

## Ray Geautreux Interview

February 2013

Interviewers: Don Davis and Carl Brasseux

Don Davis: Hello, hello. We're live. We're live.

G: Is it working?

D: Yeah, Raymond. What we' like to do is, you know Carl and I've done this before with you. But we'd like you to reminisce a bit about growing up on Bayou Lafourche.

G: Okay.

D: Leaving the bayou, going up to Donaldsonville. No, no, no—Plaquemine.

G: Plaquemine.

D: Your time in the Basin. Time in the military. That kind of thing.

G: Well, ask me different questions, and you know I'll be...

C: Well another thing we want to talk to you about is camps. The importance of a camp.

G: Is...

C: Camps.

G: Okay, that's fine .

C: Why you have a camp and what, why you keep going back to the camp.

D: Yeah, let's first do the procedural things.

C: Yeah, we have to get all the legal niceties out of the way.

D: We, we're not here to do anything other than interview you.

G: Right.

D: This is not for profit. Uh we want you to understand that what we're doing is to take your audio file, put it on the internet, put it out there for other people to use. Let people understand that it is open source and can use it. All we need you to do is agree that you are more than happy to let us do that.

G: Yes, I agree with that.

C: And if you're uncomfortable with any question, tell us immediately, we'll stop.

G: Where you want me to start in Bayou Lafourche?

C: Well, let's start with your full name, when and where you were born.

G: Alright, I was born in Matthews, Louisiana, August 8, 1931.

D: And your full name.

G: Full name is Ray Cleufey (sp?) Geautreaux.

D: Just making sure it's working.

G: Oh, okay. Uh as far back as I can remember; that's when I saw this school. It had a little country school. It didn't have but three rooms in it. So that's where I went to school. I did get really sick when I was young and had to miss some school. So missing school, you miss a grade. So I fell back in my grades. And anyway, I transferred from that to Lockport, Louisiana. I went to a Catholic school up there and I was going to the Catholic school when we left there. When I left there, we were...I was twelve years old. That's when I moved to Plaquemine. But if you want some more, go ahead and ask a question on Bayou Lafourche.

D: Now, were you raised on the bayou? At Matthews you couldn't have been raised towards Gaines (?)...

G: No, I was raised in Matthews. That picture I gave you, I showed you the house where I was born. That wasn't too far from the bayou, I can tell you. It was about uh like a walk to the store. I say back then, five blocks, maybe. So I wasn't too far from the bayou. I seen a lot going on, on the bayou while I was there, because we used to get material for the refinery there. All our brown sugar used to come there which they'd convert into white sugar. And I'd go there and watch this project cuz the store was right there where they were doing it. Mama would send me to the store. So...

C: Now, did your family have a little garden?

G: A bee garden, right. We had a garden.

D: That was right along the bayou bank?

G: No, no. Where we lived then, we had about five blocks from the bayou. Yeah, we did have a nice garden. And we had a cow, you know, naturally chickens, just like everybody do in the country. There were less like a country living on that plantation.

C: What did your family grow in the garden?

G: Snap peas. Cabbage. Trying to think. Peas. We didn't cook, didn't do corn there. We had a cow but we didn't raise any feed for them, because actually the place was too small to have that, you know what I mean. But uh, basically that's all we raised. Most of your staples, you know. And we did have a hog. We did have a couple hogs there.

D: Now, did you live in what we would call a plantation...

G: House.

D: House. So it was...

G: It was free.

D: It was on the plantation.

G: On the plantation.

D: How many rooms?

G: One, two, three. Three rooms. Two bedrooms and a big kitchen. Dining was all made together.

C: Indoor or outdoor plumbing?

G: Well, yeah. Outdoor, you know that.

D: No, I just have to ask the question.

G: Outdoor plumbing, right. And it was a nice outdoor plumbing, because they built some new ones and put at the house. They had an old camp, I can remember that. They put a tiny Greek (?) bottom on it, how 'bout that? It was really, really nice, but you know.

D: Did you paint the front of the house white?

G: Yes. The house we painted white. Mother used to clean the porches with bricks, red bricks. Rub the wood and she'd rinse them off. That's what they cleaned the porch with. I never will forget that. Red bricks. I say, damn, I didn't know what the deal was.

D: So you had side-facing gables?

G: Yes.

D: And then you had a little porch out front?

G: We had a porch in the front here and in the back. The house was made in an L. And the little porch on this bedroom, which was the master bedroom. The main bedroom was right there. All the kids slept in that one bedroom.

D: Garçonnière upstairs?

G: Upstairs? No, indeed. Like, it wasn't a shotgun house, because it was an L-shape. We had a little back porch on the backside where the kitchen was, you see. But, basically, that's how the house was designed. We had a backdoor. That's it. Had cracks in the walls, like this. It was well-ventilated. You had plenty of options. No screen, no screen on this house. Shutters, wooden shutters.

D: Mud and moss?

G: No, it was cypress boards. And my father finally...on the plantation, they had a bunch of cardboard. Huge sheets of it. He got enough of that and he papered the inside of the house with that. Guess what? It warmed the house up nice. We had a fire place. That's all the heat we had in the bedroom. Had a double fireplace. One for the master bedroom, well you call it a master bedroom. And uh one for the other room where all the kids slept. But all the heat went up the chimney, as you know. So my father, he was pretty ingenious there. What he did was took a sheet of tin, he blanked off the fireplace. Cut a hole in it. Put a six inch pipe there. Ran it out about eight feet. Put the stove in the middle of the room, like. I used to sleep under that pipe for the heat coming down. It was beautiful [laughs]. So all the heat went in the house instead of going out the fireplace.

C: Your mom have a metal stove inside?

G: A metal stove, right.

C: Wood-burning?

G: No, it was a wood-burning stove, but we'd burn coal in it. The plantation would furnish the coal and that's what we'd fire this thing with every night. But the wood stove is what my mother cooked on, now. Wood, yeah. We used to have to go cut our wood. Split it for the wood stove. Right.

D: Do you remember any of the boats that brought coal down Bayou Lafourche?

G: No, I don't remember that.

D: But you remember the plantation refinery used coal? Your coal came from...

G: The coal had to come from down Bayou Lafourche. Now I guess they brought it by Boyd's there, because most of the houses had it to heat, you know what I mean. Uh, as much as I can remember, because I was just twelve, remember, when I left there.

D: Yeah.

G: But uh...

D: Did you all have a cistern?

G: Definitely, we had a cistern. We had a cistern and we had a well. We had a well to keep our milk cold. We lowered in there with a jug to keep it in the water to keep it from spoiling. And it was good.

D: How deep was the well, do you remember?

G: The well was hand dug, because it was lined with cypress all the way down and uh so they dug it by hand. They had to. Mama always said, "Don't go meddling near the well." They had a railing. They put, they built a square box around it so kids wouldn't fall in it, naturally. But uh, that's where we used to keep our stuff that you wanted to keep cold. We did have an ice box. Not a refrigerator. A ice box. And uh, this old black boy used to come by the house every day selling ice. And he'd split a block of ice and we'd put it in the ice box.

D: Where was the factory?

G: Oh, uh...

D: Did they bring it down from Thibodeaux?

G: They must've brought it down, because had a big, big building and he'd always get it out of that building. So he probably got it delivered out of Thibodeaux, probably be uh Houma, whoever. And cuz we didn't have no ice-making deal around there.

D: So when you were ten, 1941. Alright. Do you remember when Bayou Lafourche was not paved? That is, LA 1 and 308 were not paved.

G: I'm trying to; trying to...I know on the plantation, everything was gravel. It was all gravel road. What's that's, 308 now? That was all gravel, because I used to drive down that. That was all gravel. Across the bayou, they had that pontoon bridge you'd cross right at Matthews to come across. I could...I can't remember. It looked like that was concrete there now.

D: Okay, should've been.

G: Right that was concrete as far as I can remember.

D: Now did you all have grocery trucks go up and down the bayou? Grocery trucks?

G: Uh, yeah. When we lived on Matthews, I can remember because my little sister got run over by the meat truck. They had a, fellow used to come by selling meat. And they had a grocery truck that would come by selling produce. But the rest [inaudible], you had to go through the grocery store and get that. Okay. But, I can remember that, because my sister got...he ran over...He half ran over her. He didn't hurt her bad. Think he ran over her hand or something. She started hollering. Mama went out and got her.

D: You were born in a period when often the only dentist you had, came by boat. And the boat would park on the bayou and you would go to the dentist. Do you remember any of that?

G: No. We didn't have that there, because we went to...In fact, I almost died from the dentist. And I remember I went to Raceland to go to the dentist. And he was drunk. I had a sore tooth. It was at night. It was the only dentist they could get. So I had the tooth pulled and then he packed it to keep it from bleeding. But an abscess formed in it. And my face started swelling. So they got me to the doctor and they brought me to the Charity Hospital in New Orleans. I spent five days there from blood poisoning. Uh, cuz...I came close to dying, I'm telling you. I was eight years old when that happened. I can remember that. That's one time I lost more schooling when that happened. So, you know [laughs], now that dentist, that just brought that back. But anyway...

C: Talking about coming down the bayou on boats, did you ever hear anyone talk about the boats that would come down with...Uh, they were showboats. They were like a theatre on a barge. And the late 1800s early 1900s, they used to come down Bayou Lafourche. They'd come from Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, places like that. One season they would play up in the north.

G: Right.

C: And in the winter they would come south. And they would go down as far as the lower Lafourche.

G: Oh I see.

C: Performing and just tie up along the bayou.

G: I don't recall any of that, so it mustn't a had it there. They mustn't have had it there at that time. I don't say it wasn't there.

C: Well it've been a little bit before that time. I just wondered if you had heard anybody talk about it.

G: Uh, no. See I moved, I moved back to Matthews now, later on in life.

D: Okay, so first of all you moved to Lockport...

G: No, I went to school in Lockport.

D: But you lived in Matthews.

G: But I lived in Matthews while I was going to school in Lockport.

D: Now how did you get from Matthews to Lockport?

G: They had a school bus that used to pick the people up down across...down the bayou. They'd bring them to school in Lockport. I think that's where they'd stop, Matthews. They wouldn't go further, as far as I can remember.

C: Do you remember if, remember if the canal, the company Canal in Lockport? It's named after the locks.

G: Okay.

C: Do you ever remember the locks still working?

G: The locks was out of Lockport. I knew anyway, that they were going towards the lake, like. But uh, I never went by them, but I heard about them.

C: Uh hmm.

G: I was thinking about something else...Now the way that happened, me moving to Plaquemine. I can tell you my schooling there. I quit school. I had a problem talking. I couldn't talk to people like I'm talking right now. Because I used to stutter real, real bad. Couldn't hardly talk to my mother. So that's another thing that held me back in school, see? Uh, you know, being a stutterer. I did go to the eighth grade and I quit then. I mean I just quit school. I quit school in, up in Plaquemine. And that's when I went to work then, you know, doing different types of jobs. A painter's helper and stuff like that. But then, when we got...We lived back on the bayou again in Plaquemine, down Bayou Plaquemine. Anyway, I was 16 when we moved from Plaquemine back to Matthews. But then we moved back on the plantation, but not where I was. We moved in the middle of the cane field. I mean, we were literally in the middle of the cane field. Three houses. And we had...that was the only house open. My father still worked at the refinery and that's when I went back to the refinery too. When I...Well didn't go into the refinery right then. Cuz, I was sixteen I went to work at the refinery when I was seventeen but not in the refinery. Uh, Daddy had an old vehicle. I learned to drive when I was sixteen so I used to use it to go to work. When we lived in the cane field, it wasn't too far to get to work. And the way I started there, I started in a woodworking shop. We used to make the

little dummy cores they used to haul in the cane fields, to haul the cane out. Building those as a carpenter, well, working with wood. And I transferred from that to a steam locomotive shop which was the little dummy. Used to work on those. Then I went from that to the blacksmith shop working with the blacksmith. I learned how to do a lot of welding with a, on an anvil. He showed me a lot of metal, how to temper metal, how to put carbon in metal, how to take temper out, how to put temper back in. Then when I left there I was about 18. That's when I went into the refinery then. Packing sugar. You know, from the packing the sugar, I went from there to bulking a hundred pound bags of sugar. Sewing hundred pound bags of sugar up. I did that for a while. An opening came up on the third floor where they used to do all the filling of the bags. And it was all ladies up there that used to do this job. I went up there as an assistant foreman repairing...keeping the machinery running. If something stopped, we go there and fix it. We'd get it running again. And when I left there, that's what I was doing. I went in the service. I was 19 then. That's when I left Matthews.

C: When you say the refinery, is that the refinery we now know at Valentine?

G: No, Valentine was further down. This was Matthews. Cuz this was white. This was the South Coast Corporation was the name of the place. And they would manufacture white gold sugar is what they did there.

C: And that refinery's gone?

G: Yeah that's the one I gave you a picture. Took the picture of...

D: Okay. I have a few questions before we move onto the next phase in your life. Describe for us what Matthews, Lockport, and Plaquemine were like at that time you were living there.

G: Okay. Well I'd like to say something else about school. I did finish school. When I got out of the service, I was determined to get a high school education so I went to school for three years at night. And finally went to LSU. Took the GED test. Passed it. I got a diploma. I was determined to get it. I was in business then. I was 33 years old when I got my diploma. I was determined to get it.

D: Good for you.

G: Oh yeah.

C: My father-in-law did exactly the same thing. Where did you go to night class?

G: I went in night class in Baton Rouge High. Well I started when I was in Raceland. I used to go to school. Oh by the way, my folks did eventually move from Matthews into Raceland. That's where they bought a home and that's where I was living when I went into the service. See I was still working at the refinery but I was going back and forth. Oh, something else, I left school...I left home at 17 to go live with a buddy of mine in Matthews. I didn't have a car. Daddy used to



have to...We only had one car so I moved with him...with him, his daddy, and his brother. His mother had died from cancer. And that's when I started cooking. I had to learn to cook to live with them. That's where I was...I was living in Raceland when I went into the service. Now let's...

C: Okay let's back up to talk a little bit about what you remember Matthews, Lockport, Raceland, Plaquemine...those towns being like. Can you do one at a time and tell us what you remember each one being like?

G: Well in reference to what Matthews was a little community. Well, it was a plantation. You had the country store, as you know. They had the living quarters for blacks. They were separated from the whites back then. You know, you didn't mingle with them. Anyway, they were the field workers mostly. And some working in the refinery at the menial jobs you know. But, that's all I can actually bring up Matthews in a whole. Lockport...I knew Lockport because I went to school. See I was still young in the time that you want me to remember, I didn't remember much. Ballanger's shipyard was there. I remember cuz we passed right by it. I know you on [inaudible] by Ballanger...But Lockport, that's about all I can remember about Lockport. Now I did live there after I got out the service, by the way. But we can go...When I got out of the service...I got married in England by the way. You know, my wife's English, naturally. Our daughter was born in England. When we got back, I went to work for the Ford Motor Car company in Lockport and that's why I moved to Lockport.

C: Let me interrupt you. You said the Ford Motor Company?

G: It was a Ford dealership

C: Yep that's now a new museum. It's going to be part of a museum complex devoted to wooden boat building. Now, when you were talking about the country store in Matthews, you remember did people pay by cash?

G: No, no. They...I can remember Mama said we got to go pay the bill. They had a book on everybody that went there. And what you bought they put in that book under your name and they had the price set up. When Daddy would get paid, he had to go pay that bill because that was like a company store. You didn't let that bill run up or they'd shut your groceries off. And naturally wasn't making that much money back then, you know. We didn't have no electricity in our house by the way where we lived there. For a long time we uh the old (cool hall?) lanterns. But they finally came put power in later on with the pull chain. There was no switches on the wall. This was just to give you light and a little fan. It was rough living back then.

C: Did you all have mosquito bars?

G: Yes, don't even mention that to me. You'd get soaking wet on mosquito bars. Mom would put us in there because the mosquitos were so bad like you said. They'd eat you up. And we'd

sleep there. And when you'd go to bed, you couldn't hardly cover the sheet, you'd be soaking wet. You'd go to turn, you were stuck to the sheet, cuz in the summer time it was [inaudible] boiling hot. But um I remember the mosquito bars, yes. We all had four poster beds. They had to be to hang all the mosquito bars around. We had three beds, that's cuz I had four sisters. I had a brother. He died when he was six months old from diphtheria. That was an old disease back then. But he died at 6 months so I was the only boy. I had four sisters. One younger than me and the others were older than me. [Inaudible] I got two of them living, two of them dead. Yeah see what else did you want to know about?

C: Plaquemine.

G: Plaquemine. Alright. We went to Plaquemine. Wilburts was a name that really came out of Plaquemine. Wilburts, (swing?), all those people. We moved in Plaquemine, trying to think. Oh we moved in Tolbert's Lane. Tolbert's Lane is a place, if you go into Plaquemine, before you cross the bridge, you take a right across the tracks. You going to see a church. It's a black church. They got a big church. We had a farm right there. Three acres. The rent was 12 dollars a month in Plaquemine to rent this. Three acres, now. Big home. It had electricity. I can remember that. But we still didn't have a refrigerator that I can think of. Uh they might've had one but I don't remember. We had a cistern there too. This was a real nice farm. You know, we had mules to cultivate. We had cows. We had pigs. What else? We raised rabbits. We raised chickens; we had a bunch of chickens. Mama used to order her chickens from Sears Roebuck, 50 at a time. And they'd come in. [Laughs]. Ship us the chickens. And we'd put 'em in a special building with a light bulb in there to keep them warm so they wouldn't die until they got old enough to turn loose in the yard. Because we ate a lot of chicken. We used to raise hogs too. It was a really nice...I really enjoyed that little farm place. That, considering coming from Matthews to that that was an upgrade. The first time I ever seen indoor plumbing, I was 15 years old. We moved in Plaquemine on Hay Street and it had indoor...it had a bathroom. I never seen...And a bath tub. We made our own bathtub. My father made a bathtub in Plaquemine. He took a galvanized 55 gallon drum and sawed it in half. Cut the top out. Put it in half. You the two open ends together and you weld it. Then he made a wooden cradle. And he set it in there. He took a piece of hose and he went all the way around the tub and made a bath tub. So...bathtub served as [inaudible]. Like I said we had plenty of water. We had a big, big cistern. The cistern, we used to clean it out once every couple of years. I can remember that. It had a (bung?) in the bottom. Take the bung out. Drain it. Get a ladder and get inside of it. Scrub it all down. Rinse it out good. Put the bung back in it and wait for the rain. And then we had a pump. So we'd use well water while waiting for the cistern to fill.

D: Which one did you use for drinking water?

G: Used to drink the cistern water and the well water. The well water had a little more iron in it. It had iron. You could taste the iron in it. The well wasn't probably deep. I don't know the depth of it. In the winter time...when the river would rise, the Mississippi River would rise, that well would free flow. It would flow all the time. So we just cut a ditch going into the field and turn the water [inaudible]. So we had plenty of water for the horse and the mule and the cows.

D: Now, you said you got 50 chickens at a time?

G: Yeah.

D: Now, what was the chicken coop like? Was it on the ground or was it off the ground?

G: Alright. The chicken coop was a big building. I would say that building...I'm trying to see... What's that, the end of that chair over there? The four chair. It was that long and probably about here to that wall wide. So that gives you, what's that? 25...30 feet by...20 feet by...inside the chicken house with dirt floor, okay. There's a dirt floor. And they had shelves all along the wall. That's where the chickens used to jump up and lay their eggs and hatch them. On the back side this wall was a ladder but with all the bars in it. And the chickens would go there at night and roost. Cuz I had to shut the door and wait til dark to close the door so nothing would get in to the chickens. People don't realize all I know [laughs].

D: I know I spent my summers on my grandfather's farm.

G: That's right. So that's how, that's how that went.

D: Well, let me...I have a few questions before we move on to your going into the service. I assume since you said you hadn't seen indoor plumbing until you were fifteen, that there was no indoor plumbing at the school.

G: Oh, wait awhile. They had bathrooms but they didn't have any bathtub is what I was after. In the home.

D: Oh.

G: We had them at school. Naturally you'd go use the bathroom at school. But at any home I lived in, no.

D: Okay. You talked about the dummy railroads; you were working on the dummy locomotives. How long did they run? Do you know when they stopped running?

G: Oh...When I left there it was still running because I remember them bringing them out the field, they came out the field, you know, and they'd knock the pins out the doors, the whole door. You know how they made 'em.

D: So this would've been late 1940s or so they were still running?

G: Yeah, right, oh yeah. They were still using them back in the forties, yes.

D: Explain their size, their width. Many people think of a locomotive as something you find on a major railroad...

G: No, no, no. These things were...I'd say the locomotive itself wasn't but probably 20 feet long. And uh the rail was smaller too. Because they didn't have the gauge...the railer gauge like....They had these running all through the field to pick the cane up, you know, bring 'em to the mill. But the locomotive wasn't that big.

D: Were the railroad tracks physically moved every year?

G: No, they were permanent put down. Cuz where I lived, it was right in the back of the house. And in the plantation, we used to watch them coming by, you know.

C: Can you describe that, that field operation getting the cane onto the train and the train hauling it to the mill?

G: Uh yes. Back then they didn't have any mechanized equipment because they used to plow the fields with mules. Uh they didn't have any tractors on the...They had what they call a "mule lot" to keep all these mules in the morning [inaudible]. Hook a mule up and they'd have a skidder board. They'd take the plow and hook it on this piece of metal that was on that board and he'd ride that board on the field. He'd ride his mule to the field and then off the board and he's do the plowing. They would cut the cane by hand. That's why you had these big black quarters. Everything was cut with a cane knife and stacked. And then they'd pick the cane up by hand and load 'em on this uh...

C: They put it on a wagon before they...

G: That's right. They put them in a wagon because they had to have them up in the air. Cuz they put the wagon then on the side of the train car. Take them out the wagon. Load the car up and the car would bring the cane back to the mill.

C: Now at the mill, they would reverse the process and unloaded it by hand?

G: No, it was a little bit different. The side of the car was fixed where it would come out. I could remember that steel pipe. They had a steel pipe. They had a conveyor that would take the cane into the mill. But the way they'd take it out of the car was, they had a steel pipe running all the way along this conveyor belt and then it would go up in the air. So when they knock the pins out of the cars, the whole side of the car would fall and lean against this pipe. And as it was being moved by a winch, not a dummy. Once the dummy bring it there, it would go on up mechanical uh cable and they start moving the car and as they would, the door would start sliding open until it was on that pipe and then the cane would start falling out. And then they had a arm that would just reach up there, hit that, and a fellow would pull it back with a cable and slide the cane out onto the conveyor. Then the conveyor would transfer it into the mill [laughs]. Um but that's the question.

C: Well uh, the location that it's in, it's at the mill and it's being processed and then it goes to the refinery.

G: That is part of the refinery

C: Right. I mean that's the initial stage of that.

G: Right, yeah. We would chop it up.

C: Okay, can you describe that whole process from there to...?

G: Yeah, it would go through the mill, through the grinders. They had big grinders in there. They had choppers first. Big choppers would chop up the cane. Then we'd go through three sets...two sets. They had three sets of rollers actually. Two sets and the bottom one and top, they kinda controlled the pressure. It would run through there til it got all the sugar out. the sugar would fall into a tray. The juice, the juice would then be transported from the mill through pipes. The uh the finished product of the sugar cane would be transported to another cart. And this cart would bring it out. That was the bagasse. Go through...bale it and bring it out to the field and stack it. Alright, the juice would continue on going down to what they call a filter press room. It had these huge...it was like a piece of canvas but it was coarse enough for the juice to go through this. What it was doing then was getting the mud, the mud out of the juice, because it had so much mud on the cane coming through the mill. They couldn't separate it until they got to what they call the filter press room. Sugar cane would go through that...the juice would go through that. When it would come out, it was actually clear. I know because my mother had the job of washing those big things. They'd bring a load to us. We'd wash them at the house. Put em out to dry then they'd go back to the mill and you'd use them over again. And a bunch of the people would do that just to help the mill. The sugar would then go to the...I worked in the mill processing sugar and I saw how it all worked. First it went from there to uh; they have to cook the sugar cane. They have to cook the juice, as you know. From there it went into a vacuum container. That's where it would go into the crystallization. Until they would drop it out of that into what they call a dryer. I worked one of these dryers. It's got a big scraper blade in it. Drop it in there. It would be like a big washing machine at your house. It would turn...

C: Centripetal...

G: Right, centripetal force would sling the juice out and the sugar, you could see it would turn white. And then you drop this blade in. Slow the speed down. Put the blade on. Scrape it off. Pull the bottom door out. It would drop down to go to a conveyor belt. Conveyor belt...I mean a (auger?)...screw...they would screw it up to the mill to big containers that would hold the actual finished product of the sugar. And from there it was packed. From there it would go through the mill to be put in bags. 5lb. 2 lb. Uh...2 lb., 5 lb., 10 lb. bags. And 100 lb. bags. And you used some of it to make powdered sugar. I made powdered sugar too. Take the white

sugar and grind it up. And put 10%, what I want to say? Corn starch. Corn starch has to be put with powdered sugar to keep it from solidifying. It would come to a solid mass if you wouldn't put the corn starch in. 10%. I made powdered sugar for a long time too. Powdered sugar in the form it was is like gunpowder. It will explode. So you couldn't have fire, sparks, or nothing around while you were doing this. That's the whole processed sugar. I think it went from there to the warehouse. From the warehouse it's put in the train cars. Regular train would bring the sugar out of there and distribute it. In all the, you know...I packed 5 lb. bags, 2 lb. bags, and 100 lb. bags. I've done the whole process. That's one of my jobs. That's what I was doing when I was on the top floor. I stopped doing that. That was too...repetitious and I don't like repetitious work. Thirty minutes is the time we would do it then they'd give you a break so you wouldn't...

C: Right.

G: So that was the process, what the sugar mill did.

C: One question and then I'm going to turn it over to him for a minute. Um when you were a kid, did your family have a radio?

G: Yes.

C: Battery powered?

G: Battery. It was a Philco. Right.

C: What did you listen to?

G: In Sanctum was one of the programs. Squeaking Door. And when the fights came on, oh my god, everybody liked to listen to the fights. You know, that was way back then. That's about all I can remember though. Music, no. They didn't have none of that, that I can recall on the radio.

[Talking at the same time]

C: Because you really could've caught WWL or one of the national stations, the other clear channel stations, but uh...

G: Whatever station that was, yeah.

C: But I know with my wife's family, they had a battery powered radio too, but they had to conserve battery...

G: I was just about to tell you, we had to watch what we listened to, because the battery would go down, right.

C: Now did you have the cranks to run the radio and the batteries and all?

G: No but we did have the Victrolas that you had to crank up by hand and put your big record, your 70 in. Put it on there and listen to the music and everything.

C: What kind of music were you listening to?

G: Whew. I can't recall. Mama used to have some old records. She liked different music, you know what I mean. That's all that I can recall of that. But I can remember cranking that Victrola up.

C: Now, movies. Did you go to town to see movies?

G: Well we used to go town in, we used to go to Raceland from Matthews to go to movies, right.

C: How often would you go?

G: Once a week. I can remember that you said movies. We'd get ready to go. We'd go to the movies like on a Saturday. That was the day we went to movies. And Mama would have a headache. Said, "Mama you gotta take something for your headache. We got to go see the movies today, it's Saturday." And she would take Standbacks back then. Take a Standback, get the headache gone. And then we'd go to the movies. Right.

D: Westerns or...?

G: Mostly Westerns. The Three Stooges was on their way back then, yeah. And um some of your old episodes of like, I don't know if Superman was there yet.

C: Flash Gordon probably.

G: Yeah, Flash Gordon, yeah. Stuff like that. You know, just to have something different to do instead of sitting at home all the time.

C: Do you remember your first car?

G: Yes. Daddy had a Model 8. That was the first car he had. And we got the Model T. Boy, that was an upgrade. I can remember going from Matthews to Plaquemine, because my grandparents lived in Plaquemine. In fact, the house we moved in Plaquemine on Tolbert's Lane was where they were living. So we moved in with them. You know, so they lived with us there. But I can remember that top on that car. It had tar. When they put the top, they sealed it with tar and it would leak like a sieve. We'd get soaking wet going from Matthews to Plaquemine. It would take a half a day or better to get there cuz you couldn't go fast. The

windshield wipers were [inaudible]. They didn't work half the time. You had to put a string on them and pull the windshield wipers back and forth and clean the windshield. It was...It was tough. It was tough back then. I remember...

C: Tires...

G: Oh lord, don't talk about the tires. Don't talk about flat tires. We'd have the flat tires on the trip too, right, because most of the road was gravel. And we had flat tires too. I cried when Daddy sold the Model T. I liked that old car. And then he got, I'm trying to think what car he got. But it wasn't a Model T. IT was an old Plymouth he bought, yeah.

D: Did the Model T have a rumble seat?

G: No it was uh... two seats in the back, seats in the front. Cuz you had seven of us, remember, in that car.

D: Okay, I know, that's why I asked about the rumble seat.

G: No. We all scrunched up in the back seat to make this trip. It wasn't very comfortable, I give you that. But that was the good old days, so the people say.

C: Mud holes?

G: Oh my god. Don't talk about that. Mud holes, yeah. Well in Matthews they didn't have any gravel, per se, in the plantation. It was dirt roads. When it would rain, it was nothing but mud holes, getting stuck, and all this. When we were living in a cane field that was nothing but mud holes. Cuz we bought that, yeah, we had a Plymouth then, cuz I used to drive that. It was an old 1939 model. It was old. So' but anyway, you kept 'em for a long time back then.

C: One thing before we move on, last one before I give it to you. Did you speak French at home?

G: Yes. Spoke a lot of it. I used to go to the store and ask for everything in French, cuz...

C: Most of the community spoke French?

G: Huh?

C: Most of the community spoke French?

G: Right, right. Everybody spoke French. The whole community spoke French. Both my grandparents on my daddy's side, on the Geautreax side, she couldn't hardly speak English. She spoke solid French and so did my grandfather. On my mother's side, her mother couldn't hardly speak any English either. And my grandfather on the (Treyhan?) side, he was uh, he had



a lot of German in him. And he was pretty intelligent. I learned a lot from that old man. From how to build things from him. I learned a lot. I could tell you a lot about him. But anyway, he spoke some French too, but not as much as my grandmother. So I always had to speak to them. But when you move out of the community and you don't use it, as you know, you lose it. I still can talk some of it. I can still understand most all of it.

C: Now English only at school, I assume?

G: Right, no French. No French. We weren't allowed to talk French in school.

C: How did you make the adjustment?

G: Kinda tough because I had to learn...I couldn't hardly pronounce theatre. See, when you stutter, to start a word like that, it's hard to start. Now, Teacher would ask me to get up and read. When I stood up, I couldn't talk. But she knew what to do. She'd tell me the first word. If I could get the first word, I could read the whole book with never stuttering. That was weird. I don't know why. In a way, I conquered stuttering, I think helped me a lot. I went to teaching. I was teaching bible classes. And with the help of the Lord, I think that helped me get over it. Cuz when I went in the service, I was still stuttering a little bit then. I would trip on words, you know. But I finally got out of it. Oh and something else that kept me back. My other problem was asthma. I had asthma when I was born and almost died from that. So that kept me away. See it was bad for me to go, hard for me to go to school. But I outgrew the asthma at 12 years old. I can remember that. Mama said, "Well I'm glad you're outta that." That's it. Never had any problem with it since.

C: Don?

D: Let's hear...You come to Plaquemine. You're 19. Why did you go in the service?

G: I wanted to join the service because; I'm trying to think why. Oh, to travel mostly. People talking about traveling. So I went uh...

D: Which military service? Air Force, Army, Navy...

G: I put in for the Marines first. No, I put in for the Navy first. The Navy first. And my father had to sign for me because I was 16 then and I couldn't join unless I was signed. So my father went with me to sign but he talked to the instructor. He said, "Fail him because I don't want him to go into the Navy." So he failed me. So then later on, I was living in Raceland and I'd be driving down the road and I used to black out. Just like you close your eyes. I knew what was going on around me, but uh and all roads from Raceland to Natchez, I can remember, there were shells over on the side of the road. So I'd turn the wheel so I could hear the noise and I knew that I was running off the road. And then I'd put my foot on the brake. I could still work it but I couldn't see. So I'd stop and I'd reach down and shut that switch off on that '46 ford. And I stop it. And then poof, lights would come on; I start it, and take off and go again. So

anyway. That's when I went to join the Marines. So I passed all the tests and he was interviewing me about different things. He said, "You ever black out, pass out?" I said, "Oh yeah, I black out." "You what?" He put a big a big cross and said "I'm sorry we can't use you." So that was the end of that. So I went to a doctor, (Ayo?) in Raceland. And he checked me out. He says "I know what's wrong with you. I can cure you." I says, "What?" He says "I gotta remove your appendicitis." I says, "Doctor, that don't sound right." He says "I'm telling you, I'm an old doctor and I've been there and I know what I'm doing. Son, I'm going to get you to Thibodeaux at the hospital and we going to take your appendix out." So I did. And I never, never blacked out since. So, now something that blew my mind. You ask a new doctor that and he probably wouldn't know what the hell you're talking about. But he was an old, old country doctor. And that's how I got in the Air Force. And that's when I finally joined the Air Force.

D: What year did you enlist again? Was that '48?

G: '51. 1951, October...October the 2nd, 1951, I joined the Air Force.

C: Where did they send you for training?

G: I went to New Orleans. I don't know. That's where we enlisted. New Orleans. We didn't have no...I went to Thibodeaux to sign up. They sent us to New Orleans to get all the paperwork and all that done. [Inaudible] training went to San Antonio, Texas. Lackland Air Force Base. Got to Lackland Air Force Base. Checked all my clothes out and everything. And they didn't have enough barracks so they pitched a bunch of tents out in this field and that's where we were at. And it came pouring rain that night. The next morning, we got out of bed, the ground was soaking wet. It had flooded all the camps. So here we are sitting in this field, soaking wet, thinking, "How the hell we going to get dressed in this water?" So anyway, that went on for that week. I stayed there one week. And then they said "We going to try to move some of these men out. Who wanted to volunteer to leave?" I said, "Here's one! Where we going?" "We going to Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas." So them old boys who stayed there said "You going to be sorry [inaudible]. That's a bad place." So I went there. They got asphalt streets. Nice two story buildings. Beautiful. I says, I was glad they stayed over there. I came over here. So that's where I went to Basic, Lackland Air Force Base in uh Wichita.

D: How hard was it to go from Matthews, Louisiana to a completely different environment?

G: Yes, well, that's why I wanted to travel. I had never seen places like I'd seen then. So, uh I really enjoyed...We didn't see much snow, as you know, in Louisiana. So I went to Texas and when I got out of Basic they wanted to know...Well, they gave me a aptitude test to find out what you're best suited. That's why I said today the kids should have an aptitude test to say what they're best suited to do. So they told me what I was best suited to do in the Air Force to work on planes, jet planes. So when that fellow told me that, I said, "What?" I said, "I never seen a plane in my life." I used to build model air planes when I was coming up. I guess that had something to do with that. I wanted to be a truck mechanic but they said, "No, no. You're best suited to this job." I said, "That's fine. I'll take it." He said, "But you can transfer in 6

months." I said, "Okay." So from there a bus came pick me up. 72 men on it. This blew my mind. There's 72 people in my outfit in this barracks. It's two stories. You know how many people got on that bus to go to Amarillo, Texas? Me. Was all. I looked around. I said, "Where's the rest of em?" I said, "This is it?" He said, "We going to pick some more up on the way." So we picked up other fellows. We picked up ten more people. That's all. And went to Amarillo, Texas. And uh that's where I went to the jet school. And when we got there, blew my mind, all the Basic officers were policing the area. Were picking up trash. And this bus was riding along and looking out there. These (boards?) on their shoulders and they policing the area. I says, "I wonder what's happening here." So, out of Basic...You been in the service?

D: No.

G: Well anyway, it's a different environment from Basic to where we at. So we go to this beautiful chow hall. Everything is new. Brand new base. We're the first 11 people there. So we walk into this chow hall and it's huge. Nobody there but us and the cooks. So the cooks talk to us and say, "What ya'll want for supper?" Say, "Wait awhile, something's changing here." We say, "We'll have a steak." He says, "How y'all want em done? I'll take your order." I say, "Wait awhile." So he took our order and he fixed our steaks. I say, "Man this is going to be great." So the next day, here come another bus load and the next day come another bus load. They start coming in. Well guess what, we started getting that line to eat and they didn't ask us what we wanted. You ate what they cooked. I never will forget that. That was a real good experience for me. And then the snow came cuz this was like December. Eight foot drifts. Eleven foot drifts. We snowed in. I mean, it was something. Now, I says, "I wish I was back home." We didn't have no snow like this. I couldn't get to town. So finally they opened the streets and we were allowed to go to town. And I really enjoyed it there. They had some nice...it was really good. The women would come to the base and we'd have dances or you could go to town. I met some beautiful ladies and everything. None really attracted...you know, never got [inaudible]. I didn't want to. But anyway, that was my service life. From there...

D: How long did you go to school in [inaudible]?

G: I went from December, January, February, I left there in March.

D: Three months.

G: Three months of schooling, yes. Went through the whole nine yards. I took what they call, General Jet Course, cuz they didn't know whether I was going to work on bombers, fighters, transports, or whatever. So we had to take all of them, you know. I [inaudible]...

D: In 51, they were switching over from the old piston driven engines to jets.

G: Right. That's why, you know. I picked up...I'm glad I went in the service for knowledge. I picked up so much that I...I was dumb. After I went through all these schools like tool school,

instrument school, mostly only your micrometers, (dial?) indicators...We went through all this. Electrical, went to electrical, went to hydraulics, went through different schools just to get off. My barber in Plaquemine, uh Baton rouge. I went to him. Come to find out he was my hydraulics instructor in Amarillo, Texas. I says, "You gotta be kidding, Carl." That was Carl, Carl Richard. I said, "I'm not believing this." But anyway, he was my hydraulics instructor.

C: So you went from dealing with...seeing people deal with mules as a child to the jet age...

G: To the jet age, that's right. A change from one mule to jets. That was some kind of thing. And then the way I got to England was, coming out of school, they ask us where we wanted to go. You could pick your base. So I said I want to go to Korea. I wanted to travel again. And the Korean War was on then...hot. I said, "They going to need somebody to keep the planes flying so I want to go there." So I went there. They said, "Sorry." "What you mean, sorry?" They said, "We have enough people in your classification. We don't have any openings." So you know I say, "Well, now where do I go?" So we start talking amongst a bunch of us, cuz everybody's trying to figure out where they want to go. So everybody says, uh Langley Air Force Base has nine women to every man. "Where's this at?" I says. I says, "Langley Air Force Base, that's where I want to go." Virginia. So anyway, I got on the train again. Here we go. From my train, from uh...I went home in Raceland. And then I left and went to New Orleans. Got on a train. Went from there to uh Virginia on the train. Now I got there and beautiful base and they wasn't lying about the women. I went to the beach and you looked around and there was hardly no men and solid women. So I had a blast for three weeks. And then they called us all in this big hall and they said, "We're leaving Virginia and going to England." What?! England. I heard of England in school. I said, "Where the hell's England?" So [laughs]...So they packed us all up. Sixteen hundreds of us on one boat. Sleeping ten high on the boat. And got us to England. So we landed in England, they sent us to a base. And what really, really impressed me over there was, we got on this bus cuz they put us at one big base. And they split us up in three squadrons and they put us in different bases and I went to the Sutton Heath, they call it. It's not too far from Ipswich.

D: It's not Lakenheath?

G: It's not Lakenheath. They went to Lakenheath later; the 79th did, after I left. But anyway, I went to Sutton Heath. And when we go to the base, it was an old crash strip during the Second World War They had fog lifters on the side of the runway. They had huge pipes and we couldn't think what those were. Those were fog lifters. It lightens up at night and it would burn the fog off and the plane in the air could see these two flames and they'd land between them. And they'd crash these planes coming back from [inaudible] run. They used to do a lot of night (repairs?), I found out. But anyway, I was on the bus and I'm looking out and here's these English people. They getting this base ready, okay. So they digging drainage ditches like different parts. And this fellow's got a suit on and a coat and a tie. And he's digging a ditch. I looked out there and says "Something's wrong here." This don't fit the picture, you know. So I come to find out they're really proper over there. I don't care what they do, they going to be properly...they going to be dressed. They not going to have a sweatshirt or a t-shirt. Not, no,

no, no. But anyway, that really impressed me. Well I stayed over there for forty months. That was long enough to get married and daughter born and all this. That was really, really a good tour of duty. After I got out of the service, uh...

C: Before we get out of the service, how did it change your view of the world after you'd been in the service now for almost 4 years now, I guess?

G: Right. Uh, my views really changed but I still wanted to travel. So I used to travel out of England. They come up with what they call TDY, Temporary Duty to go into other countries, NATO countries. Well, I visited some of the NATO countries. I used to put in, like we going to Africa, North Africa, Casablanca. Oh, I want to go there. So I put it. I'd get on the flight. Bring my tool box. Throw it on the plane. All of us would. Whole bunch of mechanics, cuz they needed mechanics. So they'd fly us over there. We'd get down and you know, it was really, really nice.

C: So would it be wrong to say that your view of the world went from this...

G: It started shrinking. It started really shrinking, you know what I mean? I went to Athens, Greece. I put in for that. I went to see the Parthenon twice. I went twice there. Really loved... My wife would've loved to went there, she said. She did. When I got out the service, she flew there and went to visit. In fact, she cruised the Mediterranean. Stopped at all the little islands. She touched on em. Yeah. So anyway, I went there and I went to France. I had TDY there. And I went TDY again to France, two of us. Just two. We're in England and they were going to fly some jets from England to North Africa or Greece or Turkey... Turkey. So they say, we need two people to go to France. Here's one! I wanna go. So me and this buddy of mine, they put us on a plane. Flew us to France. I went to Bordeaux, France. Got there and the reason why they sent us there was to fuel our planes if they had a problem fueling in the air by tanker. Because sometimes they can't get a hook up and they had to land them. Well, the personnel on the ground, they'd had to go through a bunch of paperwork to line these people up. So that's easy. They put us in a transitor and we'd go to the flight line and sit around. Nothing happened. We checked. Nothing happened. Y'all can go. The plane's already passed. We'd go to town. I stayed there for two weeks. We had a blast. I bought my wife a manicure set there. She's still got it. She's still got it [laughs]. It's really, really nice material, I tell you, they did things nicely. But anyway, that was the trips I took, I think. One, two, three. Yeah, right. Went to Africa twice also. Stayed there for two months one time. Oh, while we're there, the temperature got to 130 degrees. The planes were literally sinking in the runway, in the asphalt where they were sitting. So at night, it was 65 degrees. You'd freeze at night then burn up during the day. What we had to do at night. They waited til around twelve o'clock. They said, "Let's go get the planes ready. We going to get 'em out of here." Cuz they were just sitting. So all the planes left but they left us there. And the only air conditioning they had was at the hospital. It was full. So what I did all during the day, I got me a book, sat in the shower. Put the shower on my back and read a book. Just sat reading just to have something to do. You couldn't go outside. You'd get so hot. They were dropping like flies. They were picking 'em up and bringing them to the

hospital. I came from the south. I knew I could take the heat. I took the heat. I didn't pass out. That was another episode [laughs]. Any more questions?

D: Well, you came out of the service. How did the GI Bill help you or did it?

G: Oh my god, it helped. When I came out of the service, I was determined to get my high school education. Again, I told you. So that's when I went to night school. It was covered under the GI Bill. The GI Bill covered that. I finished that course. While I was in England, I took another course. I took diesel and gas engine mechanics, cuz I still wanted to work on trucks. I corresponded through uh; it was put together by NATO in Germany. The school was in Germany. They sent me material. I'd read it. They'd send me the test. I'd take the test. I'd go back and forth [inaudible]...I did that until I completed that course and got back to the States. I went to school, then I wanted to learn refrigeration. So I went through refrigeration school. I put in GI Bill. GI Bill picked that up. I went to refrigeration school for almost a year. I learned everything there was about air conditioning, water fountains, deep freezes, everything, the whole nine yards. I even built the air conditioning unit while I was taking the course. They'd send me all the pieces and I put it together. And it worked [laughs]. So that was the three things that the GI Bill helped me with. And it helped me again when I went to buy a home. I got uh, I borrowed money at 4%, I think it was 4, 4.5%. I don't remember if that was from the GI Bill or through the government, though. Yeah, that was something different, okay. But it did, it did help me.

D: Now, what year was this?

G: Alright. What year? When I finished school I was 33, so that had to happen way back in the 60s and 70s. All this took place between the 60s and the 70s. Yeah.

C: Alright. Now, two questions. You eventually became a diesel mechanic and owned your own business.

G: Well, the way I did that. Well, I went and worked for Ford, like I told you. I learned a lot about cars then.

C: Now you're living in Baton Rouge when you come back?

G: No. No, no, no, no. When I came back, I went back to Raceland.

D: Okay.

G: We lived in Raceland and then I lived in Lockport cuz...

D: Whenever you came back to the States...

G: When I got out the Service in New York, I wanted a car. So I went and bought a car. I bought a new car in New York. A Ford. I bought a Ford car. Our daughter was 6 months old then. And so we drove from New York to Raceland. Got to Raceland. I stayed with my folks a couple of days until we could get us a house. My other sister, she had a big house, so we went to live with her awhile til we could find us a house to rent. And that's how that went [inaudible]. Yeah. That's how that...

D: So you going to work for Ford in Raceland then.

G: I went to work for Ford, no, in Lockport.

D: In Lockport.

G: I went to work for Ford in Lockport and I worked at Ford in Houma, Terrebonne Motors. And from Terrebonne Motors, we moved, my wife and I moved from there. My sister was living in Baton Rouge. That's when I moved, no. She lived in Plaquemine. I moved to Plaquemine. I moved back to Plaquemine from Raceland. I moved back to Plaquemine. I stayed in Plaquemine awhile and I was working for Ford, Richards Ford in Baton Rouge. I came back to Ford there. But I was living in Plaquemine. That was a hell of a drive. They only had a two lane highway then. They didn't have four lanes, okay. Had to go around the old bridge. So that's where I...I was doing that. So I finally decided to build a house. So I built a new house in Addis. That's the first home we built. And that's where I borrowed some money, I think, yeah, through the government. I borrowed it. Built a house there. Stayed in it for two years. But I was working 70 hours a week. No. Wasn't working 70 hours a week yet. But the drive was so far, you know. No, that's right. I did switch over. When I was living in that new house, I left Ford. And my uncle was a carpenter. And they were looking for a mechanic at (Altech's?) in Baton Rouge. That's Heck's right now. Concrete company. And he said, "Well I got a [inaudible] as a mechanic." So I went to work as a mechanic on concrete trucks. And that's when I was driving 70 hours, working 70 hours a week. My daughter never seen me unless Sunday, I'd bring her to church. The only time she seen me because I was always gone when she woke up and when she went to bed, I went to bed after her, because I got home after her...after she went to bed. That was tough back then. You tell people you worked 70 hours a week, they say "So what?" But that's how it was. And that's how I got ahead. That's how I paid that house off. Sold it. Moved to Baton Rouge. Bought another house. And that's when I worked for Altech's, the concrete people. I worked on those trucks for nine years. I ran the shop for nine years for them. And Apple Sanders, living in baton Rouge, he was a state rep then. He was one of their salesmen. And he had a business. Gravel trucks. And he asked me if I'd work on em on the side. Yeah, and so I used to work on them at Altech. They'd let me work in their shop at night. And so I said, "If I go in business, I still got your truck?" Yeah. I'm going in business. So I had about ten dollars in the bank then. I lived from paycheck; you know how it is, paycheck to paycheck. So I had a good friend of mine, Jimmy Gremiaul (sp?) was his name. James Gremiaul. I knew the man for eight months. I said, "Jimmy, I'd like to go into business but I have no money." He said, "How much money you need?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "How about 2,000 dollars?" He said, "That's no money. I'll go co-sign a note for you at

American Bank." Oh you will? Yeah. Okay so I lined up. I had two other friends I knew. Shelton...Ham Shelton. Used to own (Shell Boats?) in Baton Rouge. And he was renting from a fellow by the name of Charlie Jones. Charles Jones. He said, "Talk to him. He'll build you a building." So I talked to Charlie Jones and he owned a piece of land on Wooddale Court. So I went down and says, "Did you build me a shop?" Yeah. Draw it up. See how much [inaudible]. Alright. I told him what I wanted. He drew it up. He says, "how about \$250 a month?" Build it. So he built it. So I had \$2,000, man. I says "I think I can make it." So I'd work from can to can and I did. I pulled it off. I got it going. I stayed there for 15 years. But when the rent went to \$1400 a month, when my contract was over, that's when I bought my own place on Bicentennial. Bought it. I'm glad I did, because it's a bigger place. My daughter own that place right now, by the way. She's the owner. I been out of it 21 years. I ran it for 26 years. So that's how we got to be in business.

C: Now, somewhere in this period, you became a camp owner.

G: Okay. That's exactly right. I'm trying to think what happened. Oh, I was into woodworking good. Building things. Building my wife a dollhouse. Shadows on the Teche. I went there. Took pictures of the house and I built the house. I built it. Five foot long. 30 inches high. It's brick. I made all the columns. They all old cypress. 285 year old cypress. All the columns are turned. All the blocks are cypress. All the windows work. All the doors work. I made all the brass knobs. I made...[laughs]. Don was...No you haven't seen it either. Well anyway, I never did finish, and that's when the camp come in. Well, I was going in the basin. I started going in the basin in 1950...No; I was...Yeah, 1956. I was in the basin then. But I stopped all the woodwork, I pushed all that aside, and I started [inaudible]. We used to rabbit hunt a lot in the basin. Four of us. We'd go in a little bitty boat, a little wooden boat. It had 2 inches from sinking when we'd pile it up with the dogs, our guns. We couldn't bring lifejackets, the ice chest, couldn't bring...Yeah we'd bring one ice chest to bring the rabbits back in. But that was...We had to watch what we put in the boat so it wouldn't sink. And that's when I started in the Basin, in 1956. We'd go every Saturday morning, come back Saturday evening. Go back Sunday morning; come back Sunday evening, killing rabbits.

D: So you'd drive all the way from...where were you?

G: I was living in Plaquemine then. Right. That's where my cousin lived and we'd go and we'd do that every weekend.

D: Did you launch at Jack Miller Landing?

G: No, no. You know when went to our camp, you know when you cross the pontoon bridge?

D: Yes.

G: Okay. You notice that right, right there? You cross the levee right there. They didn't have what you call...they called it a landing but it was just two little bitty concrete slabs and you'd



drop off the end of it if you went too far. And your trailer would get stuck and you'd tear your axle off trying to pull it out the water. Cuz we had to watch how we launched our boat. But that's where we used to launch, right there. And we'd do that every weekend, you know, in season. And finally we got tired of that, so we said, "You know what?" We going to build us a camp back there." So we did. We built a camp on the hill. A small camp. And then we could stay Saturday night.

D: Now, generally you had to get a lease from somebody...to build the camp...

G: No. Not back then. This was still state land. It was state land and the state didn't lease nothing back then. Oh people were building camps back then. I guess they got leased. I don't know about them. They had them on what they call at Tack-A-Paw right now. That big reserve, they had a bunch of camps on that. They not, you can't have a camp there. But we built on the island. Well, where my camp is, that same island. We're right down there from that. We built on that hill, that high hill. And anyway, that's where we used to go. And then we'd go camping during the summer time too. You know no fans or nothing. And I used to stay with them. And then my other cousin built another camp. I helped him build that one. And then I used to stay there. But then that got old and these two fellows had bought...[inaudible] helped me build my house in Addis. Me and them built a house in ten weekends. But anyway, he built another camp. And when he built it, we put it together in one day. One day. We slept in it that night. We had two people transporting material to us. And we were putting it together. He prefabbed the whole thing in his house. He cut all the studs, all the rafters. Everything was cut. All the windows were framed. He cut all at his house. When we got there, all we did was nail it. It was like putting a puzzle together. And it was just a basic camp. And we slept in it that night and finished most of it up the next day. I ended up buying that camp from...He was building that for his sister. Well, his sister, her husband died so she wanted to sell the camp. So she sold it to these two boys that was in this camp where my cousin was. So I bought it from them for \$2,000. And that's when I started at the camp. It was a camp camp. There wasn't no porch on it or nothing. There was a porch but no back porch. No...It wasn't insulated. Bare two-by-fours. It was basic, but I made it nice.

C: Fishing and hunting?

G: Fishing and hunting, right. I was a very big bass fisherman. In fact, I used to fish tournament fishing and all that. And that's another reason why liked the camp. You know, I could put a bunch of stuff there and when I went tournament fishing, if I needed something, it was right there, you know. But that's what I did mostly. And I got away from the [inaudible] part of it. I let that entire slide to the back, because I liked the camp so much. I like camp. I like it quiet.

D: For people who've never been to a camp, who really know nothing at all about camps, why is having a camp important?

G: A camping what?

D: Why is that important?

G: Important. It's very important for your mind. For relaxation is the main, the main reason. And when I go back there, I forget everything, you know, that's in Baton Rouge. That's how you're supposed to do it. That way, you can really enjoy it. Because you can do it, you can do it at your leisure. If you want to do this, you do it. I mean, that's why a camp is important to me. Uh, we bring guests back there and they really enjoy it too. Oh I want to come back. Cuz they get the fever. They see how it is. When you shut that power unit off and you sit on that porch in a rocker, you don't hear nothing but the birds, you looking at nature. How much better can it get? You can't do that in town. You can't watch a sunset across the water. You can't watch that. You can't see that. That's why I love it. And that's why I fix it as good as I can. That's why call it the Spillway Hilton.

C: Well, I have to tell you, I was hugely impressed when we went out with you during the flood and saw what you had done with your camp to make it...The flotation devices on it so that it rises and falls with the water. That was ingenious.

G; Yeah I...The reason that I did that was, the camp I bought, when those two boys had it, they had the flood in '73. The water was up to the peak of the roof. The camp was sitting on the ground, okay. And the water lifted it up and moved it back. And they had a big cottonwood tree. It got up against the tree and set down. And some of the pillars came up through the floor with the weight of the camp, you see. Anyway, I helped them repair that camp. We didn't move it back. We just moved the pillars. Cut holes in the floor. Jacked it up and put the pillars back. When I bought it, it was sitting there. I raised that camp up almost four feet to get it out the water. The water still got to it. So I said, "well I'ma fix that. I'm going to build me a floating camp and tear this one down." So I was working for, well, I was doing his troubleshooting for Rick (Copeland?) down on the architectural millworks. And on his yard, I prefabbed the whole floor of that camp. All the sills, I cut em up and I bolted it all together [inaudible]. And then I got my floor made. And it took this thing apart and we took turns in the boat bringing it back there. Cuz the floor's made out of two by six tongue and groove. And it's not put straight across. It's put on a diagonal. Like this. You start in this corner. The reason for that is, this camp's going...you don't want it to do this. You don't want it to twist. When the waves hit, it would break it up. So that's why I did it like I did. And uh me and an old man, Ralph Goodall, his father, helped me. Me and him put the sills together. Laid it out and put the floor on, just me and him. And it's all treated two by six. And the whole camp is cedar, inside and outside is cedar. Termites don't bother it. That's why I did that. But, when I designed it, Rick helped me figure the weight of that camp. I had to figure the weight of the camp to know how much Styrofoam to put under the camp to lift it. So we came up between ten and eleven tons. So, I went down Bayou Lafourche again where this fellow was making these Styrofoam floats that the Corps of Engineers use now in the Mississippi River to float their pipe. It's got a little dip in it, alright. Each one of those will lift a ton and a half. So I calculated how many pieces I needed to cut in half, turn them over, and put them under the camp. And the first time the flood came, I crossed my fingers. I say, "I hope it lifts." And it did. Ah, I'm out of the water. But I didn't figure the last flood. By loading it up with all the stuff in the other camp, I took everything.

Cleaned the other camp. All the cabinets, the stove, the refrigerator, the lazy boy chairs, the couches, the...Went in the bathroom, took all that out too. Took the [inaudible] out. The cabinets on the wall. I filled that camp up so when it came up then, it was four inches from getting to the floor. So I took care of that this last round. I went back. Not here. I couldn't buy it there. I went down Highway 30 out of Gonzales. And this old boy had some huge strips. And each one of those would lift over a ton. Four of those. And I put everything with stainless, because the old straps we were using would rust; I changed all them to stainless. I have a friend of mine and [inaudible]. So he made me the straps. So everything is stainless screws, stainless bolts, stainless straps, and the Styrofoam. No, I don't have to worry about it no more. But that's how that camp got to be. It got four guide pipes on it that raised it up in the air and then it come straight down.

D: So it can't float anywhere.

D: Right. So it floats. But the current back there, during the flood, is always going south. So the first time we went out, it started bending those pipes. The higher it gets, the more it bends them. So when I saw that, I said, "Well I gotta do something for that." So now I got, I've got it anchored down. I've anchored it with straps but now I've got aluminum pieces bolted to it and I got it to a dead man on both sides. I made me some anchors. You buy your trailer anchors, well they're not long enough so I made some [inaudible]. And sunk them in the ground. You can't pull those out. And that's what's holding it now. So when it goes up, it'll go up...Those clamps all above where it's going to go, you see? It goes up and it comes back down.

D: Well, all through our talk today. I've been really impressed by the tradition and ingenuity in here, your family. You know that comes...when you talked about your grandfather, your dad, you. It's really a case of when you can't buy something, if you want it, you gotta make it yourself.

G: You've got to make it, that's right.

D: Can you talk a little bit about the process, about how you go about creating stuff?

G: Well, hmmm. When I was around my grandfather, he was a, he raised, he had 13...18 kids, okay. My mother's side was 18. Uh, money, he had to have money. So what he did, he went into...He was a moss picker. That's how my father met my mother. Working with him picking moss. And he was a bootlegger too. And he was a trapper. Mama said he'd go out trapping for the winter and he had to have a wagon to bring the fur out of the woods where he was at. He had an old camp and when he knew it was time to come back is when they had to sleep outside. The camp was full of fur. They'd stretch and dry and they'd stack em in the camp to keep em out of the weather.

D: So when it was full, they'd stack...

G: So when it was full, he'd go back to the house and get, not a little cart, a wagon, you know. Axel in the back, axel in front. And he'd fill that up and tie it down. She said she could see him coming with that load. And that's where he made a lot of money, on fur. But he was making good whiskey in Plaquemine. And because...

D: During prohibition?

G: During prohibition? Yeah. When we lived at his place in Plaquemine, my daddy was plowing with the mule and all of a sudden, the mule dropped on the ground. His legs went out of sight. Couldn't figure out how. We went up there and got the mule out the hole. There was a barrel in the ground. (Laughs). So he got to talking to his father-in-law. He said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you the field is full of them." He said, "Wait, I'll go mark them off for you so you can fill them with dirt so your mule don't break a leg." That's where he kept his whiskey. In the corn field. In the ground. I said, "Well how you got it down?" He said, "Well I had one of those old pumps." He said, "I cleaned the dirt. I pulled the plug off." He said, "And I filled my jugs and I'd go to Plaquemine at night. And these old boys would buy the stuff because it was really good." And that's why he always had, Mama said, he always had a roll of money. And that's where he got all this money from. So, but that was hilarious about the mule falling in the drum. The wood finally rotted, you see, and it started breaking down. Because he had done that before, you see, before we had moved there. He wasn't doing it then. So that's that episode.

D: Now, is this the Trey Hunt site?

G: That's the Trey Han site.

D: Was he a blacksmith?

G: In a sense, yes. He showed me how to weld the wood. You never heard of the either. I hadn't either. He would make his own hoe, his own shovel. Uh all his tools he used, he'd make them. He'd get the steel and make them. And he showed me about a rake. It had broken a handle on the rake. And he says, "I'll make a handle." So he made a handle. And he says, "I'm going to put it back on the rake." He said, "I'm going to put the handle on the rake but I'm going to weld it." I said, "What you talking about?" He said, "Watch. I want to show you how to do that." So he got him a large container and filled it with water. He got him a fire going. He got a hot fire going. Put that rake in the fire, the part that went in the handle, and got it cherry red. He had the piece of metal on the handle and then he took that rake. He stood it up, took a handle, he put it on there, he just drove it on there. He said "Whop!" He drove it in there cherry red, when he quenched it, the wood cooled and the metal did too. He says, "And that seals them, it glues them together." I says, "Oh." And I never did forget that. And it still works today, I can tell you, okay. But anyway, and he built all the chicken coops around there. Daddy wasn't much of a carpenter. But he was. This old man was. He built all Mother's cookware. While she was raising all them little bitties, he all this going. Had rabbit pens. He built those for me too. He built me a wheelbarrow. I watched him build a wheelbarrow. I helped him build a wheelbarrow. He could build a nice wheelbarrow. And he'd build everything.

D: But, did he draw plans or was it all trial and error?

G: No, no. It was all right there. I don't know if the old man could write. My father couldn't...He didn't go to school because he had nine brothers and his daddy didn't believe in school. Cuz his daddy didn't finish school... You know how the old people were back then. People, you know, they didn't believe in education. I think that's one of the most important things. But anyway, Mother went to school a couple years, cuz she could write her name and she could write a little bit. But she had to quit school cuz she was the oldest and 18 and she had to cook for the family. So her daddy made here a stool, she said, so she could reach the pots on the stove to stir. That's how small she was, she said, when she started cooking. And so but, that's how that was back then.

D: But, Ray, you are skilled in carpentry. I've see you work in carpentry.

G: Right.

D: You know how to use a metal lathe.

G: Yeah.

D: You know how to weld.

G: Yeah.

D: So all the trades you have somehow acquired...

G: Okay, my daddy was a burner. That's one that uses a torch. I had an uncle that was a welder. I had a brother-in-law that was a Class A1 welder, Jimmy Ford. He was 80 when he died. He used to work for the pipeline people. When I was at Altech's, I had to learn to weld because of those trucks. You had a lot of welding to do on them. So, I got with Jimmy Ford, which was my brother-in-law, and I said, "You gonna give me some schooling in welding, okay?" So he did. He showed me how the rods where. What the numbers on the rods meant. What the heat that rod took. The strength of the metal in this rod. What rod welds what? And he'd come there and he showed me quite a bit. And I was learning on a cracker box, he called. It's not an electric motor. It's a transformer type. And if you can weld with one of them, you can weld with anything. Cuz it's hard to control. But that's where I learned to weld. And then the torch. He showed me everything there was to know about the torch and how dangerous they can be. You can get in serious trouble; one if you don't know what you're doing when you're using what they call a rosebud. A rosebud is a big heating torch. I mean that flame is like that. And it puts out so much temperature, it's unreal. And you're using acetylene gas. Acetylene gas is a very erratic gas, because if you pour too much gas off of the bottle, it goes into a dangerous state of blowing up on you. Because the gas in there is made by a liquid. I didn't know all this until I got some information to learn how acetylene bottle is made. And anyway, I

can go into that, but anyway. He told me, "That gauge, look at that line on that gauge, it says 15. Everything is dangerous below 15." He said, "When you're using that rosebud, don't you get passed that 15." He said, "If you do, you're in serious, serious trouble." If you have a flashback, you'll never know about it, because them bottles will blow up on you. Oh okay. So anyway, that's how I learned about my welding. Now my machinist, I learned to work a lathe was...self-taught. I bought a 12-foot lathe when I went in business, because I had a lot of axel work to do. And I was doing a lot of bearing building up welding machine and down. So I bought a 12-foot lathe from this old boy which was pushed through a building with a bulldozer and tore all the controls off. So I say, "How much you want for it?" He said, "Give me (a? eight?) hundred bucks for it." So I did. So I got another lathe and I made all the parts that were broken. And I repaired my lathe. And from my lathe, I made a lot of money with my big 12-foot lathe. So that's how I learned lathe. But, I bought some books. Again, the books came in. So I started reading about lathe. And I learned a lot there. And my son-in-law, which was my son-in-law, he's a finish machinist, okay. So then, I got with him later on in life and learned a whole lot more about lathe. So now I can operate lathe. But that's where I got all my lathe knowledge.

D: You talked about your father and grandfather just envisioning things up here, is that how you work also? Do you sketch things out or do you...?

G: Depends on what it is. Cuz I made something for architecture wood and it was, it was by just thinking. But I can think of things I made. That transfer switch at that cold storage place that couldn't be done. I done that one. I sketched that one out. I had to...because it was too...It was a little more complicated [inaudible] than doing it. So I had to do a few sketches, but finally I made a sketch and I looked at it and said, "Yeah, this'll work." So I got my material together and I built it for them. But anyway, I made uh...You know what a router is?

D: Yeah

G: Okay, you know what a inch an half radius is on a router bit? You know how big that is? It'll cut a inch and a half radius deep. And a knife is about that long with a moon in it, okay. You put that...Now you have a big router, three horsepower at least. That thing is dangerous, now. Okay. They built a place for State Farm in Virginia, Rick did. And these people were building the stairs. So they built the stairs and they put the railing up. They put all metal there. They didn't figure the top yet. Okay, now how do you make the top to put on something that's already made? You have to make it on the job. So how do you do the wood? You take the wood apart in one inch strips and you put it back together by glue. So they went up there and they glued the hand railing on this metal. And it goes up, goes up three stories like this. So now how we gonna make the hand railing? So, he came to me. He says, "Look at this and what you think?" So I looked at it. So I says, "Okay." So I got the router. I got me some aluminum to start. So I started with a baseplate. A big'un, so they told me. It's about 4 inches wide. So I started with a four inch piece of aluminum. So from there, when I finished it, you just hooked the router to it. This was all adjustable and you just walked up the steps with the router in your hand and you adjusted the (tape?) about a half inch at a time. You just walk up, turn around, and come back

down. And you just keep increasing it until you cut it all the way down. So you cut the oval. The top. Okay. Now you got the top done. How you gonna do the bottom? He unbolted it from the floor, took the same tool, and machined the bottom. So when you finished, you got a oval hand rail. It was all made out of mahogany. No it was all made out of cherry with ebony down the middle. A black strip down the...You talking 'bout...It came out beautiful. And I gave that thing to a boy. He says, "You made what? I like that." So I gave it to him. Didn't make any difference. I still remember if I want to make another one. But I didn't draw no plans on that, because I had to keep re-doing things, you know what I mean, to get it right. But I finally got it right. But, it's nice to draw things out, though. Something that, you know, you can. But most of my things, I do, you know, they're not that bad to do.

D: Now, you've had a career of doing these kinds of things and you've got a list of all the things you've done. What gives you the most satisfaction?

G: A project, you mean? I've done so many of them. I built my own grandfather clock out of rough cherry. That was a challenge. That was a challenge. Six foot, no, seven foot tall. It's beautiful. My wife wanted one. I says, "I'll build you one." So I did. That was a good challenge. I'm trying to think of some others. I made things in the service. I got an award for it. How to twist tire wire quick. So I made one. You feed the wire in one end. You pull the handle, it's done. It twists itself. The telephone people use that today putting that wire. You see that little thing running down the telephone line? It's got a ball of wire in it. Well, I made something just like that in the service way back then. And that's all it did. It had a little container of wire. And that's it. You pull that little thing and it twists itself. Make a swivel. Piece of steel [inaudible]. And that's what turns it. Just like yo-yo. It works the same way. Yeah, it works. But I like to make things. I've always been like that. When I was a kid, I had a little red wagon. My mother looked around, I had it all apart. I took it completely apart because I wanted to see how it was built. And I put it all back together.

C: Well, we've been at it for an hour and a half, Don...

D: And I've enjoyed every minute of it.

C: But we would like to keep the door open to talk to you again

G: Hey, whenever you want! I just...

C: Well now you have time to think about it.

G: Oh my god.

C: And you'll think of other things and so...You know, give us a couple weeks, and we'll come back.

G: Oh I've been in another craft. I was in...You ever seen these people build these glass things out of glass? You heat em.

D/C: Oh yeah

G: Well I built a cabinet full of them things. I went to Florida and I watched this fellow do this. I says, "Looks pretty simple." He says, "It is, once you learn it." I said, "Where you get your glass from?" "Wait awhile and I'll give you a book," he says. What kind of glass? It's Pyrex. What size? You can [inaudible] order any size. Here's the book. You can order it. I got home. I ordered all the glass. I ordered the torch, the (bottles?). I had everything. So I started making saucers, cups, wishing wells, ships. You name it, I start making em. But I don't like to stay on a project too long. I got, I still got all the things, all the glasses, all put up. I quit that. I got on another project. So, you know, I like different things to do.

D: That goes back to when you were a...

G: [Inaudible] honey bees. Raising honey bees. Don...what was his name? He died. Anyway, he was in the honey business. He used to be by Ralph and Kacoo's on Airline Highway. He died, now. But he was in the honey business. In fact he went through LSU. His mother sent him through school, but he was raising honey bees. But anyway. I got interested in it. I had a bee hive lying at the house one day. I said, "Hmm, I know somebody who's the best." So I got him. He said, "It's nothing to get that." He said, "I bring you a box." So he started then. Then finally I had a bunch of boxes [inaudible] and I was raising honey bees and producing my own honey. Because I ate three gallons of honey a year. Me and the wife, we get rid of three gallons of honey. I buy honey now. So anyway, I got in the honey business. So, I done that for a few years. I said, "Well this is old." So I gave the whole thing to somebody else. Got out that.

C: And you make your own wine?

G: Now I got into the wine business. So I make my own wine. Just started a new 5 gallon of peach. Yeah. I got it going, because Mike's daughter wants some peach wine. So I've got five gallons brewing right now. So I got in the wine business. Like I said, I like different projects. I like challenges. Oh the reunion, I was going to bring you up on that, remember? And I left it. When I got out the service in England, this was like a big family. And this old boy, Jordy Hughes from California. I went to visit him, by the way, after I got out the service. I finally found him. Uh, he says, he was in the Second World War. He says, "I have never been in an outfit like the one we were in England." He told me that. I put a Air Force reunion together. And a few of the boys, after I got it going, they came up to me. They said, "We tried." But they didn't do it. I says, "What'd you do to start off with?" Well they didn't have a clue. First thing I did, I went to the library and I started getting books on how do you start a reunion. And I started reading. And that's how I got, oh you have to do this, you have to do this. So we had in our outfit, we had 640 men. I found 265 of them. They said, "How in the hell you find..." So, it was easy if you read enough books. I went to the (pay summit?) for the Air Force which is in San Antonio, Texas. It took three letters to find a man. You put the first letter; you put the other two letters



in this letter to send to them. You send them the man's name and then you send them another envelope with a stamp on it. No name. Just your return address if you want. So what they do, they look him up and they find him. They get in touch with him. They couldn't tell me where that man lived, his phone number, nothing. You know that's the law.

D: Privacy.

G: Privacy. That's exactly right. Invasion of privacy. So, they call him. They tell him that I want to get in touch with them. So then they had to call me. So they'd send me a letter back and say they found him. And I just put it on the side because I couldn't do nothing until he called me. So they'd call me and I'd get all the information. Tell him where we going to have the reunion. I've had...I had four of them in Baton Rouge. Cuz some of the people didn't want to host. We've been all over the United States. Oh I went as high right at the border of Canada. I went to Minnesota. This old German lives up there. He's hilarious. Anyway, he hosted one up there. We went up there. Went to Virginia. I went to Delaware. Went to North Carolina. South Carolina. Been to Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas. And these people host, you see. So I became the president and they made my wife secretary/treasurer cuz we had dues to pay, she had to keep. But anyway, between us, we did it for...In fact I'm still the president but I haven't been to the last two reunions. They want me to go to this one. I can't sit too long, you know, driving.

C: Right.

G: [Inaudible] and I have to keep stopping. And she's on a walker so she's restricted on walking. And she don't like to drive far because she has [inaudible]. So we got out of it. So the vice president run it, which is a boy out of Austin, Texas. Yeah, we went in Austin, Texas. Yeah, he hosted that. So I always told him, if we can't get a host at the meeting, it's on me. So I take em. If they didn't want it, I'd take em over. So I had a problem now, cuz you had everything. You got the food, the hotel, all...What you gonna do. Where you gonna go. I'd go to New Orleans. I'd go to Nottoway. They enjoyed that place, Nottoway. It blew their mind. It just blew their mind when they went there. But anyway, that's some of the places I've been. But I did it for 19 years so we traveled a lot in doing this, okay. Had a good time. We still like traveling. My wife and I've done so many cruises. She likes the cruise. And she likes history and geography. She lived, when she was in England, she was close to the library. She used to love to read. We didn't have a library where I lived, okay, in the plantation. So, she was reading about this place on the Yucatan Peninsula, Chichen Itza. So when I ask her, "Where you wanna go this year? What kind of cruise you want?" She said, "I'd like to go see Chichen Itza." "Where?" I said, "Where the hell is Chichen Itza?" She said, "It's on the Yucatan Peninsula. There's a lot of ancient ruins there." Alright, okay we'll go. Best trip I ever took in my life. I walked up so many of those monuments, so many places that were built...I wore a pair of tennis shoes. I climbed up those steep steps and thought I'd never get back down and stuff like that. She didn't do it. She's scared of heights. I love em. Heights. I don't mind heights. But anyway that's how I went to Chichen Itza.

[Laughter]

G: And she wants to go back there. She loves old things. She loves history. She loves the History Channel. That's why we watch that a lot. And we pick up a lot from that, you know. From different people, what they're doing. And I pick up a lot of little ins and outs. Yesterday I was watching how they make this chip and all that. You watch that on TV. yesterday?

C: I didn't see it, no.

G: Oh my god. That thing lasted for two hours. How it all started. How they went from the tube, you know the old radio tubes. And the planes we worked on, that's what they had on them. The radios. [Inaudible]. The radio was out. Get the radio man. And these radios pull one out, put another one in. Make enough radios, filaments would shake and bump. They'd go out. No radio. I mean, but they changed the world, I'ma tell you. That's how they got to go to the moon. Because they couldn't put that computer inside of a refrigerator on the shuttle. That's how big the [inaudible] was, like a refrigerator. But anyway...

D: Well, we appreciate...

G: Okay, hey wait.

C: This was great.

G: Hey, whenever y'all want. I might pick up some more things. I'm thinking of things to do right now. What I can do. Oh I'm building a table for a fellow that can't...You should see this table. It's beautiful. It's all Formica. And uh when I build a table, I do something that nobody else does (laughs). I inlaid the sides with mahogany under the Formica, okay. Like I made a 6 foot long, 36 inch wide, 40 inches high. I made tapered legs. Made some nice tapered legs. They're beautiful. And when I finished the table, I take my router, and I set it a 14 of an inch. Then I cut the Formica off the edge and I expose mahogany. You can rub that tongue oil and look at it. And it doesn't cut your arm. Anyway, I built one for my camp so I built him one. He saw mine [inaudible] I said, "I build you one, don't worry about it." That's what I'm on right now.

(Laughter)

C: That's an amazing story, Ray. I appreciate your sharing it with us. Like I said, we would like to keep the, you know, the door open to come back and talk to you again.

G: But a lot of the things I've learned is from talking to different people. I picked up a lot of knowledge. You see, you notice people that know a lot don't have many friends and the reason for this is the best three words a person can say to a person to get him to recognize you, says "I don't know." That way you put him on the offensive, you see what I mean? And that's my

trouble. I can't be still when somebody says they got a problem, I can fix it. I don't know. Cuz it kills me to say "I don't know." Yeah, I know, I'll fix that! [Laughs].

D: Yeah, but it's a unique skill.

G: Well, I can just walk up to anything, you know what I mean? I don't know. I don't know why people can't be like that.

D: Well, we're not wired that way.

G: Yeah that's true, like your bed.

D: Yeah, like my bed. I had a futon room. The futon wasn't working right. And I tried everything. Finally, just out of frustration, I was either going to throw it away. And I asked Ray. "Oh let me look at that" [laughs]. It's fixed. It'll never wear out.

G: I took it completely apart. And the way they put that together was wrong. They used wooden pegs. I think it was a 9/16th hole. They drilled a 5/8ths hole on the inside. How you gonna put a 9/16th peg in a 5/8ths hole and expect it, ask it to take...It was doing this here. So I took it completely apart. Re-drilled all the holes. Made the pegs. I put it back together with bigger pegs and some [inaudible] glue and it will never, never come apart.

D: It is done right. That's all. Just done right. I said, "Ray, I've got a problem. Mike came over. Put it in the back of his truck. Let's move. Perfect." And the madam is very happy. Thank you.

G: Yeah that thing works good. Now the kids can jump in as much they want to. They can dive in it. He said he used to dive in it and break all the [inaudible]. [Laughs].

D: Not any more. I'm gonna...

G: [inaudible] Yeah you can turn it off...