

MMS OFFSHORE GULF OF MEXICO

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: LOGAN FROMENTHAL

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Bio

Logan Fromenthal was from Morgan City. He went to USL in Lafayette and went to work for Shell Oil as a laborer in 1964 at the age of 19. He worked West Delta Block 30 and West Delta Blocks 105 and 133 and was promoted to gauger. Mr. Fromenthal transferred to the Domestic Raw Material Supply (Shell's transportation group) and worked there for 30 years. He worked another two years in production and when he retired was responsible for all of the crude oil storage facilities in La. He cleaned up several spills in southwest Louisiana. He retired from Shell Oil in 1996 and continues to do sales work in the oil field.

JC: This is Jamie Christy and I am interviewing Logan Fromenthal at the Morgan City Archives. Today is Tuesday, July 6, 2004. Mr. Fromenthal, could you tell us just a little bit about your background, where you are from and who your parents were?

LF: Sure. I would be happy to. I am from Morgan City, Louisiana. My parents are Irene Tomplet Fromenthal and my dad, who is presently deceased, was Logan Fromenthal, Sr. I have two brothers and two sisters. We are all from Morgan City. Originally from here. Spent most of our lives here.

JC: You went to Morgan City High School?

LF: I went to Morgan City High School and I attended USL. And afterwards in 1963, I went to work for Shell Oil Company.

JC: Did you get a degree in engineering or what was your degree from USL?

LF: I do not have a degree. I attended USL on a football scholarship and after two years, I decided to go to work. So, I went to work. But back in those days, a degree really was not that necessary to find a good job, especially with an oil company and Shell had the greatest reputation as far as what they were all about and so, it was an honor to work for them.

JC: How did you go into Shell? Did somebody tell you about Shell? You just walked in?

LF: No, not really. Actually, I was paying my insurance premium on my car and the agent asked me how did I like my new job which was working for the newspaper company and I told him that I did not like it at all – that it was a lot of fun but I did not make any money. And so, he asked about Shell Oil Company and I said I would really enjoy working for Shell if I could but I really did not know anyone, I did not know where to go. I had no idea where their office was and at the time. I was like 19 years old. He said he knew one of the production superintendents from New Orleans who had worked in Morgan City for a while and he said he would call him and get some information for me. I said that would be great. So, when I left his office, I thought that was just talk, but the next day, I got a call from this insurance agent and he gave me this person's name with Shell. So, I called him and he asked me to go in and fill out an application and one month later, I was hired.

JC: What was your first position with them? Do you remember what you were doing, what they paid you?

LF: Yes. I did. Actually, the first job I had was working offshore on a production platform and Shell at that time had like four classifications on the production facility

and that was you would be a gauger or maintenance man A, or maintenance man B, and the lowest position was laborer. Well, I was hired as a laborer. So, I worked three months, and then I got a raise. I got this tremendous raise to maintenance man B. But I started off at \$3.21 an hour and that was big money back in those days because the job I had before, I was making like \$2.00 an hour.

JC: What year did you start with Shell?

LF: 1964. \$3.21 an hour working on the production platform offshore. Three months later, I got elevated to maintenance man B and I got like a thirty cents an hour raise. And then, I think it was three months later or whatever that I was elevated to maintenance man A and then, I got another thirty cents raise. So, I was making almost \$4.00 an hour. So, that was really good. I made a lot of money.

JC: Do you remember the first places that you worked, the first rig, where it was?

LF: Yes, I do. I worked at West Delta block 30 in the Gulf of Mexico. That was the first block that I worked on, or the first production platform.

JC: What was that platform like? Do you remember working, what it was like over there?

LF: Yes, actually. There were three platforms. There was one main platform, that is

where the living quarters were and the heliport and that is where all the visitors would be received. And on that particular platform, there were like, I want to say, 26-28 wells. Some wells were single completion, some were dual completions. And then, there were two other platforms with the same type of platform except they did not have any living quarters or things like that. That is where you would leave your main platform in the morning by boat to go to the other platform to do whatever work you needed to do. And so, I was assigned to one of the other platforms at first because, as a laborer, you did all the work that everybody else did not want to do anyway, so you know, all the general maintenance type work and helping gaugers and that type thing.

JC: Do you have any specific memories of your first job with them, that first position as a laborer?

LF: As a laborer, really overwhelming for a 19 year old kid to work away from home and really the first time that I had been away from home. And you are working 7 days offshore in the Gulf. Then, at the end of the 7 days, you would come home. I think it was basically being associated with a lot of older people. You know, some people were very helpful, some people were not very helpful. What the reasons were, I really do not know but it was nothing personal with me. That was their character and personality. If you worked offshore, the public perception was you were this big tough guy. And so, that is what the offshore peoples' reputation was at one time. Big, tough, strong people – this type thing. And so, that was an

environment that I was not used to. And so, I found that because I was at the USL, University of Southwestern Louisiana, and I was on a football scholarship, I was as big if not bigger than some of these guys out there, and I was physically as tough as they were. Maybe not mentally as tough but I found that they would work on you mentally. And so, that was an experience and a challenge, and I was determined to get along with everyone there . . . the guys who treated us like kids, if you will, nicely, and even the ones that were kind of tough on you. So, I was determined to make those guys like me. And I was successful. I got along well with all of them and I think one of the reasons I did is because whatever they asked me to do . . . well, actually, not asked, but whatever they told me to do, I would do it and I would do it with a good attitude. So, it did not matter what the job was, that I was willing to do it and work alongside other people. And so, I think it was my ability to work with people and get along with people is how I was accepted with those people offshore.

JC: Did you find that guys were kind of macho – tried to outdo each other with how much they could carry or lift?

LF: Without a doubt. There was always an attitude in people where they felt like they were the strongest guy on the platform, they were the bullies of the platform, in which they really were not. That was just a lot of talk, you know. But that was all part of that era. You know, if you worked offshore, well then, you had to be the things I mentioned earlier. But that slowly changed. That attitude offshore

changed because it was . . . when the new equipment began to come offshore and it was a more technical field than it was before . . . there was a lot of labor and then it slowly changed to where the work was a lot more mental than it was physical. So, consequently, a lot of people who worked offshore who were not educated, meaning they did not have college degrees, if you will. All they knew was work. And they were really good people, just hard working people.

I can remember some of the guys telling me that I do not know anything about remote control. I do not know anything about pressing these buttons and that some valve was going to open 20 miles away from us. That was just totally unacceptable and unheard of and it was nothing more than a fantasy. Well, when I came to work with Shell, I came to work, to work. I did not want to sit in an office. And so, you had very few people wanting to be in the office. They wanted to be on the outside. So, I thought that was pretty interesting.

JC: So, it changed as far as the . . . what happened to those old guys that did the rough work? Did they eventually get replaced by people with technical skills or technical training or they stuck it out?

LF: I think most of the people stayed. Some of the older guys chose to retire when they were at that age, retirement age . . . I think some of those guys retired. But the younger people whose attitude was to do a lot of physical work and not mental work, well then, they adapted to the change because the oil field was beginning to

be a changing world. And if you do not accept change, well then, you sort of got lost in the shuffle and there was not a real strong need for that type of individual. But you did have a lot of individuals who had positive attitudes where they were willing to learn more about the more technical parts of the business. But, you know, for the most part, I think it was okay. People accepted the change.

JC: After that first platform, what were some of the other ones that you worked on?

LF: Well, actually, on that particular platform which was West Delta Block 30, that was in inland waters in the Gulf of Mexico, inland waters meaning maybe 20-30 miles offshore, which, back in those days, that was kind of far. But there were two new platforms that were being built . . . not being built but they were drilling on two other platforms in a place called West Delta 105 and another location called West Delta 133. So, these were two locations. Now, once the drilling was complete on a well, then it was the responsibility of the production people to produce the oil on the well that was just completed. So, I was sent to one of those platforms. So, while they were drilling, we were producing. The wells that had been already drilled, we were producing those wells. So, my responsibility was to produce the wells on those other two platforms. So, that is really the first gauging job that I had.

JC: And you would go and check the gauges and the flow?

LF: Well, we would check . . . it has been a long time but the main responsibility was just to make sure that the well was flowing and as long as the well was flowing, meaning producing, that the company was making money. So, our responsibilities were to take care of the maintenance, the cleaning of all the equipment, testing of the wells to determine what the production of that well would be gas-wise and oil-wise. So, that was a big part of our responsibility. And then, of course, you had your normal daily production reports that you would fill out, and then you would forward them to the main platform so the production foreman would review. And then, these guys would . . . I believe at that time, they were forwarding information to the New Orleans office to the engineering group and they could tell if any particular well was producing less than what it had been. And so, that would bring up a red flag or maybe a certain well needed to be addressed, that something was happening to it. An example: If a well was making 225 barrels of crude oil per day and it did this consistently for a couple of months and then suddenly, it is like 180 barrels a day, that is a lot of difference. So, those are some things that you could do to increase that production. But this type thing is what we used to do.

JC: What could you do to increase production?

LF: Well, they had what was called a choke. You could change the choke size. The choke was really just like a big screw, a real thick screw, with a hole right in the middle of it. Those are called chokes. This choke would be inserted in the well,

the Christmas tree, and different sized hole in the choke would determine the amount of oil that you are producing. So, if you had a choke that was, say, three-sixteenths of an inch, and if you increase it to where the hole would be five-eighths of an inch, so, that is a bigger hole in the choke, so that will allow more oil to be passing through the choke. So, you could do these kinds of things. And if that is not working, well then maybe there is some sort of problem where the well is being produced. And so, then, at that point, they would call in what was called a workover rig and they would come over to that particular well and they would review what the situation is of the sand that they were producing the oil from. And so, maybe they had to do what is called reperforate and perforate. What that means is if you can visualize 15,000 feet below the Gulf, and then there is this big pool of oil and you would drive pipe from the top of the water down to where you are producing the oil from, now once the pipe is down there, it has to have holes in the pipe so the oil will flow into those holes up through the pipe, which is called tubing, to be produced. So, sometimes, those holes would get plugged up with paraffin-based type material or, for whatever the reason, what they would have to do is clean out those holes because it was being stopped up. And that is kind of like with your plumbing at your house, this type thing. If your sewer line is plugged up, then the water cannot flow through it. So, you need to call Roto Rooter to clean it out. It is the same principal. So, those are just a couple of the things that you could do.

JC: So, you did Block 105 and then where did you go from there?

LF: Well, from Block 105 and 133, then there was another field that was being produced and that field was called . . . it was located in Bay Marchand area. The block was Block 2. So, that was the location. And West Delta Block 30 is still responsible for the two other platforms, 105 and 133, as they are now responsible for the platform in Bay Marchand. So, I was living in Lafayette, Louisiana at the time and we were changing crew out of Venice, Louisiana. They had some gaugers who lived in Alabama who were working at Bay Marchand. So, they were having to travel an extra two hours a day to get to Grand Isle because that is where we would change crew, and I was driving an additional two hours because I was going to Venice which was south of New Orleans about, back in those days, there was an old two-lane road, so that was probably 2-1/2 hours from New Orleans. So, that made my drive further where I was working out of and also the guys in Alabama's drive, they were further. So, we just switched platforms. So, I was able to drive to Grand Isle to work at Bay Marchand and the guys from Alabama were able to drive to Venice which was closer for them. So, that worked out great. And so, while I was at Bay Marchand, they were drilling. So, my responsibility was to produce the wells that had been drilled. And so, that is how I got there.

And then, from that platform, I wanted to further my education, so I was able to transfer to a group called Domestic Raw Material Supply, which was the transporting group, or transportation group of Shell Oil Company. When you

produce a barrel of crude oil from the location, it has to go somewhere, so it can go directly to a refinery. So, it would go to what was called an intermediate site which is a crude oil storage terminal, of which Shell Oil Company had many of those terminals and I was transferred to one of those terminals. And then, from there, that is where the crude oil would be transported to the terminal either by pipeline, by barge or truck. And, in turn, we would deliver the product to the refinery, or whatever refinery that it may be going to, and there were several different refineries. And so, that is where I worked for 30 years, I guess, working for what is called the Domestic Raw Material Supply group.

JC: Thirty years?

LF: Yes, 30 years there and then another 2 years working in production, so I worked 32 years with Shell.

JC: So, did you like the last position the best or did you prefer going offshore?

LF: Well, actually, I enjoyed my position working in Domestic Raw Material Supply. I had a much better job . . . I had reached the supervisor status. When I retired, I was responsible for all of the crude oil storage facilities in Louisiana. And so, that consisted of a terminal in Lake Charles called Haymal Terminal, Weeks Island called Weeks Island Terminal which is south of New Iberia, Louisiana about 15 miles; Gibson Terminal which is located in Gibson; that is located about

15 miles southeast of Morgan City, and the other terminal was in Southwest Pass which is located in Venice, Louisiana. And so, it was my responsibility to manage these terminals. And also, to take care of all the maintenance and the purchasing and also the employees. And, of course, our big objective was safety. And when I say "ours," it is Shell's. And, of course, I always conform to their ideas. They are the boss. But they had great ideas. And so, Shell has always been one to protect their employees and one way to protect the employees is to educate them on the type of work they are doing and the hazards that go along with the work. So, Shell would spend an unconditional amount of dollars to protect its employees. And then, of course, in doing that, they were protecting their image as well. So, they are not one company that would be noted for a lot of injuries or a lot of problems. So, when you hear the name, Shell Oil Company, there are a lot of words that go along with it like respect, integrity, leader in the oil industry and what have you.

JC: Did you find that when you started, did you see a progression that safety became more and more important?

LF: Oh, without a doubt. Without a doubt. I think, from the time I began working with Shell, I remember hearing words like, "be careful," "work safe." Well, as a young guy, well, yes, I did not want to get hurt and I did not want to hurt anyone else but to do the job I am doing, I do not know is that safe or not. I mean, so there are a lot of unknowns there. Well, as the years went on, safety wise, well

then, you know, you had a lot of videos that you would watch that had safety representation, safety directors that would come out to your facility to educate you whatever you were doing. And so, I found that as the years passed, that that certainly progressed. It sure did.

JC: Did you ever see guys get hurt or know anybody that got hurt working?

LF: No, not really, Jamie. I was real fortunate . . . I mean, I have seen a lot of minor accidents but nothing of any serious nature. So, I was very fortunate. And, of course, as I became the supervisor, I learned from when I began working with Shell when the safety program was not nearly as strong and as time went on, then there was more implementation on being more specific about what you are doing. So, they would show films and we would have various programs on anything that was to do pertaining to the job, even when it came to CPR and this kind of thing. So, we learned a lot about CPR as well.

JC: Do you remember, obviously, environmental things also became more and more important. Did you see a change like from the early days protecting the environment and not littering? I mean, I know that was not as important. Did you see it change in the way that was handled with Shell?

LF: I was in different departments. One, I was working offshore. I did not know anything about protecting the environment. I had never heard that before. I did

not have a clue what that meant. I know that when you have a heavy release, release meaning an oil spill, into the water, well, that was not a good thing. I was not in a management or supervisory type of capacity so I really do not know what those guys did to take care of these types of problems.

JC: But did you see guys throwing wrappers overboard or throwing the trash overboard in the early days?

LF: Well, let's say that I do not think they were nearly as strict in the earlier days but as time went on, then I know that you could not do that. You could not throw a wrapper offshore.

JC: Shell got pretty strict about things like that?

LF: Yes, very much so. Shell had become a leader in protecting the environment and I know it is my position . . . I was involved in a lot of oil spills, whether they would be local bayous or if it would be a pipeline leak on land, this type thing. So, we had a plan, we had a contingency of what to do with any type of spill. Shell would spend millions and millions of dollars on training for all of their employees to understand what this is all about – how to protect yourself in the event you have to work with an oil spill, the necessary agencies that you have to call in the event you had an oil spill which begins with the National Response Center in Washington, D.C. And so, it does not matter how big the spill is. As

the old saying goes: A teacup is just as reportable as a barrel of oil. So, it does not matter if it is a teacup full or if it is a larger volume, it is considered an oil spill and it has to be reported. Shell has always been one to follow the instructions, to follow the protocol. So, you not only have those guys to talk to . . . basically, what you are telling me is we had an occurrence on this date and this time and this is what the source was, this is approximately how much oil was spilled, and this is what we are doing about it to correct it. And, at that point, it was National Response Center's responsibility to call the local Coast Guard and then from there, the local Coast Guard would contact the facility and then they would investigate the release. On most occasions, it was a small oil spill. Then, we would be responsible for the clean up. If it is any spill of any large volume and it was something that we could not take care of, we would have to call an oil spill contractor to take care of the spill, to clean it up. And I do not know of any time Shell has ever been written up for an oil spill. It was because of their attitude towards the spill. You know, we do report oil spills. We do make an attempt to stop the source and also make an attempt to clean it up. And I think as long as anyone would have that attitude, that they would get along very well with the governing authorities.

JC: Did you find that other companies were not as diligent as Shell about things like that, about cleaning up?

LF: Yes, without a doubt. There were some spills that I remember seeing that just

went unnoticed -- you know, no clean up, no attempt to call anyone. So, that happened on many occasions. But that is in the early days. As time went on, I do not really know what they did because I did not get involved in their business.

JC: When would you say that Shell got more and more environmentally conscious? When did you see it change? The 1970s, 1980s?

LF: I would say more towards the late 1960s. From my experience, I would say the late 1960s, I learned more about protecting our environment than ever before and then, as time went on, well then, of course, I would say the gauger foreman is what the title was but I also did a lot of work in our Houston corporate office on special assignment work, working with our superintendent or replacing him while he was on special assignment or vacations, etc. So, I spent a lot of time working at corporate office seeing what these guys did. And that certainly helped me because then I was able to understand further why we do what we do in the field. It was a lot more than just an order that was being released. So, if you understand why you are doing something, on most occasions, you are able to do a better job.

JC: Was that Shell's philosophy?

LF: Yes. Times changed where, at one time with Shell, you were a number -- whatever your identification number was. That is the way the people in the field felt. I am not saying that is the way it was but that is what the perception was.

And then, it changed. It changed where people really felt like they were someone and the Houston supervision knew them, they knew them by their first name, they knew their wife's name or their husband's name. They knew the children's name. So, they got involved with each individual. And so, that is when people really began to feel appreciated in their work which is very important. So, this went on for a number of years. And then, of course, the oil field really slacked up a lot. There was more attention focused on deep water drilling and this type of investment. And so, I guess the company started in just a little different direction and along with your automation system that the company has, along with this computer age that we are in, that really took the place of a lot of people. When an individual retired, rather than that person be replaced, then they would just take that person's responsibilities and consolidate it with another person's responsibilities. So, you still had one supervisor but it was just more work for that other supervisor, you see. So, at that point, you could slowly see things/situations changing somewhat.

JC: Did you find that as time ran on . . . well, what year did you retire from Shell you said?

LF: I believe it was 1996.

JC: Why did you retire in 1996?

LF: I retired in 1996 because, at the time, I was 52 years old and I could retire because I had my points. Shell's retirement system was based on your point system which was 80 and that point system means that your age and crediting service had to amount to 80%. And if that had not happened, well then, you will not be able to look for retirement.

JC: So, you got points?

LF: I had enough points . . . I had more than 80 points because I had 32 years when I was 52, I think it was. So consequently, I had 84 points, so I really had more points than what I needed to retire. That was not a full retirement. So, every year, under age 59 that you retired, there is a 5% reduction in what your retirement would be. So, I felt I was okay because I was young enough and I was healthy enough where I could find another job anyway. And I wanted to get involved in politics. So, that was one of the main reasons. So, I was eligible, I would not have to travel nearly as much as what I had before, and I was young enough to do something different, and some of the personal goals I had in my life, I was able to accomplish. So, that is what I have been doing for the last 8 years or so.

JC: You still do work that is oil field related, don't you?

LF: Yes, I do.

JC: What do you do now?

LF: Sales and also customer service for a lube distributorship.

JC: What is the company name?

LF: The company name is Jesse Fontenot, Inc. That is the name of the company and we sell oil, gas, diesel, greases – any type of product that is used in the oil field – that is what we sell.

JC: Since you are still around the oil field, do you see changes from when you retired to now?

LF: Yes, I do. What I see now is I see a lot of the personnel who were involved in the oil field are not really as happy as they used to be. They have downsized the operation. Employee-wise, I can remember Shell had over 35,000, 40,000 employees. I do not know what number is today but I would venture to say it is probably 15,000. Maybe less than that. So, that is really a lot of people. A lot of people feel like they can hardly wait to retire. They are not really happy working with the way the situation is today. One of the problems goes back to what I said earlier: That at one time, you were a number and then the employees felt like they were someone because supervision knew their name, they felt like their

efforts were being appreciated, so consequently, that meant a happier employee. And then, it reverted back to where they feel like a number again; they really do not feel the appreciation that they once did. So, that has a lot to do with it.

JC: I guess times have gotten a little harder for Shell.

LF: Without a doubt. Apparently, the profit margin was downsized or their profits were not as great as they were in the past and one of the reasons it was not was because of their investments. So, they are investing billions and billions of dollars in deep water technology and that is a lot of money. It takes a lot of years to get a return on your money. So, there are really two sides here, you know. There is a corporate side where all the decisions are made to what direction the company is going to, and I certainly have no criticism of that. You know, in order for the company to survive, they have to deal with change as well as people who work in the oil field. If they cannot adapt to change, they will get lost in the shuffle. Well, with the corporate office, if they do not adapt to the same change or different type of change, then they are no longer in business. So, it is a matter of survival. And, of course, Shell, as being one of your leaders, then they will. They will adapt to change. They have projections for the next 25 years, I am sure. So, they know what direction they are going. They know what it will take to receive their goals and what have you.

JC: Do you remember . . . you started in the 1960s . . . do you remember a change as

far as working with blacks, women? Obviously, they probably were not working with you in the beginning but did you see a change in hiring practices there?

LF: When I worked offshore, there were no blacks nor were there any ladies that were working offshore. It was men. White people. Maybe some Hispanics. As a young kid, it did not matter who was working out there – whether you were black, white, or whatever. It did not matter. But the point is there were no blacks at that time. And then, when I came to work onshore in the raw materials and supply, I do not recall any African Americans working at that facility that I worked in and that was in 1966 maybe, something like that, in that era. And it was shortly after that was when they hired a minority and then maybe six months later, they hired another minority. And how did that affect me on my job and my attitude? It did not affect me at all. Both of the guys that were hired were both about the same age that I was, and they were athletes of high school, they loved sports and I loved sports, these ex-jocks from high school if you will, so we had a lot in common and they were good workers. So, it really did not matter as far as the hiring practices. I was not involved in that so I do not really know what practices that they had initiated, if any at all. I really do not know that.

JC: Were there any guys that were not as open minded as you about that?

LF: Yes. I think so.

JC: It takes a little while I guess for some people.

LF: I think it was more difficult for a lot of the older people, the older generation, because it was different and this thing called “change.” Remember we stated earlier that if you adapt to the change, you either adapt or you get lost in the shuffle. Well, this was a changing world and . . .

JC: Some of them had a hard time.

LF: Some guys had a very difficult time, and that is only because they never gave them any credit. And really, there were some people that were hired that really did not deserve any credit. They were that bad. But it has nothing to do with their skin color. It was just that is the way they were as individuals. But for the most part, two guys that they hired at the location I worked at, both of those guys retired here recently. So, I worked maybe 4 or 5 years longer than them but that is the only job they ever had and they were great workers. And they were really nice people. And I am proud to say they were friends of mine. But it had nothing to do with their skin color. You know, in today’s time, you have . . . not so much today but the time when they hired minorities and women, I think it was more of a problem for women than it was for blacks.

JC: How so?

LF: Well, you know, when you work in the oil field, it is just the way that it was because it was only men and men have a certain way of talking. Now, there is a lady in the house so you need to be careful what you say and a lot of guys really were not careful. Even though I really believe there was no ill intent, it was the fact that some comments were made that the ladies were not pleased with and consequently, they were reported to the supervision and these people were either transferred or even fired. Personally, I think that was wrong. I think too much emphasis was placed on protecting the women and what happened was a lot of women knew this and they used it, and they used it for their own personal gain. I thought that was horrible.

I will be specific. This guy was working . . . this was not with the company I worked with but it was with another company. They hired this lady and she was working in the roustabout crew, maintenance crew. They were working on land and there was a lot of bad weather, a lot of inclement weather conditions and so, when it started raining real hard, they had to stop the work that they were doing and so, they took cover wherever. And so, at the site that they were working in, they had four or five guys in a pickup truck along with all their equipment and what they had there. So, that was not really that nice a place to go to but it was transportation. That is the way it was. The foreman invited this lady to sit in his car where his truck was a lot cleaner and there was someone else that was asked if they would like to sit in his truck until the weather got cleared up. Well, what happened was the lady had reported this foreman because he invited her to sit in

his truck and not other people so, in her mind, he had some intentions that were not real favorable to her and it was really nothing that specific . . .

End of Side 1

Side 2

JC: And so, you were saying that he was given a choice to either retire or be fired?

LF: Exactly. And the person chose to retire. Now, that was really unfair for him. He thought he was doing a positive thing for the lady in helping her and as it turned out, it turned out to be a negative for him. Well, it wasn't but three months later or so that this person, this lady, was no longer working for this other oil company. I had received a call from her. I did not know her, never heard of her. She called and asked if she could come in to our office to fill out an application. I said certainly because you cannot refuse an application to anyone. And it just so happened there was a representative from this other company who was there in my office at the time this person called and he asked me if I knew who that was. I said, "I do not have a clue." He said, "Well, if it is the same person, that is the same girl who was responsible for the firing or termination of this supervisor." So, she came maybe one or two days later to get an application and I found out a little more about her, and then, as it turned out, that she was the person. And so, really, I did not want anything to do with her. I am really not sure what she did with the application, if she mailed it directly into our corporate office or what she did with it but she never returned it back to me. And, of course, I was not encouraging of her to do that. I told her we did not hire or fire from our department, so she had to go to Houston or even New Orleans. But did I want her, would I have accepted her? No, I do not think I would have. I would have attempted to discourage management from hiring her. Not hiring a lady but hiring her with the attitude that she had. And, as it turned out, I heard through the grapevine that this happened at most locations that she was in and what she was looking for was money; that she would attempt to sue the company she worked

for because of sexual harassment and this type thing. So, apparently she made a living doing that. But you had that type of attitude, and not all ladies were like that, by any means, because you had a lot of absolutely great employees whose attitudes were the right frame and they did an excellent job for Shell. And they still are doing a great job. But what happened to a lot of ladies is that they had to pay the consequences for some of the ladies who had the negative attitudes and this kind of thing. So, that was really an injustice to them as well.

JC: Changing times!

LF: Changing times! Accept change or get lost in the shuffle. And the times are still changing.

JC: Well, do you have anything else you would like to add? Is there anything that we did not cover?

LF: Well, actually, we went over 32 years of oil field experience that I have had and there were a lot of other experiences involved. There were a lot of oil spills that I was responsible for the clean up of some of our facilities. Just one other thing I remember very well. One of the gaugers at our location called me and said they had a slight pipeline leak. And so, I left home on a Saturday morning about 10:30-11:00 a.m. to go to the location where the pipeline leak was and I told my wife that I would be home in maybe 2 hours or so. So, this was on a Saturday and

I think I came home the following Tuesday because that little pipeline leak turned out to be a lot more serious and then the pipeline . . . the oil that was released from the pipeline, went into a ditch. Into the ditch, floated to a larger ditch and then that larger ditch floated to the marsh. And at the time, the tide was up, so all the oil that was in the marsh stayed in the marsh. And then, when the tide went down, then that means that when the water went down, that all the oil that was in the marsh, that got into the bayou. So, it all started with just a little bit of oil in a ditch, and then into a bigger ditch, and then to the marsh, and then to the bayou. And so, that was a tremendous experience.

JC: Was that around Morgan City?

LF: That was actually at Weeks Island terminal. That was maybe 15 miles or so south of New Iberia. Something real interesting was that I had called the National Response Center and I also called our state agency, the Department of Environmental Quality in Baton Rouge. So, we had one main office that we called and then it is their responsibility to call the regional office and then have the representative come out to visit the site to make that determination of the extent of the damages if any or what have you. So, this sheriff's department representative came to my office and asked who was responsible or who was the supervisor of that location and I told him that I was. Well, I found that to be a little strange because the officer was not very friendly. In fact, he gave me the impression that he was investigating some kind of crime. And so, I extended my hand and he refused to shake hands with me. But what I did was I had called a vacuum truck service because some of the water that got into the bayou was real close to a bridge. And so, I had the vacuum truck vacuuming oil from the bayou that was by the bridge. Well, when he asked me if I was responsible for the truck being where it is, if I was responsible for that, I said, "I am the one that called the trucking company." Well, this was a vacuum truck service so, to me, if it is a vacuum truck service, they were vacuuming oil from the water. So, he told me to go to that site and to get in his car. I said, "I am not getting in your car. You are on Shell's facility. I will drive my own truck, unless I am under arrest for some reason," and he said, "Not yet." So, that was real scary. I had no idea what the problem was. So, when I drove out to the highway where the truck was right by the bridge, there were like three or four state trooper cars, there were sheriff's

department cars, and then there was this deputy that came to visit with me at my office. So, when I got out there, a couple of the state troopers came to me and asked if I was responsible for that truck being where it is and I told them that I was definitely responsible and they said, "Are you aware that it is against the law to pollute the water?" I said, "Very much so. I am aware of that." And they said, "Well, the question I have for you is why would you be giving orders to these guys to pump oil into that water." I said, "Well, I did not give anyone permission to pump oil into the water. What we are doing is we had an oil spill and we are vacuuming oil from that water." At that point, it was so strange because all these state troopers got in their car and they just drove off. They did not say sorry for the inconvenience. All they did was just drove off. And I took that to mean that they were really embarrassed because they thought that these guys . . . what they did was someone who was on vacation passed by that area and they had called the sheriff's department with Iberia Parish, and they told them that they saw a truck that was pumping oil into the water. So, they saw a truck on the side of the highway, they looked at the bayou and they saw oil in the water. They thought that is what the truck was doing. And so, really, they did a good thing because they reported what they saw. They did not understand what they were seeing but they reported what they saw, so I really commend them for doing that. So, when the state troopers arrived and the sheriff's department arrived, they asked the truck, they said, "Who gave you permission to do this?" They were not specific as to "Who gave you permission to pump oil in the water." They said, "Who gave you permission to be here?" And they said, "Mr. Logan." They mentioned my

name and gave them directions on how they could get to my office. So that was real scary. So, I thought I was being arrested and I had no clue as to why, which had turned out great in my favor.

JC: And how about the DEQ guy?

LF: Well, that was even worse because when I called the DEQ, then the State of Louisiana has an environmental department. So, they sent a representative from the state trooper's office who works with the environmental group. They sent him over to my office. Now, while I was there, there was a representative of the . . . the Coast Guard was there, the state trooper with the environmental group, and there was some other state agency there and maybe the EPA was there. I mean, they had a lot of people there because this was a really big spill. So, what they were doing was questioning me as to what time did you call the DEQ? And I said, well, I mean . . . I had written down all the documentation of who I called, when I called, the numbers I called, who I spoke with and what was their response. And so, while they were talking to me, they did not ask to see any of my records. It was nothing more than conversation. "Well, what time did you call Baton Rouge?" "Well, I called Baton Rouge at a certain time." "And who did you speak with?" I spoke with whoever the person was. As it turned out, what they were doing and I did not realize it is they were cross-examining me. And after one person finished, then the other one started. But they were asking the same questions. And at that point, I was really frustrated and I got my

documentation that was in my files, put it on my desk and I said, “You know, gentlemen, I have a lot of work to do so if it is okay with you, this is my documentation to every question that you have asked, so you can just look at this. I have work to do.”

In the meantime, the Department of Environmental Quality representative showed up from the regional office which was in Lafayette, Louisiana. Well, what happened was when I called the people, the DEQ in Baton Rouge, that person was at a social with his family and he did not call the regional office. The state troopers called the regional office to see if I had reported the spill and they said no, they had not talked to me. Well, what happened was they are asking one group in a different city if I spoke to them, which they said . . . and I had not called them which was the truth because I did not. I called Baton Rouge. Baton Rouge failed to call the regional office. In the meantime, the DEQ representative comes up to the facility and he walks in the office and there is someone that I had been on a previous spill with, so he came in to my office and acknowledged me with a handshake and he said, "Well, I am glad to know that you are here. At least I know this job is going to be cleaned up the way it should be." Now, he does not know how big of a statement that was. So, he looked at the other guys that were there and he said, "What are you doing here?" They said, "Well, we are here because we spoke with your office and whoever it was, whatever the individual's name was, and he stated that I had not called you. And Logan said he talked to somebody in Baton Rouge. So, the question is, did he ever report it? That was a question – did I ever report this or not. And so, after I gave him the name and the number of the people I called, they called that person from my office. The DEQ guy did. He said, "I know so and so. He is not even home. He is at . . . wherever he was with his stamper. And he said what they did was when Logan called him, he was supposed to call us and he never did." And they said,

“Well, how did you get here?” They said, “Because he just called me. The one in Baton Rouge just called me.” He said he got a call from Logan at whatever time earlier in the day. The state trooper closed up his book, acknowledge me with a handshake, and said, “Have a good day,” and he walked out. And so did the other two people. It was amazing. So, one was with the vacuum truck service where the people thought that they were pumping oil in the water. That was not a pleasant thing! And then with the other situation with the DEQ not getting the right reports. So, as it turned out, I did good. So, I was relieved. I said, well now, I can go back to work to clean this all up. So, that was an honest to God true experience. But that is how strict our state is and I have to commend our state on their attitude of protecting the environment as well.

JC: Did you find environmental issues like that were frightening, kind of worried you or did you just . . . when did this occur?

LF: This occurred I would say in maybe 1990. Early 1990s maybe, 1991, or 1989, 1990 – somewhere along there. No, actually, when we had the spill, I was not concerned with and I was not worried about it because, number one, we stopped the source so we were not releasing any more oil into the water and then number two, we had the spill contained. So that means that its not going anywhere. You are in an isolated area. And so, it is a matter of just getting it picked up which, it being in the marsh, we had to cut the marsh down, a lot of the high grass that was in the marsh. It was really a lengthy project. But worried or concerned? No, I

was not. I was more worried or concerned why the governing authorities were so questionable and what was their intent which I did not have any idea.

JC: So, did you not like dealing with the DEQ and some of the environmental people that you had to deal with? Were they usually like this?

LF: No, not at all. Actually, the people with DEQ, in my opinion, were excellent people to work with. They were there to do a job and they were there to make sure that the oil was picked up, the clean up as close to 100% as possible. But that was our attitude, our attitude meaning Shell's attitude anyway, is that we want to do the very best job we can. So, the more oil that we can recover, the more dollars that we are able to save with the oil. The EPA, you know, they have a job protective environment as well. So, no, I found those guys to be extremely professional.

JC: You just got them on a bad day!

LF: Well, it was really the office of Emergency Response was one of the people who lives in New Iberia. So, any time there is any type of catastrophe, well then, the Emergency Response people are notified and it is their job to investigate. But a lot of that could have been resolved. All they had to say was what is the truck doing? The truck is vacuuming oil. But they were so sure what the truck was doing was illegal, and why do they feel that way? Because you have had some

companies that do exactly that. But Shell would never do that. I can tell you, they would never do that.

JC: Did you have any other spills or anything like that, that stand out?

LF: Nothing that really stands out. I have been involved in a lot of oil spill clean ups and what have you but nothing quite as scary as that was because some people have a perception that what you are doing is something wrong and once they find that what you are doing is absolutely according to law, then that was a release, a tremendous release. But then, you go back to the office and then the state troopers show up and it is the same thing with the reporting. So, that is the only scary thing. But I believe this: As long as you do the right thing, you will be okay. And that is what we did. We did what we were supposed to do. That is why everything was okay. Kind of scary though but it was okay.

There were a lot of spills that we could talk about, like in the bayous. A lot of people would have the perception that well, you know, if oil is released in the bayou someplace in one of these old oil fields, let it go. That is the attitude of some people, was just let it go – no one would ever know. Well, in many cases, that is true. Maybe they would not but that was not Shell's attitude. Shell's attitude was it does not matter where it is, in some remote section of the state or the country – if it could be cleaned up, they would do it. And so, that is what their attitude was.

JC: Do you remember some of the places besides Weeks Island where you did clean ups or where they had spills?

LF: Yes, well, you know, every crude oil terminal we had occasionally has one. We are not always responsible for that spill because most of the spills occur while you are loading crude oil to barges. So, you have pinholes that develop in barges and then oil would slowly leak out, and this kind of thing. But there was a big pipeline spill in Southwest Pass area and that is where they had . . . I think it called the Breton Sound, and oil washed up onto the beach areas and there were a lot of birds who were contaminated by the oil and what have you. And so, Shell scientists were out there. In fact, at the time, I was doing some special assignment work in Houston. One of the people was a Shell scientist and the other was . . . his expert was the environment. And so, we flew from Houston to New Orleans to investigate that spill and I do not remember how many barrels it was but it was hundreds and hundreds of barrels, and it all got washed up onto this beach area. I think it was a wildlife refuge. So, a lot of birds were damaged or they were contaminated with this spill.

JC: Was that in the 1990s as well?

LF: I would say that was in the late 1980s. Between 1985 and 1990, somewhere along up in there. You know, it has been a long time ago – I do not remember the year.

JC: So, they lost a lot of the wildlife?

LF: Not a lot, but they did lose some, some birds. But I know Shell, along with all the production and people. You know, it was just really a joint effort in getting that area cleaned up. That was an experience that was really too big for the company internally to clean up, so we had to have an outside company. Any time you are dealing with your offshore type of environment, you know, with your winds and your current and your higher seas, you have to have special type of equipment versus inland waters like in your bayous where the water is calm most of the time. So, it is a different type of equipment that you would need.

JC: Do you remember who they called to contract your clean up for that one?

LF: Well, for the one in New Orleans, no, I do not. Maybe I could say a name. I am not sure if that would be accurate or not so I do not know if Oil Mop Inc. or something like that . . . it was not long after that that they formed this big co-op and I believe Halliburton is the main company that started up this oil spill clean up department. And they had every piece of equipment imaginable to clean up an oil spill. So, if you had . . . and it was not really designed for inland waters or

small spills. Just offshore with larger spills. You made one call to these guys and they took it from there. Of course, they are recognized by not only Shell but I think Shell possibly may have had an investment in the company. I would venture to say that every major oil company has some sort of investment. Not monetary investment as being owners of the company but they contributed in one way or another. It may be equipment or dollars to buy certain equipment because they knew that equipment would help them some day, as well as some independents, some smaller companies. I think they were probably instrumental in the success of the company as well.

JC: Do you have anything else that you might want to add?

LF: Not really. I do not really know which direction to go. This is a subject that we talk about a lot of years and a lot of changes over the years.

You and I spoke briefly on this earlier but I remember when I was working offshore, they had two things that happened that were really interesting. One was this thing called . . . a lot of equipment we had was remote controlled. No one ever heard of that before. It was just unimaginable that people could press a button in New Orleans to shut a valve in working offshore on some offshore platform. You know, guys said that will never happen. Well, look what happened. It did happen. You can press a button today that affects something across the world. But that was the first time when that talk had begun and that

was in the mid 1960s. And then also the first electric test field. That was a start on one of the platforms that I worked on. And that was called a chemi-electric test treater. So, that was really neat to see that compared to the old conventional type of a test separator. And so, thinking back on time that I was one of the people who worked with one of the first modernized test treaters in the Gulf, it kind of brings back some nice moments, I guess.

JC: Which platform was that that you worked with the first test treater?

LF: That was at Bay Marchand Block 2. And that was used basically to remove . . . it was called a three phase separator and what that does is all the oil from the well flows into this separator and what it does, it has different valves inside the separator where it separates the gas from the water from the oil. So, when you speak of three phase, remember gas being the lighter, then it is going to rise to the top. So, it separates the gas from the oil. And then, when it hits these electric valves on the inside of the separator, they are so hot that it immediately knocks out the water. So, the water goes to the bottom because it is the heavier of the three, and the oil remains in the middle. And so, from there, the gas goes to one place the oil goes to another place and the water goes to another place. So, that is why it is called a three phase separator. It was just more efficient and it would knock out more water than what the old conventional type of separator did. So, that was kind of nice to think back. At the time, it was really no big issue – just another piece of equipment, but I guess just now, thinking about the era when that

first separator was out there in the Gulf and that I was one of the people who worked on it . . . that is a kind of nice memory.

JC: You said you might have some photos to share with us.

LF: Yes, as a matter of fact, I do. I have a lot of photos from different areas that I worked in offshore and I am not sure if you are more interested in the offshore type of work or the transportation part with barges, tanks and that type thing. So, what I would be happy to do is gather as many photos that I can and I would be happy to let you have them.

JC: That would be great. Also, is there anyone that you worked with that I might be able to talk with or anybody in the oil field that you can think of that is still around town?

LF: Yes, as a matter of fact, there is. There are several guys that worked in the production. I did not work with them personally but I know that they are still around and I know they would be happy to give you some of their time. Most of the people I worked with were . . . bless their souls, they have all passed away or some transferred to Houston many years ago and so that is where they live today. So, there are really not a lot of those guys. But there are more production people still around today that I would be happy to give you a list of some of these people. And I know they would be happy to visit with you.

JC: That would be great. Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

LF: Just thanks for visiting with me. It was really nice reminiscing on some of these issues and how the oil field changed and this type thing. Of course, there is a lot more that we could say on offshore – we could talk for another three hours, you know, but just touching on some of the questions you had and some of the memories that had, nothing else to speak of.

JC: Okay.

THE END