Interviewee: George, AL

Interview Date: August 13,2003

HHA # 00194

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Interviewer: Steven Wiltz

Interview Date: August 13, 2002

Interview Site: Lafayette, LA

Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW022

Transcriber: Lauren Penney

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

Ethnographic preface:

Al George was born in 1928 in Alexandria, Louisiana. His father worked for the railroad, but the family had to live off their farm for a few years during the Depression when his father was laid off. He graduated high school in Winnfield in about 1944 and went to LSU on a football scholarship. At LSU he was in ROTC, studied mechanical engineering, and got married; he graduated with his degree in about 1948. Upon leaving school he had several job offers, but decided to take a position with Humble Oil and Refining even though he knew almost nothing about the oil industry. After three months of working as a roustabout and then roughneck, he was brought into the Crowley office as a junior engineer. Over the next eight years he made moves to New Orleans and Bayou Sale, and then accepted a job offer from Lamb Rental Tools in Lafayette in 1956. After 10 years he decided to venture out on his own and opened a business (Al George, Inc. or AGI Industries) that relied on his hydraulic expertise and problem-solving capabilities. As they developed new products, they also developed new companies such as Sling Shot Incorporated and Sidewinder Pumps. During the interview he talks about early offshore operations, living in the Humble camp at Bayou Sale, the rental tool business, running casing and efforts to make this safer and more efficient, and other tool developments. The interview ends prematurely and plans are made for a follow-up interview.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [AG]

SW: Interview with Mister Al George. It's uh, August thirteenth, 2002, in his home. Okay, you said you had an article here?

AG: Yes, an article that was written uh, when I was LAGCOE Louie in 1989 and uh, Gulf Coast Oil.

SW: Okay.

AG: [Rural?] magazine. Maybe some other stuff in here that'd be beneficial to your uh, research. I don't know. This is uh, it's got a lot of stuff about the LAGCOE, which is Louisiana Gulf Coast Oil Exhibition. It's held here in Lafayette every two years on the odd years.

SW: Over in the Cajundome, right?

AG: Uh, yeah, it is now. It used to be a the coliseum.

SW: Coliseum before. And uh, what's the name of this journal right here?

AG: Oh this is the Gulf Coast…

SW: Gulf Coast Oil World.

AG: Oil World. There's a, there's a magazine called World Oil [Chuckles] and I get 'em a little confused. But this is kind of a special printing uh, LAGCOE 1989. A working man's oil show is what it's called. It's held usually in October of the odd years. And uh, we bought that there.

SW: What, what's LAGCOE Louie all about?

AG: Well LAGCOE Louie, it tells in there that uh, uh, is a, is a man that's been the oil patch for a long time, made, made some contributions to its uh, progress. And the uh, members of LAGCOE get together and they vote on somebody and uh, it's kind of like being queen of the May. [Both chuckle] They have a queen of LAGCOE and they have a, all of her court, and then they have uh, LAGCOE Louie, he's kind of symbolic uh, I don't know who came up with it, but uh, you wear your black coveralls and your bowtie like most of the LAGCOE people do. And uh, you, after you read through that a little bit you'll kind of get an idea of what it's all about.

SW: Okay. This is interesting.

AG: Here's a, a write-up in the paper, says about the same thing. And uh, it tells a little somethin' about the oil patch, your welcome to some of that. I'd like to have this back. [Inaudible] pictures.

SW: If you uh, if you don't mind we can make cop-, we can make electronic copies of these.

AG: Fine.

SW: And uh.

AG: This is another magazine, the uh, American Oil and Gas Reporter. There's about the same

article in it.

SW: Okay.

AG: I went back dug in my files, this is not all of it, it's what I had here in the house. And 'course there's the queen. LAGCOE and I'm kind of the king, I guess you could say. [Both chuckle]

SW: And you guys have, there's balls and-

AG: You know in Louisiana and particularly in Lafayette, they like, they like the uh, uh, pageantry I guess you could say. This is a, just a bunch of folks and quite a program that they put on. Uh, for LAGCOE. I, I don't quite understand just the thrust uh, your interview or your, your uh, research is taking.

SW: [Explains purpose of the interviews for about 15 seconds] Are you originally from Lafayette?

AG: Originally from Alexandria and went to high school in Winnfield. Winnfield, Louisiana.

SW: When, do you mind if I ask what year you were born?

AG: Nineteen twenty-eight. January eighteenth, 1928.

SW: That's my father's generation. [Chuckles]

AG: Yeah. I'm 74. [Slight pause]

SW: How did you uh, how'd you end up in Lafayette?

AG: Uh, it pretty well tells it in that curriculum vitae over there.

SW: Okay, okay.

AG: I uh, I went to LSU on football scholarship. I didn't know they'd pay you to go to school. They pay your way to go to school. And uh, I was just barely 16 when I went down there.

SW: Really?

AG: Back then uh, they only had 11 grades.

SW: Okay.

AG: And um, I started school when I was five, I was kind of big for my size so to speak. [Chuckles] Big for my age. And I always felt like I was uh, kind of stupid 'cause I was a year behind all the other students.

SW: Okay.

AG: [Chuckles] And uh, I thought also that I was uh, stupid 'cause we was poor. We came up during the big depression and had to dig it out of the ground for part of the time. But uh, after I got out to LSU uh, fraternizin' with some of these well-to-do folks, I ended up teaching some uh, hydraulic labs for the engineering department. And here I was teaching guys that were 25, 30 years old. Lot of 'em come back from the war. And uh-

SW: Is that-

AG: Generally get a little more self-confidence my [Chuckles] my ability to think.

SW: Is that you studied? That's what you started to study at-

AG: Mechanical engineering.

SW: Mechanical engineering. Now why did you get into that?

AG: Well uh, 'course back then we didn't have a lot of exposure to what goes on in the world. And uh, after I got offered this scholarship from two or three universities to play football I thought LSU would be the one I'd want and uh, I didn't know what to take. But I'd always been mechanically inclined. And I took uh, machine shop, auto mechanics, and welding uh, at the local trade school there in Winnfield. Winnfield had one of the first trade schools in the state. Huey P. Long Memorial Trade School. You can understand why we got it. [Chuckles] That was his hometown.

SW: Oh okay.

AG: Anyway, uh, any time I got ahold of somethin' mechanical I had to take it down and put it back together. And so I felt like uh, mechanical uh, trend was what I had or at least a bent for that and-

SW: It was somethin' you enjoyed doin'.

AG: Yeah. And I, and I uh, uh… so a friend of mine who was a year older than I, he was goin' to LSU. Horton was his name. I can't remember his first name now. Anyway, I said, "Horton, what are you doin' down at LSU?" "Oh," he says, "I'm studying mechanical engineering." I said [Chuckling] "Boy, that sounds good to me." So when I went to sign up they said, "What do you want to take uh, major in?" I said, "Mechanical engineering." [Laughs] And sure enough it was exactly my cup of tea and uh, I've always enjoyed it and did pretty, pretty well at it. 'Course I had a, I had to make up a lot of uh, room because taking uh, two hours of uh, trade school e-, every uh, every day for two years I, I didn't get any physics, no chemistry, no advanced math, and I went into engineering. Boy, I'm way behind to start with and I'm just barely 16. So uh, I had a, I had a pretty good struggle there, but I had some wonderful young student-type instructors who uh, who would work with you extra in the afternoon. I did, I did pretty good. I ended up with better than, better than a two point, which back then was a B.

SW: Yeah.

AG: Yeah. And uh, I was uh, I was in the military, the ROTC. I was on the regimental staff. And

uh… uh, in ordinance. I graduated second lieutenant commission. Uh, in the Army Ordinance. And uh, I played four years of football. And with all the extra courses that I had to take, I had an abundance of hours and so in four years and three summers, I had to go to three summer school because all of our labs were in the afternoon and we had to practice football in the afternoon.

SW: Oh, so you missed out.

AG: So I'd go to summer school, make up my labs. And uh, anyway I got out of LSU, I was barely 20 years old. And I had played four years of ball, had got a degree in mechanical engineering-

SW: The war had been over for a couple years.

AG: And the war was over, I just missed that by the skin of my teeth.

SW: Just a little too young, right.

AG: In fact they uh, uh, they called, my cousin and I were the same age and we, we had to go and be examined for the draft. And that's when Harry Truman uh, pronounced the 90-day draft holiday. And we got in that gap and missed it. [Chuckles]

SW: Oh okay.

AG: Plus the fact that I was in advanced military. And if you were in advanced military they wouldn't draft you because you were getting more training there as an officer than you would've in the Army itself. So uh, anyway I uh-

SW: What did you, if I can stop you for a second, what did your family do? Were you guys farmers?

AG: N-, uh, we farmed when we had to, when daddy lost his job on the railroad. During the big depression.

SW: So he worked for the railroad.

AG: And we stayed on the farm for several years and then he got his job after the depression let up. And uh, we uh, moved back to town so to speak. And uh, moved to Alexandria and then on up to Winnfield. And that's where uh, I went to high school, in Winnfield, played my football up there. And went to trade school there. It's a fine little town. But uh, after gettin' out of Winnfield, went to LSU in Baton Rouge and uh, I took mechanical engineering. And uh, like I say went three year, four years and three summers. One of those summers uh, I had to go to Aberdeen proving grounds to, to take this summer camp experience for the commission. And uh-

SW: That was for the ROTC?

AG: Yeah. ROTC training. But uh, subsequent to that I got hired, got several offers, but I, I liked the offer that Humble Oil and Refining Company had made me. Uh-

SW: It was right out of school?

AG: Yeah.

SW: Did they come and recruit at the campus?

AG: They recruited at the university, sure did, at the campus. And uh… the uh… there again I just like a virgin I hadn't [Chuckling] hadn't seen anything about the oil patch, didn't know a whole lot about it other than what we saw in the movies. And uh… went to work as a roustabout.

SW: As a roustabout. You had no experience, they, they took you and trained you?

AG: Yeah, they take you, they, you, with Humble Oil they take all the engineers, or did then, nowadays they can't get engineers to put up with that.

SW: Yeah. [Laughs]

AG: But we, we worked as a roustabout for awhile and then uh, went from there to roughneck. And uh, spent some time on the drilling rig. And uh-

SW: This onshore?

AG: Onshore and offshore.

SW: You did both at this time?

AG: Yeah, uh hm. And I did all of that in three months. [Chuckles]

SW: Oh, so that was kind of your training period?

AG: Yeah. It normally would run over a year, year, a year and a half, two years but uh, they were hurtin' for trained engineers.

SW: So they, they needed you?

AG: And so they moved me through pretty quick.

SW: They needed people at that-

AG: Yeah. And I, I considered the fact that maybe I was kinda a hard worker and uh, moved along at a [Chuckling] fairly rapid pace. And they didn't see a need to leave me on the rig any longer, they brought me on into the office as a junior engineer.

SW: So what was it, was there an explosion in the oilfield at this time, is that why they were so shorthanded?

AG: It was beginning to b-, to boom, yeah.

SW: Boom. Yeah, this is late fif-, late ‘40s?

AG: Yeah, ’48, ’49, ’50, along in there.

SW: And, and y’all, y’all were offshore at that time too?

AG: Well it was the beginning of offshore. The second rig that Humble uh, had in the Gulf of Mexico was the one I was on. Uh, it was a uh, platform mounted rig. I think it was in about 30 feet of water. And uh, it, it had a drilling tender they called it. It was a converted warship. Uh, Landing Craft Tank, LST.

SW: Yeah.

AG: Uh-

SW: They had a surplus-

AG: Landing Ship Tank, that’s what it was.

SW: Yeah, they had surplus of these at that time-

AG: Yeah.

SW: And so-

AG: Humble bought a bunch of these and, and converted ‘em and they were basically barges with all these supplies and drill pipe, and drill collars, and drilling mud, and they had extra mud tanks, they also had uh, two big mud pumps that help support the drilling activity. And uh-

SW: That was tied up to the platform.

AG: No, they were anchored with uh, eight anchors. Eight anchor chains. Four off the bow and four off the stern. And uh, this, this kept the ship from ramming into the platform. And from the ship to the platform was a, was a walkway. And they used a crane up on the platform to reach down onto the ship and pick up what they need there.

SW: Cargo net kind of thing?

AG: Well actually it, yeah, some of it was net, it was net-type material. And uh, then there were lines goin’ up to carry the drilling mud and up there and back. So it had pretty good communication with the structure. And uh, but the structure was very limited. It, it, it had the hoisting machinery on it.

SW: The platform itself wasn’t too big.

AG: The platform wasn’t too big, no.

SW: Where did, how long did you spend out there in your training?

AG: [Sighing] Oh, let's see, I went out there uh, see back in June. And uh, July, August, September I went to north Crowley. [Pause] I spent about three months on the drilling rig.

SW: Three months. You stayed out there the whole three months?

AG: Oh no. We would go out, they had a very unique set-up. Uh, they'd let you stay out there the minimum amount of time and you'd get your five workdays in in three and a half days. You'd go out evening tour, or tower as we called it, and work your eight hours when you get out there. And so by midnight you had one day made on your first day out. Then the day you came in you worked the morning tower and uh, you'd come in. So you'd get all that day at home on the beach.

SW: So you'd cram all that time in.

AG: Cram it all into three and a half days.

SW: So you'd get the weekends off or this was during-

AG: No, they was, it rotated. [If men?], you know, you might get three and a half days out of this week on the weekend and then again you might not.

SW: And they had, they had uh, living quarters for you on the, on the rig?

AG: On the LST.

SW: On the LST.

AG: LST had nice quarters and galley and uh, they fed you like kings. Uh, I remember workin' morning tower and gettin' off after workin' all night pullin' those slips, that's back before we had a lot of automatic machinery. And uh, go down to breakfast and order a [sentin'?] of eggs. [Both chuckle] Half a dozen eggs and a pound of bacon and some fruit and eat that and then go to bed and get me a nap. You had to, you had to sleep fast, you know, 'cause you gonna be back on, on the rig for the next tower. So uh, they, your time out there was spent productively.

SW: Yeah, yeah.

AG: And uh, you maximized your time on the beach. And uh, you did all that without incurring a lot of overtime. Because-

SW: Oh, the company didn't-

AG: Only time that you got any overtime is if they had extra work to do. Which 1948 I remember we had had our first hurricane. It made up right off of Grand Isle and we didn't have but very little warning that it was coming. And uh, we had to come out of the hole with pipe and lay it down, and we had to secure all of the pipe and drill collars on board the LST. And uh, just do a bunch of stuff. And we 'course didn't have any extra men and so uh, we all worked overtime during that period of time, got everything secure so we could abandon ship. [Coughs] Had to [Coughs] Excuse me. We had to pull back on those rear anchor chains and pull the ship away from the structure so it wouldn't uh, with the force of the hurricane ram the, the structure. That

was the most gruesome chore was storing the anchor chain. [Chuckles] It would, it would come in with these windlasses which were old Navy windlasses that pull one link at a time as they rotated. The, the anchor chain fit into the drum on, on the windlass. And it would go down into a hole, which was a, a storage locker for the excess chain. Well when that came down, you had to catch it with a hook and stack it. Just stack those links so you could get, if you didn't that thing would fill up down there, just would, you just, you can understand how a chain of that enormity-

SW: Wouldn't fit right.

AG: It wouldn't fit in there.

SW: I see.

AG: Well it was alright until the chain started comin' up off the bottom. And it smelled like rotten oysters. [Both chuckle] So we changed out pretty quick down there. Guy would go down, stay as long as he could [Claps] back he'd come. [Chuckles] Somebody else would have to go down and store that chain.

SW: Hold your breath, huh? [Chuckles]

AG: Yeah. But we got it stored. And uh, 'course all of this operation was the first time that anybody, including our uh, uh, supervisors, uh, that any of 'em'd done any of this preparing for a hurricane. And knowing what to do, and when to do it, and how to do it, and get it done in a hurry. By the time we got it all secured and, and, and the LST pulled back away from the structure, the hurricane was there. And uh, the water had gotten very rough. And uh, they had sent several boats to get us, but they were too small for us to get from the LST on to these smaller vessels. So they sent an LCI, which was the same height as an LST. It was Landing Craft Infantry. And uh, it was uh, it was a powered boat, it was not a uh, boat that served as a, as a storage unit or anything of that nature. But the decks were the same level, so he tied off at, on our stern and back down against that long rope. And he'd swing away and come back and the decks'd hit with a thunderous sound. Boom! But it gave a level walkway. And each time it would come together four or five people would go across. But you'd have people on both sides holding you. So in case you fell you wouldn't go between.

SW: And then you'd get s-

AG: If you go between 'em you'd just be squished.

SW: That's it. [Chuckles]

AG: So this led to a lot of research and development naturally on how to get off [Chuckles] of a boat and get onto a boat and to do it during rough weather. Uh, I think they ended up with uh, most, most companies ended up using uh, nets. They'd lower this net down to the deck and uh, you'd get in this basket sort of, sort of arrangement. It wasn't a net, but it was like a net. And uh, then they would pick it up with a crane, it's fairly stable there, and then they would swing over to the other vessel and let it down, and it would finally secure it to the deck, and then you'd crawl out. And the other technique was that uh, uh… the ship would pull up to the structure and they would swing a big cat line out to you, a rope, like Tarzan used. [Both chuckle] And you'd back

up a little ways on that rope, hold on, and swing over, and set down. Very gentle transfer, but you had to be pretty good. Hold onto that rope, don't slip down in between the vessel and the structure. Anyway we went through a lot of experimentation that way of gettin' from boat to platform and uh, the industry finally uh, the, you know, accepted some of this as standard. But it was quite a learning procedure.

SW: Anybody get hurt in the process?

AG: Never did, not that I know of. [Chuckling] You're too damn scared. [SW chuckles] Anyway we came in from that 1948 hurricane and I realized, I had an old '37 Ford. And I don't know whether you remember those are not, but they uh, the steering wheel locked when you took the key out.

SW: Did it have the uh, the shifter on the steering column?

AG: No, this had it on the-

SW: Had it on the floor?

AG: Four on the floor and the fifth under the seat, you know.

SW: Oh, right. [Both chuckle]

AG: Huh, the uh, we got i-, we got in uh, with all this excitement and all this work, we worked like fever pitch for about 15 hours. Then we finally got on this vessel, he starts in and we're suppo-, they're supposed to send another vessel out to meet us, uh, at [Camanada?] Pass. And uh… the skipper on our boat was the first mate, the skipper was on days off, as luck would have it. [Chuckles] And he was green too at handlin' the boat. And uh, we start followin' these lights, round and round and round in circles we were goin'. And finally they got on the radio and, and found out that we were, we were following a Kerr-McGee tug, tugboat and they were following us. [SW chuckles] [Chuckling] So, we finally got oriented and got on into the uh, uh, well we called it the office but it was the uh, dock.

SW: Okay.

AG: The uh, oh, what would you call it? [Pause] Place where they cu-, kept everything, where you-

SW: The base? [Slight pause]

AG: Base, the base, yeah.

SW: The base point.

AG: The base it what it was. And uh, we offloaded, they had hot coffee for us and all kind of stuff, and we needed to get on into town. 'Member now the hurricane's already there.

SW: Yeah.

AG: It's blowing like crazy. And I go get in my car and I says, "Forgot my keys on the boat." [Chuckling] On the LST. And I tried to break that lock on the steering wheel, but there was no way. So I had to bum a ride to get into town. And it just so happened that was a, a weekend comin' up, was gonna be I think uh, Labor Day, a holiday. And my wife was in school at Baton Rouge at the time and she was gonna come down and meet in Houma. And uh, so I bummed a ride with the toolpusher into, into Houma [Chuckling] hotel. And never shall forget when I took my clothes off they were so saturated with grime and dirt, salt water, they just stood up by themselves. [SW chuckles] And that was my experience with my first hurricane offshore.

SW: Where were you livin' at this time when you were workin' at that, that summer?

AG: We had an apartment in Baton Rouge, my wife had an apartment on Chime Street. And uh-

SW: Oh okay.

AG: I'd come in on my three and a half days off and then go back out.

SW: So you were married at this time?

AG: Yeah.

SW: You got married [at?] school.

AG: Got married just before I got out of school.

SW: Oh okay. But you didn't have, didn't have any children yet?

AG: Oh no. Not, not 'til after, after that. Uh… that's, that-

SW: How was, how was that with a brand new wife and having to be offshore a couple days of the week?

AG: Well she was in school.

SW: Okay, so it was no-

AG: And uh, uh, remember when you're in school you don't see 'em ev-, all the time anyway and uh [Chuckling] your baby on weekends. So this was about like bein' in school. And uh. [Pause] Well I, I didn't, I didn't stay out there in Grand Isle too long 'til they, they needed me as an engineer. And uh-

SW: And they moved you in the office you said.

AG: Yeah, I got sent to uh, seemed like I went to uh… Crowley from there.

SW: Yeah, that's what you said.

AG: Uh huh. And let's see from Crowley uh, I stayed there a few months then they needed me in

the division office in New Orleans and I was sent into New Orleans. Stayed there uh… oh, better part of a year. They moved you around quite a bit then.

SW: Yeah.

AG: And uh-

SW: But you still had the apartment in Baton Rouge?

AG: Oh no, no. No no no.

SW: You moved-

AG: When we went to New Orleans we had another apartment down there. Wife by this time had uh, uh, well she finished school while we were in Crowley. And uh, she got ready to graduate and she lacked graduate and had to go back to summer school. [Chuckles] So uh, let's see we were married in February of '48 and she graduated in August of '49.

SW: Right there, not too far apart.

AG: Yeah. And 'bout that time is when we moved to New Orleans. We had a nice apartment and no children. Our first child was born in New Orleans.

SW: Okay. How long did you stay uh, in New Orleans?

AG: I'm trying to remember now. I used to know. [Both chuckle] It's been awhile.

SW: Well they moved you around-

AG: But was latter part of '48 or '49 to uh… we stayed in New Orleans a year, better than a year, 'bout a year and a half, two years. Then moved, and then moved to uh, uh, Bayou Sale. S-A-L-E. [Chuckles] That's out of Baldwin.

SW: Oh okay.

AG: South of Baldwin. But from, at Bayou Sale we stayed five years. And uh-

SW: You still with Humble at the time?

AG: Still with Humble-

SW: You spend all your career in-

AG: Well as a junior engineer got promoted to, as an associate engineer and then full petroleum engineer they called me. That was the way they ranked us back then.

SW: Anytime they moved you was that a promotion or they were sending you somewhere else-

AG: Sometimes it was promotion, but mainly just fill the gap, yeah.

SW: Okay.

AG: They, they needed you there. And Bayou Sale had a very active uh, drillin' program offshore and uh, inland water. And some land. All three. And lot of production work that we had to take care of.

SW: When you say "inland water," you mean the marshes or the swamps or?

AG: Uh, well like Duck Lake area, where used barge rigs.

SW: In lake areas and things like that.

AG: Submersible barge rigs to drill. And the uh, they digged canals in order to get to the locations. And uh, towed these uh, barge mounted drilling rigs in and uh, sink them. Drill the well, complete it, and then back off, go to another one.

SW: Okay.

AG: Uh… anyway, while, while there at uh, Bayou Sale we drilled the Duck Lake Field and uh, we had one offshore rig at the time. It was uh, one of the first offshore submergibles. And I think uh, I think it flipped over [Chuckling] that first time it tried to raise itself. It had stabilizing pontoons and some other complex uh, equipment in uh, they had never done this before and it did, they got it off balance, then it flipped over. But uh, let's see what else I remember about that. I can remember [Clears throat] one December that I was gone 30, 30 days out of 31 out on the rigs doin' somethin'. Just come home, change clothes, back out on the rig.

SW: Go back out. That's what I was gonna ask you, you said you had these office positions, but you weren't staying in the office a lot.

AG: Didn't stay a lot, no. It was, I wrote the uh, the monthly report which the engineers had to write on various pieces of equipment that were on test in the field, you know, in use. But uh, uh… I wrote speeches for the superintendent when he had to [Chuckling] go, he had to give a talk. Uh… there were several records that you got to keep that involves uh, some calculations that the, that the Department of Conservation requires a monthly test on every well and you got to report the gas-oil ratio and the production rate and things of that nature that you have to, you had to, had to write up uh, uh, synopsis on each workover operation that took place to tell what you had done, leave a paper trail so that people comin' behind you would know what was below ground.

SW: Okay.

AG: If you had moved the uh, the point of uh, production, perforations, and squeezed off the old ones, and what you had done to the well so that uh, the whole picture of the history of the well was in these reports that had to be written after each workover.

SW: And you had to give reports to the conservation board, too?

AG: Conservation Commission required what they call a P-11-11 report. And uh, it was on every well. Every well had to be tested. And uh, the amount of gas you produced, the amount of oil that you produced daily, what the daily allowable was, uh, what the gas-oil ratio was. And if your gas-oil ratio got above a certain point uh, then you were forced to either cut back on your production or to work it over. Because it indicated you were drawing uh, too much gas off the gas cap and that the gas that's normally produced with the oil is, is gas that's in solution. And when you produce oil, gas comes out of it because you reduce the pressure from what's in the reservoir to what's in the tank and the gas flashes off. And uh-

SW: And they used to just burn that off I remember.

AG: Used to flare it, yeah. I was gonna give you that little point of interest. We burn, everybody did, everybody that produced oil, gas was a uh, uh… it wasn't a usable commoda-, commodity, it was, it was a nuisance.

SW: Yeah, so they just burned it off.

AG: Somethin', somethin' you had to get rid of and you, you couldn't just vent it to the atmosphere. And so we burned it. And the story is told that from Beaumont to Lafayette that you could uh, at night drivin' down the highway you could read a newspaper without lights. [SW chuckles] There was that much gas bein' burned uh, along the highway, Highway 90.

SW: Yeah.

AG: That was an exaggeration of course, but uh, it wasn't too far from-

SW: You could see it.

AG: And I remember at Bayou Sale while I was there we did some studies on this and uh, we developed systems to recover this gas instead of burning it. And uh, used compressors to build the pressure back up on it so we could sell it. And uh, I remember we were gettin' five cents per thousand cubic feet and we were making money at it.

SW: Okay. So Humble was sort of the first company that, that pushed for sellin' it?

AG: I don't know whether they were first or not, we were being forced to by a lot of conservation uh, effort.

SW: That's the other thing I was gettin' at, you mentioned the conservation board and this is the 1950s.

AG: Yeah.

SW: Now people have the idea that the environmental protection and all that came much later. But from what you're tellin' me they had-

AG: Oh yeah, that came much later. We didn't, we wasn't bothered with the environmentalists other than we had uh, uh, I guess the Conservation Commission.

SW: This is-

AG: You couldn't dump oil in the water and you couldn't uh, vent uh, gas without burning it, and if you vented too much gas for the amount of oil you were producing, they'd make you work your wells over. There were certain rules we had to go by.

SW: But that was more conservation of the minerals?

AG: Yeah, yeah.

SW: Not necessarily, they weren't concerned about-

AG: They wasn't worried about the atmosphere.

SW: Everything else la-, that, that's what came later.

AG: Yeah.

SW: That's what the EPA-

AG: We dumped a lot of saltwater in the fresh water, but not so it would bother the fish. But mainly we uh, uh, reinjected the saltwater, as you probably already know uh, when you produce a well, an oil well, you get oil, gas, and water. Not in every one of 'em, but when, when uh, when the uh, water drive gets uh, closer in you'll get some water with the oil. Sometimes you'll get uh, uh, maybe 90 and 95 percent water and five percent oil. And then plus the gas. So you got more stuff to get rid of than you're sellin'. And uh, uh, the conservation commission was charge of that. And that's why you have to send in a report on every well, ever month. We did then and I'm sure that that holds true.

SW: They were concerned about the allowable too, because they-

AG: Yeah.

SW: They didn't want y'all just yanking everything out of the ground too fast.

AG: You had, you had to produce it at a reasonable rate. And, and that was tied in some how or another to the price of oil. Uh, I'm not, I used to know all that, but I can't remember now just how they uh, anticipated the, the demand and they based everybody's production on what that demand was in the area of that conservation district.

SW: Maybe they were just guessing anyway, huh? [Chuckles]

AG: Probably guessing, but anyway it kept you-

SW: Based on last year.

AG: It kept you from just doing like they did in the old days. You know, they used to bring in a gusher and they just dig big pits and catch it all.

SW: [Put it in?] with water, yeah.

AG: And then 15, 20 days the thing'd b-, kill itself. They would, it would uh, pull sand in and water in and, and uh, these wells wouldn't last very long, but they'd get it all in a few days. Get that f-, quick money and quick return on the investment.

SW: That was, that, that's what they all called it back then-

AG: Yeah.

SW: That quick, quick uh-

AG: And so uh-

SW: Cash.

AG: One of the things that uh, that I've always been concerned about is the amount of money you have to put into one of these wells uh, and the rate at which you get it out. It has to be uh, economically feasible or, or you can't do it. You can't go out there and lose money every day and can stay in business. Or furnish uh, fuel for the economy. And I've al-, I've always contended that the uh, cheap fuel in the United States as provided by the oil and gas industry is major res-, has, is primarily responsible for the success and the standard, success of the nation and the standard of living that we know today. Now very few people will say that. But if you think about it uh, back 15 years ago we crossed southern France and, and Italy uh, by car. And we were payin' four dollars and somethin' a gallon for gasoline then. And we got back home and people were screamin' and hollerin' 'cause it was-

SW: A dollar 60.

AG: Well it, it was approachin' uh, 80 cents.

SW: Oh, for the regular. Yeah.

AG: Well, over here. And then, and when gasoline hit a dollar a gallon people screamed like a [panther?], you know. [Chuckles] And uh, you could buy uh, distilled water was more expensive than gasoline. But consider the cost of drillin' a well, and uh, the money that's, that's, let's say you borrow the money at interest and you drill the well, and then it, it, it, it makes a dry hole. Well your return is zero. But if you make a well, back then they had what was called a "depletion allowance," that, that, the government would allow you on your taxes. And you could recover, eventually, the cost of dirllin' that well through your depletion allowance. And this encouraged people to take that big gamble and punch a hole in the ground. And back then the average was one well out of nine wells. You drill nine wells, you'd make one producing.

SW: Okay. One of nine, that's not-

AG: You had one in nine.

SW: Not very good odds.

AG: You see it was the wildcat, for wildcats now.

SW: Oh okay.

AG: Then once you, once you discovered a field, 'course the procedure normally goes uh, you go through the seismic investigation where they, you know, set off charges and other ways to send shock waves down and, and, and try to determine what the uh, subterranean structure looks like. And certain types of structures were more um, likely to, to create oil traps, where the oil is created by god I guess and out of whatever. Little microscopic bugs. And it accumulates and coalesces and migrates up structure by gravity segregation. And if it hits a barrier, like a shale, uh, barrier, well that makes a reservoir. And this happens over thousands and thousands of years. Probably even millions of years. But uh, oil piercement type uh, oil uh, piercement type salt domes were, was a favorite place to look. Because this salt plug literally pushed up miles into the crust of the earth and it bent all of these bedding planes in an upward direction and they terminated at the plug. So around everyone of these salt mines that you see in Louisiana there's an oilfield.

SW: Yeah, yeah. 'Cause they knew they could kind of get something there.

AG: They formed natural, stratigraphic traps. And uh, and when the oil migrated up [stratig?], they would tap into it and, and, and it was, it was a favorable place to drill. And 'course they got a lot of new technology now, seismic technology, and they're goin' back into some of the fields and finding uh, some, some amazing uh, discoveries.

SW: Yeah, 3-D seismic.

AG: Thinking that, that they were basically defunct and depleted and drilled up. But uh, the uh, the encouragement to do that uh, is not too great because you got to show a payout.

SW: Yeah, it's cost.

AG: Yeah you go to the bank start to borrow money to drill a well. Now, back, you might remember in 1973 when the Arabs had the embargo. Well all of a sudden oil and gas got to be very, very valuable. In fact, the price of oil went to right at 40 dollars a barrel. And at 40 dollars a barrel you could uh, justify drilling a well that may not have been even thought about at eight dollars a barrel. Well this went on for, I forget now how many years, several years up to the early '80s.

SW: Eighties, yeah.

AG: And about that time the Arabs uh, they, they been negotiating for 2,000 years or more uh, they, they had this cartel over there and if, it would, if that cartel was uh, in the United States they'd put all the people in jail. It's illegal to fix prices and to be, have a monopoly and all that stuff. But OPEC seems to get by with it because they've got, they go the oil. And they jumped the price of oil to eight dollars a barr-, uh, to 40 dollars a barrel with this embargo. We had forty-two hundred rigs operatin' in the United States in the early '80s. And then the oil all of a sudden, almost overnight, dropped to eight dollars a barrel. And the banks had loaned money to companies to drills wells for 40 dollar oil, and even if they made a well, it was only worth eight

bucks. I remember the big boom outside of Baton Rouge over there, uh, the big gas boom. Uh, it fizzled pretty much [Chuckling] when that happened. And uh, companies were goin' bankrupt around here by the 100s. Service companies, drilling companies-

SW: All the auxiliary.

AG: They built these big drilling rigs to drill deeper. And bought all this equipment and, and, and was expectin' a payout uh, over a period of time, a period of years, and drilling these deep wells and finding this good 40 dollar oil. Well now you can only get eight bucks for it.

SW: Yeah.

AG: On the world market. And they was smart, they, they got us stretched out like a rubber band and then they cut the band in two. And, and the drilling industry and the oil industry, as you well know around Lafayette, uh, we went, I used to get three to five uh, chapter uh, chapter 11 filings into my mail basket nearly every day. People that owed me money that I had done work for them and sold them equipment and all sorts of stuff. And uh, we were lucky to survive.

SW: Yeah.

AG: And the only way we survived was we had everything paid for.

SW: You personally, your house and everything?

AG: My, well, yeah, my house and my business and my buildings and property and uh, uh, our machinery and… vehicles, uh, cranes. We had a 40,000 pound crane still, still workin' over there. Uh, I, it, it cost over a 125,000 and we had it paid out. Well people that owed money on things that they would normally buy in order to operate and got caught with it, and particularly to high interest rates that they were charging. And uh, business just went away. My salesman would come in and I'd ask 'em, "[Inaudible, name]," I said, "what do you find out there?" "[Inaudible], there ain't nothin' out there." Everybody was waitin' on somebody else to do somethin'.

SW: Yeah.

AG: And uh, I laid off a 100 men in one day. But I waited five months too long to do it. Almost went belly up myself. But uh, we did a lot of speculative work. We were in fabrication business. And, and we also sold finished goods. Hydraulics, and pneumatics, and power transmission equipment.

SW: That, that's into the '80s.

AG: Yeah.

SW: When you left off we were, we were-

AG: We were way back-

SW: You leave in the '50s. Uh, I'm just tryin' to, to get the whole story.

AG: Yeah. Alright.

SW: So you, you were in Baldwin and after five years and then what happened after that?

AG: Went from Bayous Sale to uh… well I left Humble, I'd been with 'em eight years.

SW: Yeah, oh, so that's when you-

AG: And I got an offer over here from uh, uh, small rental tool firm, Lamb Rental Tools. And uh, I came over and went to work for Mister Lamb at doin' everything in his sales department, public relations, and uh-

SW: Was this here in Lafayette?

AG: Yeah.

SW: Oh so you, you got here late '50s? [Slight pause]

AG: Moved here in '56.

SW: Fifty-six.

AG: Fifty-six. [Slight pause] I was at Bayou Sale for…

SW: You said about five years.

AG: Yeah, five years. I went to work in forty-, latter part of uh, '48 I guess it was. And I moved over here in '56, that's about eight years in between my roustabouting, roughnecking uh, junior engineering and so forth in Bayou Sale.

SW: And particular reason why you left Humble or just greener pastures maybe?

AG: I guess my nature was to be entrepreneur.

SW: And move around.

AG: And uh, the enormity and the complexity of workin' for a major company uh, I think didn't quite agree with my uh… personality I guess you could call it. I did a lot of good work for Humble. I, I made a lot of money for them in many ways, uh, in projects, corrosion projects, and research on, that's a big, that's a big item producing a well. Uh, if you have to workover a well and change out the tubing it's quite expensive. But if you can prevent that corrosion, uh, before it happens, well then you save the workover money. And uh, I took on several projects like that and I'm very proud of my accomplishments. But uh, after leaving Bayou Sale, which we hated to, while I was there I got uh, involved in the Boy Scouts and was assistant scout master-

SW: Y'all really put some roots down there.

AG: Yeah.

SW: ‘Cause you were there five years.

AG: And we raised uh, four of our kids there. And I think gave birth to the fifth one. It was a good place to raise kids. We lived in a, in the camp.

SW: Oh, you had company camp?

AG: Company camp. Back then uh, roads wasn’t too good and uh, housing in town was not too plentiful and the cost of driving back and forth to work was a problem. Uh, plus the oil patch bein’ what it is, your own 24 hour a day alert, seven days a week, and so uh, these camps were very practical. You were right there at the office, uh, you were right there in touch with everybody and on top of everything. Some people didn’t like it because uh [Chuckles] one guy put it this way, he says, “I just don’t like everybody in the company knowin’ when I buy a new pair of shoes.” [Both chuckle]

SW: ‘Cause you guys were all there.

AG: Yeah. But it, it was good for uh, other reasons, too. It was such a community. Uh, almost like a tribe. That if somebody got sick, immediately the neighbors were there the help. Uh, one of our children had major surgery and we had to, that’s after we had four, and we had three kids, we farmed ‘em out in 30 minutes. People just, each came got one to take care of and we took the sick one to the doctor, to the hospital and had surgery. And uh, it was uh, it was uh, a comfortable living. I, I enjoyed the camp living. [Phone rings] Let me get that. [Recording stops and is restarted]

SW: Back on. Uh, you had left off you were talking about some of these fellows that didn’t like the camp too much but uh, you said it was a good community.

AG: Yeah, s-, some of the wives didn’t like it, some of the men didn’t like it, but I think it was very convenient with the type of work we were doin’ and required to do. Uh, back then uh, 40 hour week for uh, executives so to speak, an engineer, was unheard of.

SW: Yeah.

AG: You went when they needed you. And uh… this eventually caused the industry to uh, have problems uh, hiring good personnel.

SW: Because of the work hours.

AG: Because they didn’t, they could find a job in industry somewhere uh, where they didn’t have to uh, stay up all night and all day and be away from their families so much. But uh, I enjoyed it. It, it was a good training ground for me. I got experience at practically every aspect of the oil industry, production, and drilling.

SW: And your wife as well, she was okay with living in, in the-

AG: Well she had uh, five kids to raise, so she was pretty well occupied. [Chuckles]

SW: Kept her busy, huh.

AG: And living there in camp with neighbors all around, your kids would uh, I never shall forget one mornin' we were in what we call "morning meeting." Every Monday morning all the supervisors met in the superintendent's office and we reviewed the activities that had gone past week and what we were gonna do next week. And the superintendent was a very gentle man and he was always uh, looking after something. And he stood up all of a sudden and he looked out toward the highway and uh, it was about oh, 200 yards from the office to the, to the uh, highway that went by, and uh, there was a hedge row there and uh, he recognized two little kids. My boss, my boss' son and my daughter were runnin' down that hedge row and he said, "[Trab?], Al! Go get those kids, they're runnin' right down the road!" [Laughs] I mean, he, he's the superintendent of this whole district. And he sends his engineer and his, and his associate engineer out to the highway to pick up their kids. Well of course we took the kids on home, which was right behind the office, and we gave those wives a good tongue lashing. [SW laughs] They, they had embarrassed the hell out of us. To have a superintendent have to tell us to go get our kids. And, and, and the ladies were leaning on the clothesline-

SW: Just watchin'. [Chuckles]

AG: Talkin'.

SW: Oh.

AG: Gossip. Having a ball. And the kids had just wandered off. They had gotten out the lane and onto, onto the road. [Laughs] I never shall forget that. But that illustrates, I think, the uh, closeness of the people in that community.

SW: Yeah. Exactly. D-, do those communities still exist? Those uh-

AG: Not many.

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] maybe?

AG: Uh, just about the time I resigned and it was kind of one of the things that promoted my uh, decision-making to come on and move into Lafayette uh, and go to work for a much smaller company, with a lot less security, uh, was we could, we could establish a home and not be movin' around so much. And uh, move into town, because uh, everything we did when we went church, or when we bought groceries, or uh, had to go to the doctor, or any of those things, we had to drive 10 miles. And we had to cross the Intracoastal Canal, which sometimes you might wait 30 minutes to an hour waitin' on the boats.

SW: Boats.

AG: Bunch of boats comin' by. [Audio breaks in and out for about five seconds] Occasionally [Inaudible, poor audio] [Laughs] And you'd get back to the canal and you've have to ride across in a boat and then uh, somebody'd pick you up on the other side and take you on to the house. And uh, so it, it was, it was an adventure. But bein' young we put up with a lot. And uh, but we looked forward to, to movin' to Lafayette and did and settled down here.

SW: So what was goin' on here in Lafayette? Was the oil taking off at that time?

AG: Oh it was booming. And uh, there were 10 new rental tool firms. Now, rental tools came into being because of the complexity and expense of buying drilling equipment. Uh, most companies that did any drillin' owned their own equipment. And if they didn't have it, they'd buy it. Like blowout preventers, drill pipe, drill collars, uh, different subs to go from one string uh, one type of [Inaudible, audio starts breaking in and out] to another. All of these [Inaudible] owned 'em and it was expensive inventory. And n-, not only did they owned, but they had to maintain 'em. On, we have a big yard full of equipment when I was there Bayou Sale. And we had several men workin' everyday just cleaning threads and doping the threads and, and, and repairing equipment. So rental tools [Clears throat] came into being [Coughs] because you could, you could go out and rent somethin', use it, and then send it back, and then you wouldn't have all this maintenance to worry with. And you didn't have the investment in the equipment. So it uh, it was a very lucrative business. And-

SW: You could make a lot money.

AG: And about 10 rental tool companies opened up almost over night in Lafayette because the boom was goin' on in the immediate area.

SW: There was a need.

AG: Yeah.

SW: And they could, they could make money off of that.

AG: And uh, combined with the rental tools uh, one of the major aspects of the rental tools was casing tools, casing handling tools. And so these casing handling tool uh, rental places normally had casing crews. Because when you ran casing you needed about five or six additional men that were skilled in handling pipe. Because you had to get the pipe from the rack, up in the derrick, stab it, screw it, you know, you had to have a stabber up there that knows how to stab pipe. And uh, then you had to screw it together, you had to have these special elevators that they would pick it up, slack it off into the hole, and special slips at the floor level to hold it while you reached and got another joint.

SW: So a drilling company would hire not only the casing tool, but the crew that came with it, too.

AG: Yeah. Yeah.

SW: That's kind of-

AG: They didn't go together necessarily, but uh, uh, Mister Lamb, the company I went to work for, had a uh, had casing crews, casing tools, and drilling tools. Blowout preventers and things of that nature. And uh, some of the work that I was able to do for him was to uh, well in fact the first patent I ever got was on a stabbing guide for one of the big elevators. Uh, BJ had made a big, 500-ton elevators. That's the size, this is the thing that would grip the pipe and pick it up. Uh, and uh, it was very difficult to stab this over the top of the pipe. Most elevators were, had an opening

and they would go around the pipe and then latch. And these uh, would slip over the top. Well you've got a target here of maybe seven to 13 inches depending on the size of the pipe. And you've got a opening in the bottom of that, that 500-ton elevator that's uh, not much bigger than that. And this derrickman has got to swing that thing on in and if your runnin' 500-ton elevators you normally got 10 or 12 lines strung up, which makes it a pretty stiff [Chuckles] [Inaudible].

SW: Yeah.

AG: And he'd have to stab that just as the driller slacked off over the top of the pipe. Well you were damaging the pipe a lot of times and it took time to do this. And one of the things you're probably already familiar with, but when you're running casing you've got your hold made to that depth. It might be surface casing, it might be uh, what we call "protection casing," which is a, an intermediate string that would be run, so you could go even deeper. Or it might be your production casing. And you, you were not safe until you got that string of pipe to bottom, and cemented in place. And when I say "safe," your chances of sticking or having a bridge that you run into that it, somewhere the hole may have collapsed.

SW: Yeah.

AG: Uh, and, and the amount of time that you're out of the hole uh, with the pipe and not circulatin' the drillin' mud and not conditioning the well, uh, is critical. So running casing, particularly if it's a long string, has a very crucial time element to it. In any uh, aspect of running casing that, that took an uh, exorbitant amount of time uh, worked against you. So you tried to overcome that. The, the stabbing guide that we developed was a large opening funnel that would just let that driller slack on off it, it would stand itself.

SW: Okay.

AG: So you could get ahold of that pipe, pick it up, slack it up, [to the row it'd?] be back up waitin' on the, on another, another joint to be wrung. And uh, one of the other things that was developed was a quick release thread protector. Uh, all the pipe came with metal-

[END OF CD1, TO CD2]

AG: Uh, all the pipe came with metal uh, thread protectors screwed on, on the pin end and into the box end. Well, the box end was not critical and they would back those out and just stack 'em. Uh, on the pin end uh, the crews would come out and loosen those up so that when the joint of pipe was pulled, [when they're/from the?] horizontal up the catwalk, up the ramp into the vertical position uh, and stabbed, before you could stab it you had to take that metal thread protector off. Many times they'd loosen it too much and it would get cross threaded. Or they wouldn't loosen it enough and he'd have to beat it with a sledge hammer to get it off. So this was a time consuming uh, aspect of running casing was removing the thread protectors. So uh, several people developed thread protectors that were quick release. And one of 'em was uh, the clamp on thread protector made by Hawk Industry out in California. And uh, he came by one time, he had been all over the United States. And he couldn't uh, couldn't get anybody to help him produce and develop uh, this tool. And uh, Mister Lamb and I looked at it and Lamb asked me, "What do you think about it?" I said, "Take it. We need to promote that, we need it out, out there in the patch." And we took that, and you might read in the article that I helped develop the clamp on thread protector. Not so

much from the engineering, manufacturing aspect of it, but developed a market for it. And we used to get so much a foot for sending five of these protectors out to the rig. And you put it on five joints and as you pull a joint up and remove it, it was just a quick movement of the handle and it would fall off. And so uh, in running the joint of pipe it's normally picked up with a pick-up line that's attached to the uh, traveling block. And this joint comes up so that it could be swung into position and after you get the protector off, it's stabbed into the, the female part of the string that's already in the rotary. And this stab it, stabber up here has to move it around and he feels it lined up and it's, it's a skill that only a few people had and if you were a good stabber, you were, you had a job. I mean, they liked you on their crews. If you were a bad stabber, they'd run you off quick. So anyway, uh, stabbing this pipe in. Uh, the next thing was to spin it up, to rotate it so that the threads would engage. [Clears throat] And in the olden days and the beginning of time, we used the, a spinning rope. You take several wraps of this rope, the end of this rope around pipe that was there and when the pipe was stabbed you'd pull that up, pull back on it and guy on the cathead then would pull the other end of it. And it would rotate that pipe by spinning it. Well, it was pretty hazardous, you'd get your fingers caught in that rope sometime, pull 'em off. Uh… that's when the hydraulic and, and air-powered casing tongs came out. It was in probably the early '50s. And it got to be a very popular uh, device and needed in running pipe. It increased the safety of the men and it increased the speed and it also gave you a uniform torque, which is important if you get a thread leak in a string of pipe that's wrung like this. Uh it's, it creates all sorts of problems downhole. So uh, where was I headed with all that? [Chuckles]

SW: Well you were, you were telling me, you were giving me descriptions about uh, the rental tools and how all of these got involved in casing and casing crews and-

AG: Oh. Right. So they uh, the rental tool companies uh, lot of 'em didn't have casing tools, but they had all kind of other pipe handling tools and pipe. Uh, different sizes of pipe, different grades of pipe. It was during this time that, that high-strength pipe came into being where-

SW: So they were not only renting, but they were selling p-, they were selling pipe and renting tools.

AG: They were mostly renting both. You rent pipe.

SW: You rent pipe too?

AG: Yeah.

SW: Oh.

AG: And it got to where the, the comp-, see the oil companies themselves at many times in, in the olden days had to buy and own this equipment. And the drilling contractor, he furnished the hoisting equipment and the mud pumps and all the other things that were needed to drill a well. And sometimes he even had the pipe. Now, you get further along in the drilling of a well you may need a string of smaller pipe. Which the drilling company may not have as a standard stock item. So now the, the company who is having the well drilled has to furnish that pipe. Well where does he get it? He either got to have it in his own inventory or he rents it. And so that got to be a popular item, drill pipe of, of a smaller size. And a different grade. A lot of times you had to have high-strength pipe uh, to go deep. And uh, many of the drilling strings eventually became uh, the

high-strength pipe. 'Course the disadvantage in using it is if you marked it or notched it you'd have notch sensitivity and it would have a tendency to fail. Like uh, uh, it would break. And uh, so anyway the rental tool business got to be big business in the Lafayette area. Mister Lamb recognized that he needed uh, someone over here to help him that was more technically uh, oriented and he needed an engineer. And nobody else in the rental tool business had an engineer. And my sister was married to his son. And we used to come over and visit on weekends. And uh, in one of these visits he says, "Why don't you come over and go to work for me. I need somebody like you to call on the uh, engineers and the superintendents and the management people uh, to rent 'em tools." And he said, "Nobody else over here has an engineer." So I came over and, and basically was in sales, I'd call on the offices uh, to see what they needed in the way of pipe and if they had to have something uh, that required engineering skills, well we had it.

SW: And you could, based on experience, you could, from your experiences and your engineering knowledge you could, you had an angle-

AG: As to what they needed, yeah.

SW: What they needed and why they needed it, you-

AG: So during that period is when we developed several pieces of equipment. We developed the Lamb Casing Tong and we developed the uh, the stabbing guide, and uh [Clears throat] one of the ways the man up in the derrick that handled the top end of the pipe uh, would support himself was on the, they'd put boards across the uh, the derrick. And uh, 'course he had a safety line around him and he had a safety rope across. And he, he was always at the wrong pipe. Pipe would be different length. And he'd have to climb up to the other board or down to the next board. So I developed a stabbing board which was uh, uh, pneumatic-powered. It was kind of like a portable elevator. It was a platform that ran on a track. And so he could adjust himself to exactly the position he needed. He could do a better job of stabbing. He could do all of this safely. And uh, it would increase the speed of runnin' this pipe.

SW: His ability and everything to move around.

AG: Yeah. So the stabbing board and the stabbing guide uh, the hydraulic tongs and all of these things were devoted to uh, more safely and faster running of the casing into the hole. [Pause] One of the other things we developed was what we called a "false rotary." Now the rotary's a giant [berry?] with a hole in it. [Chuckling] And uh, uh, it has to support the full weight of the pipe. Well, normally the rotary is more than adequate to support the drill pipe. Bit if you start puttin' the weight, several million pounds of weight of casing on, on this rotary, many times you would pit the bearings and the rotary would subsequently fail. So we developed this big massive chunk of iron's what it was, uh, with a hole in it, that you'd take the rotary out and put the false rotary in, run your pipe, then you'd take the false rotary out and put your regular rotary back in. But it spared the rotary of this uh, load that it'd have to encounter if you uh, didn't use the false rotary. That was another tool we developed. We were sensitivity to the needs of the industry. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

SW: Right, b-, because of your, your engineering background you were able to see the need for these things and you-

AG: Yeah, and able to do something about it.

SW: Do something, yeah. And you had the initiative. So you worked for Lamb for about 10 years?

AG: Ten years, yeah.

SW: That, so that takes us into nineteen six-

AG: Fifty-six to '66, yeah.

SW: Six. And then what happened after that?

AG: Well [Clears throat] I begin to uh… want to be part of the company, own part ownership and I, my family was growin', my financial obligations were looming on the horizon, and uh… I was, when I came over here was supposed to be part of it, but the bigger Mister Lamb got the smaller I got. And uh, the more I did for him, uh, he, he, he took good care of me. All, all of the, most of what I learned about the business was learned from him. And uh, a lot about the industry. And it prepared me to do what I needed to do as far as being in business for myself. And I always uh, thought that the lord would open a big door for you to walk through if he wanted you to change what you were doing. And I taught a Sunday school class, a men's Sunday school class, and I taught a lesson one Sunday on Abraham. I don't know how familiar you are with the scripture, but Abraham was called by the lord to leave his hometown and to take everything he had, all of his people, all of his servants, all of his sheep, goats, cattle, and camels, and go. And he said, "But where?" The lord said, "I'll show you where to go." And so he was known as a man of faith because he moved out on faith. And sure enough he was the father of the Hebrew nation, as most people know. And I was teachin' that lesson and it, and it uh, dawned on me all of a sudden that's kind of what the lord wanted me to do about my work, my job. And so I came in one day and told my, my wife uh, in the meantime we'd opened a little gift shop up here, she and my sister were taking care of that. And uh, I told her, I said, "I'm, I'm leavin' Lamb Rental Tools and I'm gonna go in business for myself." She said, "Doin' what?" I said, "I'm gonna wait for the phone to ring." I was quite experienced in hydraulics by this time uh, hydraulic-power transmission. And uh, uh, had developed several pieces of hydraulic equipment, power units and uh, uh, power drillin' equipment, pipe cleaning and pipe maintenance equipment, uh, pipe handling equipment, and the pick-up and lay-down machines that I built were hydraulic-powered. So uh, this area didn't have any expertise to speak of uh, of people who could help you with a hydraulic problem. And I recognized that. So basically [Clears throat] we started with a telephone and a solid [core?] door for a desk. [Chuckles] And a, and a 10 dollar typewriter, which was 25 years old. [SW chuckles] And uh, my wife says, "You're crazy." I said, "No, the lord has led me to do it." And uh, she said, "But you got five kids and a big house note, and your car's not even paid for." [Chuckling] And I said, "Well, uh, I just feel like we can make it." So basically we've been busier than we could handle ever since. [SW chuckles] Uh, people would call, and we got known as problem solvers and people who had a problem that there was no uh, nothing readily available to, to address the problem, they would say, "Call Al George." And, and I got [Chuckles] I got, I don't know whether it was ego or what it was, but I would take on stuff that we had never done before, we just had confidence that we could do it and we were pretty successful at handling-

SW: You had developed a reputation and people called.

AG: Yeah, and, and through that we developed several pieces of equipment that became uh, uh, proprietary-type items that we produced and manufactured. Such as the, the little power subs, this is a rotating device that, that is suspended from the hoisting machinery and it uh, screws into the top of the pipe and has a torque arm on it, and it rotates the pipe in the hole like the rotary would normally do. And when you go to what's called "macaroni" one-inch pipe, as compared to say five-inch, uh, it's very delicate. And trying to turn that with a rotary which has so much power that many times it'd twist off and not even know it. So what they needed was a rotating device that was powerful enough to turn the pipe up to it's maximum torque, but not twist it in two. And that, under the high torques, under [stalled?] conditions it would, it would stop. And of course with hydraulics you can set your relief valve to give you however much torque you want. So we developed uh, a line of power subs for turning small pipe and made 'em available to rent. Then eventually made 'em available for sale. That was the kind of thing that we did uh, we uh, people would come to me with different problems. One of 'em was the uh, separation of uh, the suspended solids uh, that, that were, was in the water that was produced with the oil. In your normal lease facility you separate the water from the oil and the gas from the oil, and the gas goes into the gas system and the water is put in tanks and held and pumped into disposal well or, as in the offshore condition, it would be dumped overboard. But if it had more than 40 parts per million of oil in suspension and uh, it, it would form a sheen. And the environmentalists and the EPA and all those people would, would fine you.

SW: Yeah.

AG: Uh, if you put a sheen on the water. And 'course the ocean has the ability to, to uh, to digest a lot of that and not cause any problems, but uh, it got to be uh, with, with the environmental uh, responsibility, companies wanted a way of removing this, these suspended solids.

SW: Right.

AG: Now, to tell you what a suspended solid is, it's like the cream in homogenized milk.

SW: Oh okay.

AG: Now, normally, if you remember milking the old cow and puttin' the, the bowl of milk out there, or if you bought a bottle of milk, the cream would rise to the top, it'd gradually segregate. [Clears throat] But some of that would stay in the milk. And the part that would stay in the milk was the very finely divided particles of fat. Uh, and that's what you'd do when you had the old turn when you turned it up and down you would cause these particles to bump against one another until they would coalesce, and float to the top, and what was on the top was butter. Well, if we, uh, the, the oil that's, that's uh, water that's produced with the oil normally has in it very finely divided particles of oil, they're microscopic in nature. And they have more of an electrolytic attraction for staying in the water than they have in a gravitational pull, because of the difference in the, in the density of the water and the oil. So [Clears throat] we developed a device called a [mono cell?] where we bubbled gas through the produced water and uh, the gas would attach to these little droplets of oil and float 'em to the top and form a scum. And then we'd skim the scum off and dump the water. And we were able to get the uh, amount of oil, of suspended oil, out of the water down to below 40 parts per million, which was required by law.

SW: Required by law.

AG: Yeah. And to handle large volumes of water from offshore to inland to disposal was quite expensive. But being able to be free to dump it overboard because it's now clear of most all the oil, I forget now what the little formula is, but uh, 40 parts per million is like sixteenths of an inch in a mile. [Chuckles] It is very, very-

SW: Very small.

AG: Small. And it won't gravity, this, this is particles, that won't gravity segregate. Also the solids that are in the water tend to be coated with oil and this added to the oil content of the water that you desired to dump overboard. So we developed the uh, floatation equipment that would uh, separate the last little remnants of oil from the produced water and allow them to legally uh, and environmentally uh, throw it overboard, economically. That was called a mono cell [Inaudible].

SW: Mono cell-

AG: So we formed another company to handle that aspect of it. See uh, pipe handling equipment and the pipe cleaning equipment we had in what we called Sling Shot Incorporated. And the reason for that is the boom on the, on the lay-down machine looked like the old timey sling shot that you played with when you were little boy. And so we called it the Sling Shot. And the mono cell was 'cause we had a one cell unit. We later developed the multi cell, which was a four cells and [Inaudible] where we clarified the water. But that was another company. And we, we, we were selling this little uh, chemical injection pump uh, and a large percentage of our company uh, profit was in that little pump, in marketing that little pump. And we were doing an excellent job for a manufacturer out of California. He got greedy and he cut us off. And uh, I had in the back of my mind a pump that was, was as good or better than the one we were selling. And so I went to work and in about six months I had the sidewinder pump developed. And we formed another company called Sidewinder Pumps. And uh, it's a pump that's necessary in the oil industry to pump very small amounts of chemical under high pressure into a system, either into a flowline [Clears throat] uh, the chemicals that we pump are emulsion breakers, which help separate water from the oil, uh, corrosion inhibitors, which coats the inside of the pipe to keep it from corroding, and uh, methanol for preventing gaslines from freezing up. And these chemicals expensive and uh, you wanna be able to meter it accurately, 'cause if you don't get enough in there your oil uh, will go over bad, have too much water it, the water will have too much oil in it. Uh, if you don't get enough corrosion inhibitor uh, your pipe will corrode, so it's expensive proposition. And this got to be a good item with us. And after I sold uh, all of the companies to my two oldest sons, I kept the little sidewinder pump uh, as one of the companies that I wanted to, to have. I went from 165 employees down to five. [Chuckling] And uh, and three of those was me and mama and my son. So had I had it where I wanted it finally and that's where we are now.

SW: I have a problem. The tape is almost out and I have another interview I've got to do. I'd like to come back and talk to you more. W-

AG: I'd be glad to talk to you.

SW: Yeah, uh-

AG: As you see I, I've 'bout used up my throat, too. [Chuckles]

SW: Yeah, I can tell, I don't want to push you any further either. Uh, I'd like to, to hear more about uh, the developments of your, your, your uh-

AG: Tools and-

SW: Tools and things and uh, come up into '70s and '80s and all the stuff that happened there.

AG: Yeah.

SW: If you don't mind-

AG: I had written down some comments that I can share with you later on.

SW: Yeah, yeah.

AG: Uh, deeper drilling was possible with uh, larger rigs, high strength drill pipe, better direction control machinery to makin' [to break?] the strings, uh, s-, more safely and quickly, pick-up and lay-down machines for handling the pipe, the, of course early in the, my experience in the industry Hughes had developed the three-cone roller uh, rock bit and, and Reed developed the four-cone, because Hughes had the three-cone patented [Chuckles] I guess. Uh, I had some comments here to make on the Arabs and the uh, price, their control of the oil production price.

SW: The embargo, OPEC's embargo.

AG: Anyway, we can get that on next interview.

SW: If you don't mind.

AG: Yeah.

SW: I, I wish I didn't have another one lined up, but I gotta head over to New Iberia.

AG: No, this is [a good place?]. You know, I love talkin' about [Chuckling] where I've been-

SW: A trip down nostalgia lane.

AG: Yeah. [SW chuckles] Nestra-, nostalgia.

SW: Let me shut that off.

AG: You may wanna-

[END OF RECORDING]