

## Clifford Smith Interview

Interviewers: Carl Brasseaux & Don Davis

Smith: I have a long history at LSU. My mother finished at LSU in 1924, uh, 5 of my 7 children have 6 degrees from LSU. I finished at LSU in 1958. I went to LSU in 1953 and my—I would say the person that—if I had not met this person at LSU I would still be at LSU and that was Dr. Ray [Odema], who was teaching math at LSU, and again, Dr. Odema taught me at least two years of math in the engineering school at LSU and later went on of course, to be the president of ULL and USL. Interesting of course, Dr. Odemas is from Terrebonne Parish, Dr. Odemas is from Boudreaux Canal, which again, is 15 or 20 miles south of here. And his wife is from [Shreba] in Terrebonne Parish, and she grew up about two houses away from where my wife grew up so we have a close, frankly, relationship with the Odemas' and my wife is a graduate of SLI. And my wife's mother is a graduate of SLI and a number of her aunts were graduates of SLI so we—

Brasseaux: It's a very small world in South Louisiana.

S: Yeah, we have a very fond spot in our hearts, for frankly, both LSU and SLI, USL, ULL.

B: Well can we start by just telling us a little bit about your own background, where you were born, where you grew up.

S: Yeah, again, I'm Clifford Smith and I was actually born in New Orleans on April 21, 1935, but from the time I was a week old I lived in Houma, Louisiana, Terrebonne Parish, except from about 1953-1958 when I lived in Terrebonne but I also lived at LSU—in the stadium and in the dormitories at LSU. Received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from LSU in 1958, grew up in the engineering business of my father, [T. Baker] Smith, who was a Tulane graduate in Civil Engineering in 1913. Born and raised in Terrebonne Parish, went to a number of high schools around the south but ultimately ended up at Tulane with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1913. Came back to Houma—he came back to Houma after his graduation and began to practice civil engineering [Lansabeg] in Terrebonne Parish. In 1913, and again, talking about time and ages, I would assume that there was about, at the most, 5,000 people living in Terrebonne Parish at that time. And he did whatever it took to make it as a consulting civil engineer and land surveyor in those early days. Among other things, we have some pictures on the wall of plans that he developed for building steamboats as an engineer. He, of course, developed an “expertiseship” in the reconstruction of the U.S. government's surveys on land between the Mississippi river and the Atchafalaya River, but major landowners such as Louisiana Land, LaTerre Company, Continental Land and Fur, and other major companies in the area. Landowning companies. Because much of these properties were surveyed by the U.S. government surveyors between the 1830's and the 1850's and much of the land had transferred in title without much of the other benefits of surveys. So my father, working primarily for major landowners and ultimately for oil and gas companies, and ultimately for other landowners, developed and “expertiseship” in the reconstruction of the U.S. government surveys, which are probably different in South Louisiana than anywhere in America because believe it or not, in the

Louisiana Purchase, when they talk about all that acreage that was purchased by the United States from France, much of the usable surface areas of coastal Louisiana were already owned by people because of the French and Spanish grants that were given, and most of the ridges or high land along the bayous and rivers were already owned by people and the only part that the United States acquired was undeveloped lands between the ridges and the bayous. And then the U.S. government came in and surveyed, and had to recognize—the U.S. Government surveyors had to recognize previous French and Spanish grants—

B: Mm hm.

S: And then project a rectangular surveying system out into the marshes, out into the swamp, what they considered the un-valuable areas. And they were great [heights], they surveyors were paid by the mile. Can you imagine in the 1830's/1850's they were on horse and buggies and pirogues and what have you. Um, but my father became an expert in reviewing the field notes and the maps of these U.S. government surveyors, even acquired the instruments that they used so he could follow in their footsteps. They were—in his time they had developed a transit, but in the—U.S. government surveyors, they didn't have transits, they had compasses and chains and so he—and we have, in our collection around here, the compasses and the chains that he used in an attempt to reconstruct the U.S. government surveys. Those are examples of Witness Trees that came out of the woods around Terrebonne Parish. Witness Trees from U.S. government surveys and my father, reconstructed—

B: Well, with your permission, I'd love to photograph that because we have seen massive amounts of information about the Witness Trees, you know, recorded by the surveyors, going back to 1811 or so, I guess.

S: And what did we do? You see, if we follow the notes, which are very difficult to do, but if you followed the field notes, they would set a government corner, section corner, township corner, range corner, and they would usually—they were using Cypress stakes, they weren't using anything more permanent, hell concrete had not been invented, much less steel, or cast-iron. They were using primarily Cypress stakes and when they would set the corner then they would reference the corner. Normally they would have four or five trees that was so many degrees, so many feet from the corner, and they would go to the tree and they would etch into the tree with a stencil that this is a Witness Tree. Okay. My father would come along in the 20's—1920's primarily, thirties, and think he had gotten to the corner. But there was no corner because it had rotted away or been removed. So he would look around and he would see a tree over there and he would see another tree over there and he would read the notes and they'd kinda fit the "South 6 degrees, 14 minutes, so many chains or so many lengths, there was an 8-inch Cypress tree," The field notes would say that and he would mark it as a Witness Tree. My father would go so many lengths and see the tree, but the tree had grown. It was say, witnessed in 1850 and he was there in 1925. Well he would cut into the tree, and where the stencils were in the tree, the tree would peel back to that point. See the axe marks when they'd cut into the tree, and what you're looking at is upside down because the stencil had been put into the tree and now you're peeling off the tree to see this. Now what became very important is the U.S. government knows of public

information, okay, but the notes that retrace the U.S. government and decided that that was a witness tree and re-established that corner is not public information. It's T. Baker Smith's information. And of course, that's why he became an expert. Nobody really cared about that until about 1930 when they discovered oil in South Louisiana, particularly in Terrebonne Parish and everybody decide, "Well maybe we wanna know how many acres they are from the [Lee Red] field in Terrebonne Parish, over the Lapeyrouse field in Little Caillou. Okay? Because the government surveys might have said they were three miles, and guess what. They ain't three miles. It might be 2 and a half miles. So all the sudden everybody got very concerned about how many acres and how many—ownership of who owned what. So it was—again, he became an expert, he became an expert witness in court cases. I ended up—again, I was his youngest child. He was 45 years old when I was born in 1935. My father was truly an engineer. He believed in the profession, I think that he studied engineering because he loved the outdoors, he loved to hunt, he loved to fish—he grew up, again, in Terrebonne Parish. And he is—I think his mother insisted that he studied some profession. And I think he chose civil engineering because it gave him an ability to be in the outdoors. And so although he was an engineer and he designed bridges and things like that, utility systems, he was also truly a surveyor. But he was also truly a collector of things, and we have—and the lady will bring it in in a minute—we have the first field notes that he did in 1913. We even have information that he [has seen] well even before 1913. And that—he again, we have in this office, over 5 million pieces of paper. Maps. Field notes, calculation files, and frankly, we have now, microfilm, and also we are now scanning to put into a computer system.

B: Hm.

S: So, I consider that to be very valuable information, uh, again, I was his youngest child. My older brother was interested in something else, architecture or something else, and I have an older sister whose husband who was working in the oil industry when nobody was interested, frankly, in the profession. Uh, and my father was adamant about the fact that I was interested in a profession and therefore, if I was interested in a profession, he felt that this business belonged to me, and he told my brothers and sisters and my mother that and in his will he told them that—that the day I graduated from LSU in 1958 the firm became T. Baker Smith and Son. Up to that time, it had been T. Baker Smith. After he died in 1962, the firm became T. Baker Smith and Son, Inc. because of taxes and other matters, and I was the sole proprietor, the sole owner since my father's death. And again in his will there's a special request to me for that purpose. Um now I have a—my oldest son is Kenneth Smith, who is a graduate of Louisiana Tech in civil engineering, again, who grew up in the firm. I was working in a survey crew when I was 13 or 12 and he was too. And now he runs the firm, which consists of about 250 associates with offices in Houma, Thibodeaux, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and Houston. Uh, and we've expanded of course on my father's practice, both in the surveying field and in the engineering field, and now in the environmental science field. Somebody was just inquiring this morning before you got here about 404 permitting—wetland permits, and we get probably 2-300 permits a year for clients in the wetland areas of primarily coastal Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, I would think that we'd probably become an

expert in that, but I'm not sure anybody's an expert at that. I consider the whole process arbitrary and capricious. Uh, but we tried to provide services to our clients in those fields. We even had in this organization now, a group of oyster experts, again, most of our work has been in evolution, again, we basically started out as a surveying and engineering company. We probably now have 35 boats and about 200 vehicles, we are an equipment rental company, although installing is one conglomerate. We are an engineering design company, we are a surveying company, we are an environmental service company—that includes—we have a group of so-called "oyster experts" that evaluate oyster problems for clients. And again, we've evolved into all these things because this is what the client needs us to do. We—the volume of business we do in 30 days is more volume than my father did in his whole lifetime. But most of the work that we do in 30 days evolves back to some of the things he did, again, in 1958. When I finished school, he had one employee. And the only reason he had the business open was because I wasn't interested in the business. He was 65 years old—68 years old and he only really kept the place open because of me. He had an independent income out of the engineering business and that's much is like similar again, similar to me, what I've done, evolved in a small community, in an expanding community, when I got out of LSU in '58, we probably had 50,000 people in Terrebonne Parish. We always had an urban area around Houma, and Houma always owned its own utility system, which is kinda unusual—it's own electrical generation and distribution system, similar to Lafayette, but much smaller and didn't have the assets of course, of the Hyman's and the university in Lafayette. Interesting the Hymans were from Houma. The Hyman brothers—the one that went to Lafayette and started the oil center, was born and raised in Houma. His mother ran a store called the Houma bargain store in Houma and his brother—I think Morris is the one that went to Lafayette—his brother went to New Orleans and married the daughter of [Cress], and ended up running the Cress stores in New Orleans. And they were born and raised in Houma and Terrebonne Parish. As a matter of fact, you mentioned the boat races in Lake [Baraid], that my father participated in college, I'd assume, and right out of college, maybe, they were promoted—he told me they were promoted by the Hyman brothers who were young people growing up in Terrebonne Parish. So it's uh--now again, I family, as near as I can tell, my mother was of all things a Wright. A W-R-I-G-H-T. And being—having a Wright and a Smith in Terrebonne Parish both born and raised in Terrebonne Parish was extremely unusual. The Wright family as near as I can tell came to Terrebonne in about 1830, primarily agriculture people and evolved into livestock and liver stable business.

B: Where were they from originally?

S: I think the rights were—really I think the rights came here from Virginia, okay and I think they were probably from somewhere in England and the reason I think that is I had a great grandfather that went to Northern Virginia during the civil war and fought in the army of Northern Virginia with Robert E. Lee. And I think the Virginian cousins, communicated with the cousins in Louisiana to come and fight for the confederacy, because there was very little activity by the way in the third congressional district of the civil war. Uh, although there were some, and I've been

reading a little bit about that in the local papers, as a matter of fact there's a guy working for the Houma Courier by the name of Bill Elsie that ya'll oughta know, if you don't know 'em already, because he—and I have some of the articles that he has re-created in the Houma Courier about—particularly about some of the civil war matters in Terrebonne—but generally the third, congressional—the fact of the matter is that the third congressional district never succeeded from the union and so in the emancipation proclamation, it only affected the counties and districts in the United States that had succeeded from the Union, so he totally always contended that the emancipation proclamation never affected the third congressional district, I'm not sure that I knew that or agreed with that but, anyhow, getting back to the Smiths, my father's mother was a DuPont. This—my father's father as far as near we can tell came to South Louisiana right after the civil war and he ran saw mills and they were cypress people and this is where my son ended up with my grandfather's house, which is a magnificent home right in the middle of Houma that's built out of virgin cypress and anyhow, that was the Smiths. Smith married a lady by the name of Clara DuPont. DuPont's family was from—DuPont's mother and father were from Bardeau France. And there were merchants. They came to Terrebonne I think, probably just before the civil war and they ran—they had a store, and it later became [A & G C] DuPont's Store, M & J C DuPont with Clara DuPont's brothers. And supposedly that store was at the corner of [Baristry] and Main Street—still there—across the bayou from that was the Smith home and supposedly two DuPont brothers said, "You can't live on this side of the bayou, you gotta go live on the other side." And that's when my grandfather bought the property on Park Avenue, right opposite [Bara Street] and built the [Baristreet] Bridge. Anyhow, that was C.P. Smith. And that was T. Baker's son. Um, T. Baker's father as a matter of fact, and I'm T. Baker's—uh and I was named William Clifford Smith. William was my grandfather Wright's name, a guy named Billy Wright Jr. And my grandfather Smith was named Clifford P. Smith—Clifford Percival Smith, so they named me William Clifford and it ended up my call name became Clifford because William Smith is so counterfeit, you know. So I went to LSU and at LSU they said William, first name middle initial, and I was at LSU for about three years, my daddy went up there to find me one day, called the directory and wanted to talk to Clifford Smith, they said, "There ain't nobody here by that name." He said, "I've been sending that boy up here for three years!" Davis & B: [LAUGHING]

D: Is it fair to say, and continue please, but is it fair to say that your father was the first wetlands surveyor in South Louisiana?

S: No. In my father's day—there were surveyors before my father. As a matter of fact, interesting that you asked that. There was a guy named [V. Solocovsky], who we have some records of and maps of that were in Terrebonne Parish doing survey work. V. Silocovsky was from—as near as I can tell—was from St. Helena Parish and he came down here working for the Bara family. And the Bara Family, who were very prominent in the St. Francisville Area, ended up owning some land in this area and I think Silocovsky came down here to survey some of their properties. And that was right after the civil war. Silocovsky happened to be the commander of the confederate troops at Port Hudson, okay? During the Civil war.

D: Hm!

S: And actually I think he was in Terrebonne doing some survey work before the civil war and after the civil war. And I was reading the Advocate one day and they had some history about Port Hudson and they had this guy Silocovsky, so I began to read about that and we have maps and field notes in this office from a guy named Silocovsky and it's the same guy. I think it was Victor Silocovsky and he again, was a surveyor that came into Terrebonne, now you're talking about wetlands, I mean—

D: Yeah.

S: Because you couldn't hardly be in Terrebonne and not be in the wetlands, not even in those days!

D: Mm hm!

S: It was primarily surveying highland; land of agriculture use, you follow me? Then it was a guy by the name of Bocage in the area and we have some field notes from Bocage before my father. But before my father really, as a professional was Mr. Lovell from LaFourche. Mr. Lovell was a surveyor in LaFourche Parish—in Thibodeaux. And Mr. Lovell had developed as my father later developed with the help of Mr. Lovell and other people, the process of following—when you do property surveys along the bayou, not only do you have to know about the government surveys, not only do you have to know about the grant surveys. And there were grant surveys even before the U.S. government surveys, but you gotta know something about the titles. So my father would track the titles through the conveyance records—and Mr. Lovell did the same thing—and developed and abstract map of the area, trying to fit the titles within the U.S. government and the grant surveys previously. So that became quite an ought. Again, that was a master and Mr. Lovell was a master at that too. Now Mr. Lovell was a little older than my father, so my father learned from Mr. Lovell. There was a Mr. Landry in Plaquemine Parish and ended up his son became a priest in this area that I ended up knowing, and there were other few surveyors along the way but again, my father had developed a clientele with primarily Louisiana Land Exploration Company, which owned 600,000 acres of wetlands in Terrebonne, LaFourche, over into Plaquemine and Jefferson Parishes and he did most of the survey work on their properties. He also had a client by the name of Continental Land and Fur Company, which we have today, they owned 125,000 acres of wetlands at Terrebonne Parish; One track of land. Louisiana Land's property's kinda spread out although they own 600,000 acres plus, it's spread out all the way from the Mississippi to the Atchafalaya River.

D: Well, let me clarify something. Years ago, you and I were talking and you once told me that the water bottom in Louisiana went to the Win or Lose Company, they were sub-leased to W. T. Burton, who subleased to LLNE, who subleased to Texaco.

S: Mm hm.

D: And that was the chain of the water bottoms. And of course LLNE went to Burlington and now I guess it's part of Conoco-Philips, k, so we have this long linear chain of at least the water bottoms. Other than a conversation with T. Baker Smith, I have never seen that written, although I do believe you are exactly correct because if you try to find anything about the Win or Lose Oil Company, that wall is easier to walk through.

S: That's interesting that you would say that because what I know, about it is, first off, let's go back. There were French and Spanish grants and they were primarily on lands along the rivers and the bayous, and they were the valuable—in those days, we're talking before 1800—those were before the Louisiana Purchase. The valuable lands of course were the lands [held] above the river—

D: Right.

S: To tell you the truth. Not the gulf, the river, in those days. And so those lands were transferred from the Kings of Spain and France to their different courts and ended up with huge grants of land. So—and there were surveys of those grants! And there were records of those grants! I mean, French and Spanish records in the records of the state of Louisiana primarily. Okay? Then the U.S. government surveyors came in and surveyed the government vacant lands, let's say, which were primarily the marshes and the swamps and had very little [circus] value. Alright? After the surveys the United States—as far as I know—the United States Government...deeded those lands—and that's not the right word—to the state of Louisiana, okay, because the federal government didn't own the land, the states ended up owning the land, okay? They had not already been transferred. Then the state of Louisiana looked around and in those days—and that gets back to our coastal erosion problem--that the greatest problem in Louisiana, this—say before even coming into the Louisiana Purchase was the Mississippi River because every spring it would flood. So the landowners around the river began to build the levees for their survival, okay? That became a state problem—as the state began to grow and the value of land increased, the landowners petitioned the state to get interested in building levees along the river. The state legislature, as far as I know, created different levee districts. Now this is not only in Louisiana by the way, if you go up and down the Mississippi River from St. Louis south, and even north, there are all kind of levee districts that were created so that there was a vehicle for the government to tax the land to build the levee along the river. That was the levee district—the first. And now we're in what we call the Atchafalaya Levee District. And as far as I know, the constitution and laws that created the levee districts in Louisiana gave them the right to levee a five-meal property tax against a property within their district, without a vote of the people. And the purpose was to build levees on the Mississippi River. And that we didn't want the river to flood us so we wasn't even gonna get the vote on that. Goddammit, you had to pay five [meals] property tax. Okay? Well all this land is owned by the state of Louisiana. State of Louisiana gives the land to the levee district to go and use the value of the land to use—to get money to build levees on the Mississippi River. Okay? Or tributaries. The levee districts say, "Well how in the hell we gonna—we can't tax it, we own the land! We got a right to levee five [mill] properties, but most of the land we own now! Okay, so what we gonna do?" So, they, a wise lawyer and a banker from New Orleans called Wisner and Dress, okay? They put a deal together to go to the Atchafalaya Levee District in particular and said, "Look, we'll buy all this land for you, for 25 cents and acre. Okay?" Levee district says, "That's wonderful, we gonna take you 25 cents an acre, we gonna put you on a tax [rolls] that own the land and we gonna tax you five [mill] property tax, and that's how we gonna get the money to start building the levees!" Wisner and Dresser get them a train ticket and go to the east: Toledo, Ohio, Chicago, Ohio, they start

peddling this land off like—when I grew up they were peddling of Arizona, you remember you could buy a lot in Arizona for 500 dollars or something? I'm sure William Dresser went to the east and started peddling this land as reclaimed land! And they were all kinda companies for 'em. The New Netherland Company, the New Holland Company, Cloverleaf Farms was the same way. Many of the reclamation projects--two or three in Terrebonne Parish--were the same way--that somebody's gonna buy this land cheap, we gonna build levees, we're gonna build pump stations, we're gonna reclaim the land, you get [60] inches of rainfall a year, we got a growing season from March to October, man we gonna make millions growing crops. Okay? The Tempkin-Rollerbent Family in Toledo, Ohio, put up a bunch of money. They ended up basically owning Louisiana Land and Exploration Company. Louisiana Land and—alright so all this went on, say, from 1900 say to about 1920, okay? And companies went broke, bankrupt, you know we talk about your two big old bankrupt men that go bankrupt around here, every damn cane season people would go bankrupt and lose everything, so [it's surely just marsh], the only thing that marsh was a bunch of nutria--not nutria even, in those days, but mudrats and what have you, and they couldn't hardly make a living doing that, alright? So those companies were really on their ass, frankly. All those companies! I mean Louisiana Land, I can remember, again, I was born in 1935, I surely can remember my father telling me between 35 and 40 Louisiana Land didn't have enough income to pay their employees! They would give them script! My father did work for Louisiana Land and they couldn't get paid! My father's--the Louisiana Land's lawyer was Mr. Roberts Milling in New Orleans--my daddy--my Mr. Roberts Milling tells my daddy one day, they working on a case for Louisiana Land, he says, "Baker, you oughta go buy some stock in Louisiana Land and Exploration Company." This is say, between 35-40. My daddy comes back, he was the only son of my grandfather. He was the oldest child. My grandfather bought stock in automo—steam companies—automobile steam companies. He bought a Colorado Coal Mine, and my daddy says, "I wanna borrow \$100 from you because I wanna buy some stock in Louisiana Land," which was 50 cents a share! And my grandpa says, "What are you gonna do with the \$100?" He said, "I'm gonna buy Louisiana Land Stock." My grandpa said, "You gotta be outta your mind. I ain't lendin' you \$100. My daddy goes and scrapes up \$100 and buys Louisiana Land stock for 50 cents a share. When he died in 1962 it was worth \$18,000, okay? Mr. Milling at the time bought 3,000 shares, okay? I mean, that, they were on their butt. There was a guy came along from Sweden. We called him Mr. Seashore. He had Swedish name that I can't pronounce but it's in the records somewhere. He sold the Tempkin family on the fact that there could be oil and gas on this property. So, that's when Louisiana Land—before Louisiana Land was New Holland, or somebody else, and that's when they formed Louisiana Land and Exploration Company. And Mr. Seashore began a—he was a geophysicist and he began a preliminary oil and gas activity. He discovered that a lot of the potential resources were not on the land but on the water. And that's when he went to the state of Louisiana and started talking about, "how can I buy leases on the water?" Again, the navigable waters of the state of Louisiana, state of Louisiana owns the [feed] title to the water bottles. And LA Land, although they own 600 thousand acres of land--and they did! And they—well it's not 600,000 anymore, but they did, and

but adjacent to them was another 600,000 acres of water bottoms that Mr. Seashore had a theory, had oil and gas production on it. So he begins to petition this is--now this becomes about 35 or 40—he begins to petition the state of Louisiana to lease him the water bottoms. And the way you did that, you went to somebody that knew Huey Long, and you leased the water bottoms from a company that would lease the water bottoms. And that's how, frankly, the Win or Lose Oil Company, which was made up of people like W. T. Burton, James A. Knoll, Allen Ellender, Harvey Pelché, Simone Wise...they ended up with the state lease and then they began to sub-lease it to people that ultimately, Louisiana Land ended up with the state leases. Louisiana Land drills six dry holes on the state leases--and that property. And they were bankrupt. Okay? In comes a little crappy company from Shreveport Louisiana called [Lead] Texas Company and they could borrow a hundred million dollars to go drill exploration wells and that made Texaco, and that made Louisiana Land and that made the state of Louisiana, in my humble opinion.

D: And when Texaco—the Texas Company came in, that was in the 30's, actually they were involved in a little earlier than that—

S: Yeah.

D: When they came in, they went into Lake Barray. Would you recall the number of wells they drilled before they found their first play?

S: I don't know about—I know that Louisiana Land, I think, drilled six dry holes.

D: Right.

S: I think Texaco was much more successful. [Detective] Company. Now a guy you oughta talk to is Bill [Hulls]. Bill Hulls is an old—older than me, and Bill Hulls was the Secretary of Natural Resources during one of the Edwards Administrations and Bill Hulls is uh, [camey]—is not from Louisiana, but he's been here forever, and he's been in the oil and gas business forever and he knows a great deal about this. I tell ya, nothing [got] knows a great deal about his is [Tozac]. Tozac knows a great deal about it because Tozac, at one time, worked for Harby-Pelchay Jr. Okay? So Tozac knows a great deal about this and of course they are tremendous [court]—I mean, Louisiana Land has sued Texaco so many times, I mean, they got more court records than you would believe. But—

D: Well it's a—

S: But that has made—Texaco really truly made Louisiana—well, this part of Louisiana in particular, but all across the state—I mean that—those leases covered, maybe not a lot in the Lake Charles/Cameron area, but surely in Vermillion Bay, east all the way to Mississippi.

D: Yes. And wasn't this building at one time—

S: Oh yeah, this building was built in 19—this building, let's see, I finished school in 1958, this building was built in about 1950, it just so happens that Texaco—my father had been working on and off with Texaco since they were here—1930-1935, Uh, by 1950, right after the second World War, Texaco decided it wanted to really expand and build operations—it had to operations in Louisiana, and they built--they had what they called the New Iberia district, the Houma district, the Harvey District, and the division office was in New Orleans. And they solicited my father to acquire the property for this installation because they didn't want the price to go out of sight, so my father and his lawyer at the time, a guy named Claude Ellender, who

was Allen's brother, bought this property on behalf of Texaco. Turned it to Texaco, Texaco built this building about 19—between 1945 and 1950, they expanded on the facility—expanded on this building, they built a building next door, and the slip was already here. They had operated for 50 years out of this building and they, at one time, ran at least 50 drilling rigs, I mean they were—they had had a budget right here probably of about 250 million dollars a year and they was—Texaco probably had 5,000 engineers that went through this particular building and just so happens when Texaco left they gave it to the YMCA. The YMCA mortgaged to the bank, lost it, and I bought the building from the bank. It's kinda ironical how that all transpired. But they were of course—Texaco was huge employers and I tell you, again, from the time I can remember, oil was three dollars a barrel, until at least, I got out of college. And when I got out of college—again, you'd bring an oil or a gas well in and you've got an [alaro]. The first thing you go and do is go bust the state's but to get you an [alaro] to produce the well and the well could produce 150 barrels of oil, the state might ALLOW you to produce 50, okay? [INAUDIBLE] produce 10 million cubic feet of gas, the state might not allow you to produce 2 million a day. I mean, that was unbelievable! That was again in the 1950's and 1960's that that was going on. All of the sudden the need for oil and gas kept—continued to grow, so all of the sudden nobody worried about chokes, nobody worried about how much oil and gas you could produce, they produced, everything—they'd blow the damn wells—many wells, many [stands] were probably damaged by the fact that they tried to overproduce too early. So that's been an evolution. I got a piece of property, one of my grandfather's bought it in 1903, they drilled a well—Chevron—the California Company drilled a well in 1950 on the property. The well is 10,050 feet deep, there's a unit of 60 acres producing this well, it's produced since 1950. It ain't Chevron anymore, it ain't California Company, it ain't Win or Lose, it ain't the Great Southern, it's somebody else now that ended up behind the well for me and recompleted the damn well and still producing. I mean I cannot believe this well and the money it generates for me and my family. It's unbelievable. But that's the history—again, that's the history of Louisiana—

D: Yeah, if—

S: And again, them people in Baton Rouge, that's again, I used to love to go to the legislature, I used to love to go to Congress, I used to love to be around those bureaucrats and around those politicians, I mean, those people don't have a clue in Baton Rouge, that the reason we have a deficit today is the price of oil and gas! We could talk about income taxes, we could talk about sales taxes, we could talk about smaller government, we could talk about bigger government, we could talk about education, but Louisiana's budget depends on the price of oil and gas.

D: Exactly. Now, when you were growing up, did your family have a close working relationship with the clerk of court?

S: Oh yeah, the—again, my father started out in the clerk of court's office like I tell you with a process to do what he considered to be a—I wanna say, abstract survey of an area. Again, if somebody says I want you to survey this 50 acres or this 100 acres on the bayou, there's two or three [often front] by depth of survey. Then my

father to do that, would have to re—in his opinion, he'd have to reconstruct the titles in that area, basically going back to the grants, the U.S. government surveys, and then the titles. Much of the property was sold and occupied without the benefit of a survey because, again, then possession became nine tenths of the law, believe that, okay? But you had to at least try to fit the title, fit the puzzle together. In doing that you spent many hours in the conveyance records of the parish. So not only did you have to learn the conveyance records, the U.S. government title surveys, but how you put that all together in a jigsaw puzzle. Okay? Because when we're surveying, background came in. And the first clerk recorded that my father, I think, worked with, was Mr. Frank Worstler. Mr. Frank was a senior—was I think, the [first], and I think that's who Randolph Basat went to work for as a Clerk of Court. And then Mr. Basat became the clerk of court for eternity and then Mr. Bobby Boudreaux became the Clerk of Court after Mr. Basat. And we have been very, very blessed and terrible. I mean, we have a very, very confusing geographic area here—I think we have a very confusing culture, even more confusing than Bayou Teche—than Bayou LaFourche because Terrebonne has five bayous. Bayou Teche is one bayou—east-west. Bayou LaFourche is one bayou—north-south. We are the Large, Grand Caillou. Little Caillou, Terrebonne, and Pointe au Chien, and everybody comes to Houma, alright? And then you go north to Shreve and Gibson—everybody comes to Houma. The bayous 200 years ago were the highways. The bayous were the area where the high land developed adjacent to it. Okay? And because we were regional, everybody came to Houma whereas you had a strip parish in LaFourche North-South, and you had people all the way from Lee Ville, Golden Meadows, all the way to Labitty Ville practically, and the resources were stretched. And then in Teche you had the opposite from East to West and they were stretched from Amelia all the way to Generat, whereas in Terrebonne, the assets are almost centrally located in an around the city of Houma. Terrebonne Parish, again, has about—I figure, about a million three hundred thousand acres of surface. Now when I saw surface area, you gotta remember I'm talking about open water, bays, saltwater marsh, freshwater marsh, swamps—

B: Within the boundaries.

S: And about 300,000 acres of land above that five-foot contour. So we have a million three hundred thousand acres of land. Okay?

B: Only three hundred thousand—

S: Five thousand above the 5-foot contour, okay? So we truly, like everybody said, "Where you from?" "I'm from south of New Orleans." "What you mean you from south of New Orleans?" "I live in the Mississippi Delta." You go to Vicksburg,

Mississippi, they tell ya the Mississippi Delta starts in Vicksburg and stops at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. I raised my hand, I said, "Hey Hoss, I'm from three-hundred miles south of here Goddammit and I live in the Mississippi Delta! I live in the New Delta!" Assholes.

[ALL LAUGHING]

S: So I mean that's the—frankly, that is a problem for us, because nobody knows we're here, Man. Hell, half the—90% of people in America think the Mississippi River stops in New Orleans. When I tell them the Mississippi River goes 125 miles south of New Orleans they look at me like I'm nuts. Said, "Man, you think you seen some resources in the Mississippi Valley? Go to New Orleans, get in an airplane or a helicopter and fly to the mouth of the Mississippi River. You ain't seen nothin', Man!" You know? They take me up the River on the Mississippi River commission and they show me 300 acres of wetlands. You know, somewhere in Missouri, or Illinois, or somewhere. I said, "Man, I'm gonna tell you the—LaFourche and Terrebonne Parish, I'll stop the automobile and you cannot *see* the end of the wetlands. Okay? It go over the horizon, Man."

D: You'll appreciate this. I had a Japanese colleague that came to Louisiana, and I went out—the road that goes between Grand Caillou and Little Caillou, and I stopped right there. And he's looking, and I said, "Get up on top of the car." And remember this fellow's from Japan.

S: Yeah...

D: "What?" I said, "Get up on top of the car!" "Oh, I'll hurt the car!" I said, "No, get up on top of the car." So he gets up on the roof and he looks. 360, and I said, "What do you see?" and he said, "It's so big." And that's what you're talking about.

S: Yeah, yeah.

D: When you were—

S: You go below Golden Meadows, stop [INAUDIBLE] no matter what, you know, before you get to Lee Ville, get on top of the car and I guarantee you, you cannot see the end of wetlands.

D: No. no.

S: You know?

D: Now, one of the things that I'm real curious about, is you had one of your relatives involved in the timber industry. And the timber industry became important because

during the Swamp Land Act, they bought a lot of timber. And it wasn't locals necessarily—it's the Rathburnes, it's the Buoys, the Wilberts, the Schwings, the Kyles, you know, the players. But when you look at Terrebonne, I don't know where the mills were in Terrebonne. I don't know where the sawmills were, other than in Gibson and Donner. Maybe in Chacahoula, but you look at the Canal patterns and the canals give you a clue that they were harvesting cypress.

S: Yep.

D: Could you just kind of—

S: Well, I know where one—my grandfather had a sawmill where the American Legion Home is in Houma. I can show you the foundation for the boiler at the sawmill. You remember running everything with steam or something because you didn't have electricity. So I know that there was a sawmill where the American Legion home was. I can, again, show you the foundation for the boiler. There was a sawmill where the Sun Barrier Operation was up on Main Street. I can show you where that was. Uh, of course, the Donner-Chacahoula area had a huge sawmill. There were 1,000 men employed in that place and there's a lot of books written about Donner-Chacahoula. Down the bayous, I don't know of any particular area where there was a sawmill. Again, I know the two that I know of in the Houma area were there. I can remember seeing the remnants of both of 'em. You ride around and you see foundations—there is a foundation on Rebecca Plantation that I thought was sugar mill. The people that owned Rebecca now tell me it was not a sugar mill but I don't think it was a sawmill; it was some other kind of industry that was there. Um, so I can't—now that you mention, I can think about two places that there was sawmills. But there are people around the...[Buguerre]. Now Buguerre family owned DuLac Cypress Company. They still own land, they still around, the Buguerre family is still around. Um...the...Bégay! Bégay. There was a guy named Bégay that actually worked for one of my grandfathers that was in the lumber business for years and some of his heirs might be around that could tell you where there might be sawmills in the--specifically in the Houma-Terrebonne area.

D: Well when you mention—

S: But—But the sawmills—you see, I use the example of the Cypress business.

D: Mm hm!

S: Very similar to the oil and gas business. Obviously the Cypress was the first resource that somebody discovered, particularly in the wetlands—in the swamps. And they literally destroyed 'em. I mean they clear-cutted the cypress. And eventually the cypress business went away because there was no more cypress. And

eventually—that's the kind of deal we dealin' with with in oil and gas. I mean, you know, as wonderful as oil and gas has been to us since the thirties in Terrebonne Parish and Louisiana, it's a depleting resource and that's very—in my opinion, my lifetime, that's always been very scary. Little Terrebonne Parish—and we existed—my ancestors existed here before oil and gas but there weren't 120,000 people living in Terrebonne Parish. Again like I tell you, I believe when my father got out of school in 1913 it was probably about 5,000 people living in Terrebonne and agriculture and seafood was the only industry. That was it.

D: Yeah, but it's interesting to Carl and I that, you know, if you have 1,000 people working in the swamps, that's one-fifth of what may be the population of that time. To use a word that I overwork--and this is my editor—that's not trivial. That is an enormous number of new residents, new settlers, new surnames, new attitudes—

S: Yeah, and that went on from about 1860, or just after the civil war—1865 to about 1920.

C: Okay well I'd like to follow up on that note because—the same thread. When the Texas Oil Company comes in and brings a whole new batch of people, that's something nobody ever talks about, but could you tell—there's—something you would have witnessed as a child here. What was the social and cultural impact of all these people—

S: Very, very interesting question and very interesting observation. As a native of the area, and my wife and I both natives of the area, we always thought that it was difficult for foreigners to come into Terrebonne. But we've made many many friends our age. Many friends. Again, because of the business we were in and we were servicing those companies, those employers, we have made many friends. And many friends tell us that Terrebonne was a great place to move to. Now we were always a Blue Collar town. We had very few—although we did have some petroleum engineers and some geologists, but we had—compared to Lafayette we had very few. Again, the oil center in Lafayette did marvelous things for Lafayette in my opinion.

[TRACK STOPS AND RESTARTS]

S: These people in South Louisiana have just got a culture that's absolutely unbelievable. I—you know, I've live here all my life, and I go down to Montegut today with you guys, I go to Cocodrie today with you guys, to go to Chester Lapeyrouse's place or Little Caillou today with you guys, and I'm the kid from Houma, okay? I'm not a—them people don't think I'm a native, okay? I mean, I ain't a native as far as they're concerned. I'm from Houma. I'm the kid for Houma named Smith! That's a little bird, you know, and I never did learn how to talk French, which was pretty stupid because if you could go down there and talk French with somebody, you okay. But the point is that we have tremendous ingenuity. We have tremendous ability to survive. That is the only way you can live in Terrebonne Parish man. When you think about people—just think about my ancestors that came

to Terrebonne in 1830's and 1840's. You came to New Orleans from France, okay, from Bardot, or Alsace Lorraine, you know somewhere. You came to New Orleans in a boat, you got off the boat, you got up the Mississippi River in a steam boat to Donaldsonville, you came down the damn Bayou LaFourche in a steam boat to Thibodeaux, and then you came down Bayou Terrebonne either in a steamboat or in a damn buggy, to Houma, Louisiana. Now who would do that, Man? There had to be somebody chasing him, you know? You had to be a draft-dodger or a convict or something that said, "I'm goin' somewhere where no bastard gonna ever find me!" 'Cause everybody else went up the river, I mean to go east of—where your from of course is Acadiana and that was a little earlier and without a doubt, our Jimmy Hayes used to make a speech without a doubt, them people can't mess with nobody that would find 'em! "Don't tell me about government man, we don't want government! We been run out of every damn country we ever went to!"

D: [LAUGHING]

C: That's exactly right.

S: You, know, again, so that's why we got a slight problem with all the government [INAUDIBLE] confused and depressed okay?? But, uh, so we have a tremendous ingenuity here, I mean we really do, I mean and--and what we been through for—frankly, what I've been through in my lifetime, but particularly what I been through since Hurricane Ivan, okay? Since Ivan, which I lose track of, that was in '04 I believe. '04-05 and now '08. What we've been through, I mean, in my lifetime, in my recent lifetime—and I've been through all of the damn storms, I have never evacuated Terrebonne Parish for a hurricane until Gustav. And I don't think I will ever evacuate Terrebonne Parish again. Because Gustav—the models—the wonderful computer models with big Mike and Super-duper computers were wrong. For Gustav. They were wrong—positive! But they were wrong. And they were wrong for Ike, They were wrong for Ike negative. Okay? So I don't believe 'em. I didn't believe 'em in the first place and I really don't believe 'em now. 'Cause I missed the computer age, okay? They didn't teach that at LSU! So I say a hurricane is such an unusual weather event and where you are is such an important part of the geography equation that you can't put it in a computer. And depending on where the storm is, the intensity of the storm, the location of the storm the aftermath of the storm, and what's happening to you physically. And what's happening to us physically, you can't know where you can put that in a computer. We had a plus 5 for Ike—for Rita. We had a plus 5 right down the road. We had a plus 7 for Ike. Okay? That's what's happening in this place. So what if this is a plus 11? So one of these days they gonna have a plus 11 here. Or more. Ain't no doubt in my mind. But I've come to the conclusion that I've got generators everywhere, I built an office in Thibodeaux 14 feet above sea level, 15 miles north of here, I have a facility in Lafayette with a redundant computer system and I have a facility in Houston with a redundant computer system. I have a two-story guesthouse I built that I think is Hurricane-proof, and it's the second story's 20 feet above sea level. And I don't think I'm leaving. The reason I ain't leaving is first off, that I—gettin' back is ridiculous,

okay? Secondly, I look around and see the authorities. I ain't leavin' my property in their hands. I got very little confidence in them people. I don't care what they say, I don't like them [idles], and I don't like the way they run their business. And by the way, I was here before FEMA, okay? And I'll be here after FEMA. You know what Mr. Tozac told me in 1980 he got elected to Congress. And he got elected on a ticket to eliminate the Department of Energy. It had just been created. So he goes to Washington D.C. in 1980. And he goes to some social function in 1980. He bumps into a guy, Tozac introduces himself, and the guy introduces himself and says, "I'm with the Department of Energy." Tozac says, "I don't know if you wanna shake my hand. I just got elected to the Congress to eliminate the Department of Energy!" And the guy says, "Well Mr. Congressman, I wouldn't worry about that. I'm on the B Team." And so he says, "What is the B Team?" he said, "I'll be here when you come, and I'll be here when you're gone."

[ALL LAUGHING]

S: So I'm with the B team with FEMA. Them S.O.B.s...

D: Well, you know we were talking about the lumber company and I had read all of the early transcripts of the...well, within the Clerk of Court's records for the parish government, and one of the things that Terrebonne did that I don't know of any other parish--you had some siltation problems, not from flooding of the river, but from pull boat logging in the swamps, putting sediments, and those sediments were filling your bayous. So you bought the dredge boat, the Eclipse. And I know you know the Eclipse. Can you give me some—you know that's a massive undertaking for a parish and its public works to get in the dredge business.

S: We in Terrebonne, again, it goes back, there was a number of drainage districts [on], there was a number of...not levee, districts, primarily drainage districts and there were a number of canals dug not only for logging purposes, but primarily for drainage purposes. There was one, what they called the Prairie Land district, Levee dis—drainage district which was between the Coteau Ridge, Bayou Blue Ridge, and Houma. Just so happens, C. P. Smith ended up being the president of that drainage district and they dug a canal from Bayou Terrebonne to Bayou Coteau to Bayou Blue, for drainage purposes. That's where U.S. [Nighty] ended up being built. Right along this [pause] from that canal. So drainage, again, because of the ridges, as I described to you, was very important, and also, in the 1926 storm, there was a—again we get back to hurricanes. We had a great storm in 1856 that [expected] Terrebonne, there was a 1909 storm that affected Terrebonne, which my father, grandfather, and a great-uncle drowned in, but my father and great-grandfather survived the storm. And then there was a 1926 storm that was affected Terrebonne, and then in later years, as far as I'm concerned, Betsy was a major storm, and we've had a few others and that's another book that I would like somebody to write some day about the storms that drastically affected Terrebonne Parish. Interesting, Houma has never flooded from a Hurricane because of—I consider our buffer was the wetlands, which are gone. Again, I think we've lost over 400,000 acres of land between here and the Gulf of Mexico in Terrebonne Parish within my lifetime. And

that was our protection and that's gone. But again, in 1926 there was a hurricane. And father told me about the story that the hurricane created what we call Wanda Lake, which was between Bayou Terrebonne and Bayou Pointe au Chien. And the storm with the tornadoes, etc. picked up the marsh and put it in the middle of Bayou Terrebonne. And they had to dredge Bayou Terrebonne out for navigation and drainage purposes.

S: So drainage was always a big deal, so you say, okay, there were problems with the pullboat runs, there were problems with moving the timber around between, let's say 1870 and 1920...Uh, drainage was always important. We had a drainage, uh, a gravity drainage tax in this parish. As far as I know, it was put into place in the 1930's. And probably even before that to tell you the truth, but what I know is about the 1930's, there was a millage, a parish-wide millage for drainage—we'd call it gravity drainage improvements. Most of our drainage until my lifetime—my professional lifetime, was gravity drainage. We never had a drainage problem, an influx of water, we always had a gravity drainage problem, again, we get 60 inches of rainfall on average a year. One—1992 we got 100 inches of rain. Uh, we've gotten, some months, 20 inches of rain. In a month! okay? Uh, so drainage is always a big deal, course our drainage system also was drastically affected by the levee-ing of Mississippi and the Atchafalaya River. We are between the basin of the Mississippi and the Atchafalaya and the Bayou LaFourche Basin to the Gulf of Mexico. That's how "Morganza to the Gulf" got named, by the way, because we're in the basin, all the way from Morganza, Louisiana, the Mississippi River, to Bayou Lafourche, to the Gulf of Mexico, and the east guide levee to the Atchafalaya River. This is a basin, okay? Love when the court talks about the basin. I said, "First off, when you're talking about the basin, the basin that I live in starts in Minnesota and it comes all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Now I got a little basin where I live, but if you wanna talk about the BASIN, it's the big basin. And I'm part of the big basin! So don't do something in Minnesota and don't think about what the shit you're doing to me in Louisiana." They—lemme tell ya, they don't have a clue. Okay? I've been preaching that for 50 years and it's like, I mean, I just as soon been talkin' to the chair. [INAUDIBLE] gonna change everybody every three years, which you know is a ridiculous process. Where was I? Uh, again, drainage was—I'm sure if you go back in the records of the parish, drainage for us was probably as important as the Mississippi River. Uh, again, interesting: In 1997 we had a flood of the Mississippi River, before last year, that was the last time Bonnie Carey was open. Interesting reading the Houma Courier, somewhere within the last two or three years, and I may have the article—I know I have the article somewhere, we had a flood in 1897, and [prine]—there was an article in the Houma Courier and the big problem with the 1897 flood was that the Bayou Lafourche was gonna flood and that there was gonna be a crevice in bayou Lafourche and St. Charles and it was gonna flood all of Terrebonne from the east! Okay? Coming from Bayou Lafourche. And that was a big concern. After the 1897 flood is the time they started talking about damming Bayou LaFourche.

B: Right.

S: And again, my grandparents, in the interim, started building houses in Houma. The lots 11 feet above sea level, they built about 1900, they built the houses 6 feet off the ground. Not because they liked to go up steps, but because they thought their houses would flood from the Mississippi River. Now I may see the damn houses flood from the Gulf of Mexico. I was showing somebody the other day, [Big Ole Bird]. He owns a piece of property. House flooded for Ike, never flooded before, lived on a little ridge down there, so he's building up his mound—pod. In highland they build pods. We build mounds now. He done it up to plus 8, that's the FEMA elevation. I said, "Okay, you got 100 year flood protection?" "Yeah, yeah 100 years." I said, "If you wanna build your house ten feet up above that you'll have 500 years." And that's what people used to do. Okay? They don't go to get certified levees and all this other B.S. That's what they did! That's what they did in New Orleans, that's what they did across South Louisiana. That's what they did in Terrebonne Parish. I can remember going down the bayou--Bayou Lafourche--and everything was raised. Every bar room they had was raised. I can remember the stories about, you go up, you had a guy, a badass in Golden Meadows one time and somebody had to go arrest him, my neighbor was Johnny Forks. Johnny Forks was the game warden in Terrebonne and LaFourche. Nobody would go up and get this guy. Johnny Forks comes down and, "What's the matter?" Said, "Well they got that guy up there wanna kill everybody. Nobody wants to go get him." "I'll go get 'im." He goes up the steps, he tells this guy, "Partner, you're under arrest." Pulls his gun out, handcuffs 'im and they walk to the steps, the guy trips him, going down the steps. Boop boop boop boop. Ten feet down. When they got to the ground the guy was dead!

D & S: [CHUCKLING]

S: But that's the way it was! Partner. You know, he was the game warden! Everybody else live in a houseboat. You go down the bayou—I can remember people in Terrebonne Parish—you go down to DuLac, you go down—first off you go to Dulac, they had a big barroom at Dulac, Bayou Dulac built up high. Everybody built everything up high. And some fool came along in 1945 and built something on a slab! I mean that was—that's the guy that oughta go to jail! You know, they wanna put the [coin] in jail, they wanna put these people in jail, the guy that build the first house of the first slab in Louisiana oughta be the one going to jail! Whoever that was.

D: So, houseboats were the rule!

S: Well yeah! And even today, I go down the bayou, I've been down this parish after a storm so many times, you know? I stay in Terrebonne for a storm because I felt protected. Truly did. Didn't feel like I was in peril, and as an engineer I wanted to see the effect of the storm. So after the storm soon as the wind stops blowing, okay, I'm down the bayou. I'm in an airboat, I'm in a helicopter, I'm in something. You go down the bayou and see the people at Dulac. Partner, they in their boat, turned to the south! The way people lived! And you know, I'm talking about 30 year old guys, partner, and they know what the hell to do down there! I'm going to the cardiac doctor the other day in Houma. I've been going to the cardiac doctor for 26 years because my partner died one time in the real estate business at my age so I've been going to the doctor. I'm in there and they got a beautiful little woman comes in there to give me some kinda treatment or something, and she's—man she's young, she

looks like she's 40 years old or older, and I said, "How you doing?" And I'm looking at the cardiac doctor's office, it opens right on the edge of Intercoastal, and I'm looking at it there, and I go, I said, "Look it there, that's muddy water, that's from the Atchafalaya." See this is about a month ago, I said, "The river's gettin' higher, the water's comin' in. By the way, the water's crestin' today, by the way." But anyhow, she says—I says, "Boy that's something that's good, that muddy water coming." She said, "Yeah." And I don't know, I said, "Where you live?" She said, I live at the end of Bayou de Large." I said, "What you mean you live at the end of Bayou DeLarge? Where you livin' in the Bayou DeLarge?" She said, "You know Stanley Liner?" "Oh yeah I know him well!" She said, "That's where I live." I said, "You live on the 16th section?" "Yeah, yeah that's where I live." I said, "Why in the world is this obviously very well educated lady—" I mean she been working in the cardiac—I mean she's a nurse, okay? And she said—I said, "Why you live down there? Your house flooded for Rita?" "Yep." "Your house flooded for Ike?" She said, "Yeah, but we had built everything up and [wasn't flooded, we figured we was gonna flood anyhow]." I said, "Oh, okay. Why the hell you live down there?" She said, "Well I married a So & So Leray. He used to work for you, Clifford." I said, "Oh yeah?" "Yeah, worked in a survey crew." I said, "Well why do you live down there?" She said, "He's a fisherman. He makes a good living a fisherman. And we live here and right across the road is the boat, and that's where he goes, gets in his boat every morning and goes crabbing or trawling and he makes a good living. And you know, if he didn't do that we wouldn't live there, Goddammit, I mean I would live somewhere else, but that's what he does! That's where we were born, what the hell! you know?" I said, "But that's getting confused again, I get confused. Now here's nice people, obviously this lady has got a pretty good formal education, her husband has got him a way to make a good living and he ain't going to Napoleon Ville, or he ain't going—that's where he is, I mean, this is the dilemma, okay? And you know, this poor guy living in Bayou Large, I'll take you to Bayou Large right now, and the damn water's probably over the road right now!

B: But you put your finger right on it: It is a dilemma.

S: Yeah, it is. You get like—I go, the other day, when I was riding around with the Parish President, we were at Isle of Jean Charles. And you know, I been going—the first time I went to Isle of Jean Charles, I walked to Isle of Jean Charles, okay? And they were lucky that you could walk there. Before, you used to have to paddle a pirogue through Lake Barré to get there, alright? So, I mean, when I walked to Isle of Jean Charles in 1952, them people looked at me like I was from the moon, and they looked at me like I was from the moon. Okay? So I been going to Isle of Jean Charles forever, so I'm driving down the Isle of Jean Charles with the parish president and he said, "Man we gotta rebuild the road. Why would we rebuild this road?" I said, "I agree with you, this is ridiculous! We got of course, 4 or 5 million dollars to dam everything—that ain't worth 20,000 dollars." He said, "Well what would you do?" I said, "That's why I ain't the parish president, hoss. I ain't gonna make this decision!"  
[ALL LAUGHING]

S: "I think I know what I would do but right now I got other decisions to make! You ran for parish president not me!" But then I could show you all over Terrebonne Parish, examples of that. I could show you public money being spent where anybody

with their right mind wouldn't do it. I can show you coastal restoration projects in Terrebonne Parish where money has been spent to protect a coastal area that ain't never functioned. That nobody ever goes and operates. Okay? They have paid me, my firm, probably millions of dollars to design projects that get built, that nobody operates. And we read about the paper, "we got the biggest problem." We do have the biggest problem! But the biggest problem is we ain't got a commitment. You know, Mary Landrieu wanna go to Holland, I been to Holland, okay? The biggest problem is them people are committed to protectin' their ass from the North Sea. We ain't committed. And I'll tell anybody that. We got a magnificent library in this parish that I voted for, okay? We need a library in this parish like we need a hole in the head if it's got ten feet of salt water in it. And we still don't understand that. We do not understand that. My mother was on the founding library board of Terrebonne Parish. How could I be opposed to a library tax? But we got a library tax that generates probably 4 or 5 million a year and man, and we got a 15 million dollar library, and we buildin' branches now all over the goddamn place, that are gonna be underwater! And nobody—the stupid newspaper don't write about that. You know, I mean, it's confusing. I'm very confused.

D: Well, going back, 'cause Carl and I are real interested in your notion about people building, they raised their house, they did it, not because FEMA told them, but "this is what I have to do to protect myself."

S: Yep.

D: I've seen only one photograph at Sea Breeze. And yet, Sea Breeze I know was an important recreational facility for Houma.

S: Mm hm.

D: There apparently was a very large--

S: That's the boat races in Lake [Barré].

D: And what is this in the background? All of these houses? Is that houseboats?

S: Probably so, yeah.

D: Alright.

S: Let's see if I can find—this is the boat my father built in 1926 they were building this boat in 1926 at Madison Canal. And the storm was coming, okay? Building this thing out of virgin cypress, alright? The storm was coming, the cabin wasn't built, the engine wasn't in it, so they sunk the boat and came back after the storm had bumped out the ability. Okay? This is the boat I used to go to the coast in every damn summer. This is my daddy fishing for tarpon at [Wine Allen Pass], and uh...with rod reels. Probably first rod reels, that was the tarpon, see right there, standing in the damn pass. See they're standing in the pass!

B: Yeah! Huh!

S: Okay, let's see if I can find it. Ok yeah, this is the--this happens to be my father right here but this isn't the same place, you see they used to sleep on the top of the boat with mosquito nets...This is my father, can you believe that?

D: Wine Island Pass.

S: We'd go trawl for tarpon, [they were the] best fish in the damn things. Still fishin' 'em, okay.

B: That one's enormous.

S: Yeah, this is a—look at the boat! Look at the boat! [He] like old man in the sea. I think this is at Sea Breeze, okay?

D: Mm hm.

S: Now this is the first rod and reel. You see, they got, I think this is at Sea Breeze. I think this is at Sea Breeze, wait a minute—this is at Sea Breeze but this is when I was on the boat, and this is those old shrimp drying platforms at Sea Breeze. This is the boat. This is Bayou Terrebonne. This is—This is Barra Street. Right here is Barra Street, Dupont store was here, this is actually a seafood market, and this was before my time, but I know where it is. This is the bridge, this is foot bridge I think my grandfather built at Barra Street. And this was the boat they used to run down the bayou, just take people down the bayou. Cruisin' down the bayou. Okay, here you go, here's the camp at Sea Breeze.

D: Yeah, okay.

S: This was a—as far as I know, this was the camp in 1909 that my father, my grandfather, and my great uncle went to in September the—