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Interviewee: Salter, Norman ( Pete )  
Interview Date: February 4, 2003  
SW036

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Interviewee: Norman (Pete) Salter  
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz  
Interview Date: February 4, 2003  
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA  
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW036  
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling and repeated words have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee speaks quite slowly, with many pauses; the interviewer generally waits a long time before responding.]

Ethnographic preface:

Norman Salter was born in 1912 in Many, Louisiana; he was raised in northern Louisiana. He left college (where he was studying to be a school teacher) when he was about 20 to go work in the oilfield first in north Louisiana and then in south Texas. A friend helped him to get a job as a derrick for Nicholas Drilling Company; they worked in the Tepetate Field near Basile, Louisiana, and a field near Ville Platte. He moved with his family to Lafayette from Eunice in 1956 so that his daughters could go to college at Southwestern Louisiana Institute (SLI); at that time he had an independent drilling company with a few partners. Not long after moving to Lafayette, he sold out his share in the company and went to work as a superintendent for MichPSC, as gas pipeline company. They were unsuccessful in the area and moved out; he then got into consulting.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [NS]

SW: Interview with Mister Norman Salter. It's uh, February the fourth, 2003. And uh, Mister George told me your nickname was Pete?

NS: Yeah.

SW: Is that correct? Okay.

NS: That's a short, my name's Norman.

SW: Norman, but you go by Pete?

NS: Everybody calls me Pete.

SW: Oh, okay. I'll just put that on there. Um, I see that you were born, like I said, in 1912, right? Where were you born?

NS: Up north Louisiana a place called Many.

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SW: Many, okay. That's where they have the gardens, right?

NS: Yeah.

SW: Yeah, I've been there before.

NS: Tallulah [Bends?] right there close.

SW: Uh hm. And you were raised in north Louisiana as well?

NS: Huh?

SW: You were raised in north Louisiana.

NS: Yeah, 'til I went to oilfield, then I left for uh, I left before I was a young man. I went... I quit goin' to college, my family almost disowned me. I went up a little place Zwolle, above Many. Worked on a rig awhile and we run out of work there, so I heard they had a lot of work in south Texas. So I hitch hiked me a ride with a cattleman goin' there to buy some cattle. A man I knew. Down to Beeville, Texas. And uh, I worked there a little over a year. Little old town above that called Pettus around there I worked. And I made enough money during that time to buy me a brand new Pontiac. And then there was a discovery over at Tepetate Field out of Basile, Louisiana. And there wasn't many men here then. I mean oilfield hands. So this company, Nicholas Drilling Company, was buying a new rig to make that well. Was buying a new rig to uh, put out there to work. And one of those drillers said, "I don't have a derrick man." And my buddy that had already come over here said, "I know where there's one, but I have to go get him." He said, "Where is he?" He said, "Beeville, Texas. The old lady he stays with down there, a widow woman, don't have no phone. So that's what happened, he drove down there. They paid him two days work. Went down one day, came back the next to come get me. And uh, I worked uh, most of that field [I drilled it?]. Then we went over to Ville Platte, the Tate Coal Field they called it. And we helped drill that.

SW: That, that's what you did, you were a driller?

NS: No I got to be a driller later on, I was just a derrick man then.

SW: Yeah, kind of a roughneck or a roustabout.

NS: Roughneck they called it, yeah.

SW: Okay.

NS: Lot of boys didn't like working the derrick. It was too high, they didn't like that height. But for me it was a lot easier than working down on the floor. I always worked derricks. Most of the time.

SW: Did one of 'em pay better than the other?

NS: Well, derrick man paid about 50 cents a day more.

SW: So there was the money in it, too, huh?

NS: Uh huh. Yeah.

SW: How old were you when you went off to Beeville?

NS: Oh I was uh... twenty... about, just about 20 years old.

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SW: Twenty years old. You said you left college.

NS: Yeah.

SW: And you moved on, okay. What did you study while you were in college?

NS: Well I was supposed to be a school teacher. I had two brothers that were school teachers and I knew I didn't want to be a school teacher. I thought, "That's a poor way to make a living." And I, 'course oilfield wasn't very good 'til later on, 'til I got promoted and did a little better. It turned out to be alright for me.

SW: Were your parents school teachers, is that why-

NS: Well, no, no. My two brothers and three sisters were school teachers.

SW: So it was supposed to be the thing you were supposed to do, right?

NS: Yeah.

SW: Alright. Okay. I'm sorry, I interrupted you there, you said you were a-

NS: That's alright.

SW: You were in Ville Platte, y'all were workin' at Tate-

NS: Well they called that field Tate Coal.

SW: Tate Coal.

NS: We were uh, we were awhile drillin' there, it's pretty good size field. We drilled there about three years. That one place. That's unusual. Usually your rig moves around.

SW: Right and you move around with the rig.

NS: We move around with the rig. Either that or you don't have a job. [SW chuckles]

SW: But that's in the drilling part, if you're-

NS: Yeah.

SW: If you're in production it's a little bit different, right?

NS: Yeah. In production uh, well you [Inaudible] people and stay there, you know, 'til the wells go dry. 'Cause I never did care to work in production. I did a little, but I didn't care about it.

SW: When did uh, when did you come to Lafayette?

NS: We came to Lafayette, we left Eunice and moved to Lafayette in nineteen... forty... let's see. [Pause] No, it was nineteen... fifty-six we moved to Lafayette.

SW: That's right about the same time as Mister George. Yeah.

NS: Yeah.

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SW: 'Bout right about the same year Mister [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

NS: Yeah, yeah, Lafayette was just beginning to go.

SW: Okay.

NS: And uh, I wanted to, my girls, or kids to go to college here. You know, [they wouldn't have, them?] stay at home to go to college. That's, that's the re-, main reason I moved over here.

SW: Oh, for the university?

NS: I build a home here. And uh, three of my girls finished at, all of 'em finished at USL. And I wa-, two of 'em went different places, but they ca-, wound up goin' their last year. The baby girl went to LSU, oldest girl went to Louisiana College. And the middle one, sh-, she wouldn't leave home. She wou-, all of her schooling was here in Lafayette. The other two the last year they came back to Lafayette to finish their education. And we had a boy, he went a little while, but he quit, he wouldn't go. I couldn't get him to go to college. So he's like his daddy I guess. [SW chuckles]

SW: Uh... so, I guess uh, you were married before you got to Lafayette because you said you had children.

NS: Oh yeah.

SW: Already.

NS: Oh yeah.

SW: So how, but as a derrick man you said you moving around a lot. Is that right?

NS: Yeah.

SW: You had to move your family a lot, was that difficult?

NS: Well, sometimes they wouldn't, I wouldn't move 'em. Uh, we would drive. If the well, looked like the well wasn't gonna last long, we'd just rent a room somewhere. Say if it was out at Thibodaux, we'd rent a room and when that job was over, well my, you never knew where you was going. Move back close to Eunice, you didn't know. 'Course Eunice was pretty much of a little boomtown then. There was a lot of work, lot of oilfield hands lived in Eunice. But a lot of 'em moved over here.

SW: So Lafayette was the place to be.

NS: Yeah, it looked like it. And it was. It turned out to be. You know, Mister Heymann wanted to build that Oil Center in Opelousas. You knew that?

SW: I've read about it, but you can tell me more.

NS: Well I know is I talkin' to him one day and we had a building we rented from him. And uh, he, the people over there didn't want him over there, didn't want the oilfield over there. So he had a uh, garden out here. He just turned that into Oil Center, you know he just cut down all these strawberries and started buildin' buildings.

SW: Why didn't Opelousas want that uh-

NS: Oh no, people, people thought it would bring people there that they didn't want in their town. So I, Mister Heymann said.

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SW: So the oil patch people had a reputation?

NS: Yeah, they kind of, they's kind of rough.

SW: Rough group?

NS: Yeah.

SW: But that included you, though, right.

NS: Yeah. [SW laughs] Yeah, but I wasn't rough.

SW: Okay, so he builds it over here and then a lot of the businesses start coming here in town, right?

NS: Oh yeah. Yeah, Lafayette's been growin' ever since.

SW: When you first came here, uh, who were you workin' for at that time when you first came to Lafayette?

NS: Oh... when I came here I just uh, was uh, in the drilling business myself.

SW: Okay, independent.

NS: I had a couple of partners, we had some rigs. But shortly after I moved here, I left 'em, I sold out with 'em. I went to work with a gas company. They were lookin' for a superintendent. It was MichPSC out of Detroit. A big pipeline. And uh, I went to work with them. I worked eight years. And then they quit, they weren't very successful in finding production. So they told us they gonna quit. So then I started in consulting. And I consulted 'til I retired.

SW: Consulted on drilling?

NS: Yeah.

SW: Or mainly, okay.

NS: I did gas and production, too. I had some pumpers work for me.

SW: But you mostly worked for yourself while you were here in Lafayette, most of [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

NS: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SW: Yeah I saw the drill bit on your uh, your carport door right there. [Chuckles]

NS: Yeah I worked for different people. Uh, I had a cousin here that drilled a lot of wells, I drilled all of his wells. I worked for Atlantic Richfield and uh, Tidewater, I worked for them some. Several independents I worked for.

SW: You contracted your services out to lots of different companies?

NS: Yeah.

SW: That's how you-

NS: But I worked, you know, I worked by the day.

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SW: Okay. Yeah, and they would just pay you and then-

NS: They paid me [Inaudible]. Sometimes I'd have my workmen do it. More work than I could do and I'd have to hire some boys to help me. But most of the time I did have a couple of hands. And uh, that was a lot easier than runnin' those old drilling rigs. That consulting, that was easy.

SW: Tellin' other people how to do it, right? [Chuckles]

NS: Yeah. Yeah. And I made good money, too.

SW: You had an office in the Oil Center.

NS: Uh huh. It was right there in, on Heymann Boulevard.

SW: The, was it difficult sometimes if business was slow to, to, to keep everything going?

NS: No, no, I never was, I never did have to look for work. Uh, I've been in the drilling business good while and I met a lot of people with the companies. When they had work to do, they'd call me. And that's how I got my work. I never, I never went and called on anybody.

SW: You established a reputation-

NS: Yeah, I guess so.

SW: And they came to you. Oh, okay. Well that's a good way to do it. [Chuckles]

NS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SW: Did, when you first arrived in Lafayette, was it difficult to find a place to stay?

NS: Well no, we built a home on Myrtle Place.

SW: Oh, okay, not far from-

NS: [Inaudible]. We called it the Silk Stocking Street then. I didn't know it but my wife come over here and bought that lot. I remember she paid 8,000 dollars for that lot and you could buy 'em all over town for two and three d-, thousand. But she wanted that particular lot.

SW: Well that's why they called it the Silk Stocking Street. It was the most expensive place to buy or?

NS: Well it wasn't, this is still pretty street, Myrtle Place Boulevard, if you've ever been on it. It's still pretty street. I don't know. The whole town was callin' it the Silk Stocking. All I know. [Call?] people up, they said, "Where are you building?" I told 'em on Heymann, I mean on Myrtle Place. "Oh, you on the Silk Stocking Street." [SW chuckles]

SW: Uh, let's see. I know Miss Gloria Knox still lives there. Uh, they call her the general, [lagco?] general.

NS: Huh?

SW: I went interviewed her not too long ago.

NS: Miss Knox?

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SW: Miss Knox, yeah, she's still lives on Myrtle Plantation. It's not far from here at all.

NS: Yeah, I know. I knew her, I knew her husband.

SW: Oh uh-

NS: Real well. He died a long time ago. He was geologist here. He was independent geologist.

SW: Did you knew Mister Heymann pretty well?

NS: No, not... but anybody meet him, felt like you known him all your life, he was such a likable guy.

SW: What kind of man was he?

NS: He just make himself welcome on you.

SW: I've heard stories that he was very generous.

NS: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, he helped a lot of people. [Pause]

SW: Where did you and your family while you all buildin' the home on uh, Myrtle?

NS: Oh we had a home in Eunice.

SW: Oh and you just kind of drove back and forth.

NS: I'd come over here every once in awhile. Oh nearly everyday if I could, check, 'cause I had a rig runnin' right out here. When I built that house, I had a rig runnin' out there at Breaux Bridge, so it wasn't far. And I got those carpenters from Guidry to come over here and build that house. The [Breaux?] Brothers. They was gonna build at Eunice, [but I went outside?] and build it over here. I said, "Would y'all build that in Lafayette for me?" They thought about it a couple days, they said, "Yeah, we'll do it."

SW: Why'd they have to think about it? Was it too far?

NS: Well it was, they never driven that far. They lived over there at [Guidry?]. Between Ville Platte and Eunice, the [road?]. And uh, they'd never been that far.

SW: They'd never built a house in Lafayette before?

NS: Oh no. [SW chuckles] They were good carpenters, though.

SW: It seems like even though Eunice was a little boomtown, Lafayette was the place to be.

NS: Oh yeah. Oh there's no doubt about it. Oh yeah, Lafayette was growin'.

SW: What did the town look like when you first got here as compared to today?

NS: Lafayette?

SW: Yeah.

NS: Hm. I don't know, it's kind of hard to describe. They had a lot, that street out here I believe was still gravel. And-

NS: Lan-, Eraste Landry.

SW: Eraste Landry. Yeah.

NS: I think it was still gravel when we got here. There were a lot of gravel streets here when we first came.

SW: The city was slow to pave the streets?

NS: Yeah. Well I guess they didn't have no money.

SW: I understand Mister Heymann uh, paved the Heymann Boulevard himself.

NS: I think he did.

SW: Yeah. I think because the city didn't have the money. He did it himself.

NS: Yeah he did a lot of good things. Yeah that, I remember right, Pinhook was gravel part of the way. Yeah, it runs right by the Heymann Center. Oh it's come, Lafayette's come a long way since then.

SW: It's a uh... I, I'm thinkin' this area was probably the newest part of town back then, right?

NS: Oh yeah, this was [started?] new sub-, 'fact we was first, see this subdivision was made in three stages. [Inaudible] and across John Street over there. And then this section. And this was the first house built on this side. I bought this lot from J.D. White while I was still livin' on Myrtle Place. My wife wanted to change the house. Cut it up, do this. I said, "No, just go out there and build you another one." And that's what she did. She came out here and built this house. [Pause] This lot's one of the biggest lots out here. It's 200 foot deep.

SW: Really? [Pause]

NS: Well. [Pause]

SW: Into the uh, thinkin' into the 1960s when you were still workin' out of the uh, the Oil Center. Did you, I guess you noticed a lot of companies comin' in from Texas and from Oklahoma that were movin' into Lafayette.

NS: Yeah.

SW: To help, because the business was so good.

NS: Yeah.

SW: What happened or did this happen, if there was a boom period where lots of companies came in and then there was a downturn.

NS: Yeah, we-

SW: What happened during those downturns if they had all of these people here?

NS: Oh those rigs, a lot of 'em were sacked, you know, they didn't have no work to give 'em. It was slow for awhile but I was lucky, I worked all the time.



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SW: You worked all the time. Did some of those people that moved into town for work, did they have to leave town when there was no work or?

NS: I don't believe, I don't believe, some of 'em went to work offshore, you know, there was some work offshore. I don't think many left town. Most people come to Lafayette like it. They stay here. I got a lot of friends from Oklahoma and Texas, Arkansas. They retired, but they stayed right here in Lafayette.

SW: Did they, did they want to come to Lafayette or after they got here they realized [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

NS: After they got here they like it. But lot of 'em that moved here was afraid they wasn't gonna like it. It was different country from where they came from.

SW: Bein' that you weren't exactly different uh, country, Texas, Oklahoma, and you were from north Louisiana, so that's a bit different from here, too.

NS: Well that-

SW: How did the local people feel about uh, you guys moving into town-

NS: Well, some of 'em resent just a little bit. Uh, but most of 'em didn't. They accepted us. I know I belong to the Oakbourne Country Club and there was, I heard remarks. I didn't hear 'em say it, but I heard some of 'em didn't want that oilfield bunch out there. But we, we pa-, paid more for that club than anybody else. You know, we put more money in than anybody.

SW: Had a lot of oil guys out there.

NS: Yeah. Still is, still a lot of oil people.

SW: Well I understand some-

NS: My son-in-law's still workin', he's out there. He belongs to that.

SW: I understand some oil companies, part of the benefits package is a membership to Oakbourne.

NS: Yeah. Oh yeah. Like that Petroleum Club. When they opened it, there wasn't nobody but oilfield people could join. Now uh, when the business slowed down, they started accepting anybody that wanted to join. Just about anybody.

SW: So it was different at first.

NS: I don't know of anybody's been turned down that went to it.

SW: But at first when you guys were first there, you joined when you started working here in Lafayette?

NS: Yeah.

SW: Was, that was a good thing, it was a good business decision to-

NS: Oh yeah, good, good. Good place to go meet people, take 'em to lunch.

SW: The food was pretty good too. [Chuckles]

SW: Speaking of food, I know in north Louisiana they don't always eat some of the stuff that we eat down here in south Louisiana.

NS: No.

SW: How, was that a big change for you when you first, when you moved here?

NS: Oh yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, oh my goodness.

SW: D-

NS: Different altogether.

SW: Potato, rice instead of potatoes or?

NS: Up in north Louisiana they don't eat rice much like they do here. They eat potatoes. And they don't season their food as much as they do here.

SW: Do you like that or did you have a problem with that at first?

NS: No I like it. I've always liked the food here.

SW: Would you say the same for a lot of the other oil people who were moving to town?

NS: Yeah, most people come here they like that food. Oh yeah.

SW: I haven't heard too many complaints.

NS: No. Call it Cajun food.

SW: Yeah.

NS: Yeah. [Pause]

SW: What happened up, when you were working in the 1980s when they had the real big bust at the time, when a lot of people, after the OPEC crisis lot of people were out of work, early '80s and mid '80s and uh-

NS: Yeah.

SW: How did that affect you?

NS: Uh, well it didn't bother me. I had plenty of work.

SW: Still were workin'.

NS: Just like I said, I was lucky I guess. I had plenty of work, I did.

SW: Did you, did you specialize mainly in the land-based drilling? Or did you do, ever do any offshore uh-

NS: I did offsh-, some offshore work. Mostly on land.

NS: Like that rig over there, I helped build that one. That's offshore.

SW: Did the uh, the increase of the offshore uh, end, part of the industry did that, how did that affect you as a land-based driller? Did they ever pull away from you guys, any of the business?

NS: No.

SW: What about today? Uh, are you, you're still consulting a little?

NS: Oh no. I [Inaudible].

SW: You finished that off?

NS: I've been quit a long time.

SW: Where do you see it going today? Do you uh, do you see a lot of opportunities still in the land part of the business or is it all offshore?

NS: Well, it's, it's limited. I got a son-in-law promotes drilling and all. Like they got a well now they're completin'. It's, prospects are hard to find. It's rough. He's been lucky and smart, I don't know why. Did pretty good I think.

SW: He takes after uh, takes after you?

NS: I guess. [Coughs] Oh I help him once in awhile a little bit.

SW: If you uh, if you had the opportunity if you were [NS coughs] if you were 20 years old today, would you do the same thing? Would you uh, get back into the drilling- [NS coughs]

NS: Excuse me. No I don't believe I would.

SW: Think it's too risky.

NS: Well I don't think there's that much oil left in this country. Uh, it'd be rough try to make a living, startin' all over. [Coughs]

SW: At the time that you got into it it was uh-

NS: Oh it was lucrative business.

SW: Very good timing.

NS: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SW: Would you say you have any, nay regrets at all for uh, the career you've had in the oil patch?

NS: No. No. It was good to me. I made a lot of friends. And uh, made a little money, which we all like. [SW chuckles] And uh.

SW: But you said that uh, yeah, you didn't want to be a school teacher because you didn't see that you could make any money.

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NS: Uh uh, no, no. I never wanted to be a school teacher.

SW: Besides the oil patch when you were 20 years old, what else could you do? [NS coughs] What other opportunities were there?

NS: Well-

SW: For a young man.

NS: I never have thought about it that way. Um... I guess I coulda did carpentry work. My daddy was a pretty good carpenter and I had a brother that was a pretty good carp. And uh, I used to help them a lot, I guess I coulda made a living doing it if I'da wanted to. But other than that, I don't know. In north Louisiana, you know, there's not much work goin' on up there even right now. [The climate is not what you?], this part of the state is a lot busier than north Louisiana, as you probably know. A long time ago they had quite a bit of oil production in north Louisiana, but that's all about gone down. Arkansas has quite a few little booms. [Pause] Our oil now, as you know, a lot of it comin' from overseas.

SW: It creates a whole different set of problems, huh? [Chuckles]

NS: What is it, about 50 percent now.

SW: Somethin' like that, yeah. That's why we're havin' all the hoorah over there in the Middle East right now.

NS: Yeah, yeah. [Pause]

SW: I know sometimes they say the work on the rigs is sometimes dangerous. Uh, did you ever have, did you ever get hurt or did you ever have to really watch yourself so that you wouldn't get hurt?

NS: I got hurt a few times, but not seriously. I remember I had to layoff one time. Other times uh, I never did laid off or nothin'. I remember one time I got a knee sprung, but I worked with it. Other time I got a, burned my leg from my steam hose. And I had to lay off about two weeks from that. That was the only time I was ever off. But uh-

SW: What did the company do after you would get hurt?

NS: Well I went on back to work when I got better.

SW: Did they pay for the hospital and the expenses?

NS: No.

SW: No, they didn't take care of that then?

NS: Not then.

SW: Different world now, huh?

NS: Yeah. Today they, somebody do that they'd sue the company.

SW: Totally different mindset of the workers, huh?

NS: Yeah.

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SW: You guys were thinkin' totally different way.

NS: Yeah.

SW: Did you uh, well it seems like you hear everyday somebody's suing an oil company.

NS: Oh yeah.

SW: It seems like somebody's [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

NS: Well they got these lawyers on TV everyday, four or five of 'em. They'll tell 'em, "Offshore, if you get hurt offshore," I heard that guy this mornin' talkin' that. "Come see me. I'll get every nickel you can."

SW: They didn't have those guys back then when you were [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

NS: Oh no.

SW: Didn't exist?

NS: I thought it used to be against the law for a lawyer to advertise like that. But I guess it wasn't.

SW: I think you're right, I thought so too, but, I don't know.

NS: Well you take doctors, you see where that bunch struck up at that hospital up north? From insurance, people suin' 'em? They gone, they quit. They're not gonna put up with it.

SW: I heard about that-

NS: It's been on the news last two or three days. That's awful, doctor can't even, help you when you're sick, and he makes a error or you don't get well, so you sue 'em.

SW: Yeah, they're afraid to work.

NS: Yeah. Whew!

SW: Sort of the same thing, huh?

NS: Boy, boy.

SW: You guys back then on the rigs, if you got hurt you shook it off and you went back to work, huh? Unless you were seriously hurt?

NS: Well, once in awhile you'd find some uh, some old boy that didn't want to work, he'd sue the company. I know a few that sued the company, but it wasn't like today, they didn't get no million dollars out there, they might get a few thousand. But today they suin' for big money.

SW: Because the lawyer wants a big cut.

NS: Yeah, yeah, he's got to make a livin' too.

SW: I know today they have a lot of safety standards and regulations and meetings.

SW: And all of this, y'all didn't have any of that back then did you?

NS: Uh uh.

SW: But was it, do you think it was more dangerous back then or y'all were just more careful?

NS: Well... I don't know we were more careful or not. They got, had people hurt back then and every in awhile they kill a man. I don't, you don't hardly ever hear of a one that gets killed anymore. Used to kill quite a few people on those rigs. I think that part slowed down. And they go way out, I know, I watched that rig down there workin' for my son-in-law, boy they safety first. That's first. They got safety all, signs all over that rig.

SW: They have a meeting before they start.

NS: Yeah, they have safety meetings. [Pause]

SW: Uh, I want to ask you a couple of opinion questions.

NS: Alright.

SW: Just how you feel. What do you think the oil industry did for Lafayette?

NS: Oh it caused Lafayette to grow about twice the size.

SW: Over night? [Chuckles]

NS: No. Through the years. 'Course now we got a lot of hospitals here, that's helped Lafayette grow a lot too. But the oil business started Lafayette growin'.

SW: You don't feel it's the only reason Lafayette grew, it was just one of the reasons?

NS: Well, I don't know. [Inaudible] financial [or not?]. I know the oil business helped it, a lot. No. It's just like these, all these hospitals here, that's helped Lafayette a lot. Build a hospital, more people come in, the grocery store, he builds another grocery store, pretty soon everybody's buildin'.

SW: Yeah. And so it just keeps-

NS: And it, it's still boomin'. Lafayette's still boomin'.

SW: Yeah, I know drive on Johnston Street and you see how many, how many cars-

NS: Or go on Kaliste Saloom.

SW: Yeah, there too.

NS: My daughter lives off of Kaliste Saloom out there. And uh, there's somethin' goin' on, they're buildin' all the time. At River Bend, River Ranch Subdivision. There's a jillion houses in there.

SW: Yeah. It's still goin'. [Chuckles]

NS: Yeah. Man alive. All right close together. I don't like my house that close. Too close.

Interviewee: Salter, Norman ( Pete )

Interview Date: February 4, 2003

SW: Not quite like here. You have a little bit more space here. [Chuckles]

NS: Yeah.

SW: Well uh, that's about all the questions I have. Do you have anything you want to add, uh, any stories or uh, anything you just want to say about the oil industry or about Lafayette?

NS: No, um, do you mind if I ask you a question?

SW: Sure.

NS: What uh, what is the object of you doing this?

SW: [Describes project; for MMS to determine the impact of the oil industry on the area; finished product will be in library at ULL for researchers to access]

NS: Well you know, we're talkin' about olden time, you see the picture of that rig over there?

SW: Uh hm.

NS: That's the kind I used to have. That's a steam rig.

SW: Yeah, those were the ones before-

NS: They don't have those anymore. They use too much fuel. It wasn't that they didn't do good work, they just used so much fuel that the power rig took over.

SW: I know, uh, and you said you burnt your leg on one of those, huh?

NS: Yeah, we uh, we used to buy gas off of these pipelines to fire those boilers. We get it as much as three cents.

SW: Per gallon?

NS: No, no, gas.

SW: Oh.

NS: Cubic foot.

SW: Oh cubic feet, I see. Okay.

NS: Three cents! Today what is it, two and a half? Somethin', I don't know. I know my little ol' heater here last month was about 80 dollars. [SW chuckles]

SW: You have gas in the house?

NS: Huh?

SW: You have the gas in your house? It's high. It's definitely high right now.

NS: When I built on Myrtle place I put a gas air conditioner. And my bill was never over eight dollars a month. Five ton unit. That's how cheap gas was then.

Interviewee: Salter, Norman ( Pete )

Interview Date: February 4, 2003

SW: Nothin' like now, huh? [Both chuckle]

NS: Yeah.

SW: Big, big difference, huh?

NS: Five ton unit. About eight, seven or eight dollars a month. [Pause] Well we get this, like Bush told 'em the other day to start working on that nitrogen, run your car on. They won't need so much oil. But that's gonna be awhile. Yeah.

SW: Yeah, they're not quite there yet.

NS: No. It's gonna be a long time.

SW: Eventually the oil's gonna dry up everywhere anyway, so-

NS: Oh yeah.

SW: They'll have to do somethin'.

NS: Somethin's gotta happen. And Louisiana, you know, it's gettin' deeper and deeper and deeper. They found production now, they don't have none of that 3,000 foot stuff like they used to at Beaumont and over here at Evangeline. Up by around Shreveport and Caddo Lake. They don't have no more of that.

SW: It's at 10,000 feet now, huh?

NS: That well my son-in-law's finishing now is 21,200 feet.

SW: Where's that?

NS: Uh, it's uh... Morganza.

SW: Morganza. Okay.

NS: Tuscaloosa. [Pause] That's a long ways down.

SW: It's a lot of pipe, huh?

NS: It costs lots of money. I think I saw his cost the other day on that where I was. [Plus?] they got it, completed it all by perforatin'. You know, they put the tubing in and they move the rig off and they go in there and perforate. I think it was uh, 14 million dollars. [Pause]

SW: It must be a big oil reserve down there if they willin' to spend-

NS: No they've got, they've got three sands I know in that [field?].

SW: When you say sand you mean three different levels?

NS: Yeah, yeah. One here, and one here, and one here. [Pause]

SW: Besides these uh, these big pictures, do you have any smaller pictures of anything?

NS: Ooh. Yeah, there's some here somewhere. I don't know how my, [there?] or not.



Interviewee: Salter, Norman ( Pete )

Interview Date: February 4, 2003

SW: Well if you ever dig 'em up, we can make copies of 'em. I had some pictures, I don't have 'em with me, of Mister George when he was [Inaudible].

NS: Yeah.

SW: Back in 1989. I have some pictures from Larry Monte. I interviewed him last week. And he gave me some pictures of a well blow out. When totally suck in the water and disappeared.

NS: I got a picture of a rig blowed out right there in that hall.

SW: Oh okay.

NS: The derrick, the rig and all went down.

SW: The whole thing.

NS: Down at [Inaudible] [Island with me?], Texaco well. It was [Inaudible], was the name of it. Man made that picture he was a salesman all, but he give it to me. It's there in that hall right there.

SW: Okay. I can take a look at it on my way out.

NS: Yeah. Oh I got pictures of those old rigs around, but [Inaudible]. I don't know if mama knows where they are or not.

SW: Well if you come across 'em and you want to put a copy of it in the library, we can make a copy of it. Just if you want-

NS: Let me ask her if she knows.

SW: I'm gonna-

NS: She knows more about this-

[END OF RECORDING]