Interviewers: Don Davis, Carl Brasseaux, and Jay Darden

Interviewee: Sherill Sagrera

Don Davis: We'd like to bring in a video camera. And when I've gone through things and just ask, "Look. can you—can you on a video talk about the [Shenuwatith] School? And what we're gonna do is, working with Sea Grant—and Mark Shirley is your person here—
Sagrera: Yeah
D: And Jay Darden. Carl and I are gonna feed LSU Sea Grant information, they're gonna turn these into educational kiosks. They're gonna be thematic oriented. The first one we think is going to be Shrimp [Brine]. The second one we think is going to be on cattle. Carl and I have some long-term plans on cattle. The cattle business in the marsh—I think it's fair to say—is unique. And it has provided a livelihood for generations...It just—Carl's a colonial scholar so he can chime in better than I can about its roots. But you know when some of your family's born over here you don't cry you go "YEE HAW GIDDYUP!"
S: [chuckling] Mm hm, that's right. But you know a lot of people don't understand, the cattle industry in this country started in Louisiana. It didn't start in Texas and Oklahoma and everything else—it started in Louisiana. And it just—„cause I know years ago, people from Texas would graze cattle in Vermillion Parish. They'd drive cattle from Texas—Orange and [Boudoff] and all that stuff—drive them from here, the winter cattling in Vermillion Parish. You know, they—people—"No, no, no, How they got there?" They drove the damn things. They didn't have horse trailers in our day, they drove 'em.
D: Well, I—Mr. [Selas], we interviewed him twice, and one of the things he talked about was the Miller's driving their cattle from Grand Chenier and from that area west of here, onto beaches. People that were coming from Texas, did they drive them along the beach too or further inland?
S: They'd drive 'em...Well they knew where the ridges were. Now those ridges would follow parallel to the coast but the ridges would stop. And maybe a mile or two down to that other little ridge that they could connect to to drive their cattle. And I remember Daddy talking a lot of times about getting in these ridges—these Cheniers—and cutting [pelt meadows] to bridge across the two ridges. They put those [pear meadows] down, you know, on where they come and get a little support to cross those sloughs basically.
D: Mm.
S: 'Cause all that stuff naturally drained before man screwed with Mother Nature. That would naturally drain through these sloughs between these ridges. It may go this-a-way and then go this-a-way that way to better drain out but it had a natural flow of water—a natural "Hydrology," like we like to say. That's where the water [be pat]—and I know years ago some of the old-timers at Pecan Island—when we talk about diverting water across Highway 82 from the [Mirmenthal Basin], they said that is a natural drain—it goes across 82. But whenever our powers that be decided to build a road between Pecan Island and Grand [Samir], they were—in their infinite wisdom they said, "We're gonna put a road here, we're gonna put the drains here, we're gonna put it here," not taking into consideration where the Good Lord said that water's supposed to pass. So that's why you don't have to flow across 82 like you normally have...like you should have. So, you know

it's things like that, you know, when you talk about them driving cattle from—you know, old people knew! They went across them marshes years and years and years—they knew where to pass. And they'd bring them cattle over here. Heldabrand—that's the big name around [Puralfahorns]. Well there's a pasture name on the [MacElaine] this year that should be [tig]: The [Heldabrand] Pasture. That was—he'd bring cattle from that area and range them right there in the tig.
Carl Brasseaux: Now this was all on a seasonal basis?
S: Yeah. [INAUDIBLE]...on a seasonal basis.
C: Right. Well can you explain a little bit about that some more? About why they moved them seasonally?
S: Well, you know, a lot of people said, "If you got cows, you gotta have 'em in a—[thatissaw around] and tell me you can't raise cattle in the kitchen." Well everybody wants to raise their cows here, they wanna build a—wanna put 'em some feed and put the—an animal—the Good Lord made him to live off the grass. And old cattlemen believed that, "Hey...I ain't gonna feed no cows." You ain't gonna make no money feeding cattle. I mean people make money doing it, but to make money with cattle you need to get them grass to eat, and in the wintertime you could burn these marshes over here. And for miles it looked like you planted nothing but rye grass. Salt water will kill it, but saltwater...hits of saltwater won't kill it. But concentrated salt water for too long a period of time will kill it. Frost won't kill it. So as soon as you burn all that stuff you happen to get a little shower that is washes the [soot] off of it—that comes up. And it look like for miles, nothin' but pretty green grass as far as you can see. Got grass that cow's bellies all the way along. So why go to the feed store and buy feed or bail hay and all that kinda stuff to feed 'em when you got the natural thing, what they supposed to eat. And a lot of people go out there and put salt blocks in there for their cattle. Well there's enough salt in the grasses in the wetlands that gives them that supplement, so it was a no-win situation. So if you had a thousand head of cattle, the feed bill run up pretty good. But when you can drive 'em right here where you can lease for maybe a dollar and acre—and in those times probably less than that—yeah, I'm saving money. And I'm making money with cattle. So.
D: Now, what about freshwater for the cattle?
S: Well freshwater was the only problem that people had, but that's mostly summertime you had that problem. Because you didn't have—most of the time in the wintertime you didn't have no droughts and this kinda stuff—mostly the cold weather, but in the summer time it's a problem because most of the cattle drink in the streams. And I know I work with an RCS so, salt and water...It smelled bad, won't it?
[INTERVIEWERS CHUCKLING]
D: Oh, it's terrible.
S: It said uh, so one of the practices with the program is to keep cattle away from the streams. Well, you can't do that in the wetlands. First place, where are you gonna get your freshwater, anyhow? So that's where your cattle drink, you know and there—from time to time you gotta treat 'em for worms and things like that but—because you know drinking that, drink leeches and things like that out of the water. But we've done that for the last—for generations and cattle ain't died from no worms and—oh I guess we've had some, you never know, but cattle and shit—cattle did good for a long time, until Rita. We'd leave cattle year round on the coast. 'Course like I said, in the summertime we'd

have a problem with saltwater. We'd dig what they call "Curving Wells," which is a box you'd dig big ole holes in—you'd build a 4x4 box, you'd put it in the hole, and you'd keep digging—you'd sink that box. And when you get that box down, well then you'd put another box on top of it—and secure it together. What you actually had was a square box down there. And if you—you dig them wells no more than 20 feet, and you had fresh water. I said freshwater. It's not water you'd get like at your wells here or whatever it is, because most of the time you had about 75 grains per gallons. Which cattle can tolerate that—humans can tolerate that. But if you went any deeper than that, you're getting gulf level. So then it's saltwater. And old mud—old marsh mud in your water. You would have to go down to 400-600 feet, then you can hit the [aqua-foy]--then you got freshwater. But that's one problem I'm having with [being to deal with equip and uh] the farm bill is as practice is to help you drill the wells to water your cattle. Well I got a $3,000 cap on it. And it'll pay 50% of that to produce it or to pump it or to make it to the well...[INAUDIBLE]...It would cost me more than that just to talk to the man that put his machine on the barge to bring it over. So I said, "it's not cost-effective." So we're working on something through USDA to maybe help out the people in the coastal zone to be able get them somewhere else to drill, where they have no electricity to start with. When—get 'em some kind of source of energy like wind power, solar power, whatever it is to better pump 'em water and people [oughta] feed cows. But it's getting to the point now where most of the people are not gonna leave their cattle in the summertime. I'm crazy enough, I'll probably end up leaving some day here around.
D: Go on to Chenier?
S: On to Chenier.
D: Alright so there's shade?
S: All that! That's full of oak trees! It's nothin' but oak trees. Well, I say nothing but oak trees—a lot of trash now since the storm, a lot of chicken trees and, you know, different prickly ash and all this kinda stuff—not prickly ash but uh—prickly ash and uh...shit what's the other thing...uh...Hackberry. Things like that. A lot of—it's nothing but woods.
D: And they can tolerate the mosquitoes there during the summer?
S: Uh, yes. But the thing is that you can't go get cattle that were raised upland and bring them up. They're not gonna survive.
D: Well that was a question I had about the variety of cows that people had when you were a kid. Uh, you talked about the types that they were driving through the marshes and all. I'm sure this is something—
S: Heinz 57.
D: that they have been adapted to—
S: Heinz 57. That wasn't no breed. There were a lot of Brahman, now Brahmans can stand that. I mean I guess the basic breed was Brahman—I mean that was...and Brahman was mixed with anything: Jersey or Holstein. Whatever it was, that's what they brought out there. And those cattle basically did get immune because those mosquitoes, regardless of whether you're immune or not, they're still gonna affect it. But they uh—what we used to do is, we'd go along the beaches. [All times they'd drift on the beaches]—and pile that stuff up. And build smokes. And smokes are to [tar—tard] mosquitoes. And over the last—the years, when we got more technical then we'd always, if the mosquitoes got bad—we'd find a good high spot where the cattle would get down and throw a good perimeter around that, we'd spray with malathion. And mosquitoes don't travel far so the

cattle would have a change to rest. They'd sit down there and rest and the mosquitoes wouldn't bother them. The big problem we got is not so much mosquitoes, it's deer flies. Deer Flies—Malathion, they'd eat that! It doesn't bother them. I mean if you sprayed it on one it'd probably kill them but I mean it won't retard them like it does mosquitoes. But cattle would do good. I mean, a good fat cow; a few mosquito bites ain't gonna hurt her. But you know it's...All that, you adapt what you're graze out there to the environment. That's the same thing when we used to talk about the [gazing] coast guard, the swamp angels. They tried bringing people in here from away to serve in that coast guard unit—they had to send them back. They couldn't stand the mosquitoes and the environment down there. Not that it's a bad environment—it's some bias, a little bit, because I was raised down there but it doesn't—I mean Hell, a few mosquito bites...Daddy used to say, "Mosquito not bad unless you pass a poor joint and catch a gallon. Then they bad." But if you couldn't do that, they not bad. He said, "when you—when mosquitoes get bad, you don't fight 'em, when they get thick enough, you just wipe them off your arm and go about your business."
D: Now, when you were trail-driving, you had wranglers taking cattle from some point near the coast, and I'm gonna guess: Through Perry to Abbeville. Before trucks, how did they do that? How did they wrangle the cattle from, let's say the western edge of Pecan Island through Chenier [Otigue] north?
S: Barges.
D: Barges.

S: Barges. Dr. Miller, well he had a lot of money, he could do things like that. He'd bring his cattle—he built a bridge across [Umble] Canal.
D: The which canal?
S: The Umble Canal, which is uh—it leaves freshwater brine, it goes into—well it does branch off and come into the bridge—the [front ridge of Pecan Island]. But they got a bridge now going to freshwater city.
D: Okay.
S: Right there where he used to have his crossing, right there. And he built a barge that would connect the two ramps. Well he'd drive his cattle all the way back to Grand Chenier or wherever he wanted to—he could move his cattle on the hoof. Well until they built Freshwater Bayou [Locks], we'd barge 'em out. We'd barge 'em out to [Pentecostal] city and we'd drive them to our farm here. That's when we had gravel roads and all that kinda stuff—you wouldn't have the traffic you got now. So we'd drive them on our farm back here and then we'd separate them, work 'em, and do what we had to do. But most all of that's—we had our own barge—we could put 100 head of cattle on the barge and we'd barge 'em out.
D: Now, the barge is pushed by a boat?
S: Mm hm.
D: Now is this, you know, are we talking steam? you know before--?
S: No, now that's before my time, steam! [Chuckling]
D: Yeah, but you're daddy might have told you!
S: No—Well in those times they wouldn't move cattle out. They'd bring 'em out alright but they brought 'em back by little old lovers—little old...I forget the name of the...
D: Scooners?
S: Yeah, scooners. You know, uh...

D: Sail Vessels.
S: Yeah. Three Mast Scooners, they'd call them. They'd bring 'em out. They, you see—what the hell the name of them little uh—? They run like the little old time John Deere: "Puh puh puh puh puh puh puh." You could hear 'em—
D: Put-put?
S: Yeah—it's uh—
D: We've heard 'em called a "put-put" and a "tucka-tucka-tucka."
S: Yeah, that's the kind of engine and I don't know if that was steam or some kind of a fossil fuel, I don't know what they use. But I remember that and them—they had little bitty barges at Holstein's. And they'd put maybe 20/30 calves on a barge and bring 'em to [Intracoastal] City.
C: Now, from there, where would they send them to market?
S: Dominic's Stockyard in Carencro. My grandfather was the first cattle that Dominic's Stockyard bought. He went to [Shinitig] and met my grandfather, and he said, "Look. I want the calves. I'll see about picking 'em up and bringing 'em to the"—at that time brought 'em to Baton Rouge. And they said, "I'll come back tomorrow and pay you for 'em." And that shows the trust people had in those times. Nowadays, you wouldn't let that sucker leave without a check in your hand. But they trusted each other, he picked up the cattle and brought them to Baton Rouge, and it wasn't the next day but a day or two after he went back and paid him for the cattle. $18 dollars a head. You know, that's—
D: Is there still a Dominic's Ship—
S: Yeah!
C: Yeah in Baton Rouge.
Jay Darden: Well there's still one in Carencro too.
S: Yeah, Carencro and believe he's got another one in Alexandria, I believe—he did at one time.
D: Hm.
J: Yeah there used to be one in Opelousas.
S: Outseed Dominic.
D: Now, question you have is: who made the barge?
S: The barge belonged to Shell-Morgan. [INAUDIBLE]...docked around here. Originally. And I guess it got to where Shell and my grandpa just said, "Look, why don't you just buy the barge and ya'll"—now, his boats would move the barge back and forth but it was our barge at the time. Every year we'd pull it up—it was a wooden barge. Every year we had to pull it up, scrape the bottom, put some [Ocam] in the cracks and make sure it didn't leak. Not that it didn't leak, but you know...then we'd move our cattle back and forth.
D: Now, how big a herd are we talking about during this time?
S: Oh at one time, when I was a kid, on the island itself, there were 1,200 head of cattle out there. Oh yeah.
D: Now, how many people did it take to manage a herd like that?
S: It depends a lot of—you know whenever people say, "Look, I'm gonna pin up my cows," and they got more riders than they got cows, that's a ruin-ation of cattle. Because too many people—too many cooks in the kitchen, that expression—is not good. Of course you always like to have help but it don't take that many people. If your cattle are a manageable cattle, and I guess if you got that many cattle there's always a rotten apple in

the bunch, but it‟s not hard to do it. And Brahman cattle are easy to handle. I mean, mixed Brahman Cattle, easy to handle. Um, shit, you could take 10-12 riders and make it [out of there], no problem. You put a man in the front, and those cattle are used to following a rider in the front and they'll follow right behind him, you just got the other people to kinda keep 'em gather up and moving along.
D: Now, do you use dogs at all?
S: No-oo! My grandfather hated a dog around his cows. And now it look like every cattleman's got a damn dog.
D: Yeah, that's why I asked the question.
S: And—
D: Your grandfather didn't--dogs were not allowed.
S: No, no, they didn't like dogs around their cattle.
D: Now, what about the use of a whip?
S: Well, some of the old folk, they believed in that whip. But they believed in limited use of that whip. They wanted you to have a whip. Because at times you needed that whip to give a little extra boost. But boy whenever you—a lot of times the kids, you know, would start out and they'd get 'em a whip and they were sitting there "pop-pop-pop-pop-pop" all the time. And that would aggravate the old people. They'd say, "tie that thing on the saddle. Leave it alone until you need it but you don't need to be popping it all the time."
D: Have you ever heard the term pisel tail for a horse?
S: A what?
D: Pisel tail. P-I-S-E-L. Pisel tail.
S: Mmm...look like that term sound familiar but I—It doesn't—
D: Did you use—I mean, when you were using horses—are we using, you know, big, little?
S: Creole horses. Creole horses got big feet. They could go further in the marsh and they were raised in the marsh. Years after we got “technicalized,” or whatever you wanna call it. Well, people thought it [raw], big quarter horse, that'd be good, that'd be good. Shoot. Soon as you got off the ridge, they'd bog down. They couldn't take it. But these little old things, I mean—
C: Now, I don't know if I've ever seen a Creole horse, what was different about it—you said it had big feet but it was smaller?
S: It was a smaller horse.
C: Mm hm.
S: Smaller horse and you could ride them things every day and they would hold up. I mean that's riding them and riding them, you know, but you could ride them every day and they would hold up. But these big horses—you ride them a couple days you better let 'em rest a day. They couldn't take it. 'Cause I'd bought a quarter horse. Phoo-lord. As soon as I got off the ridge, a lot of time I walked more than I rode. 'Cause they just couldn't go in the marsh.
C: Now the riders that you had managing the herd—those are all local people?
S: Oh yeah, it's all family members, mostly. Mostly all family. That was uh—see my grandfather—they were—let's see...I remember there were 10 of them in the family. Well they each had a brand. They each had cattle. They each had family—offsprings. Well then each one of the brothers and sisters had cattle and then their family would—it all get together whenever you got time to work and you had a lot of people that worked. A lot of

times you'd bring in one crew to get a herd and one pasture what is, and put 'em in the pen and then you had enough people, where they could be working while you went and got another bunch. So it was a continuous thing.
D: Well, can we talk a little bit about the cycles there—let's talk about what you do, let's say in the spring, in the summer, fall—when did you brand, when did you—
S: We brand most of the time in the spring. Most of the time in the spring and then we'd uh—you'd kinda take all the butcher cattle, what you call 'em, we uh, you know—bull calves and stuff like that—because we always did try to keep some heifers. Because you wanna keep that string going. 'Cause you get rid of them. Now I'm a believer that I'm a miser at heart. If I save a heifer and I bring her out to where she's a cow and she started breeding, that's three years. I can take that same heifer and send her to the sale and buy a bread heifer and get my money back in the next year. I may have to pay a few extra for that calf—for that bread heifer, but I'ma get my money back, whereas I gotta wait three years plus another year for that thing to get big enough to go to market, so sometimes it's kinda hard to save 'em but you gotta save some because you gotta keep that breed going. And not so much the breed but used to being there. To be able to take that environment. That's—it's kind of a: "Do I or do I not?" you know, sometimes you say, "to Hell with it, I want my money right now, and to hell with it, man."
D: So you would brand in the spring, so what about the summer?
S: Summer we would just take care of the cow. You know, a lot of times if you had a lot of mosquitoes, you had to build some smokes, and if it was dry, and then most of the time that's when you have to mosquitoes, when you get a drought. A bad spell of mosquitoes. Because mosquitoes, they always tell me that the mosquitoes, if you have a drought and then you get a little rain, that's what breed the mosquito. Now if you get a lot of rain, it washes away what [bails] out so you don't have as bad of a—so in a drought is when you had most of the problems because you get these little showers—just enough to breed the mosquitoes. We'd make the smokes and then we'd—we had a watering pen we'd call it where we'd go everyday. Go round up all those cattle. And they would fit in that pen. We had some troughs where we ended up at that time having to—I forget the name—Stokes I believe the name was that came to drill a well right on the beach. Had to dig it 600 feet to get freshwater. Dug a well and we built some cement troughs and we'd bring those cattle and put them in the pen at night. Put them to drink, cause everything was salty. Then we'd build some smokes within that pen to keep the mosquitoes down and whatever, and that was an everyday thing. We were gonna get 'em, put 'em in the tank.
D: Start the fire again.
S: Yes, start it all over again and uh, it was a chore but [tell]. That's all we needed. What else are you gonna do?
D: Raise cattle.
S: Yeah. You were raising cattle and that's what you had to do to raise cattle. So you just...
D: Now what about the fall? You were out of the summer heat, we're now moving into the—not winter, but we're starting to get a little cold front coming through and what would you do with your cattle?
S: Well, most of the time what we'd do with the cattle, we'd spot-burn. We'd move those cattle out of what we were gonna burn and we'd spot-burn that thing. And then whenever

that new grass had come up, well then we'd move the cattle back and we'd spot-burn somewhere else. We never did try to burn, you know, all the marsh.
D: Mm hm. But this was in the first fall when you would spot burn?
S: Mm hm. Usually in September. You try to burn and then everybody started pulling traps out the barn, 'cause they gonna start trapping first of December. So they did—I mean that was a cycle. They lived off the land.

D: Mm hm. Now, were alligators ever a problem with your cattle?
S: Naw.
D: Okay.
S: Naw. And they—well before they put the endangered species on 'em well they'd uh—hell well that was part of their income. They'd go and whenever they—all them old people used to say, "while you're restin' we need to go kill some alligators." You know, let's get 'em out, salt 'em down, and then when [book] came to town well then they'd go sell them. But when they put them on the endangered species they couldn't let 'em do that.
D: Now, clearly your family remembers when muskrat was really important. How did that work? I mean you owned the land so you didn't have to lease it to a trapper?
S: Well, we uh—we owned the land—some of the land. But we also had some land that we would trap for Audubon Society, for the [McElainey] Tabasco people. We—and for [Bing] Corporation [INAUDIBLE]...it was Louisiana Fur at this time. We trapped some of that land too. See Daddy was in charge of everything—well my grandfather was and then when he got—he either died or got older, Daddy took it over from [Duwith] Canal all the way to [Shinutig], the main corporation at Louisiana Fur [Plant]. And he took care of that.
D: I love the expression "while you're resting," it takes me back to my childhood because my grandfather used to tell me that too! HAHAHAHA.
S: They didn't believe in idle time.
D: Oh no!
S: If you didn't have nothing else to do while you were resting, you go shuck corn, take it off the cobs, feed the horses and the chickens or whatever it is. But you always—,,cause you got—they stopped at 11:30 to eat lunch. They went back to work at 1:00. But in that hour and a half you might be sittin' in a tree resting but you takin' corn off the cob or something like that, so... [chuckling] to feed the animals.
D: Now what—when we talked to people at Vermillion corporation, they actually had a drying shed at [Belle Isle].
S: Mm hm. Yeah.
D: So, we've got these furs. Now did a fur buyer come regularly, or did you have to go into Perry or Abbeville?
S: In those times we brought 'em out.
D: Brought 'em out.
S: We brought 'em out. Uh...over the years, some of the buyers would come to the camp. I know uh, [Burnelle Conch], years ago, he went around uh—Wayne—I got a cousin—Wayne's—he bought fur for oiling, he'd go to summer camps and pick up fur. Uh, but in those times, they'd just bring 'em out.
D: When you talk about a camp, you guys had a camp that you used specifically during the trapping season?

S: Yeah. Yeah. I built one at Mulberry, trapped that for several years. I mean you lived—you ate, slept, and dried fur in the same house. I mean they were separated but you know—cause, you know—kinda hard to eat dinner with the smell in your kitchen, but, uh you always—you had everything—everything you needed was right there in that building. [For me], corporation and Louisiana Fur are the same thing...They had some people that working for Louisiana Fur and they would—they lived there at the camp and then they had a drying shed that they dried all their fur in.
D: Well some [places], I know that Thibodeaux—uh Terrebonne parish area, for example, when they had a trap—people went out trapping, in many cases the whole family went—
S: Oh yeah.
D: Was that the case here?
S: Well, it wasn't right for us, but I know some people over here—the [Laissez] family. When we went to school [INAUDIBLE] graduated one of them. When they got trapping season, whole family went to marsh. And we went to [Mt. Cormelly] Catholic School, well they said, "Okay, this is what we gonna cover in school for these three months." Well they brought their books. While they were "resting", they studied. And they each had trap lines—the girls and the boys both. They each had trap lines and they—I mean they helped support the family. In those times if you didn't work, if you were a kid—I mean I didn't have to do that but a lot of the folks around here—If you had kids and they made money trapping, it went towards supporting the family.
D: Mm hm.
S: I mean if you needed something they'd buy it for you, but I mean, it went to support the family. It wasn't: "It's mine, I made it." Nuh uh, It wasn't none of that. It went in the pot.
D: Now, um, do you remember when commercial hunting...?
S: No. I heard 'em talk about commercial hunting, and some of the books I saw—where you see this pirogue fella pulling his pirogue drowning a duck just hanging out all over the place—yeah, the limit at one time was 25 ducks and geese. And at that time, they were selling—man, New Orleans was buying the Hell out of them.
D: Oh yeah! There was a place called the Dudley Lease. It's Licoscene Refuge now.
S: Mm hm.
D: And the Dudley—He was a Brit, came from Britain. And uh, he actually had a school and uh a group of skilled marksmen—he got 100 shells a day, and he'd come back with 100 ducks. And it was legal—
S: Yeah yeah!
D: It was perfectly legal, but they shipped out—well I read they had to use like an oxen to pull the barrels of duck out to a siding and they'd load it and get it on a train to go to New Orleans. We were just—it's a part of Louisiana's history...we're trying to get a little handle on because it was really important.
S: Well it was something that, you know...The Acadians when they moved down here, they lived off the land. And if they could make a dollar selling a duck, or an alligator, or a muskrat, or something like that, they were self-sufficient. They lived off the land. And if they needed something that they couldn't get off the land, they took that money and they bought it—when they could find it. You know, that's something that I—I'm tickled

at...Where I live. If things got bad, I could survive. If you live in a concrete jungle, you ain't gonna survive. 'Cause you don't know how to do it.
C: Well, talking about surviving, what did you eat when you were a child growing up in the Chenier?
S: Well, we used to all the time say it: Any kind of meat you wanted to eat, you had it at Trinity. I mean they had sheep and they had goats and they had cattle, they had pigs, they had chickens, they had geese, they had ducks—I mean they [to raise] just about anything that you wanted—any kind of meat you wanted to eat, well you know—like we used to do when I used to trap—or raise cattle—Well I ate beef all summer long. But when it got down to wintertime, we'd eat deer and ducks and geese and—I mean it was just, you know, whatever was handy.
D: Mm hm. Now what about the garden?
S: Well—
D: I assume you had a garden out there.
S: Oh Lord. Years ago, that's how they survived in the summertime. They grew patches of watermelon, cantaloupe—My great-grandfather was uh...If you wanna call him a horticulturalist? He loved to grow, you know, oranges, and peaches, and persimmons, and grapefruit, and all this kinda stuff—He grew that for market.
D: Well, I wanted to ask you about the watermelons—I had heard about cantaloupes but I've seen in the Abbeville Paper, ads from long, long ago where people from the Cheniers were sending watermelons [INAUDIBLE]—
S: We were sending it. Uh we would grow 'em on the island and then load 'em up and I remember getting out of school—we got out of school in the afternoon, and we knew when we got back that they had a [lugger] out there [Pentecostal] City, loaded down with cantaloupes and watermelons—we had to go unload it until dark—until we got the stuff out. Then my dad and my uncle—they each had a route. Daddy would take Abbeville route and my uncle would take the Capital Route, and they stores knew, that whenever those melons were coming in, they were better melons than what they'd shipped from California, so they stopped buying those. Well when they were—when melons would start coming in, well I mean...And at good times, every street corner had a Mom-and-Pop grocery store. Well they'd go in there [INAUDIBLE]...50 cantaloupes or some odd 20—and they'd get rid of the load they'd come back to the little old shed across the road right here whenever we'd take 'em off the boat, we'd stack 'em in that shed. When they got—their route—the truck was empty, well they'd come back there and load that truck up again and go back.
D: Hm.
S: And we had people working for us over there that, you know they were getting ready, or getting some more ready to load on that lug that had come back. So when they got right out—and they run out here, well then they come back and pick up another load and come back. [Purple whole] peas, black-eyed peas, they'd bring that stuff in by the [gunnysack] full.
D: Hm.
S: Before we had canals, they did that over there, but the only way they could bring the produce, they had to go to Franklin with it. It wouldn't—they'd take schooners from in the front of the island, go all the way around, around [Kunk Blunk Bed] up in there and go up to Franklin. That was the only route to bring that produce to market. Well after a while,

they passed by what is now Southwest Pass, and they said, "Well, look...that's not very far across there." And it was just a trickle of water. They took crooked shovels and kinda opened it up to where they could pass some pulling skiffs through it, then they could start bringing that produce that way—go through Vermillion Bay and Old Vermillion River and come that way to start selling produce. And now you tell people that, you know, Southwest Pass always was the size it is and it never was that way, historically.
D: Now, these are reefs, you're talking about?
S: No, there's reefs in Southwest Pass but that trickle I'm talking about wiggled through the reefs.
D: Mm hm.
S: Years ago, before they dug Freshwater Bayou, and before they dug [Full Mile] Canal, you used to—if you went through Southwest Pass you had to know how to go through Southwest Pass. Because it was deep enough to pass the big boats and all that kinda stuff but you had to know that that reefs right here and you gotta cut back that way because the next reef was right there. [INAUDIBLE] Now it's a straight shot. But that was uh—that never was the size of this until man fooled with it.
D: Now, you used the term "crooked shovel."
S: Yeah.
D: Now I've heard of Mr. Dyson use that term in reference to [COVERED UP BY COUGHING]...de trénance, and you said "crooked shovel."
S: Mm hm.
D: And then you hear the term "mud boat."
S: Mm hm.
D: Alright and I—Carl and I have seen a mud boat. When you go over to the east, you get in what's called a "ditch-digger," a "trenance machine"—it's two airplane blades, it's saw. Now, have you seen a trenance machine on the Cheniers?
S: Uh...well I...
D: With the blades!
S: Not so much to change the tape, but Danny Richard, here, [Intracoastal] city, his dad had one.
D: Okay.
S: And he kept his ditches clean with that. They would not exactly dig the ditches with that, they would keep 'em clean with that. Years ago, before you had that machine, they would take crooked shovels—take a regular shovel and bend it to where you—like a hoe. And they would just run on each side of the ditch. And pull it back and forth. And they'd make it big enough to pass a pirogue. Then whenever you got industrialized to where you got little motors in these little mud boats, well then they'd put a little [lacue] motor in the pirogue and they'd go down these ditches and just "put-put-put-put" down the ditches. They would follow the natural flow of the water with these [sonances]. And then at the end where it would come into the stream, they would put flumes. Which is what we call 'em now, [fits grass weers]. To where they would keep the water at a certain time in the marsh for the rats and all this kinda stuff and then they would open it up and let it flow so that the vegetation can come back in the springtime and the summertime. In the wintertime it goes back down and they'd hold a certain amount of water on that marsh so they'd—for the rats and everything else. Now, natural marine fisheries would shoot you if

you did something like that. But that was the way the old people managed the marsh. And they always had good marsh. Now, we can't do that so we don't have the marsh.
D: Now, with Southwest Pass so crooked, and Carl and I know that during prohibition there was a little illegal alcohol coming in, particularly over west of us—east of us. 'Cause the Spanish—[de es Ninos]—they spoke Spanish. The mother ships all came from Cuba so they spoke Spanish. And New Orleans was a big market. Now the most important case here is something called the "I'm Alone"
S: Yeah. They sunk it right out here.
D: [COVERED WITH COUGHING]...and families won't talk about that, well that's okay. But we think that it was an important source of income and it was—it's all right to bring—nobody was offended. Now, there's one case over in St. Bernhard Parish where it was French Speakers. They brought this stuff in and the Mafia types shot somebody. They turned them in. Because the last place you wanted to go in the thirties was Angola!
S: [CHUCKLING] Yeah.
D: I mean you did not want to go to Angola. And then they left 'em alone. Because they could—they knew all the bayous. They knew all the tricks to bring it in, you know, and the places you could—I mean after all, Jean LaFitte taught 'em!
S: Mm hm. Yeah well of course.
C: But what kind of stories have you heard about prohibition here, and especially down in the [loan] incident because—
S: Well that—there was the talk about how they sunk it right here, and they said you would see some debris from it. [CHUCKLING]
D: HAHA! Just debris, that'll work, yes yes! Floating debris!
S: On the shoreline, you know, they were patrolling the beach. They were riding horseback up and down the beach. They would see the "debris" coming on the shoreline, 'course you know as coast-guard men and Cajuns they wouldn't fool with none of that.
C: No.
D: No, no, no.
C: No.
S: Uh huh. They made that on and they knew what it was.
D: [Laughing] Well, my family, from Oklahoma, all right, and all of my family on my dad's side were basically cowboy in their roots. Um, Show Webster was a very well-known rodeo cowboy—cousin of mine—according to family legend, I'm not sure.
S: Oh yeah.
D: Our family's legends are bigger than our family. Well, my grandfather, they told me was really good at making the appropriate distillery spirits in their backyard. So I'm fully familiar of how this works because my grandfather was very good at creating extra income during prohibition.
S: Well...everybody could use and extra dollar, you know?
D: Yes!
S: I mean, especially during prohibition.
D: Yeah!
S: Naw, you know, and that's something they did over there—what they had over there is what they call—it's a grape. It's a wild grape on this island.
C: Not muscadine?

S: No, it's not a muscadine, it's a wild grape. Now, a muscadine, you could take it and eat it. Don't do that with these. It'd burn all your lips.
D: Hm!
S: You couldn't—now if you took it and crushed it, we'd make jellies and all kinda stuff with it. It's edible, but the skin of it is acid in the skin and it'll burn the Hell out of you. But now, they take those grapes—usually in July—first part of July, end of June—and that's when they ripen. And it's—it harvest those grapes. It makes that wine for the winter. And you know, the used to bury it under the house—it stays cool. And I've gotta go back, because that old hotel—Rita demolished it—and I wanna go around where them posts were to see if I can find that stuff—
D: Hahahaha.
S: A jug of that stuff and put it in one of these croc drawers with a cork on it. And after about 100 years, it oughta be aged gooood.
D&C: HAHAHAHA.
D: Well, talking about the resort, I have, I've seen photographs from Chenier, unloading watermelons on—from a cart into a schooner, a small post-office which was very small, your school, and the resort. Was there ever a church there?
S: Yes. Yes. There is a piece of land that the Dyson family donated to Bishop [Jomar] in Lafayette. [INAUDIBLE], Lafayette. It was built right next to where my Daddy's camp was. As a matter of fact, it's on Daddy's land 'cause Daddy bought the land from the Dyson's. Uh...years ago, we needed a church here, so they tore the church down, and they—we needed to add to the church, so they tore that church down and added to this church over here.
D: Here in Esther.
S: In Esther.
D: Wow.
S: Yeah, the parishioners went there, one weekend and just tore it down and loaded it on a barge and brought it all here, and they added to the church here with the church from over there--because there wasn't any people living that would go to church over there anymore so they got--granted permission from Bishop Jomar to tear it down, to add to this church over here. Yeah, that was church, school, dance hall, and all...everything--I mean that was--it was a thriving community. More people lived there than there was on Pecan Island. Actually living there.
C: Hm. When did the family close the hotel?
S: Poo, it was some odd time after the 40's...no...when did the great flood in New Orleans? Um „27.
C: Right.
D: Okay
S: Okay. That was a resort before „27, and shortly after „27, but whenever they built up the Mississippi levees—and people don't believe that today because they don't understand what built all this delta back here. Whenever they blew up that levee over there, you had about uh—oh, three quarters to a mile in nothin' but mud.
D: Hm.
S: Right here in Vermillion Parish. That's a long ways from New Orleans. All that silt came and deposited there and the resort was gone. Well the resort tried to build jetties out there to get beyond the mud to where the bailers could go out in the—haha...relatively

cleaner water—it's not Florida water because we're influenced by the Mississippi river on this side—so—but to get out of mud—but it, you know, when you try to build something in the gulf, waves come along and just tears it all up and they just figured it was a lost cause. People started saying, "Well now, If I'm gonna play in the mud I can do that at the house, I don't have to go to coast to do that." So it just shut down.
D: Yeah, but I've read a really interesting piece on how your family used to get fish.
S: [snort/chuckle]
D: Explain how you used to get fish for the resort.
S: [Seine].
D: But Carl and I have heard the term "seine." Is it 1,000 feet? 500 feet?
S: 500 foot sand.
C: And how many people did you have pulling that thing?
S: Heh. Just about every nigger you could find!
D: Heh heh.
S: But it was uh...they were particular about sand. They had people—they had a stick. And you had to hold that stick straight up, 'cause you got a lead line at the bottom and a float line at the top. So you had to hold that thing straight up so that the float stayed at the—the weight stayed at the bottom and the float stayed at the top. That was the worst job of all. Was—every time that stick would do that you got hollered at to straighten up the stick. Well, you had a couple of people doing that but then the rest of the people be sure to go along the edge of the sand, be sure that it's on the ground. And then, Buddy, whenever they decide "well we're gonna pull it to shore," well then everybody had to get along to edge of that lead line and be sure it stayed on the bottom so the fish wouldn't get out of the bottom—they'd pull that up on the...pull that up on the shore. They had an oxen pulling a cart. They'd load that thing up, bring it to the house, and then they'd clean 'em. The good fish, the fish that wasn't any good—they'd put that around their fruit trees—fertilizer. Smelled like Hell after a while but that was fertilizer.
D: Now. Did you ever use animals to pull the seine? Like a horse or an oxen? It was always done—
S: By hand.
D: As my daddy said, "Right Here" [patting noises].
S: That's right.
D: Okay.
S: You're right. We always did pull it by hand.
D: And it was almost every day—every other day?
S: Oh no it—Well, it—usually—well...there wasn't refrigeration.
D: I know, that's why I ask.
S: They made that topsoil—[tossle] water—like garfish and stuff like that and they'd strip it in long strips and hang it on the pole line, you know, cure—
C: Dry it.
S: Dry it. You know, that would suffice when they wouldn't have time to fish. But every two or three days they were...just like go on the Little Hills and get oysters. Take that ox cart and go down to Little Hills, which is cheaper--it was almost to Southwest Pass.
D: Right.
S: They'd take that ox-cart and go down there, walk on the reef, pick up oysters, put 'em in sacks, put it on the ox-cart, come back. Every two or three days.

D: Hm. And did you ever grow cotton?
S: Yep. Grew cotton there for quite a few years.
D: Did you have a gin?
S: Noooo. It was all hand picked, stacked on a boat—on a lugger, for a [plastic] town.
D: That town would be Abbeville?
S: Yeah.
D: And the—oysters really interested Carl and I because when you look at [Duprees], 1869...
S: Mm hm.
D: Alright. We think that's oldest seafood—continuously operated seafood restaurant in Louisiana.
S: I believe it is. See old [Mershamat]—the man that owned all the furniture north of oysters for Duprees, and I believe Mershamat basically was an owner at one time of Duprees...Uh, he would go to Little hills—
D: Now what is Little Hills?
S: Little Hills is just West of Southwest Pass.
D: That's on Audubon property?!
S: Uh...Yeah.
D: Got it.
S: Yeah, 'cause you see, Audubon Property—I got some maps, I'll show it, but Audubon property, it leaves from Shinutig—
D: Right.
S: Going east. Then you got a school section mixed up in there, then you got a state wildlife exhibit.
D: Right, right, right.
S: But now State Wildlife comes over, just behind Lake Portage and then cuts back—
D: I got! I got!
S: And it cuts back to Vermillion Bay but then East of that, all the way to Southwest Pass is still Audubon. So all the shoreline basically is Audubon—
D: Alright.
S: 'Cause the state wildlife don't come all the way to the shoreline it—just south of Lake Portage. And all that stuff in the back [full of] Audubon. They would go out there and get oysters and Daddy used to—you know...a lot of times to tie it was up and they said they pullin' oysters—tacks of oysters—now they wouldn't put two or three oysters in the bucket and bring them to the shore...and draggin' that stuff. And you know, kids doing this, you know, but it wasn't no such thing as being a kid. You worked just like everybody else.
D: So we have...we had oysters, we had vegetables, we had grapes, we were also growing cotton.
S: Mm hm.
D: Carl and I have read that when you go from Johnson Bayou to Chenier-Ortigue, one time that was all being produced in some amount of cotton.
S: Well, that's—you got—on the [ridges] you had some.
D: Right.
S: On the ridges.

D: We've also been told, on the south side of [White Lake], locals call it "The High Marsh." And in that High Marsh strip they were growing cotton as well.
S: I [INAUDIBLE] cotton—they were growing a lot of watermelons as well. Right on the shore—the lake shore. That was all high. I mean we used to raise cattle there. We'd drive cattle from Shinutig to White Lake.
D: Kay.
S: North side and South Side.
D: Alright.
S: And we'd raise cattle in there—that was big old, high sand, you know, ridges like along the shoreline. Now it's all even with the marsh. It's all gone.
C: Now, you drive them over land? From ridge to ridge? or did you have to barge them?
S: We'd drive them to Pecan Island and go from Pecan Island to the lake.
D: Well there's a canal that comes from White Lake to the backside of Pecan Island.
S: Yeah that's the...mail...uh...
D: That was the mail boat canal. And it's got a little levee. Not a big levee, a little levee. Could you run your cattle along that little levee?
S: Well, see that canal was dug after all this happened.
D: Really? Okay.
S: And that was—all this stuff where they used to raise cattle on the shoreline—uh lakeshore—they didn't have all that. In later years when they dug the Mail Canal, well then they built that for what is it—to bring the mail to Pecan Island and for the people of Pecan Island to get in and out. You know for a long time the only way you could get to Pecan Island was from Lake MacArthur.
C: Hm.
D: Hm.
S: And then they made it a little closer where they could go to Little Prairie—at uh...Little Prairie at the bridge where it crosses [Scoom-pie]. They could go there and then they had a remnant of the road from there to [Fork-it] Island and people could go on the [time].
D: Now, you know why the term "schooner" was chosen for Schooner Bayou?
S: I don't know. I don't know. Why—that was the only natural stream!
D: Okay...
S: Okay. What Schooner Bayou did—Schooner Bayou left Grand Lake, you know Marenthal—the Marenthal River—and followed through Grand Lake through Cullivan Lake on into uh...another little lake goes through there and then that's into White Lake, and Schooner Bayou came through Little Prairie, it followed it until it crosses where we know now, Freshwater Bayou, and it come into Vermillion Bay—Little Vermillion Bay, which is part of Vermillion Bay. Then it would follow Vermillion Bay a little bit until it got to Buck Point and then it would cut around and that's where the Vermillion River met Vermillion Bay. You would follow Vermillion River up. There are a lot of people—I went out there with a fellow from [Le Coulis] and he called me, he wanted me—people from United Foundation wanted to go look at the marsh so they asked me if I had the time to go bring 'em. And they started questioning just how this whole system—how it would drain, how was the hydrology? I said, "Well, when you left Abbeville and you wanted to go to Pecan Island you would go down Vermillion River and you'd go to where they call "the Cut-Off"—it was just a place in Fairmount Lake, and they would take

another little Bayou and go through Billy Lake, you'd follow Billy Lake until you got to Billy Bayou, and then we'd wiggle around and we'd go to where—the "fork" they call it—the forks would fork off and one would go to the front of Pecan Island and the other would go to Freshwater Bayou—Not what we know as Freshwater Bayou today—Freshwater Bayou was—looked like they followed some snake whenever they made Freshwater—[do this or]...and that was where all this stuff drained. And back this way you have Bayou Chien, which would come out here and hit—what is North Prong today—and follow along it and come out and it would go into Little [INAUDIBLE] from that way so it could drain on this side. Vermillion River drain on this side. He said, "That's kinda interesting." I said, "Well, you know..."
D: That's the way it worked!
S: That—and we finally got out of a battle now with Lafayette. We wanna put structures in what they call the "Four Mile Canal." there's a Four Mile Canal we dug 80 foot wide and 8 foot thick. And today it's 16 foot wide and 1,000 foot wide. And it's a conduit—It's kinda like our MRGO. It comes right out the bay right into Vermillion Parish. And that's where your [INAUDIBLE] come from. We wanna put uh—maybe a swing barge now like that in Terrebonne Parish. Shrink it down and put—you know, storm's coming, and you close it. Not that you won't get any water over it but they would stop that 16 foot of conduit bringing water in—
D: Mm hm.
S: And then people said, "I—you know, we're gonna flood." I said, "Folks. Before you dug that damn thing, how you think the water went out? There's no more land in Lafayette Parish than they had before. It all drained before, why you worried about it flooding in Lafayette Parish if we do something here. And all it's gonna do is pass through the old Vermillion River, which nobody uses anymore. It's gonna half-way silt it in. It would probably gonna scour it out and help the marshes around it at the same time." "Oh, we worried about flooding." But they don't understand the natural hydrology.
D: Now that's always the case. Do you ever remember a name, Oric? Is Oric a name that you recall from your childhood?
S: Mm hm.
C: Well, I have a name for you too. And I don't know if it affected areas this far east, but there was a time when there was something of a war going on between Abram Caplin and the people living in Grand Chenier, uh, about him damming up the Mermentau River to—
S: I heard something about that years ago but my computer program—byte got lost or something—
D&C: Hahahaha.
S: But uh, I've heard, you know, people talk about it.
C: Mm hm.
S: Because they wanted to kinda create a reservoir basically.
C: Right.
S: By puttin' some kind of a dam in the Mermentau River to where—Uh, Cap'n was a big land owner, and he owned rice mills and all this kinda stuff so he wanted to create a reservoir, if you wanna call it, for them to have freshwater for irrigation—
C: For an irrigation system, right.

S: And then it was time to have pumping stations where AVRI, which is a water supplier to a lot of the people here—you didn't have your own pumps, you used this AVRI canal, and every so often they had a big ole pump—you could hear 'em when they were using 'em: "pouh-pouh-pouh," the old engines would just barely turn over but they were pumping water. And they would pump water—and Hell, they'd just—I used to pass back here and go back and come back that way all the way from almost Fork-It Island over there. And the water went this way and then went back that way, but everybody was furnished water by a little gate. If you needed water, that waterman would go open you a gate. And if a lot of people needed water we'd open a little bit. And you couldn't go touch that gate. So—and they did the same thing around Gadon...around Lake Arthur the way they wanted to dam this thing off so that their pump there could pump into the water system that supplies the water over there. But, like I said, I heard talk of it, but—
C: Okay. Anyway, actually what you gave me was a lot more than I asked!
D: Yeah, and wasn't Amanda Hanks your aunt?
S: Yeah.
D: Carl went on a tour with her on Highway 14?
S: Uh huh
D: And I've been looking at the maps on Highway 14. You know, Highway 82 sometimes—82, yeah—hugged the coast highway?
S: Yeah.
D: Or you know, the "eroding road"?
S: [Laughing]
D: Well we're gonna rename Highway 14, that's the Reclamation Road. Because everything south of that when you look at it, has been turned to rice fields. So it all looks like—not everybody, I'm not saying from all of that—but there was a chunk of that that was marsh at one time.
S: Well this was all marsh. Thousands of years ago, this was the Gulf of Mexico...Millions of years—a long time ago. The old Florida/Mississippi River is what built all of this. Before our people decided they wanted to divert all the water out of the Mississippi River out past New Orleans.
D: Well, what's intriguing is, we know that there was, I mean—recent Hurricane events have shown how New Orleans can flood. New Orleans is built essentially around levees; it's reclaimed.
S: Yeah.
D: Well there's a lot of reclamation that's not urban. Because some of the early reclamation was for rice!
S: Yeah.
D: And it stretches, well, from Abbeville almost to Lake Charles.
S: Uh huh.
D: And there are some big pieces of real estate just south of Becker. Becker? Is that right? Banker. Banker! Big. They could throw an airfield out there. And then right up at that boundary, right at the boundary between where you have rice and your marsh, if you look real carefully, there's a whole series of places like the Florence Hunting Club, the Marsh Club, Sweet Lake Hunting Club, I mean and if you take a straight-edge, you can just about connect the dots, because they're right at the boundary of rice--imagine that--

and the marsh, so you got two habitats that you can hunt. It's really a fascinating twist on this whole concept of reclamation.
S: Mm hm.
D: And pumps! Oh ho!
S: They got some pumps.
D: Ho!
S: That's what we keep telling them about, uh, you know, I'm involved quite a bit with hurricane protection and restoration. You know we said, why are we gonna create another footprint in the marshes? Leave the marshes alone. Use the existing footprints. And most all of them existing footprints are pump-off. So if you would capture that footprint and build on that footprint, you already got the pumps. If it's over the tops you ain't gotta spend the money to build some more pumps. Each individual landowner or pump it out themselves. But it's like talking to a brick wall. They said, "That's not where we want it, we wanna put it right here." Well, that ain't where it goes! And I said we put uh--where I kinda drew a parish hurricane protection plan. And I kinda mimicked the state plan, to an extent. I wanted to make it mesh with the state plan. But I used all existing features off your canal levees, natural ridges, intercoastal canal levees...you know, just to where I'm not altering the hydrology anymore, it's already altered, I'm not gonna impact that, so we'd just, I said, "Let's build on what's there already so that whenever you decide you want to do something like that you have the regulatory agents that said, "Oh that, well you're covering up wetlands!" They already covered up, so we just gonna build on what's there. And that's what I keep trying to get 'em to do and like you said, if you follow that straight line, it just, it's—from Iberia Parish all the way to Cameron, that's the way it is.
D: It is! It is the way it is!
S: And but they don't look at that, they say, "Well we're gonna ring-levee Gadon, we're gonna ring levee Capital, and..." Why? They flooding! First place, Gadon's already got a ring-levee around it and a pumping system. So, you know I know I'm getting off the subject but--
D: No, no, no, it's part of the story. When did the road connect Abbeville-Perry to Pecan Island? A real road.
S: Hoo...Lord, Lord, Lord...I don't remember...
C: Now you said early on when you were a child there was a little bit of a road that went south of Fork at [Ireland] right?
S: Yeah.
C: Okay.
S: Yeah, that was--well you had people that lived Prairie, that you know, they had a trail, if you wanna call it that people could get back--they might have to use horse and buggy but they could get--they could come out. And then, you know, whenever the state finally decided, "Well I'm gonna build a road to Pecan Island, well then they actually built an actual road.
D: And do you remember using buggies?
S: I remember using a buggy at [Chinuatig]. We moved to the industrialized part if you wanna call this industrialized—
C: Well when did you move?
S: I was six years old. So that was two years ago.
[ALL LAUGHING]

S: Would I lie to Mr. Don Davis?
D: Nooooo! You tell the truth every time. But again it's a very interesting part of this part of the world: The use of buggies. When you think of a buggy today you think of Mennonites and Amish. I mean they drive buggies. You sometimes see Buck Wagons because of television, and Riflemen, and Bonanza, but a buggy to go to church, to me, growing up in the San Francisco Bay area is almost an alien thought, and yet it was an integral part of the region, they were manufactured here—that's why we ask about the barges because somebody had to build them...
S: Mm hm.
D: And they were a very important part of this, let's call it "Sunday Socializing."
S: Yeah...
D: And it's just—Carl, because he grew up on a prairie, he is very familiar, but when you get to Baton Rouge, them people don't have a clue!
S: Well, Don, I remember—I don't—I mean I was—I can just barely remember this: My grandmother and grandfather on Momma's side were from Youngsville, okay? We'd go there on Sundays. And Buddy, whenever you went there on Sundays, they had a hitchin' post around the front of the church. And everybody went—I mean not everybody, but a lot of people—the country people—came to church in a horse and buggy. They had a place in Abbeville, uh, what the Hell was his name? Right about where uh, Gulf Coast Bank is, uh...there was a stable right there. And you'd go to Abbeville and when I was a kid we'd go by—car—old model T's—but you'd still see buggies [stylin'] on the streets. I can remember buggies in town.
D: Mm hm.
S: And how many people they got—three a lot of them—driving along side with a Model T and blowin' horns and scarin' the horses and the horses tearin' up the wagons, and you know...I mean, it was—
C: Now, there was also a problem starting those things. People very often broke an arm starting those things.
S: Hoo, Lord. We had a generator after—well the hotel was still going. We had an old Cola generator, that's when we started getting "industrialized"—to run the hotel and the dance hall. And they had a crank on that thing. Hoo! How many people got their arms broken on that thing? It just—and the boats, at that time, they had cranks on 'em. When it finally got to tractors, and there were no big tractors but yeah, crank. And whenever they came out with batteries and started everybody cheered because man that thing—crankin' on that thing—
C: But in the newspapers when those first appeared, they kept reporting every week somebody broke an arm started them.
D: Well, one of the things that we're looking at is that, when you start looking at the Chenier's or the Delta Plain Marshes, boats are critical.
S: Ho, yeah!
D: Boats are absolutely critical. Alright. If you—If there—you can look at this sequentially. The first boats were oar powered. Alright?
S: Mm mm. [Prudent's] Gift, they'd call 'em.
D: That's it. Second, you added a sail. Now it might be a single mast, double mast, but you added a sail. The third is you took a skiff and you put a motor in it. Now we think it was a model T or A.

S: Mm hm, T.
D: The Model T was about 20 horsepower. Right?
S: Yeah.
D: Now, other than calling Deerborn, which I'm going to do, I can't find out how much it weighed. Because your weight tells us your boat has to support--probably center console mounted—that weight.
S: Mm hm.
D: And it was your own ingenuity--put a transfer box on to drive a propeller—
S: Most of them were direct drives.
D: Direct Drives.
S: When you crank it, you better be ready because it's going.
D: Okay.
S: There wasn't no clutches on 'em.
D: Giddyup!
S: I mean, whenever you crank—,,cause it's usually—they had [magnetas] on them in those times—it wasn't points and all this kinda stuff, so if that thing was right, and it wasn't foggy and [erath]—
D&C: [LAUGHING]
S: Whenever you—all you had to do was find dead-center and hit it and it would start. But you better be ready. And you better not have it on [Maxine], you better have it on Idle because she was gone. But you know a lot of people—and you look today—they got [INAUDIBLE] 200 part engines on them. Those times, people wasn't in no big hurry. The boat was to do a job. It wasn't, "How fast can I get over there?"
D: Mm hm.
S: Time was—I mean, time had value in those times but people were more low-key, you know, "I got fifty traps a run, I'm get up at daylight and go run my traps. It'll take me til...I get back and take care of my stuff. If I had to go check my cows if it take me til noon it take me til noon." You know, they had a schedule, and they knew how long it took them, and if they went with a little mud boat or they went in a pirogue they knew how long it took 'em.
D: Now, did you family make their own pirogues?
S: No.
D: Okay.
S: We had somebody to build a pirogue.
D: Because when you think of how important the boats are and everything you did, somebody had to build them. Now often, on Bayou Lafourche for example, if you wanted to put a motor in your boat you went and did it! Now there may be a shipyard that could help you, but generally speaking, one man, one boat. Other places: "I got the skill to do it, I'll do it for you." And there's a big difference when you start thinking about how these things evolve. We're trying to get in our head, you know, it's one thing to have a motor but somebody had to put it in there—somebody had to get the motor here!
S: They had to get the motor here and you can't just put a motor in boat.
D: No! No!
S: I mean that motor has to be—to work right, it has to be a certain distance from the back to allow for the angle of the shaft, plus it also has to have—it can't have too much angle 'cause then you burn the engine out, because the oil is not gonna lubricate. So it's

not a thing of, "I got a motor, here's a wheel and a shaft, I'm gonna put it in a boat and it's—
D: No, and that's absolutely critical to the story we're building.
S: Yeah, 'cause I built a mud boat one time. And brother, that was a nightmare. I had the boat, but I wanted to put an engine in it to run some ditches. And poooh. Needless to say, I didn't keep it long.
D&C: [Laughing]
S: I found my sucker! I said, "Enough of this is enough!"
C: Guys will hold on just a second for me to swap out
Woman: Everything's ready.
D: Oh ok! Notice how fast I pop up! Carl doesn't drink coffee, but I do. I love hot coffee.
S: Oh I do too, I mean, I might have a cup with you!
C: Okay...
D: I'll pour this one for you if you got another cup.
S: I got another cup.
D: Now did you grow up on the Cheniers?
W: Oh no, I'm a city girl, I'm from Delta.
C: Ahh!
D: Oh yes!
W: Down the road.
D: Oh yes! Yes, yes!
C: That's your donkey?
W: Shrimping country.
D: Oh yes, yes...and uh, Jefferson Island Salt Dome...
W: My daddy used to work in the salt mine. I used to ride with this lady that would go house to house of the wives whose husbands worked there and collect their dinners in buckets, little pots, whatever you had, and I would go down and get 'em for 'em. And then we'd go down to the mine--
S: Do you want another rootbeer, tea, or something?
C: No sir, I'm good. Thank you.
W: Bring them all of their dinners--
S: Beer or something?
D&C: Hahaha.
C: We may get to that.
S: Well I don't know I believe we still got three or four cans in there! I don't drink it but my son—I usually keep it in there for him. And I am not lyin' to ya!
D: No, I know, I got the expert right here. She tells me that.
S: Oh, she knows I don't drink.
W: And when he said he was...what's the word?
S: That's what it is?
W: Skimpy? Cheap, in other words, he is true about that.
C: Oh, a miser?
S: Hey, look, I'm a miser at heart.
W: Miser, that's the word.
S: That's what kept together in the police jury all the time. I've been working with coastal restoration for 19 years now and I said, we're getting more done because we volunteer to

go up and get things done than you paying an engineer to go get all that stuff done. I said, you know, "I'm a miser at heart." If I can get the same job done for nothing, I'm gonna go do it—that's what I wanna do.
D: Well and that's the way it should be.
S: But it's--because it's all about money today.
D: Oh ho! I listen to the czar at the Chenier Planes Symposium. He talked about all the money he got. And now, Sheryl, I was on my best behavior, I didn't say anything.
S: [Laughing] I bet you were bitin' you tongue though!
D: Oh man, I was sittin' outside, I said, "I think I better leave." And so—„Cause it's one thing to have money, but that's not what we need here. We need decisions to move forward, and if you have some money, fine but let's move forward 'cause we've been on the treadmill long enough!
S: Whatchu talkin' about?
D: And I was just saying I don't wanna get in trouble. I just don't want—„Cause I do get—every now and then I get kinda—push the envelope a bit—
S: You talkin' about Garrett?
D: Yeah.
S: Uhhh.
D: Yeah, "I got 300 million dollars." And what I was gonna ask him, I said—this is what I was gonna say: "What do you do with the interest?"
W: Mm. [Chuckling].
S: That goes in the slush fund.
D: Eeuhh. Well I wasn't gonna—I just gonna ask the question.
S: Don't you know? I mean, I know you wanted him to answer the question...
D: I wanted it on the record! But you just stay away, and you know, the things you're telling us here right now, uh, are going to help scholar scientists 50 years from now—
C: Well, hopefully before that.
S: I'm [double] to read that in 50 years! [Chuckling]
D: Maybe, a little sooner, Carl and I got a couple of things we're working on.
S: Well, I plan on being here for another 50.
D: Hey, I plan to make 116 and when I get that old I'm gonna get 20 more.
S: Oh well, hey, whenever that happens we're gonna have us a party.
D: You got that right!
S: Shit.
D: I'm for that!
S: Say we'll find us each a girlfriend and we're gonna go party.
D: Hey, don't be going into that...
S: Hahahaha.
D: No going down that road!
W: [INAUDIBLE]
[All Laughing]
W: There's no way in Hell I'm letting him get away with that!
D: Now, now, when you, okay, again, when my family would buy cattle, they'd go to a sale and buy cattle. But it's [known] as a Brayma--Or Brahmah. Uh--in mid-west it was just—
S: [Earthwood], something like that?

D: Yeah. So when you go—when you go—well and I mean this with the utmost respect. You lost your herd, now you gotta rebuild a herd. How do you do that?
S: Well, what you try to do is to look at what's available. What we did, we went and bought uh, 45 head. Well we went uh—this fella had a bunch of them for sale. So we went and met with them and said, okay I could use that heifer and that heifer, and that heifer--they could be black, white, pink, green, it don't make any difference in the color, as long as they have that trait. You know you don't want something too pure you don't want pure Brahma, you want just a mix to where--right now most of what we have are Angus/Brahma mixed, which is fairly hardy, and, again, being a miser at heart, they payin' more for black calves than they are for white calves. So you know, you kinda look at what's available and if you get some Brahma and Herfwood Mix, it's good, that would work alright, but you don't want something that--uh, too much Herfwood. And you look at a lot of the cattle at the market and if they're real hairy, you know, curly hairy, we don't want that. We want 'em pretty slick to where they--you know they don't have too much of that registered breed in them. It's more leading towards the Brahma side, to where they slicker. But you get one every once in a while. I mean hell, you put a bull with 'em and you end up getting one of those curly things or that--but that's the one that goes to the sale.
D: Now, do you have you own bull?
S: Yeah, well I lost mine the other day and I went and bought another one but I bought one from a fella in Henry, so that's basically uh, he runs cattle all the way to the Intracoastal Canal. So it's kinda the same environment if you wanna call it, as we got over there. So, you know I try to buy from people I know where their cattle are at…to where that was raised when that environment—I can tolerate that.
D: Now, you mentioned the Millers. That's Dr. M. O. Miller.
S: M. O. Miller.
D: Alright. We interviewed a fella who suggested now and I'm not sure I believe it that he had 400 bulls. Either that's a lot of bull or that's no bull I don't know what that is--
S: He got—that's very possible.
D: Really?
S: Oh very possible. That man had cattle? I don't know how many head of cattle he got. Well I know somebody told me he lost in the thousands of head for [Audrey]. I used to trap mulberry, when my camp was over there, and I got to be good friends with Dr. Miller. You know and he said, you know, you see some problems with my cows—that O'Neil—not O'Neil, that...Roland Copaw used to be his—took care of his cattle. He said, "Let Roland know, we'll come see about that." I'd a looked buggy if I'd have seen one of his cows bogged or something like that, well I'd rope 'em, pull 'em out the mud, you know tryin' to help 'em, save 'em. And you'd look on the levees in the wintertime and half the damn things standing there were bulls! I mean there were a lot of cows there but you'd look on the levee I guess they did their job and they didn't have nothing else to do so they were standing on the levee, but you'd look across there and he, if he went through branding his calves and all this kind of stuff and they said, "I want that to be a bull." It'd be the shabbiest lookin' thing you want but, "I want that as a bull." He didn't have none of this fancy bred bulls and all this kinda stuff, so all his bulls were raised—no, I say all—most of his bulls were raised from his herd. And I guess he had enough of a herd to where he didn't really degenerate his herd because he was, you know—if you got 500 bulls and

10,000 head of cattle there's not gonna be much degeneration. But he had a lot of bulls. Yeah pretty large.
D: Well, he built some of the first staggered ditches.
S: Mm hm.
D: And then the Grey family built the dump. The dump came out of Johnson's bayou, almost straight shot of [the air] place out of south of [INAUDIBLE]. And it was the longest staggered ditches. And of course, they ran a lot of cattle from the back side of Johnson Property and they still cut across the ravine, even thought the refuge, you know, there are little blocks just convenient that you can go this way and this way and go all the way across the Sabine with your cattle drive and not be on Sabine real estate. And I'm guessing he did that on purpose.
S: Yeah, very possible.
D: But he was a HUGE cattleman.
S: Oh lord, yes. Because he still got a lot of land. All that stuff from Bear Lake coming up from Highway 82. All that stuff between the lake and 82--he got a big chunk of land out...he got a big chunk of land in the front. Uh, [INAUDIBLE] big track in the front of Pecan Island, which right now is all open water, but you got a big track of land there. You got a big track of land in front of Shinuatig.
C: Now, when you were a kid, were people still dipping cows?
S: Yeah.
C: Can you tell us a little bit about the process? And also, I'd like to know, where most people doing it? Because—
S: Everybody was doing it!
C: Okay, 'cause—
S: You had a tick problem.
C: Right.
S: The only way you gonna get rid of ticks is to dip 'em. And we dipped--not dipping cattle—we dipped sheep, all the animals, we dipped 'em. I don't believe they dipped the hogs, but they dipped the sheep sure.
C: Now, how often would you dip cattle.
S: It depend a lot on the infestation. If you didn't have none, it didn't pay to dip 'em.
C: Hm.
S: Most of that that stuff was done—if you seen there was enough infestation then you'd dip 'em.
C: That's interesting, because I'm from St. Lander Parish and people up there were not enthusiastic about participating. And so the sheriff rounded up a bunch of people, you know the early 1920's and you see page after page of people who [deep] chores without non-compliance. But people here are generally—
S: Well, you gotta dippin' vats down here and that's one thing they—the UPA and DQ been chasin' around all this area, tryin' to find them old pits because they had arsenic in the water. Uh so but I—I mean what are you gonna do about it? If you can find one you can probably dig 'em up and maybe clean the salt out of it, but I mean, that was a common practice that it was legal to do that. I mean that's just the way you got rid of the tick problem.
C: Now for the solution that you put into the pit. Did that come ready-mixed or was that something people themselves—

S: You just put uh—what was it they put in there? I don't know exactly the chemical but you just put water in the thing and put the chemical in there. And I forget what they use...
C: But it was essentially a sack of mix that you put in the water?
S: A sack of stuff you just throw in there. If I remember, you know, all I remember was the cows running and jumping there, and swimming to the other side and you know...
C: But you'd run 'em through a chute to get 'em in the pit?
S: Yeah. There was a pit in the chute.
C: Ah. Okay.
S: And you'd run 'em through it and it would--boards where they could catch on it and get out. But it was deep enough to where when they hit it, they went under and then they come out the other side.
C: Hm.
S: Oh yeah. Yeah, we had one right next to the beach at [Shinutig].
C: Now, did you guys have a radio when you were growing up?
S: What are you talking about, a radio? Is there a record company in there? That kind of radio?
C: No, no the battery kind of radio—
S: Aw yeah. There were Motorola radios--used to have battery packs—big ole battery packs. And you would listen to the grand Ole Opry and uh...what's the name of that show?
W: Louisiana Hayride?
S: No it's uh...trying to think of the name of that show...But anyhow, it's talk shows, you know. Course they had to be, it's on the radio. Uh. they're certain programs you can listen to. Don't run that battery down! I mean, there was a certain time that you could sit down and listen to the radio, and other times it was turned off. Oh yeah, we—I remember them things.
C: Which stations could you catch?
S: Oh I don't remember the stations but that's uh...
C: But you said you could catch the Grand Old Opry?
S: Yeah. Oh it uh...[Super Buggy and Miley]. We'd listen to that. Jack Beany. You know, things like that, you know. I know that makes me sound like a moaner...
D: Oh, no, no, no! Being from California visiting my grandparents, my cousins who would visit my grandparents all the time, well I'm the new kid on the block. So my job was the turn the crank so you could listen to the radio, right? Well I thought this was great fun, but you know after a while, that fun wears off! Oh you know I'm having a great time here aren't I? As I turn? Well does anybody else—and they're just laughing at me because city kid's in here making—aw yeah I did that. One time. And then I figured out uh-uh! We will have a rotation here, I am not doing that all the time.
S: No, I know. We maybe didn't have one of those...I know like washing machines and stuff were all gasoline driven, you know when we got industrialized—got away from that [red barn]. But I—you could hear on the island, out of two or three of the washing machines on the island, you could hear that motor start and you said, "Well, so-and-so's washin' today!"
D: Hm. And now, how many people were—max—lived on the island?
S: We had about 20 families.
D: Families.

S: Families. The Schultz, and the Dices, and the Broussards. Let's see...the Abairs...Uh...there were some Whites, and of course us, and uh, the [Ragazzons]...hmph.
C: The LaPlace family, out there?
S: LaPlace had, uh, they were out there. We bought some land from the LaPlace's. They still have a piece of land over there. Paul LaPlace, the old man, uh and then his sons, uh, I believe there's only one of them left. Well Bob LeBlanc's wife was one of the girls, she died just recently, and the Elwood died too just recently—I believe there's only one of them left of the LaPlace bunch. But they had a piece of land out there. The [Sellers], like Red [Cellar], well his parents had some land over there. Red still has a little piece of land over there—15 acres at least, something like that. But that, you know, and in those times I guess they didn't have T.V. so at night, they used what night was used for. And—
D: So they had families.
S: They had families!
D: Yeah.
C: Well, talking about entertainment, you talked about the dance hall out there, mm hm. How often—were there balconies out there too or would everybody just gather sometime at the dance hall?
S: Well there's always somebody who is halfway and mechanically inclined, you know, I mean uh, musically inclined. And it might sound like a cat caught in the crack but it made noise and people danced, you know? Uh...every Saturday and Sunday they always had a dance.
C: And now, these were all locals that would play there.
S: Oh and some other guests. You know, a fella came from Lafayette or LaVille, whatever it is, and he was there and he knew how to scratch a fiddle—hey.
C: So whatever music you had depended on whoever showed up!
S: There wasn't a jukebox, no. So whoever showed up, and if nobody could, they'd dance with no music but they—there's always somebody had a little bit of musical talent and uh—
C: What kind of music would they play?
S: Well you know it's all French music, you know. There wasn't no opera. There wasn't no rap.
D: Hahaha. No hip-hop!
S: No, hip-hop.
W: What instruments did they use?
S: Heh, most of the time an accordion and a fiddle.
W: And a triangle?
S: And uh "Do-do-do-do-do-do-do."
C: Oh, a [juicar]?
S: Yeah.
C: Now did you ever hear of anybody name Basker Mouton?
S: Basker Mouton, name sounds familiar...
C: He was a fiddle player—supposedly trained lots of people who there went on and recorded.
S: Yeah, uh, heard of him—I don't know if that's not some of the same bunch we had at our RCD meeting in Lafayette one time? At Ms. Allen's?
W: Ms. Allen's?

S: 'Cause they'd make accordions.
W: Oh I [INAUDIBLE].
S: Yeah, I've heard the name, you know, I just...but because I can't carry a tune and a radio I don't know.
D: Now did you have any contact with Avery Island at all?
S: We had—well our parents did. Well, I still have contact with them, matter of fact next week we got a meeting with 'em, but uh, Daddy bought maybe 60 acres from the MacElainey. 'Cause they had a piece of land that came in within our land. So Daddy was big friends with Ned Simmons which is one of the older ones.
D: Mm hm.
S: And he ended up buying a six acre track that was Daddy owned—that he bought fron the LaPlace on one side and the Dyson's on the other side, so you had this 60 acre piece in between, that the MacElainey's owned, which was a Jean Fleur—Jean Lafitte Corporation at the time, uh he went and bought that land from the MacElainey's. And we were close with the MacElainey's.
D: Well the reason I brought it up—Carl and I were nosing around Tulane's library, we found and old map that shows land ownership. And not too far from Avery Island, there is a very large strip of land owned by the Arch Diocese of Baltimore.
S: Mm hm.
D: Not of Lafayette, not of New Orleans. In your memory. do you remember any families that may have given land to the Arch Diocese of Baltimore as opposed to—that's exactly—
S: I can't see—
D: That doesn't compute.
S: I don't know, years ago you had Daises, but you had to Arch Daises that ran all the other Diocese—which you still have that now, but I'm thinking, I mean you mentioned of that probably the Arch Diocese of Baltimore kinda was in charge of all these Daises that I [met]. So if somebody donated some land to the Diocese, it went under the Baltimore—
D: Okay
S: Uh...Arch Diocese.
D: It's just a curiosity in the Land Records that you try to get some handle on...Now, your aunt, Amanda Hanks? What happened to her papers? You know, she had a huge historical photography collection...
S: That old heifer took half of 'em.
D: The old heifer?
S: Rita.
D: Ah. Ah.
S: I had a lot of pictures. Well what it is when Amanda Hanks died she didn't have a will. She had a will but it wasn't signed so it basically was gonna be all our brothers and sisters in there, which the ones that are still alive, you know, they kinda divided everything she had. And we all got a bunch of pictures, a bunch of papers and all that kind of stuff. It's somewhere in the swamp over there, I don't know where. But there's still some of it uh, that uh, like Aunt Zoe, one of Aunt Amanda's sisters, she probably still has some of that stuff. She [safe] 'cause she lives in [Brobridge], so, Lafayette—
C: Well, we're more interested in just seeing that it's reserved.

S: Yeah. Yeah some of that stuff should be reserved...uh I'm pretty sure she's still got some stuff over there. I know, maybe Uncle Ralph, probably he didn't have any of this so maybe he didn't—he saved some of it, some of the stuff. Uhhh...But I wish we could've kept all that stuff. 'Cause you know, I'm 67 years old and at the time Rita came through I was 65 years old and I never figured we would get that much water here. Because Audrey was the worst storm we got here. And we had water about halfway in these in the yard. And then Rita come along and I get 6 foot of water [and] miles. And I guess with the surge, it was about 8-10 foot of water. And I—when that drift caught up in the damn baseboards—
D: How 'bout Ike?
S: Ike, we got about 6 foot of water under my house.
C: Yeah but you raised it after Rita.
S: Yeah I raised it after Rita. I mean, you know, we got our survey mark. We used it as a guide, so that if you--we know what that survey mark says, elevation is and then we use it—if a storm comes in we use that as a bench mark to say well okay, we had this much water over at our house.
C: Well, how high did you raise your house?
S: Well I was required to go to 11 feet above sea level.
C: Okay. And that's what this is?
S: No, I'm 15 foot above sea level. I always figured I like a little [Freed Board]. And then too, when I started looking into it, We were required to carry furniture, well, at 11 foot, if I'd have went to that base elevation it was going to cost around $700-800 a year. But because I'm that much above flood elevation, it's $229 a year. So, again, the miser at heart comes out. You know, what is it to drive a pilin' and leave it 10 feet out the ground or leave it 8 foot out the ground? I mean, if the piling's long enough, hey!
D: Yeah!
C: Well I saw you built yourself a list over here. Explain a little bit about how you went about doing that—It's not for us it's about people down the road—
S: Well that's some of that is colored ingenuity. My son and I kept saying, "well you know—well what it is, I ended up having to go to emergency surgery, and we been talking about building an elevator because I left a little corner where the elevator's at, so down the road I was gonna build one but it wasn't high on the priority list so we just never worried about it. So one day I had to have emergency surgery while I was in the hospital he said well, he ain't gonna build a crawling staff, so we gonna—so he started building on the elevator. And between his expertise and my aggravation we kinda designed something. We had to the material—well most of the material, these water-maker—that they convert saltwater to—I worked for Columbia Gulf for quite a few years and they decided they weren't gonna use that anymore so they brought it back in and they gave 'em to me, so I did big ole sheets of aluminum, now [INAUDIBLE] [make it] a lot, using aluminum. And I said, "It's there! And aluminum don't rust, well shit, we just gonna build it out of that." So he—between his expertise and me aggravating him all the time we put it all together.
C: Now, what kinda of wench motor did you use?
S: It's electric.
C: It's electric?
S: Yeah.

C: And you've gotten, what? Double switches top and bottom?
S: Yeah I got a switch at the top, switch at the bottom, a switch inside. I mean it's just—
C: That's a three way switch?
S: It's three way with the switches you can't turn it on and walk away. You gotta hold it on.
C: Ah.
S: 'Cause I didn't wanna put a switch where you turn it on and--you know know some people, not gonna use no names, but sometimes their mind wanders and, "Oh look at the flowers over there!" and BANG! Top will bang that bottom. And I said, "If you take your finger off that thing it's gonna stop."
W: I think he's telling the truth.
D&C: HAHAHAAHHA.
S: You know, no reflection on her but you know, somebody that came and not notice it and flip a switch on and pooh! You could tear something up. So this way—
C: Yeah.
S: Going up is not bad because there's a cut-off switch at the top, so if it goes too far it's gonna cut itself off. But I didn't wanna take a chance on that. I said, "Well, look you hold it, you take your finger off of it to look at the flowers—
D&S: it's gonna stop.
S: And then too, if you're going down then you crownest all the band cable at the top and then you gotta pull it all out and start all over again so, this way here um...and we put it inside where if you're inside you can bring yourself up. If you just gotta top and bottom, if you feel it at the bottom, well then you can send the thing up. Or if it at the top you can send it down, but then you still gotta walk down the steps and go wherever it's at so this way you can bring yourself up and down. It's not something you'd see the Waldorf, but it works.
D: Well sure!
S: And that's all that counts.
C: And that's all that counts!
S: And it's mostly, not so much so carry us up—maybe it will be in the future—it's just all the crap you gotta bring up and down up here.
D: Amen.
S: You go get a load of groceries or something like that and you know, I can climb the steps, but I like to hold on the rail. And if I have my hands full of junk I can't hold onto the rail so this way you put it all in the elevator, send it up, or ride up with it and you're right here at the top.
W: And when we were building the walls I had to put the lumber, reach it up to him and then he'd get it from up here before we had steps.
D: Oh my goodness.
S: Well I tell you what, and now I got so aggravated with ladders, 'cause heights don't bother me too much but it's getting to the height that bothers me. There's always that [figure] where you hang the ladder right there, what happens, it slides...
D: That's right.
S: And look, I was too old to be hitting the ground. It's not so much the fall but the stop that's bad, so. But we did it without any bad injuries. We tore—Helen and I tore down out old house and...matter of fact this house was built with seven houses. We—everybody

that had a house, that "We gonna demolish it, we gonna get the [corp] to demolish it." I said, "Woah, woah! Let me get what I can off of it."
D: What's part of your character is this referring to?
S: That refers to that um, you know...hahaha...miser...
D: Oh I was just checking to see if I remember right.
S: Well, you know! I mean—
W: All of these [INAUDIBLE] were the top part of people's houses.
D: Really!
S: You know water got halfway to paneling, well I said, well good! The top part's good!
D: Sure!
S: So I just [wind scolded] the house, the sheetrock at the top, and the paneling at the bottom. Why throw something good away? Because it was just gonna go to the landfill anyhow. I said, "Well I'm gonna put it in my landfill."
D: Hm hm.
S: It's like all these walls are diagonal [cinnemats] behind it. Not straight across, diagonal makes it stronger.
C: Yep.
S: Everything behind these walls is 1X6 cinnemat on top of that. I mean it was, to me it was built strong, but you up high, and you're more apt to catch the wind. That's where somebody keeps telling me, "Oh, you gonna stay in your house for the storm?" I said, "No, no, no. I'm gonna test my house, without me in it." So if it ends up in Abbeville to meet me...
D: HAHAHAHHA
S: I don't wanna ride it there!
D: Well, you know, again, it's not insignificant but it's a terrible time and I guess the real terrible part was it never happened before.
S: That's right. And nobody ever figured that! We always--most of the time we'd leave for storms. And then most of that is because if one did come in and you hurt yourself, or you got sick or something, you couldn't get out. You were stuck. So we'd go just as a precautionary measure. And we did it this time just like we always do, you come back, you pick up your broken limbs and fix your roof, and things like that and go on about your business. Never dreamed that you'd come back here and your house is just about gone. And you got a cow sittin' in your front door. I mean, you know, it--you never imagine that could ever happen. You know, six foot of water, inside my house and water went almost to Perry over there. Which, Intracoastal City is 22 miles from the gulf. So you add another 6 miles plus another 6 miles; that's a long way from the gulf! And all the levees and trees and you know, all this kinda stuff, and still get water that far...that's not imaginable—you know, to me it's not.
D: Now, I mean, how many horses do you keep? When you got cows you gotta have [INAUDIBLE]. Here it's either boats or horses. So how many horses would you keep to manage your herd?
S: A bucket of feed.
D: One bucket of feed.
S: Right now I can go to the pasture—our cattle [are coastal] right now—I can go to the pasture with a bucket of feed and they'll follow me anywhere I go.
D: Really. Hm.

S: But we still got—between my son and my brother, we got five horses I guess.
C: Does anybody still have Creole ponies?
S: You don't find them no more. That's a kinda dying breed, they don't—not very many people have them anymore. Everybody—when everybody started getting industrialized they said, "Aw I'm gonna get me one of them big fancy cuttin‟ horses or—“I don't look at that. That's such a—well I can't ride anymore but if he holds up with my big behind on it, hey, that's all I need. As long as he not throwin' me down and everything else. I don't have to have nothin' fancy.
D: And where would you go get a saddle?
S: You can get 'em at different places. You can go most anywhere in Lafayette, there's a—you know uh...not tractor supply, it's a—
C: Right, but when you were a kid, where did you get a saddle?
S: A lot of people made saddles. Mr. Aubrey Miller of Pecan Island made saddles. they had an old [Laubrey] in Abbeville that would make saddles. Uh, [Baskem-Abaire around Fork and Cal-Island], made saddles. A lot of people, you know, had that craft and they'd make saddles for you. And then a lot of people that, you know, they'd pass around a lot their saddles come out of Mexico. Uh, they'd come down and somebody'd go to Mexico and they'd bring back a load of saddles just to make 'em a few dollars, pay for their trip or whatever it is. Because I know my aunt would go to Mexico every once in a while and at one time, she had three sons and two daughters, adn she went to Mexico and bought them each a saddle. Brought each a saddle back from Mexico. But that's—that was after people had quit making them here. 'Course they still—I believe Aubrey—Well he's retired now, I don't believe he makes 'em anymore, but he used to make 'em.
D: And he did this on Pecan Island?
S: Mm hm.
D: The reason we ask is that, you're right. The saddle-making tradition is not something that is common. Uh, you can go to school to learn to make a saddle in Oklahoma. But you have to have a particular [last] and I think it's made of cottonwood. So your basis has to be a particular form—
S: Yeah the tree has to be a—
D: Oh yeah! So, you could trace the saddles coming in perhaps from Mexico. Now, cowboy boots. Cowboy boots came from Italy.
S: Huh!
D: And the way you—the easiest way to remember that is one of the really premier brands is Lucchesi. Lucchesi's made in San Antonio, Lucchesi's an Italian name, and because they had a riding—now a cowboy tradition—a riding tradition, they brought the boot in and it became modified. Well there's no cobbler traditions I know of, here. So if you want a pair of something other than white Dar-Dar Buggy Boots—
S: Hmm (laugh)
D: You had to go someplace to get a pair of cowboy boots. Now, leather's not the best thing to use in the marshes.
S: Well no. No. That shit rots in a minute.
D: Really?
S: Well, what it is, you look at these boots right here: They crack. 'Cause you—when you're in the marsh, you know there's wet. And wet is not so much gonna rot it but it's

gonna dry it out—when you dry 'em out they start cracking. Then they—not long after that they gonna fall apart.
D: Hm.
C: Well when you were driving cattle as a kid, what would people wear? Would they wear any boots at all, or—
S: A lot of 'em in those times didn't wear shoes! I mean they didn't have all this fancy gear, these chaps and all this kinda crap. They—I mean, a lot of them had big old hats on and just dressed to keep the sun off of 'em. But other than that, they just wore what they had.
D: Um, you mentioned the swamp angels. Now that's something—a term we just recently kinda fell into. Tell us what that is.
S: Swamp Angels was a group of men commandeered—I say commandeered, might not be a good word for it, but uh, they were inducted to be able to patrol the shoreline of Louisiana. Now I don't know how much they did going east, I don't—I haven't heard anything going east of southwest Path, But I know west of Southwest Pass was, I don't know, the battalion, and but there's groups that, where there was one station at [Shenuatig], one station at Grand Chenier, uh, and old—what's his name? Wynn Hawkins. He was a big--he had big hunting club. And I believe the club is still there, right at that old grove where you turn to go back north—
C: Mm hm.
S: Uh, he used to have a camp right there. Well he was kinda the commander of the whole thing and they kinda inducted him to more-or-less run all this stuff, so he got all the locals—My two uncles and my father served in the Coast Guard and all they'd do is they'd ride. They'd ride from freshwater parts [Rollo] Bayou to Southwest Pass. Then the other crew would run from Grand Chenier to [Rollover] Bayou. And they'd—
C: They'd check it once a day, or—?
S: They'd run shifts.
C: Okay, so it was continuous.
S: It was continuous. And then right at [Shinutig] they had a coast guard tower. And that tower--that was manned 24 hours a day. They had a radio and I guess they had one of them.
D: Yeah?
S: But anyhow, they would run one of them would look over the gulf and all this kinda stuff from that tower. Matter of fact I had a cousin of mine, that was his job up there, in the tower. They—and I guess some of the articles I sent you, some of those articles about them retrieving [down] pilots and all this kinda stuff in the marshes, and all that. They used to, you know like all Cajuns they like to pranks—pull pranks and all this kinda stuff. If they got somebody from away from here, well you know, he'd [let the dogs lie].
D: HAHAHAHHAHAHAHA.
C: You know that something, while we're on that subject, did people play pranks a lot over here?
S: Oh lord, all the time! Amusement!
C: Okay well tell me a little bit about [INAUDIBLE]—
S: That's amusement, you know. They do all kinds of things. You know, they—that's like the coast guard. They had a trail and these horses, I mean right now, if you got a horse that's used to a place and you turn him loose over there, he's gonna come back to that

place. Well, the trails were the same way. They'd pass the same trail. Well, you know, just to fool with the next fella on the next shift, they'd pull a limb and put it across the trail and then when they next one come along on the horse, they half asleep, the horse would run into the thing because it wasn't supposed to be there! Things like that, they pull all kinda things, you know.
C: Well, where I grew up, out of the prairie, people sometimes when the neighbors would leave, they'd get together and go and nail the furniture to the ceiling and to the roof or something like that. Did they do anything like that?
S: Oh, uh huh. They never told me that they did.

D: Hahahhaha.
S: They never owned up to it if they did!
D: Hahahhaha.
S: But you know they'd do all kinda crazy things. But that was amusement to them it wasn't nothin' that was—
C: Well it was never anything malicious--
S: No! It's just somethin'. And sometimes it got out of hand but it wasn't—not to hurt anybody but just to have something to do, you know. Daddy talk about them going to school at [Shinutig] and you know, pulling all kinda pranks...throwing cow manure on the girls, and you know, things like that. You know, get their ass whooped for it—excuse me! Hahaha.
D: Hahahaha. Oh no. My daddy went to a little school house where he grew up and all the boys decided they wanted Monday off. So they took a calf, broke into school and left the calf there for a weekend. They got Monday off! Of course, next Saturday they had to go to school, but they got Monday off, 'cause somebody had to clean up after that calf!
S: Well yeah! Probably they had to clean it up!
D: Oh yeah, it was short-lived, their vacation.
S: Oh yeah. Or they'd—you know, years ago it was a big thing, and it was a healing thing--and I believe in it today—is that if you go along the coast in the salt marsh—in the salt coastline and dig you a hole and lay in the hole and cover yourself with sand and let that saltwater drift over there, it sucks impurities out of your body. Well, they had to—when they milked the cows in the morning they had to drive the cows away from the pin so they'd go eat. Well, you know, that and them in their wisdom, you know, these people were buried along the thing where they'd drive the cows along there and all they had were their heads sticking out and cows were walking all over the place, you know, and things—I guess it could've hurt somebody but, you know, it's—people go to Highland Road [caza] and jump off the side, you know?
D: Now what kind of firearms would they use?
S: They had shotguns and stuff, like mostly single-shot stuff, you know. It wasn't no fancy automatics and all that kinda stuff—double barrels and single barrels.
D: You ever heard of a Cajun shotgun?
S: Uh...
D: Is that a term you've ever heard?
S: Uh uh.
D: Well it's a term used on Bayou Lafourche and it's basically an Over and Under.

S: Yeah. Well, we seen some Over and Unders over the years but you didn't see much of that when I was growing up. You know, over the years it got introduced, but I never saw many of them.
C: Well, getting back to [use of guns and] mostly for hunting here, what has changed from the time of your childhood? Well let's talk about the wildlife here.
S: Well wildlife itself is almost gone. And I'm talking about wildlife, more waterfowl than anything else. You know, years ago all this marsh back here, west of Vermillion Bay was all relatively freshwater marsh. That grew all year millet and all this kinda stuff. And you had worlds of waterfowl. Everywhere. Tell you [Shinutig]—this would be the stopping place for geese. You can't find a good for medicine anymore. The food's not there. It's like you. If you go down there and McDonald's is closed and across the street is a Burger King, and you wanna eat a hamburger, you're gonna go to Burger King—you're gonna go where the food's at. So if the food's not here, they gonna find the food. Most of the time if a duck was laid here, that duck's gonna keep coming back to that same place, but eventually if there‟s no food, he's gonna go somewhere else. These marshes used to be full of game. In the wintertime, Hell you—when we were living next door—I was raised next door—well at night when them geese were coming in you'd—it'd wake you up at night. Now and then you see a little bunch of geese passing but it's nowhere close to what it used to be. They're just not there because the food's not there. And all that's attributed to the intrusion of saltwater: It's killing all your natural vegetation, the food for the ducks.
D: What about deer? Particularly on the Chenier.
S: We—[Shinutig] always did have its amount of deer, but all these storms, I mean, it's killing a lot of them. It's killing a lot of them and then we have all these damn coy-dogs or whatever it is, coyotes or whatever it is all runnin' 'em allover the place. So the island itself still has some deer, but it's nowhere close to what it used to be.
C: Now the coy-dogs, was that something that was here at all when you were a child—?
S: Mm mm. (negative)
C: Or is that something that's come in?
S: That's come in in the last 10 or 12 years. And they‟re gettin'—that and wild hogs—it's gettin' to be a problem. You know, wild hogs are rootin' up all your ridges and things like that, they're making it weak for surges. If your surge comes over that, well that's a weak spot, it's gonna cut that ridge. Um, we—Cameron is raising Hell about this sand-mining and all that kinda stuff—these damn hogs are sand-mining the ridges, you know, they just digging up all the ridges. And then your natural vegetation that usually grows on the ridge is not gonna be there. And it's dangerous for riding horses or running or something like that—and holes. It's not good. We tryin' to get rid of 'em but it's like them coyotes—we tried to get rid of them but had too many of them so. And they sharp.
D: They're not dumb.
S: No. They're smarter than I am. 'Course that don't take much, but then uh...but that's the problem we havin' with that, but as far as for, you know, rabbits and things like that they still got an ample amount of that, but as far the waterfowl, it's down a lot.
D: Mm hm. Was there ever any black bear? That you know of?
S: We hear people talk about that. I've never seen one. Never seen a black bear. I don't know, one time I believe someone saw one around here, but that's very possible with all

the big woods and that kinda stuff that's up in here, it's very possible to have them. But over there I don't ever remember seeing one or hearing anybody talk about one.
D: Now, in the winter your source of heat would be wood?
S: Wood. They go and what they call, "Top the Trees." They go in oak trees and cut top branches. And it's basically a pruning thing, you know, and then next year they all came out—you didn't chop on that tree next year, you chop on another one. Daddy used to talk about going out there with an axe and hit the bottom of the limb and hit the top and it would break, well then it would break the other limbs going down so you didn't have to chop all the limbs, you know. But they'd get that firewood that way. They'd use a wagon, go in the woods, cut 'em a load of wood and bring it up to the camp. That was their heat.
D: Hm.
S: And they definitely need it. Because a lot of times when you wake up--if you were allowed to sleep „til after daylight, you could see daylight through the walls.
W: And for cooking too.
S: Yeah, for cookin‟ too. I'll never forget waking up in that old hotel over there, and they poured pea-berry coffee. Green coffee. And they would parch it and grind it and make the coffee in the morning. And you could smell that shit parchin' in the thing...Man, now, now...That was some of the best coffee. 'Course you didn't need but one little cup. 'Cause it would stay in the bottom of the cup.
D: Heheheheheh.
S: So what you think it did inside?
D: Heheheheh. Black as sin, hotter than the hinges of Hell, and stronger than a bible religion.
S: Yeahhh.
D: Yes indeed.
S: And it wasn't none of this percolated, it was a drip.
D: Yep, yep.
S: Drip. And it stayed on the stove until it was empty. So if you got the first few cups it wasn't quite bad. But if you got the last few cups, it was [stop].
D: Now, how would you characterize the arrival of oil industry in the late 20's to Vermillion Parish? The area you know.
S: I'm not that old!
D: I know.
S: I was born in the 40's!
D: I know. I know but your daddy knew.
S: I believe the oil industry—you know, personally, I think the oil industry did some damage, uh, but I believe that damage was made without them knowing they were doing the damage. You know, by cuttin' the canals—
D: Mm hm.
S: And, you know, and you watch some of these earlier movies about the oil industry whenever they'd make the oil well and they'd—spews out of the top, and I can see how that doing something to the environment. But I think there's enough technology now that people gotta understand all the damage to everything is not--you can't point it at the oil companies. They gettin' a bad rap for that. Now I don't like going to the station and paying 3 or 4 dollars a gallon for gas, but—not that I take their side, but I think that over the years, they have got a bad rap, that they're the one that did all the damage. Now I

think that a lot of people are—that their lives got a whole lot better because of the oil industry. With leases, and oil production and all that kinda stuff, they made their lives a whole lot easier.
D: That's the part Carl and I are interested in, because I think it's fair to say that—you're only two years older than I am. Actually, you're only 18 months older than I am, so I come from the same vintage—
S: Mm hm.
D: That there was a barter economy essentially. It wasn't a lot of money because money wasn't—"I give you eggs, you give me fish." I mean that was a common way of doing business throughout the coastal zone. And we've already rediscovered, you can go over to Texas and [Anowhack] and go clear over to almost Mississippi, but Mississippi people are different.
S: Yeah. Different dog.
D: Okay. But so now you get the oil industry in. And now, you do get income from leases.
S: Yeah.
D: You do get income because you knew the marsh and you could help with leases. That's the part I want you to...
S: And then too, it helped the economy. Now you know, whenever you're—not so much struggling because that's all you knew—if you trapped in the wintertime, you raised cattle in the summertime, you raised vegetables anytime, you made a certain amount of money. But when these oil leases came in, well hey, now I can maybe buy me a tractor instead of following the behind of that mule...you know, that helped the economy. He can make—he can plant 10 acres instead of five acres now. And I can make me a little bit more money. My son don't have to follow that mule. Maybe he can get him a job with one of those oil companies where he—and in a way that's not good because you're losing that culture, that history by kids moving away from the farm, but they not really moving away from the farm because it's still instilled in 'em. And they still—their roots are still there. But it, at least it's helping them to improve themselves.
C: Well, lemme ask you this, with that next generation, how many of them did go to work doing something else? Whether it was the oil company, or...
S: A lot of them did. 'Cause it's like us: when we move from over there, well I was 6 years old. Well my brother is a year and a half older than I am. Well he went to school at [Shinutig] for that first year but then the school board decided, well there wasn't enough kids so they wanna close that school. So Daddy believed in us gettin' an education. Not that I got one, but so we moved to high land. Well then my grandfather done bought a bunch of land here. Well then we started farming rice. We stayed in the cattle business but then we started farming rice and so they--it was still the trapping part and the cattle part was still there because you farmed in the summer time and trapped in the winter time, so you still were doing that, but your culture and history was still there. But then after your fur got to where it wasn't, like, feasible trapping anymore, well then you lost that part of the culture. But then you kept that cattle part and you kept that rice part. Well, we trying to get the rice part but we can't plant [INAUDIBLE] couple of more anyhow. It's still in 'em.
C: And your kids are living mostly around here?

S: Well I got a daughter living down and a son across the road. And uh...other son and daughter live in [Herath]. When he's here. Most of the time he's overseas, but.
D: So when [Erath] plays [Delcam] in football...
S: That's a grudge.
D: That's a long-running rivalry.
S: Oh yeah.
D: Do you sit on the [Erath] side, because of your son or the [Delcam] side because of your heritage?
W: My granddaughter plays in the Erath band so we kinda...
D: Okay. I just wanna make sure.
W: My 50th reunion's coming up and I'll have to sit on the Delcam side no matter who [INAUDIBLE].
D: HAHAHAHAHA. Well that's always been a long rivalry.
S: Oh yeah. I've—
D: Seven miles or more—
W: They're marrying each other!
D: Oh that wouldn't hurt 'em.
W: Oh yeah.
S: Oh no. Oh no. You better not go out and date a girl from Delcam!
D: Ahhh. Well the 1970's...69? 70. When you're coming from New Iberia, going into Delcam. You cross the bridge, right?
S: Mm hm.
D: When you look south you see all the shrimp boats. Well when you look north towards the Salt Dome, there's a little fish fire right there. Just a little place, and I was told I had to go in there and interview these people.
W: [Monte Carlo]. That is a character.
D: Oh, Well I walked in there—
W: He is from Lafourche.
D: At 8:00 in the morning. Walked in, I said what I was doing, I was gonna do some interviews. "Oh yeah, we talked to you!" A guy come in and said, "Buy everybody a beer! Give the college kid one!" Well, I couldn't see at noon. I couldn't see! I don't know how I got back, but...And I'm learning about Erath and Delcam right there. That's how I learned about all the competition between the two. And it's not that far removed from where you are here—
S: Mm hm.
D: But they got a lot of water too.
S: Oh lord. See that problem over there is the Delcam Canal.
D: Mm hm.
S: I mean Delcam Canal, when they talk about Delcam Canal, well, hey, it affects Delcam. Mm hm. 'Cause off the Delcam Canal is Bayou [Tigue]. Now, Bayou Tigue comes right in the middle of Erath—the bank, right in the middle of Erath. And Erath is a place that doesn't have drainage, if you wanna call it. Only outlet they have is Bayou Tigue. So if everything from Youngsville and all that stuff—water comes down, and you got a storm surge on this side, where does it go? Into Erath. There's just not enough outlets to get the water out. We're tryin' to—,,course, you got to remember the red light in Delcam is the line between Iberia and Vermillion Parish. It's not the canal. So the Delcam

Canal is basically in Iberia Parish. And I fight with the police jury all the time. Some police are you know—whenever we put a plan together it's all, "Whatcha gonna do about the Delcam Canal?" So I said, "Well you better go to your neighbor in Iberia Parish because we can't do nothing in Iberia Parish without the O.K. of Iberia Parish!" Now we working with Iberia Parish to try to do something with them, in the Delcam Canal. There's always just south of the Bayou Tigue. If you do it north of Bayou Tigue, well you not helpin' Erath any. Might be helping Delcam, but you're not helping Erath. So it's a kind of a bad situation. The line should be the Delcam Canal and that way that side's yours and this side's mine, not an Imaginary line down the middle of the town.
D: Yeah. Now, we were talking about the oil and gas business and you said you worked for Columbia Gas?
S: I worked for Columbia Gulf. Which is a subsidiary of Columbia Gas Transmission.
D: Did you ever work at the Henry Hub?
S: Henry Hub is not part of Columbia.
D: That was Rich Stoner, Texaco—
S: That's—It was, for a long time Texaco. But now they got, oh, 10-12 oil companies mixed up in there. And the Henry Hub, a lot of people don't understand. Those people at the New York Stock Exchange, they set the price of natural gas daily. And that's where they get their information from. That's where the price is set daily in the stock market. And I keep telling 'em, I said, you know, that thing don't operate good underwater. All those electronic gauges and all that kinda stuff. Some breeds of electricity and water don't mix, so, but you know, they don't understand the importance of that thing. And the importance of protecting that thing. When the kids—when we built this house I was fortunate enough to get a lot of people, volunteers to come help me. And every once in a while we'd get down, we'd go to talking and what I did and all this kinda stuff. And then, you know, I gotta get on my soap box every once in a while, you know. I said, "Well I work with coastal restoration, you know trying to protect the coast so we don't have these surges..." and uh they said, "well you know the price of oil or gas went up so high in New York!" And I said, "Do you know why?" They said, "Well, no..." I said, "Because all this gas—41% of the natural gas that goes to the Northeast passes through or near that Henry Hub. When all that shut down down here, supply and demand took over, and your price of gas went up. When did your price of gas go up?" And they told me right after the storm and I said, "That's why, the price of gas went up. And that's why the importance of the rest of the states in the United States to get on board to protect this stuff. If you don't do nothin' else, besides—thank you for helping me, you know—if you don't bring anything back other than telling the people in New York state the importance of the Wetlands in South Louisiana." So I don't know if I made an impression on them or not but...
D: But it's hard. But it needs to be said. But even the people in Shreveport don't get it.
S: When I started, I was one of the first one's started—not started, but got on board with America's Wetlands. One of the first meetings that they had about America's Wetlands was at a monastery in Baton Rouge. I forget the name of the place but I was there and they started talking about America's Wetlands and what the America's Wetlands campaign was gonna do: Get the rest of the United States to understand the wetlands of South Louisiana. I said, "Before you start trying to preach to the rest of the nation, you better preach to your own people that don't understand the value of these wetlands. Until

you convince your own people don't try to convince them other people." I had people that tell me that they had some people from up the country huntin' over here around Johnson Bayou and all that. And they said, "Well what's this erosion here? Oh, this is just wasteland." Our own people! That's the message they're giving to people away from here, so how in the Hell are we gonna get people from over there to do it when our own people are delivering the wrong message? You know. It boggles my simple mind.
D: Well you're not alone. You're not alone.
S: And you know, and like you know, I been messin' with the coalition for years and all this kinda stuff. And you know and it gets me aggravated sometimes because most of the focus is on Southeast Louisiana. And we're gettin' some little focus movin' this way but it's a slow trail.
D: Well, even when you look at the science literature—
S: Mm hm.
D: Um, the last...Well, I have to be a little careful, but I believe it's fair to say that the last comprehensive geologic study of the Cheniers, I mean all of the Cheniers, was done in the thirties.
S: Mm hm. Right.
D: Was done in the thirties. We have seen focus science on mud stream out of the Atchafalaya coming West up against the Cheniers. Now that—there's a couple of very good papers on that. But when you start looking at a very detailed analysis of the marsh, there's not much done. And there's not—it just...ULL is the logical place to study this part of the world. Because it's right there! It's in Lafayette! LSU, it's hard to get here!
S: It's hard to get here, but I was with Dr. [Badell] the other day, and I been—him and I been friends for years, and I said—
C: [Derka]?
S: Huh?
C: Derka Padell?
D: Donimo Padell, yeah, he's uh—I don't know what department he's in, but anyhow, he uh—I told, I said, "Don, what UL is to do to study Southwest Louisiana and the marshes and all that is—Pecan Island school's for sale. They closin‟, it's for sale. UL needs to buy that school. You have all the facilities that you need there. You got classrooms, you got some of those classrooms could be put into dormitories to study this here. I said, ya'll need to buy that place. You got White Lake on one side, the Gulf of Mexico and the wetlands on the other side. It'd be a perfect place for someone with environmental engineering, and all this. Not just that, but a lot of things, and not just the college. High school students and everything. I mean, you—it would be the perfect place. The only other thing we have is [Numbcorner] where that at LSU has, what else do we have to study? Used to have a place at [Fermac]. UL used to have a place at [Fermac].
D: Yeah, it's gone.
S: It's gone. And it's not accessible! It's accessible by boat only.
D: Yes.
S: Now, this here would be accessible by road, and you can study the whole damn thing.
D: Well, I mean, we could argue about no more studies, okay. Ok I can hear that, I hear that. But no matter what you do, you have to at least monitor it.
S: Right.

D: And that's different but you have to do that. And there is a person at ULL, a very good scientist, goes by the name of [Ehab Muselli].
S: Muselli, yeah.
D: He's doing some very nice modeling because the hydrology is the key.
S: Mm hm.
D: You gotta get the hydrology right. There's actually an oil company that I don't know if they wanna be recognized, and it's funny, because they understand to protect their wells they gotta know the hydrology. Not north to south, south to north. They understand the south to north; they know how to protect their wells. And I'm tinkering right now with maybe writing something about the wells at risk but Carl and I got a couple things I committed to finishing. But I think that's how you drive some of this is we have so many oil wells that are at risk. That the remediation is gonna be a lot more than an engineer sitting in an office in Houston, or Denver, or someplace in California [INAUDIBLE].
S: But you know, you said something about the last study that was done in the thirties.
D: Comprehensive.
S: Okay, but—you know, and I look at some of these studies—O'Neil's studies, like that O'Neil that supposedly walked from Texas to Mississippi and all this stuff. That is good, but you got to understand it's like an aerial photograph. It's like a snapshot in time. If I walked the ridges that they used to drive the cattle on from Texas to Mississippi, uh, that's what I saw here. Is that the total picture? That's not the whole picture. The whole picture is everything. Now, I can tell you, and I can document what's there, but does the hydrology work everywhere, in conjunction to there? It's not the same. You might say, well this is the way it works in the wetlands of the Chenier Plain but that's the way it works right there, but it don't mean that the big picture is—that's the way it works. Now, they doin' this Southwest study now. The core is, that Bustani Study, whatever you—well that's fine. But I, and I'd hate to dispute it because we need to—it's probably the only way we gonna get something done on this end of the state. But NRCS did a study on the Chenier Plain, quite a few years ago. There was another study done by the corp. not long after that. It did the hiccup study, which was supposed to be looking at the hydrology in the Chenier Plains and now they doin‟ another study. Uh...My problem with the study is, that why, if this study's here and this study here and this study here, that this study doesn't capture on what was already done. Historically, instead of starting from square one, doing a complete new study. There's too many of them sittin' on the shelf collecting dust when they could go back and read those others and then incorporate that. Then you can look at the historic part of it along with the stuff, now. That way, you get a general idea of how it worked. How it worked now and 50 years ago is different because a human animal fooled with Mother Nature. So, let's look at what it's supposed to be. Just like we raise Hell about river divergence. Most of the river divergences are not put where the good lord said that that water basically went. Somebody, with their infinite wisdom said, "We wanna put [Canarvum] right here." But that don't necessarily mean that's where the natural hydrology went. Because I wanna put it here. "That's where I think it should go." But that's not necessarily where it's supposed to go. Not that it doesn't work, I'm just sayin' that—
D: No no no no no. There's a thought that's been bantered around a little bit...How would you react if—and this is all what if—
S: Mm hm.

D: I don't mean it is, it's what if. What if the state appropriated enough money that we could buy for Vermillion and Cameron Parishes, 20 dredges? Now these are not monsters.
S: These are small dredges.
D: These are small dredges that you could use on your property, on the hydrology you know, and say, alright--we're not gonna deal with the permit issue—
S: Ooh.
D: Alright. That has to be put there. We're gonna say, alright, you're a rational person, what we want you to do is we want you to go to Bayou Tigue, and you know what—it's [sholey]. And we want you to take that sediment and put it where you build marsh.
S: Right.
D: But you got 20 of these. Is that a bad idea?
S: No. We have what we call "The Small Dredge Program" within this state. I believe we get something like 2 million dollars a year. Well, they call us one day and they said, "Okay. Where do you have some places where the marshes are all broken up, where it's easily accessible, where we don't have to put a dredge out there and have to pipe it ten miles." We're infested with oil field canals.
D: Mm hm.
S: Plenty [spoiled] in there.
D: Mm hm.
S: And like I keep tellin' 'em, they said, "Well how deep are we gonna go?" I said, "until that little China man starts raising hell about you in his rice field. Dig the damn thing down. We got footprints already there. Take that spoil. A lot of the places it's just across the levee." We give 'em a whole list of places...I haven't seen it yet. We have looked at—they got a place, [Jetsco] or whatever it is, just outside of [Yacht Berry]. They got some small dredges. Matter of fact, Audubon Society is doing a demonstration with one of their pumps—their little dredges—to create a real marsh, just to see how it works. And see it's just cost-effectiveness. Where they—you know, we're gonna go in big scale to do that. Well, I'm hoping that they're—Paul Kemp, he kinda works with Audubon Society, but now they kinda workin‟ on trying to get that done. But you know, when you talked about the permit part of it, I'm a firm believer that if it has something to do with restoring the marshes, or building hurricane protection, it oughta be exempt, if you wanna call it. Now if you wanna build a Wal-mart in the middle of the marshes...clamp 'em hard. Make 'em pay. Mitigation and all that kinda stuff. But if it has to do with protecting people's lives or protecting the marsh, or rebuilding the wetlands, you don't have to have a permit. You have to show what you're gonna do, and I understand that part, but oughta not be this big thing about mitigation and all this kinda crap.
D: Just get busy.
S: Just get busy doing it. And whenever you're creating marshes, it oughta be self-mitigated to start with and just, if you're gonna take that--and the bad thing about permitting, if I take that dirt out of the canal, I gotta pay up 4 cents a cubic yard before I take out that canal, which don't make damn load of sense. Just like, I had a marsh [manimberg] plan put in [Shinutigue]. I was gonna clean out a little ditch that would allow the flow--that always did flow for centuries, on my land. My dirt, I had to pay up 4 cents a cubic yard. I took it out of that canal and I used it to create marsh. This doesn't make sense. And I keep after permitting, well when Dave was kinda in charge of coastal

managing—Dave Fercher—I said, "Dave, we need to revamp this stuff." "Oh," he said, "We doin' that." But all they did was put it on the computer where you can file for a permit on a computer. They didn't really revamp it. And then the fella that's on there now, they got after him again. We need to revamp this permit process. I mean, we're, right now, because of the other regulatory agencies, have the right to stop you from doing what's gotta be done...Uh, you can't get nothin' done. Because if you wanna do a project, they gonna chop it up so bad until the intent of the project is not do-able anymore. I wanted to chop anything higher than 4 parts on the marsh because most of our marshes, we notice that over 4 parts constantly kills the marsh. Kills the vegetation.
C: Hm.
S: Now he can take a 500 part if he want, if it goes in and comes out. But if it stays on there, it kills the grass. So I wanted my permit, on my [instructors] so I can close those gates if it's over 4 parts. He said, "Oh no no no. We'll let you do it at 6 parts." Well if I hold the water at 6 parts I'll kill all the vegetation. But to be able to get the thing done I agreed to do it. But it's not as good as if it's 4 parts.
C: Well we should let these folks get some lunch.
D: We need to let you have lunch, we need to say thank you to both of you!
S: Oh!
C: Yes! for putting up with us—
D: And, we have a little form somewhere—
C: Uh...
D: Where did I put that?
S: Oh, is that a liability form?
D: No! No no no no no. Basically it simply says that you Sherrill have agreed it's alrightfor scientists in the future to listen to your [dates] at some point.
S: Aaaahhh.
D: Alright.
S: Hey, probably a lot of the scientists have listened to me already--
D: Yeah but they—that's alright.