

Interviewee: George, Al
Interview Date: February 4, 2003

HHA # 00194

Interviewee: Al George

Interviewer: Steven Wiltz

Interview Date: February 4, 2003

Interview Site: Lafayette, LA

Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW037

Transcriber: Lauren Penney

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

Ethnographic preface:

Al George was born in 1928 in Alexandria, Louisiana. His father was a railroad man but lost his job during the Great Depression. As a result, his father resorted to farming to feed his family. After the Depression, he was given his railroad job back. 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 first interview ended prematurely and plans were made for a follow-up interview.

In this, his second interview, he discusses what Lafayette was like when he arrived in 1956, how it has changed, why the oil and gas industry came to Lafayette, things that have aided the development of offshore oil and gas, and the reputation of the oil industry in the United States.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [AG]

SW: Interview number two with Mister Al George. It's February the fourth, 2003, in his home. Like I said just ignore that thing, like you did last time. [Chuckles] I remember you'd gotten here in Lafayette around 1956? Correct?

AG: Yeah.

SW: Okay. What did uh, what did the town look like back then, how big was it?

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AG: Well it's not as big as it is now, of course. I can, the main thing I can remember is that uh, findin' a place to rent was hard. Rental property was short because of the expansion in the economy and people moving to Lafayette. [Pause] Um. The other thing that I remember not so fondly was Johnston Street was two lanes. And any time anybody wanted to turn right or left you had a problem. Usually a left turn out of the right lane it'd sto-, it'd block traffic halfway to town.

SW: Had a lot of cars-

AG: You know what I mean?

SW: Yeah.

AG: Lot of cars but very little road, just this-

SW: So they had a lot of-

AG: Just two lanes.

SW: Lot of cars on the road, but they were just not, the town was growing too fast?

AG: Yeah. And that's before this back cir-, [circuitous?] uh, route was uh, was covered and, that goes through [Greenbriar?], Greenbriar didn't even exist. And uh, the bridge there across uh, Coulee [Mine?] I guess it is there in Greenbriar did not exist. Uh, South College Road, I believe, was shell. And uh... the street over here, Antigua was shell. It was, but Grand was blacktop when I bought my lots out here. On Grand Avenue.

SW: Was this part of Lafayette at the time, or was it-

AG: No, it was outside the city limits. No, it's been out, it stayed out for a long time. Uh, in fact my neighbor over here had a pet project of not goin' into the city because [Chuckles] they didn't offer anything. Uh, not ever garbage pickup, so we paid for our own garbage pickup and we didn't have water, runnin' water, uh, or sewage system out here. That all came later. And I remember we had a meeting called the Southside Citizen's Council. [Chuckles] This bein' the southside. And uh, the mayor at the time was [DiMaggio?] I believe. And he met with us and uh, truthfully informed us that uh, if we came into the city all we would gain from it was the privilege of haulin' our garbage can to the street. [Chuckles] Uh, at the present time uh, the garbage people would come to your backdoor and get it and take it to the street. So if we went into the city, we would get to bring our garbage to the street like everybody else. I never shall forget that, I thought that was something else. But he was truthful. The city had no funds for sewage systems, water systems, or anything that dealt with that aspect of it. 'Course it eventually did. I think they uh, realized that takin' more area into the city would bring money to the coffers and allow 'em to do it. Well, let's see, what else did I-

SW: So y'all might have paid taxes as being part of in the city, but it wouldn't have got you much of anything?

AG: Yeah.

SW: At that point.

AG: Well we were payin', you know, most of the city's income I guess was from sales tax and what have you. But uh, there was no property tax. Uh, we were pretty much all under, what did we call that uh... Homestead Exemption. We were all pretty much operatin' under that aspect of ownership. And let's see uh... most of these subdivisions uh, were developed. Some of 'em had been developed, like up on the other side of the Coulee. Uh... I can't remember the names of 'em now. But that particular subdivision had been developed. Uh, and uh, because I know the houses that were built adjacent to the Coulee flooded twice. [Laughs] We'd get these heavy rains and the Coulee had not been

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developed to drain like it does now, and water would back up in their backyard, come in the house. [Coughs] Excuse me. See what else do I remember? [Slight pause]

SW: When you first got here-

AG: Lafayette High was here. And uh, the subdivisions uh, immediately adjacent to Lafayette High had been started or developed at the time. This Grand Avenue uh, Gus Grand I guess for whom it was named, had started it. And uh, there were very few houses back here in the trees. Uh, they had developed fairly full up near Johnston Street. And uh, we wanted a wooded lot, so we drove back here in the trees and sure enough, uh, we found these lots and got 'em for a song compared to the way they sold later. [Chuckles] So we bought two. I had uh, five kids, I needed some room. And uh, we built out here and moved in in nineteen... fifty-seven I guess it was. Yeah.

SW: How did you guys uh, when you first got to town, how did you go about findin' a place to stay?

AG: Uh, we contacted real estate agents. And, uh, I think, I'm tryin' to think of the one that uh, got us a little house over on uh... near [Myrtle Place?] School. And never shall forget, we had a three-month old baby who was on a bottle and uh-

SW: That was your fifth child, I remember.

AG: Yeah.

SW: [Inaudible] by yourself.

AG: Myself, right. One of the reasons we moved to Lafayette was because we needed a good doctor like Doctor Newman and uh, we moved to Lafayette to be near him. And uh, that particular night we got unloaded and I had the stove all hooked up, ready to heat the bottle, and went out and tried to turn it on, there was no gas. [Chuckles] The uh, real estate agent was supposed to have the gas turned on. Well, I got my wrenches and went out there and took a look, I turned it on. Nothing happened. Then I d-, that's when I discovered that they put a little disc in the union right adjacent to the meter. So if you turn it on you can't get the gas. That needed to be done before we got here and uh, so went over to Missus Lamb's house and heated that bottle and got us out of that screamin' child. [Chuckles] And uh. [Pause] What else about Lafayette? But it, it's grown at a rapid rate ever since, ever since. Even to the extent people movin' on out in, out of the city limits into the various surrounding areas and finding places to stay. Various uh, businesses uh, had begin to develop here. Service companies, for example, the rental tool business, which I was part of with Mister Lamb. Uh, there were 10 rental tool companies here at the time. And I remember Mister Lamb sayin' that uh, that there were 10 rental tool companies and they all offered about the same line of equipment, uh, but none of 'em had an engineer. And he thought that I could speak the language of the company people and do him uh, some good. And, of course, uh, he was correct on that assumption. Uh, plus the fact that I ended up engineering a lot of products for him. [Pause]

SW: Who was moving into town at this time? Was it just oil people or was it uh, who was coming? In the late 1950s?

AG: Mostly oil people. Uh, and, and uh, other companies were building, some of the uh... stores, you know, the department stores and what have you. Were enlargin' to take care of the extra trade that was uh, made up of mostly oil people. And uh... you know, any time an area has an influx of businesses and people, all of the services that service a community tends to either grow in the existing town or uh, would move from outside. Let's see, Sear's Roebuck, you know, built that big store there where the City Hall is now. And uh, then they later moved out here to the mall. The first mall that was built here was Nor-, Northgate Mall. And uh, and subsequent to that we got the uh, the Acadiana Mall. And uh... let's see. The north side of town was slow in developing for some reason. I don't know whether it was the availability of school or just whatever. People liked to be next to people. [Chuckles] And uh... the Oil Center expanded considerably since '56. Heymann, Herbert Heymann was the motivator of that. He had a lot of

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foresight. I remember goin' downtown to call on companies and they had just uh, picked the upstairs of stores and whatever they could get for office space. Geological people were here because there was a lot of uh, exploration goin' on. And uh [Slight pause] I remember the production offices of Gulf Oil were uh, up over, right in that area where uh... oh, I can't think of the name of that now. But it was a dress shop. [Chuckles] And you'd have to go back around the back and climb upstairs to get to the office. And so Herbert Heymann had a, was visionary in that he did build some office space for people to occupy. And this encouraged uh, out of town companies to move to Lafayette because they had good facilities and they were centrally located and exchange of information back and forth between geological groups and exploration groups uh, was convenient. They were all there within a eight or 10 block area. Not all, but a goodly number of 'em. And uh, I watched that develop.

SW: Did you know Mister Heymann personally?

AG: Uh, I knew him later. I didn't know him at the time, no.

SW: What kind of a, what kind of man was he? From when you knew him?

AG: I'm, let's see, I don't remember, he was, he was the one that uh... had the Heymann Store? Was he the one had the Heymann Store? Yeah. Apparently he was quite a generous man. They say that during the Depression, the big Depression, that uh, he had uh, over 100,000 dollars of credit on his books. Where he sold people that couldn't afford to pay. He charged it so to speak. And uh, said he never lost a penny. That's what people thought of him. They thought, "Well we gonna pay him this before we pay the doctor." [Laughs] And uh-

SW: So he-

AG: That's the type of person he was. He-

SW: So he was well respected here in town?

AG: Yeah, yeah, he was a foresighted, community spirited, generous individual, from what I understand.

SW: And the, the oil companies that were crowded downtown were pretty happy that he built, that he brought that Oil Center around.

AG: Oh yeah.

SW: So they could have some space.

AG: Yeah. I remember seein' the layout of the Petroleum Club, much smaller than it is right now. Uh, and within a stone's throw of the Petroleum Club were uh, the major part of the Oil Center development. And it went on down that avenue and Mister Heymann also uh, donated the land there I think for the hospital. Lafayette General was in a little wooden buildin' up in town. And uh, I remember bein' a Baptist that he offered that to the Baptist people to build a Baptist hospital. They were known to go into areas where there was a hospital needed and build. And they were not able to car-, advantage of it at the time. And later he offered it to Lafayette General and they built that nice hospital there on the corner. He uh, he pretty well was responsible for what was called the "Style Center." Which was all of those stores in and around the hospital there. But that's, some of that later the stores uh, moved somewhere else or closed up. And uh, it's some kind of office complex now, I believe; right there across from the hospital. [Slight pause]

SW: They called it that "Style Center," sort of a play off-

AG: I think that's what it was called.

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SW: Play off of the Oil Center?

AG: Yeah, it, they had a Medical Center, Style Center, Oil Center. All where there used to be azaleas and camellias growin'. [Chuckles]

SW: That's true, he had the gardens out there.

AG: Yeah. [Pause] And uh-

SW: Where, let's see, it's 1956. No, you came to town a little bit too late, I was gonna ask you if you had seen the gardens, but uh, you came to down about three or four years after they built the Oil Center.

AG: That's, yeah.

SW: Yeah. You just missed it. What did the university-

AG: B-, Bendel, was it Bendel Gardens?

SW: Bendel Gardens?

AG: That was one of the first major real elegant subdivisions. And it was I think part of or right adjacent to where the nursery was. [Pause]

SW: That's uh, this is all near the university. What did the university look like at that time? Was it as spread out as it is today? Did they have-

AG: Oh no, no it was, it has added quite a few buildings since then. I remember when my brother was uh, attending school there. They used to, he used to come see us, we lived in Crowley at the time. That's before we moved on to Bayou Salle. And uh... we would bring him back and I remember where the dormitory was, but it was one of the few male dormitories on campus. A three-story building as I remember. And uh, I think it was Saint Mary. Saint Mary Boulevard. Uh, the university has built quite a bit since then.

SW: They're tearin' down a little bit, too. This past Saturday the uh, if you look to the old male dormitory.

AG: That always broke my heart to see people destroy good buildings. [Chuckles] I guess they have to. And it looked as though it, they were in fairly open areas, it didn't look like the land was scarce. Be no reason to take the building down to get the land.

SW: I know they're planning on building another larger dorm in one spot, but another spot's gonna be open. I don't know what they're plannin' on doin' over there, but I recorded the whole thing with this thing. [Referring to camera]

AG: Oh did you?

SW: Yeah. Just to have it, just in case, you know. Kind of a historic thing.

AG: Yeah my son and grandson were he-, stayin' with us that night and they got up early the next morning to go down and watch it. And uh, I remember right at eight o'clock we heard some, "What in the world is that noise?" And uh, it was an explosion that timed sequence. And uh, uncanny like, it was not but just a few minutes from that they begin to report that the shuttle was overdue by five minutes. And that they had lost radar contact. And uh, and voice contact. Well I knew they always lost the uh, audio comin' through the uh, atmosphere, as they reentered, a reentry problem. Uh, somethin' about the heat shield. But radar, uh, was not dependent on anything comin' off of the ship. It

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was dependent on the ship bein' there. So I told my wife, I said, "Honey, that thing is either burned up or exploded." Because radar will pick it up if it's an object. And this was 20 minutes before they had any clues that, of a, those multiple streaks across the sky. But it was quite a tragedy.

SW: Very unfortunate. [Pause]

AG: Yep. Okay. What else you want to know?

SW: Well we digressed there for second, huh? [Chuckles]

AG: Yeah.

SW: Uh, well you mentioned that you were a Baptist.

AG: Uh huh.

SW: Uh, were uh, I know that this area is known for bein' heavily Roman Catholic.

AG: Right.

SW: Were you guys in the minority when you got here?

AG: Yeah, we still are. But uh, we've done a lot, we've built there on... we joined a little church that was just in the process of developing, Emmanuel Baptist Church there on the corner. Uh, Brother Bower, Doctor Bowers, who was the pastor at Northside, like Heymann, he was a very foresighted individual and he could see the town growing and that it was growing toward the south, particularly out Johnston Street. And he drove out Johnston Street one day and he noticed that corner lot that was right in the curve. And you could see it comin' from either way. And he said, "That's an ideal place to build a church." So he negotiated for it and I'm tryin' to think of who the owner of it was at the time. But uh, they bought that lot. And several years went by, not a lot of 'em, but two or three years went by and then uh, they started a mission there. I don't know whether it was a mission or a full-fledged church to begin with. I know what it was, it full-fledged church, because he uh, took part of his congregation, which showed his unselfishness. Most preachers want to get all the people they can get. He took 'bout half of his congregation and said, "Y'all go out Johnston Street and build a church." And that's how Emmanuel was formed. And we moved to town shortly after that and uh, Missus Lamb was a member there and she invited us to come. So we joined Emmanuel. And it wasn't long they had us pretty busy. [Chuckles] Had us on nearly all the committees and uh, teaching classes and what have you, 'cause we had worked in a little church down at Franklin. And uh, somehow among the Baptists your reputation gets known. And they'll put you to work. Really they'll hurt you, they'll put you on too many committees and too many jobs, if you're willing. It's like most organizations. Find a willing person and load him up. But uh, we enjoyed our stay there, we stayed there 26 years. And then uh, our pastor Doctor Fox uh, started a little mission out here called Bethel. And uh, we uh, we left Emmanuel and went out and joined him and stayed out there for... oh, I can't remember now. Up 'til about three or four years ago. And uh, Brother Fox was later passed on, he passed away. Um, he had retired prior to that. And then we've gone from Bethel, which is now called The Open Door, I think. And moved to First Baptist Church. Uh, [I kid?] Perry and he doesn't take it too, uh, too well because it's a very dramatic thing. Uh, we went to visit with my son, he used to be deacon down there. And nearly half the congregation came to greet us. And I told my wife, "Well this is where we need to be." [Chuckles] So we moved our letter to First Baptist Church. Uh, this was uh... let's see. This was on a Sunday. And Wednesday the church burnt down. [Chuckles] And I told Perry, I said, "You heard us coming, you burnt your church down!" [Chuckles] I said, "I was known as a troublemaker, but not that bad." I say "troublemaker," I always have an opinion on things. And uh, but that-, that's not too good of a joke, he didn't laugh when I told him that.

SW: Nah. [Chuckles] [Pause]

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AG: But I've always loved the gospel. And uh, had hungered for the Word. And when I was uh, I guess a college student, we would go occasionally, if we wake up on time on Sunday morning. But we had to catch a bus and go into Baton Rouge and it was not convenient, so we didn't go too often, and to church and Sunday school, bible study. And so uh, I got in a class when we moved to New Orleans and just hung on every word that the teacher would bring and I'd study my lesson diligently and the old man got moved to, he worked for Avondale, he got moved to another shift. And uh, they didn't have anybody to teach the class. I was 23 years old, youngest one in the class. [Chuckles] It was a men's class. And they said, "Well you've been takin' part in the discussion every Sunday, why don't you teach it?" So that's when I started teaching there. They asked me to teach the class and I did. And you learn more by teaching than by just sittin' in class. You've got to prepare if you're gonna teach. And I have enjoyed it over the years. What's that make it? Fifty? Fifty-, 51 years. Fifty-two years.

SW: When you guys first got here in Lafayette, there was, how many Baptist churches did they have?

AG: There was First Baptist, and there was Northside, and then they were forming Emmanuel.

SW: Started out with two and the third one was comin' along as you guys were getting here.

AG: Was coming along, yeah.

SW: Okay. And how many, about how many do they have now? [I would say?]-

AG: Well if, uh, west... is it west, not West Bayou, uh, Westside formed. Uh... we were instrumental in forming the uh, East Bayou. Uh... I remember, uh, I rented a furniture store over there in fur-, and offered it to the church to meet in. And went over and built partitions and stuff, you know, where they could meet. And uh, and they [Clears throat] and then we uh, looked at and purchased that lot while we were at Emmanuel. Where the church is now located. And we helped uh, each summer we would hold a revival out there under a tent to sample the area to see if people were genuinely interested in a church. And after about three of those revivals we decided it's time to build. So they built a nice church there. Uh, East Bayou Baptist now. I understand they're fixin' to tear down and build again.

SW: There we go tearin' buildings down again, huh? [Chuckles]

AG: Yeah. But uh, let's see, what other ones that, well of course, I think Broussard formed after that. And uh, Milton. And uh, they're all, not all Baptist, Evangelical churches. I can't think of the names of all of 'em, but I believe there's six or eight of 'em.

SW: Six or eight, about in there.

AG: Yeah.

SW: Where, in the oilfield did they have, you were a Baptist, did you find a lot of your coworkers were Baptist?

AG: Yeah. A lot of the uh, growth of the churches was around the growth of the community, which uh, was oil people. Oil-related industries. Uh, I know when uh, people would come to Lafayette we uh, we used to h-, joke about how uh, transient our church was at Emmanuel. People would, we had an average membership there of around four years. They'd be transferred to Lafayette on a job and get a promotion and move back to Houston or somewhere. And uh... I remember when my sister was uh, killed in the Lamb plane crash. I don't remember the year of that now. Sixty-six I think it was. And uh, we uh, the crash was in Houston, so Doctor Fox and his wife uh, took me with 'em to Houston. And when we walked into the hospital over there, there were eight former deacons of Emmanuel Church at the hospital who were livin' in Houston at the time. They had heard about it on the news and had gone to the hospital. And uh, so Doctor Fox got to see eight of us former [Chuckles] members. That indicated how many people from Lafayette had moved back to the Houston area. Give you some idear of the-

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SW: And idea-

AG: Transient nat-, nature of uh, oil industry.

SW: So these, the oil industry was bringin' people to Lafayette?

AG: Uh hm.

SW: They were comin' from outside of Lafayette and, you're sayin', that uh, quite a few of these people movin' in were not of the Roman Catholic faith, so they were, such as of the Baptist faith, and that's what contributed to the expansion of the-

AG: Of the church, yeah.

SW: Of the churches.

AG: Yeah.

SW: Okay. Um... are these, these people movin' from out of town from Texas, Oklahoma, or from Louisiana?

AG: Mississippi.

SW: Mississippi?

AG: Yeah. Uh, Alabama, got a few Alabama, wasn't too many oil people there, but there was some oil activity there. But the uh... the uh, bible belt they called it, I guess, is the South. Is where most of the oil activity's, of the nation have been taken place, other than California. And so that drew a lot of people in here.

SW: How did the, how did comin' to a town that was predominantly Catholic and bein' a Baptist, how was that?

AG: Well uh, there was enough Baptists here that uh, uh, we Baptists believe in workin'. Minister. And uh, takin' a resp-, responsible position. And uh, there was certainly room [Chuckles] for talent. They would move in from outside and uh, they'd put you to work teachin' a class or workin' with the youth or somethin' of that nature, choir. I sang in the choir, taught a class, was a deacon, uh, was on about five different committees, the committee on committees, we got one called "committee on committees." [Both chuckle] They're the committee that forms the committees.

SW: [Chuckling] Okay.

AG: [Coughs] There's a committee on everything.

SW: Sounds like a government agency.

AG: Well, just about. [Pause] But we, we've enjoyed Lafayette. And it's been uh, it's met our needs as far the family was concerned. Uh, one of the reasons we moved here other than the fact that my daughter had polio and we needed to be near Doctor Newman, was the fact that there was a university here. And lo and behold, out of the five children, none of 'em went to USL. [Both chuckle] One, two went to Baton Rouge, one went to Auburn, and one went to Louisiana College, and then later uh... two or three uh, two of my kids and one of my in-laws attended USL. [Pause] And uh-

SW: But none of the kids went. [Chuckles]

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AG: Well, I mean, the kids they went to LSU and then dropped out over there and moved over here and finished up. Two of 'em did. And uh, one of two, two of my daughter-in-laws finished there I believe. But that was one of the [drawin' cards?] for movin' over here. I got to, we got to reasoning one night there and I said, "Honey, there's gonna come a time when we're gonna have from three to five kids in college at one time." [Chuckles] And uh, that's when we started a little savings account.

SW: Yeah.

AG: So we'd be prepared.

SW: Were there a lot of people moving in to town to go to the university as well? Does that kind of help [draw?] people?

AG: I'm sure it uh, it influenced the, their decisions uh, as to whether to take a job or to move to this community. Usually you follow your work. 'Cause you got to eat. [Chuckles] And then you got to worry about educatin' the kids. But the schools, not only college, but the high schools and grade schools, Broadmoor out here was built and Montgomery was built, uh... I can't remember all the others that were built, but they were building schools on a routine basis there for a long time. But Laf-, before we moved here, Lafayette High was already there. There was Northside and Lafayette. Seemed like subsequent to that they built Judice, but Judice was there also. It was a 12-year school. Because one of my sons started there in the first grade and he graduated from twelfth grade. He was one of the few people that went all of the way through Judice. And it was a tremendous school. People think 'cause it was out in the country that it was kind of a hick school, but uh, Mister [Trahan?] ran that school with an iron hand. And uh, the kids that came out there excelled in college as well or better than any of the other high school graduates. [Pause] Judice.

SW: Judice.

AG: It's now a full-fledged high school. [Pause]

SW: What uh, what can you tell me about the railroad depot that was there when you guys moved into town?

AG: Uh, yeah, it was there, I'm not sure what the train schedules looked like or whether they were even servicing the public. My daddy was a railroad man, but uh, I didn't pay a lot of attention to uh... the railroad there.

SW: Were there a lot of supplies comin' into town via the railroad or was it highways at that point? [Slight pause]

AG: I don't know of a lot of traffic comin' by rail, oilfield traffic. [Pause]

SW: 'Course in '50, in the late '50s and early '60s they had built a lot of roads at that time, so probably people were comin' in by cars maybe.

AG: And truck. You know, equipment was, usually if it had to go to a rig, you couldn't get there with a railroad anyway. You might offload it to a truck and then go to the rig. But if it had to come from a nearby area, you might as well load it on the truck and take it straight to the rig. Like pipe and things of that nature. [Pause]

SW: How involved with the politics were you back at the time?

AG: We uh, paid close attention to what was goin' on locally, and state-wide, and in the federal elections we got involved to the extent of voting regularly. And maybe supporting a candidate. We wanted to see the two-party system develop in Louisiana. We were registered Democrats 'cause there was no other way to vote. And uh, but we were conservative in our thinking, which most oilfield people are. And uh, we have subsequent to that supported several

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candidates both locally and state-wide, and uh, national. Senatorial elections and the uh, elections of the representatives. I remember interviewin' one of the representatives. Had sent him some money in to support him. Uh, 'course I've always been concerned about the litigious society that we are in. And the detrimental effect that lawsuits had on small business. And on the cost of livin', because of the uh, increase cost in medical and uh, and other services that was brought about uh... frivolous lawsuits. Many of 'em had merit, but uh, much of the time the settlements were so outlandish as compared to the loss, that it drove the cost of insurance out of sight and in some cases it drove it out of the state. I remember one of the reasons why uh, when I was workin' with the uh... LAIB I think it is, yeah, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry. I was on the board in Baton Rouge. And uh, we were made aware of the fact that much of the uh, reluctance of companies comin' to Louisiana was the fact that it was so litigious and insurance and workman's compensation and things that you had to have to do business uh, were so much higher than it was in say Mississippi. I remember one deal there where [Clears throat] guys premium in Mississippi was 700 dollars, he moved across the river and it went to fifteen hundred. [Chuckles] 'Cause he moved to Louisiana. And that, you know, small business that makes you take notice. So that and the lawyer, attorney population in Lafayette grew as much or more than any other aspect. 'Cause there's a lot of legal work here to do. [Pause]

SW: And that came from the oilfield.

AG: Well the oilfield had some uh, legal work to do, but then the forming of corporations and the uh, settlement of buying and selling property and all the things that attorneys do multiplied astronomically.

SW: Not just uh, not just people suin' the company they worked for and things like that, but also land titles and stuff connected to the oil industry really brought these guys in.

AG: Yeah. Yeah. The first time [Clears throat] after we moved here, I have a, and I guess it had just about begun at that period of time, when you turn your TV on and lo and behold some lawyer is on there sayin', "Ain't you been hurt lately? Come see me and I'll help you get a bunch of money." Essentially that's what the ad said and they still are havin' 'em. Uh, I wrote a little scenario I guess you'd call it or uh... a one act play [Chuckles] called "My Gold Finger Award." It was about a farmer that scratched his finger on a crab, uh, on a crawfish trap. And all that went after that the discovery, that went into the lawsuit, he sued the people who had sold him the crab, the uh, not crab trap, your crawfish trap, the people that made the wire that went into trap, the people that made the slip ring that you put on top of the trap, the people that made the uh... pliers that you put these clips on [Inaudible] hog rin-, rings, hog ring pliers. They mash a clip and they used those to clip the crawfish trap together and they use to put the slip ring up at the top. Uh, anyway, I had him suin' the people that made those pliers, the people that made the pig rings, the people that made the mesh that went into the net, [Chuckles] and the store that sold it, and uh, all of the discovery that went on in those stages. 'Cause I'd been through that. In several cases. My favorite story that I tell at these uh, meetings where they're discussing doin' something about the uh, litigiousness of our society is about being sued for two million dollars for the lack of sexual affections by a woman I'd never met. This actually happened. [Pause] You wondered what [Laughs] anyway, we sold a pump to an outfit in uh... Mississippi, they sold it to an outfit in Alabama, they installed it on the lease, and on that lease was a separator and a gas supply and all the stuff that you have on a uh... a production facility that handles the oil and gas. And we, we'd made a little pump that pumps the chemical into the system to help break the emulsion between the water and the oil. And that little pump mounts on the end of a drum. On a drum gauge, so you can see how much in the drum. You can also set your rate of injection by using the drum gauge. And uh, this drum, this lease operator uh, got out there one morning and the line, the gas line had frozen up, which it does in, where you got wet gas and you got cold weather. And he testified that his standard way of thawin' it out was to wrap a rag on the end of a broomstick, soak it with gasoline, set it on fire, and pass it under the line. 'Course he had left the big [bong?] out of the drum. And on the side of the drum was written "flammable." And he passed that burning gasoline rag under that big bong, bong of the drum and that drum blew up, burned him pretty bad. Well he sued everybody that was big enough, he sued everybody that had anything to do with that lease. And my little pump on it, said "Sold and Serviced by Al George and Pump [Inaudible]," so they'd know where to buy parts. Well they found that pump over in the weeds out there somewhere. And uh, we got involved in the suit. Two millions

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dollars for lack of sexual affections. Well it seems that uh, this fella that got burned [Clears throat] he got burned in some crucial areas and his wife was havin' to do without sex because of it. And she sued everybody. That's how frivolous some of the suits get. We settled after nine years, there was nine parties involved, we had council and local council, that's 18 attorneys. And uh, after nine years our part of the settlement was 84,000. What they do is they get it down to where the cost of fighting it just about equals what they'll settle for and so it's really uh, a form of intimidation. And you either spend your money on lawyers or you pay 'em off. You, at least your insurance does. But that's my favorite tale, gettin' sued for two million dollars for the lack of sexual affection by a woman I'd never met.

SW: That's a good story.

AG: It gets their attention. [Chuckles]

SW: It's a good story. [Pause] Yeah, that's uh. [Pause] I think that about covers it. I wanted to talk to-

AG: Some of the, I made a few notes after you left the other day.

SW: Okay, yeah, if you wanna say something uh-

AG: I don't know if, we covered uh, some of the developments that have taken place in the oil industry over the last many years. Uh, I might have mentioned to you that ridin' out, one of the first hurricanes that hit after offshore drilling had started, I was workin' off of Grand Isle in 1948. And the hurricane just happened to make up not too far from Louisiana and it was on us before we could do anything about it speak of. And we had to really scramble to lash down everything on the rig and then evacuate and come in. And we came in really in the teeth of that storm. And it was uh, it was quite a story. But uh, since then we have much better hurricane warning systems that gives you two or three days to do all you need to do to get ready for a hurricane that's coming through. And that has helped a great deal as far as the offshore development's concerned. Uh, deeper drilling. Deeper drillings made, been made possible by uh, bigger rigs and uh, higher strength drill pipe, where you can run along the string and still hold together. And uh... directional control techniques, as far as the uh, drilling of the well is concerned. And uh, the machinery necessary to make and break pipe and makin' the trip. Every time your bit gets dull, you gotta pull all that pipe out of the hole and put a new bit on it and you run it all back in. So power tongs and make and break machinery have been improved considerably and that helped the uh, the industry go deeper. And pick and lay down machines, which is something we had a lot to do with, made it safer to handle pipe from the horizontal to the vertical and the vertical back to the horizontal. Hughes developed a, not, not during this period necessarily, but they had a three-cone roller bit. And uh, Reed developed the four-cone. I guess one had the patent on the three and one got patents on the four. And later on they lubricated those rollers to make 'em last longer. This allowed 'em to drill, these were called "rock bits." When you get a hard formation, a blade bit wouldn't do anymore, you had to go to a rock bit. Uh, that promoted the drilling activity. And allowed 'em to go deeper and increase penetration rates and so forth. They developed what was called a "no wall stick drill collar." Used to uh, if your drill collars got over against the wall, then you developed a hydrostatic uh, differential across it, it would just hold it against that wall and you couldn't move it. So they developed centralizers which would hold it over in the middle of the hole and also the no wall stick drill collar allowed a lot more drilling to take place than would've taken place otherwise. Better muds, drillin' muds, uh, promoted the drilling activity. And uh... the geological aspects uh, fella gave a talk a little meeting of the oilfield pioneers that I belong to. Uh, about six months ago and he was tellin' us about how the geophysical ability to look under ground and see overhangs and uh, the subterranean formations uh, they've gone back into old areas that they thought to be depleted and found new fields. Because of the efficiency and the increase uh, ability of geophysical surveys. Uh, I'm tryin' to think of the name of the... anyway, they can look under ground and see a lot better than they used to; that's helped a great deal. [Pause] Then I, I don't know whether I commented on this before or not, but very few people when you say "oil industry," people think of, well people uh, of an industry that has nothin' to do but destroy your ecology. Oil spills for one thing. And there's been a lot of pressure on the industry and a lot of cost involved in tryin' to make sure that pollution was not a problem. And one of the units that we developed, the [monasep, multisept?] was for extractin' the last little remnants of oil out of the water before they disposed of it overboard. And uh... the cheap fuels that the oil

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industry had provided to this country in its history is what's made this country great. There are a lot of other things that contributed to it, but without cheap fuel, I'm talkin' about cheap gas for generatin' power, cheap oil for producing gasoline, and lube, and all the other things that we do with crude oil. The fact that it was discovered in such quantities that we could produce it and provide it to the nation at the price we did, uh, is what's made this country great. In my estimation. One of the major contributing factors. 'Course we still have coal. Coal is gettin' to where it's [Clears throat] a major competitor, because it can burn much cleaner. But there was a time when coal provided quite a problem to the environment also. Uh... but the rapid increase in our standard of livin' was brought about by cheap fuel. Right now we pull up to the pump and we pay a dollar and a half a gallon for gasoline. And that includes 'bout half of it is tax. But uh, last time I was in Europe, we drove a small car and we paid four dollars a gallon for gasoline. And that's been several years ago. So we still have [Inaudible, phone ringing] [Recording turns off]

SW: Okay, we can wrap it up if you want.

AG: Yeah.

SW: I don't' want to take too much more of your time.

AG: I just want to say that about cheap fr-, fuels and the effect it had on the overall economy in the United States and the ability to move ahead in a rapid fashion, because it takes fuel to do anything. Electricity, generated, and then uh... the involvement of the Middle East problems over the last half century has uh, aggravated the fuel situation and made us more dependent on people who didn't particularly like us for our fuel. And half of what we burn in the United States now is imported. I guess you knew that already. The uh... embargo that happened in 1973 really illuminated the problem. Because people were in lines to get gasoline for hours. And uh, the price went out of sight. And the uh [Clears throat] the fact that that cartel can control the price of oil like it does uh, would be illegal if they operated in the United States. But they still do. And the only thing that's going to remedy that is for the U.S. Government and the ecologists to lighten up on the restrictions that they have put on our domestic in-, uh, industry. Let us drill offshore. The industry does a good job, they take care of things, they don't spill. Once in awhile you'll have an accident, but you take a bigger chance in haulin' oil from the Middle East to refineries in the U.S.A. You have a bigger chance of spillin' oil than you do if you produced it here. So I want to get in there, that our dependence on Middle East Oil, their controlling of the price, their controlling of the supply, puts us in a very precarious position. Both from the defense standpoint and from uh, econ-, economic aspects of it. [Pause] We went up to, during that period of time when oil shortage was created by the '73 embargo, we went from, I'm not sure what rig count was at the time, but we got up as high was forty-two hundred rigs. In the United States operating, drillin' holes in the ground of all kinds of depths. Because oil was 40 dollars a barrel. And then over night it dropped the price to eight dollars a barrel and [Phone rings] a lot of us got caught off base and uh [Phone rings] it put a lot of companies in bankruptcy. Anyway, we got up to forty-two hundred rigs. [Clears throat] [Slight pause] By 1980, oil was 40 dollars a barrel, which justified the additional expenditure in exploration. Almost over night the Arabs, the Arab cartel, OPEC, dropped the price of oil to eight dollars a barrel. Banks had loaned money based on 40 dollar oil, companies had organized buil-, were spendin' a lot of money, had borrowed a lot of money to build facilities to support the industry. And uh, they all got caught off base. I did. Uh, we almost went under. If we hadn't had all of our stuff paid for at the time, if we'dve had a big bank note, we couldn't've made it. And uh, I compare it to being uh, like it bein' a rubber band stretched out real long and they just came along and cut it. [Chuckles] Uh. [Pause] That's about it. I just wanted to get those thoughts in there.

SW: Okay.

AG: Anyway, we need to open up the [Anwar?] Basin in Alaska, we need to drill off of Florida, and get the politics out of the oil supply. How we're gonna do that, I'm not real sure. President Bush had done a lot toward that. In that, some of the stuff that he has recommended. He's takin' an awful political beatin' over it. Because for some reason uh, American people don't appreciate the oil industry for what it is. [Pause] And that's why I made that comment about it bein' the source of our progress over the last 100 years. That's it. I don't know anything else. [Both chuckle]

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