A: Hahahaha.

D: Yeah, we know what it's like to work with [stevedores], teamsters, and [shipwrights], and when they said, "College Kid! How much you gonna make when you get out of college? I already make \$22.50 an hour and I got a fifth grade education!"

A: That's right!

D: Right then, Allen, [INAUDIBLE] learned a very important lesson: First, don't tell 'em you're going to college, and second, keep your mouth shut. Say nothing, do nothing.

A: Well, I had a very, very personal experience there. I was working on a pipeline over in east Texas about 1950—49 of 50. Got to raining, shut the job down, I came

home, and there was a young boy, couple years younger than me—and I was probably 18 or 19 then—I said, "Why don't you come go back with me and get a job pipe lining?" "Shit, I don't know how to pipe line." I said, "Anybody that'll work can pipe line." So we loaded it on the bus and went back to Jasper, Texas and I told 'em, the boss that morning when we got there that I brought him a good worker. He said, "Hell we don't need nobody!" I said, "You gotta give this guy a job, he's starving to death over there at De Ridder. Can't make a living, don't know what to do." He said well, "We had an old pot that got cold and if he can chip that pot out and clean it out, I'll give 'em a job." I said, "Oh, he can do that!" And a pot was these big containers that hold about 40 barrels of melted tar that was sprayed on that pipeline and wrapped up with fiberglass and [crab] paper. Well he got down in that thing and busted all of that old cold tar out and we'd go **buy** and throw him a can of sardines or somethin' or other and look down in there and pull it up and all you would see was them big old blue eyes and teeth down in there. And that guy became a world renowned pipe liner. Owns a lot of stock in William's—may **wanna** turn that thing off. Hahaha—but no, he became a very very extensive pipe liner—very mechanically oriented, set a pipe lining record years ago—

D: Would you call this a camp?

A: That is a huntin' camp. And they had a big complex here and a storm got it. Rita got it.

D: K. We're just takin' our time.

A: But that was a classic example. Following year came, I went back to LSU and he went to become a millionaire and I barely make a living! No, I have one of the best jobs anybody ever had but...

B: Well it makes a difference if you like what you're doing.

A: Well, I enjoyed it and I ended up with some bosses who were interested in trying to restore our ecosystems on the state lands. Richard Nancy and then later on, [Burlangelle] and what have you, and those guys—I believe we got a couple customers coming, we need to get out of their way—they were instrumental in helping gettin' the legislature to set aside a portion of the Rockefeller gas revenues—and the same thing for Marsh Island—into a long-term interest-bearing trust fund. The Rockefeller trust fund now is up and around 50 million dollars, a little above, producing about 2 million dollars a year in income, Marsh Island somewhere around 30 million, and those moneys are being used to maintain those two big properties. Otherwise, would have just been normal income from state properties and spent on whatever the legislature spends money on.

D: Well Marsh Island is particularly intriguing to me for the following reasons: If we go to the western end we're at Southwest Pass—you wanna take salinities here?

A: Yeah, let's get some slides.

D: Alright. But yeah at the western end you have Southwest Pass. Now, there's a lot of discussion at how wide that originally was. On the south side you had an enormous oyster reef.

A: Yep.

D: On the east side, you had, let's call it, the Point of Fair Reef, on the north side, that was pretty nice water.

A: Mm hm.

D: Yet you have this island that was noted for its fur, you had a resident agent, and that person lived there. I know **there was school**. I've seen the records, there was a school. So what we have is a Louisiana, let's call it "refuge", in which they not only had a resident, they were also concerned about the education of the people living there.

A: Oh yeah, yeah. Well, Don, even better example, and you'll see this when you read through it, the Rockefeller family was influenced by Mr. MacElainey, uh convincing them that they should buy these, uh, tracks of land in Louisiana from Orange Land in the Belmont or whatever the name of the company he worked for. And there's strong indications that he used his influence with the women in those families: Mrs. Sage, and Mrs. Rockefeller, and convinced them to get their husbands to do these things with their money and—boy there's a big fish here—and as far as we were able to ever figure it, the donation of the Rockefeller tract was the very first philanthropist activity of the Rockefeller Foundation. They bought that property, turned around, and donated it back to the state of Louisiana, who they'd bought it from, and in that deed of donation there was about 10-15 conditions incorporated into it with reversionary provisions that if you didn't do these things it would revert back to the donor. One of those things was that they used the money produced from it from income and they had a clause in there if oil and gas or minerals were discovered on the adjoining properties it's authorized him to develop and exploit foreign development, the minerals are under their property. And then the money from that would be used to maintain the property and any surplus then would go into health and education. And that's written into those deeds of donation. So, you know, you really get the educational tie that—why don't you just pick out one of these two—

D: I'm gonna go right back here—

A: Oh okay, you got a better one?

D: Because I see a little place in which he's gonna have room, and I'm not gonna go pee in my britches.

A: Or fall in the canal...But, the Rockefellers put all of that into their original donation and Russell Sanchez did that in more modern times. We went back to them and got them to amend their gift of donation allowing the state to use some money, uh generated, and to explore for minerals on Marsh Island. Uh, that's an interesting oyster reef there. Apparently that line was down in the water long enough for oyster spat to get attached and when they picked it up it was growing oysters on it!

D: You know, uh, have you ever seen any pictures, photographs, of the, um, Marsh Island school?

A: No.

D: I haven't either.

A: And I would think that it was out at Shenuatig, Don, and the Sagreras actually were in the process of moving cattle to and from Marsh Island when I uh, first went to work in the department, and Sheryl Sagrera might have some kind of access to some of that.

D: Now, when we talk about cattle—

A: Let's take a look at that bird right there coming around...uh, that may be an osprey...No, it's a seagull.

D: We all talk about cattle on the Cheniers, then there's cattle on Grand Terre, but there's a lot of cattle in the Delta.

A: Oh yeah.

D: Who does that? I mean in Plaquemine Parish, all them people are oyster people, they don't wear cowboy boots!

A: Well the Armstrongs down in Plaquemine, and there's a guy by the name of Earl Armstrong, is the one you need to visit with, he's at uh, Pilot Town, they own property all around that pass bank and run cattle on it. He's on the conservation district board in Plaquemine, he's a super [by there]—Earl's a great individual, and his wife. And their families were all oyster people and what have you, but uh—

D: Now, while I'm thinking about it: At [Pickro] you met—mentioned a person we should see at Rathburn?

A: Yes.

D: And that was?

A: That would be Greg Leer. He's the Land manager at Rathburne.

D: And then at Williams?

A: At Rudy Sparks is in land—

D: And at Buoy?

A: Bob Kindler.

D: Kindler. Now there's a Chris Kindler...works for **department of conversation**, do you know if they're—?

A: Yeah, Noel Kindler, and Quinn Kindler. Quinn works for NRCS and Noel works for Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries. Their family's ties were back into the swamp there at Boutte.

D: At Boutte, okay.

A: Yeah. And they are uh—and Noel, I hired Noel and Quinn both—Quinn worked for me as a student while he was going to college as a Rockefeller. So those guys are very knowledgeable of these coastal marshes and what have you. Let's pull up to that water...need to write all of these things down on a log book or I'll get back a month from now trying to remember what the salinity was. What we needed to do was get a sufficient [pole catcher]

D: HAHHAHAHA

A: One of those big red fish—

D: Alright, let's see, **lemme getcha** out, **lemme getcha** out, here you are.

A: Don't **wanna** let us kids fall out of here...locks automatically. My wife's got one and that's the most aggravating thing there ever was...

B&D: [TALKING ABOUT TECHNICALITIES]

A: That's 9.2 and the Reitke Ditch was 7.6.

B: And what is an acceptable level for cypress and other native vegetation to grow?

A: One.

B: One.

A: Cypress can tolerate 1-3 for a limited period of time. Well if it stays up at that salinity for any length of time, it starts to stress those trees out and a classic site right now is I-310, right down there in the New Orleans area, where it connects on with 10. That I-310 section was built in the late 80's, early 90's. The channel was deepened out into Lake Pontchartrain to bring all that construction equipment in and it penetrated back into that swamp.

B: So that's what's killed all of that Cypress?

A: That's what's killed all of them Cypress trees. They **rebuildin'** that **huntin'** camp now.

D: My goodness.

A: That's their boathouse. To hunt ducks first you got to have a boat. And the second thing you **gotta** have is a rich client.

D: HAHAHAHA.

A: Well this is a...

D: Yeah, you **gotta** have pretty deep pockets.

A: You have to have deep, deep pockets. Now, this road goes across this big open water, this was Bullwhip, which has a very low tolerance range, [Piaphine] Marsh, uh, [Maiden Cane], all of this whole area was vegetated in the 1950's. And was impacted by the construction of the ship channel into Lake Charles, changing the hydrology [into] Calcasieu and the penetration thing.

D: Now, this waterway to the right of it, that's the borrow pit for this road?

A: Yeah.

D: Okay.

A: Yeah, and this road is about, uh, I would say 30 years old. **Somethin'** along in there. Because I drove out to Gum Cove before I retired from the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and had to go across a ferry and this road was built after that and I retired in 1984. So I would think this road was probably built in the late 70's. And these modern-day ideas about how to fix it, is to come out here and weld terraces out in that open-water area to break up the wind fetch. Maybe we **oughta** turn—

D: Too late.

A: Off about what I think about over there...pissin' in the wind. No it'd take a good hard look at what they're doing there; It's a great idea, and it has some application in this type of area. Because they can reach down with that big piece of equipment and get some dirt and they can build a little levee across out there to break up the fetch. The concept being that in between these mechanical sites, you **gonna** get it stilled, and you'll produce some aquatics, and in time, grow some [emergin']. Sounds good. And you know, you got these spoil banks like that one right there alongside the canal as examples, and this one over here for—that has occurred, but to put all your eggs in that basket, I think is **gonna** really stretch it.

B: Well let's talk a little bit about the change in vegetation and fauna as well. Uh, you know in the decades that you were working the land out here. Um, let's begin—you said you started in the early 50's, um what's the most striking thing that's changed? Native grasses, or—?

A: Yeah, the whole ecosystem has been—you got a marine environment (marine being a gulf influenced environment) that has been transposed way inland and beyond what was a natural progression of a saline marsh, followed by a brackish marsh, followed by an intermediate marsh, followed by freshwater marsh, followed by a fringe of cypress timber as you got up to the inland. Now as we sit here and look out this car, you're sitting in a marine environment that is 25 miles or more inland from where it should be. The ecosystem here should still be bullwhip, **cuttin'** grass, salt collar—Don, stop right here for a second, back up a few feet.

D: I'll back up as far as you want me to go.

A: There's a little clump of [saw] grass still struggling to hang on, out on that side of the vehicle right there is Sawgrass. *Cladium Gemison*. And that plant was prolific in the 1940's. This whole area was covered with a massive stand of that. And you see where it's growing today? It's growing up out of that flood zone of saltwater. I need to take a sample right here...

[ALLEN EXITS CAR AND ALL TALK ABOUT GETTING OUT AND STUFF]

B: Well they got plenty of activity going down. There are...9 of those front in loaders working on the terraces?

D: Yeah it's a huge project that we'll need to look at. Google Earth—we should be able to pick it up on Google Earth. They are a bit controversial. They have some potential but they—it's also very important that you buttress them with the correct grasses, so the grass can help build a mat. And then if you get the cold fronts, string up the sediments, it gets caught in the mat and it procreates slowly—

A: That was 5.6, so it's a little fresher than it was back at those—

D: Are you writing those down somewhere?

A: No I'm not, I need to do that.

D: Mm mm mmm it would be nice to have a fishing pole even though it says no fishing! Look at that! Boiling with big red fish.

A: There's a lot of money being spent right there. Of mine and your money.

D: Yeah, there's an awful lot of terraces. There's nine pieces—

A: Heh, miles of terraces.

D: There's nine pieces of equipment working. Carl.

B: There's a good shot of at least three of them.

D: Yeah.

A: There's a 4x4 in that one cluster, yeah. Now, this—as I said earlier—this **kinda** site, you can do that work. But you get down there around New Orleans, it's 40 feet down there to [the tier] that'll stand up. But by the same token, we're getting advocates of terracing to insist that we build **'em** down there **anywhere**, just go build **'em**. And they can't build **'em** there.

D: Well, you and I both understand that every basin is different, therefore the solutions are different.

A: Yeah, and within each basin you got these things—

D: And you need to pay attention to the regional hydrology that will help make the decision on the proper way to maximize your funds to get the greatest return.

A: And Don, we got to stop calling these landowners "stake holders." Those goddamn people own that land, they pay taxes on it, they have suffered through all of the what-have-yous of land ownership. Albeit that a lot of them are corporate type owners, but they are no different than a city lot. They belong to someone. And to make all these monumental decisions in closed-door sessions almost, or say we're gonna have a public hearing in Abbeville and we're gonna make up our mind about how to fix Southwest Louisiana. Well baloney. Go ask that landowner what he wants to do to his property. And I think that's one of the things we're gonna see here today. These landowners now have become very resentful and I think you guys are seeing that as you start to explore this history making and recording of events. When I told Mr. Odom that we were planning to come out here today, the very first things out of his mouth were, "What do they wanna do?" And I told him you know, "They're not interested [introduced you to] a [bill bruce] at the Chenier symposium, and that we want to see the property and all that [INAUDIBLE]." And they're extremely suspicious of any outside activities.

D: I tell ya, this is amazing road.

A: Yeah it is. And this thing is built on a borrow and there ain't no tellin' how many jillion tons of rock that went on top of this.

D: Yeah, this road is amazing. I thought the one out to [Isle Jean Charles] was pretty amazing but this one puts it to shame.

A: Yeah...And you see these defunct structures along here? Those were put in back when this road was built and they functioned very well. But...here again, maybe we oughta turn the tape off...people that had charge of this track over here on the right—

C: People who are familiar with the early trappers?

D: They may have dug their own tréance? But they put almost like fixed weers.

A: Yeah. Right.

D: And they would control water levels on the track to help the grass to make sure they had water in their tréance but not to put too much water in that would kill the habitat.

A: That's right. Old Vancouver couldn't read a book but he knew exactly what to do to maintain—

D: His—the water levels.

A: Exactly.

D: That was pretty fascinating. Fixed crest weer. That's the term that we used.

A: Yep, that's right. And we built a whole bunch of those and have been criticized for building 'em by the fisheries people, and tens of thousands if not millions of dollars, been spent to prove that they're not wise to do it. Now that's a Cypress tree snag there, does that tell you something?

B: Mm.

D: Mm hm.

A: Years ago there was a grove of cypress on this eastern end of Gum Cove and today all that's left is those fragments. And there's your debris line from Hurricane Ike...

B: Now, the change that's taking place, is it something that has happened incrementally or were there periods of greater change than others?

A: Oh there was a huge amount of change associated with the invasion of saltwater. That all happened in a period of 12-15 years, and in ecological terms that's the blink of an eye. And that all occurred after the breaching of the bar in Cameron. **There's you a rack.**

D: That's about as good as you **gonna** get.

A: Good as you **gonna** get. And let's get out there and look at that stuff, Carl.

B: Alright.

A: This...

...[EVERYONE LEAVES]...

A: Mokay. Are those two rolled up mats that we have there?

B: Oh, sure, yes sir...

D: Okay, you ready to go?

B: Ready to go.

D: Fire up the recorder.

B: Got it, thank you.

D: This is—All I can say is Allen, thanks, 'cause I'd have never been able to come out here ever.

A: Oh no, this um—

D: I mean, I don't let many signs stop me, I just figure I'm ignorant, but out here man, look at it, it's a long ways!

A: Now hold up just a second. Now this is one of the things that I as a wildlife manager would love to correct for you: Matter of fact, he **don't** own this tract of land and water got trapped in there from the storm—

D: Got a truck behind me.

A: And killed all of these plants, but it's a big [bird wreck]—*was* a big [bird wreck], there's not enough vegetation there now to support that colony of egrets [INAUDIBLE] and nest in there. There should be a turn out up here...

D: Yeah.

A: So you can get out of his way. But that foundation's name is Moore-Odom. Old man Brucey Moore, and Lutch Moore, and Odom is the modern-day heir.

D: And what was the name of—it was the Burton-Something canal?

A: Burton-Sutton.

D: Sutton.

A: That canal was dug by W. T. Burton back in the 20's down there to that oil field. Here's you a turn now—

D: Cameron Meadows!

A: Yeah Cameron Meadows' field.

D: Alright.

A: And apparently the people that was running the operation had had some knock-down drag outs with the Federal Government to run the refuge about traffic in that canal down through there. And the oil companies ended up having to—what did I do with my little map—they ended up—in their infinite wisdom, dug a goddamn canal several miles long to get to one drill site over there, and that's this red line you see on here. It's called the B-1 Canal just because they couldn't get permission from the feds to come back in the existing Canal.

D: That would be the Burton-Sutton.

A: Yeah. The Burton-Sutton is here. It comes down to it. This is the south start canal. [They have a record].

D: Yep, yep.

A: So they dredged this damn monster and then ended up having to fight it ever since for saltwater intrusion.

D: Yep. Now with these speed limit signs, this road's not maintained by the state, is it?

A: No, uh uh, that's all strictly owned.

D: Private.

A: Well it's that oil company trying to keep people from driving 100 miles an hour down through here and the landowner put a bunch of restrictions in it to drive slow and all that. This I think is one of those areas that we saw on that map that showed up as—

D: Yeah, because that looks like a rice-harvesting machine right here.

A: Yeah, that is an old Combine there.

B: And there's a dead cypress stand off to the left.

A: Yeah...have I ever introduced you to Bill Bruce—?

D: Yes you did.

A: At the symposium? And he recalled you and he's out here **waitin'** on us, so I guess we'll just go on toward there.

D: Alright.

A: But I think Bill will be a tremendous access type guy to help you get in there. They bought...well...Mr. Odom bought this track of land here from a real estate guy that had bought it—not out from under him, but he was foolin' around too long, the old lady that owned it sold it to someone else. And after years he ended up buying it back. And I pick at him about how much he had to pay for it—he don't—he goes silent and **kinda** swells up. [Chuckling]. So he realized that was one of his worst—

D: Now, the land to the left of us is really pretty healthy.

A: That's all his property, over here [on out to] Gum Cove Ridge. And that's cattle-raising areas.

D: Now is this the only road in, the only road out?

A: The only one in and out.

D: So everything that we've seen going this way has **gotta** go to the Ridge?

A: To the oil field, yeah. We're **going that** oil field right there. And um, [day on day] Mr. Odom and some others own a construction company in Orange called Duphin, [INAUDIBLE] I have no idea where that name came from, but um, they do a lot of

this construction work. I would expect that some of those machines out there working on those terraces are some of their equipment.

D: Equipment. Now, does Mr. Odom have any children?

A: Has no heirs.

D: No heirs.

A: No heirs. I think he had one child that died when he was about 4 years old, that's my understanding. He never remarried, he and his wife separated, I'm not even sure if she's alive today.

D: Mm hm.

B: Water control structures?

A: Yeah. Pump station has a fishing pond here...for the bass...

D: So the Fin and Feather Hunting Club was established by Amoco employees or retirees or something.

A: Well, more so than that, when Amoco got ready to sell this property a group of guys got together and bought two or three sections of land over here and they formed the huntin' clubs. And I think they call it the Gum Cove 8 so maybe there was 8 of 'em that bought those Amoco properties.

D: Because Amoco, you know, morphed into BP. And then BP gave what became the White Lake Conservation area.

A: Yeah...He's trying to get out of your way there.

B: Yeah, that's a fallen tree.

A: Oh, yeah, okay. Uh, yeah and that debacle over there that come out of that whole process has matriculated into our effort to try and get a foundation that's bad news to several at the Wildlife and Fisheries. Well, my god, we already got a Wildlife Foundation given to us.

D: The White Lake?

A: Yeah. I did base my documentation on White Lake where MacNeese and I, when Ducks Unlimited was considering maybe taking over the management of it. And um, that ran its course and along come the politicians, saying, "Oh shit, huntin' camp and boy that went over like a lead balloon. Joe MacPherson didn't like the **fostered** administration so he got a hold of one corner of that rug and drug it out from under **'em!** And he covered **'em** up with it.

D: Well, it didn't get the best press, let's leave it at that.

A: Oh god, it was debacle. Crazy. Joe Herring kept trying to calm it down and get it smoothed over and the more he did the worse it got.

D: Yep.

A: Alright now we **gonna** take a left up here.

D: Alright. No problem.

A: Tell her hello and keep going...Hello! We're going down to the ranch.

Woman: [You want]?

A: Yeah.

W: You goin' this way?

A: Yeah.

W: Okay. Who are you with?

A: We're with LSU Sea Grant and Mr. Odom, I work for Mr. O.

W: Oh you work for Mr. Odom?

A: Yes.

W: Okay.

D: Thank you...

A: Now, we're...well we've been in probably [zet coze] on up to the north there. They actually own a part of that Black Lake fields [on 'em]. I think he has about a million a month income from that one field. Those [Cousaret Braymers] are over on the north side of that road and we'll look at them when we come back out later on. But this is all a bunch of cross-breed Braymer. And with the insect problem that there is down here I don't know that you could even ever make enough money out of kettle to pay it—pay your way with it. That's gonna be one of the long-term financial issues with the foundation I think, is what to do with that herd of cattle. And uh, we all understand that we're not gonna do anything with 'em, other than to keep 'em here in the pasture.

D: Mm hm.

A: And he's got a good point: This property probably was grazed by buffalo long before the white man ever showed up in North America and to a degree, helped control the encroachment of brush and crap out into these fields. And those are fairly representative of the—he had about 1,900 head of cattle on the property and Ike got around 8 or 900 of 'em drowned.

D: How many bulls?

A: Peuh! Lot's of 'em. One for every 30. That's about the ratio of uh...

D: 'Cause we were told that the Millers had 400 bulls.

A: Yeah, that's probably right. I would imagine that R.E. had at least that number here. Well, if you got 2,000 head of cattle and you divide it by—

B: 30, huh?

A: 30, you're gettin' up there around a couple hundred bulls. Say a bull has serviced 20 cows, that'd still give you 100 bulls. We'll ask Bill, he knows how many bulls he's got.

D: It's tough gettin' outta here.

A: [Laughing].

D: Well, you wait too long you better just turn on a generator!

A: Yeah, you better have already been outside!

D: I mean it's just pretty tough. Now this is surface road, this is gorgeous road!

A: Nice road out here.

D: We about on time?

A: Yeah I think we gonna be alright. I told him it'd be around 10 or 11 o'clock—[we got it on here]. He's fooled with me long enough to know that meant 12.

D: [LAUGHING]

A: Turn left right here.

D: Alright.

A: His grandfather planted this road with Oak Trees. Everybody laughed at him about plantin' 'em and look at 'em today.

D: Yes.

A: They should've planted 40 more rows like it. Now this guy we're going right here to meet is a cowboy. He won the national champion **cuttin'** horse competition.

D: This is Bill?

A: Bill Bruce, yeah. That—he went to high school up there in Longville. One of my nephews was the principal there. [INAUDIBLE]. No, that's not him... He had worked for the Gray Ranch, and then he left there and went to work for [Grenadier]. And [Rum]. Adair had a bunch of high-powered horses but he didn't like to work riding horses, for him, and I think one of his horses—the one that was a national championship horse—had already hired him to ride some of his horses. He's got a bunch of horses up there around Fort Worth that are high-powered bloodline.

D: Quarter horses.

A: Quarter horses.

D: Now, is it a—was he riding a [cutty]?

A: Yeah, a cutty, yeah, yeah.

B: It's so beautiful out here.

A: Ain't this a pretty place?

D: Mm hm.

A: One night, my wife and I were down here, couldn't get away and couldn't get away. Finally left about 10 o'clock at night and I think we saw 45 deer for the house out here to that road.

D: Wow.

A: Yard full of 'em. You can turn in the yard here. And the water did not get in the building, it got up—they drove an airboat around here to the kitchen door, [take a right].

D: Right here?

A: [INAUDIBLE]...this white pickup—there ain't nobody gone.

D: Yeah, I figured you can probably leave it unlocked here.

A: [Laughing] Yeah. Ya'll need to [rig it], 'cause he—

[TAPE STOPS]

B: Okay guys, I think we're back in business.

D: Billy [Hardeman]. Now you said he worked for Amoco?

A: Yes, he was a fee man for Amoco. And was out here on this particular track of land and had good relationships with the Odom family and was worth his weight in gold to Amoco. And when they sold the property he ended up buying a piece or two of blank area for himself to [pawn **of 'em**]. But Billy is a supervisor in the Gulf Coast's soil and water conservation district board and really should be helpful to ya'll in your contacts and history as a cattleman in marsh conditions down in this area.

D: Now is he local with a name like Hardeman?

A: Yeah, he's local. I don't know where their family originated from or whether they were old family from the Lake Charles area or not but he and I were in school at the [MacNeese] in the 40's—early 50's.

D: Well, you know, uh, you coming from De Ridder, Beauregard Parish, I've got a real good friend of 40 years—Beau Blackman.

A: Yeah.

D: And Beau's family are all from Beauregard. And Beau keeps me up to date on the Mennonites because I think the Mennonites are a group over there that we just don't even know they're there.

A: Yeah. That's right, Don.

D: And I just think it's important that we should know they're there.

B: Well, I've worked in Louisiana history—in the Louisiana studies center for almost 35 years and until Don brought it up I had never heard of Mennonites over there.

A: Yeah, they're uh—the old Schmidts. Schmidt. That enclave of Mennonites came down from Kansas and the panhandle of Oklahoma in the 1930's—same time we came down--and probably were encouraged by the prospectus at Long Bell Lumber Company circulated all through that dustbowl country. And I have one of those originals. I'll dig it out and make sure you guys have access to—

D: We'd love to.

A: It's **fallin'** apart—oh! there's a baby calf!

D: Yeah!

B: Yep!

A: Hours old. Or minutes old.

D: Now, did you—do you recall if there were any [Yoders] in the De Ridder area?

A: I do not—that does not ring a bell.

D: Alright. Because, according to Beau, the Amish have become very good in, let's call it "Farm Implement Repair" and they've got themselves a nice niche market, just repairing farm equipment! And it's apparently a pretty good-sized community. You know, we're not talking ten families, here.

A: Well, the Mennonites that came down at the same time we did, formed a co-op called "Highland Growers." And Long Bell and all of their solicitation referred to the highlands of Southwest Louisiana. And the land was for sale for \$3.50-10.00 an acre and what have you. But that is still in business and that's who we buy our fertilizer from and they apply it for you and all this, that, and the other. Been a very successful business operation. Think we better blow our horn and wake that boy up? Oh he's awake! Got his foot up...But our family was a starvation situation. We had to leave the dust bowl country, all the topsoil was blew away, [Broom Corn] was the main cash crop and—that and cream. We had some milk cows and the apparently the kids all started milking when they was 4/5 years old [they just continued] right on milking and would take the cream cans out into the road and the tomato man would bring 'em to town and haul the empty ones back. All of [INAUDIBLE] lifestyle. Well, we came to Louisiana everything had just—on the heels of the depression and the dustbowl all was a double whammy. On that part of the country. Hardly any—

D: You lived in Oklahoma or Colorado?

A: Colorado—southeastern point of Colorado, back of the county. And there was about 30 families that ended up in the De Ridder area from that corner of Colorado and came down here and bought land and moved livestock and [barrel]. And in our lifetime—my lifetime, my mother and dad went back there one time, in 1948, year I

graduated high school. One of my nieces that was about my same age, and Mother and Dad, we drove from De Ridder to Seattle and out to California and up to Seattle to see one of my brothers that lived there in Seattle and came back down through Yellowstone, and back through [Campbell] Colorado, and I took my wife up there two years ago and when we come back to Louisiana she told my brothers, she said, "Well, I see why ya'll moved to Louisiana."

D&B: [Laughing]

A: She was not impressed. Didn't have much in common with Terrebonne Parish where she was grown.

D: Now, what's her surname?

A: It's Smith. S-M-I-T-H.

D: Is she related to Clifford Smith?

A: No, Uh uh. Her father's people were from over on the river. They were the Smith family over there around Lutchter. And her mother's side of the family was [Musées] from down in Lafitte.

D: Mm hm.

A: And the Rogers family. Roger (said with French accent). And Gerald Wasan, that was the land manager for LLB was going through his old records one time and found a list of their trappers from Lafitte and mailed it to my wife, and there was about 10 or 12 of her ancestors on that trapping list.

D: Wow. Yeah. Now that LL&E has gone the Burlington and Conoco Phillips, you wonder where all of those historical records have gone.

A: In the garbage dump.

D: Yeah, and it's too bad because they tell such an important story about wetlands and how the wetlands were used and the people that were there. I mean it's just not insignificant. And I just don't know—Paul Carrel may have some clues because he worked at Burlington for a while.

A: Yeah, right. And Kermit Coulas—Kermit is a well-educated guy and his dad was a [townie] agent I think in Assumption maybe...Assumption I'm pretty sure.

D: Now, was Kermit with LL&E or was he with—

A: He was hired by LL&E right out of college and has stayed on right with all of the changes and he's still there. And who advantaged the Continental Land and Fur Company?

A: Alright, that was a track of land that's owned by a family—it's a family owned corporation—matter of fact, one of the great-great granddaughters that owned continental, owned some land that adjoins some of our property up in De Ridder and they live up in Kansas now but J. B. Miller was a land manager for Continental Land and Fur and attorney, in the [Middle Ing] Firm. And today's land manager or Continentals Manager is George [Strain]. He lives over in Covington, he has offices in Veterans, in that high-rise building right there on Jefferson Parish boundary line.

D: Mm hm.

A: And they hired Greg Linscomb. Greg worked for me as one of my senior biologists for years, and when we retired I finally convinced him to accept an offer to go to work for Continental and thank gosh he did because he has really been a tremendous asset to 'em.

D: Yeah, we're trying to get an interview with Greg, I've known him for a long time—

A: Yeah, you know Greg, right.

D: And he is—Greg's just good people. And besides, Klondike's kinda fun to go through every now and then. Well how about the Miami Corporation was that—I mean [main light] Miami would imply maybe Ohio.

A: That's where they came from. And ended up with this property here in Cameron and Vermillion, in some stuff on—down that St. Mary on—

D: Yes.

A: By St. Mary Land Company's joint acreage. They've had a whole series of land managers. Gordon Hogan is now the manager for Miami. However, they've hired a young guy by the name of Chad Corville. Chad's grandfather was Johnny Lynch. Johnny Lynch was a fly away biologist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and at one time was manager of Sabine Refuge when this impoundment was being planned and whatever. And Chad's mother was a Sagrera. Jonny Lynch had married Zoe from Shenuatig, back in the late thirties, early forties, sometime. He and O'Neal were real real close, worked together, spent a lot of time together when the Tig was in the marsh but Chad is now working from Miami and really a good addition. He had worked for Ducks Unlimited after he left college and they went to work for Miami.

D: Now...is there a Biloxi Land Company?

A: Yeah. Biloxi Marsh Lands.

D: Where did they come from?

A: They're part of that Southwest Louisiana process. They bought land adjoining and outside of the Delacroix property on out there east of New Orleans, Orange Acreage, about 90,000 acres, somewhere in that vicinity. There's a young guy by the name of Will Rudolph; is one of the heirs I think of that ownership and is kinda the overseer. Randy Mortel, who got his degree in fisheries and did his research work at Rockefeller, works for them. So he is a good contact for you. Randy lives down in Lockport. Why don't we just run into here if you can—

D: No problem...

[ALLEN GETS OUT]

A: 7.1 and the water is **runnin'** to the northeast so that water, to get out of here, goes all the way around through Hackberry, out that bayou on the north side of the little old village of Hackberry into the Calcasieu ship channel to get back out to the gulf.

D: Yeah, there's a researcher at UL. He had [Masellius] develop a very very good hydrodynamic model—

A: Mm hm.

D: And he has shown how the G.I.W.W.s play a critical role in salinities and how they operate from the Gulf of Mexico to the G.I.W.W. east and west towards Lake Charles and then back out to Calcasieu.

A: Well, [INAUDIBLE] apparently ran into those problems in the thirties when they built that [breach] G.I.W.W. from the Lake Charles [stuff]...Vermillion Bay. Prior to that they had the old schooner bayou locks that was down south of there. And it was the old Intracoastal canal came into White Lake and Grand Lake and part of the Mermentau River could get over to the Lake Charles area but the Chocolate family had built the Sweet Lake Canal from the Calcasieu there south of Lake Charles, eastward into that Chocolate property and they had a big rice farming operation in

that real isolated area and had a rice mill out there on the farm and that barge canal was built to transport sack rice up into Lake Charles for [sane] and that was tied into and made part of the Intracoastal canal and I strongly suspect if the truth is known. Saltwater intrusion after the bar was cut out here, influenced the Corps of Engineers into building The Locks there on the Intracoastal canal on Lake Charles.

D: Have you ever heard of—I mean, we can make some assumption; I just **wanna** ask you--have **ou** ever heard why we have the term, "Schooner Bayou"?

A: Well, apparently, Don, there was a fairly active commerce attachment with Galveston and that was all done with a schooner that sailed into the mouth of the Mermentau and [took branch there], and I at one time, knew the name of that schooner...I don't think it was the Majestic, I think that was a boat that linked [Pilot Town] in New Orleans and I, for the life of me, have lost the reference to the name of the schooner that serviced it. But the Crane family, Hilda Crane, who's one of my secretaries at Rockefeller who's married to one of the Cranes, Hilda probably could dig out some of that information for you out of the old Crane Family records. Uh, one of her husband's cousins were there Harpers and they have an engineering company over and they're likely to have more realistic records than anybody and Lonny Glenn Harper would be the engineer there.

D: When you think of the Biloxi Land Company, something that came to mind, and that I wanted to ask you about: After the Trapper's War in Plaquemine, the Meaux family began to go into competition with basically the Perez family and were purchasing land in the name of trappers and others. Is any of that Biloxi Corporation land part of what developed after the so-called Trapper War?

A: I suspect it is. And it may have been a kind of a division from the [Hislano's] around...Bayou Terre aux Boeuf. Yeah, everything kindly north of that went into the Biloxi and everything south of it was Delacroix. All right? But that, I think you can get a lot of that Dot Binge. She is very, very active in that [Hislano] community in history that her folks had. Now, there's a new kid on the block now that ended up in the [Nero] Foundation. They've got a foundation down there formed—these are young boys from Michigan whose aunt was Nero's common law wife and after his death **in all oh his** will, everything went to her, and she in turn has formed the foundation. That's all public records. Now, Jack Stevens, the sheriff in St. Bernhard and two or three of the other prominent politicians are on that foundation board. Her—the old lady's dead now, but her niece is now on the scene down there and has moved down the [to be living] in St. Bernhard so they're available.

D: Alright, well Carl and I were looking at records of Tulane. Tulane has some records that are just phenomenal. They don't really know what they have.

A: Well that's **kinda** like your football team. [LAUGHING].

D: I'm not **gonna** tell you what his plan is until you answer my question.

A: Oh, okay.

D: Alright, have you ever heard the name Peter Bolreck? As a landowner?

A: Yeah, but I can't [be too] guess where it might be. It may be the river itself, right along Venice, or somewhere I don't know.

D: No? If you go from Mulberry—

A: Oh, ok.

D: And you go east—we're gonna lie just so you get an idea—almost to Chenier, and you go west to almost Pecan Island, and you run two straight parallel lines right up to White Lake, that's what they say they owned.

A: That might be.

D: And what's interesting, no matter what record we look at, this name doesn't show up. Doesn't show up anywhere! Yet, it's clear that these are survey records, that it was surveyed by people, the name's on the survey, and yet it's a name that just doesn't show up, Allen, it's just not there!

B: And no one can remember anyone...

A: Who was the surveyors that surveyed that?

D: I don't know—

A: Do you know that?

D: We're trying—

A: I would look at the Cameron/Vermillion Parish boundary line because that would be about where that—western survey line that you described there would be.

D: Let's see, I think we'll just sit right here a minute and let that old boy right there pass, I'm gonna change the salinity in this pool, okay?

A: [Laughing] I don't believe you're gonna change it much.

D: Well, I'm gonna just try to help it out, we'll let this guy come by, but it's just one of those things that Carl and I are trying to sort out in our minds, well a great deal of this land was purchased by people who were determined to reclaim it.

A: Yeah, that's all reclamation oriented.

D: And we have found township plots. Now wait! Nobody's seen these, actual township plots where they have a surveyed map and put in all the roads including areas for fountains—

A: Yeah, oh yeah.

B: And parks, and libraries.

D: And yet to our knowledge, what we're quoting has never been published, never been seen, it's just a little difficult for us to get the permission necessary, but we think it's not insignificant because it points out that, although the Williams'--no I lost it. But there were several people that came in bought huge, huge, massive amounts of land.

A: Yep. [Wisners]—

D: The Wisners!

A: Old man Wisner, he was a flim-flam artist, worse than MacElainey...

[TAPE STOPS AND RESTARTS]

D: Of what he wants to do—

A: Of what he wants him to do.

D: That's right.

A: And uh...

D: Well Wisner certainly, you know, he came in here, had 11 companies, 1.2 million acres, had his own dredge company—

A: And he dreamed of turning it all into a drain area to emulate that stuff up there around Lake Erie.

D: Yes indeed. He was—there's no question—he was very clear about his goal.

A: Yeah, he was gonna—

D: And of course his land eventually became [LLME].

A: Yeah, and some of it that I manage out there on the [Montéon] property, that was a reclamation site there on Bayou LaBranch.

D: Yep.

A: And then we bought--the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries bought the [Nevelind] property out on Lake [Telawachi] probably...

D: Now, explain to me the Nevelind Property 'cause if you read some accounts, this is Lake [Catawachi], and we're gonna say it's a circle.

A: Yep.

D: Some accounts say it's on the Western Side—

A: Uh huh.

D: Some accounts, say it's at the Northern Side. On the Northern side there's a place called Churchhill Downs. Now, that would indicate to me, that's the original Netherlands.

A: That was the original Netherlands.

D: Can you tell us a little bit about how that—

A: Well, Wildlife and Fisheries, when I was there, we bought 3500 acres of that Northwestern corner of Lake Catawachi. Those farmland areas that had eroded, broke into Lake Catawachi, but they were real, real good waterfowl habitat—tremendous amount of—what are them damn fish?—real good waterfowl area, mainly for coots, water aquatics and still is. Heavily hunted area in there and that Netherland Corporation had some people in Holland, still as orders, that we ended up getting in the act of sale. That act of sale is in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries records somewhere. You could eventually, I think dig out the ownership somewhere.

D: Now, clearly when you look at the land, it's flooded, agricultural land. How did it flood?

A: It was properties that they had drained in oxidized and—subsidence and oxidation. Once you dry these marshes up they just turn into a sponge bed. And happened there with the Netherland Corporation. They drained it—1915 Hurricane came through there and flooded it, went over top of those protection levees. One of my wife's first husband's grandfather worked in that swamp at Boutte. And actually, when we bought that Salvador Wildlife Management area from Exxon, the old man was still trapping. And he told me, he says, "Ya'll bought a Eagle [mask] right there." I said, "Whatchu talkin' 'bout?" and he said, "Well there's an eagle that nests on that property." And he took me back there in an airboat—airboat from over here in Rockefeller...guys we may be in trouble. Let's see if the gate is openable...and uh got in there to that thing—and he even took me in the woods where they had some old corrals with barbed-wire fence where they pinned up the mules and oxens that used to drag those logs down here.

D: Hm...You can see on the topographic sheets, the outlines of what clearly were agricultural plots.

A: Yeah, well we got an old pump station still out there.

D: Really?

A: On that area, uh...

D: And there's two! There's one that's clearly Churchhill Downs, but there's another at the Western Side, now I'm just wondering if they didn't reclaim two plots—

A: They did.

D: Okay.

A: And maybe three.

D: Woah.

A: There's another spot down south there a little ways that goes down there towards Crown Point that is got to be an old reclamation site.

D: The Pin?

A: Yeah, the Pin.

D: Pin, yes, it is.

A: [INAUDIBLE] that you guys need to keep in mind: There's a young boy down there by the name of Troy Swest. That's my wife's little nephew. And he can take you to those old pump stations out there in that Netherland track.

D: And who does he work for?

A: He's a trapper, hunts alligators, and carpenter, and what have you.

D: And where is he based?

A: He lives in [Morero].

D: Okay.

...[DRIVING TALK]...

D: Well the Netherlands Track...Senator Olario and a fellow by the name of Reeves, wrote a book together on Westwego.

A: Mm hm!

D: And there are some marvelous photographs of the Netherlands track and how they encouraged people to come in, buy the land, put houses, and the point of fact—the point that looks like Churchhill Downs actually looks like it belongs at Churchhill Downs! It's like a clubhouse should be at Churchhill Downs!

A: That may very well be.

D: It is just an interesting piece of history.

A: I think I have a copy of that book. I'll dig around and look at it again, uh, Olerio's [lunch hall] were tied to the Cheniers and the storm that—

D: Chenier Comonata.

A: Yes, Chenier Comonata.

B: Now, you mentioned earlier the Pen, seeing a pen where they would store the draft animals for the rubber industry—

A: Yeah.

B: Can you describe that a little bit?

A: It was just a fenced off area in the woods, and still had the old barbed-wire remains in there.

B: About how large was it, do you remember?

A: Probably an acre or two in size. But you know, you see something like that and you think well how in the hell are you gonna pen up 50 animals in a spot like this? It wouldn't have enough food there to feed them overnight, much less six-eight months while they were logging, or ten months in the year.

B: I've always wondered about that, that's something nobody ever talks about and I haven't seen anything in the literature—

D: No, no. The other thing we're intrigued by, we've been doing some interview work and pushing hard to produce something related to Sun-dried shrimp, largely because we think we can get a handle on it, put something out in a museum, or that kinda thing. You remember of course, Manilla Village?

A: Oh yeah.

D: Alright. One of the things we're trying to uncover, and we think we have a handle on it, is the amount of lumber required to build a platform—

A: [CHUCKLING] To build that dance floor.

B: Right.

D: Exactly. And that these were built in a time when all of that lumber either came by schooner or steam. In addition the boilers were all run by wood, so when you start looking at these platforms, there's some carpentry and engineering involved that has not been discussed—

A: And logistics of gettin' that fuel out there—

D: Yes, exactly.

A: I've often thought about that.

D: Yes.

A: And once you get that steam up, you don't let that fire go out. You gotta maintain that boiler, keep steam pressure up.

B: Any idea where they were getting that wood? Was it coming from upper Terrebonne?

A: It had to be coming from those wooded areas up in there from Westwego, to Morgan City. Frank Williams said that they ran that sawmill at Garden City on lumber that were cut and hauled in there and burned, and a lot of it was Pecky. And these are the Pecky Cypress that they happen to saw into a log, it just reject it, slide it out there, and cut it up into firewood. Before I'd get paid \$4,000 dollars a thousand board feet for some lumber [the Panellis] camp.

B: Yes.

D: Well we think there may have been as many as 80 shrimp drying platforms at one time.

A: Uh huh. Well there was one there across oyster bayou from Point au Fur.

D: Mm hm.

A: And uh, at one time, I vaguely remember seeing some of the support piles stickin' up—

B: Do you remember seeing any west of Vermillion Bay?

A: No. I don't know that there was ever any in Vermillion Bay that I'm absolutely sure of.

B: Okay.

A: There may been one down there around southwest pass in that area. But I don't think it was ever one over on Calcasieu and Sabine.

B: Now, on average, how many people would you say were working on a platform?

A: I would think you were looking at maybe 80-90 people.

B: Per platform?

A: Yeah. I would think that. Because the whole concept of that thing was that you got those shrimp half-cooked—or got 'em somewhat preserved—put 'em out there and then let 'em sun-dry, and then broke the shell off of 'em and kept turning 'em over and over and burning that [chaff] outta there until you had a dried shrimp.

B: Were there families out there too?

A: Well, I'm sure, yeah. How in the hell would you ever get that many men in one place without their women out there with 'em?

B: Yeah.

A: 'Cause they had to tell 'em what to do!

B&D: [LAUGHING].

B: So that could well have been more than 80 or 90?

A: Oh I would think you're looking at communities like that, with families and all involved, you'd probably have 150-200 people! And all of 'em were part of the process. Didn't make any difference if it was three-year-old feet that was mashing that shrimp or a 80 year old man, long as they could break that shell off there.

B: So they were still dancing the shrimp when—

A: Oh yeah, they was walkin' that stuff.

B: Now, people generally wore special boots for this?

A: I think they wore tough feet! They wasn't a bunch of candy-asses like us today! I seen that down in the tropics in those coffee operations. All the families that Ted Joanna and I worked with down in El Salvador in the 70's had big coffee [fingers] and they had big concrete platforms out there that they'd put their coffee on, and then they'd turn that with their little hand-made shovel-lookin' thing. It was a plow and it just pushed it through there and made little wind rolls and then the sun dried it and then they'd go back the other direction and make a fourth. And in the process that pulp shattered off of it and they just had the coffee bean and [psyched] that all up by hand, and ship it to Germany and France and everywhere else in the world. Alright Don, we're back out here at 130...

D: I'm gonna go right up here and decide...

...[DRIVING TALK]...

A: Good bunch of stuff to see down here that's really worth your time. And one of 'em—I gotta get back on my soap box—they built these really nice water control structures down here on the federal refuge and manage 'em to benefit shrimp rather than to block all the saltwater going into the federal refuge.

D: Mm hm.

B: Okay guys, hang on one second. Don, we're running out of battery on this one...

D: I handed you some batteries?

B: Yep.

D: Okay those are what we need.

A: Yugoslavians and their cycles in the oysters. Those people all came out of the Adriatic, over there in the northern end of the Adriatic, to Louisiana and up **til** the civil war and afterward, they were in direct conflict, labor-wise with slaves. So there wasn't really many jobs for them in the New Orleans area and some of **'em** recognized that there was oysters out there in that marsh and started harvesting oysters and bringing **'em** into the French Market. And **relates** in there that their families back in Yugoslavia were orchard people that had crepe orchards. And they would work in the New Orleans area for two or three years, then they'd get passage. Many of **'em** went from New Orleans to New York and then caught passage back to the Mediterranean and worked their way over there and worked back to Louisiana on about a two year cycle. And they went home to maintain those crepe orchards and come back to Louisiana. That's where the Petroviches and Ukoviches and **Sonofabitches** and all come from.

D: [Laughing]

A: And my daughter in law was a descendent of that group of Slovenians, Produced some really good grandkids.

D: Now, who were the principle fur buyers besides Steinberg?

A: Steinberg was the old original fur company. Maradona Brothers had a fur house a block from my office in New Orleans and over in this end of the state, it was the SAGRERAS. Present-day, Wayne SAGRERA's still alive and buying fur and what have you. One of his sons is on the Wildlife and Fisheries Board—Steven SAGRERA is on the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission but Wayne's still alive. And they were the big fur company when I was employed.

D: What about Mahler in Houma?

A: Mahler was a Houma man. He was from down there in the Houma area, and they each had their contacts in Europe. And when that aged group of men died out, their children became doctors, lawyers, and Indian chiefs. None of **'em** became fur buyers. So I broke that chain—YARBOROUGH was a "North of Louisiana" guy. He's from up here around Sicily Island and primarily dealt with upland—coyote, bob cat, and what have you.

D: Are there any of the heirs of say, Steinberg or—?

A: Julian was the end of the Steinbergs and he was so rich he probably just disappeared into the modern society. Maradona had no heirs that I ever met but I'm sure they had—but none of them ever went on in the fur business. The only ones that are in the fur business today is the SAGRERAS. [They're all alone.] And the only reason they're there is alligators. It was a link between fur and present-day commercial resource.

D: Well we met a fellow in Lafayette that deals in alligator skins and makes oh, belts, and has access to making boots, and he apparently has a very good business.

A: Who was he?

D: Uh, Carl.

B: Mark Stabler?

D: Mark Stabler.

B: Staton.

D: No, Saton!

A: I don't know 'im.

D: Yeah he uh, PhD at LSU.

A: Yeah.

D: But that whole industry...well, we lost sight of the fact, how important it was. We have found a photograph from a magazine called Outing that shows a Pow Meadow single room hut was used by trappers around 1900. And you read about these but finding a photograph is very difficult.

A: Yeah.

D: Because it's just like Bill said: "How'd these people do it?!"

A: Yeah, that's right. Well, my next door neighbor, I talked to her this morning, she's got a little shop in De Ridder, lived in Grand Chenier, she was school teacher down there. And after Rita, they moved up here to their property in De Ridder. She said that she can't remember as a kid—and she was raised in Cameron—said, "I don't remember the mosquitoes being that bad, now I can't go out down there and even visit with our in-laws without the mosquitoes absolutely killing me!" And she may have a point there. It may be that these marshes broke up and what have you. Now, this here is part of that federal refuge and there's that—one of those canals that proceeds west all the way to that Burton-Sutton Canal.

D: But this is the old Stark property?

A: This is the old Stark property. All the way from Sabine Lake to Calcasieu Lake across here. And as I mentioned here earlier, they built these big elaborate water-control structures and they leave 'em open. And the reason they leave 'em open, National Marine Fisheries wrote into the permit that [allowed] interchange of marine organisms so they might as well just left 'em wide-open to start out with. And see the gate's open there now. And I've checked the salinity here, in conjunction with that Dorée part property down there, saw some 18 parts going west into this canal. This canal goes all the way down to [INAUDIBLE] feeds all into the federal refuge. And you say something at these public water fountain meetings about the US Fish and Wildlife Service not managing this track of land they all get their nose out of joint, but goddamn! What duck gonna come down here and land in the salt? A barren salt marsh? None. And [INAUDIBLE] were carrying a decent population of [Snokies].

D: Yeah, well we were around Gadon and there's a lot of geese there but I'm...

A: [chuckling]. Well there shouldn't be. They should be south of there and down in that coastal marsh around Abbeville and what have you. And of course, ya'll have touched on something very accurate: those trappers burned that marsh annually for two things: It made it possible for 'em to walk over that surface out there and secondly, they understood the cycle of these [plank managers]. Three corner grass, [Gergazolii], responds to burning. And it's a cool weather growing plant. So if you burn it in the fall of the year, [old me I three square gets ahead of that spart tine a patents and all dominic plaque community]. With these late burns up in March of the following year, all you doin' is encouraging those obnoxious plants to grow. That was the Sabine Headquarters, right there.

B: But I would think if you're burning it in the cycle you could feed cattle on it as well and—

A: Oh yeah! Sure! Burn it in October when you get that first little cool snap in the fall of the year, set that marsh on fire and burn—and don't burn 100,000 acres. Burn thirty or forty acres here, a little patch there, there, there, and there. And you can rotate your cattle grazing in that process and grow back.

D: Hm. Yeah we learned that out in Chenier that was the policy of the Sageras.

A: Yeah.

D: That they would burn a small plot, small plot, small plot—

A: That's right—

B: [board affect].

A: Yep.

D: And that became their pasture.

A: Yep.

D: And they kinda gave the other a rest. And my guess is there may be a year or so go do the other side.

A: Yeah.

D: You forget how far it is from the Gulf of Mexico to Gum Cove.

A: Yeah. It's about 35-40 miles.

D: That's a looooong ways to push water.

A: [Any] amount of water to cover those pimple mounds up. I think this is that central canal...Those old remnant fences were to separate different grazing allotments on this federal refuge.

D: Now, because this is a federal refuge, US Fish and Wildlife can pretty much establish their own policy here?

A: Yeah. And of course the minerals were life in perpetuity with the Stark heirs who sold them the property and reserved the mineral rights. And some of these elevated areas are access roads built in there to 'em, to mineral prospects, production and what have you. That dark green plant there is the Cadillac of the muskrat industry. Those are three-cornered grass and these there because it's burned. They've got a pretty good burning regime here on the refuge...Here again is another one of those big Morphonite structures that no longer—never did—work because it was planned around shrimp instead of wetland management.

D: Wasn't there a big track of Maurepas swamp that was recently given to Wildlife and Fisheries?

A: Yeah, uh huh. And um, that was some of the [Mecum] property. Old John Mecum got too big for his own good years ago and got in such a financial [straights, telling] 'im to lose 'em along that land and he ended up selling it to some Arab to try and recoup some of his losses and that's the tracks that ended up with Wildlife and Fisheries.

D: Now, so, it stayed in the hands of Arabs?

A: No, it is now in the hands of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries but the minerals stays with the former owners.

D: Because I know there was some Lutchermore land in there.

A: Yeah, right.

D: And then there was something called XLR...which may be the Saudi land.

A: That's the Saudi land.

D: Alright.

A: And the Moore-Odom stuff was tough and Mecum bought from them. He got into the inner workings of the Stark family and bought that interest down there in Moore-Odom interest. And that's a bitter pill for [Roussier] and his mother—let those other siblings out-vote her and sell that track. But that part of the—

D: Well that's a beautiful swamp!

A: Oh yeah.

D: We interviewed a fellow who, uh—you may know him, Kerney Sheets?

A: Uh, I've heard that name, yeah.

D: He logged it essentially by himself; selectively cut everything, cut only the finest timber, milled it, pulled only the finest timber, and had a very good living, had his own business in Sorrento. He's 81 and thinking about going back in the swamp!

A: [Laughing]. Well let me—go back, there was a big ole alligator dead back there on the side of the road. Now, this property here belongs to Apache. This was a track that Mecum had put up for sale and was willing to sell, and I flew down here with Dewey Will, Richard Yancy, and we looked at it, went around and around and around, finally elected to just not be interested in it and they ended up selling it to [a Fina Tetrico] LaTerre. Now it went to Fina to Alpace.

B: But it seems like the marsh—**well it my uneducated eye**—it seems like it's fairly healthy on this—

D: Yeah it's salt!

A: This real brackish marsh, see, you're right at the Gulf at water towers on the beach and what we've done, we've transposed the quality of this marsh [a barrel] on that fresh water marsh. And look what kind of a mess it's in! And 3-400 years from now it may look like this. But I doubt it because the only way it's **gonna** get any recruitment of soil is from these infrequent storms that'll wash a little mud up there on it. Denise Reed and Gene Turner and Bruce says that these storms are good for the marsh, they bring in silt. Well, I don't think that's what you heard from the people that are living in that marsh today about how good it is [without a dam]. Tear their property all to pieces! Albeit, it may put a lens of silt out there on that land but it's certainly not a beneficial thing for the wetlands.

D: Yeah, we talked to Sheryl and he mentioned that one of his friends had put a pump on one of his pastures in March and he was still **pumpin'**.

A: Yeah. Yeah.

D: So, clearly there's a great deal of salt water.

A: Yeah, and...guys, you **gotta** remember: Everybody talks about freshwater introduction, freshwater introduction, **that gonna** be the answer. B.S. We get five feet of freshwater introduction a year in rainfall, what do we do with it? We drain it and put it back in the gulf. And don't dare apply for a permit to regulate its runoff. You ain't **gonna** get that permit. So you know, it's just—it absolutely befuddles me. I get so irritated and so uptight I just feel like walking out of those kind of shareholder meetings. And you know, you tell everybody, "Well look. What are we **gonna** do with that five feet of freshwater we got?" "Oh, what you **talkin'** about?" "Well every one of those little showers that we get is freshwater introduction and we're not tuned in to

the cycles to utilize it." Did you ever have any contact with any of the FINA people? The old [Pulchar] family, John Woodard?

D: John Woodard I did from—

A: Yeah.

D: And then even before him a mister Vincent?

A: Yeah, Larry Vincent was [the turn over to the young firm]. And I have a lot of dealing with Larry and [Marsh Island]. [It was] also the Marsh Island. That's Apache's office, that there, that's on the beach out at Holly Beach. And Tim Allen is the guy that replaced John Woodard down there in the Houma office of Apache.

D: Well, the LaTerre Company, their roots are also in Iowa.

A: Yeah, the [Puljar] family.

D: And then it became Tenico LaTerre, Then Fina LaTerre, the Fina, then I don't know what happened to it.

A: And then it went to the Apaches, yep.

D: Well this is all that's left of Holly Beach.

A: That's Holly Beach. And all of these facilities including the power line you see here are as all since Hurricane Rita. And Ike inundated it again.

B: Well, let's see Don, there are about a dozen, I guess, "permanent camps," out here.

D: Yeah.

B: Maybe less than that.

A: [Laughing] Here's a truck that didn't make it out in time.

B: Nope...Let's see, Don, can you drop the windows just a hair so we can get some of these flies out? The other side. Okay.

A: Well, these peoples like views of the open ocean better than I do.

D: Yeah they do.

A: Pour the money into 'em like they're doing here.

D: They do put a lot of emphasis on their..

A: What's kindly irritating me, now this is one place I don't think we **oughta** spend one dime of public money **keepin'** that gulf from reclaiming this area. These people knew they were building these things in a precarious place when they made the decision to do it. I went to a meeting and there was a couple there that had built a nice home and the beach was washing away and at that meeting [INAUDIBLE] and said, "Well when are ya'll gonna do something about our beach out there?" Lord. I felt like jumping up and saying, "What the hell are you wanting to live on a beach for?"

D: Yeah I understand. When you spend your time, like I have trying to learn a little bit about beaches, the one thing you learn is they're pretty ephemeral.

A: Heh heh, they sure are. Now, down this coast, here, Don, is those segmented break waters.

D: Yes.

A: Those things are working. And they're a doable thing. If you want this pristine view out in front of **ya** that looks like a pile of rocks. But if you want that road to stay in place you better build what they got down yonder. And...and there's other sites in Louisiana where those things need to be constructed. [Fushun], close to the city, it's

a three hour drive from New Orleans to La Fourchon if you go the speed limit. Don't get a ticket.

D: Yeah and Golden Meadow.

A: Golden Meadow is [life blood of]...Golden Meadow, I've contributed to their...

B: Operating fund?

A: Operating fund.

D: Well, these houses must—no, they look like new bracing underneath it.

A: Yeah. These are all after Rita. There was not a single structure left here. Power line or nothing.

B: But these were going up, Don, when we came by with Chuck. That was in 2007, I think.

D: And now they've gone through Ike.

A: Yep. Yep. They probably had 3-4 feet of water...

D: I may not be able to get that flag the way I want it...Maybe...Ahah! Going to work! If I turn it on it will!

B: Yeah, usually it makes a difference.

D: Yeah, it's part of the trick....That's alright. I was trying to get the flag. I was trying to get the flag on one side and building on the other with the dark. But that's okay.

A: Too close to you and too far away.

D: Yeah, that's alright. You're the only people knew that I tried to take that picture so we're fine! Let's try to get some of these flies out.

A: Yeah. One come back in and stayed...

...[SILENCE]...

A: I think this road may dead-end.

D: Yeah I'm gonna make a turn right before these two houses. I'm sure there's a—right up here there'd be a—

B: [INAUDIBLE]

D: Wow man, A lot of money.

A: Lot's of precarious money.

D: A lot of money.

B: Well Don, I don't know what to tell you, it's set on focusing on the center object.

D: Alright, well.

A: He may have had some interference with the ground areas picking up their [gitter]...Well, this thing has the potential of being another coon-ass Riviera before long.

D: Well, clearly there are many people willing to take the risk.

A: Sure there are!

D: And I mean, that is of course their prerogative, but you have to remember you're taking the risk.

A: Yep. And the people that are coming here to do that, they love that beach area crabbing and what have you.

D: Rodney Gilbo used to—

A: Oh, Rodney.

D: Say his peace.

A: He was a perennial agitator. No, but he did a lot of good, he sure did.

D: He spoke up for—

A: The issues out in the front.

D: What made a lot—well...He had the passion.

A: Yep. Very sincere about it.

D: Now, there's no fencing here, so there's not gonna be any cattle?

A: Oh yeah, there's cows in there. I imagine they got those cattle pretty well moved out of right now.

D: Yeah, because of the—

A: Bugs, Don.

D: The mos-quitoesss.

A: And those Green Heads.

D: Greenheadsss.

A: I think the Littles are the cattle people down here.

B: Well, I've been told that the flies are worse than the mosquitoes here on the coast. Is that correct?

A: Yeah...

D: Now, you and your brother have property that butt up against each other? In De Ridder? You mentioned you were helping—

A: Yeah, we got—we have about 1000 acres of property in the family. 80's, 40's, 100 acre tracks, 200 acre tracks, and my brother and his son and grandson are the primary cattle owners. I've got about 50 head. The wife and I—we keep 'em mostly there. But about all that we accomplish with our little family-run operation is to keep the [Chinese delatries] beat down.

B: Don, are those [pokey boats] out along the coast?

A: No, they're oil and gas pumps—

[ALL TALKING AT ONCE]

D: That's a shrimp boat there and that's a shrimp boat.

A: Yep.

D: I'm sorry, my field of view gets pretty narrow on this road.

A: That's right.

D: Hug the coast highway. Well, Allen, do you have any children?

A: I have a son and daughter and my son died with [allo] cancer about 40 years of age.

D: Mm hm.

A: He had a son and daughter and his son is a sergeant in the marine corps as an Arabic interpreter and he just finished his third hitch in Iraq and gettin' geared up to take a platoon into Afghanistan before long. He's 30 years old now. And then Marilyn had two girls and a son when I married her. And her son died with a sleep apathy. And then we've got two daughters. One lives in Metairie. She's got two little boys 8 and 10 years old and we have another daughter that lives about a mile and a half from us and she has a daughter that's 20 in college. So we--and she was a real active high school rodeo princess so I got to relive my youth through her. Had a lot of fun.

D: She go to McNeese or ULL or LSU, or—?

A: She went to McNeese one day, ended up in the hospital with an asthma attack.

And spent the next ten days—made it through the first semester after she got back

in school and decided she was gonna go to a trade school. This last year has done real well. So whether she goes back to college or not I don't know and don't really pressure her, whatever comes along. And she's taken a course in early childhood development, which will end up being able to transfer that into nursing or whatever if she wants to. And she's happy so that's the main thing, to keep her happy so—

D: Oh yes.

A: My granddaughter in Mississippi's, oh, 36-7, no children, so she's...doing well.

D: Hm. Now who owns this stretch of marsh through here?

A: This is a track known as the Maplewood Corporation. And there's about 10 or 12 owners in it as I recall. And they lease it out for cattle grazing and then oil and gas and that rights. And I think it's a bunch of people from up in there around Sulfur that made money in the oil and gas industry and what have you, bought it. Mecum had some ownership in here that they bought out.

D: Well, we're on highway 82 going from Holly Beach to Cameron and if we look on the north side of the highway that would go all—would be—that particular company owned from the highway all the way to the GIWW?

A: No, they own up to the federal—south side of the federal refuge. Apache owns a big chunk of this just north of this area so they're—the Maplewood Corporation is fairly small. 7-8,000 acres would be my guess.

D: Mm hm, Mm hm. 'Cause when you start looking over here there are large parcels of land. Now, when you get off the Cheniers—there may be small parcels on the Cheniers—when you get off the Cheniers, there's you know, 30 families—well 30 corporations—

A: Yeah.

D: And I'm guessing of course, but—

A: Yeah. [I am the uh]...Matilda Grey, Odoms, Greystream, yep.

D: Well, the [Midhaven] Plant brought in trailers so they're gonna [do their people] got a place to stay.

A: Yep.

D: Used to have a dormitory. And they're in business!

B: Yep, boats are all out

[ALL TALKING AT ONCE]

D: If there's an airstrip they're in business. And you can tell by just breathing hard.

A: Yep. And cookin' as we talk.

B: Doesn't seem that's sustained too, too much damage, Don.

D: No, it—there's—no. Now we've got some fencing as we approach the Calcasieu ship channel that—and the wire is tight.

A: Yeah, it's all up to—

D: That wire is tight! Not much rack on the wire?

A: All fairly new wire.

D: looks like new wire, yep.

A: I hope the ferry's not just leaving when we get there.

D: [LAUGHING]. There's some pretty cows!

B: Yep.

A: Bug bait.

B: Well, I would not want to be one at night.

D: No.

A: Or any other time—

D: No.

A: I feed my little limited herd of cows a material called IGR—Insect Growth Inhibitor. And they eat it, along with minerals, and then that is an insecticide that goes through the cow and into the manure and the flies lay their eggs in the manure and that kills the larva stage of the flies. And it gives up good cattle control. Rather expensive but it's cheaper than trying to spray 'em periodically. And not have much luck.

B: Well we couldn't have timed this any better!

A: I mean! That right there—

D: It looks like we're the last—the last wired body on this. They might squeeze two more on it but—

B: It would have to be a VW Beetle.

D: Real small.

A: If we'd have drove one more street, [OBSCURED BY LAUGHTER].

D: Well, Allen, we appreciate you taking your day today.

A: I've enjoyed it today! This is a lot of fun.

D: And we would like you to go through your files and any historical document that you would like to see preserved—

A: Well I think the key thing we have in our family is that old long bell prospectus. And my dad, when we bought our properties down here, had stumps on 'em. Old Long-Leaf Pine stumps—and he spent most of his life trying to get some of them stumps out. And in that prospectus it says in there, you know, that this was all virgin habitat and was clear-cut, had some stumps on it, but they're easily removed.

[ALL LAUGHING]

A: That was a classic example of a lie in print.

B: Well, what was he doing, primarily, trying to burn 'em, or?

A: Yeah, diggin' holes around 'em and dynamitin' 'em. They'd dig down long in the base of the old stump and bore a hole down in 'em with a big ole logger—A hand logger. And then they'd put dynamite down in there and blow 'em up out of the ground and bust 'em in the process. And then they'd load 'em on the truck by hand, haul 'em to a turpentine mill, Hercules power had a plant in DuQuincy. And then the Prolosby family from over in Picayune built a mill in De Ridder. At the time, I was, I guess I was a freshmen or somethin' or other in high school when they built their [INAUDIBLE]. And those people that came down with us, they all were dirt farmers, scratched out of subsistence living, they'd raise watermelons. That was their one cash crop that they sell. Some of us planted orange trees. The track of land that Mother and Dad bought had about 8 or 9 acres of satsumas on it when they bought it. And they used those and sold satsumas, and had a early freeze in about 40 or 41 that killed all of her trees. Didn't know and didn't get 'em preserved in time to avoid being killed.

D: Well, all the Cheniers produced oranges.

A: Yep. And still have a lot of oranges on them.

D: Really?

A: Not grove type things but—

D: Just scattered. And this also was very important cotton-producing.

A: Yep.

D: And that we've already documented, went to Galveston.

A: Yep, that all went right through here, and went out.

D: Yep. To Galveston.

A: And Mermentau went to Galveston.

D: And the Galveston cotton warehouses were HUGE.

A: Yeah. Well, they brought in all of that cotton from up here in the coastal plains of Texas. And they bartered with these business people down here. Um, I had a friend in college—Joe Singleterry—that was a cowboy when Odom and I were in college. His family had a store here in Cameron and his mother was a well-educated woman, was a school teacher in Lake Charles. Joe's dad was [Cameron] run the business, and she raised the kids in Lake Charles and got 'em educated. But they traded back and forth between Cameron and Galveston a lot and even on up into the 50's, I'd think that was a fairly good commercial link here. 'Cause that road from—[one of] my first trips to Rockefeller made the [round] and we made the day to go to Grand Chenier and the road to Abbeville was not built. So if you went to Grand Chenier you first went to Sulfur and [INAUDIBLE] across here and on down the road. It was a day drive from the Rockefeller Refuge to Baton Rouge. It was a big day.

D: It's also weird seeing a shrimper cross the channel here. You're right at the fringe of the shrimping grounds.

A: Yeah.

D: The good shrimping grounds, you know, are from Mississippi to Vermillion Bay.

A: Yeah.

D: And once you get past Vermillion Bay or the Delcam Canal, it's kinda iffy.

A: But I think what happened there went hey cut these bars, here, they lost their inland shrimp-producing nursery grounds and that's why that Cameron name is. That means shrimp in Spanish. Cameron. And apparently it went downhill from the time this bar was cut out here and—you can see in front of you, that's the ocean, there. That's the Gulf of Mexico. And that's where that bar was—about where that big crew boat's tied up out there.

D: Well have you ever run across anybody that told you stories about how wide Southwest Pass was at the eastern end of Marsh Island?

A: The western end of Marsh Island—

D: The western end, right, the western end.

A: Uh, I had a boat captain, [Unique Sonnier]...

B: Allen, you got a mosquito attacking you...

D: Hit it right there! You got 'im!

A: But Unique talked about how narrow it was. As a matter of fact I think they were smuggling [rock] from out in the Gulf through Southwest Pass and the revenuers got everything from 'em and sunk their boat and that was during prohibition and they said that all of the local people in that country all went out there and got that

Canadian Whiskey and...[Laughing]. And was looking for it for two or three years, diving and swimming and trying to find a bottle of booze.

B: Well Allen, lemme ask you something, you started, you said, in the early fifties working in the coastal plain?

A: I went to work for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in May of 1954.

B: Okay, well, to what extent did you have a problem of—a language problem?

A: No. None. I was aggressive enough, if they didn't wanna talk I kept pestering 'em til they talked to me to get rid of me and I—

B: So they switched to English too?

A: Oh yeah, sure! Yeah. We had a few trappers my first winter I worked for the department, first or second, that's confusing my mind. I spent about a month and half in a trapping camp and in Oyster Bayou on Marsh Island with a bunch of guys. And there was one guy in that group of four that could speak English well enough for me to carry on a conversation with 'im. The other guys all spoke French continuously. And that was right when nutria were coming on the scene and they were insistent upon walking that marsh and trapping just like they'd always done from the time they were little kids for muskrat. And I kept harassing them, "Why don't ya'll trap along the bayou?"

"Oh, no you got to walk along that marsh." So I finally got 'em to give me about a dozen traps and I'd set 'em along the bayou bank and they'd go in the marsh and they'd catch nutria and skin 'em out there in the marsh. And when they'd come in from running their trap line at 3 or 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, I'd have 15 or 20 nutria skinned and on the drying rack because the nutria were everywhere. You'd go running traps, reset 'em, go back to the camp, go back and run 'em and you'd have nutria again. And them old men couldn't get over that Yankee catching all them nutria. Skin 'em and dry 'em and everything else while they was fartin' around walkin'.

D: Do you remember any of these drying racks that were out in the marsh you know?

A: Yes, sure. They were extensive things and they were all associated with muskrat. They hangin' [breath] those muskrat on those big ole wires, the spring type—

B: To stress them?

A: Yeah. And they would hold 'em open where they could dry good inside and dry the leather side and then hang 'em up out there with the wind blowing and they'd dry in no time. And there was an art to that drying because if you left 'em out there too long, they'd turn into almost like parchment paper. Real real thin, and then they'd break, and they were worthless. So you had to have 'em just exactly right for that fur-buyer to be able to turn it without breaking it to look at the fur on the inside of it. So the person that was running that rack there was just about as important as the trapper and the skinner. And a lot of those were the women the camps. That was their job, to take care of that, cook, take care of the kids, and try to teach 'em a little bit while they was—in their spare time.

B: I've heard that some people grew some few vegetables and potted plants.

A: Yep! Have any old pirogue, got to where it's leaking too bad to stay afloat, that became a—

B: That was a family garden?

A: Uh huh. That's right. They'd fill it up full of mud and plant [rows...of] vegetables in 'em or roses, or hydrangeas. And a lot of those things like that plant growing down there at Gum Cove today, I imagine, at it's origin.

B: Well, I'm sure.

A: Let's take one quick little detour here, alright, Don, when you get up here where you can see that one way sign, go in right in there.

B: Now is that the Parish building—?

A: That's the parish courthouse right there, and this is part of the police jury office thing. And those oak trees in that courthouse yard was some seedlings that Dr. Glasgow brought down here from LSU and we gave 'em to Hadley Fontenot, he was the county agent, and this whole little bunch of grove of Oaks here, were planted, uh, at that time. And Judge Fontenot was the son of Hadley and during the Audrey memorial he brought that out and introduced me as one of the people that helped bring those oak trees down...

B: Those old trees have seen a lot.

A: Yep. Yeah, they been there since about 1958 or 9—

D: Amoco Road.

A: Amoco Road.

D: We got the convicts even here.

A: Yep.

D: How do you be a convict in Cameron?

A: Oh shit, that's easy! Just sell dope and get your ass caught!

D: Yeah, got it right!

A: Or steal a car and try to get to Lake Charles.

D: Yep...Yep.

A: Years ago, they brought a lot of convicts here from the east coast, the old people up here in the Carolinas had [pokey boats] that worked out here and seasonal, and they'd bring a lot of prisoners down here on those boats and they were in a work release program.

D: So, actually had low-risk convicts working the [pokey boats].

A: Yep.

B: Low risk, low cost.

A: Low risk, low cost. I went on board one of those snapper boats at the mouth of the river one time and I didn't even know it at the time that they were all convicts and got to talkin' to 'em, and one of those old boys said, "I'll tell ya one thing, this may be a bad job out here fishing snapper, but it beats the shit outta stayin' in that cell 24/7. I think that may have been the first time I ever heard that term used. 24/7. No doubt about it to him. That was a good outlet. A lot of these trees are those—we brought about 2,000 seedlings down here and I believe every single one of 'em got planted. How many survived is anybody's guess, but you can see these are all planted trees with being in that room.

D: Mm hm.

A: And that's one of the things that [Hootie Gaglian] and I have been beating the drums on in this restoration thing with the Cheniers. For God's sake, go back and

plant those things as densely as you can get 'em planted. And rebuild some of these Chenier farms.

D: Either that or bamboo!

A: Oh God, no [INAUDIBLE] bamboo.

D: It'll grow fast!

A: It'll grow fast.

D: It'll cover everything!

A: It'll cover everything.

D: It'll cover everything!

A: I tell you a plant that I think has got a bad rep, is this Tamarac. You know, the Tamarac. Boy, them people out in the west, you say something about planting Tamarac, they wanna lynch you and that's a no-no. 'Cause it sucks up all the water. That's some of the best bird [ruckers] we had, that Rockefeller was in groves of salt-cedar Tamarac. And there's a lot of it down here naturally. Well these people are recovering from Ike now.

D: Yeah they are. But not everybody's coming back.

A: No sirree!

D: You can still see the lanes going back to where the house was and you don't see any house going back there.

B: We've just driven by about 8 slabs, Don.

A: There's one right there. And these are all since Rita. These houses are all well.

B: Folks are moving to Lake Charles you think? Sulfur?

A: Yeah, we'll see where a lot of 'em are on the other end up here. What we'll do, we'll go up here to Creole and then go north up to Grand Lake.

D: Okay.

A: And then drive back Grand Lake Route and come out by the airport in Lake Charles.

D: Alright.

A: And Grand Lake ridge is just now solid. But it's transposed from down here.

D: So they still have their land—

A: Yeah.

D: They'll still probably run cattle, but they're gonna have their living operations away.

A: And they can't come back down here and build with any degree of comfort with the FEMA [rakes]. How is a 70 year old or a 60 year old person gonna go build a house like that? You almost have to have an elevator to get up there. You go in the house one time a day. I lived in two-story houses and what have you. In Rockefeller after Audrey, we built those houses thirteen feet above sea level and Chabrick and Larry McNeese and all of 'em. said their kids never played outside, they were always in the house because it was too much trouble to run up and down the stairs. So they ended up almost forcing them to live in the house all the time.

D: Where is [Shabrick] these days?

A: Had a mild stroke a few years ago, lives in Baton Rouge on, I think maybe Meadow Crest is the name of it, off of Stanford out there near the lakes. And he's

doing well. He and Greg Linscomb went to an award thing where he received a real nice plaque for his work in...

D: Alligator?

A: Yeah, the vegetation, mainly the vegetation aspect. Look at that house on that pimple mound. I don't know, that's...I guess that's a safer place to live but it sure doesn't have much aesthetic to me.

B: Well, and as you said, not much security because the mound only seems to be about six feet off the ground.

A: And built out of sand. These old Chenier decomposed shell material, you get a violent storm hammering that thing for 12-14 hours, it's gonna wash some holes—and if you don't have it grassed over like that one right there, you may lose—

B: [INAUDIBLE] pretty windows in it either!

D: Nope, that's it. Uh uh!

B: No windows in the front or the side, huh?

D: Uh uh, that's going to be just—that's it folks!

A: Well the morning of Audrey, uh, I got out and went slacked our boats off in the boat house and luckily got a couple of life preservers from the boat house and brought them back over to the house and my wife had fixed breakfast for our son and fed him, and about 8:00 that house went to bumpin' up and down—that's how quick that water came in there and we had a little building out in the back that's a brooder house. It came off the blocks and turned upside down and floated right toward our house and he had a great big picture window on the south side and it broke. And I had just made a dining room table and I nailed it up over that open hole, and about 20 minutes later we left that yard and went across the highway—house and all, and ended up in a big Oak tree. Floated up into that oak tree and got jammed and sunk. And the current held it in place there, and about 1:00 in the afternoon—that was all about 8:00 in the morning—about 1:00, the sun started shining and we heard an airplane. I told my wife, I said, "Well it's all over with." Oh, about that time, that son-of-bitch went back to the north came back through there and I thought sure it was gonna float us back out of that woods. But it held together and about 4:00 it kindly stopped raining and calmed down and got where I could climb out on the roof. And I could see some people in a two-story house out walkin' around their yard and that was the first indication that there was anybody left alive other than us. So we decided to get out of there. Crawled out the end of the house—I'd kicked the [Louver] out, and got out of there with the life preservers on, and we had a baby bed mattress that was floating and we put our son on it. I was walking over there to that house, I walked off into a hole, dumped him off our [life] to drown the poor little thing. (Laughing Sort of) And uh...but we got on over and spent the night there, and they were in the same shape, they didn't think anybody other than us had survived. And the next morning we started walking the ridges looking for people and finding a few but uh...

D: This was at Rockefeller?

A: This was at Rockefeller. Grand Chenier, yep.

D: Were you walkin' east or west?

A: I walked east to go to that house.

D: Yep, yep.

A: But then the next day, we—Robert Meer, who worked for me for ever, and I—got together and we were looking for his wife's family who lived west of the refuge, and we finally got back there to the house and we had found one or two people in trees and got them down on the way and got over there and her family was all okay. And we went on back to the refuge and went to try to get word out. One of the employees had taken one of the department's big old trucks home that evening and it was the only vehicle on the west end of the ridge that they were able to get started from. And he started haulin' people up and down the ridge, lookin' for family members and what have you. But we spent that day there, and my brother came down from Lake Charles about 4:00 in the afternoon—they launched the boat up there south of Lake Charles--I'll show you where he put in—he came across the marsh to Grand Chenier and then out and then came right to the headquarters and found my wife out there in the yard at those people's house, and we loaded up in the boat and went up into one of the [Creams'] houses and spent the night there. And the next morning was kinda the LZ. And the next morning I caught a helicopter from there into Lake Charles. So it...and when we flew across that big debris field north of Little Chenier, there was just hundreds of acres of debris with house pieces and houses and lumber all in it. And of course that's where they found most of the bodies too, so...Up in that area.

D: Now, the refuge had to be rebuilt?

A: Oh yeah.

D: In total?

A: In total. It **was** wiped that yard clean. The house we were in, I think—and I was the only family living there at the time—we had three resident buildings and a kind of a bunkhouse complex. And I think of those four buildings, the one we were in was the only one you could've survived in. The others just went completely to pieces. No sign of **'em**.

D: Yeah, when we were—the day Camille came through Jim Coleman and a group of us—I was a graduate student—we were going down to Wildlife and Fisheries Camp in the Delta Wildlife Refuge. I forget now who built that but it was some multi-millionaire, built this structure, and it was—we'd stayed in the ones before and it's **nothin'** in there less than a 2x10 and I'm talking 2 and a quarter by 10 and a quarter.

A: Yep.

D: So we go down and we're staying on the Louisiana, which I think was Huey Long's yacht.

A: Yep.

D: And there was a Wildlife and Fisheries fellow running the boat, and we went down there and it was as clean as you could see. There was nothing. Not a board, nothing. It was just gone.

A: Wiped clean. Yep.

D: What is the story of how Wildlife and Fisheries got the delta [passaloot]?

A: Yeah, Passaloot was a track of public lands that McElainey and some of the club members—well McElainey was—back up. E. A. McElainey was instrumental in—as I mentioned to you earlier—in convincing the Rockefellers and the Russell Sage

people to buy these two tracks. He and a fellow by the name of Charles Ward had bought the state wildlife properties over there on Vermillion Bay and donated them to the Department Commission—at the time I think it was called the Conservation Commission. And he used that donation as a leverage to convince these other people to do the same thing. Buy these lands and set 'em up as sanctuaries in perpetuity and all that. Well, at that same time that was going on the Delta Duck Club, who had properties off of main pass down there, had a huntin' operation and passaloot had a big old building down there that was a coast guard station and that 66 thousand acres was for sale by the state. And an act of the legislature in 1922 withdrew it from public sales and McElainey's encouragement and political clout. And Governor Parker was a friend of McElainey's and hunted with 'im and all and he championed that—withdrawing that from public sale. And that's where [Ron Passaloot] came in as a shooting grounds that was what they called it at that time. And then at the early thirties, the Delta Refuge came into being and it was purchased from the Buris Family and other private owners that had homesteaded it up there.

D: Now did the Delta Duck Club move to [Evoka] Island?

A: They sure did. And they moved in mass and the old Evoka Club in Evoka Island had a whole bunch of old prints and some old pressed plants that had been framed and displayed in shadow boxes that was all there at the old Evoka club that got lost. But they moved from Main Pass up there.

D: Well, Nash Roberts—

A: Yeah.

D: Was one of the early members. His son just retired from LSU—

A: Ken.

D: Ken, that's right--too see if Ken can get us into their records. And the other club that's been around for a long time is the Tally Ho.

A: Yeah.

D: And they're almost secretive in what they do.

A: Yeah, they sure are.

D: And then you have, at the very western edge of the state—and I mean—

B: Nice [INAUDIBLE] there.

D: Yeah, right? I mean right—you can't get much—still be in Louisiana, there's a piece of property called the Marsh Club and it's behind gates. I've never seen anything like it before, it's behind gates. And it's gotta be pretty wealthy people that hunt that piece of real estate.

A: Uh, you think it's on Matilda Grey's property?

D: You know, it might be, I can't tell ya—

A: I would suspect it is, I know what you're talkin' about there.

D: 'Cause you go down and there's what looks like an old elevated railroad. They still got the [decree a showed] piles.

A: Uh huh. Well, now old Highway 90 is abandoned in that area. It was adjacent to that railroad through there.

D: Alright, then that may be what I'm looking at because I just saw an end of the road and said, "I'm gonna go see what this is." And I come in there and I see this little sign: "Marsh Club Road." And I said, "Well, lemme take a picture of that" and

then I look over here and there's this big gate and I mean it's filigreed and got all kinds of—I mean it's nice—“Marsh Club.”

A: Uh huh.

D: And then there's somethin' 8 over there—somethin' 8 Ball--8...There's another club right close to it.

A: Well I tell you what, when you get a hold of Billy Hardeman, you may find a treasure chest there with him because he was in that [fee mederal] office of Amoco's. And he probably had come in contact with every single landowner that was from one end of this state to the other. Jesse Knoll, do you remember who Jesse Knoll is?

D: Mm hm.

A: State Senator. That's who Hardeman worked for, was for Amoco.

D: Well the Amoco was originally [Stanilan].

A: Yeah, old Stanilan Oil Company.

D: And if you got to Hackberry—we didn't do it while we were there but if you go to Hackberry, I forget Allen, which road, Little Lane, but you can still go back there and find their offices.

A: Yeah. I bet. Matter of fact, where we made that first hard turn to the left, if you turn right you'll go right to Stantlin's office back in there. Now this marsh here is a real good freshwater marsh—

B: Well, I was gonna ask you if that was saw grass—

A: No, it's all cattail and three-corner grass in here now. And long taw and that little short one is a seashore [pass paylum] growing in there, Bullwhip, Cattails...real good. And of course it's land-locked by the front Creole Ridge out there, Little Chenier, up here where those houses are, and that Water tower you see over yonder on the horizon is at the end of Pumpkin Ridge. There's a whole series of those Cheniers in line and little Chenier here is the furthestest north. I say the furthestest north but when you get up there to Grand Lake you're on the same Pliocene outcropping that Gum Cove joined.

D: Okay.

A: And you've got that big channel where the Calcasieu cut a hole through that Pliocene shoreline about 20,000 years ago and as it melted up north it came down in the Mississippi—spread out across a valley.

D: Now how would you react to something that uh—you know we have a small dredge program. So we get a small dredge and we put it in this bar up here, right here. It's already got a footprint. And we start harvesting sediments, and we put 'em out there, wherever. Now, we'll put some restrictions on how deep you can take this, but it's already there though, alright? I don't know, pick a number.

A: 50 feet.

D: Alright, I've heard people talk about that.

A: And you have to go down far enough to get past the organic sludge that's here now and harvest that lid off that Pliocene to get anything that you could expect to ever—

D: And if you go 50 feet, just figure, alright we'll put us a—let's call it a sub-aqueous dam and leave a certain amount of header space. Whatever you think is needed for a

bath boat. And that would keep any saltwater—'cause it would sink—within the channel. Is that fair?

A: That's—sounds plausible. Hell of a lot more plausible than a lot of crap I've heard.

D: Well, it's just—we're trying to think creatively here, trying to think as—

A: Lemme tell you what has happened. The very first one of the Quipra projects implemented in Louisiana was on the [Mont les Ons] property in Bayou [LaBrinks]. Built a little levee around and utilized some old levees left over from [Wisner's] era. Went out at Lake Pontchartrain from here to that car a little further with a big dredge and fill that thing full of mud and raise it up to about two feet level with the expectation that it would subside and consolidate. And Sue [Hozz] and I took a number out of the air and flied these marshes. The ideal lookin' marsh to me is one with 80% land and about 20% water. Is a good combination. Well, that's what our goal was. Built this thing about 15 years ago today is just about 80/20 and it's there, it's one of the finest projects—I've got about 2 or 3,000 acres of open water right next door. I can't get the door open even to suggest we do the same thing next door because they don't want that damn [doe] marsh [a little duck hunters]. They want to raise shrimp. And I get so bent out of shape and it doesn't do me any good to talk to 'em. That project costs \$10,000 and acre with available [sim]. Had another track on Point au Fur Island, Catholic-owned church, owned 40%, the Schmidt Family out in Chicago owned 60%.

D: Of [Point au Faire].

A: Of Point au Faire. Had an ideal spot, built a levee around it, about 400 acres, went out on bids, built at \$10,000 an acre had access to some additional money that had accumulated in DNR in the mitigation fund that the legislation was buying and to keep from being transferred to the general fund, I convinced leadership over there to go out there to Point Au Fur and do another little project. We know it worked. Well I went out there, engineers got involved, "Well, we gotta make a square box and pump it in there and..." Spent half of our budget trying to maintain that little levee around that thing. Finally got it up to project height, cost us only \$46,000 and acre to build it, got criticized by everybody in the [Crookebal] area: "It's a waste of money to try and do that kind of a project, you can't do it." We're right back now, coastal environments, put together a proposal for the St. Charles land syndicate to go in that big open water and take a suction dredge in the lake.

D: Lake Pontchartrain?

A: Lake Pontchartrain—and dredge out, and instead of boxing it into a container, pump it, just let it go—lemme let you guys look while you got this. This is a GIWW and lookin' back to the east you're looking toward Vermillion Bay and back the other way, you're looking toward Lake Charles, look at the traffic in that son-of-a-bitch. And it was built 150 feet wide and a couple hundred feet wide now. Now this is the Cameron Prairie Federal Refuge, this was part of that North American Waterfowl Management Plan money bought this track. And it's got a lot of pimple mounds out here on it.

D: Yeah, Carl and I went out here back through a little roadway up here. You should see the alligator in there!

A: Oh yeah.

D: Big alligator! I mean this is not little puppies, these are big alligators!

B: Yep, we went all around it too.

A: That's a good spot. My granddaughter come down, we'd take her through that thing and bring the grandkids over to see the wildlife. But this is a really nice tourist type thing.

D: It is!

A: It's something that people can drive around and see it and...But anyway, that new project, we're trying to get 'em to approve is to go out there and take that material out and just dump it in that big open-water area and build bigger pimple mounds. Well, [Ashton bring fishes come into the play oh no my god this go] don't do this, that, and the other. The landlord said, "Well go ahead and do it whatever way you want to but just get it done." And so now we're talkin' about trying to build some of those in there and leave the other open.

D: Well if you haven't seen the work Chevron's done, you get David Richard to take you. You get along well with David Don't you?

A: Yeah, yeah.

D: You need to ask David to take you to the Chevron site, the two people from Chevron was Jerry Hall, uh...oh heck, he doesn't quite kill hogs with knives, he's not that bad but he's a hunter.

A: There's some saw grass in that marsh there.

D: And then Jim Meyers who is just a true—his philosophy is, if you're not a hunter and fisherman, and you have a biology degree, you're not a biologist.

A: That's about my kinda—

D: Now I think you'd like 'em and they can show you things. But you just need to see it and let it digest in what you're doing.

A: Well I think if we're going to be serious about trying to restore coastal Louisiana, and have some projects that you can turn to and point at and say, "This is where your money went," we have absolutely—have you guys stopped here at the—?

D: We went—we didn't stop but we—it's on the list.

A: Yeah. It's—they've done a good job there. But if we're gonna continue to take money from the tax payers in Kansas, Nebraska, and California, or wherever, we gonna have to start havin' some of these "show me" success stories and quit all this flip-flappin' about "Oh we gonna save the city of New Orleans and the 9th Ward." We've heard enough of that. We need to do that but let's do some other stuff too. And if you'll just look out this car, that ditch is full of freshwater plants. That's no mystery. That's cut grass that's been growing in wet areas for millennia. But there ain't no saltwater in there and if you gonna raise shrimp you not gonna have that plant there.

D: So small dredges or large dredges—

A: Will work.

D: Working from an existing footprint, I'm not saying, going to put it in something else, my father was associated with dredging so I understand the concept of booster pumps. And they'll pump it as far as you want it. That is not hard. Cost you a little extra money but they will pump it.

A: And just keep that flow going so the pump won't stop up on ya, and you got it made.

D: Yep. And if there's a little abrasive material in the sediments, just change out the pipe.

A: That's right. Well, you know, that's what [mark eeri san paid. His got] so much criticism with his pipeline—you pump that silt out of the river it's gonna [eat ya pipe by welding]. So what? You know? Put another one in! And if you keep that formula right, you'll eventually fill that marsh up. Now let's make a left up here at this Bouman's corner.

D: Alright.

A: And this is where the first bunch of those evacuees that had money ended up from the coastal areas.

B: This is after Rita?

A: Yeah, these are all after Rita. Some after Audrey but mostly after Rita.

B: About how far away from Homewood here?

A: Uh, Homewood's about 12-15 miles on up the road here.

B: Okay, right.

D: So, Highway 384.

A: Yep.

B: We're turning onto that and—

D: Aw a saddle! Oh my goodness A SADDLE SHOP!

A: Yep. [Aw hold up].

D: Have you ever been in places—those are fun now! Those are fun! Because the old boy in there, he's a true cowboy, and you go in—I went into one in Texas, I said, "How do you make a saddle?" And he looked at me and said, "What do you wanna know for?" I said, "Because I don't know and I wanna see how." He said, "Well come back here." I bet that man talked to me an hour and a half but it was good. You learn something!

A: You need to go to the Colorado Saddlery in Denver. No! Colorado Springs [INAUDIBLE]...I [hit] Denver. They've got a saddle shop there with 5/6 stories high. Where they manufacture saddles.

D: Mm mm.

A: All handmade. I got in there and I like never got out of there. I've got a bunch of whips I bought from that boy there on that corner. Now, my granddaughter rodeoed with a bunch of these kids here. Now this is that grand—this is that outcropping of the Pliocene as you can see the dust [blow it]. This is some of that Mermentau mineral land Buddy Leach's wife's family the [Chockly's].

D: Sweet Lake Land Company.

A: Sweet Lake Land. And you'll see some of the Sweet Lake Signs on these fence posts down through here. Slow down—

D: Now does that old boy back there still make whips?

A: Slow down, slow down!

D: Yeah yeah, still make whips?

A: Turn left, turn left in this driveway. We'll go trespassing. Now this is where you oughta build your house if you're in pimple mound country. Look at these pimple mounds.

D: Boy, just—

A: And when they decided to move up here they lived down yonder by that water tower way out in the marsh. I convinced 'em, I said, "For God's sake guys, do not dig down those mounds." So they built their home site around these pimple mounds and they've done a great job here.

D: My, look at this showcase here!

A: Ain't this a pretty thing here?

B: Oh it's gorgeous! And look at the arena back here!

A: Yep. Victoria is on the rodeo team at McNeese and they've got the money to haul their horse wherever the next show is, what have you. Really nice people. Her dad, this lady's dad was Fats DuPont. And Fats was Chairman of the fur and alligator council and I served after he died. I became chairman of that council. I've known these kids—little young kids.

D: Look at this place over here! That's not a bad [raven]!

A: That ain't a bad spot there.

D: He's got a Shelby Cobra sittin' in the—

A: Yep. That's her...

D: That's a fast car.

A: That's a fast little car.

D: And you say she's a rodeo...

A: She rides—

D: Barrel-riding?

A: Yeah, barrels and poles and she's good [careful]. So she's rodeo-in'.

D: McNeese were from Grand Chenier.

A: They're from down there in Creole.

D: Creole, huh.

A: But I like their pimple mounds. I was really proud that they never—

D: They didn't—

A: They didn't [hurt 'em at all].

D: Nope, nope.

A: Planted them smoke trees before they ever started the house sites...Now what is that old Chevy doin'? He's actin' like he can go for a walk right in front of us.

D: Yeah, he's gonna say, "Look, I own part of this land.

A: "This is my place. My property."

D: That's right. I think you know, we're gonna let this other truck go by 'cause he's in a hurry and we're not.

A: That's right. This is all Sweet Lake land over in here.

D: Uh huh.

A: Wendell and uh [INAUDIBLE]...bought that track of land, they paid I think about \$400,000 for 40 acres in there. And then built that little old shack in there. Ain't no tellin' what that house costs now.

...

D: There's some pretty rice country right there.

A: Yep!

D: Right side of the road rice, left side of the road [INAUDIBLE]. Make a right?

A: Yeah make a right right here.

D: Stay on Highway 384?

A: Yeah. That road goes down to the [Pure Oil] facility, down there toward [Intercoastal] Canal. Old, old oil and gas operation.

B: Oh yeah, we're both familiar with the Pure Oil Company.

A: Yep.

D: Now where's the road that led to the ferry that would allow you to get—oh, we're not far enough west. Yeah okay.

A: This road goes right on around there...before we turn **right the go** right up there to airport in Port Charles, if you a quarter of a mile—

D: Left or straight?

A: Left.

D: All right.

A: Now this country has grown. When I worked for the department, we had a softball field there. And I'd play softball on Wednesday night with a bunch of 'em from Grand Chenier. So during the softball season I usually arrange my office schedule where I'd fly to Grand Chenier, be available...

[ALL LAUGHING]

A: Spend the night at Rockefeller and go back to the office on Thursday. Go through Rockefeller and Marsh Island and State Wildlife...trips.

B: But, do you fly yourself?

A: I've got about 4,000 hours.

B: Oh.

A: About 3,000 hours of pilot and command and then about 1,000 of co-pilot on Canadian waterfowl surveys. Had opportunity to fly some in El Salvador down in Central America and got my pilot's license validated to fly down there and used aircraft along the Ricardo Creek that owned [Tack] Airline at the time. He made it available to Dr. Plesco and I to work with. But this whole system here now has just turned into the Chenier North is I guess, **kinda** what they call it **themselves** now. And some of it is driven by safety. The other is driven by FEMA. They couldn't get permission to build back down there without building those sky scraper—

B: Now, this is across a barrier line? This is in Calcasieu now?

A: No, this is still in Cameron.

B: Oh, we're still in Cameron?

A: They're out that flood zone, see. They're out on the natural terrace, here. I think we're at about 14, 15 feet elevation here.

B: Now, I was just curious as to what the migration was **gonna** do to the Cameron Parish tax base but if they're still inside the parish...

A: That's why these people are all here, is they stayed in Cameron. They wanted to stay in Cameron. How long that loyalty is gonna last is anybody's guess but of course these kids' kids will be right here. But my next-door neighbor came from Grand Chenier. They're permanent residents in Beauregard now and their son is a state policeman—he just bought a home up there.

D: But they still have their land in...

A: Oh yeah. They still own their property down here. They'll have that forever because that's where their oil and gas income comes from.

D: Mm hm. Well oil and gas played a dramatic role in changing how we assess the wetlands.

A: Yep.

D: One of the things that we've been looking at and are curious about, let's take the hackberry site and let's take the Cameron Meadows site. We want those two sites because between roughly 1925 and 1935 they were built.

A: Yep.

D: There was essentially no roads, so if you were going to work an oil field, you lived at the oil field.

A: That's right.

D: And you [might have been an all male] and you would go someplace else for the weekends.

A: Mm hm.

D: Well we have a sneaking suspicion that each one of those sites had 50-100 people. There's 414 oil fields in let's call it the coastal parishes. Well I don't know that we get two-tenths of those after WWII but before WWII there's about half that number. If you got 200 oil fields, some of which had 600 oil wells and there's only 50 people, that's 1,000 people. Or more. And if it rotates a different one, well that's 2,000 people. So again, there's this idea that there's just not a lot of people here, just in our conversations between the shrimp drying, trapping, and oil, you got a lot of people.

A: A lot of people.

D: I mean look at—just look at both sides of this road.

A: Yep.

D: Now, there's a Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company owned community at Grand Lake, or up to it?

A: They're the marsh owners. These ridge areas, a lot of 'em were owned by Sweet Lake but over time, they sold off some of 'em for communities to develop in. Buddy Leech got a magnificent camp down here, down at Gross Savan, you know that's—go over there across—

D: No, that's gorgeous, I've been there.

A: Turn left and go down that [INAUDIBLE].

D: That is fine.

A: This is their huntin' lodge and it went through Rita, had about 3 and a half to four feet of water in it so he raised it. It went through Ike, it had about 2 feet of water in it. So now he's blockin' that up to plus 14. It's gonna be sittin' up on stilts.

B: Is there a final judgment about the elevation? And the structures susceptibility to wind now? Wind damage?

A: I don't know. I don't think they've ever come up with that number. And it's a guess-timation to start out with. It may be another hundred years before you have one of those events to come back through here.

D: Right?

A: Right. Unless ya'll wanna drive around here the rest of the day.

D&B: Hahahaha!

D: Oh no, we—

A: Well, you've been to [Buddy's Plates] down there so you know.

D: Yeah, I know.

A: And it's only 4 or 5 miles on down there. This road goes right by the airport in Lake Charles. 15 miles away.

D: Hm. And if you think of people we should get in touch with, if you don't mind just writing them down. And give us a little while. It takes a while to process all this and we make sure we tell everybody, you know, "It's gonna be...it could be two months. But we'll get back! Promise you, we'll get back!"

A: Well the one that comes to mind for me [for any kinda thing] is Hardeman. And [INAUDIBLE] well you know, he's my age, pushin' high 70's and is still in real sharp mental [completion]. Easy to access...

D: What about Greg?

A: Greg is—

D: I mean he's not as old but he certainly has a lot of mileage.

A: Oh yeah. Yeah. And Greg's family has lot's and lot's of roots. You know his brother, is Doctor Linscomb over at the rice experiment station.

D: No, I did not know that.

A: Yeah. So that's Greg's brother.

D: Well the two things that we're having the hardest trouble nailing down is the movement of alcohol through the wetlands during prohibition and commercial hunting. We know, I mean I feel real confident there was a lot of alcohol that was probably brought in to Chenier-Ortigue.

A: A lot of it was consumed.

D: Oh sure! They are Cajuns after all! [See how they] lifted this up.

A: Yep.

D: People just won't talk about it. The Kennedy's will but locals won't.

A: Hahahaha.

B: And I've wondered about that. I don't know if it's a question of casting a cloud over the family name or if it's a case of not really believing in the statute of limitations.

A: I don't think that many of these coastal people are proud of that fact that their ancestors were bootleggers. That was not a—now, cattle wrestler, that had some meaning, you know, you had to work at that. Bootlegging was kinda like drug dealing today.

B: Mm hm.

D: I never thought of that, was there a lot of cattle wrestling?

A: Uh no, they usually shot 'em on sight.

D: Well I can understand—remember I got cowboys in my background too and I have an aunt that can shoot a sparrow from 30 yards with a—she will not miss!

A: I had an old aunt, my mother's sister, that married my dad's older brother and they had a little old business place in Oklahoma, in the [hardcore] Oklahoma I believe. They had little dry clingers and all this that and the other at the end of the depression here and some guy broke in the house, in a residence, and she happened to be at home and got after him with and old hog leg and run 'im out in the street, run 'im almost a block and killed him! She stayed with him 'til she put his ass on the ground!

D: Jeeze.

A: Got 'im down and shot him. [Not a kiss]. My daughter was a real good high school athlete. Went to college on a basketball scholarship and they went up to Oklahoma and uh it was at a tournament up there and she went and [looked up one of the boys that had to relive—to shoot that burglar]. I guarantee you one thing, if anybody burglarized Susan's house she'd shoot their ass out. He better not go in there.

D: Well my aunt has her son living close and here daughter so it's not like it used to be when they were really out in the country. But they grew up in what's sometimes called "Outlaw Country" of Oklahoma.

A: Where were they?

D: Up in the northeast corner, right on the fringe of the Osage Indian reservation.

A: Oh yeah, I've heard north of the [round]—what's that--?

D: Bartletttsville.

A: Bartletttsville?

D: Yep. And uh...

A: That's beautiful country there.

D: My grandfather was—it appears with the family legend, although I've tried to run it down, was a tool pusher for Frank Philip and a mule skinner.

A: Well, like, when somebody said at Bartletttsville, you didn't ask who you worked for, you just wanna know what [division] are you in!

D: Hahaha that's right!

A: Boy, I tell ya, that museum site out there is absolutely worth anybody's time to go see it. That Little Rock.

D: Yep.

A: No doubt, the best Native American photo gallery and paintings in North America there.

D: Well, my grandfather's job when they had, what was it called? Sheriffs and Outlaws. Uncle Frank declared such and such day that the sheriffs and the outlaws get together and they don't bring guns, and nobody gets arrested. My grandfather's job was to bring the fish for the fish fry. Well you try a seine it wasn't doing too well, but dynamite was wonderful. And that was when the oil fields were booming and dynamite wasn't hard to come by.

A: Wasn't hard to come by!

D: So they always had plenty of fish.

A: That's right.

D: They'd get those horses and run the creek, stir 'em all up.

A: Carl, have you ever had fortune to go through that museum?

B: No sir I haven't but it's on my list of things to do.

A: You really need to do it. He's got an old—about a 1937 delivery truck in there and I mean, immaculate condition. Got an old automobile that they hunted coyotes out of with a shootin' seat up on the fenders up there. I think it may be a Royles, I'm not sure—it's not a Chevrolet. And got an airplane hanging up in there, with a Phillip's logo on the side of it, [an old, 450 Pat-Whitney] engine on it. That is a beautiful—and they not just one building, like they got a whole complex and these buildings are as big as gymnasiums! And they're just full of artifacts and arrowheads, and—

D: It's done right.

A: It's done right. Got a pretty good herd of resident buffalo on the grounds. We took our granddaughter up there with us when we went to a meeting and we told her before we left that we were gonna show her a buffalo, and hot dog, I about went crazy looking for buffalo!

D: HAHHAHAHA.

A: Finally got to Willow Rock and thank god they had some buffalo. So we had a buffalo hamburger and sit out there in that pasture with them buffalo in sight.

B: Can I ask—the airport here, sort of a staging area for off-shore helicopter travel?

A: Yeah. It is. Not as much as Houma is but PHI [ovarian] but they do have a lot of flights outta here. And they're in the process of having a direct flight from here to Dallas. So that'll help transportation. They just in the process of rebuilding the arena in the back. It got tore up in Ike.

B: [Berkley] Colliseum.

A: Yep.

D: Carolyn Woosely. Is that a name you recognize?

A: I've heard it, I don't know...

D: She's the granddaughter of W.P. Burton.

A: Uh huh.

D: That's her grandfather and she was very instrumental in getting the Chenier Plains Symposium together.

A: Oh, okay! Okay.

D: And it's something that needs to be done again just to keep the awareness level up.

A: Well sure. I tell you what, Don. I went to that public hearing down in Cameron that the Corp. of Engineers held following the symposium and I was really happy to see a lot of the police jury members there, Tina Horn was there, and got an opportunity to address a bunch and a study of the hydrology of the whole southwest corner of Louisiana was the number one issue that was talked about.

D: Well the cell size is not nearly as good as some of the people would want but Ehab's work at ULL will give you a very good understanding. Now, to the modelers, you always want a better cell size. Well, you know, everybody wants a better breed but sometimes you gotta take what you can get!

A: That's right.

D: And I think without spending much money at all we need to at least go and visit with Ehab because we funded him to do work on the Calcasieu. The reason we funded him was with the amount of foreign crew that comes into Calcasieu, and it's because of Sitco, it's Venezuelan crewed, the API number makes it a very heaved crewed, and we were concerned that if you lost some of it, where will it go? Because it's gonna sink! So we underwrote a study where we completely modeled the Calcasieu. It's public information, it's available. We fast forward, we have a spill event in the Calcasieu and nobody uses the model.

A: Yeah. That's—

D: And yet the model would have told them exactly what to do and you wouldn't be faced with a multi-million dollar suit by the Gray family because of how it affected their golf course.

A: Yeah, that's right.

D: It's just—don't reinvent it. If you have anything just at least go and look at it.

A: Yeah. Well right there seems to be the direction people go. Everybody's gotta reinvent the wheel. Old lady that owned that had gotten too old to operate it and my dad leased it from her, and my brother and my dad ran it, and with the war bringing all of that massive number of people into the neighborhoods at Fort Polk, we moved over and lived in that bank head of that old service station and grocery store and rented our house to a colonel and his family out in New York. And they had some [sub-teen] kids, my age kids, and of course I had to show them which way you sit on a horse—face his head not his tail...

B&D: [LAUGHING].

A: I tell you one of the best things that my mother laughed about the rest of her life-- 'course we always had fresh milk--had those Jersey cows--and gave those people milk. And this woman came over in a big panic and said, "Mrs. Ensminger, I may have killed one of your cats!" And Mom said, "Well, what do ya mean?" She said, "I fed it some milk and it was sour!" Oh my mom thought that was—she said, "Well if that kill that damn cat, he's ready to die!"

[ALL LAUGHING]

A: [Big] thing. And also, experienced the prisoner thing.

B: Oh, the P.O.W.s?

A: Yeah, and a whole lot of the P.O.W.s are [buried Fort Polk] and they—we had that little old country grocery store and they—

B: What do they have the—I know in other areas they kinda form the [mount] of farmers to let them kinda harvest crops? What were they doing around Forth Polk?

A: They were picking up garbage on the side of the road. Anything to entertain 'em. Get 'em out of that prison complex and take 'em for a ride down towards Lake Charles and back, and what—a lot of that make-work type bullshit. One of the things that we ended up with, they built us a toilet. And of course everybody said, "Well what the hell big deal was that?" Before that we just dug a hole in the ground and built a little old outhouse over it. Well, that wasn't a very good sanitary thing. So they come in, they dug that pig hole, then they made a concrete floor, and a concrete stool to put the seat on and all that and built a decent little privy on it.

B: Now, the ones that were in Fort Polk, were those mostly Africa Corp. Veterans, or?

A: They—no, I think most of those were probably from the Italy invasion.

B: Oh, okay.

A: There were a lot of Germans in there. And of course, our community had all of those Mennonites in it that still spoke German. And my dad's family had maintained a few words of German but not enough to carry on a conversation.

B: Some of the rice farmers down in [Akennia] Parish still spoke German.

A: Yeah, right. All that [INAUDIBLE] in there, south of [Humus].

B: Right.

A: And Kender. What's that little old community down in there?

D: Robert's Cove.

B: Slabacher, uh...Bullwater, all of those—

A: Bullwater! Our preacher lives right up there by his wife who was from Bullwater. She's a big ole tall German gal.