

David Richard Interview

Interviewers: Don Davis and Carl Brasseaux

Don Davis: There we go.

Carl Brasseaux: Now a little bit – if we can play with the...

D: First of all we'd like to thank both of you for giving up one of your day to day....David if you could just introduce yourself

David Richard: Sure. I'm David Richard.

B: Hang on guys. We get this started. Hang on guys.

D: Just we're, you know, (inaudible) because this is for history and it's important that we know a little bit about your background. Okay.

B: I can't figure this recording out. We've never had....that worked better. It's better. I think maybe we have to readjust the volume, maybe, but...okay.

D: David if you could just introduce yourself?

R: Sure. David Richard. Uh, I work here for the Spring family. We um, the estate of J.G. Gray. I've been here since 1991. Worked with the family prior to that in the (alligator?) business – the land business. Worked here with uh, hunting guests as a service man, um, we have timber holdings and marsh holdings, and a huge cattle operation.

D: Kent?

Kent Ledoux: Yes, my name is Kent Ledoux. I'm from Sulfur, Louisiana. I've been working for the Strings since 1972. Um, I serve as ranch manager, currently. Have since 1970. And uh, that covers livestock, cattle, horses, and I also work with David on some of the farming issues.

D: Great. Well what we really would like for you this morning is reminisce. Just pretend like I'm one of your grandkids and you're telling me what you do. And since I know David a little longer, I'm first I'm gonna address David. David, you know, you've been around Coastal Louisiana most of your adult life. And in both of your instances, you're gonna remember stories from your father, and your grandfather, and those people who work with you. And those stories are important whether they be in the cattle business, the alligator business, market hunting, or at least in some parts of Louisiana, bootlegging. Cause they did a little bit of that too. David what's your earliest recollection of the marsh when you were...

R: I guess crawfishing as a kid. Working cattle as a kid. Hunting as a kid. All around the ranch near the Creole area. My heritage is from Grand Chenier. Uh, my grandfather was Irish - was an Irish immigrant. Um, my grandmother was from the Miller family of uh, German descent. My father and his family were French of the French. So, from Creole. So my family heritage is basically contained in that Southern Cameron parish.

D: Now do you remember what your grandfather did in Creole?

R: I remember what my grandfather did in Creole – what my grandfather did in Grand Chenier.

D: Would you kind of give us a clue of - that's a period before major roads. So, everything was done essentially by walking.

R: Yep. That's correct.

D: Kind of explain what you remember about it.

R: The major trade was done from Grand Chenier by water to Lake Arthur or to Galveston. That trade was in - I'm gonna talk about before my time now...

D: That's fine.

R: Trade was with Sea Island cotton, going back to the early part of the century – they had commerce with pecans, commerce with citrus, and probably one of the major, you know, money issues as far as currency is concerned, is trapping. So, um, there were stores, right there along the (Mirliton River?) that did the shipping. I actually uh, went through Hurricane Audrey in Creole. And uh, there were cotton gins – the old cotton gins are still there on Old Oak Grove. That was remnant of that cotton period time. Uh, the rows from that cotton and some of the ditching from that cotton is still there today. You know, a hundred years later. So my family was associated with a piece of land called (Merlinton Meadow?). Um, it was under a land manager, probably 1930, '31. Uh, my grandfather went to that land company in 1930, '31 and basically my family is still on that fourteen thousand acre land in Grand Chenier. And so he had ownership of his own, and Grand Chenier and at Johnson Bayou. And um, they used their house, you know when they were young for hunting – they had hunting people that came in – they hunted. Basically on the south side of Grand Chenier. It was in an area that was open - the north marsh was um, pretty solid. Solid with plenty Cladium Jamacense or saw grass. And until hurricane Audrey, actually until the drought - probably 1951 to 1953 – caused a lot of that saw grass to die, and Hurricane Aubrey opened that up to where you had areas that were opened up north of Grand Chenier, Pecan Island – that area. Um, the big burn, you know, it was a fire in the twenties that opened up some of the areas between um, between Gibbstown and – between the prairie and the Cheniers, so it opened up that particular area. So, you know, I've been involved with the marsh since my earliest remembrance. I guess that's the easiest way to say that, Don.

D: Okay now you know we've – both of you are familiar with trapping. And in order to gain access, you either walk the marsh or build the trenches. You remember how the early trenches were built?

R: They were built with crooked shovels.

D: Okay.

R: The, the way to get from grand Chenier to Pecan Island was Pecan Island ditches was built with crooked shovels. Off the front end of a boat.

D: Off the front end of the boat. Do you stand on the front end of a boat and use, like a...like a hull. But a shovel...

R: They call it a crooked shovel. It's actually a shovel that is bent down.

Oaky.

R: And the way the first ditches that I'm familiar with were dug.

D: Now, when we -

R: Now, before -

B: One second guys. Let me shut this Just a tad. Okay.

D: When we look at early maps, like 1930 they show a few they call them pirogue trails or ditches. My instincts tell me there were a lot of these. Because you were not only using them for trapping, but at that time there was some hunting taking place. Do you remember that era? Or stories of the....

R: Sure.

D: You know, the Florence Hunting Club being one, and many others - Pecan Island Hunting Club. What's your remembrance of the, the hunting and the....what has evolved now into a big industry. Recreational and...

R: I remember the - talking about the cattle drives in Chenier (inaudible). You gotta understand a lot of those cattle were moved up and down the coast. To different ranges. They were also moved from North to South. Um, I remember talking to the Roy Hebert who lived on Chenier (inaudible). And my grandfather and them would talk about - they'd kill a hundred fifty geese or so, pack them in lard, so that they would have meat for the year, and uh, they always have a goose gumbo or a roast goose when they went there and they brought the cattle back the next Fall. So you know you learn about the preservation of meat, you now in lard, and you preserve the meat in salt products. Which you know I still - they still did when I was a kid. Butchered hogs in a lard pot. You know, and I did that on the farm. So, um... you used to have to guide me on subjects, you know.

D: Well when I wanna stay on that. On the cattle business. Because um, you mentioned that Kent here has been involved in quarter horses. Do you know um, Tommy Blanchard? Is that a name you recognize? Okay. Tommy's from Thibodaux. And he carried a lot of quarter horses. But he's sort of going in the racing side, but you're developing a horse that works a farm. You know, explain how a marsh cattle enterprise works since we have no clue. Don't assume we know anything. Just sort of explain how that

works. Your cowboys, history of your cowboys, um, why do we use a whip? I can't find any other place other than Mexico.

L: Sure. Can David and I interact as we...

D: You can have a great time. Just get after it.

L: Because I, I will tell you uh, unlike David, I did not grow up in the marshes. Um, I grew up more as a city dweller. Um, listening to stories of my grandfather and my father. Um, they all work for rice farmers, and back then, all rice farmers had cattle. Those two entities went hand in hand. And uh, dipping was a - for fever ticks was a very interesting story. Listening to my grandfather, of course I never was involved with that. It happened earlier on, but, uh, you could imagine my excitement my first trip to the Gray Ranch and I walked up to a, a dipping vat. I dipped in that after I heard so many stories of my grandfather, talking about dipping cattle. But uh, David uh, grew up with cattle, and so I think we can probably interact.

D: Well please do.

Ken Ledoux: Um, I know uh, the particular area from Ged south to Johnson Bayou , um, probably is different in some marsh areas that you see. David's had more experience in many different areas than I have, but, but I can tell you about some of those um, so called marshes uh, and it takes a Brahman influence cow to navigate and want to explore and find better grasses. Uh, they, they must maintain some Brahman influence. But in doing so those cattle travel out in areas you would think are totally impassable. And uh, we do still use whips. We do use dogs on certain occasions. Some places they're not applicable but certain pennings in certain areas they do use dogs. But what I noticed or what I learned from the old cowboys, I was fortunate enough to go to Gray Ranch when Mr. Pete Henderson was still alive. He had been retired by the String family. And his son was the current ranch foreman at that time. Uh, when I went to farm, but here were guys like Bud Trahan who lived in one of the ranch houses in Johnson Bayou. He and his wife uh, lived on the ranch property in Johnson bayou. So I got to know him and his old stories. Dennis birch, Um lived at what we call the Pines, and I'm sure we'll talk about that more later. But uh, I got to hear those stories of those were cowboys and uh, Dennis was a trapper as well as a cowboy. Uh, and up at headquarters in Ged, um, the guys that have ranched for Mr. Pete Henderson early on are now in their later years, and have taken jobs in the oil field. I' m not sure we'll talk about the Ged Oil Field more, but those guys were MS. Everybody called him Bud Johnson. Buster Singleton, uh, Shelby Broussard, those guys that have all lived and worked on the ranch in their early years, but they've now taken jobs in the oil field. And uh, of course I got to work with them and they worked seven and seven, so on their seven days off, they were working at the ranch. And – I got to work with those guys and hear those stories. Uh, um, Bud Johnson was - all of them were good cowmen - or cowboys. Let me put it to you that way. And I remember several of them who were excellent with handling whips, and Bud Johnson was one of them. And uh, for our purposes at the ranch, David can expound on this more, but the whips were used more just to make a little noise. You could ride out on the ridge in the marsh and see some cows grazing on the marsh – sit there and pop the whip a time or two and those cows start coming out on their own. You go out there and try to 'hoo rah', get rough with

them, you'd bog something down. That was our experience with whips used in the marsh. So that's uh, it was more for, for just making a little noise.

And how did you move the cattle from say, Johnson Bayou to – I'm assuming there is a pasture there. To wherever you went to get out of the mosquitoes during the summer – I'm gonna say maybe you leave maybe in April, May, something like that. And you head out someplace where there's no mosquitoes. How did that operation work?

L: Well now I'm telling you what happened before my time.

D: Okay.

R: Okay when I came to the ranch, I came to the ranch in 1972. There was a total herd depopulation in 1971 due to brucellosis and TB. Quarantined and had been inactive for many years. Okay so uh, powers to be decided it was best to just depopulate. Leave the ranch vacant for one year, and that was according to government regulations, and then repopulate. But before my time, uh, and this is well documented in the Louisiana Cowboy Book, uh, Mr. Henry Gray uh, John Geddings Gray's son, who it's my understanding was the true stock person. Cow person, horse person. And uh, must've had a true love for Gray Ranch. He knew of grasses in Johnson Bayou. And wanted to find the direct route to get his cattle from Ged, South of Vinton, to Johnson Bayou. And they rode that marsh horseback – which I can't even imagine what that must've been like. The few times I've been bogged down, I always think about Henry Gray riding from the first time from Vinton to Johnson Bayou, and I can't even imagine what he must've gone through. But he did - he found the he found a, a route and with the help of building some what we call dumps, small levees, to go for a real bad - go across the worst parts of the marsh. He was able to drive cattle from Benton down to Johnson bayou. They wintered down there. Now I'm telling you stories that I've heard.

D: Sure.

So um, what always interested me was the cattle and I'm – I tried to think of how that all came about. But before the Intracoastal was dug was when this trail started. And those cattle were somewhat migratory because I've heard bud Johnson tell of being delayed for one reason or another – taking cows from Vinton to Johnson Bayou in a bad north wind come through, and they gotta get to the Intracoastal because the cows were already heading down there on their own. So I think about the, the migratory animals that we know of today, and that herd must've been like that. They had gone down there for so many years and came back with their calves and their heifer calves went back, and that's how those cattle were able to traverse those marshy areas. But they would take them down to Johnson bayou to spend the winter because of the milder winters and the lush grass that was everywhere. But being uh, the elevation in Johnson bayou by being what it is, uh, um, average of four feet or so maybe? Any type of disturbance in the gulf is gonna push salt water up on your property. So they, they weren't able to leave them down there year round. Although there probably were some cattle that stayed year round. The large herd was brought back to Vinton in the spring.

D: And did you keep them in Vinton or did you go further north?

L: For Gray Ranch purposes I think Vinton was probably the stopping point. David, do you know more...

R: But the Broussard herd went down there with them, and some of the other herds went to the woods toward DeQuincy. They went up all the way to DeQuincy. It's just ..

B: Lichtenstein.

R: That's correct. A lot of that went on further into the upper land.

L: Te Dequincy area.

D: Now I know you only know the stories. David already mentioned cattle that went I'm gonna assume from Johnson Bayou to west. To Chenier (inaudible) then I'm guessing North, someplace more like Abbeville. How did that work?

R: On the beach, you gotta remember the historical hydrology. Uh, historical hydrology had, the area Creole ranch near more stable water levels and a fresher environment. So you have cattle there that were raised there I the summertime, but they would Winter them at either Chenier (Tig?) or they would winter them in Johnson Bayou. So the cattle were the Creole cattle which was a drive across the Ship Channel were driven from Creole across the Ship Channel, through Holly Beach to the western end of Johnson Bayou. Some cattle went that direction. Some cattle from that Grand Chenier, Creole area went to the beach and they drove them toward Mulberry which is on the west side of Freshwater Bayou and Chenier (Tig) on the east side. Um, driving north is for the railhead that's not available. There was no rail to get them to Abbeville. So you know the marketing is a whole another story, but you have to the migrations of those cattle from that particular area – the Grand Chenier, Creole area which was in the Cameron area, a prairie that a coastal prairie – and really a coastal marsh prairie – we're gonna differentiate things here. Cheniere complex that moved both west and both – and east and west.

D: Well now, marking had to be tough and difficult, but...

R: Marketing is difficult – I'm gonna tell you a story about marketing. My grandmother in Creole was a Trahan. And she talked to me about after the big burn, moving cattle from Creole, up to Gibbstown, in the Intercoastal there. Where the hooves were hot because they were on fire. Now, when you look at that march today after subsidence and sea level rise and marsh deterioration, and tidal amplitude because of the ship channel and a number of other things, um you wonder how cattle move across that country – that they were actually driven to the north. We also had cattle that were shipped by sea out of Cameron. We also that - and that's documented in regard to moving steers or whatever. The same thing um, out of Johnson bayou. Where you had cattle that were moved by boat. And marketed in that way.

D: And I'm gonna assume we go back far enough these are sailboats. Sail powered.

R: We also had steam, you know after that we had steamboats.

D: We're taking them to Galveston or Lake Charles?

R: You're taking some to Lake Charles. Lake Charles was probably - and then they had rails in Lake Charles - they had rails in - they actually had rails in Lake Arthur.

D: Okay.

R: Um, my mother went to school in Grand Chenier from a boat. In Grand Chenier to go get on a train in Lake Arthur and go Louisiana north to Natchitoches is how she was educated. My grandmother, those people were actually sent to Grand Coteau. Grand Chenier was a place where we had lots of education - education was very important. But from a coastal standpoint, you know you had Italians, you had Germans, you had Irish, which is Dublin which is my heritage, you had French, and you had at that time Czechoslovakians. Can't hardly say that today because they want to be called Slavs or Czechs. But in any case, um, some time you know, I you know time has worked quickly on our lives, Don. As you know it. Haha

D: Well you mentioned you were a Miller?

R: That's right.

D: That leads me to believe. Emmo.

R: Emmo was my grandfather's younger brother.

D: And he, he's credited with you saying that staggered ditches as a way to rest cattle in the marsh. I don't know if it's true, but you know we built the staggered ditches so that they have a place to calf. That's absolutely unique, and it was done well before permits and anything else you would require. It was something you only find in this part of the country. You do not find any place else. It's a fascinating part of the cattle business that's been overlooked. Carl and I've been trying to stitch some things together - we're hoping to get into some Miller papers. But you know, you grew up seeing these, but they're highly significant in letting the cattle

R: They call them cattle walkways.

D: Yes.

R: It's actually programs, that the old, um, predecessors, up in **RCS, which was Resource Conservation Service**. Actually, not only promoted that but funded some of that. And it was funded as staggered bar ditches. It was funded as cattle walkways. I want to tell you something about Henry Gray. The walkways that Henry Gray built preceded that and preceded Emmo Miller by thirty years. Henry Gray had a right of way from Texaco across the old Orange Land Company in Sabine refuge to build a walkway that's nine miles long. And also the walkway between the ridges that connected Vinton with Johnson Bayou prior to Emmo Miller's birth, so I want you to - and that comes from my historical records here. Because from in the land business, I have to look at right of ways. I have to look at construction. I have to look at the permitting. I have to look at movement and coordination with Kent on how we do things.

D: That's really important because on early maps, nine miles- I'm gonna call it on the western edge of your property – a dump. it's actually listed as the dump. Is that the seven mile route you're talking about?

R: It's along -on the eastern edge of Sabine Lake and it's called Gray's Ditch.

D: Yes. That's it.

R: It's called Gray's ditch. And that was built, the right of way was secured in 1924. The Texaco. From Texaco.

D: Alright. Now you mentioned the Orange Cameron Land Company and that they had real estate essentially- we're gonna exaggerate – mostly Cameron parish uh, west of the Calcasieu but it wandered over to the east as well in maybe...

R: Sabine National Wildlife Refuge.

D: Is that the...

R: The Sabine National Wildlife Refuge

D: So the Sabine refuge is...

R: Orange Cameron County. It's a trapping operation. Do you notice the straight ditches that are dug east and west there.

D: Yes.

Willow Bayou camp. They call it Buzzard Camp. There's a number of camps out there historically that were used as trapping. It was a trapping company. And uh, that's why the ditches were dug.

D: As part of the...

R: The trapping operation.

D: Ranch, well you also could call it Rat Ranch. Now didn't they own pro- no it was Stanalin. – the old Stanlin camp that is...

R: White lake?

D: White Lake. Now that goes back to the Stanalin oil company which was in Amaco's

R: Which was (inaudible).

You gotta go before that to (inaudible).

D: Alright. And that's – that's Texas money.

R: That's correct.

D: Beaumont.

R: I can't tell you that.

D: And I think it's Beaumont. Do you know, do you know a little – we want to talk about the oil and gas business, but right now, let's get back on the cattle side.

R: Sure.

D: You know, if I'm looking for a cowboy, where do I find one? I mean do I advertise in the paper? I mean, I don't know how you do this. I know how you want to Johnson Bayou and there's all kinds of signs up looking for people – not anymore, but you know what I mean. How do you find a cowboy?

L: I don't know I guess uh, I guess the history of the ranch has been - they just show up.

D: Okay.

L: Uh,

B: From where?

L: Well all the guys that have worked at the ranch were locals. Uh...

R: Southeast Texas and Southwestern Louisiana.

L: Yeah. And I say locals, probably Eunice this way, uh, are the ones that I'm familiar with, you know, but uh, men or boys that want to ranch, want to ride, want to chase cows, migrate to ranches that they hear about. And when you go from Sulfur west, you hear about Gray Ranch. So I - we still get calls today. Uh, our drive-ups, I get drive ups. Uh, guys that uh, had ranched early in their lives, went to work construction, well there's no work today. I know how to ranch, I know a little veterinarian work. I don't mind building fence. Can you use me? You know. So we've we get calls weekly from guys that that want to come work for the ranch.

D: Well as I recall, Sulfur High School still has a high school rodeo.

L: That's correct.

D: Alright so clearly there is a connection because of the high schools that still rodeo. Not all high schools rodeo.

L: Correct.

D: And because of home background I understand how that works. So you have a labor pool that's not far. And now they seek you out. And that's probably because the ranch has a great reputation and it's a good place to work. Now how many people would you have on a ranch on any given day or week, or how does that work?

L: Well, currently, we have three guys full time plus myself. Four full time cowboys. Uh, when we work large areas, there are some day workers available to us. Thank God.

D: Mmmhmm.

L: But back before my time, uh, it was not uncommon to have fifteen or twenty hired men on the ranch.

B: So it was so many per so many cattle? How does that figure?

L: Oh uh, I really don't know how they did it in the earlier days. Uh, today we're budgeting everything we do and we have housing for three men and that's about what my budget will allow.

D: Mmmhmm. But it's enough. With some

L: On most days. When they work, sure.

D: It, now how – when you're depopulated your herd I'm assuming it didn't go to zero. But it probably went some - in lower numbers. Now how long has it taken to build the herd back up? From the 70s.

L: Well the way that transpired was the government stepped in and said if you will depopulate, leave the land idle for one year, you've got - correct me if I'm wrong - you've got a year from that date to reinvest that money in livestock. Or I'm assuming there would be some tax disadvantages. Okay so one year left idle for one year and then you had one year to repopulate. Okay.

D: Okay.

L: And I was there at that time and uh, the gentleman that was in charge of land management uh, purchased a thousand heifers at one time. So that got us pretty well on the road.

D: But these aren't – these have to be cattle that can work the marsh? So if I'm - and you always said that there has to be a little Brahman?

L: Brahman influence.

D: Where do you go find cattle that have the right Brahman influence to work South Louisiana's marshes?

L: These cattle happen to be involved around New Roads, so they were South Louisiana cattle. Uh, but I would tell you that is a very uh, critical decision for me. As to raise my own heifers versus buying heifers. Because economically, I can show you where it's cheaper to go buy a bred cow than it is to raise a heifer. But it takes so long for a cow that's brought in from another area to acclimate to our country, that I'm still currently raising our own replacements. For that very reason.

D: Well it's not an easy environment to work cattle. But it's an environment you've learned how to work cattle. Um, Carl and I discovered that Louisiana is the second state in the union to have Brahman cattle. They came in through the Carolinas and into the South. And though the Texans don't like to admit it,

they got theirs from us. And I think the first cowboys spoke French. And if we get our way, we're gonna prove it and let Texas rewrite their history. Don't you think that it'd be fun?

L: Haha

B: While we're on that subject David and Kent, I want to ask both of you um, we know when the Brahmans were introduced; do you have any idea from the old timers what kind of cattle they were running here before they were introduced? I mean were these Texas longhorns, or um, some other breed of cattle – I know there wasn't flooded stock that were bringing in from Europe. Do you have any idea at all what the original cattle were out there?

R: We uh, I can tell you about my youngest experiences – we had lots of longhorns influence, and lots of those cattle were um, in my vernacular we'd say chisel backs. They didn't have uh, they did not have the meat. They did not have the quarters. They were thinner cattle, um, and I mean, still today, we have what we call Dulong cattle, uh, cattle that you know, I mean the French names are Dulong and (Muskaret?) – the different French names that I grew up with in regard to the types of cattle and how they would be identified by. When you would part cattle out. Um, then you had the Brahman influence, you had the angus influence, you had uh, later on you had you know some Hereford influence but it had to be in a cross bred situation, you know. Now marsh cattle, my preference, is another one, Brahman Hereford. And then you make a three way cross – and that's prevalent in cattle mentality with black hoofs. Uh, because today the black market it – the market for angus cattle bought market for cattle – really in tune to black cattle. I mean it's we went through this period of Exotics, Charolais, and Charolais you're gonna find that it's southwest Louisiana also. Uh, Brahman – my earliest remembrance of cattle – of woods cattle – cattle that we call came out of the woods – woods cattle. Cattle came out of the woods all had Brahman influence and those were cattle that were tough. You've gotta have the Brahman influence because they have pores that are in their skin that can take the heat.

D: Hmm.

R: And uh they can take the insects. That Brahman influence is disease resistant – say you know that Brahman influence as far as cross bred – it is terribly poor.

D: You know during Audrey, we lost a lot of cattle in South Louisiana. Now we've gone through 2005 2008 – did you lose a lot of head in the four hurricanes in the last – well now four years. Three year spread. Did it hurt?

L: Well you're looking at two totally different pictures here.

D: Alright.

L: And uh, David is awfully lost all their cattle.

D: Everything.

R: Not everything but you look at them from another standpoint, um, we went from uh, probably 700 mama cows to less than 100. And a lot of those rescued them in the marsh marsh – in air boats, shrimp boats tied to barges and uh, lots of things that went on here during Rita that uh, I worked at that for almost thirty days, Kent worked with it for the same amount of time here on the western side. Uh, trying to salvage the cattle, but we couldn't – because there were lots of cattle that were stuck in the marsh - there was no fresh water, and nothing to eat. So um, and there are some records to that you'd probably, you know, somebody needs to save. I can't hardly bring myself to that period of time to take photographs, but...

No and it's gotta be tough, David.

R: It was tough. It was a tough deal, and it's tough bringing back the cattle because I worked for thirty years to get a population of cattle that - I had a little herd of registered Herefords that we used in the show ring with my kids. I (inaudible) Brahman bulls. I raised some of my own bulls. I raised my own heifers. To replace that herd, it's gonna take me a long time. And uh, it's been a tough deal. And it's been a tough deal you know I estimate we lost 20,000 head for hurricane Rita. For hurricane Ike, it hadn't been repopulated. A lot of those cattle have not been repopulated. And most of those cattle moved out of there. I actually lost some for hurricane Ike for some extenuating circumstances, but I was able to save um, a little less than a hundred head. I lost about 50 head. But um, it was I was not able to get them out because smaller circumstances, in any case, it's been a tough deal in that country for cattle.

L: I'd like to add something

D: Sure. Please.

L: David's not gonna tell you, but David was in that airboat – I'm sorry.

D: No it's a – remember I got family that lost cattle. And I – I don't hurt because I grew up in California.

L: Yeah.

D: But I know the herd. And it's a tough story we have to tell. When you feel right...

L: Yeah.

D: Chime in.

L: Well, David was out there helping everybody else. Uh, he lost his home. It was easy for me to go help my neighbors. I didn't lose my home. David didn't have anything left. No home, no furniture, nothing. And he was out there every day helping friends, relatives, people he didn't even know. The other cattle – I'm sorry guys.

D: No no no. No. Don't be because – we're

L: We saw things, uh, it's a – hard for me to talk about it. I can't even imagine what he went through. I, you know I sat on the porch at the ranch by myself for three days, and looked at the devastation, and had my little pity party. And uh, had found out what he'd gone through and it was easy for me to get up and go, go pen cows for other people. I was very fortunate that I had been cautioned by the older guys about leaving cattle in Johnson Bayou during the storms. I was only seven years old for Hurricane Audrey, so I remember photographs. I remember the stress on my parents faces. But I – I didn't understand what hurricane Audrey was about. But it had scared me enough to where when the old timers said don't leave your cows in Johnson Bayou for the summer, I took heed to that. And I tried to make it my business to get all the strange cattle up to Ged , you know for the summer. Thirty years rocks along I guess I'm the laughing stock of the cattle industry of Southwest Louisiana, because I'm trying to get every cow out and we got guys that were leaving the herds down there for summer you know. Why are you going through such an expense to get those cattle north? Because I was told to. Because I – that impacted me – the stories I heard about hurricane Audrey. The ranches cattle for the most part were out of harms way.

D: Well, you know these are

L: I'm sorry David.

R: No! Aint no problem!

D: But, I gave a little presentation recentl,y David, to a group in – I've heard all the stories about how fast people came back form hurricane Audrey. And I wanted to make sure people understood that there wasn't a FEMA - they probably didn't even have a house note. They just did what they did. And I reminded people that in my mind, and this is just my mind – your property is your 401 K, and your herd is your interest. When you lose both, it's a lot different than the mentality of the people who aren't cattle people. We want to know you know, it's in your blood. You know and my family lost cattle in storms in Oklahoma, you went back to the business. It's in your blood – and now you've got maybe to be a tad cautious. And we would really like to know – I mean you lost a lot. Are you coming back?

R: Am I coming back?

D: Sure.

R: Sure I got a hundred head of cattle right now.

D: There you go. Um,

L: But you gotta understand the values of the animals that we're talking about today. You know he's not going to a sale barn and buying two hundred dollar cows. He's buying those thousand dollar cows because he's a cowboy. He knows through trial and error and through education what it takes to be productive in the cattle business. And that's what madam housewife that's going down there and buying a little package of hamburger or buying the ribeye doesn't understand. A cow is not just a cow, you know. And uh, and it's a costly nature to repopulate and I – I eluded earlier to the fact that I have to raise replacements. I don't have to raise replacements. The easy way out for me – working for this

organization, would be to sell every calf and go buy bred cows every year. I 'm just not sure that is the most economically feasible for the company I work for. You know,

D: Well when you buy – okay. You hear FEMA does this, FEMA does that. Did somebody come say to you, you lost a thousand head - we're gonna reimburse you for something? Or do we start from rock bottom? Because we hear all the stories about New Orleans – we can go through the whole list – but what about the cattle person?

R: There was a program – um, Livestock Indemnity Program.

D: Mmhmm.

R: You know with our government, we had to give it an acronym. Called LIP.

D: Mmhmm.

R: That was able – to reimburse cattlemen 75,000 dollars for losses that you could document. So let's just take the case of my uncle that lost, um, four hundred head. You know, 150,000 dollars for him and his wife ain't covering four hundred heads and fifty years of breeding, but they did do that. So you were able to put some cattle back in there, but it discouraged an awful lot of people from going back in the cattle business after these stroms. And actions by FEMA had been the biggest deterrent to the repopulation of that coastal culture. It is an absolute farce. It has been a farce. Now I'm gonna give you an example from a costal restoration standpoint , because you know I do a lot...

D: Mmhmm.

R: Cameron Creole Levee – 17 mile levee – built what we call 566 fonts. From, in RCS. They had periods of time we did some augmentation that we call 646 fonts. Which is (inaudible). It was done under the sponsorship of RCS under the brave boards of Cameron who are ultimately under Cameron Parish Police Jury. We are 2009 as we're speaking today. Four years after hurricane Rita. FEMA had yet to settle in regard to that rebuilding of that particular area. People were kept out of their homes after hurricane Rita for months – weren't allowed in Cameron parish. In lots of cases because of devastation, but FEMA has been a cause in my estimation, of the destruction of that culture. Of their rules and regulations and the destruction of some of that industry. So I mean, I had a call yesterday in regard to funding Cameron Creole that is in jeopardy from the state because they want to wait on FEMA to pay. That's not an option. That is not an option. FEMA has put a huge requirement in regard to elevation and construction. But what you did was after hurricane Rita you kept people away from their homes and their land for months. And they had to find a place to go, Don. They had to find a place to live. And they to find pieces of land – I mean there's land all over this praire country. Because people needed a place that was theirs underneath their feet. At that point, you have a lot of people that gave up. The delay, and FEMA recovery was incredible. So you had a lot of migration from that so the heritage of some of that area had been irreparably damaged. You go look at the pictures of hurricane Audrey in Cameron six months after hurricane Audrey – I spent hurricane Audrey you know, twelve - a sixteen foot wooden boat tied to a tree. My dad and my uncles were tying trees with whipping ropes called (inaudible) – in west Texas. Tied

to trees with life jackets on. That Fall, I was a kid - I was six years old. And I was kid and we rebuilt my grandmother's house. We had you know, people were back in there but we didn't have the government. And we didn't have government telling you how to eat, how to drink, how to sleep. How to get healthcare. How to retire. How to buy an automobile, and who you buy it from. So that FEMA deterrent had been a real issue in my estimation in regard to destruction of culture. As you know, I'm involved in lots of different things. I'm a Louisiana Mississippi Habitat Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council. We had a meeting Thursday before last. Now listen to the corps talk to me about - in Mississippi talk about the purchase of the real estate along the coast of Mississippi, and purchasing it from people. We're very proud of that in regard to basically depopulating some of that coastal country. That is contrary to my estimation of the government. And I'll never forget J.C. Reno from Creole one of the FEMA meetings after Rita says; I don't want your insurance. I just want to go build my house, and if it floods, it floods. If he doesn't build to their elevation, he does not get electricity. So he'll be there on a generator in a civilized world - you know the highway in front of them. And so those kinds of government mandates have been a real cultural problem, and I know you're interested culture and so am I, but it has affected my family and my heritage in regard to that country. So uh, I know you hear about New Orleans and I know you hear about violence and I know you hear about money. But you know for Hurricane Ike, where you did not have to strike a majority, minority population - you don't hear anything about Hurricane Ike. You know, you don't hear a lot about rebuilding that goes on in that country. You didn't have the national media coverage. You know, it was a little short blip. It was a huge storm here in Lake Charles for Hurricane Ike we got eighteen inches more water than we had for hurricane Rita. You know, a lot of it due to tides, and a lot of it due to it's size, and a lot of it due to a number of different things. Um, FEMA has not been - it - um, had been advantageous in repopulation of the coast. And as far as I'm concerned, has contributed to the destruction of the culture.

D: Carl were driving from Creole north towards Bell City. And there's an area up there that's clearly - there's a lot of new people. And I don't remember the road - it goes off towards the west - four digit highway. There's a lot of new homes. And we made the assumption that those people came out of Creole, Cameron, or some place. They're living as close to the marshes they can get.

R: That's correct.

D: And my guess is they still have real estate, and they may be commuting and it's just so they can get out. What did you say? Ground under their feet? And we made the assumption that that's where they went.

R: There's a lot of them that did. They went all the way up to Kinder. You know, but they didn't go much farther than that, you know, they stayed close on the prairie to the marsh. Marsh is such a productive place. And you know it's their heritage.

D: Now in sulfur, I mean It was the sulfur mine up there at one time, hence the name. You were not in the direct path, but you know what happened. And it's interesting that twenty miles away, twenty miles. Not far - you were in an entirely different environment. And how have you seen the marsh change in your lifetime, and those of your senior cowboys, and David, you've certainly seen it. How have you seen

the landscape change? And if we were in a perfect world, what would we do? Perfect world. We don't live in a perfect world, I understand that. But just sort of tell us how you've seen the changes. Kent?

L: Well, David will be able to tell you more about the actual changes of the marsh, but I know for us, the salt intrusion devastated all the grasses. We were fortunate enough to have the Bermuda grasses back first, which are some of the better grasses for us. Um, debris was a horrible issue, and all the marshes that I'm familiar with – David had a lot of influence in cleaning that up. They'll be some debris that we'll see for 50 years from now, you know. Um, the drift - marsh grasses and cane and whatnot – in some areas that have even prevented us from getting to certain spots we used to get to before. As far as a tremendous change, David – you might...

R: I will

L: You might add, um..

R: Sure. I will. Let's talk history here somewhat. Uh, you have to understand the hydrology of Southwestern Louisiana and the geology. The geology is much more stable here. We're got twice the same prairie. Drops off in some cases – let's say if you get to Grand Chenier might be 30 feet, Johnson Bayou in some places is two feet. Uh, you got the ridge complexes. You got the ridge soil complexes. The ridges in Johnson Bayou, um, a lot of that is less than a thousand years old. You go to Grand Chenier it's 1500 years old. Chenier Perdue - two thousand - little Chenier, 2500. So you're talking about the fault in the blink of an eye in geologic time. But stability – the stability of those settlements is much thatn it would be in the deltaic plains in Southeastern Louisiana. Our major problems here have been caused by uh, shipping channels that have crossed bystanding lines – I worked on a piece of land when I was with the state in the early 80s. Where (inaudible) is today. Those canals were dug by steam shovels in the later 1890s for rice culture using fresh water out of Calcasieu Lake. Today we got a 40 ft by 400 foot channel that brings salinity all the way in front of this office into Lake Charles. Lake Charles was a cypress lined lake that has been influenced so much by salt water, I mean you don't see cypress trees around here, and we have a salt water barrier right north of Lake Charles. Two things that people forget are not only do you have the salt water, but you have tidal amplitudes. You have a three foot barge in Calcasieu. You have a three foot barge in (Mirliton?) I watched the canal in Mirliton Channel being cut in 1972. I wasn't around when the barge was cut in Calcasieu – it was very well documented. And it's cut in in Sabine – about a 7 foot barge in Sabine that was cut back in the 1860s, 1870s. Barge Calcasieu was cut around the turn of the century there also. To be able to get bigger schooners in. You didn't have to wait for the tide. You didn't have to wait – you know, you could move bigger cargos out. Lumber. Cotton. Which was a big industry at that point in time. In this country. Um, in my lifetime, we have a real luxury in Louisiana that – we have a photographic record going back in some cases the 1928 arial photographers. And I use then in my business that – you know we have a wonderful historic record. We don't have that in some places in Texas. Because we also have a wetlands company where I do consulting and we do projects in Texas. We don't have some of that luxury – we have wonderful vegetative records (inaudible) in 1944. And uh, the combination of the photographs and the uh, and the vegetative record and the type maps as we call them in the business – um, we have wonderful record of those changes. What have I seen? I've seen, you know the Mirliton? River where I was raised, and the

merlton Basin . I've seen that tidal amplitude change. I've seen the associated fisheries uh, change. I've seen the tidal amplitudes change. One of the more dramatic areas I guess that I have seen in my lifetime was the area right west of Cameron what we call the Western's Track. The area – huge area three square. Huge trapping area for muskrat. Most of those muskrat trappers walked. I mean they had some tremasses, but most of them walked. I mean this land in southwestern Louisiana stayed on the – it was walking. You walked, you skinned, you hung the pelts on your belt. They were carrying lots of stuff. So the tremasses as you, as you talk about in Southeastern Louisiana, um, when that was prevalent here. I never heard the word tremasse when the job became my professional career. Here they were called trapping ditches. And so just a little different terminology and a more I think the more English terminology than the French terminology was used in Southeast Louisiana. So, I just kind of want to use these antidotes as we go in here.

B: Guys if I can stop you right at this point I'm running out of film on here. So Don, if you can help me

R: Alright we'll take another – we'll take another break.

B: Yes.

R: I'll want to talk a little bit about the cattle in regard to this Prairie and how it relates historically.

B: Yeah I have some refreshments here. I want you to talk a little bit about the seasonal cycle of the year. What you do with the cattle industry in the winter, what you do in the summer and fall...

R: I want to...

B: That's something I think that people outside the industry have no understanding of.

R: I'm gonna talk a little bit about the history and Kent's gonna talk to you a little bit about – a little about that.

D: Yes. I'm working on it. I'm working on it. They fix these thing to - I got it.

B: I'll take this one. I'm gonna leave this one here. I am gonna put this here so you have a spare. I'm gonna put this one here.

D: It's K-E-N-T or K-E-N?

L: K-E-N-T.

D: Thank you sir.

B: Well we appreciate you spending the day with us. You have this and that. Um, we certainly believe that this information is, you know, extremely valuable, and needs to be preserved because if we don't do it, nobody else will.

L: Well David is a wealth of information. I'm afraid I probably wasting your time, but...haha

B: No, not at all. Believe me.

R: You can go finish your cigarette.

L: I don't think I should be out there doing it anyway. So there.

R: When you have some semblance of education, you should know that.

(laughter)

B: Alright? We're back in business. Okay.

R: Historically, I want to talk about cattle for a minute because I have an interesting history, but have not been able to pursue it a lot because of my profession. But it has exposed me to a lot of history. One thing that you will probably know, and I – you need to investigate and look into is the greenhouse. And I think I talked to you about the greenhouse before in Lycosine. Hebert you have to understand about this huge prairie. This huge prairie and the interaction of moving cattle both ways. You're looking at, at 500,000 acre prairie. And they didn't call them cowboys back then. The, they called them – *Vacher* – okay. They moved cattle and lumber in trails. They moved them across the Sabine River to put them in railheads in Beaumont. Put them in railheads in Opelousas. Put them – bring them to New Orleans. And uh, you had interactions between the prairies and the marsh. The recognition of moving cattle from the prairies to the marsh are recognized by people like the McFadden family, the White family, the Gray family, to where they had holdings in the prairie that bordered the marsh. So that they can move their cattle to the lush marshes in the wintertime where they didn't have to hale. They didn't have to feed them. They moved them back to the prairies in the summertime – again take advantage of the lush grasses in the prairie in the summer. If you look in that book, there's one particular picture in there that it's so impressive to me. and that is a picture of those *vacher* on the prairie. Where you did not see a tree. This country was controlled by fire. Then, then that's the way it evolved. A tall grass prairie here is controlled by fire. The biggest detriment that we have here is introducing to exotic cattle trails. The cattle trail of the prairies perfectly suiting to these very wet clay soils, and is a terrible invasion. And it's caused a terrible plague upon us to maintain productivity in prairie and coastal wetlands. Um, so you ask about things that've changed. The (inaudible) I will tell you has been an absolutely major change and plague into this country – especially in southwest Louisiana. But the huge herds of cattle that comingle, and the comingle of cattle is something you need to also understand about these herds. My family, the Dowan family moved our cattle from Grand Chenier to Johnson Bayou across the Calcasieu ship channel and comingled with Gray cattle. There was comingle at that point in time. That point in time when Henry Gray would move and the Broussard family, and I'm not gonna tell you all the families because I don't know them all. But I can remember the Broussard family and the Gray family. Would move ten thousand head to Johnson Bayou. There would be from Creole, they would move three or four thousand head from Creole also west to Johnson Bayou. Today, when you go across the road to Johnson Bayou, you can still feel the wooden cattle guards and I can show you sometime. That separated that twenty five miles of open range that was in western Johnson Bayou. Along the Chenier's. And the only places you had fenced off were people had either cotton farming on the ridge, or they had, you know, their yards, or you know, they had their (inaudible).

D: Now, northwest of Johnson bayou. Very close to the Calcasieu. We have found one map that shows a little town or community of Perry. P-E-R-R-Y. Never seen it mentioned in any other things – just there. Do you remember it doesn't have to be Perry, maybe, I'm gonna make this up. Chenier Perdue. As an example. Where people live, but then they left their land maybe with Johnson Bayou – we saw an early migration.

R: You have to go back. Every piece of high land had people on it. The population in JB at the turn of the century was the same population number - and Grand Chenier was the same way. Almost the same population in 19 – and in the year 2000. Alright I'm gonna talk to you about some ridges that won't be familiar to you.

D: Okay.

R: Marceaux Ridge. I still see the rows on Marceaux Ridge from, from when they had agriculture there. The Pines Ridge still has remnants of that farming and what the cattle were on – they had a cattle operation also. Perry Ridge is the one that's right north of there. It was named Perry ridge – Perry's an old name. They had a grave on our property from Perry who was given a consolation acreage after the civil war. And he wanted to be buried in the gate of this cowpen. That grave is still there today maintained by overseers. On that piece of property. The cutting of the intracoastal canal had major changes because the prairie came into the marshes, but when you cut that intracoastal canal, which was not cut as an intracoastal canal – it was cut as a ship channel between Orange and Lake Charles in about 1915. It was later incorporated into the intracoastal system, but it was first built as a ship channel. Well, then in 1940, Lake Charles figured out that ships weren't gonna bypass Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange to get to Lake Charles. So they cut a direct route to the gulf. So then what you did was you connected the Sabine river basin and the Calcasieu Basin with the Calcasieu channel. I'm saying that because in the western part of the parish, the western part of the parish was divided was done right north of the Cameron line. Calcasieu parish is where the ship channel was built. And of course was to benefit the port of Lake Charles. So those changes happened there. I took over management of Stanlin which was Amaco. Partially in 1994, and I guess the rest of it in about 1996. About a 150,000 acres. I was contracted with Amaco to take care of that property. As you know I've been involved as a research biologist for sixteen years prior to coming here with brown pelicans and eagles and alligators. The mode of transportation and my boat of choice in the marsh is airboat. There's a particular, there's a particular ditch that I found south of Perry Ridge that I never understood. It was about as wide as this room, probably thirty feet wide, and there was some old remnant cypress posts on one side of it. But there was no spoil. Confounded me. There's also one called Back Ridge which comes off of - it's on Sabine refuge now. But it came off of the Gulf Cove Ridge that you were talking to Mr. (inaudible). Those were cow trails. Where before the levees were built, before there were ways to build they drove those cattle in those trails going from the prairie to the coastal marsh. Those trails are somewhat documented in that book. But the significance of those trails – I don't think it's well to understand because I don't build is never – don't think Bill is ever been. My - we used to have cattle – we had lots of cattle, and you always helped your neighbors – you went to lots of different places whether it be Pecan Island, or Grand Chenier or Creole, or wherever vacant. Cattle had trails in the marsh that are still visible today. Where they couldn't push through the mud and the muck and the grass. But if they could make a trail where

they could half swim, half touch the bottom, they were able to navigate across bad areas. So you don't get out of that cow trail. I mean I remember as a kid going to see the marsh my dad said, who's riding that horse. He said make sure you follow Jim Theriot. I said okay, what's the deal. I must've been eight or ten or twelve or something, whatever. And uh, he said because he knows that marsh. Well let me tell you – I watched Jim Theriot he followed those cattle, and I followed him. And you stay in that cow trail. If you get out of that cattle trail your horse would bog. But going across those cattle trails you did it. We had them on the land on the property that my cattle are still on. We have what we call big coup and little coup. And cow trailers going across. On Chenier they'd somewhat of a decent hard sand bottom but just the movement of cattle kept those areas open. And you half swam, half rode your horse, to get across those areas, and well you get across there. So the trails the cow trails actually, you know predate the ways for uh, for walkway levees. Now, it's a whole lot easier to build a walkway levee and use that than go for a cattle trail. But those cattle were tuned from – as you said – in their heritage to be able to do that.

D: Now you mentioned, Kent, the Pines. You said, what is the Pines?

L: The Pines is some privately owned property owned by the Gray family. Uh, I say middle of the Sabine Reserve. It's on the western edge that borders Sabine Lake. And there's a boat trail that stuck out there. Um, and that nine-mile levee that he was talking about goes from the Pines to Johnson Bayou. It was used...

D: No, Go ahead...

L: It was used in the early days as a night over the stock over – the guys would start the cattle in Johnson Bayou, the lead that the herd might get there at two o'clock in the afternoon and the rest of the herd's tailenders got there at dark. They ate supper, they slept. When they got up the next morning, those cattle walked from the Pines house where they turned them loose, and walked from there to Black Bayou and bedded there. Cowboys got up in the morning at their breakfast met the cattle at Black Bayou, swam back bayou crossed Perry Ridge and into...

D: So they swam the bayou.

R: Swam the bayou – swam the Intracoastal!

L: Some of the fuller grass – which you've probably seen – uh, Black Bayou has a very swift current. It's not wide compared to the Intracoastal, but the current is very strong and it had to have a uh, a rail to keep the cattle from drifting downstream with the current so they could be able to get out on the other side. And they would have the photographs and the stories I've heard, was Mr. Isaac White trapped all that country. Lived at Hackberry at the time – David could even tell you more about that family which is very interesting, but one of his sons would put – these were not logs but timbers uh, appears to be 12 or 14 inches by 12 or 14 inches. Tied together with chains and ropes. And he would row and pull that barrier across and then those cattle would swim uh, that's quite a feat I'm sure.

D: Well you know Hackberry was one of the early, you know, uh, oil fields. Now is Hackberry all one family or is it multiple family owners?

L: A lot of those are migrants from Ged. The Collagan family. A lot of those people were in the oil field in Ged because Hackberry was after Ged. And you have a lot of those people that left Ged and went to Hackberry.

D: Well , Carl and I are really interested in Ged for a couple of reasons. When you look at the history of the oil and gas business, the industry kind of lined up by that marsh. And they were puzzled because it never worked in a marsh environment. Didn't know what to do. But there's a whole bunch of fields lined up - Ged being one. We know the Gray family provided land for a school, we know that they - apparently everybody was welcome on this piece of real estate. We think the population approached to be a thousand. We're not sure. If that's the case, Ged probably had more people than Lafayette.

R: At that time, it was a boom town, it probably did.

D: Yeah it's – it's not even a footnote in history. What you're telling us – we spent a lot of time in libraries, now we can't find a great deal, and yet you can still see a sign, highway sign that says Ged! And when you get there, you better know where it was. And you know where the post office was because you told me. It's a fascinating piece of history. Can you – either one – both reminisce about what you know about hearing stories about Ged. where did the name come from?

R: The name I can tell you . The rest of the story is gonna come from Ken.

D: Alright.

R: John Geddings Gray. J. G. Gray. He was called Ged.

D: Perfect. Haha

R: That's an easy part of the story!

D: Yeah but it's hard to find! Yeah.

L: And I know I won't get all these facts correct. But it is in print, and you can find it if you haven't already. He was named after a professor of his father's in medical school.

R: That's correct.

L: That's what Geddings came from.

D: Now, Ged. I mean, it is a big oil field? A little oil field? You know, it's, it's not insignificant, but it's not even a footnote in history.

R: You will look on it also on the Vinton Oil Field. You need to look at it both ways, I mean a lot of people call it Ged Oil Field which we've seen, history – some people call it the Vinton Oil Field. Uh..

D: Who were the operators? Do you know?

R: Every operator that you can think of. And every one of them is listed on those photographs. You're gonna see Stanlin. You're gonna see Gulf. You gonna see Texaco. You're gonna see all those old oil companies – a lot of them got their start. And a lot of them came from (inaudible). from Gladys City. Gladys City in which is very well documented. You had Gladys City, you had Orange Field, all of these are associated with salt domes. Once they figured out salt domes and the trapping of oil around salt domes, then it went from one oil field to the next. Then it went to Hackberry. You know, and they went to the sulfur mines. Then they went up to Starks. I mean, we had weeks I mean, I had Coat Blanche, (inaudible). Avery Island. You know all those domes. Cameron Meadows. All those domes were then looked on as a cookbook to be able to drill relatively shallow wells. I mean you talk about a thousand to four thousand foot wells. Relatively shallow – all done in wooden barracks. And it was probably the advent of um, I don't know I'm gonna get this name wrong. Still...Lucas. Lucas...and Hamel. Hammel was when they finally got a rotary. They could do something with the rotary on the rail. And that you know also opened up that. But, and you had people that, you know, that had you had – all at that point in time it was like a gold rush. I mean you had those people that were looking for work. They wanted to work. Where they could find work- they migrated there. When you migrated there, you needed schools. You needed churches. You needed a post office. You know, the post office was kind of a remnant- and the machine work building. Both of which were destroyed by hurricane Rita. And that is when our works.

L: Evangeline Iron Works.

L: Evangeline iron works. Came out of Jennings. Came from the Jennings Oil Field – which also predated Ged. Um, those were – those landmarks were there until Hurricane Rita.

D: Let's stop for a moment and check our tapes. Did you –

R: Okay good.

B: If you can plug in some earphones in there...

(inaudible)

D: Alright good.

B: We will get this- I have a couple questions I'd like you guys to be thinking about.

R: Alright.

B: One is you talked about the comingling of the herds.

R: Mmhmm.

B: Uh, that goes back to at least the 1770s. And I'd like to know how people went out separating them out. I know people were branding, I'm assuming they still were at the time you were talking about.

R: Still are today.

B: Okay. Well could you talk a little bit about...

R: Sure. I guess. Identification of cattle um, is done by branding and earmark. Now, we've got a lot of sophisticated things today about implanting, you know, chips that you can read with a reader, whatever, cattle are done by, by branding an ear mark, and still today. You have a cow outside to identify – I served eight years on the Louisiana Brand Commission. Here in Louisiana. From – as a representative of the Louisiana Land Owner's Association. We were brand inspectors. We still have brand inspectors at the sale barns that check the brand on those cattle as they come through the sale barn. So identification of cattle – I use different methods of branding. There's all kinds of things. This is the impart brand – the Gray brand is the impart brand. That's – we still brand the cattle today. Now, when you want to part out the herd, there's people that are just, like marsh biologists. I've had lots of students – masters and PHD students that work on the big boat professionally when I was with wildlife and fisheries, and actually still working with students today through different universities. But some people learn the marsh, and some people never understand the marsh. Some people understand cattle and understand the behavior of cattle, and some people never do understand the behavior of cattle. People that understand the behavior of cattle will understand that this cow belongs with this calf. The smell, the look, the activities of that calf, prime example sitting next to me here. And he'll verify what I'm telling you, but that man would also have you could call him the trail boss, you could call him whatever you want to call him. The foreman – you can call him – he's a leader. He'll go in the herd, he'll probably bring a man or two with him in a big herd. And now I actually part out the cattle for different ownerships, or in our case, you might part out the heifer calves with the mamas in this herd, the beef calves that you're gonna castrate and put them in this herd, and uh, it's down to a system to where you hold the cattle, and then the guy – the guy or guys, probably two or three, will actually part out the cattle. And that's where the horse training comes in. and that's where the quarter horses are so valuable. And I really should let Kent talk about all that.

(laughter)

L: You did an excellent job.

D: Now horses are very important to the story. I have heard, but I've only read it one time, and I'm not sure I can share it right. There were pissel tails. P-I-S – pissel tails. And it was a – a smaller horse that apparently was tough in the marsh. I mean it would just a good animal. I never- I never read or heard much more about it, it – you can't be a cowboy without a horse. If you can tell us about the quarter horses, please do.

B: And the Creole ponies too if they're still around if you can...

I'm so excite - I am interested that you know that. I grew up with the wild Creole ponies on the range in Creole. They were pink horses. And they were wild. And uh, and I can't tell you about the origin of the pissel tails. But I've heard, I've heard as a kid.

B: I'd like to hear you talk more about the Creole ponies, because ...

R: Do you know what they brought the Creole ponies for? We catch the Creole ponies and we cut the hair off the tail – I can remember it just like it was yesterday. Cut the hair off the tails and cut off the mane and make – made bridle reins inside of that. You had plaited bridle reins out of the hair from those Creole ponies.

L: Zero Little worked for us as a day worker. When uh, when I worked at the ranch. And he was the last person that I know of, and he made me a couple sets of bridal rings and a girth that I still have today.

D: A gurt?

L: A girth.

D: Okay, yeah. Yeah.

L: Um, that I still have today that he made. Uh, out of horse hair. We call - we had some wild horses on Perry Ridge. When I went to work for the ranch. And I assume that that is closely associated – not necessarily related – but associated with the horses that we see - the mustangs that we see out in the mountains, you know. These horses were adapted to the marshland. And I can verify because we, we need to remove them from Perry Ridge. This was during the time when we had the cattle off the range, and it was suggested to us to try to get those wild horses taken off as well. And I can attest to the fact that I rode some very good horses. And I could barely keep up with taillights. Those marsh horses would hit that mud and never slow down. And then our horses couldn't nearly keep up with them. In that marsh situation.

B: Now how big were they? I mean they were small...

L: Smaller in stature, not very well in confirmation either. Similar to the longhorn cattle, David referred to earlier. Finer of bone, lighter of muscle, um, now the particular herd on Perry Ridge was very inbred. I noted that the first time I saw them, I saw evidence of that and uh, big heads. Uh, the poor construction. The poor confirmation. Very inbred - probably because they were isolated when the Intracoastal was dug, they had a much smaller range to deal with. And they were mostly studs when I went to work for the ranch. But um, very, very tough.

B: How do you know about the Creole ponies? They've been around and people – they mention about documents going back to the 1700s. But here's only one picture that I know of. Of one.

R: Oh my Gosh. I could remember that herd out there in between Creole and Oak Grove, you got a herd of them – see out there on what we call Happy Ridge. And there was you know, a swell and a short ridge and it went – if I could remember who put that herd out there. There was a herd of them – and they were from Happy Ridge.

B: But they were notorious for being mean and stubborn.

L: Oh yeah.

B: But, but the best cattle horse anywhere.

D: Now, how did you – when the quarter horse arrive? That you remember?

L: Well...

R: It's not that I remember. It's very well documented.

L: Yeah. Well, the quarter horse registry as we know it association – we started in the 40s early – maybe 1940. But places like the King Ranch had been breeding that cow pony, that horse of uh, sharp stocky build. Very durable. But the number one selection criteria was his cow sense. When you rode him in a herd of cows, did he look at the cows. And that's how they selected their cow ponies – the guys that did the parting that David referred to earlier – wanted to ride that horse that would be intent on the cow in front of him. So they selected their breeding stock through those horses that showed more cow. That's what that's the term we refer to today. How much cow does he have. When you ride him toward the cow route- will he really look at her and be intent on her, or is he looking off at the birds, you know. And so they selected their breeding stock by how much cow they had, and then the confirmation – the heavy build, the more bone – was selected uh, over time. So King Ranch is one that I read a lot about. And they were one of the earlier ones. But I'm sure every part of the country had their King Ranch. Uh, one thing that we didn't talk about – I'm gonna get back to the cow horse deal. We didn't talk about was the renounce situation for the army. And it's my understanding, and Bud Johnson was one of them that told me that – that the army came down and brought some stallions and gave them to Mr. Henry Gray to turn loose with their horses to raise, renounce and upgrade the stock. Now I have not read that – I have not seen that in writing, but hat was an old timer story that was told to me and bud Johnson grew up on the ranch and knew Henry Gray well. So...

D: It makes sense.

L: It's gotta be documented somewhere. I just have not read. But anyway, today we breed our horses – we want cow horses. We want – we're not interested in racehorses. We have to have ample speed, but speed enough to go catch a cow that's trying to get away. We're not interested in the racetrack. We're not interested in what we call halter confirmation classes. There's a whole group of horses that are being produced today that are judged on strictly confirmation. They look like muscle build – weight lifters, muscle builders. But they're totally useless for what we do because they can't move, they can't get around. And a cow horse has gotta be a tremendous athlete. You know, he's gotta go from here to there in a split second with that cow or you'll be out there all day. If you're out there parting 300 cows, you gotta have a horse that's gonna help you get around as quickly and as quietly as possible. And so we, we select our breeding for cow.

D: You breed it at Ged?

L: Yes sir, we have a herd of horses at Ged.

D: Ged, okay.

L: And we do uh, and of course we're – I came in at a time and I feel very fortunate in the fact that Spook Stream got very interested in cutting horses – which is something I've always been interested in –

because – but I was never able to do it because it's uh, a very expensive endeavor, but he did. And he uh, invested in some great, great horses in the industry. And the ranch always got the spill over, you know. So a lot of our horses came out of his program, and then because I was introduced to those horses through him, he carried me to King Ranch for my first visit. He carried me to Fort Worth for National Cutting Horse Association uh, an event that I would've never been able to go to. And so he introduced me to some upper level horses, and uh, has helped the ranch acquire a good breeding stock.

D: Well it's important because on the prairie, you had the bush tracks. Quarter horse races – is basically field stock they raced on Sunday - maybe gambled a little bit – it's rumor. They gambled a little bit. So there was – there was

L: It's how horses got their name. For running a quarter mile.

D: Well they ran 32 feet. They had races that were 3- I didn't go but I read – 32 feet. Blink twice, you're done. So there are quarter horses on the prairie. The reason I bring that up- were those horses comingled with what you had at the ranch – or you had at the ranch – or others in Vermillion or Cameron. Where they had quarter horse stock – did they pick up some of the traits from the prairie? Because some of them were very fast. Now that you- you're breeding but that's all part of how you breed cattle.

L: Well in my limit to knowledge on that, um, it's just like the cattle back then. You had a cow, back then at your house. And you milk in the morning and you pull the plow with her in the afternoon, and you butcher her calf for beef. She had to be a tri-purpose animal because you didn't have ten thousand cows, okay? And the horses were the same. You had that horse and you plowed him during the day, but when it was time to go tend to your cattle, you saddle that same horse up and went and tended your cattle. But on Sunday afternoons after church, "so and so's got a horse that he says nobody can beat, so let's take old trooper down there and let's see if we can't outrun him." So that's my interpretation of how it all came about

D: Well that appears how it evolved, but we forget that that horses are an integral part of this regional culture. Because you tend to think – general terms – rice, and crawfish. Now historically that's not the case but if you look that it's rice and crawfish, well it's not just rice and crawfish. We even talked about, um, the trapping industry in terms of um, the Orange Cameron Land Company, there are some others that you all know, huge land owners that played a definitive role in how you manage your landscape. Because you were early involved. Florence started out as a land reclamation project. We found, Carl and I think that there was a – was it Highway Seventeen Carl?

B: Fourteen.

D: Fourteen. South of highway fourteen where everything's reclaimed. Because it ran along the (inaudible) edge. So this is a part of the story that's really interesting to us is the cattle, the horses, the cattle drives, and of course the oil and gas. And you've mentioned,

L: uh...yeah go ahead.

D: Some of those little meadows, Hackberry, uh, Ged, those were all in the time period when still, you know, cattle, horses, I mean if you go to Audrey. 1957. That's twelve years after the end of WWII. Twelve years. And you still didn't have some bridges in South Louisiana. You had some ferries, I remember one at (Bouston?) – a little ferry was there forever – a little cable ferry, well I people don't have a clue!

R: When I dated my wife, I went across a ferry from Grand Chenier to pick her up in Lake Charles. Now I'm not talking about – we're talking about 1975. There's no road between Grand Chenier and Pecan Island till the late 50s. Was no road to Southern Cameron parish. East of the channel until either the forties or the fifties. I mean, you know, I guess it was the forties. So you know that isolation um, was apparent. But I have to get back to a little story of the horses. I was somewhere in the last week and somehow saw – when I was a kid I could remember going to – especially in the prairie country – is where you had those little two-horse, those little two horse gates. Where they'd put them head to head, partner. It always seemed like it was a head to head deal. You put two horses head to head there – a match race. And you have a – you see the cars parked there and they'd be watching. Oh I mean I just remember it like it was yesterday. But I mean what I'm trying to tell you is that those remnant pieces of quilt are still there. I actually saw one last week somewhere my travels around here.

D: Well the reason I bring up the roads is that the only way you could get from ridge to ridge was either, by boat, walking or horse. I never heard anybody talk about a surrey or, you know like the Amish wagons, you can find those in the prairie, um, Church Point, and they look just like the Amish. You never hear that, but did everybody? Yeah you wanted to see your neighbor – you either got on a horse or you walked.

L: Mr. Lee and Perry's last trip from Vinton to Perry Ridge, they drove a boat board. I heard that from many, many people. So it was probably boat board farm wagon type things to..

B: And that would've been around what time?

L: I'm not sure. You know,

D: Pre world war II?

R: Oh, Pre WWII. Yeah.

D: Alright. Let's see – always a good benchmark.

L: Back to – I know I'm jumping but, back to the cattle and horses, uh, and I'm sure that's with just about any animal, we have selected certain traits to do certain jobs. And that's how the racehorses evolved. They bred the fastest of the fastest to get another fast one.

R: And that's how the cutting evolved. That's how the reigning evolved. That's how the – what is it – halter classes? Evolved. It's all been through breeding programs. Breeding programs that Kent can tell you when he rides through the herd, not just the sire and the dame, not just the grand sire and the grand dame, Kent may look back ten generations on some of these horses with their heritage. Now, and

if you go to those horse people, they're gonna have certain traits for certain horses. And those traits they'll say, that horse doesn't back up as good. You know, but that was a trait of this horse five generations ago. I mean horses are amazing to me and people that deal with horses like Kent are amazing to me in regard to those traits. What I just told you is that breeding is what has done that over time. And know that. That heritage in the prairie that Opelousas, Acadiana heritage – they'd like that horseracing on Sunday. Now I call it a man like that horse racing on Sunday. They could rest on Sunday a lot of tenant farmers, lots of those kind of people. Sunday was their fun day, and they might be able to you know, beer wasn't probably as accessible, as much then, I mean, whatever. You know. They could have a little Bon temps Rouler every Sunday afternoon, you know?

L: And I see that competition in the herd part of cows.

R: Oh yeah.

L: That um, I 'm talking about just like the racing.

R: Oh, no doubt.

L: When, when I ride in there and cut a cow, my horse just shh shh – does his business. You know I want to grin, but I'm not going to.

(laughing)

L: But I kind of look out the corner of my eye and see if those guys are watching. And...

R: And they kind of look at you like they may not have been watching, but they watching every step.

(laughter)

L: And then the next guy comes in and he cuts his cows out, well he wants his horse to throw a little more dirt than mine threw, see. So it's still competitive even though it's on the ranch environment.

R: Oh, sure.

L: And we're out there parting cows. But we select our traits for the cows just like we do for our horses. You know, we've got to have that durability. We've gotta have that cow that's gonna go out in the marsh – not just stands up and eats grass on the ridge. It's easy for them, but will go out there and get a little muddy and find the good stuff.

R: And if you get one that wants to jump, or high head, or doesn't want to stay with the herd, or this that and the other – I mean...

L: We find her a new zip code.

(laughing)

R: She just got – she just went into the Big Mac factory.

D: Well I – we can understand.

L: It is selection.

D: Now how many horses do you have on average?

L: Well that- total number of horses at the ranch is around a hundred head. That includes broodmares.

D: I don't know what that term means.

L: Broodmares are the mamas.

D: Okay.

L: Their sole purpose – we ride all of our Phillies. Phillies are the little girls, and colts are the little boys. And we do ride all of our Phillies because I want to know that mentally, she's capable of doing our work. What we're gonna ask of her. I mean I don't keep her riding for many, many years like we do the geldings or the castrated males that have to do the work every day. But I want to know that she is of the correct mentality. I've already selected her for the confirmation, color, or whatever...

R: And breeding,

L: And breeding, but I want to make sure that she has the disposition to do the work that we're gonna require of her and her offspring. Before she goes into the broodmare (inaudible) and becomes a mama. Okay? So that number includes those broodmares, their babies, their yearlings, and their two year olds, and then all the geldings that we use to work.

D: How many stallions?

L: Five. Right now.

D: Now, are they from Spook Stream?

L: Most of them are.

Okay so that legacy, I mean, you didn't put a time frame - still lives.

L: Absolutely.

R: Tell them about the latest stud you just bought. I bought – let's talk about that.

L: Okay I love to tell this story.

R: I do too! I love to hear the story.

L: When Spook got started, um, he met a gentleman that was very well known in the cutting horse association, um, Buster Welsch. Buster Welsch was working at King Ranch at that time. Thus, my chance to go visit King Ranch and he went down to King Ranch and schooled. Buster actually taught him how to

show horses. Well Spook got involved – hiring him a trainer, a personal trainer that lived here on this place, and um, started acquiring - I want to buy a little better horse. So they went out and they bought a more competitive horse for Spook to show. Well, he is - Spook is very intelligent and very athletic and he rose quickly. And uh, so okay we need Spook, we need you a better horse, so they go out, and his trainer knew of this mare. Her name was Doc Starlight. Came off the west coast. The daughter of Doc Bar which is the son of Three bars, okay. So they buy - they buy this they purchase this mare. She's fourteen years of age when they bought her and she's won just about as much money as any mare in the industry. And Spook was very successful for several years. And um, the King Ranch horse won the Futurity, which is the Premier event for three year old that year and he said, what do you think about breeding Doc Starlight to little Peppy? Which was the King Ranch horse. Peppy son Badger. The Mexicans down there coined him little peppy. Great Idea. So my wife and I got to haul her down there and get her bred. And the resulting foal was a horse named Gray Starlight. Gray Starlight um, had a yearling Spook ran into the man that bred the mare, Doc Starlight. I hope I'm not boring you.

D: No, no, no.

L: He said Spook, if you ever get a nice colt out of that mare, I'd love to have a shot at training one of her babies. Spook saw him and said, I've got a really nice yearling out of that mare. They made an agreement, and Gray Starlight, the resulting foal, went back to California. Was very successful in cutting. And trained and immediately his stud feet went through the roof and poor guy, poor boy like me couldn't even buy a colt, you know. And they were sky high. Well, two years ago, I was able to purchase a son of Gray Starlight for the ranch. Brought him back to the ranch – we now have a son of Gray Starlight.

D: Wow.

L: Breeding our mares at the ranch so, that's a...

D: That's amazing.

L: Neat story for us.

D: That's a neat story!

R: But Gray Starlight – I mean he probably, I mean is there, was there, is there, she got to be the premier mare – ever in that business.

Doc starlight.

L: Doc Starlight. The mare.

R: Doc Starlight. The mare.

L: Is one of the – probably the top two or three mares in the whole industry.

R: Right.

L: Yes. Gray starlight died at a young age of West Nile. I don't know if you've ever heard of it, but

D: Mmhmm

L: Mosquito born...transmitted disease. Um, died - eight years ago? Something like that. He – today remains on sire list. Horses that are listed on sire and grand sire lists for years and years and years, and he is in the top five to this day. Been dead for eight, ten years. To this day he's still in the top five as far as what his get and grand get had done. To this day.

B: You bring up West Nile – one of the diseases that can affect...