Hollis Chapman and Paul Coreil Interview
Recorded: April 2011
Interviewed by: Don Davis and Carl Brasseaux

Don: What we would like for you to do is just to introduce yourself. Who you are what you are and give permission to store this for future researchers. We find that is a little more efficient sometimes than forms. Both of you realize that some people we interview, umm can't read the form so we have just adapted this method where we just ask you to introduce yourselves, a little bit about your background, if that alright, for future scholars to use this information.

Carl: Before we get started guys, we have a technical issue, Don it says the battery here is dying.

D: Then we may have to check this battery and sorry guys, opps, only one battery, thought we had a back up, we don't so, if it dies it dies. It's just one of those things that's part of doing research.

C: I thought we had two

D: Nope it says change battery pack, battery dead

C: Oh well back to where we were guys. Since obviously there won't be any visual aids for the transcriber, we would like you to please identify yourselves, um so that the transcriber can associate your voice with your name and then as Don indicated, these interviews are being put in three repositories, one at the University at Lafayette, one here at LSU and one at the Sea Grant office, I would assume that its going to eventually make its way to the Sea Grant headquarters in Washington D.C. so um the whole purpose of this is to make, not only gather this information to preserve it, but to make it available to scholars for interpretation, so we'd like to have your authorization to make these materials publically available, obviously in the case of all interviews of this type, there's no any type of monetary compensation for this, these are strictly for research purposes.

Hollis: My name is Hollis D. Chapman. I'm a native of Southwest Louisiana, Evangeline Parish to be specific. My formal training is in population genetics, biometrical genetics, whatever you choose to call it with expertise in beef cattle genetics. I have worked for the Texas A&M University where I got my degree, for the University of Georgia, for MississippI State University, and again for LSU in my second term in the place in which I retired in 04 in the year 2000. I'm glad to be with you and you have my permission to use whatever I may contribute to as you see fit and as other people see fit.

C:Thank you Hollis. Paul?

Paul: Paul Coreil, also born and raised in Evangeline parish, left there after high school, went to USL, graduated in zoology, went to LSU got a masters in Wildlife Management, went to work for LSU Ag Center, Cameron/Calcasieu 1978. Worked there for 14-15 years, came back and get a PhD here at LSU, and um developed a coastal research program for extension and left about 6 years after doing that and went to Burlington Resources, which they just recently sold. I mean it was just recently purchased by Burlington, previously Louisiana Land Exploration Company. Stayed there about a year and came back here in administration and now I'm currently vice chancellor and director of the extension service of the LSU Ag Center.

C: And is it okay for us to put your

P: Yeah, you have permission to use whatever may be useable, realizing that information is probably second or third hand, but it may be carried forward as

C: That's our goal to carry this information forward

P: You have permission to carry forward what I carried forward (laughs)

C: Right, Right. Umm well Harris, I think I will start my first question with you. I'm a Colonial Historian and I've been gathering information on the South Louisiana Cattle industry since the late 70s I guess when we first started farming and the Spanish materials...and the one thing that has always fascinated me was that there are very few descriptions at all of what the cattle are like in the period before the civil war and I was wondering, I mean we have a couple of sketches, we have clues about where the cattle are coming from because as you know in the early days a lot if it was being smuggled in from Texas. I wonder if you have any clues at all particularly from genetic coding about the types of cattle that may have been here originally.

H: I would suspect because of necessity, they were primarily of dairy type or dairy breed origin as to compare to beef type animals that are in the United States. These are quite different. In except that in Latin America beef cattle differentiated from dairy cattle, dairy cattle as specifically in the United States, specifically for the production of milk and used for beef only as a residual product of the dairy industry. beef cattle are bred specifically and developed specifically in the United States and certain parts of Europe, for beef purposes only and not designed to be milk cows so I'm thinking because of early settlers coming with families, that the milk cow probably followed pretty closely and all through the Colonial development period and it would be the basis of the early beef cattle industry. In fact my grandfather, when I asked him as a young man, I'd asked him about, we called my grandfather, papa, how many cows did you have? And he would always differentiate. he would say I have (in French) fourteen milk cows and (something in French) and that last description bothered me a long time because as, Carl, you probably know that (carton??) is also means horns, so my immediate thought was that he was talking about cattle with horns and that doesn't differentiate them from any cattle because most of the cattle had horns in those days. And then I realized later on as I got more familiar with the Latin countries that carton probably meant cottonaye which means beef or ... and that's how he was dividing his cows. Again going back to the fact that he separated milk cows from other cows I'm thinking milk cows and other types of milk cows were probably prominent. And I would guess the most prominent breed would be those from the British Isles, probably Jersey cattle predominate in that particular group of cows. And also I would say from England, probably the Durham. They were a breed of cattle and I think you can still find them if you do some research. They called Durham cattle.

C: Those are also called shorthorns.

H: Well they're different. The Durham, I think now is, goes back to a much older type animal, but you're right, they are related and milk and shorthorns at one time was they type referred to by most of the people that I grew up with. Most of the older people that I knew in Southwest Louisiana, the Durham was more or less associated with the shorthorn but predominately referring to something that maybe was a little more dairy in purpose.

?D: Well that brings me to another question. Umm in the early twentieth century, there is a sudden interest in improving the breed of cattle here. And I'm wondering, because my family also grew cattle,

raised cattle, so its something of interest to me personally, but also professionally. To what extent does this filter out into the average farm, the average ranch, and the prairie area of Louisiana by let's say mid-century or so, what kind of cattle did your families raise? I mean, how much, did you have any pure bred stock, or were these all mixed cattle?

H: No, we had in my grandfather's family and in my father's family, where my father's side was the side that had cattle, and these were all mixed breed cattle. Even the bull was selected as something that looked more like a bull than, than the rest. There were no (present?) and I think and I hope Paul will agree with me, I think in Southwest Louisiana that probably the first, umm impact of the pure bred were realized when the mid-westerns came down to grow rice in the Camilion country, camilion country of Louisiana and brought their black angus cattle as they referred to them to them then I think was the first evidence that we have of of pure bred cattle coming into the country, and of course as time changed and people got more particular about the kind of cattle, um that they raised, then you saw other breeds like the American Brahman creeping in and up til the present day, probably Louisiana, Southwest Louisiana has a representation of mostly the pure bred cattle. There is something interesting that crept into my mind that I didn't realize until I was uh fully grown and doing some private contracting throughout a good part of the Latin American world and that is that wealthy people, the world over, I have found tend to be the people that have pure bred cattle and horses. And its kind of, as I see it, its kind of a social thing so I think

C: A status symbol?

H: A status symbol and I think as we, as we saw the black cattle come with the very progressive rice farmers that brought them here, we saw a little bit more socialization maybe moving into the cattle industry along with the pure breds.

C: Is pure bred stock actually an asset or a liability here, given climatic conditions and the amount of insects?

H: It would depend on the breed of course. And aside from the social aspects of being beneficial. The Brahman breed is a breed that is unique. Its origins are in Italy, uh its a very heat tolerant breed and to some extent, uh a little bit more disease resistant than a lot of breeds so we can say that early on that breed had an economic impact that was worth considering. And the Brahman breed is a bases of most of the synthetic breeds that have developed in the south and the southwest. By the synthetic I mean, uh a new breed based on older breed, Brangus for example had its origin at the experiment station in Jeanerette when it was under USDA control. Its 3/8's Brahman and 5/8's Angus. And then you got the Santa Gertrudis at the King Ranch which people developed as a synthetic breed. Then you move into the Beefmasters, and now we have more synthetic breeds than we have pure breds, so um the Angus breed is known as a breed that produces quality beef so there are some advantages to having

C: But also resistance to insects?

H: Not so much so but its very unique you would think that a black color would be susceptible to heat but as I said before, the early black cattle that came in adapted well and uh all along the gulf coast there is a man named Petty Jean' that you might have known his family from the very south of Louisiana that had angus cattle right on the gulf coast and they were uh fully functional and very reproductive. Reproductively probably is the most economically, it is the most economically trait in beef cattle

production. And those cattle reproduce regularly and in spite of that black color and adapted well to to the heat.

C: Well what about the native grasses here? And I realize that the tall grass prairies had largely disappeared by the time we all of us appeared on the scene but the grasses that were available on the prairies at the time that you were coming up guys. Is there a tremendous fall off Hollis in terms of the quality of that grass for grazing?

H: Fall off from where?

C: Well I meant the native grasses were supposed to be tremendously nutritious. Now those that replaced them, is there a tremendous fall off in the nutritious value?

H: They umm the native grasses are still here and still productive and still very economical and still very functional. The new grasses that have come in are pretty much grass lings followed the beef cattle thing or vice a versa. They are hybrids made based on Bermuda grass or some leos or some of the legumes are maybe mixed as that came here. The common Bermuda grass that we've had here has been here for ages and ages and the old grass that we had in the prairie land that people call gazon

C: Actually that was my next question

H: Well a Gazon is, I would say its a neighbor of the grass I have in my lawn. It serves a lawn grass here and the name for that grass slips me. Those are very functional grasses and the nice thing about them is that they to this day can be grown very effectively and they are very productive without heavy fertilization. All of the new grasses that we brought in that would supposedly replace those depend heavily on fertilization.

C: What exactly is Gazon, the technical name for it?

H: What's a grass I have in my lawn? Its a... a Gazon, I have no idea, we just call it prairie grass

C: Okay because I well remember my wise grandfather he was in his 80s when we were (digging?) and talking about his pasture beingazonaid

H: Yeah that's the word. The biggest difference if we're looking for differences between grasses the biggest difference between the grasses that we had on the prairie are still here today. Those grasses are, all of our grasses in Louisiana, especially the southern part are very high in moisture content compared to the grasses you would find in the Mid-west and Northwest and in order for cattle to do real well they've got to eat much more of that and they have to do uh eat...uh...if they would if they had access to the to the drier grasses

C: uh huh

H: because the grass can be 80% water and it takes a lot of the 20% kinds to make a 100% food. Its and economic benefit too because cattle that are produced here and on into Florida actually uh in the south have a reputation for having larger stomachs, larger developed stomachs and cattle from the other parts of the world and they are in pretty good demand in the feed lots for

C: (interrupts) Why is that?

H: consume a lot of food and convert it to sugars?

C: Why is that? I mean is it just a genetic quirk?

H: Well you gotta take in so much more water so I guess its a stretching effect. You gotta take in so much more water to get a say a daily allowance of nutrients because of higher a high humidity in our area and a higher water content of our grasses.

C: Um, Johnson grass, I its not native is it? Or is that something that was introduced with the

H: I wouldn't think it was native because I...I don't remember it. I remember it being first cursed by the cotton farmers; umm you know I would guess it came in with cotton seeds somewhere along the way. It's very prominent in the delta country and its a good grass especially for hay making if the weather stays dry long enough for the water content that the cane has. You know it's a cane type plant

C: My grandfather raised ten acres of cotton and I remember I went out there and helping him pick it every summer and I can well remember him cursing it, the Johnson grass!

H: It has a rhizome system and I think uh probably its greatest effect on cotton was competing for moisture in the soil.

C: Umm Don, don't umm jump in here at anytime

D: Well I wanted to ask Hollis about the Brahman or Brayman. Umm there is some indication the first Brahman came in through the Carolinas and the second place was Louisiana, is that true?

H: That's true.

D: About what time?

H: Gosh I don't know. I'm a terrible historian but you'll have to go back. The reference book on this was done by a professor at a small university in Florida. Uhh it's called the American Brahman and he documents all of that and you should be able, uh to pick it up if not through your library contacts Carl, you can certainly pick it up on the website of the American Brahman Breeders Associations.

C: Okay thanks.

H: Actually the Louisiana contact with people who live not, who live not far from here. The St. Francisville folks had a I think had a pretty good hand in early Brahman development

C: My understanding though its that the South Carolina herds petered? out pretty quickly and essentially disappeared and the ones here are the ones that really had an impact even down in South Texas

H: Uhh that's true I guess because we maybe needed the insects resistance qualities that those early Brahman cattle had because of their background in India. I think the Carolina deal is mostly because

they are noted in the history books mostly because it was the first port of debarkation for the Brahman cattle. The development was actually from here in Louisiana on through Texas countries

C: Where did the Brahman and the Mexican cattle sort of meet? We had a migration, a diffusion from Louisiana west and we had a diffusion from Mexico which was north and more east. Where was the contact boundary between the two?

H: I can't give you a year but I would say in fairly moderate times because Mexican cattle are still distinguished as Mexican cattle and are not necessarily greatly Brahman in influence in the early..in the old days I guess I would say but fairly recently in history again because of the social thing of Mexican people wanted to have pure bred Brahman herds. Its a status symbol. So fairly recently the American Brahman and the Mexican cattle have mixed. Early on there was a little uhh passing through Mexico some Brahman cattle but umm I can't tell you when and how much influence, influence it has but Mexican cattle if you look at them today across the feed lots of the southwest you would see more, more Spanish type umm type horn umm type cattle like the Corrientes would be more recognizable then the Brahman influence, the Corrientes influence.

D: Well we were on Cheniere, Ellen Engminger?? gave Carl and I access to a pretty good sized ranch in which they were bre...uhh raising pure bed, bred, do you remember Carl the cattle type?

C: no, well its its its pure, its, are you talking about the Dellcove

D: Yes

C: group? Uhh its Brahman but they are directly imported from India so

D: Yeah its was a surprise to us

H: Were they different looking from the American Brahman or

C: I don't think...I...I...I you know

H: The gear has. A gear is a a different strain. The American Brahman was developed from three strains and the lower the gear in the third one is a twomen?? breed which will come to me later on but again it would be uhh it would be uhh documented in that book you would get from the American Brahman Breeders Association. uhh they are uhh a little bit different. Brazil has uh has two or three different strains of Brahman cattle that are really unique and uhh I think to be fair with all of this, the science of beef cattle breeding or breed development has only been available for uhh for the last 30 or 40 years, maybe 50 years I forget how old I am but umm before that uhh beef cattle breeding was kind of uhh an artistic sort of a thing and a lot of the cattle breeds the Zebu, I mean the Brahman by the way is a member of the Zebu family. Some of the Zebu cattle in Brazil would not be called Brahmans at all. They would be called Brazil or by there, I mean Zebu or by the name the Brazilian people, people gave them. You find some with big frontal lobes on their head they really..uh really unique looking you know and the Brazilians will tell you that's so good for them because uhh their brain has more room to breathe and respirate in that big ole cranium roll they have in the front. So there is a lot of hocus pocus going back in breed development. Im not sure I might

D: Well, no no no its good because one of the things we want to ask Paul is with his experience in the Chenieres. This piece of property is on if I remember right by an Oda and he apparently was pretty reclusive. umm

C: Comment on the property

D: And its accessible. Its difficult to get to

P: Right

C: But these, these might be Zebu

C: They look...they are quite distinctive. They look quite different from the Brahmans huh?
(everybody talking at once)

D: One of our interest is you know there is as you well know there is a rich cattle tradition in the Cheniere and we can start it at Cheniere Rotee?? and work all the way to Texas. Umm and I know we are looking at stories but moving cattle from one of the Chenieres to other pastures, now if it was vertical we would call that transhumance umm I think we do the same thing here its just more horizontal than it is vertical based on seasons. Can you relate some of the early cattle drives that you've heard about or that you've witnessed?

P: A lot of them were more about not so much moving cattle from grazing pasture to grazing pasture or marsh to marsh was moving to market and how hard that was to have to swim those rivers. And most of the stories I heard both from Evangeline and Cameron is going west and having to cross the Sabine and Calcasieu and Mermentau and umm they had it it took weeks of of activity they had a lot of planning and they had to have a lot a lot of resources to go there. The horses were very critical and that's why they had a lot of interest in horses that could tolerate a trip like that. Umm they all carried guns I mean there was a lot of challenges along the way. I know my great- great-grandfather had a gun and that was the cattle drive gun. It was a big long pistol, a little ball pistol that he had to pack

D: Mhhm

P: My, my brother still has it and huh they had a lot of cattle wrestlers they had to deal with and renegades along the way just like I guess you see in some of the more accurate depictions of of moving cattle along in the west but the issue was insects, mosquitoes, and uhh those the currents in those rivers. They had to really think about how they were going to do it and where they were going to do it. There were certain places they knew they had a little bit of a better chance of walking those cattle and swimming them across.

D: Mhhm

P: And they knew they would lose so many, they'd talk about that.

D: You have any idea what the normal loss rate or what was considered an acceptable

P: Depends if there was a hurricane that came through or if they had you know something unique but umm most of them mentioned that they'd lose about 10% pretty easily.

C: Two names that appear, actually there is three, one we haven't been able to document. Two names we know of from the Miller family and the Gravestate? and they were both very active in the cattle business. We ran across another name Olrick and we're still trying to figure that one out. We know that the other two and we've had a chance to speak with some people that raised...inaudible...Miller estate we're working on we think they may have a cotton gin located at their place. Those two families were very active and it seems to me and both of you can comment that one reason that the marsh was grazed was Pifine. Pifine apparently was a grass that had high protein and I don't know if that's true or not but I would sure appreciate your comments.

P: Well they talked a lot about Pifine and...and umm in Cameron parish but in some cases it was considered a weed. It would take over but those were people looking more duck hunting and other uses. well...it was native and I think you're right that was a dominant plant. You know one of the comments I came, that came to me that I think is more recent since the forty's more like thirty's is the impact that the Chinese tallow tree has played and I know that wasn't an 1800s issue but you know based on what I remember reading and learning is that tree escaped cultivation around Elton and the southwest part of the state has been devastated by that. It started in the fifty's but when I was there in the seventy's they were trying to "quote-unquote" eradicate, didn't happen, not going to ever happen and they sprayed....loud noise.....and they went into the air strips and they were dumping that stuff anywhere they could and all the landowners would sign up. They had government programs for that but they quickly learned that you not going to eradicate and it did replace the prairie to a forested habitat quickly and that's, that's in my mind today that's the biggest impact you had on native grasses by far

D: Hollis you mentioned the king ranch. Somewhere I remember something about a monkey bull. Is the monkey bull responsible for what we know as the Brangus?

H: Santa Gertrudis

D: Santa Gertrudis and that is the marriage between what two breeds?
and we've had a chance to speak with some people that raised...inaudible...Miller estate we're working on we think they may have a cotton gin located at their place. Those two families were very active and it seems to me and both of you can comment that one reason that the marsh was grazed was Pifine. Pifine apparently was a grass that had high protein and I don't know if that's true or not but I would sure appreciate your comments.

H: Well we'll cover some ground that Carl and I to talk about. Monkey bulls was actually the offspring of uhh one of the owners one of the ... milk cows. She was a milking shorthorn type cow and I really don't know the parentage because they always stress that that the saying was that the the Santa Gertrudis that the King Ranch developed was was 3/8ths Brahmans so obviously the parental side had some Brahman and 5/8ths shorthorn that would have been a milking shorthorn cattle. The 3/8 and 5/8 came in much later on when a man from from Jeanerette actually began the the Brangus breed and the reason the 3/8th and 5/8 is is because in the kind of genetics that I studied, there is a formula for for calculating what combinations produce the the minimum umm the genetic variation when you're producing a new breed and mixing new strains and the 3/8, 5/8 combination is what what produces the minimum amount of variation as compared to the half and half or 3/8, 5/8 is best umm or the 3 quarters, 1 quarter you know so that's the reason why that 3/8, 5/8 was developed. But the monkey bull was nothing like that he was just an offspring of a cow that the th breed that the owners found very attractive and decided this is the type we want to produce and they produced a bunch of daughters by

him and did some inbreeding and came up with the Santa Gertrudis. Its very interesting to me as a geneticist that the Santa Gertrudis ranch has hired some uh some young people who are interes, who are now reproducing using shorthorn and Brahman are reproducing the precise 3/8, 5/8 combination on the ranch so they will have a legitimate 3/8, 5/8 combination. That the number..when when they named the breed and had to describe what it was, they came up with 3/8, 5/8 because it was a textbook definition of a breed that would give you the minimum amount of variation. Now they are actually making a 3/8, 5/8 precise genetic combination as the start of a renewed Santa Gertudis

P: One of the things before I forget that I think yall need to capture and yall probably heard this before but one of the trees on the Cheniere was favored for whip handles, Bodock

D: Bodock you said?

P: Yeah and most of the guys that, the old cattlemen always wanted to get a Bodock tree to make there whip handles, beautiful whip handles, it's a beautiful wood and they aren't as common now down there in fact I talked to people recently that said they don't see any bodocks down there but when I bought my property in Ranch Nire? I had four trees on it and those big ole uhh fruit you know they would fall and everything and they're a nuisance. But I had several people offer to buy those trees from me. I said "ohh I got a little asset here" so I I didn't cut them but uhh for some reason they love that for their whip handle.

C: Well it was used by Indians as bow wood

H: That's where the term Bodock comes from
(everyone talking at once)

D: There is a lot of interest between Carl and I. My roots are up in the Northeastern corner of Oklahoma and I have an aunt that married into a family that had somewhere between 1500 and 2000 heads of cattle. My interest is that there are certain clothing items, one associated with the western cowboy, one is boots, belts, often with belt buckles as big as plates, shirts, with not necessarily buttons but snaps, western hats, and my family was a roper lariat but here its a whip. In my family the dog was just there, it wasn't a cattle dog, here we find that. So I think one of the things to me at least is when we're looking at the time period you remembering, were they're wearing what we would traditionally call Western boots which I'm pretty sure came from Italy to the United States and that's why you would find people in Tony Llama, its an Italian name. Was this an item of apparel that you remember or is it something that came about and Paul, 1950, 60 years ago we've all seen a great deal of change in our lifetime and we're remembering change before that. Umm I'm really fascinated by that because when we see cowboys in the marsh they all wear white DarDar boogie boots, some wear cowboys boots but generally these are the white boots you'd find on shrimp boats so its, that's a clothing issue thats just fascinated us particularly like the hat doesn't always have to be a steset, although steset is sometimes used so if you could comment about of any of that you remember, it would be very helpful.

H: Well, I remember two sources of the cowboy boots, one was the Sear's and Roebuck catalog and the other was relatives from Texas who came back to Louisiana pretending to be big shots (laughter) and I think those were right, but you're, you're correct, the cowboy boots probably came in with Italian boot makers you know or early on boot makers in this country, good boot makers, mostly Italian

C: Lou Casie

H: Lou Casie is an Italian maker. They make probably one of the better American, American boots when you consider the linings and everything. And I, its been interesting to me and my travels, one of the places I really like to visit and I do for pleasure quite a bit, but I mean I do is Gwenso,?Argentina where they have beautiful leather work there and the Argentine people and Latin America go back more so to Italian rootstock, the European Argentine people go back more so to the Italian/European Rootstock ... than the other Latin American countries and its interesting that the boot making and the shoe making and the purse and leather jacket making is in Argentina, in Gwenso as well as in Italy

D: Yeah, I unlike you and Bonny, I've been once and was fascinated by the number of Italians. Uhh when the British were going back and decolonizing the islands of the coast of Argentina, there are 6 thousand Italians, 6 million Italians so there is this tradition of leather work and it is fine. Now what about hats? We see photographs of these floppy hats. Were they made of palmetto? Were they store bought as my family would have said? Umm did they come in from Texas? Its, Its an important part of Western Attire.

C: Well what did your families wear guys when yall were kids? Let's Let's

H: My family probably couldn't splurge for boots. We had to have something more practical and I would think that the cowboy hat in our country came in with the Tom Mix movies or something like that more so than

P: I agree with that

H: than a necessity. Straw hats, I remember straw hats but they were all store bought. I don't know that Cajuns had a custom of hat making like they did using straw for seat bottoms

C: Well they did in the 18 century but I don't see any evidence of umm umm

P: I think the cost was the problem, they just couldn't buy it couldn't afford it You know they had whatever they had they could put on there feet and I would say that laced shoes were probably more common than when you think of slip on type cowboy type boot and they would wear those laced boots, they were more durable. Now all the older people wore formal hats and they were you call them cowboy hats, they just, I don't know. My grandfather was in World War I and he always wore, it was kind of like a cowboy hat but its just dressed felt hat .

H: For the older type?

P: Yeah. It was just a hat they wore. It had nothing to do with Western wear or cowboy wear. And I know they had to buy that, like he said they had places you could, the merchants would bring those in but I don't think that was a style as much for Western wear or cattle driving or that kind. I think whatever they could get their hands on to get the sun off their neck, but most of them had major problems with sun damage.

C: Oh yeah

P: So they weren't wearing, a lot of them weren't wearing hats

D: And I know my grandfather had skin cancer problems because of that

P: I remember my other grandfather who was a rice farmer in Evangeline Parish had cattle. He wore you know safari hard hat.
A little girl walks in (Hey Girl! How you doing? That's the Chief's lady there.
Hi, How you doing my baby?
Mr. Don, Mr. Carl
You have a pig?...
little girl: No I I got a cow!
That's a cow.
Ohh. Its a cow!! We're talking about cows right now
Yeah

P: Ill be back in a little while
Oh yes. yes too precious.)

C: I have a long check list of things here Hollis that I would like for us to run through. Umm when I was a kid my grandfather as I said ... out a living growing 10 acres of cotton and I guess all together he was living on about 40 acres. The rest of it was given over to pasture where he raised cattle. Now, I know my family didn't umm didn't feed cattle ... you know for getting them ready for sale or and I'm assuming for winter. I don't ever remember him cutting hay. Umm what did your family do to feed the cattle in the winter time?

H: I I in my father's, my father I think was born in 1902 to give you an idea but uhh he produced, he produced hay so my father's generation would have been a hay producer and in the old days, my grandfather's place and prior to them cows went into the woods in winter time or in into the marsh mostly for hay. Uh they usually fed the milk cows and what they fed the milk cows was if they were lucky and had a good season they would have put up some peanuts and they would just call it peanut hay. They'd pull the stem out and the peanuts attached to it, throw it in the attic of the barn and let it dry and they fed that or, or umm left over sweet potatoes or unusable sweet potatoes and that was the fed but uh feeding for market was as far as I know non-existent. The relished source of meat as I was growing up was uh either a calf, a milk fat calf or a barren heifer that would be 3 or 4 years old and just failed to conceive because of some physiological um function that wasn't quite right and she would be a prize um prize source of meat

C: Umm and I I, this is something I'm going to ask uh Paul when he gets back too. Now I grew up in a family that grew its own beef and I know how often we ate beef, every day and every week. What uh what part of the diet was beef in your family?

H: Well in the summer time it was beef and chickens was the primary sources of protein. Uh in winter time of course we also had hogs to supplement that but um I would say as, as a society, and to document that I'd point to the neighborhood boucheries organizations. We would have to say that beef was a prominent source of protein in the families in area that I grew up in part because obviously if you farmed a boucherie that lived off of slaughter beef, its an important thing to have.

C: In your part of the world, about how many people took part in a bouch or were part of a boucherie association?

H: I would say 12 maybe 15, they had to provision in the boucherie if your quota was 5 pounds a week, you provided one animal when your turn came around, if it was 10 people you know, one in ten times you would have provided the meat. If you subscribed to, signed up for 10 pounds of meat, then you did two boucheries in duration of the deal so I'm guessing 10 to 12 people.

C: Okay

H: Families

C: My wife's family is from Pointe Noire, near Richard, between Church Point and Eunice. Um in their associations, they always had one family that contributed um expertise essentially. They were people who function as butchers and that that was their contribution to the system, was that the same in your part of the world?

H: In my personal experience, it was a local grocery owner, a country grocery owner. He had a country grocery store there in a crossroads where I grew up between Ville Platte and Mamou and he had a what you would call a small slaughter house. It had a cement floor, concrete floor and uh that was called the slaughter house and he would provide that place as a community service and there were some local people who were more expertise at slaughtering than others so they did the work. Most every Saturday that everybody. I guess with the privilege of the one who provided the beef that week having, having permission to get the... Usually what wasn't separated was the uh the meats, the heart you know and some of the, I forget the proper collegiate term for that now, but some of the by meats, usually remained in the provider of the calf's hands for his family.

C: Okay

H: The byproducts you might say some people like to use the cow's stomach you in stuff with ground meat and some smoked it and some didn't smoke it. Uh it produced a rare kind of thing. We called it kiette? in our country and I understand around Abbeyville in those places they have another name for it.

C: Now how did they get the uh the animal to the slaughter? I know in the Pointe Noire area because it was a neighborhood thing and there was no, were no professional slaughter house, um basically the animal was slaughter on site, but apparently since facilities was involved here, was it the case of loading it up in a truck and?

H: Most of the time the animal was slaughter on spot, usually a 22-rifle that somebody had and was an expert marksman and that sort of thing. Would come in and sacrifice the animal and then the carcass would be put in a wagon or something and hauled to the blucher site.

D: Okay. One of the things that is fascinating is the number of auction houses here in Baton Rouge was Charlie Brown, Dominics. What about over the prairie? Were there..these are auctions, highly punctuated if I'm sure you've been to them

H: Yeah, in um in our part of the world there was Jultate? livestock auction barn. Uh when those barns got a little more sophisticated, they were called commissions. Uh over in the Lafayette Opelousas area they were the Dominics had the uh a barn actually in Opelousas, Carencro, um somewhere else. And then you went to the west and there was one in Deridder I know of and they were some in Lake Charles area. They were pretty uh pretty common in that area. What they really were was, I got Fort Worth on

my mind because I just visited recently the old historic stock yards there. What these were you could say was a break up of a big commission site where there would be ten commission representatives on the yards of Fort Worth where you would have only one commission guy in your neighborhood so you really unless you were able to go from spot to spot, you'd basically all charged the same price, I think the difference in them was their ability to draw buyers from a wider range of territory one versus the other.

D: Yeah one of the things we observed on the Grey Estate is that cattle now have UBC codes and they are just scanned and photographed and really advertised on the internet and they're sold by the pot and people who have long histories of preps working with this family here and they don't have the shipping charges now because of the weight loss in shipping and its made the ranch a bit more efficient. So we've seen how the internet has changed the market ability of cattle quickly um so the auction houses were part of the business, the boucherie was part of the family business, it was how family... How did you preserve the meat before refrigeration?

H: Well that's why you got 5 pounds or 10 pounds, depending on how much you could use. The reason for the boucheries was because you had no refrigeration, you got fresh meat, you used it, next week you got fresh meat, you used it again. Um its um...other than that I guess if you go back far enough before refrigeration, you all know the term packing house. A packing house refers to process of packing meat into barrels with salt to keep it safe and back in the early days of meat transport, uh way back in history, of course that's where the term packers came from because meat was packed in salt to preserve it and shipped by rail, by water, or whatever to the points of destination.

C: Uh cattle on the prairie or in the marsh, how important was the railroad in developing and moving and?

H: I don't know that there was much of a railroad influence except maybe in the Lake Charles area where Lake Charles is closer to Texas and there might have been some. See to make use of, efficient use of a rail car for example, a rancher or a farmer would have had to have a number of heads to fill up a whole car. Most people even to this day, I bet the average heard size in Louisiana is probably uh probably between 24 and 35 and in a national heard you might be surprised that it’s not much larger than that the average heard size. So the reason you have these small commission houses scattered about is because the marking animals you had no alternative if you had 5 or 6 head to market or 10 to 12 head, you had to go to the local place because you couldn't constitute a truckload of any consequences and you couldn't constitute a car load of any consequences so I think Lake Charles may be the only area and at one time the Swift Packing Company had a had a pretty big plant there in Lake Charles and they um they slaughtered um their biggest, one of their biggest customers was the King Ranch in south Texas and they would slaughter the genetic, the animals primarily the bulls that were deemed uh uh genetically inferior, not useful for their breeding purposes. They would send those to Lake Charles by the car load on the train and uh and one of the reasons why they picked Swift n Company in Lake Charles, not only because it was close to them, but it was accessible by rail because they trusted management not to sell those bulls out of the slaughter pins to people who wanted to have, have a bull. They wanted to make sure that even though they were genetically inferior for their uses, they didn't want anybody else to get them for their purposes.

C: Right.

H: So I would say very, very little you know.

C: Well that's fascinating. Umm let's talk a little bit about the health dimensions on all of this. If you look at the 19th century newspapers the columns are filled with accounts of shard bone and anthrax. Umm to what extent was that a problem when you were a child?

H: I don't remember it being uh much more than a scare. Every once and a while there was an outbreak and you'd hear like uh let's say for example, Mr. Leslie Ordean lost 5 head or something like that. You know it was assumed that it was shard bone, but I don't remember that being a big deal. Seems like what impressed me as a child was uh more than cattle disease is was uh the horse diseases, the sleeping sickness you know made a sweep through south Louisiana at one time and because I think the people are more attached to horses than they are to cows, I think that created a bigger, bigger impact, bigger social, uh stir than any of the cattle diseases. Black Leg is another one of the diseases that people feared for. Vaccination for that was available a long time ago and that wasn't practiced to a great deal you know when I was young, probably not at all by my father's uh era.

C: Uh what about the ticks? Was that operation going well when you were a child or had it uhh

H: Well, well I know it was going on in Texas and went on after even into my teen years. It was a big...Texas Fever tick was a big deal and dipping vats were produced and I think in some spots in Louisiana you would have known of dipping vats. For people who only had a few head of cattle as I mentioned before, it was pretty easy to tell if you had tick problems and they would usually gather these animals up and put some kind of I remember a black pace that was kind of smelled of petroleum based used that or turpentine or something like that to reduce the effects of ticks I and

C: So there were no dipping vats in your part of the world?

H: I don't remember dipping vats in my part of the world, no I do not

C: Okay. Was there any resistance to efforts to eradicate the tick in your area that you recall? I know in St. Landry there are page after page of people who were actually arrested by the Sheriff's department for their refusal to participate in these eradication programs.

H: I, no I don't have any information on that

C: Umm talk a little bit about the routine of raising cattle on a farm in your part of the world. What was it like? Let's start with the, well this is February so let's start with the beginning of the year and then take it seasonally all the way through the year. What would you do with your cattle?

H: Well in February, we would be hopefully coming out of the winter time and hopefully we had just enough hay or rice straw was a popular winter feed and during my time because Evangeline parish got quite a bit of rice production. And hopefully you had enough of that to get through the winter so you were looking forward to spring grasses coming out and cattle production and spring time is always when the natural uh natural calving cycle because um by the time if you stop and figure by the time the spring grasses get, get ground and are nutritious enough to cause a little increase in body weight that triggers a physiological mechanism in cattle and cows begin to come and eat and bulls begin to have a good time so calves would be born again the next spring so we this time a year would be looking for a maybe a fourth of a way into the calving season and you'd have calves and cows and if you had milk cows hopefully you had a milk cow freshen or to replace a cow that was about dried up and that sort of thing and from then on it was just native grasses until the next winter when you had to bring them back in.

There were some shelters provided especially in the, I would say south of the, south of I-10 especially going west of Lafayette along the southern part of I-10 you still see a few old...railroad tires sticking up everywhere and those were wind breaks that cattle were in, there were more cattle per owner in that part of the country than back in my area. You'd see that effort made to provide some kind of, of wind barrier at least for the cattle in winter time but cattle weren't stored in winter. I, I usually at my house we had very nice barn that my father had made and one side of it had an old hang and that was reserved for cattle in really bad, unusually cold weather so just a little bit of feed we could put up.

C: Um we talked a little bit earlier about getting, moving cattle, how did you move cattle around the property around your place?

H: Well properties were not that big at the little farm that I was raised on so there never was moving cattle. Um my father, my grandfather had his cattle in an area that was considered open range and the cattle pretty much moved themselves in and out of woody land and it was kind of fun when I was growing up and I spent a lot of time with my grandfather's I just happened to be the grandchild that was of the right age and had the, the know how or the ability to help them with the cattle and stuff. It was a lot of fun to see the cattle come out of the woods in the afternoon and on to the prairies and then hang around the house over night and then the next morning make their way back to the woods. I'm assuming, I don't remember this but I'm assuming there was some reward...in the terms of maybe feeding or something like that kept those cattle from coming up but um that, there was not a lot of movement but I do want to comment on this, I think if you don't know about the Opelousas trail, you need to, everybody knows about the trails that go from Texas to Kansas like the Chisen trail and those trails. I think if you're interested in movement you would want to see what you could find about the Opelousas trails in addition to the few rural marks they have in this book that you have.

C: In fact I have some 18th century material so. Umm you talked about the rewards and using that a leverage to get the cattle to move, I know in my family and I have seen my father-in-law do this where he does exactly that he simply calls the cattle and they respond but, you talked about the open range out there, I assume because it was open range there were still open range out there that they had to still brand the cattle.

H: Yeah, They had to brand them, they had brand them and mark them and that was one of the things that they did in the afternoons when the cattle came up, the old folks could go out there and they knew their cow, being an old animal was already branded and chances are had an ear mark or a call so they could identify those and they could associate a calf with them and that's how they identified the calf belonged to my cow or to Rowmuse's cow, they had that all figured out so when the label was available, they usually catched these cattle up into a smaller yard or something and mark the calves. We called in my family, I don't know if we knew the word castration or not but marking also meant castration as well as putting them an identifying ear mark.

C: Well can you talk a little bit about the ear marks that was used in your part of the world?

H: Well there is everybody had a unique one and I guess in some cases the ear marks had to be changed slightly if two people had very , very same. They are pretty well documented in books like this. This book kind of, kind of features the Mexican type brands as opposed to ear marks but there's an approved set of ear marks so to speak that designates uh a certain cattle and they uh

C: Right. We're just trying to carry forward the memory of what the practices were.

H: Well they'd ear mark them. My grandfather's ear mark was a slit and a knot

C: Okay.

D: Hhmmm. What happened with the cattle hide once you killed a cow and prepared it for the table and it were.

H: I'm sure back early on when uh, when the leather was valuable as chair seats. I also remember raw hide leather being used as door hinges and other things like that where ruggedness was required and then coming forward from that point at one time was uh when trucks became available, I'm sure this is after World War II, I would say prior to the end of uh World War II, most of the hides were used on the site of slaughter by the people uh for purposes that they had in mind. Whip making was one thing and if you had raw hide whip you really the owner of a jewel. And uh they were theirs for chair bottoms and then after that you know things began to pick up and there was more uh artificial products that could replace leather and I do remember a truck from the rendering company and coming around and buying the leather hide from you right there at the place if it wasn't too putrefied so most people would stretch them on the barn roof where the sun could get to them and semi-dry them and then sell them to the rendering plant people as they came by.

C: Umm Hollis did your family by any chance have any stories, passed down stories about Jayhawkers?

H: No.

C:And/or Wrestlers?

H: No. my wife's family does but uh I don't have any. I'm kind of afraid to look because it might be a part of my family (laughter) if I checked it too closely

C: Uhh what about wrestling? stories about

H: I don't remember it, any of that. I'm sure it had to be on Oakland Ranch country but I don't remember anything like uh like you have now a days where somebody shoots a calf along the roadside or steals somebody's or kills somebody's steer in some kind of voodoo semi- religious sacrificial thing. I don't remember anything like that. Of course you had death, you expected death you know as a natural occurring thing especially among the older animals but I don't remember any stealing or killing on purpose outside of what was necessary

C: Now you talked about castration earlier. I know in some places people did it according to the phases of the moon believing that you that people, animals wouldn't bleed if you cut them at a certain phase, was that also a practice in Evangeline Parish?

H: That I don't know that it was a practice in Evangeline Parish, I think, I think the practice was when you could get enough labor to help you pin your cattle, then you got the castration done and you got marking done. I don't think it was affiliated with the moon, but I know that is a common saying, plant your garden according to the moon, castrate your animals according to the moon. There was a problem associating with castration that was an international problem for years and years and years and that was a screw worm infestation. And I do remember again a product that uh was recommended to use, it was

kind of a charcoal base um product to swab on to scrotum after you cut the bottom of it off and extracted the testicles, it was supposed to keep the flies away that caused screw worms, you know that produced the egg that develops into the larva which is the screw worm.

C: Right.

H: Early castration that's, that's a subject that interests me, I've just been too lazy to look into it. Early castration, I don't read much of it in books like this, ear marking, surely branding, surely but they never mention castration much because I'm guessing its a bad thing to do with screw worms.

C: Don?

D: I'm working

C: Well first of all what have we missed?

D: Yeah

H: Again you are trying to preserve this for

C: Future generations basically, and basically especially what you remember of cattle raising as a child and your families practices cause those are the hardest to document

H: Well we all, in my family we always had milk cows and I, I think uh Paul would maybe the one to comment on this more so than I am, but what I can remember is when uh when the cooperative extension service uh presented itself I guess, or, or the community, community founded is really when better cattle breeding practices began and people started looking past uh what their grandfathers did and what their fathers did. I think the cooperative extension service in those days had a tremendous impact on improvement in milk production and improvement in beef production. I think at the point they came on to the scene, you started seeing more emphasis, I remember some of the early beef cattle's specialists in the extension service that now that I know a little more about that kind a thing. Um I think they, they had a little scientific information but we're still lending towards the artistic aspects of animal breeding or animal improvement, but they would tell you things like, you really need a pure bred bull and that meant go to somebody who is raising registered stock for a bull that could uh could produce calves with more market appeal, more beef appeal. In the dairy industry about the time the extension people really got powerful on the scene, or really got recognized for their valuable information. Artificial insemination trailed behind that so the dairy industry I think was the first, the first of the cattle industries that was heavily influenced by artificial insemination. Its today totally dependent on artificial insemination with the beef cattle industry trails at it.

D: What about herds like limousine and Simmental that came in from my recollection in the 70s how has that affected the industry in Louisiana, in South Louisiana?

H: Well when they came in, uh, uh, they were brought in uh, by two kinds of people. The people who had taken hold in the semen business had primarily, had primarily dairy cattle semen production that had veered back into the beef production that was one, one group of people that were interested for commercial purposes to commercialize on the difference in the breed and the fact some of those breeds were extremely muscular. And the other group of people were those wealthier type folks and vester

type people that kind of missed the boat on the first round of cattle breeding development as more of a science than anything else. They came in and the ones, the particular breed you mentioned, did you say Charolais or

D: I said Simmental

H: Simmental comes from the Simmen Valley in Switzerland and they at that particular time in beef cattle breeding, a large animal was preferred to a small animal for kind of um a lot of people thought uh scientific reasons, uh not necessarily everyone felt that way but the Simmental breed was a big breed, uh came into American and it had, it had a splash of special and social circles and Simmental go to be a reasonably accepted breed, and what people found out in the long run was that the Simmental was big and it was slightly muscular but it had a tendency to produce more milk than it could support on a grassland and in the range and therefore because they struggled and produced a lot of milk, they were poor in reproductive proficiency and didn't fit. Charolais on the other hand came um from France. It was strictly a, a meat breed in France or a draft breed and it has remained and is popular to this date where additional muscle is needed in a scientifically designed crossbreed program breed like the, like the Charolais has its place and found its place and is is popular. The other, other continental European breeds that are relatives of the Charolais developed in the same area of France like the Limousine for example or the Blonde Dr. King are um, they never found their place cause really, cause they really couldn't do anything, uh better than the Charolais already did and uh now you would see Simmental, the few Simmental cattle that are remaining, you would see a lot of them colored black and white that you wouldn't recognize from the original red and white because of the popularity of the black angus in the United States at this period in time

D: Now generally when you have cattle you also have horses and you know

H: Wealthy people do

D: Yeah. What about a horse breeding?

H: Its very, uh Louisiana horse breeding is very interesting subject to me and uh again it’s another thing that I neglected to study in depth, but I think you could pretty well summarize that it improved horse breeding going from the Creole pony that was just a native horse running wild on the prairie so you could go from there to the uh to the release of the um to the release of the army stallions and the transport of those stallions in into Louisiana. The remount stallions has a whole history of those you'd, you'd find it on the computer ... the history of horse racing in Louisiana and the history of better horses developed in Louisiana primarily goes back to the remount stallions that people were able to attain when the Calvary decided they weren't, the U.S. Calvary decided they weren't going to be in the horse, horse business anymore. Many got it. it goes from there in to again because of the influence that Paul's and his people have had over time uh you got 4-H kids interested in horse projects and you see more of the quarter horses that have come in. Louisiana people were early on into what the, what, what contributed to the quarter horse industry as we know it today at least on the race horse side because Cajuns were always famous for having race horses and some of those horses were, were originally what we referred to as good race horses and some people called them quarrel horses and they went into the make up of the quarter horse breed, but inevitably uh the good race horses go back to the remount stallions that came down to the country.

C: Uhm, uhm, we were talking earlier about the cooperative extension service and its influence early on improving beef quality here and getting people to move away from what had been done for generations just simply passed down by word of mouth and example. Um do you want to comment at all about that or?

P: I think its a national story. The kids in 4-H that participate in livestock projects in many cases when they won, they had opportunities to go places they had never would have gone. Seattle was... One of the most famous stories I heard was Russel Honore'. I talked to Russel Honore' about 4-H each year for the dairy project, Pointe Coupee parish, never left the parish until he joined 4-H. And he had a winner's trip, went to Mexico, who would have know you know but that's where the trip was and he'll tell you he learned more on that trip to Mexico than anything in his life, until probably Katrina, but uh that story could be told a thousand times by a little ole' country kid from Ville Platte or Cameron or Mamou or wherever was able to go on a trip and see things they never seen so when they grew up they knew the world of the cattle industry and the sheep and the hogs and the bigger they had running in the pine woods, pine prairie or whatever the big long nosed hogs or whatever it was, horses and uh they, they improved based on what they saw and they learned and that value has never been captured well enough in my opinion. Everybody looks for these research-based you know journal articles about all of the findings and impacts, and much of it is unwritten. But, but it took place and its, its in the quality of the animals improving as you've seen over the whole country really.

C: But if you look at the papers, the local newspapers in the 1930s, that information is everywhere...

H: I'm sorry I missed that

C: the cooperative extension services and working with school children, I mean its in every issue

P: Well wasn't it Sears Hollis that had a program where they would provide animals..to have a food chain

H: Yeah, a lot, Sears had as I remember was a pig program

P: Pig Program

H: They provided pigs and you'd started the chain by returning so many pigs from their first litter. Uh in Evangeline Parish, our county agents at that time had drummed up local support of banks and uh a few other people to buy Guernsey heifers because he was a fan of the Guernsey breed and a chain started like that and I'm sure that was kind of popular all over. My comment to him Paul was that the question was when did the pure bred first come into being and I said that's when the extension service agents started telling folks you really ought to get a pure bred bull instead of just taking something from the pasture and that's kind of how the pure bred thing took big and then, then the kids

P: I remember when the first, you probably saw it before I did, but when I was a child seeing the first Charolais cow, or heard and how amazed we were with that breed....Jesse Johnson. It was the talk of the town and you know what he did and where he got them, why they different and why they white and they pretty and uh daddy had a few, we had about a hundred head of cattle, you know there was so much like you said more stylish than anything we had. All of ours looked kind of rough when we looked at them, but Jesse had a little bit money and he was an entrepreneur and he had two hours away from a degree or five hours away from a degree here, he died recently.

H: Mr. Jesse was a fine man, I worked for him some

P: and Koonce

H: Yeah

P: He went to war and never got his degree, five hours away, well he's eighty something years old and got problems and comes see Dr. Koonce. He called me, he said I want to get my degree before I die. Make a long story short, he finally got his damn degree

H: I be dern

P: He had a bad knee and was all crippled up, he got on those crutches and walked across the stage. Ask Ken Koonce about that one there and he said its amazing story, but Jesse was an old cattleman and on the side he was a banker, but uh he wasn't doing well.

H: I think Jesse's cattle come from the first Charolais cattle group that I ever saw. They were pinned on the Morian property near the Evangeline club in front of the race horse barn and they were part of the, they were part of the illegal importation from Mexico that probably you know about Carl. Uh some came this way and I think the judge finally put the rest of them in care of the monks at that little place by that, uh, uh, area between Lafayette and somewhere else where, uhh last time I knew there were still Charolais cattle there. The judge had...Huh? Pardon Me

C: The Morians?

H: The Morians, yeah they kept their cattle at Claude Morian's out in that pin where they used to exercise uh race horses, they kept those illegal cattle there, I think for the courts and I think some of them had a way of disappearing you know
(laughing)

C: I could imagine that. What role did the FFA play if anything?

P: Well I wasn't around in FFA at all but maybe Hollis was, 4-H was

H: No, I never was, we didn't have FFA, uh the role of the FFA would, would be, would vary from place to place. In Texas for example, there was an FFA Ag teachers as they called them. One was in almost every rural school. Uh in this country, the county agents that did the 4-H work just overwhelmed and over sacrificed and over produced uh the Ag teachers who were located in the schools so FFA in Louisiana uh going back to my childhood was, was never approached being as important in Louisiana as it was in Texas or some of the other southern states.

P: I agree with that

C: So the county agents worked directly with the kids

H: County, the schools, schools got, gave permission to the extension service to go in once a month and the case that I am most familiar with in conductive 4-H club meeting and you had a one on one deal with

the county agent and those guys were like uh, uh country missionaries. They would come out at see your project you know and, and, and they um, I don't think the Ag teachers ever had to do that.

P: They didn't do that, they were teachers with just an Ag focus, but they had members and they had the blue jackets and great kids, I mean we still have good kids in FFA but its so much smaller. I bet you we got 60,000 kids in 4-H in schools and then they have 8,000.
(lady talking softly in the back ground)
Who?

D: Um you mentioned Texas and I just remember if you drive through rural Texas, Hollis, you'll often find a building and it's the grange, which I assume is some sort of association, but I don't recall ever seeing a grange in Louisiana

C: There were in the 19th century, they just died out.

D: Okay, alright.

C: And this has nothing to do with this topic, Hollis, but you talked earlier about the, the folks who left and went to Texas and uh coming back driving...relatives coming back in their Cadillac's and the big hats and the big

H: They were big shots

C: Aw yeah

H: Even though they were firemen (laughter)

C: What kind of, to what extent did those families that left maintain a relationship with the ones who stayed behind?

H: Well I think probably in the case of the Cajun people that I can only speak for um like all Cajun families they're pretty close and they kept contact for a long time. I know from our end, from those of us who were behind when our Texas relatives came over, we'd kill a fatten calf or you know or killed moose chickens and we just celebrated because we thought they had accomplished something, something real real fantastic by going to Texas and surviving in Texas and coming back rich in their cars with their hats and their boots and everything. That was pretty much the general philosophy I think in the South, Southeast Louisiana, I mean Southwest Louisiana excuse me because you even find um Texas and the Texans uh spoken highly of in folklore and folk song and Grande Take Side and You Left Me for Something Better, etc., etc., etc. Uh they always came back , we always when we could after World War II I can remember my family being able to go to Texas and visit, visit some families that went there. And a big attraction to go to Texas during World War II was the shipyards like in Beaumont for example, Port Arthur and those places where there was work.

C:Right.

D: Now in my family, my father went from Oklahoma to California and we would go from California back to Oklahoma just about yearly and it was a long drive, it was the old true route 66 and when we got to my dad's mother's home which is very rural, never had running water, really never had electricity, you

know you would get a gueny and we'd get chickens and my grandmother fixed a big douduha and they had a hand-crank radio because come Saturday night you listened to the Grand Ole Opry, that was it and of course being the outsider, my job was to crank which I finally figured out was just my cousin's wrapping my horns pretty hard. So when you listen to music at the local bar, what did you listen to growing up, I mean I'm talking about the old Philco tubed radio, what did you listen to?

H: Uhh I can only speak for myself but what we listen to in my house was on the Sunday mornings, I think it was maybe Saturdays was the Light Crust Dough Boys from Fort Worth, Texas, uh and then we would hear uh the Shen's program originated in the Shenandoah valley of Kentucky, of Virginia. We would hear a program from there and as I grew older on the radio, my folks never had TV until I was a senior in college and I can remember radio at nighttime we would listen to the voice of XEOK in Acciona, Mexico, uh or some of the, Mexico, on the border of Mexico there were radio stations that actually belonged to Americans but because they could put their towers in Mexico, they got around the FAA regulations about wattage or whatever.

C: Clear channel stations

H: But that's what we listened to and as I got older and more influenced by the cowboy shows on Saturday I found Jean Audry program on Saturday nights, I could listen to them on the radio, so those kinds of things

C: Okay

H: then the rest of the music was church music if it was wasn't in the barn

C: And Paul when you were growing up and you were listening to the radio or you remember what your parents were telling. What, what kind of music did they listen to?

P: Well we spent a lot of time at my grandparent's house and we didn't listen to the radio. But at my grandparents we did and it was French music. we didn't call it Cajun music, it was French music, so I don't know how the terminology changed over the years, but when we went to listen to music it was a Frenchman playing and we like the French music. The Cajun term I think kind of evolved more and, but I just knew from experience that wasn't something we really dwelled on, you know. A lot of people who speak French and they like French music, but we listen, there was a KVPI radio station in Ville Platte and they did the news in French as Lafayette did television news a lot and they did a whole morning show on Saturday in French and I remember my grandparents and I had to do what they did but we just sit and listen. You didn't say nothing, you there was no dancing going on, it was just listening and they got pleasure in that, very conservative. All this wild you know partying and all that's not. Now they did that a little bit later at night you know when they need to but just listening to the Saturday morning in the morning, not late

C: Cousin Doug?

P: Mmh

C: Did ya'll listen to him?

H: Definitely, Cousin Doug if they could get the old radio working you know

P: Yeah it was hard to catch you know that old AM was terrible

H: Going back to Paul's comment, about the Cajuns uhh, from my experience, the old folks were more apt to identify themselves as Creoles than they were Cajun.

P: exactly

H: and uh

P: My grandfather always used that and he'd talk about somebody ole Creole

H: Yeah Creole, Creoleise were people of European decent so that would mean Creole in the original definition of Creole not the New Orleans adopted definition of Creole

C: exactly

P: But in more recent times, I've been reading more about it, uh and my grandfather talked about it. He probably didn't see it much, he probably heard it from his dad. But they had a lot of the Indian in them from Mamou and Chico

H: Definitely, definitely, there were Indian tribes in the Mamou vicinity

P: exactly

C: And in fact in the 18th, the late as the 1870s you'd get maybe 2, 3, 4, 5, sometimes five thousand people going and watch them play stickball, lacrosse up there somewhere around Pine Prairie.

P: But I think, what what I observed and it kind of picked up is they had no protection from the law so if you had a Christian, you know pretty good person, they would treat it pretty good, but if somebody showed up missing, law enforcement wouldn't give a damn about it, they wouldn't too bad, so they, they had, it was almost a lawless group in terms of no one is going to protect them.

C: So you protected yourself

P: Well, the Indians did but I'm just saying if, if somebody disappeared or was killed, oh well, I don't know what happened, but they wouldn't investigate it. That's what my grandfather would tell me, and uh it was obvious they were probably lower even than African American population and um you know it's, that's just the way it was and you know they were conquered and not of any, any, any use to the community and then after America, they were the workers, but that was very just some little references to Indians. He told me that his daddy found an Indian dead in the woods and you know like what happened, what happened? Well they just, they buried him. You know like you find a deer dead, and it was just that mentality was just intriguing to me now than it was then

C: Umh hmm Well were there any Jay Hawker stories passed down in your family?

P: Well it was general, very general, not so much one that would really intrigue you

C: Right, but I mean were, were, were just trying to preserve these for future generations, I mean just in general, what were they remembering?
P: (Disdained?) they were, were, were (more orders?) that came in and they, they just took over and everybody would hide and the women and the, hide, hide and my grandfather would say how terrible it was to have people come in like that and just totally turn it upside down. The society you thought you lived in, it was lawless and I remember him telling me that and then I read this thing last night and its Evangeline parish history, you probably read that book but it, you know same thing, it was like hearing my grandfather talk again, you know they killed people and they'd steal and there was just, we in charge here and you just going to do what I tell you to do

C: Right

P: And it was I guess, that federal control after the Civil War, some of the Jay Hawks just took advantage of that you know

C: Well its

P: the spoils of war, you know

C: Well it all started with uh sort of a class war just before the Civil War, continued all through the war, and then (laughter) continued on for a generation after the war and there were night riders you know all sorts of things going on and on for decades

P: You know I think this story goes around, I bet you my grandfather heard it because I think read it in other books. But he talked about Jay Hawk was coming and they wanted to, I don't know why they, they thought they were going to take one of the babies, and they put that baby under, under dress of the momma, and they looked and looked and looked and looked and looked and they couldn't find that baby was underneath, you know, the long dress and uh they saved that child, by uh putting it under that dress. So they would kidnap people too, I would imagine based on that story. Now you know what else he always talked about that intrigued me too, you've heard this the (fife-a-lay?)

C: Mmh hmm

P: And the story he would tell us that was the spirit of a baby that died, is that what he would

C: Before baptism

P: Right, okay well ya'll heard all that

C: Well, no no, but tell us

P: Well what he told me that the only way to put the spirit to rest was to put a knife in the ground and that light would go through the knife and that would and that would put the spirit to it. I just listen to him, I mean I, he said a pocket knife you put it in the ground as a V and light would go through it. But he said he had seen those lights before in the dark.

C: My father-in-law and I've heard many other people talk about to people playing practical jokes on each other, at least in Acadia parish, was that something that was common in Evangeline parish too? It

talks about uh a couple of ones I remember. When he was a kid they used to take turkey buzzards and they'd tie lanterns to their feet and let them lose at night (laughter) and another one was they'd uh, people would go out somewhere and when they'd come home they'd find their furniture nailed up to the roof and things like that, I mean was that something that existed in Evangeline parish?
H: It was common in in my neighborhood for for people who came to see you if you were not home, you weren't able to visit with them, you'd turn your porch chairs upside down or make some kind of machria out of the situation, now usually not destructive in anyway, but to let you know that somebody had been there, that's really all.

P: Well he talked about in Ville Platte I know he said they would put up a gate, a barrier and they wouldn't let you go through the town, you know you had to stop at the barrier and it was like in Mexico I guess and they would as what you doing, where you're going and uh typically they had to pay a little bit of something or you're not going through and it reminds me of third world Mexico you know, but he said aw yeah you not going to come through town unless, you know, we find out what's going on and what you doing and where you're going and I'm sure that was told to him and it wasn't something that happened in his lifetime, but that, that was kind of just lawlessness I'm sure too, probably not lawlessness if you lived there, you're okay you know while you're going through, but stranger coming through, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa, Stop, you got no business here, what's your business, where you going, and it was probably pretty scary.

C: One of the things that you see in the papers guys from roughly the 1880s all the way through the 30s is uh dance hall violence, mall de masion, somebody was killed almost every weekend, if it wasn't in Evangeline Parish, it was in Acadia parish, or Lafayette parish, or St. Landry, somewhere. I assume that was the case in the rural neighborhoods where you grew up as well?

P: Yeah they had a murder when I was a little child, you probably remember that Hollis, it was a Tate and he shot somebody at the grand ole club. It was a big big story, but those dances were rough.

H: They were rough and um one of the songs that um my father-in-law and his uh old brother-in-law was famous for is (name of French song) and that was supposed to be a really uh the turn on tune for these uh

P: hall out brawls

H: for these halls, dance halls, for these home brawls, but he plays a really unique French song, and it is real, music of real, they gifted us credit for having done (French song)

C: We were talking a little while ago about horses

H: The mad reel

C: I assume cutting horses was still a big deal on the Chenieres, when you there, ranching there? Can you talk a little bit about that, the people using the with cattle

P: Most of the horse discussions and conversations and observations I saw where working horses it was not recreational.

C: Well I know that's what we're talking about

P: I'm probably not familiar enough with the terminology, but everybody had horses for work

H: They had horses but if you're thinking of the term as it applies to modern horses. It wouldn't have existed then, in fact horses; a lot of the horses that were used for round up probably hadn't been ridden since the last round up so.

P: When you say cutting horses, there were people on the ranch there that had cutting horses and they competed in

C: Uhh no, no, no I'm not talking about that, I'm talking strictly about working

P: I know, that's why I'm saying that that wasn't the term they used, that was just their working horses

C: Just their horse

P: And I'm sure they did cutting work, but it was not in the sense of a recreational, you know, competent, competitive

C: The people, I know, years ago and the sketches we have from the 19th century, all people riding Creole ponies to do that kind of work. How long did the Creole pony hold out as the primary work horse here do you think, especially in the cattle industry?

P: I have no idea.

H: Probably til about 75 years ago

C: Now why did it start to lose out you think?

H: Well I think because the Creole ponies dimensioned again when these remount stallions came in and started to breed a better type of horse. Uhh horses had, had a little more durability if they, if they were from these remount stallions, bred and durability. The strength of the Creole pony was and this, this is not only in Louisiana, this is all over Latin America where there is, every country you go to has its own Creole pony. Uh durability, stamina those little horses could work from daylight to dawn and they were there where some of the improved horse breeds would play out on you in early afternoon but these little horses were, they didn't have, they were smaller and shorter and they didn't have to fight the tree limbs as much. They were really very durable and that was not necessarily fast but quick and so they lasted, when I was, when I was a child, I had, my father bought a mare when I was uh 5 years old and bred her to what I call my saddle horse, so I've been horsing since uh I guess since 7 or 8 years old pretty well and this horse was from a remount stallion, the saddle horse, my saddle horse was from a remount stallion and all they kids I rode with was still riding Creole ponies, but very old, very contrary, very hard headed, very durable

C: But you could get a more docile, a bigger horse with the same characteristics essentially is what you're saying right? The ones that were interbred with the remount stallions

H: You could get a horse that, the Creole horse, he was not big but his long suit was durability and stamina. Uh when the remount stallions came in the deal with the people that got the remount stallions

is you was supposed to breed neighborhood mares you know at the will of the mare's owner but it always came out to be that you had to pay $5 or so for stud fee. Anyhow, but those horses replaced the horses because they were nicer looking and they were bigger horses, there was more social value to having them, but they weren't necessarily as strong or stronger than Creole ponies, it was just that they came available and the Creole ponies diminished

C: Are there any Creole ponies still existing today? That you know of?

H: Gosh I wouldn't know where, I'd, I could go to Ecuador and bring you a Creole pony

C: Right Right
(everybody talking at once)

H: it would be just like the one we had here

C: Right, right I mean do you know of anybody at all who still has some in this part of the world?

H:There would be a man in Chatanga who still has a jackass, he would be the likely, likely person. I forget that guy's name but uh one of the guys that used to work with us Paul, well it might be...who did I see this morning here was the parks commission for a while

P: Dwight?

H: Its Dwight. Dwight called me one time to have a, he wanted to get a, get some mules to go down to the place in St. Martinsville and I had to do some research. I was a livestock specialist at the time, I did find this man in Chatanga that still had a jack, but I don't know of anybody nowadays that would have any of that stock

C: No its just that I would like to get photography of some if we can find one for this project. I mean I have a nice 19th century pen and ink sketch of one, but nothing

P: Late 70s John Mecom put a bunch of burrows? birds? in Johnson's Bayou, starved to death. The human society just about lynched him, I mean that was a big story over there, I mean that's not even related to this but that son-of-a-gun was bringing those damn burrows? birds? in the marsh, I mean it was ridiculous, and then he sold and then went bankrupt. I guess Benson bought it from him that time, but he used to own the Saints

C: Right

P: They from Texas.

C: Well Don

D: Well they just...roads as we know them came in at about 1930 so pre-1930 was a wagon or saddle horse and my question is where did the wagons come from? Were they made on the place? Was there some place you went to get a wagon made for your needs? Did you trade for it?

H: I was born in 1936 and all the wagons I know of that would qualify as wagons and useful were wagons that were bought somewhere. I would imagine in Opelousas if you went back through Standoff's? history far enough Standoff's hardware history, you'd find it to be a source of wagons and I'm guessing a few other people in Ville Platte, G. Ordean? Company.

P: Well my grandfather, well great-grandfather (all talking at once) he sold wagons when they came in they were

H: They were assembled there

P: They were assembled there but they didn't make them

H: They just got the parts there and I'm thinking seeing

P: Now they would repair them and they had blacksmith's that would work on them, but I don't know about fabricating from scratch the whole wagon

H: Occasionally you would find a black family that had a wagon and a couple of mules but usually they were either very good wagons or wagons that had been reassembled from parts of other wagons

P: Exactly, even when I was picking cotton I remember some people bringing cotton by horse, you know by mule and wagon.

H: There used to be a special place behind G. Ordean's in Ville Platte for wagons and buggies, uh I remember that very well because I tied my saddle horse in that area when I rode into town on him as a kid. Its very, I mean, still, not one or two buggies but a lot of buggies on Saturday.

P: It was amazing that even in the late 50s and early 60s we still had people using wagons and we still had people plowing with mules, very few but I remember seeing people doing that

C: I can remember getting off the bus in high school and seeing my neighbor plowing his corn field with mules next door

P: It was usually a very, very old farmer

C: Its the same here

P: The guy I picked cotton for, I'll never forget that. We'd show up and we'd pick every morning and we got there and he was crying and I remember, he couldn't speak English and my mother told me what had happened, his mule died and I'm telling you, he was crushed, I mean he loved that mule, and it affected me that how somebody could be so close to a mule cause I mean we'd lose dogs and we'd lose cattle and nobody cried over it. That mule was a different situation that was his partner.

C: Well that leads me to something I wanna ask you, umm my father-in-law told me and this was a common rule of thumb back where I grew up, you could never, you were never to give a name to animal you knew you were going to slaughter (laughter) you know because eventually it became the family pet. You know and I could see that with my sister-in-law, she adopted almost every animal on the farm. So I assume that was what was at work here as well?

P: Exactly. Yeah exactly that was not an animal for slaughter, that was partner in the farm and I'm sure many hours spent alone, that was a conversation going on with that mule and that mule listened to him you know.

D: Yeah where my father grew up, I don't remember, I only have one memory of my grandfather but they plowed with mules and of course I grew up in an urban environment. I just thought that every urban kid knew the words gee and haw, I figured why wouldn't I? My daddy used it so I figured your daddy used it. I thought everyone in the urban environment had ever heard of gee and haw

H: Which one is right and which one is left?

D: I think gee is left and haw is right

H: I don't know

D: I think that's correct

H: I was trying to recall

D: But um that's the way it was and my daddy would just bring it into conversation

P: I told you this story already but when you said gee and haw. When I went and stumbled across that guy Alvin Richard up in.. what's the little community north of Moss Bluff?

H: North of where?

P: North of Moss Bluff... anyway he was from Lake Charles, Cameron Parish area, but he was a big horseman. Mr. Alvin was probably 75, real active and wired still. He had a crawfish pond and I was doing aquaculture work and he called me, and he said you need to come see my place and I went. And he had rigged the damn horse to pull a boat with some big long...arms and he had that thing rigged to that thing. He said get in and I'll show you how it works. So I got in that thing and he started giving him signals and that horse would go, stop, turn on signal and we started running traps you know and his hands were free, no reins no nothing. He'd pull over those levees and I was so intrigued by that. And then he said, I said how did you do this? He said let me show you what I trained them with and he had a wooden skid he had built that he dragged that skid and he said he trained them pulling that skid in the pasture, but he had had the horse trained and uh I never saw that sense or pry ever again cause we were going to take the time to drain a damn horse, but uh he'd run those traps with that horse and it was amazing to see that.

D: Well when we talk about the cattle industry, one of the things Carl and I had found in Cameron Parish, there is an arena, basically a rodeo arena tucked away in a little back part of the region. Clearly its there so you can show or 4-H can do or we can have a Saturday night rodeo. Was that common on the prairie as well? ...actually I've got a photograph it says rodeo arena Cameron Parish police jury

P: Oh yeah that arena is right there east of Cameron

D: Yeah

P: That's a more modern thing

D: Okay alright

P: Most kids got involved in rodeoing in high school competitions and they decided to build them, the welders got together and donated their time. I was there when they built the arena. It was built like in the late 70s.

D: Okay, okay Does it catch you a little off guard

P: But it see like Mcneese State University was a big rodeo college and all those kids wanted to be in the rodeo and wanted to be on the rodeo team so it was always an aspiration so they built rodeo to try get those kids to get involved. They competed I mean we had a 4-H horse program and we'd have horse shows and they'd compete, and that's basically what they doing, not so much a rodeo as it is horse competition.

D: Alight

P: But they called it a rodeo arena cause that sounds more exciting

D: Well when we were at Gumcove, let's just call him the foreman, had married at one time the firefighter, Reda Deer's daughter and he was a true rodeo cowboy of American Competitor first rate and here we are and I mean you take a compass, guide dog and luck to find where we were, out there in the middle of nowhere, here's this award-winning cowboy (happen contenent?) bunk house like you would see in the west. Here we are you really have to know where this place is and we're going..it catches you off guard that's all I want to say.

P: I don't know if I ever told you this, I may have. Y'all need to interview, and you know him, (T B Porter?), he knew all

H: T-Bear Corter?

P: he knew all about rousing (more ottom, y'all talking about ottom)

D: Yeah mmhmm

P: He worked cattle that guy, he knows him personally, and Porter must be I think in his 80s, at least he's close to 80

H: He's got to be there

P: Well anyway, he's told me I told him a few stories about I'd been on Cameron meadows and he started telling all these stories. "Oh yeah, Mr. Ottom, we worked cattle together and you know, when they brought the black franklins on there, you know Porter was aware. He's an older, he competed in rodeos didn't he?

H: He was an excellent calf roper

P: Yeah

H: A calf roper, a famine, a rodeo circuit back in his days

H: (T Bear Porter)

P: Yeah, he's probably one of the more famous rodeo people in Louisiana.

C: Where does he live?

P: He lives in Vernon Parish

C: Okay

P: What's the Fort Polk town?

C: Lesville

P: Lesville and his son-in-law was our country agent, just retired last year.

D: So the best way to get to him is through his son-in-law?

P: I might have his number in my, in my, in my file because he used to call. He's a big cattlemen association member and I think yall would need to interview him.

C: Well you get an idea of what we're trying to do and if there's things that pop in your head you'd like to talk about, we're

P: More of these connections to the marsh, he knew about the

D: We're also always interested in, in family imagery you never can tell Carl and I were up to about 20,000 images now and there are constantly evolving. You never know what you're going to find so if you stubble on anything, we're trying to get Allen Ingsmenger? His family is one of these people who came into Louisiana and looked at migration out of the Midwest and there was a blanket inversements that went out through, what do they call it?, American Press in Lake Charles and he actually has a copy of this essential book telling you to migrate, why. Its in poor shape but we haven't been able to sit him down and see if we can get a copy. I've never seen one and there were thousands of them which they won't surface

C: But just family pictures guys, family albums, anything that would have to do with the, well anything that would have to do with early life or you know in this area but particularly the ranch, I mean the cattle industry, there's virtually nothing

H: When you went to the great ranch did you work with Kent Ledure, who did you work with?

C: Kent and David

H: Kent, Kent is a great resource person. He's one of the remaining real cowboys in the deal and he would also be a, he would know as much about horses as he would about the cattle industry, but he's a good resource person. And if you're looking for uh something a little later on in history, uh, kind of middle of the period we've talked about here today, John Dennison from Lake Charles area, from the Iowa area. He was, his father and grandfather was instrumental in getting a lot of those people to come from the Midwest down here, uh kind of surprised me when Johnny was talking about that but it I really, really was surprised that he was, his grandparents were maybe as familiar, maybe as influential as...in getting people down here and selling land to them and that sort of thing, turned out to be good news for both sides of the deal

D: The Watkins family, well between, there's three families that own the equivalent area of Rhode Island and its an interesting part of the historical record that we'd like to get but we're always interested in any imagery trying to just sort out how this works. You would think with the cattle industry here we wouldn't have any trouble; there's just not a lot out there and I don't think Carl and I have turned over every rock but damn we gone through a fair ocean

C: Its actually believe it or not easier to find materials about the origins of the cattle industry here in the 18th century than it is for the last 100 hundred years

H: Uh I think its probably because of the same reason that livestock specialist have always a great uphill battle with cattlemen because cattle production has never been a primary enterprise, its always secondary to some else

P: That's exactly right

H: You, I mean you just not going to have much emphasis put on it unless its... its not going to from the economical stand point from the economical side of things, it would be more from the social side.

P: I totally agree cause you didn't hear much about someone being a cattle producer in the sense of he's a big time cattle producer. That was something they did because they had some land, but they did something else and we got cows cause Daddy was a good example of that. Daddy had a feed store, he was a salesman and he had 100 head of cattle but when he talked to people, the cattle never came up, just had them because we need a little bit more income and we had to work every weekend to fool with those stupid cows but we did it and it was work, it wasn't fun. We didn't have any horses either we were on foot cattlemen.

C: I'm laughing because all of a sudden on foot cattlemen chasing down the family's cows in the field.

P: Daddy talked about horses, he'd say we can't afford a horse y'all young, y'all go work the cattle. We'd go round the damn cattle up on foot, no 4-wheelers, no nothing. I mean they didn't have them back then but, uh you weren't working thousands of acres, but everybody, nobody, a lot of those cattlemen around where we were in Chatanga and Point Blue in that area you didn't see them on horseback, they were working on foot.

C: Yeah.

H: And whips, whips always whips

D: And whips

P: Well yeah but

H: Its gone from

P: It wasn't glamorous

H: No from horses to helicopters in the big country

P: And they go shoot a few hogs while they at it too

H: They need to shoot a lot of hogs

P: I know

C: You wanted a couple stories from Paul I think

D: Well I just really wanted Paul to sort of relate about your dad, I mean just think about it he owned a store and if you owned a store and you were in that store, Lord you heard stories probably some exaggerated, but that was the meeting place that was the social center so if you can remember some of that early activity that went on in the store, uhh we'd appreciate that, I mean it was a feed store so clearly there was a market. How far would people drive or come to your dad, your grandfather and father I guess to get supplies?

C: And what were the biggest things, the biggest sellers

P: By far when I was a child, I started working there actually for a wage officially by 12 but we'd work there before, it was people wanted to buy chickens that was the big thing, you know live chickens and then they'd raise them then butcher them. And everything that goes with the chicken

C: Now where did he get his chickens?

P: He'd get them from the Midwest, they had some big hatcheries down there. They'd mail them in you know, you'd get them at the post office. I remember picking up 40, 50, 60 boxes of chickens, all live and they needed some water pretty quick so you had to rush and put them in the brooder and get some water for them and they were very, you know they were hungry too. Well he had mainly chickens, we had guninies, a lot people liked guninies too. And then he had ducks and stuff like that but my father, you'd make a lot of money on chickens but it was a big demand thing, everybody in town even had a little brooder, and they'd build those little brooders. You might have seen a brooder and they'd put a light on them and a fresh chicken was what people could afford, you know that even you had a few cows and you butchered a calf and you ate it, but more the meat was more portable with chickens. And I had to babysit those damn chickens in those brooders. And when people wanted to buy them, they'd come in and you know they wanted 50 or 100 you know whatever you had to catch them and that was a big part of what we did and the social background, gathering of that store, it was much more than buying as yall all know. I mean they always had a big pot of coffee and they'd sit down and talk and they'd visit. The only disadvantage I had and Hollis is bilingual, I wasn't really good at French and they spoke in French all the time so we missed a lot of the stories as children cause that was used as the

language to not communicate to the children you know. The story they didn't want us to know, but by far chickens dominated the feed and the brooders, the waterers, the feeders and then after that it was plants, people started

C: gardens

P: buying seeds yeah seeds and plants for gardens, fertilizer, insecticide, uh and extension did a good job of bringing these new varieties of Creole tomatoes and you know Mom and Dad tried to make sure they kept up with that, and they'd sell the seed by the ounce, you'd put in on a little scale and you could sell all those seeds. Later the plants came and that's the thing now, you know nobody plants a seed anymore, they plant a plant. We got into that heavy, but earlier it was seeds. And then in the 60s they got heavy in the commercial agriculture and we... fertilizer and lime, all that kind of stuff. I remember the box cars coming in, it wasn't bulk fertilizer, it was all sack fertilizer so you had to unload a box car by hand using that dolly and it was 80 pound sacks and they asked me why I had fusion surgery on my lower back a couple years ago, I could tell you I could go show you why, I mean, I couldn't imagine a young guy 12, 13 years old playing around with 80 pound sacks all the time, but you just did it but uh you know they talked to my grandfather, but he died before I was born, they had the saying but it was more hardware, the buggies and the equipment you need on the farm and that kind of thing, it was more of a rather than the food production type, agricultural goods. It was dry goods

C: Well one of the things that we're finding is and largely because

D:...if that's the case, it will be fun rewriting Texas history. We’re not sure that's absolutely true, but there is some indications it could be true.

H: Would they have been French coming in with the French, uh infusion in the St. Louis area? You said the nation's first cowboys; you not saying Louisiana, you just saying the nation's first cowboys were French

D: Well were not sure yet, certainly well

C: We've got 3 really old ranching traditions in the country, South Carolina; Texas; and here. You know and they all pretty proud and there all (laughter) Let's just leave it at that.

D: Yes! Its, you know you don't step on historical toes, but uh there seems to be there could be a reason to be proud in other areas as well as agriculture, fishing, boat building, and that kind of thing. Well we thank you

C: Yes guys thanks

P: One of the last stories you told me you wanted to hear and I'll say it again for the recording.

C: Sure

P: Mr. Alvin Richard, the other thing he told me and that he demonstrated to me what he could do is, yall have captured this I'm sure from others Carl. When rice came in, they had problems with blackbirds, their predation and he was uh one of, as a child he was the one who rode around rice fields and scared the birds with his whip and he, they'd have to go and crack their whip periodically and it was the same

thing as a Carbide gun that we use now and he taught me, showed me and that son of ma gun is the best whip cracker I have ever met, I mean it would ring through your ears and pierce and uh I didn't know that. When he told me that story, it intrigued me. I said well it makes sense, he said yeah, those birds were eating us up and uh my daddy all day long me and my brother had to ride around the rice fields and crack whips and it was loud enough where it probably was pretty effective with a continuing moving from one field to another. But I didn't know that, had yall ever heard that?

D: Nope

C: No, I know that they were a huge problem, but that's the first time I've ever heard of anybody using that technique to deal with them.

P: Well yeah that was his story and it was one I had never heard, but it was plausible you know

D: Oh yes, oh yes

P: You know a horse guy, a whip, tradition. Its loud, the birds fly away when I do it and they had come to that now we just need to keep cracking this damn whip so that's your job today, and I wondered if that was something they had developed or if it was something more wide spread? Hollis had you heard of any of that?

H: Not, not for birds. I know the whip cracking tradition is I guess it goes back to Mexicans on some of the big south Texas ranches, have a routine and they call it the Romuta. What they do is they, especially in days gone by, not as much today, but they would go out at get there working horses every morning and they'd drive the working horses into a pen and this one head Mexican would take his whip and pop it one or two sounds or whatever it meant and those horses would backup against the fence and their tails would line up against the fence and they would look at you and each of them had its place and they wouldn't move as long as that Mexican was out there with the whip. They would not move unless somebody went up and put a bridal on them and led them away. So that whip cracking I guess and then the people in the marsh always used whips to bring cattle out of the marsh, not so much to whip them with but

P: to give orders

H: just the noise would let them know that they were being perused. So that's not Texas at all that whipped ..on horseback. The Texas history would be that long end of a lariat rope they would be swinging back and forth and not a whip

D: Well Hollis have you ever head of the whip tradition in any other part of the United States besides here?

H: Uhh no except as I mentioned in south Texas as relative to the Mexican Romuta process, I have not. I think you can find whips all over, uh prize now a days would be uh kangaroo hide whip from, from um Australia, you know so I'm guessing maybe they use it there but to know for a fact, no.

C: Okay just curious.

D: Well gentlemen, thank you so much

H: I want to thank you for a word I looked for for a long time and couldn't find until I got your Louisiana-French dictionary and try and see if you remember it, you the word (French for brindle) it has to do with the cattle industry.

C: No

H: It was a word that I didn't know, do you know it Paul? It means brindle and the people of south of here, especially in the Thibodaux area and down below refer to a brindle cow as an (French word) especially in the German areas down there. And those people associate some extra genetic benefit to owning a (French word for brindle) cows so the term, I first heard the term when I would go to these half Brahman half Hereford makes a typical, uh part of those animals a brindle and uh old people down in that part of the world referred to them as (something in French), now I looked up the Spanish, uh tried to get it in Spanish, everything that sounded like (French bindle cow word) and I didn't find it there and I didn't find it in the original French dictionary, but you have it in yours which speaks well for the fact that you sampled several unique populations across before you put that book together.

P: I was on the internet, and this is probably not interest to yall I'm going to say it because it was intriguing, but I found one of my ancestors came from Natchitoches and it turns out she was a direct descendant of St. Denis and I read about St. Denis and you probably read about him and quite a guy. But uh founder of Natchitoches or at least one of the founders

C: Well there a number of Opelousas country, Natchitoches country connections

P: Yeah but that was. I went back and I really took interest in St. Denis. You know he went into Texas and Mexico

(everybody talking at once)

C: A lot of this early smuggling of cattle into Louisiana...(everybody talking)...

H: come from Natchitoches

P: Yeah, well its his history was, was fairly intriguing and what, how he got it here and you know, what he did

H: He had a bunch of kids didn't he?

P: Aw yeah, but like I said, some, eventually some ended up in Ville Platte some of them and he married a Spanish woman. And um, there's some Hispanic names in my family in that chain that you finally realize okay that's where it came from cause, cause his wife. But uh the other link is in, I know you in all the research you've done, in one of my family group was a Billadeau and they came from Santo Domingo

H: From where?

P: Santo Dimingo

H: Kay, I got a Billadeau on my grandmother's side

P: Well they escaped when the slaves took over and they killed a bunch of people, but they were big sugarcane farmers and they got out and went to Opelousas and that's where my grandmother was a Billadeau, which now they say Bill-adeau which I had never heard before or (laughter) or the other term was you know we were (Spanish last name)... and now its ...(Spanish last name) but is it Spanish?

C: It's Spanish

H: It's Spanish

P: Well there were a lot of (Spanish last name) in Chatanga, you know and I was reading in the Evangeline Parish book: Articgle, Manual, Rosa, um pretty common names but that was all. Some came from Mexico, some came from

C: Vertor was originally Vertoral

H: Articgle was originally Articgal because its spelled with an A in Latin American communities

P: Well that's Spanish Land Grant of the Manuals in Chatanga, that was the original name Land Grant and they had, they had linkages back all the way, uh but they were all, I call them Cajunized

H: I guess that's where my name came from too, we have to have had a British solider in

P: Chapman

H: the deal who was absorbed into the French community in Canada somewhere for us to get that name. That's the only reliable source I've ever come by and just two weeks ago, I've got no history on my Grandfather Chapman's side of the family, just a few ago I visited with my um my nanan. She's 93 years old and she tells me for the first time that when she was 17, she got a, her, uh her grandfather who would be my great-grandfather gave her a bible that was written in French, and she said, "Jean Louis Chapman, ain't that a hell of a name." (laughter) She said Jean Louis could read and write in both French and English, but he never sent any of his kids to school so my grandfather was illiterate but

D: But you know the economic conditions were such in the late 19th century that not many people went, were given the opportunity to get any type of education

H: Well he even donated land for a school, but even after doing that, he didn't send his kids to school and I can't understand to that, no way

P: My grandfather in (Adlink?) had some education here and there. My grandfather actually started pharmacy school where the Manresa is. There was a college, he didn't finish

H: Where...went?

P: Yeah, and uh even Daddy hitchhiked to USA, uh SLI and got his degree but he had to hitchhike back and forth. But going back to, to the uh the whole issue of ancestry, Joni, my sister, she went to France many times, but just recently she went back and visited some of our relatives there. We have a pretty

active connection to some Correls in south France. They actually came in the early 18 hundreds. Emel Correl, you know his as...

H: Sure

P: He was a judge and attorney, didn't go to law school but he passed the bar exam, remember how the used to do that and he died recently, but uh he said connected with that group in France and the Natchitoches group. And man I wish I could have sat down and talked to him about all that. But Joni went and visited with them and they came recently and visited her in Florida. She lives in Tampa, so we have a lot of relatives and its southern France on the Mediterranean, it's around Toulon and they were all shipping mariner type people. And you wonder what motivated you to leave, I guess it was pretty rough over there, they were hungry

D: The 19th century was

P: In Europe

D: was really a turbulent time in France

P: And they'd see those flyers I guess or read about good times in America

D: Well New Orleans was, before San Francisco was the great boom town and so it was

P: The land of promises

C: It was a land of promises, yes

H: A funny one is this lady I know real well was family name was Corville, is Corville

P: Is that French?

H: Uhh, yeah there's a town in France named Corville and she always made connections with Corville people in France and they've come and we've gone and it was a big, a big to do about with the connection of Corville family and then in searching her genealogy, she finds that her Corville name comes from a man who's original name was DaBuey and it seems like his history was that he left some person in Canada in kind of an odd predicament and changed his name while he was on his way to St. Louis to Corville from DaBuey so our relationship is kind of a phony.

P: There were some name changes that went on

C: Well my wife's a Melancon and the Melancons did much the same thing