

DON DAVIS: –40 horsepower and again going back to Cajun ingenuity, which I bet your grandfather can help us with–

CLIFFORD SMITH: Oh without a doubt.

DAVIS: –they just figured out how to put it in but it had a – I don't know if you've ever seen it yet – he'd crank them this way. Alright, well you had to get up and crank them. Well if you miscranked you broke your arm. And I'm sure and so before we leave we'd like very much if you don't mind giving us the contact information and if you wouldn't object to just, you know, college professor types coming in and doing exactly what we're doing here.

CARL BRASSEAU: Harassing him like that.

DD: But if we don't it's gonna stay in the DeHart family and fifty years from now when that kind of information will be probably very important we'll have nobody to talk to.

CS: He can give you the whole history of the mechanical application–

DD: Aw that's–

CS: –of engines from the – I'm telling you he grew up down the bayou. I bet you would – her grandfather grew up – her grandfather about the same age as I am and he probably can remember cause, I mean, he grew up down the bayou. I mean, I grew up on the bayou. He can tell you about people living in houseboats. They didn't live on the land; they lived in houseboats. They lived, again, they would oar out to (? 01:26) because, again, he knows this, his grandfather knows this, but before you had an engine that boomed a boat continuously – you didn't have a trawl. See, they discovered the trawl – a Cajun discovered the trawl because before the engine would move the boat constantly you could only sail, so, you (? 01:51) for fish and shrimp. You follow me? And you then go in the Gulf of Mexico. Again, I lived on the coast all my life and I would – my father and I would copy a picture of the boat. We'd go to the coast every weekend, but nobody went past the islands. Nobody went into the Gulf of Mexico until after the Second World War, and they began to explore for oil and gas in the Gulf of Mexico.

CB: Well, that kind of information is invaluable and before we go any further I just want to get on tape your permission for us to record this and to be able to put this in the archives at LSU at Sea Grant.

DD: While you do that and this I'm gonna go get the stand for this.

CB: OK.

DD: I know where it is and I'm gonna bring some notes I have.

CB: OK. Well anyway, we were talking about attorneys earlier. We're just trying to keep them happy and our respective institutions happy, so if it's ok with you we would simply like to get your permission on tape that it's ok for us to put this material in the archives at these various institutions and make them available for researchers for whatever purposes they may be using them for: documentaries, or books, or articles, or whatever down the road.

CS: Without a doubt.

CB: Great. Well, thank you.

CS: I don't know if you know it and, I don't know, you could put this on the record, too, as far as I'm concerned. I have a long history at LSU. My mother finished at LSU in 1924. Five of my seven children have six degrees from LSU. I finished at LSU in 1958. I went to LSU in 1953 and my – I would say the person, if I had not met this person at LSU I would still be at LSU, and that's Dr. Ray Odimar who was teaching math at LSU. Again, Dr. Odimar taught me at least two years on math in the engineering school at LSU and later went on to, of course, to be the president of ULL and USL. Interesting of course, Dr. Odimar's from Terrebonne Parish. Dr. Odimar is from Boudreaux Canal, which is, again, 15 to 20 miles south of here, and his wife is from (? 4:19) in Terrebonne Parish and she grew up about two houses away from where my wife grew up. So we have a close, frankly, relationship with the Odimars and my wife is a graduate of SLI and my wife's mother was a graduate of SLI and a number of her aunts were graduates of SLI.

CB: It's a very small world in south Louisiana.

CS: We have a very fond spot in our hearts, frankly, for LSU and SLI, USL, ULL.

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

CS: Yeah, again, I'm William Clifford Smith and I was actually born in New Orleans on April 21, 1935, but from the time I was a week old I lived in Houma, Louisiana, Terrebonne Parish except for about from 1953 to about 1958 when I lived in Terrebonne, but I also lived at LSU – in the stadium and in the dormitories at LSU, received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from LSU in 1958, grew up in the engineering business with my father who was T. Baker Smith who was a Tulane graduate in civil engineering in 1913, born and raised in Terrebonne Parish, went to a number of high schools around the south but ultimately ended up at Tulane with a degree in civil engineering in 1913, came back to Houma – he came back to Houma after his graduation and began to practice civil engineering and land surveying in Terrebonne Parish. In 1913, and again talking about time and ages, I would assume that there was about at the most 5000 people living in Terrebonne Parish at that time. He did whatever it took to make a living as a consulting civil engineering land surveyor in those early days. Among other things, we have some pictures on the wall of plans that he developed for building steam boats as an engineer. He, of course, developed an expertiseship in the reconstruction of

the U.S. government's surveys on land between the Mississippi river and the Atchafalaya river for major landowners such as Louisiana Land, (? 7:00) and other major companies in the area – landowning companies, because much of this properties were surveyed by the U.S. government surveyors between the 1830s and the 1850s. Much of the land had transferred in title without much other benefits of surveys, so my father working primarily for major land owners and ultimately for oil and gas companies and ultimately for other landowners developed an expertiseship in the reconstruction of these U.S. government surveys which are probably different in south Louisiana than anywhere in America because, believe it or not, in the Louisiana Purchase when they talk about all the acreage that was purchased by the United States from France much of the usable surface areas of coastal Louisiana were already owned by people because of the French and Spanish grants that were gives. Most of the ridges or highland along the bayous and rivers were already owned by people, and the only part that the United States acquired was the undeveloped lands between the ridges and the bayous. Then the U.S. government came in and surveyed and had to recognize – the U.S. government surveyors had to recognize the previous French and Spanish grants and then project a rectangular surveying system on into the marshes and into the swamp and what they considered invaluable areas. They were great (? 8:30). The surveyors were paid by the mile. Can you imagine in the 1830s, 1850s they were on horse and buggies and pirogues and what have you? But my father became an expert in reviewing the field notes and the maps of these U.S. government surveyors – even acquired the instruments that they used so that he could follow in their footsteps. They were – in his time they had developed a transit, but the U.S. government surveyors, they didn't have transits. They had compasses and chains. So we have in our collection around here the compasses and the chains that he used in attempt to reconstruct the U.S. government survey. Those are examples of witness trees that came out of the woods around Terrebonne Parish of witness trees from U.S. government surveys that my father reconstructed.

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

CS: And what they would do, you see, if you follow their notes, which are very difficult to do, but if you followed the field notes they would set a government corner – a section corner, township corner, range corner – and they would usually were using cypress stake. They weren't using anything more permanent. Hell, concrete had not been invented, much less steel cast-iron. They were using primarily cypress stakes and when they would set the corner then they would reference the corner. Normally they would have four or five trees that was so many degrees, so many feet from the corner and they would go to the tree and they would "X" in the tree with a stencil that this is a witness tree, ok. My father would come along in the '20s, 1920s, 1920s primarily, '30s and think he had gotten to the corner, but there was no corner because it had rotted away or been (inaudible). So he would look around and he would see a tree over there, then he'd see another tree over there, and he's reading the notes and it'd kind of fit the south six degrees, 14 minutes, so many chains or so many links. There was a cypress tree, an eight-inch cypress tree. The field note would say that and we marked it as a witness tree. My

father would go over so many links and see the tree, but the tree had grown. It was witnessed 19 – 1850 and he was there in 1925. Well, he would cut into the tree and where the stencils were in the tree, the tree would peel back to that point, see the ax marks when they cut into the tree and what you're looking at is upside down because the stencils that had been put into the tree, and now you're peeling off the tree to see this. Now, what became very important is that the U.S. government notes are public information, ok. But the notes that retrace the U.S. government and decided that that was a witness tree and reestablished that corner is not public information, it's T. Baker Smith's information. And of course that's where he became an expert. Nobody really cared about that until about 1930 when they discovered oil in south Louisiana particularly Terrebonne parish. Everybody decided well maybe we ought to know how many acres there are from the (? 12:07) in Terrebonne Parish over to the Laperouse field in Little Caillou, ok, because the government surveyors might have said they were three miles, and guess what. It ain't three miles. It may be two and a half miles, so all of a sudden everybody got very concerned about how many acres and how many ownership of who owned what. So, again, he became an expert witness in court cases. I ended up, again, I was his youngest child; he was 45 years old when I was born in 1935. My father was truly an engineer. He believed in the profession. I think that he studied engineering because he loved the outdoors, he loved to hunt, he loved to fish. He grew up, again, in Terrebonne Parish. I think his mother and sister that he study some profession, and I think he chose civil engineering because it gave him an ability to be in the outdoors. So, although he was an engineer and he designed bridges and things like that – utility systems – he was also truly a surveyor, but he was also truly a collector of things. We have – the lady will bring it in in a minute – we have the first field notes that he did in 1913. We even have information that he assembled even before 1913. Again, we have in this office over 5 million pieces of paper – maps, field notes, calculation files – that, frankly, we have now microfilmed, and, also, we are now scanning to put into our computer system. I consider that to be very valuable information. Again, I was his youngest child. My older brother was interested in something else, architecture or something else. I have an older sister whose husband was working in the oil industry and nobody was interested, frankly, in the profession. My father was animent about the fact that I was interested in the profession and, therefore, if I was interested in the profession he felt that this business belonged to me. He told my brothers and sisters and my mother that and in his will he told him that. That the day that I graduate from LSU in 1958 the firm became T. Baker Smith and Son. Up to that time it had been T. Baker Smith. After he died in 1962 the firm became T. Baker Smith and Son, Inc. because of taxes and other matters. I was the sole proprietor, the sole owner since my father's death. Again, in his will there's a special request to me for that purpose. Now, I have – my oldest son is Kenneth Smith who is a graduate of Louisiana Tech in civil engineering, again, who grew up in the firm. I was working in a survey crew when I was 12 or 13 years old and he was, too. Now, he runs the firm which consists of about 250 associates with offices in Houma, Thibodaux, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and Houston. We've expanded, of course, on my father's practice both in the surveying field and in the engineering field and now in the environmental science field. Somebody was just inquiring this morning before you got here about 404 wetland permits. We get probably 2- to 300 permits a year for clients in the wetland areas of primarily coastal Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi. I would think that we've probably become an expert at that,

but I'm not sure anybody's an expert at that. I consider the whole process arbitrary and capricious, but we provide services to our clients in those fields. We even have in this organization now a group of oyster experts. Again, most of our work has been an evolution. Again, we basically started out as a surveying and engineering company. We probably now have 35 boats and about 200 vehicles. We are an equipment rental company, although it's all in one conglomerate. We are an engineering design company. We are a surveying company. We are an environmental service company. That includes – we have a group of so called oyster experts that evaluate oyster problems for clients. Again, we've evolved into all these things because this is what the client needs us to do. The volume of business we do in 30 days is more volume than my father did in his whole lifetime, but most of the work that we do in 30 days evolves back to some of the things that actually he did. Again, in 1958 when (? 17:19) is cool he had one employee and the only reason he had the business open was because I was interested in the business. He was 65 years old or 68 years old and the only reason he kept the place open was because of me. He had independent income out of the engineering business, and that's much like similar, again, similar to me. What I've done evolved in a small community, an expanding community. When I got out of LSU in '58 we probably had 50,000 people in Terrebonne Parish. Well, we've had an urban area Houma, and Houma always owned its own utility system, which is kind of unusual, its own electrical generation and distribution system similar to Lafayette, much, much smaller. It didn't have the assets, of course, of the Highmonds and/or the University of Lafayette. Interesting, the Highmonds were from Houma. The Highmond brothers, the one that went to Lafayette and started the oil center was born and raised in Houma. His mother ran a store called The Houma Bargain Store in Houma. His brother – I think Mauris is the one who went to Lafayette, his brother went to New Orleans and married the daughter of Crest and ended up running the Crest stores in New Orleans. They were born and raised in Houma in Terrebonne Parish. As a matter of fact, you mentioned earlier the boat races in Lake Barre that my father participated in when he was in college, I assume, right out of college maybe. They were promoted – he told me – they were promoted by the Highmond brothers who were young people growing up in Terrebonne Parish. Again, my family, as near as I can tell, my mother was of all things a Wright. Having a Wright and a Smith in Terrebonne Parish both born and raised in Terrebonne parish was extremely unusual. The Wright family, near as I can tell, came to Terrebonne in about 1830, primarily agriculture people and evolved into livestock and (? 19:37) businesses.

CB: Where were they from originally?

CS: I think the Wrights were – actually, I think the Wrights came here from Virginia, ok, and I think they were probably from somewhere in England. The reason I think that – I had a great grandfather that went to northern Virginia during the civil war and fought in the army of northern Virginia with Robert E. Lee. I think the Virginian cousins communicated with the cousins in Louisiana to come and fight for the Confederacy, because it was very little activity, by the way, in the third congressional district during the Civil War, although there were some. I've been reading a little bit about that in the local papers. As a matter of fact, there's a guy working for the Houma courier by the name of Bill Elzy that ya'll ought to know if you don't know him already, because he –

and I have some of the articles that he has recreated in the Houma courier about, particularly about some of the Civil War matters in Terrebonne, but generally the third congressional – the fact of the matter is Tozan always told me, Congressman Tozan, that the third congressional district never succeeded from the union. So, in the Emancipation Proclamation it only affected the counties and districts that had succeeded from the union. So, Tozan always contended that the Emancipation Proclamation never affected the third congressional district. I'm not sure knew that or agree with that, but, anyhow, getting back to the Smiths, again, my father's mother was a DuPont. My father's father as near as we can tell came to south Louisiana right after the Civil War, and he ran saw mills, and they were cypress people, and this is where my son ended up with my grandfather's house which is magnificent home right in the middle of Houma that's built (? 21:36) in cypress. But anyhow, that was the Smiths. Smiths married a lady by the name of Clara DuPont. DuPont's mother and father were from Bardeaux, France, and they were merchants. They came to Terrebonne I think probably just before the Civil War, and they had a store. It later became A.M. & J.C. DuPont Store. A.M. and J.C. DuPont were Clara DuPont's brothers. Supposedly that store was at the corner of Barrow Street and Main Street; it's still there. Across the bayou from that was the Smith home, and, supposedly, the two DuPont brothers said you can't live on this side of the bayou, you gotta go live on the other side. That's when my grandfather bought the property on Park Avenue right opposite Barrow Street and built the first Barrow Street Bridge. But, anyhow, that was C. P. Smith and that was T. Baker's son – T. Baker's father as a matter of fact. I'm T. Baker's – and I was named William Clifford Smith. William was my grandfather Wright's name, a guy named Billy Wright, Jr. My grandfather Smith was named Clifford P. Smith, Clifford Percival Smith. So they would name me William Clifford and it ended up my call became Clifford because William is so – William Smith is so (? 23:01), you know. So, I went to LSU and at LSU they said William – middle name – first name, middle initial, and I was at LSU for about three years. My daddy went up there to find me one day, called the director and wanted to talk to Clifford Smith. They said they ain't nobody here by that name. I've been sending that boy up here for three years.

DD: Is it fair to say – and continue, please – but is it fair to say that your father was the first wetland surveyor in south Louisiana?

CS: No. In my father's day – there were surveyors before my father. As a matter of fact, interesting that you ask that, there was a guy named V. Silakowski who we have some records of and maps of that was in Terrebonne parish doing survey work. V. Silakowski was from, as near as I can tell, was from St. Helena parish. He came down here working for the Barrow family. The Barrow family, who were very prominent in the St. Francisville area, ended up owning some land in this area, and I think Silakowski came down here to survey some of their properties. That was right after the Civil War. Silakowski happened to be the commander of the Confederate troops at Port Hudson, ok, during the Civil War, and actually I think he was in Terrebonne doing some survey work before the Civil War and after the Civil War. I was reading The Advocate one day and they had some history about Port Hudson, and they had this guy Silakowski. So, I began to read about that, and we have maps and field notes in this office from a guy named

Silakowski and it's the same guy. I think it was Victor Silakowski. He, again, was a surveyor, that came into Terrebonne. Now, you talk about wetlands, I mean, of course, you couldn't hardly be in Terrebonne without being in the wet even in those days, but he was primarily surveying high land, land of agriculture use. You follow me? Then, there was a guy by the name of Bocage in the area, and we have some field notes from Bocage... before my father. But, before my father really as a professional was Mr. Lovell from Lafourche. Mr. Lovell was a surveyor in Lafourche parish, in Thibodeaux. Mr. Lovell had developed, as my father later developed with the help of Mr. Lovell and other people, the process of following – when you do property surveys along the bayou not only have you know about the government surveys, not only do you have to know about the grants surveys – and there were grant surveys even before the U.S. government surveys – but you gotta know something about the titles. So, my father would track the titles through the conveyance records and Mr. Lovell did the same thing and developed an abstract map of the area trying to fit the titles within the U.S. government and the grants surveys previously. So, that became quite an ought. Again, that was a master and Mr. Lovell was a master at that, too. Now Mr. Lovell was a little older than my father, so my father learned from Mr. Lovell. There was a Mr. Landry in Plaquemine parish and ended up with his son became a priest in this area that I ended up by knowing. There were other, few surveyors along the way, but, again, my father had developed a clientele with primarily Louisiana Land Exploration Company which owned 600,000 acres of wetlands in Terrebonne, Lafourche, over into Plaquemine and Jefferson parishes. He did most of the survey work on their properties. He also had a client by the name of Continental Land and Fur Company which we have today. They own 125,000 acres of wetlands in Terrebonne parish, one track of land. Louisiana Land's property is kind of spread out, although they own 600,000 acres plus it's spread out all the way from the Mississippi to the Atchafalaya River.

DD: Let me clarify something. Years ago you and I were talking and once told me that the water bottom in Louisiana went to the Win or Lose Oil Company, they were subleased to W. T. Burton whose subleased LLNE whose subleased to Texico. That was the chain of the water bottoms, and, of course, LLNE went to Burlington, and now I guess it's part of ConocoPhillips. So, we have this long linear chain of at least the water bottoms. Other than a conversation with T. Baker Smith I have never seen that written, although I do believe you are exactly correct because if you try to find anything about the Win or Lose Oil Company that wall is easier to walk through.

CS: That's interesting that you would say that because what I know about it is – first off let's go back. There were French and Spanish grants and they were primarily on lands along the rivers and the bayous and were the valuable in those days. We're talking before 1800s, those were before the Louisiana Purchase. The valuable lands, of course, were the lands – the river, tell you the truth, not the Gulf, the river in those days. So, those lands were transferred from the kings of Spain and France to their different courts and ended up with huge grants of land, and there were surveys of those grants, and they have records of those grants. I mean, French and Spanish records in the – in the records of the state of Louisiana, primarily, ok. Then the U.S. government surveyors came in and surveyed the vacant lands, lets say, which were primarily the marshes and swamps that had very little

surface value, alright. After the surveys the United States, as far as I know, the United States government deeded those lands, and that's not the right word, to the state of Louisiana, ok, because the federal government wasn't going to own the lands the states ended up owning the land, ok, that had not already been transferred. Then the state of Louisiana looked around and in those days – and that gets back to our coastal erosion problem – that the greatest problem in Louisiana this, say, before even coming into the Louisiana purchase was the Mississippi River because every Spring it would flood. So, the land owners along the river began to build the levees for their survival, ok. That became a state problem as the state began to grow and the value of the land increased. The landowners petitioned the state to get interested in building levees along the river. The state legislature, as far as I know, created different levee districts – now, this is not only in Louisiana by the way. If you go up and down the Mississippi River basically St. Louis – south, and even north, there're all kinds of levee districts that were created so that they were the vehicle for the government to tax the land to build the levee along the river. That was the levee districts, the first. In our area we're in what we call the Atchafalaya Levee District. As far as I know, the constitution and laws that created the levee districts in Louisiana gave them the right to levee a five-mill property tax again a property within their district without a vote of the people. The purpose was to build levees on the Mississippi River and that we didn't want the river to flood us so we wasn't even gonna get to vote on that. God damn it you had to pay mills property tax, ok. Well, all this land is owned by the state of Louisiana. The state of Louisiana gives the land to the levee district to go and use the value of the land to use to get money to build levees on the Mississippi River, ok, all tributaries. The levee districts say well how in the hell are we gonna – we can't tax it. We own the land, we can't – we gotta right to levee five-mill property tax but most of the land we own now, ok. So what we gonna do? So, they, a wise lawyer and a banker from New Orleans called Wisner and Dresser, ok, they put a deal together, go to the Atchafalaya levee district in particular and says look, we'll buy all this land for you for 25 cents an acre, ok. Levee district says that's wonderful, we gonna take you 25 cents an acre. We're gonna put you on the tax roles as own the land and we gonna tax you five-mill property tax, and that's how we're gonna get the money to start building the levees. Wisner and Dresser get them a train ticket and go to the east: Toledo, Ohio, Chicago, Ohio. They start peddling this land off like when I grew up they peddling Arizona. You remember you could buy a lot in Arizona for 500 dollars or something. I'm sure Wisner and Dresser went to the east and started peddling this land as reclaimed land, and they were all kinds of companies formed: The New Netherland Company, The New Holland Company, Cloverly Farms was the same way. Many of the reclamation projects, two or three in Terrebonne parish, were the same way that somebody's gonna buy this land cheap, we're gonna build levees and we're gonna build pump station, we're gonna reclaim the land, you get six inches of rainfall a year, you got a growing season from March to October, man we gonna make millions growing crops, ok. The (? 33:02) family in Toledo, Ohio put up a bunch of money. They ended up basically controlling Louisiana Land and Exploration Company. (inaudible) All this went on, say, from 1900, say, to about 1920, ok, and companies went broke, bankrupt, you know, we talk about your two banks that go bankrupt and they go bankrupt around here. Every damn cane season people would go bankrupt and lose everything, so surely this marsh, the only thing this marsh was a bunch of nutria, not nutria even in those days, but

mudrats and what have you, and they could hardly make a living doing that, alright. So those companies were really on their ass, frankly, all those companies. I mean Louisiana Land I can remember. Well, again, I was born in 1935. I surely can remember my father telling me between '35 and '40 Louisiana Land didn't have enough income to pay their employees. They would give them script. My father did work for Louisiana Land, and they couldn't get paid. My father's – the Louisiana Land's lawyer would – Mr. Roberts Milling in New Orleans. My daddy – Mr. Roberts Milling tells my daddy one day they working on a case for Louisiana Land says Baker you oughta go buy some stock Louisiana Land and Exploration Company. This is, say, between '35 and '40. My daddy comes back, he was the only son of my grandfather, he was the oldest child. My grandfather bought stock in automotive steam companies, automobile steam companies. He bought a Colorado coal mine and my daddy says I want to borrow a hundred dollars from me cause I want to buy some stock in Louisiana Land which was 50 cents a share. My grandpa said, "What're you gonna do with the hundred dollars?" Said, "Well I'm gonna buy Louisiana Land stock." My grandpa said, "You gotta be out of you mind. I ain't lending you the hundred dollars." My daddy goes and scrapes up a hundred dollars and buys Louisiana Land stock for 50 cents a share. When he died in 1962 it was worth \$18,000. Mr. Milling, at the time, bought 3000 shares. I mean, they were on their butt. There was a guy came along from Sweden. We called him Mr. Seashore. He had a Swedish name that I can't even pronounce, but it's in the record somewhere. He sold the Temkin family on the fact that they could oil and gas on this property. That's when Louisiana Land was before New Holland or somebody else, and that's when they formed Louisiana Land and Exploration Company. Mr. Seashore began a – he was geophysicist – and he began to do preliminary oil and gas activity. He discovered that a lot of the potential resources were not on the land but on the water, and that's when he went to the state of Louisiana and started talking about how can I buy leases on the water. Again, the navigable waters of the state of Louisiana, the state of Louisiana owns the (? 35:59) title to the water bottoms. Louisiana Land, although they own 600,000 acres of land, and they did and they – well, it's not 600,000 anymore, but they did, but adjacent to them was another 600,000 acres of water bottoms that Mr. Seashore had a theory had oil and gas production on it. He begins to petition. Now, this becomes about '35 to '40. He begins to petition the state of Louisiana to lease him the water bottoms. The way you did that you went to somebody who knew Huey Long and you leased the water bottoms from a company that would lease the water bottoms. At that time, frankly, the Win or Lose Oil Company which was made up of people like W. T. Burton, James A. Noe, Allen Ellender, Harvey Pelche, Seymour Weiss. They ended up with the state lease and then they began to sublease it to people that ultimately – Louisiana Land ended up with the state leases. Louisiana Land drilled six dry holes on the state leases and that property and they were bankrupt. Incomes a little crappy company from Shreveport, Louisiana called The Texas Company, and they could borrow \$100 million to go drill the exploration wells and that made Texico and that made Louisiana Land and that made the state on Louisiana, in my humble opinion.

DD: When Texico, the Texas Company, came in that was in the '30s. Actually, they were involved a little earlier than that.

CS: Yep.

DD: When they came in they went into Lake Barre, and would you recall the number of wells they drilled before they found their first play?

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

DD: Right.

CS: I think Texico was much more successful, the Texas Company. Now, a guy you ought to talk to Bill Hulls. Bill Hulls is an old, older than me, and Bill Hulls was the Secretary of natural Resources during one of the Edwards administrations. Bill Hulls is not from Louisiana, but he's been here forever, and he had been in a lot of gas business forever. He knows a great deal about this. I'll tell you another guy that knows a great deal about this is Tozan. Tozan knows a great deal about it, because Tozan at one time worked for Harvey Pelche, Jr. So Tozan knows a great deal about this and, of course, they are tremendous court, I mean, Louisiana Land had sued Texico so many times, I mean, they got more court record than you could believe. But that has made Texico really truly made Louisiana, well this part of Louisiana in particular, but all across the state. I mean, those leases covered maybe not a lot in the Lake Charles-Cameron area but surely from Vermillion Bay-east all the way to Mississippi.

DD: Yes, and wasn't this building at one time?

CS: Oh yes. This building was built in 19- this building, lets see, I finished school '58, this building was built about 1950. It just so happens that Texico – my father had been working on and off for Texico since they were here 1930, 1935. About 1950, right after the Second World War, Texico decided they wanted to really expand and build operations – had to build operations in Louisiana. They built – they had what they called a New Iberia district, a Houma district, the Harvey district, and the division office was in New Orleans, and they solicited my father to acquire the property for this installation because they didn't want the price to go out of sight. So, my father and his lawyer at the time, a guy named Claude Ellender who was Allen's brother, bought this property on behave of Texico, turned it to Texico, Texico built this building about 19-, between 1945 and 1950. They expanded on the facility, expanded on this building, and built the building next door and their slip was already here. They had operated for 50 years out of this building, and they at one time ran at least 50 drilling rigs. I mean, they had had a budget right here probably of about \$250 million a year. There was Texico probably had 5000 engineers that went through this particular building, and just so happens when Texico left they gave to the YMCA. The YMCA mortgaged to the bank, lost it, and I bought the building from the bank. Kind of ironic how that all transpired. They were, of course, huge – Texico was huge employers, and I tell you, again, from the time I can remember oil was \$3 a barrel until at least I got out of college. When I got out of college, again, you'd bring an oil and gas well in and you got an allowable. The first thing you do is go bust the state's butt to get you an allowable to produce the well, and the well could produce 150 barrels of oil the state might allow you to produce 50. Hell, if you produce

ten million cubic feet of gas the state might allow you to produce 2 million a day. I mean, that was unbelievable, I mean, that was in, again, in the 1950s and 1960s that that was going on. All of a sudden the need for oil and gas continued to grow so all of a sudden nobody worried about chokes, nobody worried about how oil or gas you could produce. They'd produce everyday, they'd blow the damn wells. Many wells, many (? 42:00) were probably damaged by the fact that they tried to over produce too early. So that's been an evolution. I got a piece of property one of my grandfathers bought in 1903. They drilled the wells – Chevron, The California Company drilled the wells in 1950 on the property. The well is 10,050 feet deep. There's a unit of 60 acres producing this well. It's produced since 1950. It ain't Chevron anymore, it ain't California Company, it the Win or Lose, it ain't Great Southern, it's somebody else now that ended up buying the well from me and recompleted it damn well and it's still producing. I mean, I cannot believe this well and the money it generates for me and my family, it's unbelievable. But that's the history, again, that's the history of Louisiana, and again, them people in Baton Rouge that's, again, I used to love to go to the legislature. I used love to go the congress. I used to love to be around those bureaucrats and around those politicians. I mean, those people don't have clue in Baton Rouge that the reason we have deficit today is the price of oil and gas. We can talk about income taxes, we can talk about sales taxes, we can talk about smaller government, we can talk about bigger government, we can talk about education, but Louisiana's budget depends on the price of oil and gas.

DD: Exactly. Now, when you were growing up did your family have a close working relationship with the Clerk of Court?

CS: Oh yeah. The, again, my father started out in the Clerk of Court's office like I tell you with a process to do what he considered to be a, how do I want to say it, abstract survey of an area. If somebody says, "I want you to survey this 50 acres or this hundred acres on the bayou. There's two or three acre (? 43:56). Then my father to do that would have to, in his opinion, he'd have to reconstruct the titles in that area, basically going back to the grants, the U.S. government surveys, and then the titles. Much of the property was sold and occupied without the benefit of a survey, because, again, then possession became 9/10 of the law, believe that, but you had to at least try to fit the title, fit the puzzle together. In doing that you spent many hours in the conveyance records of the parish. Not only did you have to learn the conveyance records, the U.S. government title surveys, but how you put that all together in a jigsaw. That's where the surveying background came in. The first (? 44:45) that my father, I think, worked with was a Mr. Frank (? 44:48). Mr. Frank was (? 44:51) was, I think, the – and I think that's who Randolph Bazet went to work for as a clerk accord. Mr. Bazet became the clerk accord for eternity. Mr. Bobby Boudreaux became the Clerk Accord after Mr. Bazet. We have been very, very blessed in Terrebonne. I mean, we have a very confusing geographic area here. I think we have a very confusing culture, even more confusing than Bayou Teche, than Bayou Lafourche, because Terrebonne has five bayous. Bayou Teche is one bayou east-west. Bayou Lafourche is one bayou north-south. We are De Log, Grand Caillou, Little Caillou, Terrebonne, and Point Aux Chenes. Everybody comes to Houma, alright, and then you go north to Schriever and Gibson and what have you. Everybody comes to Houma. The bayous 200 years ago were the highways. The bayous were the area where

the high land developed adjacent to it and because we were regional everybody came to Houma whereas you had a strip parish in Lafourche north-south. You had people all the way from Leesville, Golden Meadows, all the way to Labadieville practically. The resources were stretched. Then, in Teche you had the opposite from east to west and they were stretched from Amelia all the way to (? 46:09), whereas in Terrebonne the assets were more centrally located in and around the city of Houma. Terrebonne parish, again, has about, I figure, about 1,300,000 acres of surface. Now, when I say “surface area” you gotta remember I’m talking about open water, bays, saltwater marsh, freshwater marsh, swamps –

CB: but within the boundaries

CS: – and about 300,000 acres of land above the five foot contour. We have 1,300,000 acres of land.

CB: There are only 300,000 –

CS: ... thousand above the five foot contour. We truly like everybody says, “Where you from?” “I’m from south of New Orleans.” “What do you mean you’re from south of New Orleans?” Say I live in the Mississippi delta. You go to (? Pittsburgh), Mississippi and they tell you the Mississippi delta starts in (? Pittsburgh) and stops at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. I raised my hand and said, “Hey, I’m from 300 miles south of here, Goddamn it, I live in the Mississippi Delta. I live in the new delta.” Assholes. (inaudible) Frankly, that is a problem for us, because nobody knows we’re here, man. Hell, 90 percent of people in America think the Mississippi River stops in New Orleans. When I tell them the Mississippi River goes 125 miles south of New Orleans they look at me like I’m nuts. Said, “Man, you think you’ve seen some resource in Mississippi valley? Go to New Orleans, get in an airplane or a helicopter and fly to the mouth of the Mississippi River. You ain’t seen nothing, man.” They take me up the river on the Mississippi River Commission and they show me 300 acres of wetlands, you know, somewhere in Missouri or Illinois or somewhere. Said, “Man, I’m gonna take you to Lafourche or Terrebonne parish. I’ll stop the automobile and cannot see the end of the wetlands, ok. They go over the horizon, man.”

DD: You’ll appreciate this: I had a Japanese colleague that came to Louisiana. I went out the road that goes between Grand Caillou and Little Caillou and I stopped right there. He’s looking and I said, “Get up on top of the car.” Remember this fellow is from Japan. “What?” Said, “Get up on top of the car.” “Oh, I’ll hurt the car.” Said, “No, get up on top of the car.” So he gets on the roof and he looks 360 and I said, “What do you see?” and he said, “It’s so big,” and that’s what you’re talking about.

CS: Yeah, yeah.

DD: When you were –

CS: You go below Golden Meadows, stop on Louisiana 1, you know, before you get to Leeville. You get on top of the car. I guarantee you cannot see the end of wetlands.

DD: No, no. Now, one of the things that I'm real curious about is you had one of your relatives involved in the timber industry. The timber industry became important because during the Swampland Act they bought a lot of timber. It wasn't locals necessarily, it's the Rathburns, it's the Bowies, the Wilberts, the Schwings, the Kyles, you know, the players.

CS: Sure.

DD: But when you look at Terrebonne I don't know where the mills were in Terrebonne. I don't know where the sawmills were other than the Gibson and Donner, maybe at Chacahoula, but you look at the canal patterns and canals give you a clue that they were harvesting cypress.

CS: Yep.

DD: Could you just kind of –

CS: Well, I know where one – my grandfather had a sawmill where the American Legion home is in Houma. I can show you the foundation for the boiler at the sawmill. You remember you were running everything with steam or something because you didn't have electricity. I know there was a sawmill where the American Legion home was I can, again, show you the foundation for the boiler. There was a sawmill where the (? Sun Barrier) operation was up on Main Street. I can show you where that was. Of course, the Donner-Chacahoula area had a huge sawmill. There were a thousand men employed at that place and there's a lot of books written Donner-Chacahoula. Down the bayous I don't know of any particular area where there was a sawmill. I know, again, the two that I know of in the Houma area were there. I can remember seeing the (? 50:22) of both of them. You ride around and you see foundations. There is the foundation on Rebecca Plantation that I thought was a sugar mill. The people that own Rebecca now tell me it was not a sugar mill, but I don't think it was a sawmill. It was some other kind of industry that was there. Now that you mention it I can think of two places that there were sawmills, but there are people around – the (? Bougers). The (? Bouger) family owned Dulac Cypress Company. They still own land. They're still around. The (? Bouger) family is still around. Oh, (? Begay), (? Begay). There was a guy named Begay that actually worked for one of my grandfathers that was in the lumber business for years, and some of his heirs might be around that could tell you where there might be sawmills in the – specifically in the Houma-Terrebonne area.

DD: Well, when you mention –

CS: You see, I used the example of the cypress business, very similar to the oil and gas business. Obviously the cypress was the first resource that somebody discovered, particularly in the wetlands, in the swamps, and they literally destroyed them. They clear-

cutted the cypress and eventually the cypress business went away because there was no more cypress. That's the kind we dealing with in oil and gas. As wonderful as oil and gas has been to us since the '30s in Terrebonne parish in Louisiana it's a depleting resource, and that's very, in my opinion, in my lifetime, that's always been very scary. Although Terrebonne parish and we existed, my ancestors existed here before oil and gas, but there weren't 120,000 people living in Terrebonne parish. Again, like I tell you I believe when my father got out of school in 1913 there was probably about 5000 people living in Terrebonne and agriculture and seafood was the only industries. That was it.

DD: But it's interesting that Carl and I that it, you know, if you have a thousand people working in the swamps that's 1/5 of what may be the population at that time. To use a word that I overwork – and this is my editor – that's not trivial. That is an enormous number of new residents, new settlers, new surnames, new attitudes.

CS: Yeah, and that went on from about 1860 or just after the Civil War 1865 to about 1920.

CB: Ok. Well, I'd like to follow up on that note because in the same thread when the Texas Oil Company comes in and brings in a whole new batch of people that's something nobody ever talks about, but could you tell as something you would have witnessed as a child here.

CS: Oh, definitely.

CB: What was the social and cultural impact of all these people coming into –

CS: Very interesting question and very interesting observation. As a native of the area, and my wife and I are both natives of the area, we always that it was difficult for foreigners to come in to Terrebonne, but we made many, many friends our age, many friends. Again, because of the business we were in and we were servicing those companies those employers we have made many friends, and many friends tell us that Terrebonne was a great place to move to. Now, we were always a blue collar town. We had very few, although we did have some petroleum engineers and some geologists but we had, compared to Lafayette, we had very few. Again, the oil center in Lafayette did marvelous things for Lafayette, in my opinion. The oil center did wonderful things for Lafayette in getting more managerial people into the area. We had always, and still are in my opinion, a blue collar town. I always felt that we were very clannish, that we were very reserved, but in talking to our friends that came in they said just the opposite. When I observed Lafourche parish I thought Lafourche parish was much more clannish. I still think it is today, although, Nicholls has been a wonderful resource to make it more regional in concept. There's no doubt there were huge changes. You make the point there were probably huge changes when the cypress people came in, but a different class of people came in in the oil field. Another interesting thing is about how much ingenuity the local people have. I'm involved in a facility at Golden Meadows and I have an old man working down there (? 55:41). My associates have an old man working down there who's older than I am. He's probably at least 80 years old, and he takes care of our generators.

We have standby generators there. After Gustav I'm there the next hour after Gustav, and he's there in his pickup truck tinkering with the generators to get them running. These are pretty classy machines. No half-ass deals. Mr. (? Flesent) says – working on the generator. I say, "Mr. (? Flesent) you gonna –" "Oh yeah, I'm gonna have this running in 15 minutes." I say, "Well, OK." I said, "How do you know how to do that? You went to diesel mechanics school or something?" He says, "Diesel mechanic school? I'm an old trawler." Man, he said, "When you're ten miles out in the Gulf of Mexico and your diesel engine stops you go to diesel mechanic school."

CB: A crash course there.

CS: But that is the Cajun just like this little girl I'm talking to you – introduce you to today and her father – her grandfather. I mean, that is the Cajun and that's the same thing I'm sure happened in the lumber business. It's certainly the thing that happened in the oil field. Man, we got people all over the damn world in the oil field from Houma, Louisiana that went to high school with me. I go to New Orleans, Scotland one time with the governor of Louisiana, get off the helicopter, first guy that runs up to me kisses me. He said, "I went to high school with you to Terrebonne High." It's obviously that – you mentioned something a survival about the fact that I said the way you live and adjust in life is the way you survive, and these people that south Louisiana just got a culture that's absolutely unbelievable. I've lived here all my life, and I'll down to Montegut today with you guys. I'll go to Cocodries today with you guys. To go to Chester (? 57:31) place on Little Caillou today with you guys and I'm the kid from Houma. Them people don't think I'm a native. I ain't a native as far as they're concerned. I'm from Houma, I'm the kid from Houma named Smith. That's a little bird, you know, and I never did learn how to talk French which was pretty stupid, because if you could go down there and talk French to somebody you're ok. The point is that we have tremendous ingenuity. We have tremendous ability to survive. That is the only way you can live in Terrebonne parish, man. When you think about people – just think about my ancestors that came to Terrebonne in 1830s and 1840s. You came to New Orleans from France, say from Bordeaux or from Alsace-Lorraine or somewhere, you came to New Orleans in a boat, you got off the boat, you went up the Mississippi River on a steamboat to Donaldsonville, you came down the damn Bayou Lafourche in a steamboat into Thibodeaux, and then you came down Bayou Terrebonne either in a steamboat or in a damn buggy to Houma, Louisiana. Now who would do that, man? There had to be somebody chasing you, you know. You had to be a draft dodger or a convict or something says, "I'm going somewhere where no bastard gonna ever find me cause everybody else went up the river, I mean, to go east or – where you're from, of course, is Acadiana and that was a little earlier. Without a doubt Jimmy Heyes used to make a speech, without a doubt them people came there so nobody would ever find them. Don't tell me about government, man. We don't want government. We've been run out of every damn country we ever went to.

CB: That's exactly right.

CS: So, again, that's why we got a slight problem with all the government. That's, again, why I'm confused and depressed. So, tremendous ingenuity, I mean, we really do. What we've been through, frankly, what I've been through in my lifetime particular what I've been through since Hurricane Ivan, since Ivan which I lose track of. That was in '04, I believe. '04, '05, and now '08, what we've been through, I mean, in my lifetime, in my recent lifetime, and I've been through all the damn storms, I have never evacuated Terrebonne parish for a hurricane until Gustav, and I don't think I will ever evacuate Terrebonne parish again because Gustav, the models, the wonderful computer models with big Mike and super-duper computers were wrong for Gustav. They were wrong positive, but they were wrong, and they were wrong for Ike. They were wrong for Ike negative. So, I don't believe them. I didn't believe them in the first place, and I really don't believe them now cause I missed the computer age. They didn't teach that at LSU. So, I say a hurricane is such an unusual weather event and where you are is such an important part of the geography equation that you can't put it in a computer. Depending upon where the storm is, the intensity of the storm, the location of the storm, the aftermath of the storm, and what's happening to you physically and what's happening to us physically. We can't know where you can put that in a computer. We had a plus five for Rita. We had a plus five right down the road. We had a plus seven for Ike. That's what's happened in this place. So, one of – this is a plus 11. So, one of these days they gonna have a plus 11 here or more, ain't no doubt in my mind, but I've come to the conclusion that I got generators everywhere, I've built an office in Thibodeaux 14 feet above sea level 15 miles north of here, I have a facility in Lafayette with a redundant computer system, and I have a facility in Houston with a redundant computer system. I have a two story guest house I built that I think is hurricane-proof and the second story's 20 feet above sea level, and I don't think I'm leaving. The reason I ain't leaving is, first off, getting back is ridiculous. Secondly, I look around and see the authorities. I ain't leaving my property in their name, in their hands. I got very little confidence in them people. I don't care what they say. I don't like their models, and I don't like the way they run their business. By the way, you know, I was here before FEMA, and I'll be here after FEMA. You know what Mr. Tozan told me – in 1980 he got elected to Congress, and he got elected on a ticket to eliminate the Department of Energy that had just been created. So, he goes to Washington, D.C. in 1980, and he goes to some social function in 1980. He bumps into a guy. Tozan introduced himself. The guy introduced himself said, "I'm with the Department of Energy." Tozan said, "I don't know if you want to shake my hand." Said, "I just got elected to Congress to eliminate the Department of Energy." The guy says, "Well, Mr. Congressman I wouldn't worry about that." He says, "I'm on the B team." Tozan say, "What is the B team?" He says, "I'll be here when you come, and I'll be here when you're gone." So, I'm with the B team with FEMA cause them S-O-Bs...

DD: You know, we were talking about the lumber company, and I have read all of the early transcripts of the, well, within the Clerk of Court's records for the parish government. One of the things Terrebonne did that I don't know of any other parish you had some siltation problems not from flooding of the river but from the pull boat logging in the swamps putting sediments and those sediments were filling you bayous. So, you bought the dredge boat The Eclipse. I know you know The Eclipse. Can you give some,

you know, that's a massive undertaking for a parish and its public works to get in the dredge business?

CS: We in Terrebonne, again, it goes back to there was a number of drainage districts formed. There was a number of no levee districts, primarily drainage districts, and there were a number of canals dug not only for logging purposes, but primarily for drainage purposes. There was one what they call a prairieland district – drainage district which was between the Coteau Ridge, Bayou Blue Ridge, and Houma. Just so happens C. P. Smith ended up being the president of that drainage district. They dug a canal from Bayou Terrebonne to Bayou Coteau to Bayou Blue for drainage purposes. That's where U.S. 90 ended up being built right along the spoils from that canal. So, drainage, again, because of the ridges as I described to you was very important. Also, in the 1926 storm there was a, again, we get back to hurricanes. We had a great storm in 1856 that affected Terrebonne. There was a 1909 that affected Terrebonne which my father, grandfather, and a great uncle drowned in, but my father and grandfather survived the storm. Then, there was a 1926 storm that would affect the Terrebonne. In later years, as far as I'm concerned Betsy was a major storm. We've had a few others, and that's another book that I would somebody to write one day about the storms that drastically affected Terrebonne parish. Interesting, Houma has never flooded from a hurricane because of – I consider our buffer was the wetlands which are gone. I think we've lost over 400,000 acres of land between here and the Gulf of Mexico in Terrebonne parish within my lifetime. That was our protection, and that's gone. In 1926 there was a hurricane. My father told me about this story that the hurricane created what we call Wanda Lake which was between Bayou Terrebonne and Bayou Point Aux Chenes. The storm with the tornados picked up the marsh and put it in the middle of Bayou Terrebonne. They had to dredge Bayou Terrebonne out for navigation and drainage purposes. So, drainage was always a big deal. So, you say, ok, there were problems with the pull boat runs. There were problems with moving the timber around in between, lets say, 1870 and 1920. Drainage was always important. We had a gravity drainage tax in this parish. As far as I know it was put into place in 1930s and probably even before that, tell you the truth, but what I know about it is about 1930 there was a millage. A parish wide millage for drainage – would call it gravity drainage improvements. Most of drainage until my lifetime, until my professional lifetime, was gravity drainage. We never had a drainage problem of influx of water. We always had a gravity drainage problem. We get 60 inches of rainfall on average a year. One – 1992 we got 100 inches of rain. We've gotten some months 20 inches of rain in a month. So, drainage is always a big deal. Of course, our drainage system also was drastically affected by the leveeing of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya river. We are between the basin of the Mississippi and the Atchafalaya and the Bayou Lafourche basin to the Gulf of Mexico. That's how Morganza to the Gulf got named, by the way, because we're in the basin all the way from Morganza, Louisiana, the Mississippi River to Bayou Lafourche to the Gulf of Mexico and the east guide levee to the Atchafalaya River. This is the basin. Love when the court talks about the basin. I said, "Well, first off when you talk about the basin, the basin that I live in starts in Minnesota and it comes all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Now I got a little basin where I live, but you want to talk about the basin. It's the big basin, and I'm part of the big basin. So, don't do something in Minnesota and don't think about what the shit you're doing to me in Louisiana. Let me

tell you they don't have a clue. I've been preaching that for 50 years, and it's like, I mean, I'd just as soon been talking to the chair. One reason is they change everybody every three years which is also a ridiculous process. Where was I? Again, drainage was – I'm sure if you go back in the records of the parish drainage for us was probably as important as the Mississippi River. Again, interesting in 1997 we had a flood of the Mississippi River. Before last year that was the last time Bonnie Carrie was open. Interesting reading the Houma Courier somewhere within the last two or three years, and I may have the article. I know I have the article somewhere. We had a flood in 1897 (? 1:08:53) there was an article in the Houma Courier, and the big problem with 1897 flood was that the Bayou Lafourche was gonna flood and there was going to be a crevasse in Bayou Lafourche at St. Charles and it was gonna flood all of Terrebonne from the east coming from Bayou Lafourche. That was a big concern. After the 1897 flood is the time they started talking about damming Bayou Lafourche, and my grandparents in the interim started building houses in Houma. There're lots 11 feet above sea level. They're built about 1900. They built their houses six feet off the ground not because they like to go up steps but because they thought their houses would flood from the Mississippi River. Now, I may see the damn houses flood from the Gulf of Mexico. I was showing somebody the other day – (? 1:09:42). He built – he holds a piece of property. House flooded for Ike, never flooded before – lived on a little ridge down there. So, he's building up his mound – pod. In Holland they build pods. We build mounds now. He's building it up to plus eight. That's the FEMA elevation. I said, "Ok, you got a hundred year flood protection?" "Yeah, I got a hundred year." I said, "If you want to build you house ten feet up above that you'll have 500 years. That's what people used to do. They don't go to get certified levees and all this other BS. That's what they did. That's what they did in New Orleans. That's what they did across south Louisiana. That's what they did in Terrebonne parish. I can remember going down the bayou in Bayou Lafourche and everything was raised. Every barroom they had was raised. I can remember the stories about you go and they had a guy, a badass, in Golden Meadows one time and somebody had to go arrest him. My neighbor was Johnny Folks. Johnny Folks was the game warden in Terrebonne and Lafourche. Nobody would go up and get this guy. Johnny Folks come down, he said, "What's the matter?" Said, "Well, they got this guy up there that want to kill everybody. Nobody wants to go get him." "I'll go get him." He goes up the steps. He tells this guy, "Partner, you're under arrest," pulls his gun out, handcuffs him. They walk to the steps. The guy trips him going down the steps – boop, boop, boop, boop – ten feet down. When they got to the ground the guy was dead, but that's the way it was, partner, you know. He was the game warden. Everybody else lived in houseboats. You go down the bayou I can remember people in Terrebonne parish. You go down to Dulac. You go down – first off, you go to Dulac. They had a big barroom Bayou Dulac built upon. Everybody built everything upon. Some fool came along in 1945 built something on a slab. I mean, that's the guy that ought to go to jail. You know, they want to put the (? 1:11:38) in jail. They want to put these people in jail. Guy's built the first house on the first slab in south Louisiana ought to be the one going to jail. Whoever that was.

DD: So, houseboats were the rule.

CS: Well, yeah, and even today I go down the bayou I've been down this parish after a storm so many times. You know, I stay in Terrebonne for a storm because I felt protected, truly did – didn't feel like I was in peril. As an engineer I wanted to see the effect of the storm. So, after the storm as soon as the wind stops blowing, ok, I'm down the bayou. I'm in an airboat, I'm in a helicopter. I'm in something. You go down the bayou and see the people at Dulac. Partner, they're in their boat. Turn to the south – the way people lived. I'm talking about 30 year old guys, partner, and they know what the hell to do down there. I'm going to the cardiac doctor the other day in Houma. I've been going to a cardiac doctor for 26 years cause my partner died one time in the real estate business by age. So, I've been going to the doctor. I mean, there they got a beautiful little woman comes in and give me some kind of treatment or something, and she's, man, she is young. She looks like she's 40 years old or older. I said, "How you doing?" I'm looking at the cardiac doctor's office in Houma is right on the edge of the Intracoastal. I'm looking at it and I go I said, "Look at that. That's muddy water. It's from the Atchafalaya." I say this is about a month ago. I said, "The river is getting high. The water's coming in." By the way, the river's crested today, by the way. But anyhow, she says, I says, "Boy, that's something. That's good that muddy water coming in." She says, "Yeah, I know. (inaudible)" I said, "Where you live?" She said, "I live at the end of (? 1:13:11)." I said, "What do you mean you live at the end of (? 1:13:13). Where you live in the end of (? 1:13:15)?" She said, "You know Stanley Liner?" (inaudible) "I know him well." She said, "That's where I live." I said, "You live on the 16th section." "Yeah, yeah, that's where I live." I said, "Why in the world are this obviously well educated lady, I mean, she's been working at the cardiac, I mean, she's a nurse, ok. She says, I said, "Why you live down there?" I said, "Your house flooded from Rita?" Yeah. "Your house flooded for Ike?" She said, "Yeah, but we had built everything up and what flooded we figured was gonna flood anyhow." I said, "Oh, ok." Said, "Why the hell you live down there?" She said, "Well, I married this so-in-so (? 1:13:50). He used to work for you Clifford." I said, "Oh, yeah?" "Yeah, worked at a survey crew." I said, "Well, why do you live down there?" She said, "He's a fisherman." Said makes a good living, a fisherman. "And we live here and right across the road is the boat and that's where he goes, gets in his boat every morning, goes crabbing or trawling. He makes a good living." She says, "If he didn't live – if he didn't do that, shit, we wouldn't live there, Goddamn it. I mean, I would live somewhere else, but that's what he does." So, I went, "That's where we're born. What the hell, you know." Said, "You know." But that's getting confused again. I get confused. Now, here's nice people. Obviously this lady's got a pretty good formal education. Her husband has got him a way to make a good living, and he ain't going to Napoleonville, or he ain't going, I mean, this is where he is. That's the dilemma, ok. You know, this poor guy living at the end of (? 1:14:51). I'll take you to the end of (? 1:14:52) and right now and the damn water is probably over the water right now.

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

CS: Yeah, it is. It's just like I go, the other day, where I was riding around with the parish president. I won't say nothing. I better not say nothing. But I'm riding around with the parish president. We had Isle de Jean Charles. The first time I went to Isle de Jean

Charles I walked to Isle de Jean Charles. Ok, and they were lucky that you could walk there. Before, you used to have to paddle a pirogue through Lake Barre to get there, alright. So, I mean, when I walked to Isle de Jean Charles in 1952 them people looked at me like I was from the moon, and I looked at them like they were from the moon, ok. So, I've been going to Isle de Jean Charles forever. So, I'm driving down to Isle de Jean Charles with the parish president. He said, "Man, we gotta rebuild the road." He said, "Why would we rebuild this road?" I said, "I agree with you. This is ridiculous." God, it cost four or five million dollars. The damn – everything there ain't worth \$20,000. He said, "Well, what would you do?" I said, "That's why I ain't the parish president, hoss." I said, "I ain't gonna make that decision. I think I know what I would do, but, I mean, by now I got other decisions to make. You ran for parish president, not me." But then I can show you all over Terrebonne parish examples of that. I can show you public money being spent where anybody with their right mind wouldn't do it. I can show you coastal restoration projects in Terrebonne parish where money has been spent to protect the coastal area. It ain't never functioned – that nobody ever goes and operates, ok. They have paid me, my firm, thousands, probably millions of dollars to design projects that get built that nobody operates. We read about the paper. We got the biggest problem. We do have the biggest problem, but the biggest problem is we ain't got a commitment. You know, Mary Landrieu wanted to go to Holland. I've been to Holland, ok. The biggest problem is them people are committed to protecting their ass from the North Sea. We ain't committed... and I'll tell anybody that. We got a magnificent library in this parish that I voted for, ok. We need a library in this parish like we need a hole in the head if its got ten feet of salt water in it. We still don't understand it. We do not understand that. My mother was on the founding library board in Terrebonne parish. How could I be opposed to a library tax, but we got a library tax that generates probably four or five million a year and man. We got a 15 million dollar library, and we building branches now all over the Goddamn place that are gonna be underwater. And nobody, you know, I mean, the stupid newspaper don't write about that. You know, I mean, it's confusing. I'm very confused.

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

CS: Yep.

DD: I've seen only one photograph at Sea Breeze and yet sea breeze I know was an important recreational facility for Houma. There apparently was that a very large –

CS: That's the boat races at Lake Barre.

DD: And what is this in the background – all of these houses? That houseboats?

CS: Probably so, yeah.

DD: Alright.

CS: Lets see if I can find it. This is the boat my father built in 1926. The were building this boat in 1926 at Madison Canal and the storm was coming, ok. Building this thing out of virgin cypress, alright. The storm was coming; the cabin wasn't built; the engine wasn't in it. So, they sunk the boat and came back after the storm and (? 1:18:50). This is the boat I used to go to the coast in every damn summer. This is my daddy fishing for tarpon at Wine Island Pass with rod and reels – probably the first rod and reels. That was the tarpon. See right there standing in the damn Pass. See they standing in the Pass.

CB: Yeah.

CS: Ok, lets see if I can find – ok, again, this is – this happens to be my father right here, but this isn't the same place. See they used to sleep on top of the boat with 'scito nets. This is my father. Can you believe that?

DD: Wine Island Pass.

CS: We go trawl for dolphin. They would let us fish in the damn things... still fish in them. Alright.

CB: That one's enormous.

CS: Yeah. This is a – look at the boat. Look at the boat (inaudible) be like old man in the sea. I think this is at Sea Breeze, ok. Now, this is the first rod and reels, you see. I think this is at Sea Breeze. I think this is at Sea Breeze. Wait a minute. This is at Sea Breeze, but this when I was on the boat and this is with the old shrimp (? 1:20:11) platform at Sea Breeze. This is the boat – this is Bayou Terrebonne – this is Barrow Street. Right here is Barrow Street. The DuPont store was here. This was (? Ashley's) seafood market. I guess before my time, but I know where it is – this is the bridge – this was the (? 1:20:31) bridge I think my grandfather built at Barrow Street. And this was the boat they used to run down the bayou – used to take people down the bayou – cruising down the bayou. Here you go. Here's the camp at Sea Breeze. This was, as far as I know, this was the camp in 1909 that my father, my grandfather, and my great uncle went to in September – and I got an article somewhere in here – the 13th they went to that camp and they were going fishing. They said they were going fishing come hell or high water as far as they'd come from New Orleans again. Remember how you got from New Orleans to Houma, so come hell or high water they were going fishing. This is the uncle that drowned in it. There's another article somewhere in here. They go to the camp. They're passing everybody coming up the bayou in their sailboat and the oar boats and what have you – no engine. They had the only boat with an engine, and they chug it down the bayou. They get to the camp and they go up this – my father's story, and it's in the newspaper's article somewhere which I'll find for ya'll. My grandfather, and my father, and my uncle – my great uncle – they start cooking supper, but the time they got supper cooked the roof blows off the camp. Then the Goddamn camp – now this is, again, in 1909. I figure this thing was about ten feet above the bank, ok, right at Sea Breeze. Pretty soon the Goddamn camp blows away, ok, and they end up on the roof. They drift from Sea Breeze to Robinson Canal. It takes about three days to go across from Bayou Terrebonne over to

Little Caillou and they end up at – along the way my uncle tells my grandfather and my daddy he can't hold on no more. So he falls off and drowns, ok. Along the way my grandfather tells Baker says, "Tell your mom and the girls," – again he had three sisters – "tell your mom and the girls goodbye. I'm gonna fall off and drown." And my daddy said, "No you're not." My daddy must have been, you know, 19, 20 years old and says, "No you're not. I'm gonna hold you." So he holds my granddaddy 'til they get to the Goddamn Little Caillou, and they end up in a damn – the damn roof drifts up the tree. They get off the damn roof, and they sit in the tree. They could sit in the tree so you ain't gotta hold on to the roof. About three days later here comes a black dude down the damn bayou in his oar boat. They didn't have no motors. Now, the oar boat picks them out of the tree and brings them back to Houma. The guy sits – my grandpa is sitting in his damn porch on Park Avenue in Houma and here comes some reporter from New Orleans and starts interviewing him and that's what the article's about. Not this article. This is the article about the funeral of my uncle, but my grandpa tells this story. So, my daddy built this boat in 1926, ok. Keeps it at home and we go chugging, chugging down the damn bayou every weekend. And this boat – if we going for three days we had food for 30. They had an anchor on the front. They had an anchor on the middle, and they had an anchor on the stern. I'd say, "Daddy, this boat went about less than ten miles an hour." I said, "Man, if didn't have all these Goddamn anchors on this thing this thing might move out." He says, "Well, don't be ridiculous boy. Let me tell you about the 1909 storm." I mean, so all of my life that's all I heard was the 1909 storm. Again, there was a storm in 1856. They was a great storm in 1909. There was four, five hundred people drowned in 1909 in Terrebonne. There was a great storm in '26. There's about three or four hundred people drowned as far as I know in '26. And then I don't think we had any major storms in Terrebonne until Betsy. Then Betsy, again, we were on the west side of Betsy, so we had damage but we were very blessed. We were out of power for two weeks for Betsy, but we were very blessed. As far as I'm concerned, Ivan was a terrible storm, although, again, we were on the west side of it, but it affected the Gulf big time... then Katrina and Rita and then Gustav and Ike. I say, and nobody's ever verified this, but I say that there was more damage in the Gulf of Mexico from Katrina and Rita than there was on land. I'm talking about monetary damage.

CB: Are you talking about the platforms? (inaudible)

CS: I'm talking about the oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Mexico and there was no FEMA. But we are still working for clients that are still doing remedial work after Katrina today. Nobody's ever did a study as far as I know on it. But I think there was more damage. For Ike we do a great deal of work for somebody called El Paso. El Paso is now the owner of the biggest pipeline system in the world. Among other things they bought Tennessee Gas Transmission Company. We, after each storm now because of their regulations and their insurance and, frankly, because of their operations, we do an inventory on all of their systems in the Gulf. We were doing an inventory on pipeline after Ike. We were 65 miles from where they thought a rig was. We're doing a side scan sonar following the line, and we come upon something that on top of the line that we can't identify. We get divers and go down. It was a rig that drifted 65 miles and sunk on top of this pipeline in about 220 feet of water. Not only did it, of course, it also destroyed

the pipeline, but it, interesting, we were working for the pipeline company and so the kind of word, rumor got out. First thing you know we get, of course, from the company that everything we doing out there is confidential. First thing you know we got the damn insurance company that insured the rig come and find us says, "We understand you found it." "No, no partner. You gotta go see these people (inaudible)." But I mean it's – now that was for Ike. And the rig moved 65 miles for Ike. But we've got platforms that we've been working on that have been pushed over where you have to have some of these junctions of different lines and the pipe, the structure itself, collapse on top of the junction. And you talk about a mess and we still working on some of those projects. Those were Katrina projects. Now, the first storm that created havoc in the Gulf was Ivan. I say somehow or other Ivan, you know, went in to Florida, but Ivan caused a lot of damage in the Gulf of Mexico to our clients. I think we're pretty much finished with Ivan, but Ivan almost destroyed that Thunder Horse platform. That is a huge platform. At one time they had 750 men working on that platform - 750 men.

DD: Yep. Yeah, at one time it wasn't called Thunder Horse.

CS: Yeah, right. It was Crazy Horse.

DD: Gotta be politically correct.

CS: It wasn't BP. It was British Petroleum.

DD: Yes.

CS: But now it's BP. So anyhow, it's, you know – see, I also have become – I think I've always interested in history, but as you get old I guess you get more interested in history. And obviously history repeats itself. And obviously, frankly, again our system of government doesn't understand that. So, again, I get confused and depressed and what have you. Because there's so much we can learn from history, but we end up with incompetence which is, again, as I get old it gets so depressing I can't put up, I don't have the patience to put up with the incompetency. I gotta project right now that personally I'm being involved in in the parish and the incompetency of the people in this parish just unbelievable. It's really unbelievable. We have people, again, my granddaughter finished in law at George Washington. And she's studying for the Bar in New York which is supposed to be the toughest bar exam in the United States. It's also retroactive to about 30 different states so that's why you take it. She's gonna spend about a month or six weeks studying for the bar and take the exam. I said, "Well, when are you coming to Louisiana to take the bar exam?" And she said, "Well, I'd have to study for it." I said, "Not the lawyers I know of. In Louisiana you ain't gotta study. Are you crazy?" I mean, we just have so much incompetence. I mean, you just read the newspaper – again, I've been out of town for three days, so I've been trying to catch up on the newspapers. And you read the articles and you read the stupid things that we get excited about. Of course, in Washington, God almighty man, you cannot believe in Washington D.C. – first off with the Speaker of the House that's the big kick for everybody up there now. But the president of Israel or prime minister of Israel was there. You ought of have seen the TV

ads about the Middle East. I mean Iraq. What are ya'll gonna do about Iraq. They have a TV ad that shows Iraq and shows Israel and shows rockets coming from Iraq to Israel on TV. These are ads. What ya'll gonna do about that? (inaudible) You're showing it to 10 million people and about maybe 50 thousand know what you're talking about. But it is confusing. It truly is confusing and scary, you know, because, again, I took American history and civics and I thought I knew something about our government and I thought I knew something about our court system. That's another revelation that was just unbelievable to me. When I got out of school we had a court system in Terrebonne-Lafourche parish. We had one, no, we had two judges for Terrebonne and Lafourche – had two judges. And we had – at one time we had one district attorney for two parishes. Now, I think we have at least six judges in Terrebonne. We have a district attorney that has God knows how many people working for him. The judges, when I was growing up – and I wasn't a lawyer I was testifying as an expert civil engineer – man, you'd get in the court rooms in Terrebonne parish with some of these frivolous lawsuits them judges would throw you out and tell you, "You better not show your face in my court again with such ridiculous crap. You ain't wasting my time." Today, I mean, anybody that – first off the judges, cause they all younger than me, but I mean they're 35 and 40 years old don't make a Goddamn what the lawsuit's about. They hear every lawsuit, you know. It don't matter. You know, no matter how frivolous it is. Again, I tell this story I had my grandfather - Write. There was a guy named William Wright, Sr. William Wright, Sr. ended up by being that he fought in the Civil War. He came back to Houma, and he ended up in the, they were agriculture people, but they ended up in delivery stable business. Now, they ended up be mule traders. Among other things they owned horses and mules and they ended up by owning buggies and wagons and they ended up owning a hearse. So, they became the undertaker, cause they owned a hearse, ok. Well, William Wright, Sr. dies. His name was Buck. And after the – we have a picture. I don't know if I have it here, but we have a picture of after the Reconstruction days in Terrebonne. They went and found a live elephant. And they put a live elephant on a wagon I guess my grandpa owned and mules and they were pulling the wagon to run the carpetbaggers out of town. They had a parade and they put a rooster on the top of the elephant because the Democrats were running the damn Republicans out of town. I got that hanging up. I know I got it at my house. I tell all them people I said, "Man, you know, with my grandpa they running all them people out of town, you know. Buck Wright became the sheriff because they needed somebody to be the sheriff. They run the black sheriff out of town and all. Then, Buck Wright died and my grandpa was the oldest in the family, so he became – his name was Billy Wright. He was Billy William Wright, Jr. and he was uncle Billy. I was his youngest grandchild that lived in Houma. My momma was hell on wheels, ok. So, my grandpa used to come pick my ass up every morning to get me out of my momma's house and take me to the delivery stable. I grew up on horses and mules, literally did. My grandpa would tell stories all the time and story was and every time we'd pass a bond issue to build a black school my grandpa said, "What kind of crap is this?" He said, "After the Civil War we rounded every black that could read or write, took him to Shreve and bought him a one-way ticket to Chicago. And now we're building schools. What are you doing? Are you crazy?" But my grandpa – in 1952 I was a senior in high school and he's sitting on my momma's front porch rocking on a Sunday afternoon. A loaded pistol falls out of his pocket. My momma goes ballistic, "What are

you doing with a loaded pistol?” Again, he had to be 82, 83 years old. He says, “What’re you talking about, woman? What’re you talking about? I got a loaded pistol.” Said, “I’ve been out shooting. I’ve been out practice shooting.” And my momma says, “Are you out of your mind? You can’t see, you can’t do this, you can’t do that.” He said, “What are talking about?” He said, “I’ve been walking around with a loaded pistol on me all of my life.” He said, “I grew up in Terrebonne, ran a business in Terrebonne, I got a loaded pistol.” My grandpa used to have a delivery stable right off of Main Street and had two stories and it used to run a card game at the big top of the delivery stable. Supposedly somebody came up to him the next morning and said, “Billy Wright you cheated me at a card game,” and whipped out a knife and knifed him. My grandpa had his coat (? 1:36:01) coat noticed that it’s hanging on the side of the barn but his pistol was in the damn pocket of the coat. The guy goes down Main Street telling everybody that how he just knifed Bill Wright; he cheated him in a card game. He fixed his ass. So my grandpa goes around the corner with gun shoots the guy. I think he killed him, but he shot him. They charged him with assault or something. He goes – court does nothing – “He’s got a knife – gun, so I shot him.” They let him off (inaudible), but that was the way it was in Terrebonne parish. It just so happens six months after that my momma gets attacked in her house by somebody. And, of course, I got to go find my people. The police can’t find the guy. I found the guy, ok. But the way we lived in Louisiana, the way we lived in Houma, the way we lived in Terrebonne parish, you didn’t rape somebody’s wife, you didn’t rob somebody’s house because the police was gonna get you. You didn’t do that because somebody was gonna shoot you, ok. Of course, that’s all gone to hell in a basket. You know, the first thing that happens is we got to call 911. Bull. I mean (inaudible). But that’s, that’s what happened in our country.

DD: But, you know, one thing you shared with Carl and I when we brought folks from LSU here was a number of people in the parish – I think one fellow is, I don’t know if I got his first name right, (? Leroy or Bouque Cheramie).

CS: (? Batu)

DD: (? Batu). And they were involved in...

CS: Bootlegging.

DD: Bootlegging. And one of the things that Carl and I are having a hard time finding is that if we go to the eastern seaboard everybody knows the Kennedys made their money bringing in booze. You come to south Louisiana and nobody wants to talk about it. Yet we all know that during prohibition there was a great deal of money coming into Terrebonne.

CS: I think you back even before bootlegging and you go to the shrimp platforms. Now, you know something about that. And I think before bootlegging they were bringing in foreigners. They were bringing in Chinamen. They were throwing them off the damn boats and they’d swim to shore and do whatever the hell they had to do. I think all that stuff in Baratavia Bay, and I’m sure all along the coast was like that.

CB: Well, I know before the Civil War they were smuggling things from Cuba to what's now Morgan City.

CS: Yeah. Oh, without a doubt. As a matter of fact, you go back to Lafitte that's what – you know, again, I have this place on Grand Isle. And again, I know about maps. I know about – and what Lafitte would do is sit out there at the mouth of the Mississippi River and there them ships would come from Europe. He'd bust their butt and go right around the southwest pass and come into Baratavia which nobody could follow him. I mean, he knew how to get there. Everybody else would run aground, ok. I mean, that's what they did. They did that. That goes back to Lafitte and probably even before Lafitte, you know. So, then they, I think then they started bringing in people. And then when they passed this prohibition thing there was (? Batu) Cheramie in Lafourche, alright. In Terrebonne there was a guy named Harry Bourque, Harry Bourque from Dulac. Harry Bourque was a trapper, alright. So, they start bringing in booze and he knew all the bayous, so he'd go bring in booze, ok. They go raid his place, ok. Harry Bourque takes off into the marsh and he stays in the marsh for about two months. The feds finally got tired and went away. He come back out the marsh and he was a (? 1:39:30) buyer. Everybody in the fur trade would lease land to trap. Again, the big land owners owned the land. They wanted to sell the land. Nobody fur trapping wanted to buy the land, cause they didn't want to pay the five-mill property tax. So they leased the land. The (? Mollers) and the Harry Bourques and the (? Batu) Cheramies and everybody that was in the fur business – Stern. There was a big –

DD: Steinbergs.

CS: (? 1:39:57) in New Orleans sent all that crap to Europe. So, Mr. Harry Bourque, though, instead of leasing the land he would buy the land. Everybody would say, "Are you out of your freaking mind?" Every fur season he'd make a few dollars and buy some more land. He'd get more men to go survey it, and then Mr. Harry would buy another section. My dad'd go there and Mr. Harry done moved monuments, you know, he's trying to steal more land. My daddy said, "What are you hiring me to survey your land for, damn it, you moved the monuments?" So Mr. Bourque, again, got his money in bootlegging. He bought land with it, even worthless land until they discovered oil and gas. And he became a multimillionaire. (? Batu) Cheramie got out of jail. Harry Bourque never went to jail. He just went to the marsh. (? Batu) Cheramie goes to jail. He gets out of jail. He gets into the shrimp business, (? Batu) Cheramie, and he wouldn't let anyone around him where blue. Cause he had to where a blue suit in jail. He gets into buying shrimp and processing shrimp. And he forms something called Morgan City Packing Company. My dad and a group of guys built something called Terrebonne Ice and Cold Storage in Houma. Allen Ellender was in the deal, my dad, and some other people. And they ran an ice house in Houma, downtown Houma, man. You can come up Bayou Terrebonne, buy your ice and there was another two or three different ice plants in Houma. This is when that was a big deal, an ice plant. Today, you can have ice plant that – so anyhow. (? Batu) is – they're making money, got this stock company on Terrebonne Ice and Cold Storage. And (? Batu) Cheramie is buying shrimp, processing, he built him

a – pretty soon Terrebonne Ice and Cold Storage built the freezer. So, (? Batu) Cheramie’s buying shrimp, freezing shrimp, and sending them up to Chicago. Anyway, they had a fleet of trucks that all got it shipped. One day Batu they’re having – my daddy told me there was a big Goddamn Christmas party. (? Batu) Cheramie is there and everybody cause he’s their big customer and all this shit. Cheramie tells them, who had about a second grade education, who had been to the penitentiary for bootlegging, said, “Ya’ll the shrimping business is good.” But he said, “Ya’ll better think about when the shrimping business ain’t good. What ya’ll gonna do with that big icehouse, that big freezer?” “Oh no, man, no problem.” Well don’t you know for some reason – the dead zone or something – the shrimp went away for about three years before we knew there was a dead zone, before we had boats and went out 200 miles in the damn Gulf of Mexico. So, all of a sudden, boop, there ain’t no shrimp for about three or four years. Terrebonne Ice goes bankrupt... (? Batu) Cheramie. Oh, then Batu, my daddy said, “Man,” he said last night he said, “Ya’ll better worry when they ain’t got no shrimp.” He said, “Ya’ll better start thinking about freezing chickens or something.” Everybody laughed went off, you know, drinking (inaudible). Boop. Five years it happened this second grade guy.

CB: These guys were going offshore and meeting boats?

CS: No, I think the boats were, again, probably hanging around the islands. Again, not a lot of people went in there. Before the Second World War very few people went into the Gulf of Mexico – fishing or anything else. I mean, they might go – they certainly didn’t go out of sight of land. So, what was probably happening was they were – again, remember now. We bring in ships today that draw 30, 40 feet of water. Those boats, even when they came from Europe, I mean, they were drawing six or eight feet of water. So, they would probably get as close – as a matter of fact Grand Caillou, Little Caillou was the ballace they three out the damn boats; that’s 300 years ago. But I’m sure they would get as close to the shore as they come, and then somebody can go out and pick them up and get money and, you know, and go deliver. That’s exactly happening in narcotics. I mean, you go down to these bayous, you go to Grand Isle, you go to end of Dulac, you go to the end of Bayou Grand Caillou, end of Bayou Dularge. You go down there tonight a sheriff’s deputy from Terrebonne parish making maybe \$500 a week. Maybe, what? 30, 40 thousand dollars a year, he’s in an automobile, he’s got a radio, he’s got a gun. And he goes down to the end of Bayou Dularge at night at three o’clock in the morning. They got an 18-wheeler down there unloading the damn trawl boat. So he goes up to the guy and says, “What are ya’ll doing?” He says, “Well, you know, we’re unloaded some marijuana, some cocaine, or something from Venezuela or somewhere else.” And he says, “Oh, well you can’t do that. I’m gonna arrest you.” He said, “I’ll tell you what we’re gonna do, hoss. We’re gonna give you \$10,000 to go away, or we’re gonna shoot you. What you want to do?” I mean, that’s going on every night. I got a guy I went to high school with. This guy went to high school. His name was (? Pooh) Ellender, Carl Ellender, Jr. His mother, his aunt was married to Edison (? Schwess). (? Pooh) Ellender goes to high school with me, gets out of school. His name was Ellender. He gets out of school and goes to work for Texico in a pile driving barge right out of college – right out of high school. Works on a pile driving barge, marries some coon-ass gal, has two or

three kids. Works on a pile driving barge for about ten or twenty years, comes in one day, seven and seven. Wife done run off with somebody so he leaves his wife. He quits his job. So he goes to see a banker that was – I controlled the bank and I wasn't the banker the old man knew very well. He goes to see Mr. Webber. She said, "Mr. Webber's in one of barge. Somebody want to build a 65 foot trawl boat. Mr. Webber said, "Ok, how much money you need?" "I don't know. I need \$75,000." "Ok, we're going to lend you \$75,000." He said, "Well, I want to build it out of wood." This was in – what, '58 – this was maybe '65, maybe '70. And you couldn't build a boat in Louisiana out of wood; you couldn't build a boat in Louisiana in those days cause they building it for offshore boats. So, he goes to Bayou La Batre, Alabama and he finds some blacks over there to build a Goddamn wooden trawl boat 65 feet long – an offshore boat out of wood under an oak tree. So Mr. Webber one day in driving to go look at the boat. I said, "I'm going over there what boat are we going to look at?" He said, "We're gonna look at a boat for Carl Ellender, Jr." "Carl Ellender, Jr.?" I say, "You mean (? Pooh)?" He said, "Yeah, yeah." I said, "You lent that man money? This is a no-good son of a bitch. I wouldn't have lent him \$10, man. Are you crazy?" "No, we lent him \$75,000." So now we go over there. They're building this damn boat and I'm sitting there talking to the guy. They got a guy there with a 75 foot boat getting it fixed. So I said, "Where you from?" He says, "Bayou La Batre, Alabama." I say, "What'll you do with this boat?" He said, "Well, I'd go fishing and get shrimp." I said, "Where'd you catch shrimp?" He says, "West of Southwest Pass." I said, "What Southwest Pass? (inaudible)" He said, "I went to the mouth of the river, the big Pass." I said, "West of Southwest Pass?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "It's off of Grand Isle?" He says, "Oh yeah, yeah." I said, "You come from Bayou La Batre, Alabama to go way the hell over – how long it takes you?" "Oh, about 15 hours." I say, "Well, what do you do?" He said, "Well, I catch shrimp." I said, "What are you doing except bring them back to Bayou La Batre? Wait a minute man. You dragging your ass all the way over there and coming back?" "Yeah, yeah." "How often you do this?" He say, "I do this about twice a month." I said, "Well, how long is the trip?" He said, "About four or five days." He said, "I go over there, fill up the boat, and come back." I say, "Goddamn it, I live on Grand Isle you son of a bitch. You catching all the shrimp and bring it back to Alabama." "Well," he said, "once in a while I come in to Grand Isle and sell the shrimp." I said, "I cannot believe this shit." So anyhow, I say, "How much you pay insurance?" cause that was a big deal, still a big deal. He told me how much. He paid less insurance cause he was out of Alabama than we do out of Louisiana. I said, "And you in the Gulf twice as long." You can't tell – you tell a coonass he got to somewhere 11, 12 hours to fish for shrimp he gonna tell you to go to hell. So I said, "You're crazy." So anyhow, (? Pooh) ends up with the boat, brings it back to Terrebonne. About this time he done found himself a French woman by the name of Mauricy from France. He named the boat after this woman and all and they christened the boat he (? 1:48:27) the boat and all that shit. So, every now and then I'd bump into (? Pooh). I get a call one night about 6, 7, 8 years later I get a call – I hear about (? Pooh) at the bank so he must be paying the note. So, I get a call, collect call, about nine o'clock one Sunday night. So, Joanne answers the damn phone and it's (? Pooh) Ellender. (? Pooh) says, "Clifford," he said, "I'm in trouble." I said, "What you mean you're in trouble?" He said, "I'm in jail in Mobile, Alabama. I said, "Well what the shit you in jail for?" He said, "Well, the feds, the coast guard caught me out in the Gulf with a load of

marijuana.” I said, “Are you calling me?” I said, “Are you out of your mind?” I said, “You gonna rot in jail, partner, if you think I’m gonna help you.” “Oh man, you got to give – you got to help me.” I said, “First off, I don’t know nobody in Mobile, Alabama. And secondly, man, you up there on federal charges you got to be crazy, man, so shut up.” I hang up the phone and Joanne says, “Who was that?” I said, “That was (? Pooh) Ellender. He’s in jail in Mobile for running marijuana.” And she says, “What he want?” I say, “He wanted me to help him get out of jail – which are you out of your fricking mind?” So this crazy bastard goes to penitentiary and he never – they kept on his ass to try to turn state’s evidence to who in the hell he was selling this stuff to. And he wouldn’t so he spends about three or four years at Fort Smith, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas in the federal penitentiary at Fort Smith. He sent me a Christmas card every year as kids call me and something. So he finally gets out of jail. So I said, “Well, what are you coming and find me?” He said, “I need to buy a truck.” I said, “What you need a truck for?” He said, “Well, I’m into wholesale seafood business now.” He said, “I go buy all this shit and sell it to them restaurants in New Orleans.” And I said, “Whoa, what are you want to do?” He said, “Well, I want to buy a truck.” He said, “I want to borrow some money.” I said, “Well, why you come to me? I ain’t the bank. Go to the bank.” He said, “Well, you know, I’ve been to jail.” I said, “Man, look as far as I know you paid your damn note.” I said, “The banker, I mean, I don’t understand why he won’t lend you money. Go over there and ask the guy to lend you money.” So, he goes over there. The guy lends him money. He finds a damn truck and he starts buying seafood. He calls his company (? 1:50:46) Seafood. That was his daddy’s name was (? 1:50:49). He’s (? Pooh). So, down there in New Orleans one day he went out driving down Charter Street trying to get to (? 1:50:57) hotel. And you know how them stupid asses leave everything on the street. They leave behind some damn truck (? 1:51:04). Well anyhow, the stupid fool goes down there. He ends up with some woman in New Orleans. By this time Maurincy – when he went to jail Maurincy stole everything, boat and everything. He ends up with some young gal down there in New Orleans who somehow knew somebody that knew her. She conned his ass into buying – he’s making money selling seafood. She conned his ass into buying something down there in New Orleans, sign some stupid note. He’s about to lose the note. He’s about to lose the property and go bankrupt. So, he calls me and says, “Clifford.” He said, “You know I still own that property down the bayou my daddy owned (? 1:51:41).” “Yep.” And he said, “You know that’s got some royalty – some income, royalty income.” “Yep, I know.” He said, “Well, I want to sell it to you this week.” Cause he said, “I’m gonna file bankruptcy next week.” “Mmhmm.” He said, “When I get all that finished you can sell it back to me.” I said, “(? Pooh), I don’t I’m gonna do that.” So he shut up, he goes bank – he never did lose that property – he goes bankrupt. He ends up back at home. He ends up with a Goddamn watchman’s job somewhere. He goes out every night and gets drunk. He gets killed on the damn road one night. But (? 1:52:22) got to talking about his trip. I said, “Well what are you doing asshole you were making a good living catching shrimp?” He said, “Yeah, yeah, but,” he said, “they conned me into going to Venezuela.” I said, “What you do?” He said, “Well, two of us would go to Venezuela, two boats.” And he said, “We go to Venezuela one boat would load up with the stuff and one boat would be bait – empty.” He said, “We come across the Gulf,” and he said, “the Coast Guard get out after our ass we’d peel off and you had a 50/50 shot that they’d went for the wrong boat.” They went for his boat in

50/50 shot. But God knows how many times he did, you follow me, that's exactly what they do. They're still doing it. Man, they're doing it everyday. I guarantee you that in this parish – we had a very good friend around lived around the corner from my house. We knew the kid and all and sure enough one day, man, the feds surround the house. And I said, “What you doing?” Said, “We want Stanley Yancy. We want his ass. He's in the house. Bring his ass out.” They had confiscated that 18-wheeler that he had loaded up the night before. And so it's been going on. It's been going on since Lafitte. It's been going on, whatever the contraband is, we have a coast that is, in my opinion, you cannot secure it. That's all there is to it. You can't secure it. And well, during the Second World War, you know, they'd blow up all them damn ships out there that were –

CB: Well, that was my next question for you about World War 2 over here and the blimps and all of that. If you can tell us what you remember.

CS: Well, they just did a history on the airport. There was an airport in Houma that was developed by the city of Houma. This was, again, about the time I was born about the same time Texico began to discover oil and gas. Texico kind of took over the airport, but it was a grass trip. That was what it was. But Texico always had some type of amphibious plane available. Texico, again, had all big money. I mean, it was just like going on deep water now, I mean, they would do things that nobody ever dreamed of doing like we doing in deep water right now. Boats and airplanes and helicopters and all, I mean, we got biggest commercial helicopters in the world flying from basically Lafayette to Venice. I mean, I can show you in Houma, Louisiana right now I bet I can show you five \$20 million helicopters. I go to (? 1:54:59) show you three or four. I go to Forchon I can show you three or four. Biggest commercial helicopters in the world because of oil and gas. Same thing was happening in the '30s with Texico. So, they took over the airport to really operate. Then came the Second World War and they started blowing up the ships Intracoastal Canal. I've got some clients now who are very concerned about the history of the Intracoastal Canal. The Intracoastal Canal – they started building the Intracoastal Canal in 1890 and they didn't really build it until the Second World War when they discovered that if they had a canal they didn't have to go out in the Gulf of Mexico and they didn't have to get blown up. But anyhow, the Second World War the attacks by the U-boats in the Gulf of Mexico, again, the government probably overreacted, they sunk maybe what, 50 ships out there, maybe 100 ships and we done spent God knows how many millions of dollars even in those days – built a blimp base in Houma, just bought up all the damn land, basically confiscated the land, expanded the airport. The airport – where the airport was ain't nothing where it is now. Built these huge runways, built this huge building – biggest damn building you ever saw in your life out of wood, of all things – built a whole base, you know, like in three or four years. By the time they got the damn thing built there was no more U-boats. And then the air force came in later after the Second World War and built an early radar system and operated it. Luckily the parish, again, I complain about the local government but that's been a huge success. The airport has, in my opinion, been a huge success. Luckily the federal government ended up basically giving the airport to the parish, and the parish has run it as an industrial park and also as a retarded – now that's not the right word – special education center for children in Terrebonne. And that's been a tremendous, tremendous asset, really has. I

mean, the whole facility today is a huge asset. So yeah, I remember the blimps. I remember my father – I grew up on a golf course because, again, my father loved the outdoors. He loved golf, he loved building golf courses, he loved operating golf courses. And in a Houma golf course on a Saturday afternoon a blimp goes by and accidentally drops a bomb. I know exactly where. I can go show you the hole where the Goddamn bomb was. So, I mean, we had all kind of crazy stuff and we had hundreds of people that worked at the blimp base, hundreds of military people that some of them still around. C. J. Chris is a guy that ya'll ought to talk to. There's hundreds of Texico people. There's a guy by the name of Dick Lampton who came to Houma after the Second World War and flew for Texico for 30, 40 years. He was a Second World War bomber pilot but ended up basically a commercial pilot for Texico. And Texico always had a huge, huge aviation presence in Houma. Texico grew up in Houma. I mean, they had – I'm sure at one time Texico had more airplanes in Houma than they had anywhere, anywhere. Dick Lampton could really tell you the history of that. There's hundreds of people in the community just like you mentioned that the timber business, the oil business, the war – hundreds of people have come into Houma and have stayed in Houma or Terrebonne. And that's interesting cause when I tell you I always felt that it was pretty clannish and it was a hard place to move in to. When you look back and you see how many people have stayed that have come from God knows where intermingled with natives and what have you gonna go, you know, the same thing with the Native Americans, so-called Native American. We got some people here that are tremendous entrepreneurs that are Native Americans. I mean, I got some working for me right now that, man, if the storm comes that's the mothers I want around me, man. They know what to do, you know. I don't need the models from LSU.

DD: You know, when you mentioned the people that came in here there's a surname that's used in the literature quite a bit. Based here in Houma is the Jastremskis. And Jastremski is not a common name one found. And they were involved, as I recall, with the Bay Juneau Oyster Company. Well, as Carl and I have been searching records it was a huge oyster industry here.

CS: Oh yeah. Pelican Lake and Oyster Company was Jastremski. The Jastremski family, I believe, there was a Dr. Jastremski. And Dr. Jastremski was a protégé of my grandfather Billy Wright, ok. He lived on Park Avenue; I can show you right where he lived. God knows where Jastremski came from, but he was a physician. The family I knew about. I don't think I have a new Dr. Jastremski. I think he died either right after I was born between '35 and '40, but he was a physician and he was an entrepreneur. He used his medical profession and his money that he made in the medical profession to invest in the seafood industry, primarily. He owned a packing company. He owned something called Pelican Lake and Oyster Company. He probably owned Bay Juneau and Oyster Company. He owned an ice plant in Houma right down the street from Terrebonne Ice and Cold Storage. He lived right across the street from that in a relatively nice home. He had a bunch of crazy kids, crazy kids. You know, typical second generation family, his kids were. As far as I know, there are no Jastremskis left but there're a lot of people that were kin of the Jastremskis like the Duvals. For instance, you mentioned Charles Nelson. Charles Nelson is married to a gal named Dottie Duval. Dottie Duval's father was Claud

Duval. Claud Duval's mother was some way kin to the Jastremskis or his father was. There was also a Dr. Duval in Houma at one time. When I grew up there were Dr. Duval, Dr. Collins, Dr. Jastremski was already dead. There was no young Dr. Jastremski.

CB: In the early twentieth century some of the world's biggest canneries were in Houma.

CS: Oh yeah, oysters.

CB: How long –

CS: Oysters and shrimp.

CB: Right, exactly. How long did those stay in operation?

CS: Well, until ice, cold storage. See, the first way you process seafood was with canneries. That was before refrigeration, before electricity, I guess. And they would can oysters and they would can shrimp. It was a big deal. Then, refrigeration came along. That's when Morgan City Canning Company came along, or Morgan City Packing Company, and began to pack things with ice and with freezers. But they were actually, again, a seafood industry. Initially the seafood industry was to feed the people that lived on the sea. And you go back to the 1909 storm, when you go back to the 1856 storm there were people that lived along the coast and they ate what was on the coast. They found out they could sell some of that stuff, I guess, first in New Orleans. And then how would you do it? And this is even before ice. You follow me? My daddy hunted ducks. He didn't do it, but he hunted with people that hunted ducks for a living. That's what they do. They go out they decide to go out – well, today we're gonna kill nothing but pintail, male pintail. That's all we're gonna shoot today. Everything else goes bunk. Fill up the damn boat with male pintail. He had guys that would kill ducks, clean the ducks, ship them some kind of way to New Orleans and get paid for that. They first started shipping seafood by train and ice. Before that they were canning it. And they were, like you say, their oyster industry was probably the biggest thing in Terrebonne parish.

CB: Yeah, and –

CS: And fur like I can remember there was a fur dealer in Terrebonne by the name of the Molls.

DD: That was –

CS: Big Al, big Al, big Al's daddy, big Al's daddy, big Al's grandpa was a big fur (? 2:04:31), a guy named Alidor Moll. I can remember somebody telling me Alidor Moll made \$250,000 one year or something (inaudible). He was worth \$250,000. He ended up being busted when he died, but all he did was buy for himself fur. That was a huge, huge industry just like the lumber industry. When you think about a thousand in a sawmill in Donner, Louisiana there ain't nothing there. Well, there was thousands of – there was probably a thousand that been living in the fur industry in Terrebonne at one time which

ain't there no more. Now, we still do oysters. We do oysters now, because again we can ship – they ship everyday to Los Angeles from Houma by truck. They used to ship a lot of things by freight, by rail. One year was a big deal to grow Easter lilies and ship Easter lily bulbs all over the damn country in Terrebonne. But again, it went back to the land, you see. It went back to the fact that you had fertile land and you had fertile water. You could literally live off the land, live off the water. And then as the society began to expand, not only our society, but the society in America began to expand we found out there were products that we had that people would pay money for and we began to be commercial. It's an evolution, you know.

DD: One thing that Carl and I found the other day is that when you talk about a can a can had to be soldered; just like if you built a barrel. The Mancusos had a barrel stave facility next to (? 2:06:11) Bergeron.

CS: Two good names that (? 2:06:14) Bergeron and (? 2:06:16). What you said? I never heard that.

DD: Mancuso was a family name. They actually came from New Orleans and built (? 2:06:25)

CS: They were barrel makers.

DD: Right. And they were barrel makers. Well –

CS: And they would ship things in barrels.

DD: Yeah. Well, suddenly you're talking about oyster cans. Well, a can has a seam. The seam had to be soldered together. We're going, alright, who did that? How many cans did they produce? Where did they go? And we're looking right here in Morgan City those were the oyster centers.

CS: And shrimp.

DD: Oh, well shrimp –

CS: You used to can shrimp.

DD: But we looked for the can. Now, here's a man that's got a collection. Do you have a can?

CS: I don't think I do. I don't think I do, but I can remember them. I mean, there were canned oysters and canned shrimp. And they were vacuum packed with some way they – not only you talk about – they ended up by putting these things in the can and they would vacuum pack them. And supposedly that preserved them and they'd ship them all over the country. Well, you know how you go buy sardines?

DD: Yeah.

CS: The sardine can today is, you know, they got all kind of crappy things on it – didn't have all that stuff. But that's the same process was the point I'm making. I'm sure that's the same process.

DD: Cause we –

CS: I don't know the process.

DD: No, but we have a photograph on Bayou Terrebonne where the oyster shell is as tall as this building.

CS: Aw, yeah.

DD: And there's five guys sitting up there with (? 2:07:48).

CS: I might have that somewhere in here. Yeah, I've seen that. I've seen that, I mean, not only the photograph. I've seen the piles of shells. I can't find the damn article about this storm. That's gonna bother me if I don't find that. I found this about the damn funeral. You see, this uncle of mine ended up by being the mayor of New Iberia. He was the mayor of Houma and then he ended up by being the mayor of New Iberia.

DD: Well, you mentioned one of your lawyers was Milling. Of course, there's King Milling which I'm assuming is related.

CS: That's his uncle. That's his uncle.

DD: And that he was in the law firm with...

CS: Milling (? 2:08:30) is Benson and Woodward.

DD: Well, where does – governor two terms ago –

CS: Foster?

DD: – Foster come into the play. Cause I thought it was Foster Milling –

CS: No.

DD: Not at all?

CS: Not that I ever knew of.

DD: Ok.

CS: Foster was, you know, from Teche, from St. Mary. This is my father and Allen Ellender. This is back in Terrebonne Ice and Cold Storage. They went out and shot all these ducks and shot a redfish or something. This is my father's diploma in 1913 from Tulane. Here's a copy of it. This is, I guess, the graduating class. This is my father; he went to Chamberlain Hunt at one time. He went to every military school in the south. He used to throw them off. All of his cousins were DuPonts and they were all really bad kids. I guess he was, too. This is my father in college, and this is my father in the '50s. This was at the military academy, some military academy. This is (inaudible). This is his birth certificate... One of the colleges (? 2:09:56) classes, I guess, at Tulane. This is the commencement program when he graduated from Tulane in 1913. He and Allen Ellender graduated the same day. Ellender had a degree in law, and my father had a degree in engineering. This is his first registration as a civil engineer in 1914. This is the last registration, I guess, in '51. This is Louisiana Engineering Society.

DD: Lifetime member.

CS: This is the bridge at Barrow Street, and again, the Jastremskis' ice plant was right here and Barrow Street was navigable. This is a single-lead bascule bridge that my father designed and was built in about 1940.

CB: And this replaced the wooden bridge?

CS: No, no, excuse me. This is not at Barrow Street. This is at (? 2:10:56) Street. This is right at (? 2:11:58) Street. This bridge my father designed. And then we, in my lifetime, we constructed the bridge as a permanent structure and we had some pictures of it. This is the same bridge, but this was at – no, this is the – yeah, this is at Lafayette Street, I believe. But Bayou Terrebonne was navigable. This is the bridge that's there now. We replaced this bridge with this bridge. We're using basically the same foundation, as a matter of fact. This is the first paved street in Houma. This is a WPA project. This is actually Church Street being paved. This is my father in the picture. This was, again, about 1930. This is a bridge that my father designed. Actually, it was originally designed in wood. Again, this is on Bayou Black. This was the Intracoastal Canal at one time. This is a single bridge that was opened and closed by hand. And you see it had the – again, it was a navigable stream so you had to have a bridge that opened and closed.

DD: Now, to open this – now, we have a photograph of one on Bayou Lafourche similar to that. The bridge tenderer is actually like...

CS: You could do that with a –

DD: – like with a bicycle.

CS: Yep, or you could push it. They used to walkways out, and you would actually literally push the bridge. See, this was on a turntable right here, and women did that. This is my grandfather's house, and this is where my son lives now. This was the house that was built about 1905. It was finished in 1905. And again, the lot is 11 feet above sea

level. The house is built six feet off the ground, and these are 300 year old (? 2:12:46) trees in the front yard. The same house – this was actually the house and this ended up by being my father’s office, but it was at one time my grandfather’s lumber yard office. This talks about the first sawmill in Houma. One of my crazy aunts, I believe, read this – wrote this article. I’ll give you all of this. I mean, I’ll give you copies of this. This was my father, a baby picture of my father. This is my father and his father. This is my grandmother Clara. This is Clara and C. P. Helen and – yeah, Helen, I don’t know. This is my daddy, obviously. This is my grandfather, but I don’t see Helen, though. I don’t see where I see C. P. and Helen. This is Helen. This is my daddy. This is his oldest sister. She had polio when she was three years old, and she never took a natural step in her life after three years old. She died at 92.

DD: In Houma?

CS: Mmhhh. She was born the day it snowed in Houma so my grandfather called her Helen Snow Smith. And the race boat at Barrier was the Helen Snow. Again, this is Helen. She had – age 5 – I think she had already had polio. Helen’s no Clair. Helen’s no Clair Mildred. Grandma Hunter. Hell, I don’t even know who that is. Mr. and Mrs. DuPont, Clara DuPont. This is the wedding invitation to my grandmother and grandfather’s wedding.

CB: Wow.

CS: T. Baker. This is Mrs. T. Baker Smith of Kentucky. I think my grandfather’s named C. P. Smith, and I think his father was named T. Baker Smith. I think that’s where all that came from. This is my father and I. He was 60 years when I was 15. This is in his boat and I thought he was dumb and didn’t know – and old. And when I got to be 60 years old I said, “You know what, he was smart and he wasn’t old at all.”

DD: Yeah.

CS: This is B. F. Smith that drowned in 1909. This is the race boats at Lake Barre. This talks about the boats. I don’t know if it mentions the Highmans in here, but it’s about the boats. And lets see, talking about he had an officer in charge of the races was C. P. Smith Commodore, Allen Sander’s official starter, G. J. Lebara of Assumption, Fleet Captain, Maurice Highman, Officer of the Deck. Maurice is the one that (? 2:15:59). This is the boat. This is the boat, again, my daddy built –

DD: And sunk.

CS: Yep, in 1926. This wasn’t on the Merrill. My daddy named the boat after my sister, Merrill. My daddy’s first wife was named – she was a Menville. God, what was her first name? Anyhow, and he was married to her and she died. They had had a daughter who was about six years old when she died. He later married my mother and had two children later by her. This is when he went catching (? 2:16:41)... talks about the fish. All of this stuff, I mean, I’ll make copies of all of this stuff. Ok?

DD: That would be helpful.

CS: I can't give it to you right now, but I can –

DD: No, no, no, no.

CS: If fact, I can't find one of the articles that I'm going through here. This is all in Sea Breeze.

DD: That's perfect.

CS: This is the same boat at Sea Breeze, but this was in my vintage. And of course the camp was gone, but the platform was still there. That is (? 2:17:13) platform. My daddy had rebuilt the cabin of the boat after the Second World War.

DD: Now, there was only one platform at Sea Breeze?

CS: In my lifetime there was only one. That's all I ever remembered. This is, again, this is at Lake Pelto. That's the old Texico camp at Lake Pelto. And that's the boat. This is, again, a earlier picture. I don't know the date of this picture, but this is Barrow Street, this is (? 2:17:46) Seafood Market, and this is the Barrow Street Bridge. I mean, this is old; this is prior to me. This is, I guess, my father and somebody standing in the – I got some pictures that (? 2:18:00). I don't know if I have them in this book, but I got pictures of a couple of women that nobody can identify. Then, I think this is the camp at Sea Breeze.

DD: Sea Breeze.

CS: That's why I say it's Sea Breeze. In 1909 it must have been 10 to 15 feet of water. And there was no water in Houma. Well, today if you had 10 or 15 feet of water at Sea Breeze you would have, hell, you would have 10 feet of water in Houma... without a doubt. See, for Rita, again, it was a nine foot tide on the Terrebonne coast – the way I figure it. And there was five feet at Industrial Boulevard. So, for Rita you didn't lose but four or five feet of water. And so today you would lose less – no – yeah, it would be less. So, if you had Rita today you wouldn't have five feet of water –

CB: You'd have seven or eight.

CS: – eight like you had for Ike. And although Ike, both of those storms were unusual in that they stood off the coast a while. Even though they didn't go into the coast to the west, the fact that they pumped water in here was the factor. And again, you can't put that into a model. This is Honduras. My father in 1913 he was gonna graduate. Then somebody announces that if you signed up to go to Honduras for United Fruit you didn't have to take your final exams because the boat sailed with the tide or some bullshit. So, he signs up to go to Honduras for United Fruit so he didn't have to take his final exams. So, the boat sails and among other things somebody went and told him to go buy a gun

and he went and bought a gun about this big. I still got the gun. And he says – he goes down to Honduras and he gonna be there for, I don't know. Hell, he had to sign up for two years or some shit. He gets a telegram – he's down there about three months – he gets a telegram from his momma that his daddy's dieing and that he's the oldest child, the oldest son, he got to come home. So, he comes home, that was in 1913, his daddy died in 1944. So he goes to Honduras and fools around down there.

DD: Well, you know (? 2:20:17) Bergeron provided a lot of shrimp for United Fruit.

CS: Yep, yeah. And United Fruit was owned be the Detonys – the Detonys. I want to say Detonys that's not the right word.

DD: The Antonios?

CS: No, I'm gonna think of it in a minute. That's another story. My daddy ends up with this piece of property at Berg which we still own as a matter of fact. This is my daddy playing baseball. A guy named Luis Russell comes down – this is 1945 – comes down from New Orleans to see my old man. And Luis Russell is a smartass coonass got a diamond stick pen, a drilling rig, and he smokes cigarettes. And he comes into my daddy's office one morning, the old office on Park Avenue, and says, "I want to buy a lease from you on your property at Berg." And my old man says, "Well, first thing you do you get your ass out of my office cause nobody smokes in my office. Get your butt out of my office." This is 1945. So, Russell goes back to New Orleans and he's reporting to his financier who was Dr. Francis Legern. Dr. Legern was from Lafourche crossing and he was eye and nose and throat doctor in Ochners. Detony – his wife was an heir to this United Fruit. Goddamn, I can't think of the name. But anyhow, Russell fronting for Dr. Legern and they were gonna drill an oil well down there in Berg. And he wanted to buy this lease from this guy. And he goes back and tells Dr. Legern that that night he says, "Russell, how you made out today?" He said, "Man, I didn't make out worth a shit." They got a guy in Houma that threw his ass out of the office." He says, "Well, what do you mean?" He says, "They got a guy named Baker Smith down there that told me get his butt out of the office. I can't buy the lease from him. I can't even talk to him." And Dr. Legern said, "Baker Smith from Houma?" He said, "I went to college with that guy." So, he called up my daddy that night. He said, "Look, that guy Russell was really fronting for me." And so he said, "Well, send him back tomorrow." So Russell comes back about 10 o'clock in the morning, comes into my daddy's office and he's not smoking. My daddy said, "Look, I'm gonna open my mail, then going home, I'm gonna eat some lunch, I'm gonna take a nap," and he said, "I'm gonna be at the Houma golf course at 1:30." He said, "Meet me at the Houma golf course." Russell told me this story. So he goes to the Houma golf course. He said, "I've never been on a golf course in my life." He said, "Your daddy played nine (? 2:22:51), made me follow him all the way to that walking." I mean, he always walked. They walked around the damn golf course and he says, "After we got through walking around the golf course I'll be damned if he didn't sign the lease." Everytime Mr. Russell would see me he said, "You Baker's boy?" Mr. Russell and I ended up in the banking business together, but we got to be good friends. But boy my daddy made an indelible impression on him.

DD: Did Luis Russell grow up in Bayou Lafourche?

CS: Yeah.

DD: At Lafourche Crossing?

CS: Yeah, right there. He got about a third grade education. He grew up on Bayou Lafourche. In fact, the family home is still there. I don't know if I can find it right now, but it's, you know, a typical shotgun house. And Russell went to New Orleans and his first job was running a streetcar. Russell, though, was a – man you could write – well, there is a book written about Russell. But Russell was a truly wildcat, an entrepreneur. But Russell had a memory like an elephant and people that befriended him he didn't forget. And people that didn't befriend him he didn't forget either. Story is that he was selling at one time he was selling soda water when they used to sell that soda water at soda fountains, you know. He goes into somebody's drugstore trying to sell them some soda water in New Orleans. The guy threw him out (? 2:24:22) or something. So, Russell goes to be in the oil business and the drilling business and the real estate business and then in the banking business. Then, he ends up with a mortgage on this guy's drugstore. And Russell called the damn lawyer and sued the guy at the drugstore. The guy said, "Man, what you doing that for?" He said, "You don't remember me? I came in here 25 years ago to sell you some soda and you threw my ass out." Russell was tough, he was tough. I think he liked me. I guess he like my daddy cause he mentioned him. They did drill the well and it was a success well so it was a successful venture in the long run. But, boy, he used to tell me that, "You T. Baker's boy?"

DD: But wasn't he involved with the New Orleans fairgrounds?

CS: He owned it.

DD: Ok. Well, that would be involved!

CS: Yeah. Russell, you see, his crazy son – not crazy son, but his son and his son got interested in racehorses. Luis you don't have but one son, Little Luis. He got interested in racehorses and that's a pretty cutthroat operation and business. So, Russell ended up by buying a controlling interest in the fairgrounds. Every now and then they didn't treat his son right or something and he'd tell them he'd go subdivide it or something.

CB: It's (? 2:25:56).

CS: Yeah, and he's finally ended up by unloading (? 2:26:00) to somebody. Russell did not make a lot of bad business deals. His son is still a big deal. He's a big trainer. Russell was selling the bank. That's when really I got to know Russell cause we where in the banking business together and he got ready to sell the bank. The banker calls me and he says, "You want to buy – we got to go buy the bank." The banker thought I had a lot of money. So, I'm about 28, 29 years old, maybe 35 years old and I'm gonna put the deal

together to buy the bank. I said, “Well what an I doing, man? I don’t know nothing about banks. I’m an engineer. What the hell do I know?” So, we end up by buying Russell out of the bank. And when we did that I asked Russell I said, “Well, why, Mr. Russell why are you selling your interest? What are you doing? You’re selling interest in the bank. What are you doing with your money?” He says, “I’m buying Life Insurance Company.” And I said, “Well, why you buying Life Insurance Company?” He said, “Well, boy,” he said, “I done discovered that, you know, you go hustle a guy to put your money in your bank.” This is the picture. This is the picture. His first wife was Blanche Menville and this ain’t Blanche Menville and this ain’t Odilia Wright. I don’t know who the shit that is. But anyhow, he – Goddamn, I can’t find that article I want. I gave a copy of this to all of my kids. But there’s an article about the storm. I must have taken it out somewhere. No, this is all about football. I said, “Mr. Russell, what are you doing selling?” He said, “Well, I found out that you go hustle a guy to put money in your bank and he gets pissed off at you and he go in there and take the money out.” He said, “If you go hustle the guy and sell him a life insurance policy the only way he gets his money back is he got to die. He put all his banking money into – I can’t find that article.

DD: Well, what trapper or oysterman ended up with maybe the controlling interest of Terrebonne Bank?

CS: Harry Bourque.

DD: Ok.

CS: It was Citizens Bank.

DD: Alright, alright.

CS: I’m a tell you a guy you ought to talk to about the oyster business. Now, he’s not a, in my opinion, a Johnny-come-lately, but he is big time in the oyster business in Terrebonne parish is Ernie (? Waser). Now, Ernie (? Waser) owns, his sons own (? Motivative) Seafood. They’re the people that – here’s the article. This is the article about the 1909 storm. This is the article about the last island, the big storm. This is another article about the 1909 storm.

DD: Yeah, we’d like to get copies of these.

CS: We can get copies of all of that real easy for you. This is the article about B. F. Smith. This is the article – this is all the 1909. What I would like to write is a book about the major storms that affected Terrebonne.

DD: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

BREAK

DD: We’re gonna go and get ready to talk to Luis.

CS: Luis is a good guy. Too bad there was a guy – Luis had –

DD: With your permission I'm –

CB: These are amazing. They really are.

CS: Well all of this – look ya'll, we don't have to do all this today, now.

DD: No, no, no, no, we know that.

CS: These, again, are some field notes that my father had us send me later from a guy by the name of (? Julette). That's at Bocage. But these are field notes of 1886 of a guy named (? Julette). This was doing survey work in the Terrebonne area. This is, I think, some of Julette's work, too. This is just, you know, give you some idea of the old stuff we got. I mean, we got, again, we got all the T. Baker stuff, but this was even before T. Baker. This is field note number 1, field book number 1 of T. Baker's. This was March in 1914 – “variation in Thibodaux according to government stone post.” “Six degrees in 07.” See, again, my father would set the delineation on the compass. You follow me? He would read the field notes, but again, this is field book number one of T. Baker, 1914.

DD: Wow.

CS: And you see, look, you see this book has been scanned, see.

DD: Ah, ok. Well, both Carl and I are delighted that you're taking the time to preserve these.

CS: And actually they've been microfilmed and scanned.

DD: And just for your files we've been working very closely with Elaine Smith at LSU. She's somebody that if you run into any snags or need information she's the one to talk to.

CS: Again, his book number three this is concerning road district number one of parish of Lafourche. We talking about times where they were shelling, they were – not hard surfacing – they were transformed the roads from mud to some type of surface: shell or –

DD: Yeah.

CS: –(? Aggregate) or something. So, although my father, again, always was a surveyor and always was a civil engineer he used to tell said, “You don't want to be a surveyor because pretty soon they're gonna have so many damn surveyors and pretty soon they're gonna survey everything.” Well, what has evolved is we're making hydrographic surveys into the Atlantic Ocean off of New Jersey. So we have expanded he had no concept of

what the type of things we're doing today. And like we have a hundred and thirty-five foot boat out in the Gulf of Mexico it's been out there since Katrina.

DD: Well, it's so like you told me the ability to survive –

CS: Yep.

DD: – the ability – and that's what you're doing. It's a classic kind of thing, and what Carl and I'd like to do is we need to process some of this and if you don't mind giving us, we never know if it's a month or two months, and come back –

CB: With some follow up questions.

DD: – with some follow up questions.

CS: We can do it anyway you want. I would suggest that you might want to, I don't know, do you have a video process?

DD: Yeah, we do have a video process that we could come and setup a video camera.

CS: Ok, this is – jeez, I don't even know how to do this. (inaudible) This is – I'm sure you've seen these Don – but these are the original (inaudible). Now, of course, we have the original township maps, but this happens to be... where? This is Lake Quitman, this is Lake Boudreaux, this is Boudreaux Canal, this is Robinson Canal, this is Bayou Little Caillou, this is Derode –

DD: Yep.

CS: – the ridge. And this what is the date on this?

DD: That's...

CS: 1909 or something like that?

DD: Yeah, that's about right. Yep.

CS: Yep.

DD: So, on Little Caillou all the down to Robinson's Canal I've been told there was cattle.

CS: The Robinson Canal?

DD: Yeah.

CS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And this is, by the way, this is where they picked up my dad. He came from Sea Breeze. This is what do they call that, Wine Lake?

DD: Right.

CS: This is Lake Barre; this is Bayou Terrebonne. See, Bayou la Fleur at Sea Breeze was somewhere down here.

DD: Alright.

CS: And they ended up over here.

DD: Mmhmm. And that's (? Laperou's) store.

CS: Yeah, Chester. That's Chester (? Laperou's) store.

DD: Yep.

CS: And that's, you know, Lester (? Laperou's) store. This is Chester's store at Boudreaux Canal.

DD: Boudreaux Canal, right.

CS: Now, can you imagine this is Boudreaux Canal. Now, this is 1909, alright, or 1900. This was at Boudreaux Canal manmade canal or Robinson Canal manmade canal. Can you imagine what this place looked like before those two canals? Can you imagine the only way you got into Lake Boudreaux was through Bayou Dulac? And for some reason you came up Bayou Grand Caillou and then Dulac kind of wondered around like that. I don't know why. You could tell me that, maybe. But can you imagine what this place was like? You talk about – and no outlet and no outlet here. Man, you talk about a paradise, sir. There must have been alligators in there. There must have been ducks in there. There must have been animals in there we can't even dream of. Now, I did work right here. This is Four-Point.

DD: Alright.

CS: I've done survey work at Four-Point where you could see – you can't see them now – but I could see rows. There was a sugar mill somewhere down here. They used to grow sugarcane all the way down here. The Houma Navigation Canal come through here. At Four-Point. The (? 2:36:40) family, again, the (? 2:36:41) – that's a different (? 2:36:43) than the oyster guy.

DD: Well, there's rows on (? 2:36:46) ridge.

CS: Oh, definitely. Oh, yeah I remember that.

DD: And you could – still there's probably deer hunters out at (? 2:36:54) if the (?) family never go out.

CS: Oh, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah definitely. All the way to (?). (?) as you go on the (?) ridge – this is Lake de Cade, yeah, well this is Penchant. (?) ridge starts in here somewhere.

DD: Mmhmm.

CS: And that was the Bad Woods. I went to the Bad Woods with Skelly Wright a federal judge. There was a big possession lawsuit that my daddy was working on for (?) Land Company. The Milling firm was the lawyer and the judge was Skelly Wright the famous segregation judge in New Orleans – desegregation judge in New Orleans. And so here, unbelievable to me and I think back at it now, I mean, I couldn't have been this high, he decides he wants to go out and look at the possession in the Goddamn marsh between Lake Penchant and Lake de Cade. And I was on the trip with him and went took the judge out there to see the property. He wanted to see the – federal case.

DD: Well, there's another example. The (?) Land Company was not owned by Terrebonne residents. They were owned by people...

CS: Well, and my daddy used to make that point all the time that (?), Louisiana Land, Continental Land and Fur Company, all of those properties could have been bought by people in Louisiana. Nobody in Louisiana wanted to buy them just like the trappers didn't want to buy the property cause they didn't want to be saddled with the taxes. Cause they didn't think the property could generate enough money to pay the Goddamn five-mill property tax. The one guy that decided that no he could handle that was –

DD: Wisner.

CS: No, was Harry Bourque. Wisner and Dresser were the promoters. Now, they ended up with a large piece of land between here and Lafourche, alright, but that was the last piece. That was the piece they couldn't get nobody to buy.

DD: Alright.

CS: And they were supposedly – I tell you the other guy ya'll ought to talk to is Andrew McCollum. Andrew McCollum is 80 years old. Andrew is a lawyer. Andrew worked for the Milling firm. Andrew worked for Southdown Sugars... Southdown. And Andrew and I are business partners, and Andrew is an heir to the Ellender Plantation. Ellender Plantation is the only plantation in Terrebonne parish that's been owned by the same family since before the Civil War. Getting back to bankruptcy crap – people used to go bankrupt after every Goddamn sugar season, man. You know, some disease or some freeze or something. They'd lose the damn plantation. Man, they got records in this parish of people, you know, going bankrupt every other year. One family that didn't was the McCollum family. Now, Andrew is Andrew McCollum, Jr. His father was Andrew,

Sr., his uncle was William McCollum, and they owned Ellender Plantation. They kept Elleder, and their great uncle was a U.S. government surveyor. A guy named Edmond McCollum who was also a lawyer in town who also one of my partners, but Andrew is the guy to talk to. Because Andrew worked for the Milling firm. Andrew did a lot of work with (?) working for the Milling firm. Andrew was very close to Mr. Roberts Milling who is King Milling's uncle. Andrew and I talked about this many times about writing a book about the things we've talked about, some of the things we've talked about. I got about three books a could write or should write. The reconstruction of U.S. government surveys, the fact that all of Louisiana was – first off, we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Mississippi River. We wouldn't be here except for the valley of the Mississippi River.

DD: Mmhmm.

CS: And frankly, if we'd of stayed here and reverse some of the things that happened to it it's got to be the resources of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. So, 300 years ago the biggest problem was solving or protecting yourself from the river and we did. I mean, we've done that as a nation, as levee districts, as landowners. We've evolved into a system that protects us from the river, but causes little mitigation, little problem. And then we allowed the delta to deteriorate. So, we got to use the river which is the resource to reverse it. It takes a lot of imagination. It takes a lot of ingenuity. And the system we've evolved in – the authorization, the appropriation, and the permitting system, and the bureaucracy we evolved in – is all obstacles. Personally, up to the point where I don't think it can be solved. We have to have I don't know what, a revolution or something, because the system we've evolved into will not comprehend what our problems are and what the potential solution is. And it's a tragedy, because, again, we wouldn't be in Louisiana, we wouldn't be in Lafayette, we wouldn't be in Houma – well, we'd probably be in Baton Rouge because it's above the flood plain – but believe me, the resources that we enjoy in Louisiana wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the river. And if we don't have enough since to understand that, which I think is a problem. Again, getting back to Andrew, Andrew is an attorney. Andrew grew up in Terrebonne parish, law degree from Tulane, very eccentric kind of guy, very undetailed kind of guy, but knows the facts. He was a lawyer with the Milling firm. He worked on many cases with the Louisiana Land, (?), and Continental Land and Fur Company and others, Miami Corporation and others. He then went to work for Southdown, Inc. He was with Southdown as the company went away, to tell you the truth. He's still with the people. He still works for the people that basically control some of the assets of Southdown and canal assets and things like that. So, he's a wonderful source for you guys. Many times we've talked about writing a book about what we talked about as far as the levee districts are concerned, and the titles from the U.S. government, to the state of Louisiana to the levee districts, and etc. He's really got that stuff at his fingertips. He's 80 years old so that's another guy you need to really on your tape, frankly.

DD: Alright.

CS: And you can tell him when you – I mean, I'll tell you where to find him.

DD: Alright.

CS: And you can tell him I told ya'll to go see him, I mean, really.

DD: Ok.

CS: He ought to be sitting here right now.

DD: What we'll do is we'll look at our schedules. We'll plan to come back.

CB: At your convenience.

DD: At your convenience. These kinds of things are wonderful, I mean, just wonderful. And you can remember either through your dad or through your memory, you know, what it was like. I mean...

CS: That's exactly, by the way, what I have done we don't do a lot of it anymore, but I've been involved in a number of litigation matters. And as I told you we have my father's records, so we can tell you how my father reconstructed a U.S. government survey. And I can testify that I have reviewed the records and I understand what he did and how he did it and, frankly, that is upheld in many court decisions in this area. They're few and far between now because the possession, the property lines are much more defined now than they were 30 years ago. So, there's a number of what I consider to be hallmark cases that I've been involved in. Probably, I don't know at my age how many more I'll be able. But, you know, there's just unbelievable problems in operating in this area. I say 'unbelievable' but I'm sure in other areas they have similar problems. The difference is, of course, the French and Spanish grants and the geography of the area and now the deterioration of the geography which makes it a very unique place. Again, we live at the end at the most – well, they say it's the third largest delta in the world - the valley, the third largest valley but surely the most productive valley in the world. And I'm talking about the Mississippi valley. I mean, I can, again, we can talk about what I've learned as being on the Mississippi river commission and some of the examples of what the hell's happening to us. I really believed that that's what you gotta go back to. You gotta go back to the basics as why you're here, where are you. So many people don't understand. You, of course, as a geographer understand, but so many people don't understand where we are. I mean, even people in Terrebonne parish don't understand where they are in Terrebonne parish. Of course, that's what's so depressing to me. I mean, I can ride from my house on the other side of Bayou Terrebonne to here and I can tell you what the title situation is. I can tell you which way the wind's blowing, and it's scary. I can look at muddy water in the Intracoastal Canal I can tell you what the damn elevation of the river is in Morgan City, cause I can see the river water. And then when I don't see the river water I can see the green water basically from the Gulf of Mexico. Some of the people they're just oblivious to that. I mean, sometimes I think I need to go to New Zealand, man, where I don't know nothing.

DD: Well, we'd lose an asset. We've been doing this all morning. We appreciate it. What I'd like to do, Clifford, is that we are going to meet with Luis. Then, we're going down and stay all night at (? LUMCON). We hope to talk to Mr. Bouquet.

CS: Bouquet?

DD: Bouquet. I think it's Bouquet. He owns an oyster house, shrimp growing facility, shrimp shed right there at (? LUMCON). I'm giving –

CS: (? Fouret).

DD: Four-. Ok.

CS: I think.

DD: I'm going to give a presentation tomorrow at Leadership Terrebonne.

CS: He's got a facility –

(recording jump)

DD: Yes, in (?).

CS: No, not (inaudible)

DD: Yeah, not our there.

CS: See, and I can remember the old ways.

DD: Well, that's one – we'll come back and what I'd like to do is Carl's gonna park his vehicle behind your facility.

CS: No problem.

DD: I will come back tomorrow afternoon and I'd like to take that picture, if I don't get anything else, and scan that cause that's pretty important for what we're doing. And then, we'll look at our schedules and –

CS: See, McCollum can tell you all about Southdown. I mean, that's a history, too.

DD: Oh, yes.

CS: I could write – I want to write a book about old businesses in Terrebonne. Again, this business was founded in 1913. There're some that are founded before that: Davison's, and Bourgeois Meat Market in Shriever, and (?) Bergeron. I want to write a book about old businesses and how in the hell do you survive over the transition that we're going through in the 1900s and now 2000s. I want to write a book about the major storms that affected Terrebonne, but primarily point out to the people that Houma has never been flooded from a hurricane. But Houma gonna be flooded from a hurricane because of what we've lost. You know, you talk about the 25 square miles or what have you. I'd try to get it down to: look, the water table in the Intracoastal Canal is 24 to 36 inches above what it used to be 30 years ago. That's the real world, ok. And our drainage is into the Intracoastal Canal. I want to write a book about that about the hurricanes. Then, I would love to write a book about the history of the land, the government surveys, how the transition came from the French to the Spanish to the U.S. to the state to the levee districts to the major land owners. And that evolves into oil and gas and everything else. I mean, I could write about three or four books. We could write a book about Southdown. McCollum and I are very knowledgeable about the evolution of Southdown. And, frankly, the evolution of Southdown goes back to the financing industry in America. These lands ended up, most of these lands in Terrebonne, ended up with these major corporations through foreclosures and banks –

CB: Right.

CS: – and liquidation. This title of this property where we are, titles of a lot of properties. I have in Terrebonne parish the liquidation of banks. I mean, all this bullshit about this is too big to fail this is ridiculous. That's what, again, makes me so pissed that, I mean, people used to fail all the time, man. That's why we had, I thought – and, again, I'm not a lawyer – but I thought that's why we created something called the bankruptcy courts and chapter 11 and things like that. Now, if somebody decides, well, we ain't gonna do that, we gonna do something else – that's crazy, man.

DD: You're confused.

CS: Yeah, you're right.

DD: Just checking!

CB: Well, we're gonna start off by getting you to tell us on tape that it's ok for us to record you. We, as Don said, we're doing this to try to put it in the archives at LSU and at the University in Lafayette.

SKIPPY: Ok.

CB: Basically what we're doing is setting up a collection so that people a hundred years from now can know what life was like in this area.

SKIPPY: Oh, alright. Sure.

CB: So we're collecting all this information, we're making it available at the university, and we're setting it up so that, as I said, people who are doing books, articles, even documentaries can come along and get this information

(inaudible)

DD: We didn't bring it today, but we'd like to eventually bring a video camera and just let you talk for a few minutes so we'll have a name and a face.

SKIPPY: Ok.

DD: When I came here quite a while ago and we were chatting, one of the things you mentioned to me was that when you looked at your business you are one of the oldest businesses in Terrebonne parish. And that's because of your family, but your family was not only in the shrimp business they were also in the fur business. So, remembering that your knowledge we're gonna just record. So, go back and start talking about the early times, the shrimp (?). You mentioned to me that, I think, through the (? Loose) family in San Francisco you shipped a half load, a half boat load. Wait – a half a boat load is millions of pounds.

SKIPPY: No, not exactly until (?).

DD: Ok.

SKIPPY: I'll go and explain it to you. My grandfather was in an orphanage in New Orleans and got out that orphanage in New Orleans some time around the turn of the century which is from the 1800s to the 1900s. His first job that he had was working for his uncle. And I think they owned a bakery company. I think they worked at the (?) bakery company out of New Orleans. His job was to be a travelling salesman selling bakery products, dry goods, you know, basically anything he could sell down in this area. And the people down here didn't have any money so they used to use the barter system. He would sell them a package of goods whatever they needed, you know, a candy, cigars, or canned ham, or whatever, and they would give him dried shrimp. He would bring it back to New Orleans and he would go into Chinatown in New Orleans and sell it to the Chinese people there. That way they would give him the money and he would in turn pay his uncle. So, after a few years of doing this his uncle told him, he says – his name was Leopold and his last name was, I mean excuse me, Blum, of course. But his nickname was Lep and he says, "Lep," he said, "what you need to do is just go strickly into that

business.” So he says, “Well,” he says, “I guess I could do that.” So, he went into the dried shrimp business and he got a partner by the name of Shelley Bergeron. He was a man that owned a restaurant in Houma at around the turn of the century. He also used to own a place called The Ladies’ Parlor because the restaurant also had a barroom in it and the ladies couldn’t go into that barroom. So, next door to it they had what was called The Ladies’ Parlor. And they could go and get coffee and ice cream or whatever, you know, at that time they could get. So, he kind of took my grandfather under his wing because my grandpa was a young man.

DD: How old was he, roughly?

SKIPPY: I think he was 14 or 15 years old when he got out the...

DD: Orphanage?

SKIPPY : ... orphanage, but he didn’t come to Houma until he was probably in his late teens or so. When he got out the orphanage his first job he had was to go to the Panama Canal and sell brooms and mops at the Panama Canal. So he got some sales experience doing that. Anyway, after a few years he migrated to Houma with his uncle and such. Business became, like I said, it became more lucrative at that time and he went into business with his partner Shelley Bergeron. They started the dried shrimp business in Houma in a very small location out of the side of that restaurant. They had little storage room back there so they just stored everything there until he could bring it to New Orleans and sell it to the Chinese people down there. So, anyways, also in Houma they used to have a factory that used to can shrimp. And it was run by a man by the name of Dr. Leon Jastremski. The boats used to come up Bayou Terrebonne and unload the bigger size shrimp and people would peel them by hand and he would boil it and pasteurize it and put it in cans. He was selling that all over the country. He had brokers and such. So, my grandfather approached him one day and asked him, he says, “Mr. Jastremski,” says, “do you have a broker or something like that around Los Angeles or San Francisco or somewhere like that?” He says, “I’m selling a product that I think the Chinese people are interested in. So, he says, “Yes. I have a man by the name of Henry Loose.” Mr. Loose was Mr. Jastremski’s broker selling the canned shrimp and other products. He was selling rice and other products from Louisiana in the San Francisco area. So, my grandfather wrote him a letter and sent him some of the samples of the product. When the man wrote him back he says, “I’m getting ready to take a trip to Hawaii and to China.” And he says, “This is a Chinese product because they have it in San Francisco.” And so he left and he went on his trip and he sold, like you said, a half a boat load of dried shrimp in Hawaii and another half a boat load in China. While he was in China he got a patent from the Chinese government exclusively giving Blum and Bergeron Dried Shrimp Company the right to sell all the dried shrimp from the United States in China. That’s how his business really began to blossom.

DD: Was there anyone consuming the dried shrimp here locally?

SKIPPY: The local people were –

CB: Right when he first started.

SKIPPY: Right. When they first started the people here were consuming it because it was a way to preserve food.

CB: Right.

SKIPPY: Also, it was a way that the Chinese preserved food. In fact, the Chinese were the first ones to come here in about the 1850s or so when they were building those railroads across the United States. They needed a place, a climate that had shrimp and rice and stuff like this. And the Chinese came here and as I understand it they also started the rice industry here. As a side line, they started catching shrimp at the mouth of the Mississippi River. And come to find out that it was such a good shrimp that they decided that they were gonna make little plants around all over on the coast and stuff like that. That's how that dried shrimp operation got started. My daddy has some historical documents, or at least somewhere along the line, that the original man's name that came here from China to start the dried shrimp industry was a man by the name of Ting Ting. That's basically all I know about it. He was a rice farmer in China and also dried shrimp. They would dry shrimp, they would have the rice farms and they flood the rice farms and they would also put shrimp in there. So, when they drained the pond they would harvest the shrimp and they would dry it. And the same thing was what they were doing here, but the shrimp wouldn't survive in the rice ponds here. But they had a lot of shrimp locally and in the estuary and stuff, so they just caught that, I assume, and dried that. In turn, the people here were trappers. They showed the Chinese about trapping furs and such. They brought that back to other places as well. It was kind of a tradeoff. So, that was a good thing at that time.

DD: Now when, I guess it was your father or your grandfather?

SKIPPY: What is that?

DD: Leopold.

SKIPPY: Leopold was my grandfather.

DD: Alright. When your grandfather started the business you mentioned to me that he needed a loan from People's Bank.

SKIPPY: From the People's Bank, yeah.

DD: Would you comment on that?

SKIPPY: Ok. Well, he needed to finance the business when it became very lucrative. So, he went down. The People's Bank and Trust Company in Houma was a group of cane farmers that ran that bank. So, he went to the bank and he asked them to lend him

\$10,000 so he could get this business off the ground and get it going. He already had the shrimp sold and everything. They debated about it for quite some time, so finally he back to them. He says, "Well, how about my lone?" And they said, "Well, Mr. Blum we all got together and we have agreed to lend you that \$10,000. And he says, "Oh, by the way," he said, "the \$10,000 is a total capitalization of our bank. So we're lending you all of our money" to get his business off the ground. That's how much trust they had that it was gonna be a good return.

DD: And he grew up to be one of the largest –

SKIPPY: It was the largest business in Terrebonne parish at one time this dried shrimp business out of this building.

DD: Wow. Where was your markets?

SKIPPY: Our markets were in South America, Cuba, China, Hawaii, New York, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, you know; where ever they had Chinese communities. They would consume a lot, a lot of dried shrimp. Hispanic people down where the United Fruit Company was located they had big farming stuff down in Brazil and all of those little countries that were down there. It was an inexpensive way to feed the people down there at that time. When the boats would come here with the fruit and vegetables they would go back with dried shrimp and other goods to keep those plantations going.

CB: Now, how would they get the product from Houma to New Orleans to put on the boats?

SKIPPY: They used to have a steamer called the Steamer Houma and there was another boat. I don't know what the name of that one was, but it might have been the Terrebonne Parish or something. But this Steamer Houma used to have come in the back of our building back here and they would load barrels onto that steamer. And they would haul them to New Orleans at that time. They would, I don't know, 2 or 300 barrels at a time it would take and maybe it might take them, you know, they might have shipped 6 or 7, 800 barrels on a boat load of stuff. At the time they were in 200 pound barrels. It was quite an undertaking. I got another little story for you, by the way, which is pretty good. When my daddy – my daddy's name was Louis Blum – was going to college at LSU, LSU was an agricultural college. And it also had the ROTC in it. And the commander of the ROTC I'm gonna get to that story. My daddy had forgotten his hat one day at home, and my grandfather mailed him his hat in a box. He wrapped it in paper, in brown paper, and put a Blum and Bergeron sticker on top of it and sent it to the ROTC commander's headquarters. My daddy was in class one day and he got a note saying "Commander – I don't remember the man's name – wants to see you." So, my daddy hurried up and ran across the quad, I guess, whatever it was, to hurry up and get to where the ROTC was. I think it was in Tiger Stadium at that time, too. He hurried up and got to his office and, boy, he was nervous. He thought something was really going on bad. And the commander was sitting behind his desk and he had that box on his desk like that. He says,

“Are you Blum?” He says, “Yeah.” He says, “I’ve been wondering about that,” he says, “I got this box from your – I think it’s probably your family or something. And you see, it’s got this sticker on there.” And my daddy says, “Oh, that’s from my daddy,” he says, “I forgot my hat at home.” The commander tells him, he says, “Well, you know,” he says, “some years back,” he says, “I was stationed on the banks of (inaudible) in the harbor of Shanghai, China.” And he says, “I used to wash those coolies all day long unloading barrels of dried shrimp from a place called Blum and Bergeron; Red Bug Brand, Houma, Louisiana.” He says, “By any way is that any relation to you?” And he says, “Yes, it is.” And he says, “It certainly is a small world.” He says, “When I used to watch them unloading those shrimp barrels,” he says, “I used to get awful homesick.” And my daddy says, “I’m not in any trouble?” He says, “No, son.” He says, and he had a tear in his eye and he says, “You know, that was some years back,” and he says, “I’ll never forget those years.” And he says, “By the way,” he says, “you don’t have to worry about anything.” He says, “I’m gonna take care of you as long as you’re here.”

DD: Well, you had mentioned to me that there were so many barrels of shrimp that left this facility that you had to have your own barrel mancuso.

SKIPPY: Right. Yeah, Mancuso Barrel Company out of New Orleans.

DD: And they were cooepage.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: A barrel company.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: Explain how that came to be. I mean, clearly you were shipping a lot of shrimp.

SKIPPY: Well, yeah.

DD: And, you know, whether the barrel was made out of pine, cypress, just give us –

SKIPPY: I don’t remember exactly what they were made out of. I think they were made out of oak, but I’m not sure.

CB: You say that’s a 200 pound capacity?

SKIPPY: They had a 200 pound capacity. I still have some of the tools in the back they used to make them with. What happened was that my grandfather started shipping those things in barrels. He had gone down to New Orleans and found a barrel maker – Mr. Mancuso. They used to ship those, the barrels already made, to us. They would come back on the Steamer Houma, and they would unload them, and they would store them in the back back there. So, the business got so big they couldn’t get enough barrels. Mr. Mancuso sent his barrel maker here. There was a delivery stable next door that wasn’t

being used. My grandfather owned it, but that's were they put that man in there to make the barrels. All he would do was that they would cut the staves and everything out in New Orleans and just sand shove the staves, and the man would put the barrels together here. So, it worked out fine and I think he probably worked here 15, 20 years just making barrels. I think his family eventually they had a place out there on, it was on Grand Caillou at one time and there were some descendants of them. I think the man just had daughters or something like that, and I ran into one of them not long ago and he says, "I can't believe that business is still open." He says, "My great grandfather used to make barrels over there." I don't know whether he was a Mancuso or what his name was, but that was about 15 years ago I ran into somebody that did that.

DD: When you first opened you were Blum, Bergeron...

SKIPPY: And St. Martin.

DD: ...and St. Martin, but you also were involved with –

SKIPPY: He was a silent partner.

DD: But there was also fur involved somewhere.

SKIPPY: Right. Well, they did the furs as well. They got tied up with a company out of Chicago. My brother may remember the name of them. I know Dick Barker was good friends with some of those people as well. Dick Barker owns the Ford dealership here at Houma – the original, the old man. But anyways, my grandfather got tied up with this company in Chicago. They were processing furs and stuff like this. My daddy, my grandfather, and his partner owned a lot of property and stuff, and they would lease the stuff, their property out to fur trappers. They would trap the furs and bring them here, and we would send them to Chicago and they would do whatever they had to do – tan them and make coats and fur coats and stuff like that out of them out of Chicago somewhere. I'm not really too familiar with it with the fur industry part of it, but there was some of the people that were involved in it was a man by the name of Mr. B. M. Amart. He used to be the fur buyer, and they had some other people that were involved in buying furs and stuff like that, you know, if (?) still here in Houma. Then there's, of course, the Moller people. I think it was Alex –

(INTERUPTION)

SKIPPY: My grandfather used to load those furs...

DD: Just a minute let's make sure – I think we're right. Everything's going... wait a minute. Why is it going – here it's going positive numbers.

CB: Yeah, ok.

DD: Ok, we're good. Ok.

SKIPPY: They had a... where people used to buy furs and store furs and stuff like that and one time was kind of like a big cooperative, I think. Mr. Moller had a crew of people would get the furs and trap the furs and stuff. He would bring the furs here and Mr. B. M. Amart would – Mr. Moller, I think, was down in all along the coast. Mr. Amart was out a little bit out west towards Gibson and all of those areas. I'm not quite sure how that worked.

DD: Uh huh.

SKIPPY: After a while the shrimp business and my grandfather got a little bit older he just wanted to handle the dried shrimp. So, he gave the fur business to the Moller fur company, and they ran that for probably 40 or 50 or so years. They used to send that stuff up to Chicago and wherever they were selling it at that time. Is that what you wanted me to tell you about?

DD: Yeah, and also, you know, when your family was involved in the shrimp drying business I did read some things you gave me.

SKIPPY: Ok.

DD: And it's clear there were more than perhaps 50 shrimp drying platforms.

SKIPPY: Oh yeah.

DD: And your family had at least three one of which was at Sea Breeze.

SKIPPY: Right.

DD: And these were big.

SKIPPY: Yes.

DD: And as I recall three acres. Now, what we'd like to do is for you to comment on the shrimp drying platforms, what they were like, I bring in a load of shrimp what happens to them, how do they go from the boat to being air dried. If you could give us that we'd appreciate it.

CB: And also how do you support the people that are out there while their doing this.

SKIPPY: Ok. When the shrimp drying first began they would build big platforms off of the coast in the marsh areas. And the way they would construct these platforms was quite unique. What they would do was – I don't know if I can explain it without kind of showing you how it was done, but I'll try – they would drive little stakes together about maybe five or six foot apart. They would take two boards and they would drive them into the ground as far as they could get them into the ground, and they would take two boards

and they'd tie the two pylons together and the two boards would be sitting on top of the marsh. And they would act as a buoyancy and to keep the pylons from sinking any further into the marsh. The board sat on the marsh. They would probably put out maybe 2 or 3000 pylons at a time, and they would level it off like this or they would make it so they wasn't quite level at tops. The pylons weren't quite level. They would have some of them would be sticking up probably seven or eight foot some would be about four foot right next to each other. That way when they put the boards on the platform they would make like a wave. The platform would be like in a wave. The reason why they put it in a wave was because they would spread the shrimp out on top of that platform and when it started raining they could rake them up to the center and put a tarpaulin over them so they would lose them when it was raining. In other words, we call it a rake, you know, the way it was sitting up there. Those platforms went out around probably in, the last ones were made in probably about 1967, '68.

(INTERUPTION)

SKIPPY: Some of those platforms like you were saying were three acres or three football fields wide. And all the people used to live on those platforms, the people that would trawl. It was like a city and they would live at those platforms. How did they survive? They ate what they caught. They would not only live on the platform to catch/dry shrimp, they would oyster, they would catch oysters, they would go out and catch fish, they also trapped furs and what have you. They did all of that out there on those platforms.

DD: How many people would live on a platform?

SKIPPY: Forty, 30 or 40 people I would think.

CB: Now, were these families too, or just workers?

SKIPPY: They were families. They were basically families that lived there. A lot of the people that owned the platforms that was their families that were out there making those shrimp and trapping furs and catching oysters and whatever. The factories, the people that used to can shrimp, they used to have factory boats. The people that had – the factory boat was a big boat. They would send their factory boat out there, and they would bring ice and what have you and offload the ice and bring the shrimp back to the factory. They would can those shrimp from there. The other people that had platforms, well, they would go out and catch the shrimp fresh everyday, and they'd bring that back to the platforms. What they used to do is my grandfather would send so many cords of wood out to the platform and so many provisions out to the platform, you know, so much flour, I guess, and so much this and that. At the end of the year they wouldn't know if they made any money or not. They would send the dried shrimp back and everything, and at the end of the year my grandfather – this is how he kept his book – from the left hand side page he would say how many cords of wood and how much it cost him to run the platform that year. On the right-hand side he would have how much shrimp they brought back and how much he sold it for. If the right side of the page didn't add up to the left side of the page he was in trouble. But they managed to make quite a good living off of those platforms.

DD: What Carl and I find very interesting is that as I remember, I can't remember all three, but I know you had a site at Sea Breeze –

SKIPPY: Sea Breeze.

DD: – (?) Bay –

SKIPPY: (?) Bay.

DD: – and I don't remember the third one.

SKIPPY: The other one was the Chinaman's platform at the end of Grand Caillou.

DD: Alright. And those are big.

SKIPPY: Those are big.

DD: Alright. We look at this – there's so many board feet used to build this building.

SKIPPY: Mmhmm.

DD: Three acres of platform is a lot of board feet. (?)

SKIPPY: Now, I don't know whether it was exactly three acres. Three football fields is what I was told.

DD: It doesn't make any difference. It's a lot of lumber.

SKIPPY: Yes.

DD: It had to get from Houma to (?) Bay to Chinaman platform to Sea Breeze.

SKIPPY: Mmhmm.

DD: The time your grandfather was working that was not easy.

SKIPPY: No, it wasn't. They had a boat. They had a big boat that they had called the Pelican.

DD: Their own boat?

SKIPPY: Their own boat. It was their supply boat that they would send out there.

DD: Steam...

SKIPPY: I don't think it was Steam. I think it was one of the – they had those small gasoline engines that was in it. They had a hurricane in 1927 that blew a lot of places away. There was some people that they had got caught at one of our platforms out at the Sea Breeze. Some people that worked at the platform and also some people that had gone out there fishing and they all drowned. There was nine people that drowned. And my grandfather and his partner decided at that time that they didn't want to be responsible for something like that happening again. So, they just decided they were gonna sell those platforms to different families. And that's what they did. They had boats; they owned their own boats and everything.

CB: About how high the water was it?

SKIPPY: I would say anywhere from about, you know, probably eight to ten foot off the surface of the marsh, you know – had to be because the boats were so high and stuff.

DD: Now, do you remember any platforms that were owned by Chinese, run by Chinese?

SKIPPY: Well, my grandfather sold a platform to some Chinese people. That's why it was called the Chinaman's platform. But there were some Chinese people that owned platforms at Grand Isle; also some Filipinos that owned platforms in Grand Isle. You can still see some of those little pylons. If you go at the end of the road down there around where Raul's restaurant used to be at and look across the bayou right there and you can see where (?) Chinese platform was in Grand Isle.

DD: Bayou (?).

SKIPPY: Bayou (?).

DD: Now, when I was here before you were telling me that if the shrimp were too fresh the Chinese didn't like them.

SKIPPY: No, no, that was the fish.

DD: Oh, ok.

SKIPPY: The shrimp the fresher the better because you asked me to explain to you how they got them. Well, what they used to do is either seine the shrimp with great big seines – they would tie them off close to the beach and people would walk with those seines or whatever it is on the beach and pull the seines – or they would have a little boat that they would tie up and then the surf would take. Now, a lot of these boats at first did not have motors of anything. So, they didn't do what they call trawl for the shrimp; they used to catch them with basically seine nets. There was a lot, a lot of shrimp to be caught like that. The bigger boats that trawl for shrimp at that time were doing so for the factors, but a lot of people that had dried shrimp were the, I guess, the poorer people or whatever it was, and they had maybe two or three boats that would work out of that platform. And they would just go and seine a lot of the shrimp. Then, as time went by, when they started

making these little they used to call it a lister engine, and it was a one cylinder engine. It would “tup, tup, tup.” They call it a “Tup Tup.” So, it would make that one piston would go up and down. Tup, tup, tup, tup. And that’s when they started using little small trawling nets with. That’s when the boats started coming more and more.

DD: Cause the trawl boats didn’t come in until 1917.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: So, before that the factories were getting their shrimp by large haul seines, I guess.

SKIPPY: That’s exactly correct.

DD: Or trammel nets.

SKIPPY: Trammel nets, some kind of nets that they used at that time. There’s a man down on Montague. His name is Allen Maury. He can remember when he was a little boy at Lake Barre, and he could tell you some stories about trammel netting. Everybody would have their little spot, and they would trammel net in between those spots or seine in between those spots. And he said there used to be hundreds of people that would do that, you know. So, I mean, he would be an interesting man for ya’ll to go down and try to get in touch with. He’s an old time guy, and his family’s been doing that forever.

DD: Well, ok, we’ve got a seine crew.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: The seine crew gets the shrimp.

SKIPPY: Right.

DD: They got to put them on a boat of some sort either (? sail or oars).

SKIPPY: Yeah, and they bring it back to this platform. They must have either put it in an oar boat and baskets or whatever it was that they had.

CB: But also preparing the shrimp not just drying it. You got to take the shell off.

SKIPPY: You got to take the –

CB: Now, (?) they talk about dancing the shrimp. Was that still going on?

SKIPPY: Well, they did that at first. A fellow by the name of Freddie Chopin and Shelley Bergeron invented the shrimp peeling machine. They used to dry the shrimp first, and then they’d put it in that – they would dance on the shrimp to get the shells off of it. When after they finished dancing it, dancing on the shrimp what they would do they’d get

a shovel and in the wind they would throw the shrimp up in the air and the shells would blow off and the shrimp would fall back in the shovel. That's how they cleaned the shrimp after it was dried. But the shrimp peeling machine or shrimp shelling machine was invented by Shelley Bergeron and Freddie Chopin.

DD: But, first of all, you got to get them to the platform...

SKIPPY: They used to bring them to the platform either by boat or somebody picked them up and brought them to the platform for them. They would take them off the boat and they would have these great big boiling machines – boilers.

DD: Were they made out of brick?

SKIPPY: They were made out of steel. They would put cords of wood underneath them cause they didn't have any other way to heat it up. They would heat it up with those cords of wood, and they would probably bellows it underneath it with a big bellows and heated up the water 'til it was really boiling hot. They would start boiling that shrimp, and they would probably boil probably 5 or 600 pounds at a time in those boilers. They put them in those boilers with salt. They used to use rock salt in those days. So, after they boiled it and got it good and boiled they would spread them out on these big platforms, and they used these big rakes to rake them out on those platforms.

CB: Now, you'd boil them in seawater?

SKIPPY: They would boil them in the seawater and they would add salt to it as well. So, after they were boiled they would spread them out on those platforms, and they would probably take anywhere, if they had a real good day with a lot of wind and a lot of sun, they could probably dry a batch of shrimp in a couple of days. If it was raining and stuff like this they would rake them up and they'd put them underneath tarpaulins and wait 'til the rain stopped and the platform to dry off and then they would spread them out again. If it rained for quite an extended period of time If it rained for quite an extended period of time, or course, the flies and everything else their larvae would hatch and they would the shrimp would stay moving on the platforms until they dried up enough. If it was too long the shrimp would get rotten and they'd have to shovel the whole platform full of shrimp overboard.

CB: How often did something like that happen?

SKIPPY: Quite often. They would make maybe ten batches of shrimp or something like that and maybe have to throw one of them away.

DD: Yeah, but ten batches could be at least 500 pounds, so we're talking –

SKIPPY: No, I'm talking about not 500 pounds, you're probably talking about in the neighborhood of about 20,000 pounds.

DD: 20,000. Ten tons.

SKIPPY: Yeah, it takes eight fresh shrimp to equivalent of eight fresh shrimp to make one dried shrimp. That's how much weight is lost. So, if you pay, say, a dollar a pound right now for fresh shrimp by the time you finish with it, it costs eight dollars, just the shrimp. It doesn't count the labor and the material cost and everything else and today it's fuel to dry them. So, it's quite expensive. But in those days my grandfather would pay somewhere in the neighborhood of three to six cents a pound for dried shrimp. So, a barrel of shrimp that was fresh was 210 pounds didn't have a lot of value to it in those days. But today you can see the difference in the pricing.

DD: Well, if you got, let's just say 20,000 pounds, and let's just use 200 pounds per barrel, that's a lot of barrels.

SKIPPY: That's a lot of barrels.

DD: That's a lot of barrels.

SKIPPY: Yeah, that's a hundred barrels.

DD: And per run. Alright. Now, we've got 20,000 pounds of dried shrimp at a platform that's 40 miles from here. How did they get from there to here?

SKIPPY: They used to put it in big sacks. They didn't put it in barrels. They used to have big sacks that they would put them in. They would load them on several different boats and the boats would bring them in to the dock and they would either pick them up by truck or horse drawn carts and stuff like that. And they would haul them into Houma to here to packed in those barrels.

DD: Well, a hundred barrels.

SKIPPY: Or, now listen, listen. Now, they also in the byways and waterways cause a lot of times they didn't have roads that were down, you know. They would go as far as the road and they would meet the boat at the end of the road. Or the boat would just come up to the dock here and load the sacks of shrimp off the back of the boats. And maybe ten or 15 boats would show up here at one time. They would get, you know, they would borrow each others' boats, whatever they could do, to come bring the shrimp here. That's how they did that.

DD: So, if you had ten boats, each boat had a hundred barrels –

SKIPPY: But no, not each boat is gonna have a hundred barrels. Each boat might have ten barrels, you know, or 15 barrels. I mean, they couldn't dry shrimp, they wouldn't catch that much shrimp everyday, but when they caught the shrimp they would spread them out on those platforms. It might take them a week or two to gather up a hundred barrels of shrimp. You understand what I'm saying?

DD: Yeah, but let's just say you have five boats a day, just five, and each boat had ten barrels.

SKIPPY: Right.

DD: So, you're bringing in 50 barrels a day.

SKIPPY: Right.

DD: Everyday. So, we're only gonna work six days a week.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: That's 300 barrels a week.

SKIPPY: And they would ship that. They would just take them off the boat, dump them in those barrels, put them on the Steamer Houma, send them off to New Orleans, and they warehouse them there 'til they had enough to send on the boats.

DD: Three hundred barrels a week.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: Twelve hundred a month.

SKIPPY: Yeah, two million pounds a year.

DD: That's not trivial, cause to get two million you had to do it to 16 million pounds of shrimp to get out two million.

SKIPPY: That's correct.

DD: No wonder you were the largest business in Terrebonne parish.

SKIPPY: Well, they was. And that's how it is. Most of that shrimp went to China. Most of that shrimp was shipped to China.

DD: Wow.

SKIPPY: 1936 was a bad year. That's when the Japanese invaded China. My grandfather lost his concession. That was the end of that. It became smaller than that. We sold to Cuba and South America and, you know, he distributed all over the place wherever he would get rid of it. The Cubans, I hate to say this, but by grandfather had a thing they didn't like real fresh dried shrimp. They liked the ones that were a little bit older and a little bit more rank. For many years and years I have an example I want to – my broker in

Hawaii told me this that they used to send crackers in barrels to Hawaii. It might have taken three or four months for those crackers to get to Hawaii, and by the time they got to Hawaii they were rancid. The people got used to eating those rancid crackers so 1940 or so some guy says, "Well, shoot. If I can get those crackers over there fresh I'd make a million dollars." So, he started flying them in. Nobody ate them. That's not good crackers. The ones they were used to were the rancid ones.

DD: Yep.

SKIPPY: But everybody else in the world got fresh crackers, but Hawaii got rancid crackers. Well, the same thing held true to any island nation. By the time they got stuff sent in to them, including Cuba or whatever it is, it was pretty bad. So, they got used to that. So that's what happened with the dried shrimp. My grandfather says, "We used to be sent so much rotten dried shrimp to Cuba that Castro took over."

DD: Yeah, but you said the Chinese wanted fresher shrimp.

SKIPPY: They wanted the fresher shrimp.

DD: But not necessarily the freshest fish.

SKIPPY: Yes, that's correct.

DD: That explains something.

SKIPPY: They used to dry fish. My grandfather, thinking he could probably sell some of that fish in San Francisco, took a trip to San Francisco on a train, and he brought some dried fish with him. He got somebody to dry them for him fresh as he could get them. So, when he got to China town and he walked into the Chinese store and he pulled that out and the Chinaman looked at it like that. Boy, it was some big speckled trout fish dried. And man, he looked at that real good like that and he looked and he smelled the outside of him and he opened the mouth of the trout and he sniffed, put his nose up to the thing. "No good." My grandfather says, "Well, that's good," he says, "that's as fresh a fish as you can get." The man says, "No good." He says, "Got to be rotten." Got to have a rotten smell. So, they sent, I don't know whether because my grandfather went out there and brought that fish with him, but they had been drying shrimp here before. So my grandfather went down to Grand Isle where they had the Chinese people drying the shrimp, I mean, drying the fish. He says, "Well, what did I do wrong?" They said, "This is what you got to do. You catch the fish fresh, but you let them sit for a day." And he says, "When they start to swell a little bit, the stomachs start to swell up a little bit," and he says, "they start to get a little smell to them," he say, "that's when you gut them and pull the," not gut them. They used to get the guts and stuff out of them. They'd go through the gill and pull the guts out. And he says, "That's when you want them," and he says, "Then you dry them, you soak them down with brine, and then you spread them out on the platform where you hand them up and you let them dry in the wind." And he says, "It's got that certain odor that little funky odor that comes when something's starting to

rot a little bit. That's the way they want them." And he says, "If it's not like that they won't buy them."

DD: Now do you still trade with San Francisco's Chinatown?

SKIPPY: Sure, yeah. Sure do. I have customers that we have been doing business with since, God, since I've been here.

DD: Really?

SKIPPY: Yeah, and before that. Yeah. Some of those people are still there. And they tracked in Seattle, Washington probably one of our oldest, oldest customers. I went to them last time it was just two old Chinese people sitting in a shop just looking around, you know. They were very, very old. They were probably in their 90s. I told them who I was. The man started crying. He says, "Oh," he says, "Mr. Blum and Mr. Loose sold me shrimp when I was a little boy." And you know, he had that Chinese accent, you know, that they use.

DD: The reason I ask is that I was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay area. I still have family there. I go out about every year. I would like very much to be able to go to one of your buyers.

SKIPPY: Ok, I'll tell you who –

DD: If you can – I don't want to do it unless you approve and you make sure they approve. I don't want to appear – I know how Chinese think. I need the right entre to be accepted. Again, all's we're interested is trying to capture the story.

SKIPPY: Oh, I don't know if they would, you know, Chinese are very particular about what they do.

DD: Maybe he would just talk, fine. That's fine, but I'd like very much to go introduce myself because that's the side of the story you don't get.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: If you know any of the Loose family?

SKIPPY: There's no one left.

DD: There's none?

SKIPPY: Mr. Loose was the last of his generation. He didn't have children.

DD: He did not have children?

SKIPPY: He did not have children as far as I know.

DD: But he lived in San Francisco.

SKIPPY: He lived in San Francisco. Now, you know, didn't I give you a copy of the book?

DD: Oh, you did.

SKIPPY: Now, maybe he might have mentioned that he had children.

DD: Well, what I'm thinking is if he lived in San Francisco his papers may be in San Francisco.

SKIPPY: Sure, yeah.

DD: I can find it just with that information.

SKIPPY: Sure.

DD: But Carl and I would find it really fascinating if we could just go to one of your San Francisco contacts that alright. I don't want to go to anybody that feel uncomfortable. We got a lot of time cause my wife hasn't told me when I'm going to California yet.

SKIPPY: Well, I can give you some names, some places that we have, that I have been doing business with. I have some names in the safe of some places that were there when my daddy was doing business. He used to write all of that down. But the one that just generally comes to mind is to go see Mr. Tam at (?). He and his wife did, I think Mr. Tam came from China probably in the '50s or '60s. That's as far back as I think that modern people –

DD: But he's in Chinatown? He's in Chinatown.

SKIPPY: He's in Chinatown. Yes he is.

DD: Grant Street or...

SKIPPY: He's on Grant Street.

DD: Alright.

SKIPPY: He's on Grant Street.

DD: I can find him. I spent my youth wondering around Chinatown. So, I can find him. But I want to make sure that he knows that you and chatted and that alls we're doing is

trying to help sort out some history here. Because you also mentioned a Mr. (?) who helped with groceries.

SKIPPY: Yes, they own a company – they also sell dried shrimp as well – they own High Seas of Dulac. Mr. (?) when my grandfather was a young man was driving down the bayou, of course, selling for his uncle, the (?) Company. I forgot – it was a bakery company. He was with a horse and buggy and he saw a man building a building on the side of the road. He asked him he says, “What are you building there?” He says, “Oh, I’m building a grocery store,” and, you know, a dried good store and stuff. My grandfather says, “Well, I’m the guy you need to see.” We’ve been doing business with them since probably since early 1900s, you know, trading back and forth. His name was Alfoster (?). He was one of the original people down there in Grand Caillou. His ancestors are Raymond (?) who owns High Seas of Dulac. There’s a lot of (?) down there on Grand Caillou that are related to them to Mr. Alfoster. He had about seven or eight, ten kids, something like that.

DD: Now the groceries, did he have a grocery boat going out to deliver goods?

SKIPPY: Oh yeah, sure, sure.

DD: And it had the little tika, tika, tika engine?

SKIPPY: Yeah, they had all of those little engines. By that time I guess they had those little engines and whatever else that they had. You know, by the time they made automobiles I guess they started putting motors in boats.

DD: That’s one thing we’re finding real interesting is that when Henry Ford developed the Model T, Model T motor with a 20 horse, kept that motor until the early 1940s when it was 40 horse. Now we all know that Cajun ingenuity that motor got into a boat.

SKIPPY: Oh yeah.

DD: And it was hand-cranked.

SKIPPY: Sure.

DD: Flywheel.

SKIPPY: Oh yeah.

DD: And if they kicked back and hit you it hurt.

SKIPPY: Oh yeah, absolutely.

DD: So, we find it, if we could find somebody who actually worked on the early boats...

SKIPPY: Oh, you could go down there probably and find some people in Grand Caillou or Little Caillou that worked on those boats at some of those ship – those little boatyards, some of those Bergs, some Berg people that's down there – Harry Berg's decedents and stuff like that. There's a guy down there that's got a little shipyard right just before, I think, you get to the bridge down there

(Crosstalk)

SKIPPY: No, on Grand Caillou.

DD: On Grand Caillou?

SKIPPY: Grand Caillou. And there's also several little boat, you know, where they pull up the boats?

DD: Yep.

SKIPPY: They can steer you to some people that used to work on those little boats and stuff like that. They might even still have some people that used to use those little motors. I'll tell you who else to go talk to. Do you know where Robertson Canal is?

DD: Yes.

SKIPPY: Stop there and see Terry Laperouse. He can tell you about those old boats.

DD: Alright, we can do that.

CB: Now, on the platforms themselves how did you keep the birds from attacking the shrimp that you had drying?

SKIPPY: The shrimp? You didn't.

CB: They didn't bother them?

SKIPPY: No, they and the raccoons ate as much as they wanted. They left their residue as well.

DD: They left little gifts, right?

SKIPPY: Yeah. Now, you know, it's not a know fact but dried shrimp is the purist form of meet product that you can get. Nothing bothers it as long as you purify it with salt and you take away what bacteria can grow in it which is moisture. It doesn't have any harmful oil or anything in it that can that gets rancid, you know, or bad.

CB: So, essentially it keeps indefinitely.

SKIPPY: It keeps almost indefinitely. The only thing that happens to it is that it turns colors. You know, as long as you keep it dried it's still a good shrimp. Now, if you have some moisture that's added to it it'll start ammoniating, which ammoniating means that bacteria is growing in it and then you got a problem. But I've even seen that shrimp that has gotten wet got the ammonia in it and everything like this you can redry that shrimp with that salt or you can wash it out even and dry it. And it's still a good product – it doesn't smell good, it doesn't exactly have the same taste as regular beautiful dried shrimp but it is still edible and it would not harm you. You can go talk to, I don't know, I think it's Dr. Moody at LSU. He was there at one time. He used to try get something to make dried shrimp go bad and stuff like that and he never could find anything; not within reason, you know. You'd have to pour some Clorox or something on it to make it bad.

CB: Do you have any idea how the Chinese were consuming it? Is there some special dish they were cooking?

SKIPPY: Well, they were making were taking and re-soaking it and making Chinese dishes with it. The Chinese started –

CB: Just in (?) of fresh shrimp?

SKIPPY: Right. They said that the art in preserving dried shrimp started sometime right after the invention of fire. So, you know, I got a book that tells it about a U.S. Department of – Agricultural Department, you know the food science. This guy wrote this book in about 1940. Says the purist form of product that there is – drying, you know, drying fish or shrimp as long as you don't leave the entrails of the fish in it it's a good product especially codfish.

DD: Now, we have found the name Quan Sung Shrimp Drying Company. You told me about Robert Hoi, and he has sold his shrimp operation to a Mr. Lin, maybe? Do you think that Robert Hoi is still living in New Orleans?

SKIPPY: Oh yeah. He was a professor at LSU, and Albert Lin has got his number and phone number and stuff like that.

DD: And Albert Lin I don't have any notes here for what his company's called.

SKIPPY: It's called Gulf Food Products.

DD: Gulf Food.

SKIPPY: And that was the same company that Robert Hoi.

DD: Cause we'd like to try to setup a meeting with Robert Hoi and do the same thing – just chat with him.

SKIPPY: Sure.

DD: Seems like if was an LSU professor he'd understand what we're doing.

SKIPPY: Now, I think his wife used to work for the LSU system or the state school board system. She was one of the high echelon people in the school system. But she's got, she had something wrong with her. I think she got leukemia or something and she's been sick for the last few years. I'm not sure if she's still living.

DD: Well, in 1975 I was doing work down Little Caillou – Grand Caillou. I ran across the Price Seafood and Shrimp (?). They still had a platform.

SKIPPY: Right. They're at the end of the road down there, Mr. Price and them.

DD: And his son.

SKIPPY: And his son. That's correct.

DD: And that's the first time I've ever seen card shrimp. Were you involved in developing the first card shrimp or?

SKIPPY: My grandfather did that. He started that. He used to put that up for years and years and years. We used to sell card shrimp. We used to people here that used to come pack it. That's how he sold a lot of his shrimp after he stopped in the 1930s and '40s and stuff like that. He probably started that. When I was in college my cousin Tommy had – I don't know how you say it a "root" or "rowt" – that he would take and he would sell dried shrimp. After he got out of school I took it over. I used to go around and I'd circle all of south Louisiana from here to probably Donaldsonville on down to close to Grand Isle there cutoff and all those places like that. I'd work my way back around to Vacherie and come out of Donaldsonville and work over towards Lake Verret and Morgan City and come back around this. I probably had 60 or 70 people that I would sell dried shrimp to.

DD: Were they all groceries or?

SKIPPY: No, grocery stores and barrooms.

DD: Barrooms, cause that where I saw it...

SKIPPY: Right, yeah.

DD: ...is in barrooms.

SKIPPY: Right. I used to sell some barrooms when Playboy magazine first came out and my grandfather had a great idea. He would get some of those pictures of those girls that were in there and he would put that on those cards. He'd paste that picture on the card and he would cover it with dried shrimp, you see, in the little packs. He'd put that in those barrooms and people would drink beer and having a good time. They would buy a

pack of shrimp and they would uncover a little bit of that lady that was on that card. So, they would hurry up and buy a lot of the dried shrimp.

DD: It's all in the marketing.

SKIPPY: Well, my grandfather started that.

DD: And you still sell (inaudible)

SKIPPY: Yeah, I still sell. I got a little machine back there that (inaudible)

DD: I remember coming here and...

SKIPPY: Ya'll probably have to cut this out but I don't like to – there's some people

(jump tape)

SKIPPY: –dried shrimp is just as good or better than sun dried, cause he had been doing it since 1948. So, when shrimp in about 1960 the price of shrimp doubled. They thought that they were not going to be able to dry too much shrimp because it got too expensive. The market wasn't going to be there for it. They didn't want to take a chance on it if the weather was bad and they had to rake it all overboard they lost, you know, several 10,000 dollars if they had to rake it overboard. So, my dad said, "Well look," he says, "What I can do is I can fix ya'll up with a drying machine." And he said, "By that time most of the platforms had moved because they had built roads to the end of the, you know, they built those roads down to the end of Cocodrie and Grand Caillou and Montegut and such like that." And he says, "There's natural gas. You got natural gas down here," he says, "cause they ran a gas line along with it." He says, "So, we can hook up drying machines as long." They were already boiling the shrimp with natural gas and such so he says, "I'll make ya'll a machine you can dry shrimp with." The first guy that had a drying machine was – he put several of them out – Lester Duboit had one, Percy Forret had one, and Houston Forret had drying machines. So, when it was raining my dad told them, he says, "Try a batch and put it in there." What it was it consisted of a box 8 x 10. It was just a plywood box. Excuse me, 6 x 10. That's what it was. Because they had to reach and it was hot. It was about four foot high about waist high at the opening. What he did is he made them put a screen on top of the box, on the very top of it. He put a house, like your house has got a heater in it?

DD: Yes.

SKIPPY: Ok. Well, he put one of those house heater in it and he put blower on the back of it and it blew the shrimp, blew the heat up underneath the shrimp, and the shrimp was on the screens and it would dry. You could probably put 600 pounds of shrimp at a time, you know, fresh shrimp after it was boiled into one of those dryers. You could make a hundred – it could windup, you know 6 to 800 pounds, you would windup with about a hundred pounds of dried shrimp after they beat the shell off of it after it was dried. So,

low and behold, they were all skeptical of it because they were sure positive that the only way you could dry shrimp was because of the sun. And something was going to happen to that shrimp if you didn't have that sun to purify it. My daddy had been doing this since 1948 so he knew it was good. In fact, he had been selling it since that time some shrimp that were dried like that. Not the majority of it, but they had some customers that would want a certain type of dried shrimp, something he could do specialty for. So, nobody wanted to dry the shrimp that was coming out of the dryers. My daddy bought all of it. So, he had kind of a monopoly on it for a while. But then the price doubled again and all of a sudden five or six dryers started showing up instead of one dryer showing up in these places. Then it doubled again a couple of years later and all of a sudden the platform was out and the boat of (?) was in. You could dry shrimp in a drying machine in about eight hours, anywhere from four to eight hours depending on the size and how thin you spread it on the machine. Before long, you know, people were still drying it with the platforms when they could, but when they couldn't they'd throw it in the little dryers and it was still good. Everybody had caught on. All the buyers had started using it and stuff like this. So, my dad was happy that they were using his drying machine. He felt that that was his legacy to the industry.

DD: Well, it is but the thing I'm curious about – your daddy invented it, we own one, you want to get one, where do you go to get it?

SKIPPY: Well, you called my daddy up and he'd fix it up for you so we can get it.

CB: All word of mouth?

SKIPPY: All word of mouth or they went to the other guy and say, "Where you got that?" "Oh, Mr. Blum did that. See, Mr. Blum put that in here." "Well I'm gonna make me one. Can Mr. Blum get me the drying machine to go with it?" "Yeah." So, my daddy fixed up with W. W. Granger to buy industrial heaters and stuff like this and for several years he would get all of the dryers and everything like that and just send them down the bayou. Well, my daddy was getting older he said, "I don't want to do that no more." So, he just gave them the name and said, "Take it and ya'll get it yourselves, ya'll do it." Whenever a hurricane or something like that hits most of those people can go right back to work as soon as they can put their sheds back up and put their drying machines, you know, build their little drying machines and go to work. If their place doesn't blow away, if it just floods, some of them just pick up their machines. All they got to do is wash their sheds out and stuff. They can put the machines back and go back into business. Now, if their little machines, the heaters, get full of water they can buy them right quick at W. W. Granger. They can get them by the truckload and just set them down there. The biggest drying operation that I saw with drying machines was Houston Forret's. He had 27 dryers at one time. Allen Maury probably had about 23 or 24 dryers at one time. Raymond (?) right now probably has 20 dryers. Mr. Bouquet on Little Caillou probably has 15 to 18 dryers. You can make a lot a lot of dried shrimp with those drying machines.

DD: Now, what was the name before Mr. Bouquet?

SKIPPY: Houston Forret?

DD: No. Houston Forret had about 23, no 24.

SKIPPY: Percy Forret...

DD: Had 23.

SKIPPY: And Allen Maury had about 23.

DD: Is Allen Maury's operation still going?

SKIPPY: No, he just tore it down the other day. It got flooded in Katrina or the one that –

DD: Ike.

SKIPPY: Ike that came and flooded after that and he never did rebuild it. Gustav and what was the last?

CB: Just that and Ike.

SKIPPY: Well ok it was before that. He had Katrina and then they had another one that came

DD: Rita.

SKIPPY: Rita. Rita is the one that got him. Katrina didn't bring that much water out there. Rita is the one that flooded him out real good. I think Katrina blew some of the shed away, and then Rita flooded him. There used to be a man by the name of Roy Picou. He used to be a big buyer of dried shrimp. Allen Maury used to dry a lot, a lot of shrimp for him. And Mr. Roy passed away. His niece took over his business, and she wasn't able to make it as successful as Mr. Roy and she eventually went out. So, a couple of other people have taken some of his business that he had. I guess it's split up among most of us, but the dried shrimp industry is not the same as it used to be, say in probably 1990 or so. It's been kind of declining. He used to have about 10 or 12 people drying shrimp with drying machines, and now they're down to probably about 4 or 5, 6 of them left. That's about all there is. They make enough dried shrimp to make up for the loss. Now we can sell.

DD: Now, Mr. – is it Boquet?

SKIPPY: Boquet, Mr. Laurence Boquet.

DD: Now, when shrimp season started, if we tried to talk to him tomorrow do you think we could?

SKIPPY: You could take a ride to his place –

DD: And see.

SKIPPY: – and see how busy he is. If he's unloading shrimp at the dock and trying to go across and drying shrimp he may be a little bit too busy. But it just depends on when those boats show up. You kind of got to get there when he's there. He'll be glad to talk to you.

DD: Yeah, he had mentioned that as a child he grew up on one of the platforms.

SKIPPY: Now, he could tell you some stuff. Yeah. Oh yeah. Sure.

DD: Now, is Mr. Maury still alive?

SKIPPY: Mr. Maury's still alive. He's still alive. His place is still there. You can go down to the end of Montegut on the right hand side. He's unloading shrimp, but he's trucking most of it.

DD: Ok.

SKIPPY: Ok, you can down there and talk to him. You can also go down to the end of the road down at Cocodries and see Houston Forret's place. It's still there. His drying machines are still in his building, but he hasn't done it in a long time cause he doesn't have the help that he use to have. He's very particular about – he's seventy-something years old and he wants to be there when he's drying shrimp and stuff like that to make sure it's done correctly. He doesn't want to make anything unless it's done right.

CB: Well, on those lines back when your folks were operating the platforms on the coast, who was managing them?

SKIPPY: They had different managers down there. The guy that was at Sea Breeze was a guy by the name of Bob Beret. He was an Indian, and he was a big Indian. He used to live, I think, at the (?). They had different people that would manage those platforms, some families that would be living out there that used to work for us. Oh, I'm telling you. I'm trying to remember some White, (?) White. Have ya'll gone down to Grand Caillou and stuff? Have ya'll ever been to Grand Caillou? Ever ate at Smokey's?

DD: No.

SKIPPY: Ok. Well, that's some people that bought from their grandchildren and stuff like that. They had just so many people that used to be in their business – even the sheriff one time. Sheriff Carlton Rozand used to be out on the platform when he was a young man. They used to have a man that used to work here by the name of Whitney Cramer that used to own platforms and stuff. He ran platforms for the (?). He was their chief

man at one time drying shrimp for them. He had platforms offshore that he did for Mr. Calvin.

DD: Offshore?

SKIPPY: Offshore, yeah. They had them down there at that Sea Breeze, not the Sea Breeze, but... doggone-it.

DD: Fourleague Bay?

SKIPPY: Fourleague Bay, yeah.

DD: In the bay?

SKIPPY: They were in those bays back then, but he's pass away.

DD: Ok.

SKIPPY: A long time ago.

DD: Now, former president of ULL is an (?).

SKIPPY: Uh huh.

DD: You think it's the same family?

SKIPPY: Probably. It might be. It might not be that – they have several different branches...

DD: No, he was from Boudreaux Canal so...

SKIPPY: So, (inaudible) down there then he knows those people. He knows those St. Martins. Their family worked for the St. Martins, I guarantee you, if he was from Boudreaux Canal.

DD: Now, that's the St. Martins in Indian Ridge?

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: And they were also the St. Martins that were the silent partners here?

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: Ok.

SKIPPY: They went on their own.

DD: Ok.

SKIPPY: They also used to own the Houma Oil Company at one time, too. It's all different groups of people – good, good people, real good people. My grandfather, in fact, when he had his Indian Ridge Canning Company or Indian Ridge Company who were buying a lot of dried shrimp and stuff like that, Mr. St. Martin got sick with Tuberculosis. He came to Houma and he told my grandfather he's got to go to Arizona or somewhere to get well. He says, "You got to run my business for me with the dried shrimp." He says, "I'm going to take you across the street so you can sign the checks and stuff like that." So, my grandfather did that for him. It's all done in a handshake. "You go and take care of what you had to do, I'll take care of your business." Well, this is what I was told. I don't know if it's true or not, but my grandfather didn't make money that year but the St. Martins did.

DD: Ah.

SKIPPY: They made sure they made money. Yeah.

DD: Well, sure. Yeah.

SKIPPY: And that's what I was told, but I don't know.

DD: Well, it wouldn't be unrealistic.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: It would not be unrealistic.

SKIPPY: They had a big family, so he wanted to make sure they had something to eat, I'm sure.

DD: I'm looking here to see if I got any other notes.

SKIPPY: I'll tell you another little story about the trapping people and the dried shrimp people. They used to have – when the depression hit the banks failed. My grandfather either got wind of it or he didn't deposit the money into the bank. He had it in a safe over here. He went down on the bayou not far from here and they had Mr. Alidor Mauler was sitting in his kitchen. My grandfather and my daddy went into his house and they said, "Mr. Alidor," he said, "what's the matter?" He says, "I don't know," he says, "I got all of these people working for me." And he said, "They all depending on me to make their living and everything like that." And he says, "The banks failed and I don't have any money." Then my daddy and my grandfather says, "Mr. Alidor," they say, "you don't have to worry. Here's \$10,000. Go do what you got to do." The man looked at him like that he says, "Mr. Blum," he says, "Where'd that money –." He says, "I didn't put your money in the bank. He said, "You didn't?" He said, "No." He got up and kissed him. He

gave him a kiss. And the same thing – they had another man down Chester Laperou’s... his daddy. His first name wasn’t Chester. It’s... doggone-it... Terry Laperou’s... great grandfather was a shrimp man or a fur man from my grandfather. He went down there and gave him \$10,000 as well. So, he kept those people in business.

DD: Yeah, and that was a lot of money.

SKIPPY: Yes, it was. During the depression we actually thrived here in the ‘30s and so, because we were selling a product that China had and used. China was on the gold standard, and their money was good. So, whenever they sent a check you knew it was good or if they paid us it was good. So, we were able to reimburse all of our people at that time.

CB: Right after the depression I would think the company probably paid some other (?) with World War II including rationing and also the fact that so many men here were drafted into the army and taken out of the workforce.

SKIPPY: Oh yeah, certainly.

CB: How did the company handle all of that?

SKIPPY: Well, they just survived, and not everybody did. People worked down here. A lot of them didn’t even know they were born and stuff, so they couldn’t draft them.

DD: There were no records.

SKIPPY: There wasn’t too many records of a lot of the people. Unless they went and volunteered for it they didn’t know they were there.

DD: That’s right.

SKIPPY: I guess.

CB: Food rationing didn’t bother them?

SKIPPY: It probably bothered them to some extent, but they set prices on the shrimp. I know they had rationed boats, and I know that they set different sizes of shrimp was a certain price and they never got over ten dollars a barrel during the war. It was a different situation all together. But I got a good story about, you know, we sold dried shrimp but we also sell the byproduct. The byproduct has a lot of, you know...

DD: Nitrogen.

SKIPPY: ...nitrogen in it.

DD: Now, that’s the meal?

SKIPPY: That's the shrimp meal. Around the 1920s and '30s Germany became interested in buying shrimp meal from us. My grandfather sent a boatload of dried shrimp meal to Germany. He thought they were feeding cattle with it, but they were extracting the nitrogen out of it and rearming themselves. During World War II I think they shot it back at them. They were rearming. What was it the treaty of Versailles that restricted them from rearming themselves.

CB: Rearming, that's right.

SKIPPY: They were ingenious those people in figure out a way to get it. That's one thing. Now, there was another story I wanted to tell you about. Oh, heck. There's so many little stories here and there that you could tell – things that happened to us over the years, stuff like this.

DD: Well I'm still fascinated by the fact you built your platforms so large and so much board footage.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: I mean –

SKIPPY: They were using cypress and oak and whatever else. They used to have a cypress mill here in Houma. In fact, it was (?) I think that owned it. It's right there where Morison's lumber company is today. Down Baratavia Boulevard right there not far from here. You can see it, but they don't have any remnants of that mill left.

DD: Oh no, I'm sure of that.

SKIPPY: If you know anything about Louisiana you can fly over the state and you can still see where they used to pull those logs out. You can see them through the marsh. They used to pull so many of them.

DD: Well, we were told that in Donner –

SKIPPY: Yes.

DD: – and Chacahoula and Gibson there were a number of logging operations.

SKIPPY: That's correct.

DD: And these involved perhaps as many as a thousand people. And we have shrimp here, and it's not far from here to Gibson.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: Was that your market? Did you ever sell?

SKIPPY: I'm assuming that they probably ate or dried or made their own stuff.

DD: Ok.

SKIPPY: I mean whatever. They used to every plantation and every mill or whatever it is had a general store, and the people would shop there. My grandfather used to sell just about every wholesale company in Louisiana. I don't know how many of them are left, but I know the Churchpoint wholesaler's still there. They bought shrimp from us all the way up until the 1960s. One of our competitors...

DD: High Seas?

SKIPPY: No, no. (?) wife had that business for the longest time. When I bought that equipment from her she says, "I'm doing business when Churchpoint Wholesaler." I said, "Well, good." I said, "We used to do business with them before you did." I had that records of it.

DD: How about (?)?

SKIPPY: Cairo?

DD: Cairo, yeah.

SKIPPY: I don't think that they – he started a little trucking business out of the back of his truck when he was in high school. He was a truck farmer.

DD: Yeah.

SKIPPY: His business built from there, but they never did buy any dried shrimp from us.

DD: Ok.

SKIPPY: They weren't into that stuff.

DD: It's the only company I can think of that might have – that has evolved into something much larger.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

CB: The Churchpoint Wholesale was a very big player.

SKIPPY: Oh, yeah. Sure.

CB: My wife's from Churchpoint.

SKIPPY: Sure. Oh, yeah. We have descendants from our family that started the city of Appaloosas and they started the city of Lake Charles. They were bankers. What they would do is they would go over there and the people were manufacturing something, but they were making stuff there and they would organize it and ship it back. Then they would start a bank and put money in the bank for most people. Some of those people really got wealthy and stuff like that. My grandfather's oldest sister stayed with his cousin, and was one of the founders of Lake Charles. Who are those people in Lake Charles, David, that had that bank over there? That papa's sister used to live with?

DAVID: Aunt (?).

SKIPPY: Yeah, that's it. Aunt (?).

DAVID: It was Rachel and (?).

SKIPPY: Yeah, but what was the name of the people that she stayed with? They were cousins from France. They started that port over there in Lake Charles.

DAVID: (inaudible)

SKIPPY: I've got a book on them somewhere. My daddy had told me the story.

DD: But where're your ancestors from?

SKIPPY: They were from, the Blums were from Alsace Lorraine, and they came here because they spoke French. The (? Leewalts), which was my grandmother's people, they came from

DAVID: (?)

SKIPPY: No, no.

DAVID: The man she was married (?) in (?).

SKIPPY: Yeah, he was – she was, but the people that started Lake Charles that's not their name. I got a book. I'll show somebody one time...

DD: Alright.

SKIPPY: I'll try to find that... My great grandfather came from Poland. He was a (? Leewalt). He came during the 1850s. He went to get off the boat in New Orleans they had a yellow fever outbreak so he couldn't get off in New Orleans. So they brought him to Mobile. When he got off the boat at Mobile he had put a money belt around him and they thought he was a smuggler. They put him in jail. It was for somebody else. It wasn't for him.

CB: Now, the Blums. Did they come – about what time did they –?

SKIPPY: The Blums came here – my grandfather – I want to say they came here in the 1870s. My grandfather's daddy came from Alsace Lorraine in about the 1870s.

CB: Cause I'm curious because, you know, with the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, but Germany took control of it.

SKIPPY: Well, I don't know exactly what the (? Leewalt) man came here from Prague, Czechoslovakia because they were going to impress him into the army. I don't know whether the Franco-Prussian War was, but that was the time that he came.

CB: Yes, it was 1870.

SKIPPY: He went to the University of Prague, and he was very well educated. He had a store here in Houma called (? Leewalt's) Store. A descendent built the store at the end of Lafayette Street. It's a Chinese Restaurant right now. That's where it was. His family were shoe manufacturers in Prague, Czechoslovakia. I think it was one of the biggest shoe manufacturing companies there in that time. It's no longer there. Something happened to those people. I think Hitler got a hold of them and they're no longer there. That would be interesting for me to go try to find out what happened to those people. My grandfather, Mr. Blum, they came from, great grandfather, came from Alsace Lorraine. I think my grandfather was born in 1887. He must have been around 18 around that time. He was born – I'm not sure if he was born here or was born before he got here. So, it must have been around 1887 that the Blums came. When they came they had to get off the boat at (?).

CB: Ok.

SKIPPY: Ok. They worked their way up. My grandmother, my great grandmother died in Calvin, Texas where the home of now is Texas A&M University. The same town. They didn't have any money or anything like this, but they had cousins that lived in New Orleans. They had another cousin that lived in Lake Charles. He sent one of his children – after my grandfather's mother died – he sent one of his oldest child to live with the people in Lake Charles. That's Aunt Ray as my brother just pointed out to me. Then, my grandfather and his other sister – he had two sisters and himself – they went to New Orleans and they became housekeepers for the other aunts and uncles. My grandfather was put in the orphanage 'til he got of age because he was too young for any of them to take care of. So, when he got out he went to work for them. I think he was 14 when he got out. That's a little something about how we got here.

DD: (?) –

SKIPPY: (?)

DD: – to New Orleans to Houma.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: That's a good circle route isn't it?

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: Alright. Anything else?

CB: That's all I can think of, but thank you. You were great.

DD: Yes.

SKIPPY: I was?

CB: (inaudible)

DD: Ohhh, yes indeed. You have no idea.

SKIPPY: Listen, I probably got this so messed up.

DD: No, you didn't. No.

CB: No, seriously. It's a beautiful – you deleted out the (inaudible).

SKIPPY: If only ya'll had come a couple of years ago when my cousin Tommy was alive. He was a historian and knew everything. He could have laid it out. He could have gave you names of people. My daddy was even better because he lived with them. He knew them backwards and forwards. Unfortunately, what little I know I can...

DD: It's more than a little you know. I mean, you do lay it out very, very well. Just as a parentheses I came here, you were kind enough to open your books, and you laid out for me several of your labels. Now, label may not seem like much to you, Carl and I are curious about the labels. We spent two years. We have three labels: yours and two others that you got to look real hard that they're labels cause they deteriorated so bad. Those things are femoral – they're thrown away. But when somebody 50 years from now wants to put it together we have your label and it's been scanned and it'll be protected.

CB: So, that's the one when they do a history of the industry that's the one that's going to appear in the book.

SKIPPY: Well, good then. (inaudible)

DD: And you also in the stencils that you used on your barrel. You have stencils that were done in Chinese and stencils that were done in Spanish.

SKIPPY: Yeah. You mentioned that name of the company that you wanted to know.

DD: Yeah.

SKIPPY: That was the Chinese people that bought the platform from my grandfather. I want to show you something.

DD: Alright.

SKIPPY: (inaudible)

DD: Alright. Just hit pause?... Ah, records.

SKIPPY: (reading)

DD: That's from the courier in '95.

SKIPPY: Jack Jones 1930s, but you see what it says here? The document dated April 18 (inaudible) record the transaction from which Blum and Bergeron

(inaudible)

SKIPPY: You see, I got that paper here. See?

DD: Ah.

SKIPPY: (inaudible) leases and where they bought that platform for us. You'd have to kind of go over this.

DD: But we've got a scanner in the car. We can bring the scanner in and do it relatively quickly when we're finished. Because Carl would like your permission to take some photography.

SKIPPY: Sure.

DD: We won't do anything that – no way are we going to get any...

SKIPPY: Now, this is going to be something interesting. They have some descendents up there. Mr. William (?) got to tell you how (?) summer. That's 1998. Here it says (inaudible) home of my brother (?) and his daughter

(inaudible)

SKIPPY: These are the people that bought that platform –

DD: Oh, wow.

SKIPPY: – from my grandfather. They live in New York. Watch this. This is their store in New York.

DD: (?) and Company 32 (?) Street, 32 (?) Street.

SKIPPY: (inaudible)

DD: Wow.

SKIPPY: (inaudible)

DD: We're going to New York.

SKIPPY: Here we go.

DD: 32 (?) Street.

SKIPPY: This gives you these people.

DD: Oh my.

SKIPPY: This is the guy who wrote – he is a Chinese fellow. I don't know if he's still living or not. Well, his name is William Thong. His brothers – one of them was named Houma, one of them was named Terrebonne, and the other one was Louisiana.

(inaudible)

SKIPPY: I don't know whether this is the history of it or not, but he had written down his ancestry. I'm not sure...

DD: Ah, this is super. And it's Chinatown Lumber Company. 127131 Division Street, huh. Chinatown Lumber Company.

SKIPPY: I don't know what they did here.

DD: (?)

SKIPPY: Wait a minute... got stuff here. He said some stuff to my dad. (inaudible) I'll have to look it over real good and then get it all fixed up for you next time you come.

DD: Alright.

SKIPPY: He said this history of his family, I think. I'll have to look it over real good.

DD: Well, that won't be a problem. In about four or five weeks we'll get back in touch with you.

SKIPPY: Sure, ok.

DD: These won't be transcribed. It's probably going to take a while cause they're hard to do.

SKIPPY: Yeah.

DD: But we will certainly get back to you. I would really like to look at this.

SKIPPY: Ok, but this is the old time. When you come back you can take pictures, do whatever you want.

DD: Alright.

SKIPPY: But this is the old Chinaman's platform that they had. That's the picture that it was.

CB: It's a copy of this one?

SKIPPY: I don't know when that – somebody's got the original picture.

CB: Well, yeah. It says this was taken in 1941.

SKIPPY: Yeah. (inaudible) This is several purchases in one sheet. That's what this is.

DD: (?)

SKIPPY: Here it is. Here's the purchase of it right here.

DD: (?) et al. (?)

SKIPPY: Here we had the – he died or something like that. We had to sue them for it to get it back.

DD: One shrimp drying together with all (?). (?) therefore belonging to us anything appending: six cisterns, five (?), 20 tarpaulins, (?) rope. It's amazing.

SKIPPY: Here you go. Here's the original sale right here.

DD: Yep. Wow, this is good.

SKIPPY: You can find that at the court house, I'm sure.

DD: Oh, yeah.

DAVID: (inaudible)

SKIPPY: Ok. Did you ever go look and see about those cabinets and stuff?

DAVID: That's what I'm doing right now.

SKIPPY: Ok. David probably got some good stories to tell you, too, that I forgot.

DD: David's building shelves. I can tell. His mind is on the shelves.

(crosstalk)

DAVID: I can tell you a funny story about something that happened in the old shed, hundred and thirty year old shed next door. One time he was putting a light up with an electric drill. They had one guy on the ground standing up, and they had another guy standing up on a sack. Skippy was way up in the air putting a light up. So they had three guys. And one guy went "zzzt" and Skippy jumped.

SKIPPY: Stuck a nail in my...

DAVID: Stuck a nail in his...

SKIPPY: I jumped off that ladder.

DD: I guess so. You know, you remind me of a good friend of mine.

DAVID: He said, "Yow."

SKIPPY: Got knocked out in that shed, too, already.

DD: A good friend of mine was working on electricity and he asked a friend to go turn the electricity off. So he said, "Well, I turned the electricity off," and he grabbed it and it bit him. "Ow! I thought you told me to turn the electricity off." The fellow said, "Must of still been a little left in the line." (?) "Had to be a little left in -," he said, "A little left in!" Well that's the way it works. I'm going to turn this off.

SKIPPY: Sure