

HHA # 00409
Interviewee: Bobby Simon
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz
Interview Date: February 18, 2003
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW041
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of "uhs" and "ums", repeated words, and the interviewer's backchanneling have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability.]

Ethnographic preface:

Bobby Simon was born in Abbeyville, LA, and moved to Lafayette in 1959 to attend University of Southwestern Louisiana. Began work as a medical technician Charity Hospital and by 1976 he and a couple colleagues opened their own occupational medicine business. Then he developed an interest in occupational drug testing and worked a lot with testing in the oil industry. He discusses the evolution of drug testing in the workplace and drug testing technology. He also talks about changes he's seen in Lafayette over the years and the importance of the University.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [BS]

BS: -UL. Finished in 1965 with a B.S. degree in, bachelor of science degree biology, bacteriology. Did a year of internship in medical technology, worked as a med tech right here at a Charity Hospital by the way. Worked as a medical technologist for seven years. And then went into sales with that company for an additional seven years. And then ventured out with a couple of other people into the medical profession. Opened up a business in 1976. That business involved the oilfield in that we were doin' back x-rays, pulmonary functions, EKGs, other various types of testing. Because the oil patch had, wanted just a little bit better quality in their employee I think and they had set standards in particular with be-, back x-rays to make sure that the individual goin' to work on a rig, let's say, would be able to sustain his 12 hours of work if he could. If the back was not classified as being able to be employed, then he wouldn't be able to work in that particular position. So that along with the physician's findings, who did the physical on the individual and classified a person as to be employable in a particular area of the oilfield or non-employable. Like I alluded to earlier, I had a cousin who played football at USL and was a started, all GSC at the time. And applied for a job with an oil company and was classified back, which meant because of an anomaly, he was born with this little defect. Didn't stop him from playin' football, but it stopped him from workin' in a specific position with that company. I saw him the other day at one of the local health spas and he's still robust and healthy and whatever. He couldn't work for that company but he got employment in another area, so again, depends on the classification. Since that classification, back x-rays have pretty much been uh, not obsolete, but not as dependent as functional capacity. They actually have tests that individuals go through to see if they can move this box from here to over here, because his job at this company will require him to move that box from here to over here. And it simplifies it, it's like in greater detail than that. Some of these functional capacities are anywhere from an hour to two hours to four hours long. Depends on what the company regimen for that job is. They have pretty much taken the place of back x-ray, although the back x-ray's important because if you've got something there as a baseline and three years down the road you

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

injure yourself, you can always go back to that baseline to see if that was there initially. And so, anyway, won't get into the legal aspects.

SW: Gives you a starting point-

BS: Correct. And I'm in the drug and alcohol testing business and this was, back then it was being done in the oilfield but more or less it was being done I would say kind of non-standardized. Although the people doing the tests in the laboratories were very capable of running the results, but there were onsite testing being done uh, somewhat, with good quality, but maybe not as, in fact not as much quality as being done now. So the oilfield in the old days would have a dog search to see if there was any drug paraphernalia or anything in a person's bag, be it in a parking lot or in a storage room or in an automobile or an offshore rig. And then if they found something then they would do urinalysis drug testing on everybody there. Standards were, again, not nearly as rigorous as they are now. In 1989 the Department of Transportation, DOT, instituted regulations in regards to truckers, pipeline employees, offshore production platform employees, the FAA, uh, the Coast Guard, that really set the standards for drug testing. And the State of Louisiana in 1990 also passed legislation regulating drug testing on the non-Department of Transportation level. And pretty much one mimics, well, the state mimics the feds. And those standards have really raised the bar as far as drug testing in the oil industry's concern. Some of your major oil companies have followed suit and said, "Well, we're gonna raise our standards requiring individuals comin' to work for us as a contractor, you have to follow these standards. And you can't come on our property unless you had a negative drug test in the last 12 months, or a negative alcohol test in the last 12 months." In addition to that, worker's comp has said, "Well, if you're gonna have an accident, then as part of your getting taken care of in the emergency room, your injury, then we're also gonna require your company to do a post-accident, an after-accident drug and alcohol test to make sure you weren't under the influence at the time of the accident." Then again that somethin' else there. And the standards have been infiltrated throughout the industry, it's also worker's comp not only in the oilfield, but the grocery stores or the funeral parlors or the, anybody that employees, the fast food restaurant industry, anybody that has [Inaudible, phone ringing] worker's comp situation, then may require that this be part of their employment, that they agree that if they are injured, then they'll undergo this type of testing. And the ramifications are if you fail a drug or alcohol test, you're subject to being terminated. And if you follow the rules and regulations part of that is you don't get worker's comp if you're terminated.

SW: Because of that reason.

BS: Correct. And of course the feds in the past, since '89, have come back several times and raised that bar, those standards, makin' it really harder for someone who is on drugs or on alcohol at the time to get employed in the industry. And every time the individual finds a way to try to skirt by the drug or alcohol test, the laboratories and the manufacturers of alcohol testing equipment make it harder for them to be able to ru-, skate by. So from out standpoint the back x-rays have come a long way. The rigorous, or doing drug and alcohol testing on individuals, respecting the rights of the individual, by the way, out there, because he should not be put into a position where he's embarrassed for, or being asked to collect a sample, or [guarded?]. Making it really, not watertight, but close to it. And everybody follows the same standards. It's non-discriminatory. Someone goes to work for a company, that company has a policy and that policy says x, y, z. The employee, or potential employee, is made aware of what the rigors of drug testing is, alright. And if he agrees, signs the acknowledgement to work for the company under those standards, should he fail to pass these standards, then he is subject to one, not being hired, or two, being terminated because of a positive drug or alcohol test. Again, just August the... of this ni-, 2001 the DOT came out with some new standards, again I'll use the term, raising the bar to make it even more difficult for anyone to slip through the system. Because if an individual fails a drug test under the Department of Transportation standards, before that individual can go to work for another company, he's got to be evaluated by a substance abuse professional. And if that person needs some sort of outpatient rehab or whatever, he has to undergo that rehab and be released by the substance abuse professional or the therapist before he can go to work for the same company or another company. They can go back two years into an individual's history to find out if that person has ever failed or refused to take a drug or alcohol test. And has he had any kind of rehab. And if that person has failed a test or refused a test and has

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

not gone through rehab, well then he has to before he goes to work for anybody else in a safety sensitive position or a "covered position" is the proper term. So the standards have been increased. And they're not gonna stop there, they're gonna continue as they have time to evaluate where they are and, you know, make recommendations to go, make it a little more watertight.

SW: Okay. Is, are the, do they make those changes because they find out that there's small problems within the system or is it that the drug people who are undergoing drug testing are getting more clever in ways trying to cir-

BS: Well, combination of both, Steven. Combination of both. Those undergoing drug testing are always looking for, if they're dirty, if they have drugs in their system, illegal drugs in their system, always looking for ways to skirt the drug test. Finding a way to provide something that will make them pass that test in order to be eligible to go to work. Now the laboratories that do tremendous research in these areas are always finding the adulterants that these individuals present the laboratory with to check for these adulterants to make sure that everything possible on a quality plateau is being done to ensure that that sample is a true, legitimate sample and the results given are true, be it positive or negative. And there are a lot of uh, safety, not safety, but there are a lot of areas that assure the employee, potential, or the employer everything is being done to make sure that that sample that's given a result to is a negative or a positive sample. Now it's not just flip of the coin or even the quick test, which we call 'em, which are bein' done onsite have been, have to be graded by the federal government and has to be released in order to, that test that we're doin' a quality test and that the results that you give are from a history of research and development, again, to make sure that to the best of the knowledge of all involved that that result is a legitimate result. The quick test is not a laboratory test per say. The sample is not bein' run on a instrument that does, you know, quality control throughout the operation. But it is pretty safe to say that the results are founded or pretty reliable in probably 95 percent of the cases. That's been the newest thing, then they're goin' to hair testing, which is a newer methodology. Hasn't been around as long as urinalysis has been, but it's coming about. And then they're doing saliva testing for drugs now, which is the latest out there. So we're always getting more and more information on these methodologies because we wanna be on top of it to be able to give our clients what he asks for. Particularly in giving them what is regarded as a quality test, an accepted test in the industry. At the present time the Department of Transportation, the DOT, only accepts urine and breath for, breath for alcohol and urine for drugs. Right now they're thinking about legitimizing hair testing and also onsite testing, the device I spoke of earlier. How they're gonna go about doing that, that opens up some other cans of worms. So.

SW: Not only you guys having employees from companies come here, sometimes you're actually sending employees out to the sites to do testing there.

BS: Absolutely. We, 24 and seven, what we do is we make available our collectors basically on an instant. When we get a phone call from a client that says, "The operator, the major oil company, said they found something on our crew. Could you come out and collect samples on our crew, send it to the laboratory to be analyzed to make sure that those individuals are not dirty on the site." So yeah, we do that.

SW: Oh, they possibly found a foreign agent on the site somewhere.

BS: Could very, yes, could be.

SW: And they want to see if it was anybody on that site that-

BS: That's correct.

SW: That had it in their system.

BS: That's correct. And so [what they do?] since they found the drug paraphernalia or the cocaine or the marijuana, the amphetamines, or whatever they may have, if they don't have a prescription for it, the drugs, anyway, there's no

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

prescription yet to my knowledge for cocaine and marijuana [SW chuckles] um, maybe in some cases, but generally speaking they don't have any, then there's, it throws up a red flag. And they wanna make sure that that crew is clean.

SW: Go and test everybody in the crew.

BS: Correct. Because you really don't know-

SW: Who it is.

BS: Unless you find it in this person's locker. But how you know that person is not giving it to somebody else. So, and again, dogs, canines, have been around for awhile, drug dogs. And then the advent of urinalysis came after that. And then dog searches kind of went away because urinalysis was being done more and more and more. And quality always rising on the urinalysis. But we're finding that the canine work is coming back now in addition with the urinalysis. Because you've got people put stuff in their bags if they're gonna work for seven days. They're doin' it onshore and their name may not have come up in the random and they've escaped any kind of scrutiny so they're gonna try bringin' it offshore and do a little [totin'?] while they're out there. Well, that's why the dope dogs come in and they can find it in the bags if it's there.

SW: Preemptive.

BS: Yeah, then you can, you know, escort the individual off the rig or the lot or the property or whatever. All in all it's good for all of us, because although I may not be doin' drugs and I may feel offended if you do a urinalysis on me, I'm not sure about the guy workin' next to me. He may not be as clean as I know I am. So this is a way on a random basis that someone's name is picked out, computer-generated, in the computer's code it doesn't know [Phone ringing] who the person is. And then that information is given to a responsible person in the organization and those individuals take and pick on a random basis are then, samples are collected and sent into the laboratory for testing. And results are sent back to the individuals in charge of disseminating that indiv-, that information to the company. [Intercom buzzes; BS is told he has a phone call]

[RECORDING TURNED OFF AND TURNED BACK ON]

SW: Back online. [Chuckles]

BS: Yeah. So now we've come a long way, I've been in the industry uh... since 1965, the industry, the drug testing industry, the lab industry, x-ray, etcetera etcetera. The last 13 years strictly in drug and alcohol testing. So from that perspective I can see how far that industry has come. And it has come a long way. It's not perfect [Chuckling] but there's no industry that's perfect. But the standards really have come a long way compared to the '50s, and the '60s, and the '70s, and the '80s, as far as drug and alcohol tests are concerned. Instrumentation is much better, the quality of the instrument a lot better, the testing methodologies are better, the random selection is not, "You, you, and you," because that's not random. The individuals trained for companies to pick reasonable cause individuals out now, those are much better. The Department of Transportation has come across with excellent standards for drug and alcohol testing in those areas that are covered by the Department of Transportation. But again, since this sets the standard, then those who don't do DOT, Department of Transportation, testing, then they probably, they mimic the DOT. So it raises their standards also. So I can see that it's done, it's made great strides. By the same token, I see that there's more potential violations with individuals, 'cause there's more of that available now than when I was in college. And I'm naive, I, there was none, in the group that I hung with, now we didn't go to church everyday necessarily, okay, but we didn't have access to the amount of stuff that's, people a-, accessible to now. And it's a shame, but, and I don't have the answer to that. All I can say is that we try as a company and other companies try to do what we do best to find these individuals who violate rules and regulations and leave it up to the company wh-, as to what happens to those who violate that company. Either they're terminated or they're sent to rehab or whatever.

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

SW: You guys are just the testing agent and you contract out to whichever company needs your services.

BS: Correct.

SW: They have, each company has its own... design on how they handle this entire thing.

BS: That's correct.

SW: And you guys go with their guidelines, guidelines is the word I'm-

BS: Correct. Now sometimes we assist them in the guidelines. They'll come to us and said, "Okay, we're in a new company. What do you recommend in the policy or what do you recommend as far as pre-employments, randoms, reasonable cause, post-accidents?" And we'll go with the industry in which they operate and we'll say, "Okay, for the trucking industry, well it's pretty cut and dry. DOT takes care of that." "Well I've got a restaurant down there in Butte Larose, what do I do?" "Well you've gotta follow the state guidelines." And of course some people are exempt even in state guidelines. [Phone rings] The rules were written so that there are some exemptions. Most of the people that I've dealt with who are exempt follow the guidelines. [Intercom buzzes; BS is told he has a phone call]

[RECORDING TURNED OFF AND TURNED BACK ON]

BS: Is it on?

SW: Yeah, it's on.

BS: Okay. I try to go from way back when, when there were standards but not nearly the standards in industry that they have now. Now that's just in drug and alcohol testing. There's so many other, in the area of safety, I mean, I can see where, man, the operators really want someone working for them as contractors to be as aware of when they work on that, walk on that property, they know the rules and regulations of hardhats, steel toes, what not to do, what areas to avoid, because you subject yourself to accidents. And boy, it ain't pleasant, you know. Sometimes they, these result in deaths and that is definitely not pleasant. So all of this, all of this that we're doin' work hand in hand for industry to make sure that industry is as safe as it possibly can be with the rules and regulations given to us. And, again, I can see in all areas every day there's something new coming out that betters, that makes us better in what we do. In helping our clients achieve what they want. Because this is not super expensive, but it ain't free. And if you pay for something, you wanna make sure that you're getting what you paid for. So, again, it's pretty much narrowed our conversation to, you know, back x-rays and they used to call it "industrial medicine" back then, now it's occupational, "occ med" now. And how it has-

SW: Change the term.

BS: It has evolved and the standards are just better.

SW: When did drug testing actually start the first time? Do you, are you aware of the year or whereabouts where-

BS: I, I'm looking at somewhere, I guess I was made aware of drug testing somewhere in between '76 and '80. It probably occurred in some fashion before then, but I wasn't acutely aware of it then. It really came into focus in 1989. Actually, December of '89. And I've been spending probably 99 percent of my time since then in the drug testing arena. Because it's gotten really so vast. And I basically spend a large amount of my time now just in those two areas. So it's a full-time job and in order to deliver the information properly and with quality to the client, then it takes us [Chuckling] all day everyday, basically, to do this.

SW: What kind of, 1989 is that key year for the DOT regulations, but obviously that came on the heels, because there were problems within the industry when they-

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

BS: Evidently there were big problems.

SW: When did those drug problems really become apparent? Was it the early '80s or was it before that?

BS: I think the drug problem started in the mid '60s, personally. I think that, yeah, I think that's when we saw the rock concerts of this world and free spirits of this world and the people who just defied. And got worse and worse. It's a, it was an easy out. And it filtrated into the workforce. It used to be people just maybe did this recreationally on weekends. Smoked dope, drank a little beer, whatever. But it spills over into the workforce. And I'm sure they became acutely aware of this somewhere in the '80s. And that's when the DOT started, and the federal government started lookin' into um, drug testing in the workforce. In 1988 Drug Free Workf-, uh, Drug Free Workplace Act was passed by then President Regan, allowing drug testing in the workforce. Before then everybody said it was against my rights. You have no right to do that. Now [that's not true?].

SW: [So they'd?] have to do it offsite.

BS: Right. Well, weren't able to be tested at all, basically.

SW: Oh, okay.

BS: But, again, they passed this in '88, followed by the enacting of the DOT standards in '89, and then again stronger and stronger and stronger rules and regulations. Every state probably has standards for drug testing in that state. Louisiana does. It goes hand in hand with worker's comp. And it's good. Not because I'm sitting here and doing this for a living, but I mean, I don't think you'd be excited if there were no standards and people were just allowed to go out and do whatever, violate whatever rules and regulations, and then be on that highway. As it is, there's enough of that going on being standardized. Just think if there were no standards. Or there were no policing of that, just how, whew. It'd be scary. Airline pilots, just think about that. Just think about that. As it is we see evidence in the newspapers every once in awhile where a pilot will be, before he gets behind the instrument panel and whatever, somebody says, "I smell something on him." So he's pulled off on the side, he's given a breath alcohol test, and he enjoyed too much the night before. So he's not able to fly that plane. That's all part of the whole thing. And he's governed by the Department of Transportation. Yeah. It makes, I take some comfort in knowing that. I think we're helping industry, helping people, helping families, because if an individual's got a problem, maybe that problem is brought to light and through counseling maybe he'll shake that. And spend more time in production, productive, being a productive individual, not only in the workforce, but with his family. Because alcohol and drugs are one of the things that causes families to break up. It must be a powerful thing. I haven't ever been involved in that personally. But I guess it's something that is stronger than will in many cases. So it takes a strong individual to be able to overcome that and just put it aside and be sober for x number of years. So.

SW: You mentioned "reasonable cause" outside of the random.

BS: Correct.

SW: [Inaudible], can you describe that a little bit to me? How does that work out?

BS: Sure. "Reasonable cause," "before cause," those two terms are interchangeable. Means that individuals who have been trained in the detection of an individual on the job of erratic behavior, slurring of speech, red eyes, wrecking automobile, showing up late, sleeping on the job, etcetera etcetera etcetera. Those individuals are subject to "reasonable cause." There is cause to believe that an individual may be under the influence of either drugs or alcohol by this kind of behavior. This individual may also be on medication, legitimate medication. But because of his job, then he may be an individual that would cause harm to himself or to his fellow employees if he is under the influence of an non-prescribed drug or something that would cause his vision or his thinking to be slowed. So as a supervisor, being trained, I can approach that individual and tell him that these are things that have happened, this is

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

the history of the last month of what's happened, "We have reason to believe that you may be impaired while you're working, so we're going to do a drug and or alcohol test on you to see if ar-, if you are impaired. And if you're not, if your tests come back negative, then maybe there's something in your personal life that needs to be attended to." You could be goin' through a divorce, it could be a family member being ill, you could be on medication for a physical problem that you have causing you to act this way, so we need to take care of this. And if the individual is found to be positive for drug or alcohol, then we need to address that particular situation with you also. Again, this is under reasonable cause. And now reasonable cause doesn't mean a guy gets out there in the mornin', looks over his crew out there and says, "I want this guy, this guy, this guy tested." That's not random and that's not reasonable cause. So it's been an education for us to try to tell these people that even reasonable cause sometimes are called random, it's not random. "Random" means some number or name being generated by a computer that tells you that they have been picked this month or this quarter to be tested. That's random. Reasonable cause is an individual, it's like a referee. You're makin' a call. You see, this is a personal decision, this is not a machine makin' a call, this is an individual makin' a call on another individual. His supervisor. Now that be, could be because someone came to him and said, "This guy's handing out dope on the parking lot." You can't disregard this, but you put together facts and information and approach this individual. And allow that individual an opportunity to defend himself and the best way to defend it say, "Test me. I'm clean." And if you are, that's fine, then you investigate to find out where all this is coming from. So that's reasonable cause.

SW: That leads to my next question. You have this fella who's on medu-, on medication and he gets drug tested and it comes out positive. If he, whether he's, it's a false positive or not, what recourse does that tested person have if he feels that he is not on drugs, he thinks he's not taking them and [there is?] positive.

BS: Again, the system has been built to protect that individual, because if that individual is tested positive for anything then that result goes to a physician called a "medical review officer". M-R-O. That term was designed by the Department of Transportation and has been copied by the non-DOT people. The MRO, the physician has an interview with that person who tested positive for whatever. Allows that individual an opportunity to defend that result. Okay. If that individual is positive for valium, "Do you have a prescription for valium sir?" "Yes I do." "Who's your doctor?" "Doctor Jones." "What pharmacy do you use?" "I use xyz pharmacy down the block." The MRO will research this to find out if there's, if it's legitimate. If it is, then that person is not positive, the person's negative, 'cause he has a legitimate reason for being positive. If he cannot defend that result either by cocaine or marijuana or methamphetamine, or taking a prescription medication from someone else, then he is subject to termination because his policy usually will say, "You take your medicines, not your mom's, not your girlfriend's, not your wife's." So the system has a built in uh, fail safe. So that the individual has an opportunity to defend any positive drug screen. Also that individual if he doesn't believe the test results, has an opportunity to have that sample, that sample, not another sample, but that sample, retested. The MRO gets in contact with the laboratory and has the laboratory either retest the sample or send it to another laboratory to have another laboratory retest that sample. If it comes back negative within the first, then it's a total negative result. Every once in awhile that happens, but by and large not that often that it comes back either from the same laboratory or another laboratory in a different result than what was initially reported. So this is all we alluding and going to the actual drug testing, but this tells you that the industry can feel comfortable in all of us doing our job and protecting that person to make sure that if that result is positive, then you're assured it's positive. And if it's negative, you're assured that it's truly negative. So it's-

SW: And this stays on the record like you said for two years.

BS: An individual who tests positive or refuses in the DOT only.

SW: Oh okay.

BS: Only the Department of Transportation has instituted this regulation.

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

SW: So someone who maybe refused a test or tested positive and was terminated two years later can reapply for a job and his employers can research, but if they go back, they can't go back beyond the two years to see-

BS: Well, it's funny that you say that, because they say two years, but they also say below that that you can go back farther, so that's kind of loosely written. You can definitely go back two years. So the guy flunked a test today and he applies two years and a day from today, theoretically speakin' he'll be negative, okay, 'cause he, if he hasn't refused or failed a test in that period of time [Chuckling] but it also says that you can go back farther. So that, that's legitimate.

SW: He's negative according to the guidelines.

BS: Correct. According to the guidelines.

SW: But there's nothin' that says they can't check his history prior to that.

BS: Correct.

SW: Okay. Well I mean that's also in the interest of the safety to make sure, 'cause they need to know who the individuals were before.

BS: Absolutely.

SW: Okay. Uh, let's shift gears a little bit.

BS: Sure.

SW: You, how long have you been in Lafayette?

BS: Since 1959. It'll be 44 years this June.

SW: And you moved here to go to SLI right?

BS: Correct. They changed the name in 1960. [Slight pause]

SW: What, tying it all into the oil industry, the development of the oil industry, what have you seen in this town, what have you seen change?

BS: Oh-

SW: [Have?] you seen it grow? [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

BS: I'll just simply put it. When I came to Lafayette, SLI had about 5,000 students. They got 17,000 now. There's a direct proportion basically. Lafayette probably had... forty or fifty thousand people at that time and now they've got basically 100,000 people. South College was probably a cra-, a gravel road back in 1960. Not really, it was a two-lane road and now it's four-lane and needs to be bigger. The industry, you know, the banking industry, the medical profession. I was in the medical profession and ah, wow, and the medical institutions in this town are super specialized. I mean, you got basically a hospital for the right leg, a hospital for the left leg, and not really, but, you know, it's, Lafayette's a mecca. It's a drawing, Acadiana, it's a drawing point for all kinds of stuff. Not only in medicine or in the oil industry, we are the hub between New Orleans and Houston, because of our location near the water. But people have come in and opened up, you know, knitting shops have opened up. Drug and alcohol testing businesses because the potential is here for good, solid businesses to come in because of the community. And the community means the nine parish area, minimum. But you have an, you had an exodus in the middle of the '70s you had a

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

downturn in the oil industry. In the middle of the '80s, a downturn in the oil industry. In the middle of the 2000s, again. So you go through this cyclic thing every once in awhile. So what Lafayette does, it diversifies. It gets other things going for it. The restaurant industry's fantastic, uh, my god, the banking industry is tremendous. I mean, you got bankers from other cities locating their bank in Lafayette, and doing, I'm assuming, quite well. So, yeah, people, when I was in high school, "Let's go to Lafayette." That mentality still exists. And they have excellent restaurants in the surrounding cities, you know.

SW: So as a young man in Abbeville, y'all were runnin' into town here.

BS: Oh yes we were.

SW: Because [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

BS: We'd get 10 in a car and come to Lafayette.

SW: Yeah, I lived in Sunset in the '80s and we did the same thing.

BS: Absolutely. And it hasn't changed. It really hasn't changed. And each city has its own thing. I think because of tourism, number one, because now Cajun has been popular and it will remain popular, you know. Wilson [Seymour?], you know, that's Cajun. Now my kids understand a little bit of French, not a lot, but it's losing its punch.

SW: It skipped a generation [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

BS: Yeah, it has. Now my grandkids are being taught in the pre-k and first grade French. And they're learning it quite well and they're excited about, and of course we're promoting it. It wasn't being promoted when I was five years old. Not at all. I mean, we were punished.

SW: Pushed away.

BS: Absolutely. So, but Lafayette is, has done well in spite of the oil industry comin' and going. 'Cause I think over the years the leadership of Lafayette envisioned, you know, "We need to be almost everything for everyone." And to a certain degree it has. There's not much that you need that you can't find in Lafayette, unless you just wanna go to New Orleans. Take a day and [pop mom?], pack mom and the kids up and take a trip, spend some time in New Orleans. So I'm excited. I've loved Lafayette. I could not have chosen a better place to raise my four kids. And my wife being from Sunset, so we met here in Lafayette and weren't goin' back to either city, although both cities are good cities. It's just we thought that Lafayette was the place. And we think it is. Everyday I'm excited to live here. It's provided, whew, health. Let's take a look at the, now you and I both play tennis. Now take a look at the tennis facilities around here. Just quality. Quality. The health care, the health facilities are there if you wanna run a treadmill or you wanna lift weights or do bike, whatever. It's there, you know. So Lafayette's a good city. But I can see that the, as the industries out there grew, Lafayette grew with them. But I think Lafayette has insulated itself to a certain degree against the downturns. We're in a downturn now, okay. And things are slow in the industry out there, I'm told. And if they're slow, look [out?], Steven, at the end of this year or whenever it turns around. Hold on baby, I don't know how big this thing's gonna get. Which is good, because if we all survive during this downturn then it's gonna be really good for us. You know, years down the road. Did I answer your question?

SW: For the most part, yeah.

BS: Yeah.

SW: 'Cause you're sit, you sat here and you watched it happen.

BS: Oh yes.

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

SW: When you got here in 1959 where did you stay? Did you stay in the dorms?

BS: No I stayed in an apartment.

SW: Was it hard to find that apartment?

BS: No. Wasn't. It was like a one-bedroom and a bathroom type apartment, right there by the dairy, USL creamery, wherever it is. I think, yeah. And then moved into another apartment, then moved into another apartment. Now I wasn't livin' high off the hog, trust me, so it didn't take a whole lot to satisfy me at the time. But apartments basically speaking were available then, just like they are now. You built two big dormitories, they stayed full for awhile I guess, but they just destroyed both of 'em.

SW: [Inaudible].

BS: Yeah. So uh-

SW: [Inaudible]-

BS: And I think people in Lafayette provided housing, homes and apartments and whatever for the kids that, who came here and stayed here. Now remember, a lot of kids who come to Lafayette go back home to Opelousas, New Iberia, Breaux Bridge, Abbeville. They, they'll come in and out every day.

SW: Did you see a lot of commuting back then too?

BS: Oh yes.

SW: So that, there was a lot of people comin' into town for the university, but they weren't necessarily staying here overnight.

BS: No, they went back. They would go back. Commuting.

SW: Which is still happening too.

BS: Commuter, correct. In the summertime, the first summer I commuted. And then started in that September of 1959 and basically there after I stayed in Lafayette. My parents were still living and so I'd go home during the week and go pick up a loaf of bread and a can of peanut butter or something and, but, you know, and go back home on weekends. I'd visit mom and dad and, but then I began going less and less as my involvement with the school and friends and whatever came about. Lafayette's grown. It's done well for itself. And it will continue.

SW: You think we'll weather this downturn that's happening right now?

BS: Downturn's what?

SW: Do you think we'll d-, the city will be able to weather the downturn that's happening right now?

BS: Absolutely. Absolutely. It won't do as well as if there were no downturn, of course. But I take temperatures of different areas of business and, you know, you just, you cinch up, you tighten up when things are a little slow. And you don't have, take as many people out for lunch maybe or you don't go out yourself and eat at the local restaurants, you go home and make a sandwich. But you do what you have to do to survive. And if you don't, shame on you. But ride around Lafayette at noon, five days a week and tell me a restaurant in Lafayette that don't have 75 percent capacity on the parking lot. And I don't care if it's a fast food restaurant or it's the best steak restaurant in Lafayette. And I'm very serious about that. And traffic in Lafayette is really bad. So in order to do that [Chuckling] you

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

really gotta wanna go out and eat out, okay. And then at night do the same thing. You know, my children are involved in a restaurant in Lafayette and I was asked by some very close friends of mine who are a lot smarter than me, "What about parking downtown?" And I thought at the time for me it might've been a concern, 'cause they are downtown.

Trust me it ain't a concern. They are as busy as they possibly can be with the quote unquote parking situation downtown. So, no. It's worked its way okay. And it will. [Phone had been ringing; moment of silence wherein recording might have been turned off]

SW: One more question and I'll let you go since you've given me so much information.

BS: Sure, but I've enjoyed it.

SW: And regrets as to your career path and how it's connected to everything.

BS: No. No, I [Slight pause] I think that I have been led by a greater power than I every step of my life. And whatever hand has been dealt, I've done okay. It's been good. I wouldn't change a thing. When workin' at Charity Hospital at night while I was in college, workin' in the film library at UL during the time, workin' for a physician, all this at the same time by the way. It's been wonderful. Lafayette has been good to me and I've tried in a smaller scale maybe to return some of the things by getting involved in some of the things in the city. But I cannot think of one thing, Steven [Slight pause] honestly, that I regret. As far as my living and working and the friends that I've been lucky to get in Lafayette. And that university is high on the list. That is just a, that's a city within a city. That university does so much to Lafayette and the community. I just hope people out there realize that and it's a shot in the arm for us. 'Cause, you know I mean, industry comes and goes, it's still there. As much help as we probably could need in the way of paying the professors maybe a little bit better and maybe updating some of the buildings and some of the other things that Doctor [Allemande's?] staff, you know, envision. All this takes money. And right now ain't nobody got money. [Chuckles] So, but still it's a good institution.

SW: And also, you said, industries come and go as in the present tense, but UL is still there.

BS: It's gonna be there.

SW: In the past when you got there in '59 up until now would you say that the industries that were coming and going are things that were going up and down, that university was still there.

BS: Oh yeah.

SW: Being the beacon here in town.

BS: And it's adapted, its, some of its teachings to the oil industry. Has had courses to help people workin' offshore. You could come to school every other week.

SW: With seven and seven.

BS: Just one of the things. And I'm sure there's many, many more out there that they do for the oil industry. And it has, quality has risen with the needs of the industry. So it's been a strong arm for the industry. Not only the oil industry, anybody that wants any kind of further education, there's something for them out there. They gift wrapped my diploma when I left there and said, "Thank god he's not gonna be here anymore." But I've gotten some close friends and, as teachers that were out there. And I've got some close friends who are my age who are teaching out there, so it's been good. I just wish that you could experience as much [fulfillment?] really as I have. No regrets.

SW: Do they have a brick with your name on it on that walk out there?

BS: Yes they do, actually.

Interviewee: Simon, Bobby

Interview Date: February 18, 2003

SW: That'd be 1963 about or 1964?

BS: Uh, '65.

SW: Sixty-five, I'll go and take a look at it.

BS: It's out there, let me see.

SW: I've got one right there too for my bachelor's degree.

BS: [Checking something] Uh, liberal arts, whatever it say, I think it's '65. I finished, did a year of internship, and then got my degree. And see the only, they were only degreeing once a year. And I think it was in June. Let's see now they do it three times a year, I think.

SW: Three times a year, yeah.

BS: So I passed my registry let's say in June, graduation was in May, I had to wait 'til the following May to officially get my degree, so. Yeah. But I actually finished in '65, February of '65.

SW: [Notes again he has a brick]

BS: I'm somewhere on that. Alrighty.

SW: Okay Mister Simon.

[END OF RECORDING]

