

HHA # 00180  
Interviewee: Larry Frederick  
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz  
Interview Date: February 17, 2003  
Interview Site: Lafayette, Louisiana  
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW040  
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee speaks very softly and is sometimes difficult to hear.]

Ethnographic preface:

Mr. Larry Fredrick was born in 1938 in Abbeville, Louisiana. His father drove truck and later worked for about 40 years for a farm supply company, Victor Supply Company. At the age of 16, he lost one of his legs. After graduating from Mount Carmel High School in 1957, he studied mechanics at a trade school for two years. After that, he sold parts and worked at a service station. In 1964, he went to work for Young Towing, a crew boat company. After work there went sour, he returned to working at a service station. In 1967 he was hired as a crew boat captain by Cajun Marine (later Acadian Marine, then Lafayette Crew Boats). After the company sold out in 1988, he retired for about a year, before going to work for the City of Abbeville's water treatment facility. He quit as a supervisor in 1996. He describes his relationship with his boss and the people with whom he came into contact. He says he would do it all over again in the blink of an eye and that he is satisfied with his life.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [LF]

SW: Yeah. Okay, this is interview with Mister Larry Frederick. It's uh, February seventeenth, 2003 in the MCS office. And uh, just gonna start off. Um. Are you originally from this area?

LF: I was born and raised in Abbeville.

SW: Abbeville. What year were you born?

LF: Nineteen thirty-eight.

SW: Thirty-eight.

LF: August twelfth. [Pause]

SW: Alright. Uh, what did your, what did your father do for a living?

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LF: My daddy started off years ago as a truck driver. And then he went to work for Victor Supply Company and that was a farm supply. And I believed he worked there around 40 years give or take a year or two. He retired from that in '65, he died last August. August fourteenth. He was 83 years old. Momma's still alive. My mother's still livin' she's, she's at home. In fact I spent uh, Saturday, Saturday and Saturday night with her. The kids uh, spend weekends with her. You know, we alternate each week, each [of the/other?] weekend. That way we [get to give our babysitters weekend off?]. Well we call 'em babysitters. Take care of her and cook for her. Keep things up at the house.

SW: You uh, you went to high school in the Abbeville area?

LF: I graduated in 1957, Mount Carmel. Mount Carmel High.

SW: Did you go on to the university after that or?

LF: No, no.

SW: You started working?

LF: I went to work. 'Fact, I was working during high school. Soda jerk. I ushered at theaters. Stuff like that.

SW: So what happened after high school? Did you- [REDACTED]

LF: After high school [Pause] I messed around. I did mechanic work, I went to trade school for two years after I got out of high school. And after hi-, after that [Pause] I uh, went to work in a parts house. Sellin' parts. And then, that was in 1961 and '62, things got real bad, you know. What uh, what you call a depression. And so people gettin' laid off all over the place. And mechanic business was, was poor. So I quit that. Oh, I didn't quit, they let me go. They didn't fire me, just let me go, you know. And uh, after that I went to work in a service station. In the meantime I got married. I uh, worked in the service station for almost two years. And then after that I went, that's when I started on the crew boats. I lied my way into the crew boats. I, I used to mess around with uh, racing hydros and stuff like that. And then uh, that's where I learned most of my boats and then I had to get away from the service station, I wasn't makin' enough money. I makin' maybe 35 dollars a week. [Chuckles] And with the wife and, I had two kids then.

SW: Can't make it on that.

LF: No. So, they had an opening on a crew boat, so I, I told 'em that I used to race hydros and stuff like that. Well anyway, I wound up goin' to work on crew boats.

SW: You said you-

LF: Off-

SW: You lied your way into it?

LF: More or less, yeah. It's, some questions he asked, I just kind of lied about it. Well I needed to go work, like I said, I need to-

SW: Yeah.

LF: Me, wife, and my family, so. So I went to work for Young Towing. In uh, '64.

SW: What was it called? Young?

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LF: Young Towing. It was a outfit out of Abbeville. They out of business, they went out of business years ago. And then from there [Pause] that went, went sour [for awhile?] and so I went back to the service station. Worked there for awhile and then uh [Pause] uh, my boss that I worked for Cajun Marine, which was [in?] Cajun Marine, he wanted me to go to work for a friend of his as, as a tug boat operator. But I wouldn't go to work as a tug operator, because I had no experience driving tugs and barges. So I told him I, I'd rather not because of the, I didn't want to [tear/carry?] the man's equipment. I was honest about it. And then uh, he said, "Well, look," he says, "in the near future," he said, "I'll be startin' my own business as a, in crew boats." He said, "Would you be interested?" I said, "Sure." So in the meantime I, I stayed with the [Slight pause] uh, service station work. And then he called me back up. And asked me if I'd be interested in goin' to work for him, I said yes. So he bought an old steel hull. And that old boat was "Old Lumberjack," I'll never forget that. Old rusted bucket, we used to call it. [SW chuckles] I spent, I think was about two weeks repairin' it and paintin' it and cleanin' it up and all that stuff. And the first job I went to was on the [Slight pause] Atchafalaya River. My god, I'll never forget that. That was uh, old workover rig. It was, the company was named Atchafalaya Workover. [Pause] And I worked there for hmm... worked on that rig for about pretty close to t-, uh, a year and a half, I guess, somethin' like that. And uh, in the meantime my told me if I'd stick around [Inaudible] have me a new, brand new crew boat, you know. Well, you know, I heard that sad story for [Inaudible] [in all this time you get bitter?]. And [Pause] almost two months to the day, he called me up at the house. Told me that my boat was ready. I said, "Good, it's a miracle." He said, "No, it's that new boat I promised you I'd have. It's ready." So I went to Lafayette to [Life-, LifeCo?]. It was LifeCo that built it. Picked it up and went to work back at the Atchafalaya Workover. Worked there for awhile and then I got transferred. We start building boats one right after the other. And every time a new boat would come out, he'd call me up to put it to work.

SW: So he was tryin' to expand the company and buy more, buy more-

LF: We got one, to be one of the biggest crew boat companies in the state of Louisiana.

SW: And that was the uh-

LF: We called it, it was called Cajun Marine, yeah. And then [Pause] oh, I'd say about... six, seven years afterwards the name was changed to Lafayette Crew Boats.

SW: That's the one you were tellin' me about earlier?

LF: Yeah. And I stayed until, see that was in nineteen... I went to work for Darrel in nineteen... sixty-six, sixty-seven. And I stayed with him until 1988. January of 1988.

SW: Twenty-, twenty-somethin' years.

LF: It was over 20 years. I was the first man hired as a captain and I was the last one to leave.

SW: What happened with the company in '88? Did they, they went under?

LF: They were, no. The [Inaudible] business died. It, it, it went almost to nothin'. And he had an opportunity to get rid of all his equipment before he got stuck with, I guess. You know, I don't know.

SW: Okay, so he sold ever-, he sold-

LF: So he sold everything out. He sold a bunch of crew boats to uh, an outfit in New York City as uh, as uh, resort. And he had an island as, a resort on an island somewhere around New York. And he used crew boats to carry people back and forth, and equipment. Stuff like that. I didn't know too much about what was goin' on there. Then he sold all his offshore crew boats, which I was on when uh, when he sold the company. I stayed with the company [Pause] oh, almost a year. He kept, what, three boats. 'Cause he had three sons. So he kept one boat for each ki-, or

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each one of his sons. Best I can remember. And then uh, I stayed around the shop and cleaned up and stuff like that. Finally when there was nothin', nothin' left to be done. I left in '88. And then I went to work, well I more or less retired for about a year. [Slight pause] And then I went to work uh, for the City of Abbeville. Workin' at a sewer plant, waste water treatment you call it, fancy word. And I stayed there for uh [Hear rustling papers] 'til nineteen ninety... May of '96, 1996. I stayed with the City of Abbeville. I became the uh, supervisor. And the other old man uh, well, the old man died. So, he put me supervisor of the plant. 'Til '96, then I, I quit. Had enough of it. Wife had had, just had a heart attack the Christmas before. 'Fact, we spent that Christmas of '95, '96 in a hospital. She had uh, congestive heart failure. So I worked until May after that. Then I retired. I quit, whichever you want to call it. Then I, her and I took off in July to go to Massachusetts, visit some friends for a month. Well, [ended up taking six, a whole six years?]. Five, well no, actually, five years and one month. We stayed up there. We met some friends that used to live in Erath. And we went up there and we liked it up there, we stayed up there. Got involved in some missionary work. In fact we ran a [Pause] a feedin' mission in, in Boston, Massachusetts. We did that for four years of the five years we were up there. Which I enjoyed, I enjoyed the country. I loved it, beautiful country. And that's more or less. We come back in last, August before last. We came back and moved back because the kids and grandkids and stuff like that. And then we came [Slight pause] yeah, it was two, it was a year last August, it be two years this August that we're back. And [then retirement?], worked as a, part time as a security guard, which turned out to be full-time plus.

SW: Right now, huh?

LF: Yeah, it's, it's runnin' me all over the place.

SW: So you still, you're not totally retired, you're-

LF: No, I'm semi.

SW: Semi-retired.

LF: I'm, I'm collectin' my, my disability. Collectin' my disability while I was in Massachusetts. Then when you turn, when I turned 62, became uh, what they call that? Old age pension or whatever.

SW: Yeah, yeah. Pension year.

LF: Social Security. So I'm Social Security now plus what I do, you know, security [part I do?]. It keeps me busy.

SW: When uh, you mentioned that uh, when you work that Atchafalaya workover rig, you said you stayed out there for a year. You-

LF: Now that's goin' back, I, I worked for that, that one rig. It's a little over a year. But I'd go back and forth home, you see. I was workin', at Atchafalaya Workover, I was workin' four and four. Four days on, four days off, 'cause-

SW: On the rig itself?

LF: Yeah.

SW: So you were uh, you were an oilfield hand or you were with boats.

LF: No, I was boat, boat captain.

SW: Okay.

LF: I ran crew boat, I run crews back and forth.

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SW: Boats?

LF: From the rig to the, the dock and, and back. Change crews, plus I'd haul supplies and stuff.

SW: So for four days on you were runnin' back and forth between the dock and the rig?

LF: Yeah.

SW: That's what you mean by-

LF: It was almost, it was almost a 24-hour job on the four days I was over there.

SW: They were constantly ferrying people and equipment and all kinds of things?

LF: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] and stuff like that. Workover rigs are, are, are very busy, okay. They go in there, they, they clean the hole up. They just, either they're bangin' the, the well or they re-, redoin' it so they can uh, what you call that? Make it progressive again. And uh, that's what they do. They go from one, one well to the other.

SW: And it's wells that have already been drilled and, and they've given up it almost and they come back to it.

LF: Right. And some other company might buy, buy it and rework it and try to produce it, stuff like that.

SW: Think there's some oil or somethin' down there.

LF: Yeah.

SW: Okay.

LF: [Inaudible].

SW: You worked four on and four off. Okay. And while you were, while you were on for those four days you, you, did you work 24-hours a day or would time for sleep?

LF: Well-

SW: How, how did that work out?

LF: No, it, it was [Slight pause] it was depending on what, what was goin' on, see. It uh, let's say if they, they cemented a hole to re-, to redrill through it, well you had service hands you had to go get, you had parts, drill bits, drills, uh, stabilizers, just about anything that you might need to uh, to redrill that cement so they can re- uh, get to uh, work again. [Pause] Did that for probably say, I did that on that rig, then I left it. And I went to work for Penrod Drilling Company. With, you know, for, for Cajun Marine in Intercoastal City.

SW: You contracted out to whatever oil [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

LF: Yeah, our boats were contracted to these companies. Uh, Penrod was drilling for Exxon out of [Carmal?], which was nice for me because it was right there [Inaudible] just 'bout 45 minute drive. [Again/With them?] we went to work seven and seven. That was uh, which was a good job. We slept, they furnished the, on the job, Penrod Drilling, they furnished our quarters, we'd eat on the rig, and stuff like that. They had cooks and everything.

SW: Okay. That's the kind of questions I was gettin' at with uh, with this your four and four and seven and seven, you were working 12 hours days or nights or was it just whenever they needed you?

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LF: Well uh, we were two, on Penrod Drilling, we were two boats and two skippers. So we'd, one worked days and one worked nights. The next hitch we'd, we'd reverse so [change it up?].

SW: So that-

LF: It, it wasn't too bad.

SW: You were responsible for 12 hours?

LF: A drilling rig you, you made three or four runs, five runs, a day, maybe. Depending on what, what the situation was on the drilling rig. But they would, uh, what they call "slow drillin'," well you, they takin' a long time to uh, there's hardly nothin' goin' on, you see. You just sit around and watch TV, eat, sleep. [That's pretty good?] And then I did, I worked on it for [Pause] for Penrod for about eight years. Inland barges they call 'em, on the canals. Then that's when Acadian, Acadian Marine switched over to Lafayette Marine. That's when we started in the Gulf. We built some new, brand new boats, 140 footers. We had the smallest I believe offshore was 80 footer. The first one to come out was a 140 footer, which was "Acadian Challenger." That's the one I went on. And we went to work for Exxon again, but that was, like I say, it was in the Gulf. That's when things started getting hairy.

SW: What do you mean?

LF: Well, you know-

SW: Different animal? [Slight pause]

LF: Yeah, you, you had lot of more dif-, uh, uh, responsibility and [Inaudible], you had your deckhands, you had your people that you would uh, ferry back and forth to the Gulf, the platforms and the ri-, drilling rigs, and you'd haul supplies, food, stuff like that. So you had longer runs, you had more peop-, uh, responsible for. Once these people step on your boat, that, that was your responsibility.

SW: Oh okay.

LF: Uh-

SW: A bigger boat, you had more people.

LF: You were licensed by uh, by the Coast Guard. You, you were the boss, as far as that goes when, when you'd uh, you get on, on the boat, drive the boat. [Sighing] So, it got, got to be different world, yeah, [if you say]. And a lot more to learn about and lot more, lot rougher in the Gulf. You had your calm days and your rough days. Looked like you had more rough days than calm. But lot of times, I'll be honest with you, man, if I get out of this Gulf, I ain't never comin' back. [SW chuckles] Several days later, right there, ready to go.

SW: There you are, huh.

LF: It takes, to me, I mean, in my own personal opinion, it took special type of person to be able to go out and work in the Gulf as, as a boat captain. Or as a deckhand or anything, 'cause [Slight pause] it uh, it got rough, it got hairy. Lot of rough waters. [Pause] Well, I liked, what I liked the best, though, was you met people from all over the world, man. During the boom, the drill boom, you had people from all over the world comin' out there to learn. Australia, New Zealand, had some from China. [Slight pause] All over the world comin' [here/there?]. And you get to meet 'em, you know. Got to meet a lot of people. That, that was my, one of my favorite parts of being out on the Gulf, you got to meet a lot of people. My wife'll tell me, if I, I could meet a [Slight pause] uh, people from like from Australia, say. Strike up a conversation, I'll talk all day long with 'em. I, I got to meet a lot of important people in the oilfield business,

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like uh, chief of Penrod Drilling Company. I met a lot of people from Penrod in the main office and uh, the bosses and stuff like that. You'd think, you know, people that high up with that must responsibility they'd, they'd be a t-, a different type of person or. [Pause] But down deep inside when you sit and talk to 'em, they just like you and I. They got a job to do, they got family responsibilities, and stuff like that, so. They, they out there to make a livin' just like everybody else. And I enjoyed that. [Pause] I got to meet one of the guys uh, from uh... which is now is a real big company, Petrofina, which we used to call just "Fina." And he spoke [just?] French, which [Recording breaks off] Brazil. [Pause] Larry, he uh, nobody c-, hardly anybody could talk, he could hardly talk to anybody 'cause he spoke just French. And me being a Cajun, that's right down my alley, and so they asked me one day, said, "Captain, you can speak French?" I said, "Yeah." They said, "We want you to meet somebody from uh, Brazil that owns," well, not owned, but I mean, it's uh, was number one man for uh, Petrofina. "Okay, let's go." So come to find out just who he was and we sat there and talked French and asked a bunch of questions, lot of questions I couldn't even answer. It's, it was a French, they're different from us. Like what they call, what we call "Paris French," you know, and "Cajun French." And uh, but we got, made ourself understood. And I enjoyed that. I enjoyed it a lot. [Slight pause] The only thing I missed real bad offshore was my family. My, my kids grew from being two in the family to four and six. And before I knew it, they were all grown. [Pause]

SW: 'Cause you were gone half the time, right?

LF: Well, more than half the time 'cause lot of times even on my seven days off I had to go back to work 'cause somebody was gettin' hurt or somebody was gettin' sick or somebody just didn't show up for work and stuff like that. And so they'd call me and I was, I know, I was too hard-headed, I wouldn't say no, I guess. Or never learned to say no, let's put it that way, 'cause I still do that now. [Slight pause] But uh, my wife did a real good job raisin' kids as you know. Johnson, professor and teachin' over here out in New Iberia. The rest of 'em all got good jobs and so they're all doin' good, so she must have done alright. I enjoyed workin' offshore, I really did. I, like I said, I got to meet a lot of people. There was a lot of bad times. Some stuff I, I'd rather not even talk about, 'cause [Pause] it's, it's a ghost in my past I guess you can say. [Sounding emotional] I lost two people off-, offshore. [Pause] [It hurts.] But other than that, everything was alright. [Pause] If you have questions you want to ask, go ahead I'll, I'll try to answer best I can.

SW: Bein' that you got into the oilfield in the boats, what uh, what other option would you have had? You said you were workin' at the service station, but you weren't makin' much money doin' that. Um, the oilfield seemed pretty attractive, you could make good money, right.

LF: Well, yeah the money, I started off from 35 dollars, like I said, a week to 20 dollars a day when I went to work for Young Towing. So that was [Pause] pretty good money. In them days that was, like I say, that was in the '60s. And then uh [Pause] plus service station, we was workin' 12 hours a day, six days a week. And it would get to where, it, it was hard work. You fixed flat tires, you pumped gas, you cleaned windshields, check the tires, check the water, and all that stuff like that. It was rough, especially when you're [by yourself at night?]. I didn't mind too much, but after awhile it got. [Slight pause] [Inaudible] I guess, 'cause I, well, I was handicap, I lost my leg when I was 16 years old. And to where I was on the concrete. When I got home, I was tired. And I was [lookin' for somethin' there?]. You know, like I say, I was lookin' for more money. But uh, I survived it.

SW: The oilfield was the best option at that time to make quick money or good money?

LF: I don't want to sound like I'm feelin' sorry for myself or anything like that, but in them days if you were handicapped, nobody wanted to hire you. It was uh, what they call, well I was told a lot, I was a security risk. The insurances wouldn't cover me 'cause I was handicapped. They were afraid I'd get hurt or somethin' like that, then they'd [Inaudible] the insurance were worried they'd get sued and stuff like that, so. Work was in my position was, was scare. I ran across some people that gave me a chance like, like Lafayette Crew Boats. In fact, the man didn't even know I was ha-, han-, handicapped 'til the first time I met him. 'Cause I never met the man, I was already workin' for him out there, I never met him. It was all done over the telephone. And then one day he happened to come to the rig to see how we were doin', and stuff like that, and I was on, on a run and he, I walked to, I got back to

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the rig, he was there. He come on, on his own boat. And uh, I was so used to being handicapped, you know, I wasn't even thinkin' about, in fact, I still don't even think about it. It's, it's just somethin' I, you know, something like eating, you know. It's, it's, it's natural. And he looked at me, he says, "Are you, you handicapped?" [Inaudible]. I said, "Yeah," I said, "I have an artificial leg." And it didn't surprise him that I was handicapped, you know, it didn't shake him up. And I said, "Man," I said, "I'm sorry, I didn't even think to tell you that. It just, just never thought about it." But he said, "No problem." He says, "You doin' a good job as far I can see, everybody's satisfied with the work you're doin'." He says, "I stick, you stick with me." Says, "It'll get better." And it sure did. I could get the man, I could go talk to him like he was my own father. And I was only two years younger than he is. And we got along re-, in fact, uh, we still visit uh, I still go meet him at the uh, we got a shop right here in town that he, he repairs old, old cars, now, that's his hobby. Tears old cars out and sups 'em up and makes these street rods, they call 'em. He, in fact, he's on a, a '57 Chevrolet [panel wagon?] that he chopped off the whole front end and rebuilt it. Got the fancy Chevrolet engine with the fancy carburetor, electronic ignition, and all that stuff, and that's what he's doing. He's got a bunch of friends that's involved in that too, so, they exchange all of the, the new stuff. I, I pass by every once in awhile to see how he's doing.

SW: You think he'd like to interview with us, too? [Pause]

LF: No. I'll be honest with you, uh, they've tried several times when we were in the business, they wanted to know, you know, how, how the company, how the company got this big and all that stuff. I know he-

SW: He don't want to talk about it?

LF: That's, he's pretty private when it comes to that.

SW: Okay.

LF: In fact, when him and I get along, he, he, together, he doesn't, doesn't seem to go back in the past.

SW: Oh okay.

LF: That's all [Pause] in the past.

SW: Yeah.

LF: He's the type of guy who needs to keep up with the times. Good old boy-

SW: Fair enough.

LF: He's a kind hearted man. In fact the other day, I was jokin', I walked in there, I said, "Darrel," I said, "I need to borrow 10,000 dollars." "Okay." I mean, seriously, he'da loaned it to me. 'Cause, oh, he'd probably give it me, I don't know. But anyway, 'cause he's, he's well-to-do, still well-to-do. And I like the man, he's honest man. Darrel and I stayed honest with each other the whole time we worked together. And then uh, one day I called him, I says, "Darrel," I said, "I don't hear from you no more." He says, I said, "Man, what's the matter? You too busy to talk to me?" He said, "Larry," he says, "Long as things are going good, you're not gonna hear from me. When you mess up," he says, "you'll hear from me." Which was pretty funny. He's always been a man, even as big as we had, we got, if he'd see me in the shop or somethin' [Inaudible] office, shut everything down, come shake my hand, ask me how I'm doin', how's the family. And we had this old joke goin' now that [Slight pause] one we had, me and the wife go up and she was sittin' in the car then he see me, you know, so he come out the office and come outside. He said, "How you doin'?" I said, "I'm doin' fine." "How's that old lady?" [Pause] My wife come unglued. [Pause] So she told him, she, "I'm not his old lady, he's not my old man." She flat walked, I mean, walked up to him and told him. Oh yes sir, "I'm not his old lady and he's not my old man." And every time I see him, I say, "Hey, you callin' my wife old lady lately?"

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"Oh, we don't want to get into that." But uh, like I said, he was, he was a tremendous man to work for. Never regretted, not one day.

SW: Well you stayed with him for over 20 years, so it must've been pretty good.

LF: He was.

SW: What was his name, his full name, just so?

LF: Uh, Darrel Landry.

SW: Darrel Landry, okay. Well, Julia's mentioned his name before

LF: Oh really?

SW: Yeah, but not, like you said, if he's not the type that'll talk, I just need to-

LF: Yeah, like I said, he-

SW: I know who your boss was.

LF: He, you know, he'll talk to people and stuff like that, you know, face-to-face and all that. But if you start gettin' in, like in his personal life or somethin' about the company, he kind of likes to shel-, uh, shy away from it. I don't know why. It was hard work, now, the man was uh [Pause] like he told me, he said, "I just had to buy my time with my family." [He was/in other words?], every time he take, him, his wife, and his kids and take off, well he was losin' money. 'Cause, you know, when you, when you're the big boss, you're, you're last, you're, you're, you're the last one that got to answer questions. Could be the right answer or the wrong answer, but either way, you, you [Inaudible]. And I can understand, 'cause I had to more or less buy my, my time with my family in a [sense, in a way?]. Because when I stayed home, I wasn't makin' money. And [Pause] like I said earlier, I, I, that's, that's the only real [Pause] part that I, I didn't like about the job was bein' away from my kids, my family. And my daughters were grown, they were ladies and women before I realized it. My boys were men. But now [Pause] I try to spend as much time with 'em. John and Judy live two houses from my house. Jennifer, my oldest daughter, lives three blocks behind us. Then Nora, I'm sure you know here, uh, she uh, she works in one of the departments over here, I believe, with the uh, the deans uh, professors.

SW: On the other side of campus.

LF: Yeah. And uh, she lives with us with her son, which is our pr-, my little, my b-, my buddy. Her son Jack, he's a little over two and a half years old now. And he, they stay with us. But uh [Slight pause] they all turned out to be great [Inaudible]. [Pause] Hm, that's about it. [Slight pause] Offshore uh, like I said, we had some good times, we had some bad times. Hurricanes, went through three of those. And, and [Inaudible].

SW: That must have been kind of dangerous. [Chuckles] [Pause]

LF: Yeah, uh [Pause] like to lost my life one time. Uh. [Pause] I went in a, in one of these hurricanes and I had to go offshore and get some people off a rig. Can you believe it or not a pack of Camel cigarettes saved my life. [SW chuckles] [Pause]

SW: How did that happen?

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LF: Well we were comin' back, had the crew on the boat comin' back and uh, I was what we say goin' under one and over the other. You know, like that, and the waves were eatin' us pretty bad. And my wind shield [come?] out. Well, I was, like said, I was smokin' Camels then and I reached like that to, to, you know, had one hand on the steering wheel and popped that one cigarette so you could catch it with your mouth there, do it with one hand. Well, when I popped it up like that I dropped the pack of cigarettes on, on, on the floor. So I reached over and I was holdin' on to the steering wheel, I reached down 'cause you sit on these high chairs. They look like uh, what they call that? Restaurant stools. But you know, it's a little fancier. But anyway, so I reached down like this to grab the pack of cigarettes off the floor and that's when the windshield come out. And if it had caught me in the face, it'd've probably cut me up, cut me up. Cut my neck [also in that business with that?] glass. [Pause] So.

SW: So hear of cigarettes uh, killin' people [Inaudible]-

LF: That's exactly right.

SW: Yeah, yeah, they're good for you.

LF: And uh, I had a few other bad accidents. I did, I fell off uh, overboard several times. But uh, calm water. Other, other than that it's very normal. I had great cook offshore. I had a little boy from uh... Jennings? [Slight pause] Yeah, Jennings. Old fella he was a Cajun. Good cook, man. 'Fact, when you get offshore on the rigs, lot of the company people would, "Hey Captain, you still got your same old cook?" "Oh yeah, man." "Hey, he's gonna make a gumbo for supper tonight?" "Well, if that's what y'all want." And they'd come on my boat. We'd play cards and stuff like, play poker and penny ante poker and stuff like that. And he'd make a gumbo, we'd all sit down to eat, have a good time. Poker was a big thing offshore. We'd get four or five fellas and play 'till, well, three, four, five o'clock in the morning. Some of them poor roughnecks would just be uh, through playin' poker, they had to go get dressed and go to work. Uh, without no sleep [Inaudible]. Now that, that had to be a special breed of people. Guys that, some of 'em get off the rig they'd never make it home, they had to turn around, come right back. They'd be at, in the beer joints drinkin' all, the whole time, the seven days they were off. Never make it home. I don't see how they did it, but [Slight pause] that's it, like I said, it had to be some rough and tough people. They had some good people in there, they had some bad people. Very few bad. All the good, there was a lot of good people there. One, they always, they, roughnecks would stick together just like boat people. 'Cause when I first started in, in the crew boat business [Slight pause] I, I had the feelin' that a cap-, boat captain or skipper was the low man on the totem pole. You know, he [Pause] I don't know why really, well, a lot of skippers give skippers a bad name. You know, they'd go to the dock instead of doin' what they were supposed to do or do what they supposed to, they run to the store, grab some beer, and drank and stuff like that. Then they get in trouble when they get back, 'cause you weren't supposed to drink. [Slight pause] So. [Pause] That's probably one of the reasons why skippers had bad names.

SW: 'Cause a few of 'em were, were uh-

LF: You know, well, that's like anything else.

SW: Yeah.

LF: There's always a bad apple in the bunch.

SW: Sure.

LF: But uh-

SW: When y'all played the cards a lot uh, on the boats, did y'all gamble with money?

LF: Oh yeah.

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SW: Was that allowed or?

LF: I guess so. I know-

SW: If you were the skipper, I guess it was allowed.

LF: Well, uh, we, see a lot of these, these platforms and rigs had uh, had livin' quarters, you know. You'd stay up there seven days. So you had, we'd go and sit in the rec room and table and play cards and stuff like that. Nobody said nothin' on the rigs, so I guess it was alright up there, too. We played a lot of it on the inland barges. 'Cause you had your, well what they call a quarter boat. Was hooked up to the uh, tied to the rigs, you see. You had your sleepin' quarters, you had your galley, you know, all that stuff. You had your cooks and all that stuff. So after supper we'd set the table up and we'd start dealin' the cards. Nobody ever got hurt or anything with cards. We limit ourselves. We'd uh, ante a quarter and two-bit ante or somethin' like that, you know. Fifty cents the highest you could go. So once in awhile you'd have one of 'em that, one or two of 'em want to go, you know, [while we're?] playin' and stuff like that they [Slight pause] most of 'em would just say, "No, we can't afford this." Or, you know, just step out of it, get out of it, you know, stuff like that. But uh, it was all in fun, nobody got hurt. No fights [was over poker?], 'cause knowing, you know, compared to [Inaudible] Cajuns playin' Bourre, boy, you played the wrong card, you get [Inaudible] havin' a fight. You know, that's all rumors and stuff like that 'cause [Slight pause] but uh, nobody ever got hurt doin' that. That was just to past time, get together, drink cigarettes, uh, smoke cigarettes, and drink coffee. And then you always had the night cook, he's a pastry cook we'd call him. The night cook's the pastry cook, make all the pastries. Well a lot of pies disappeared in that galley. Uh, one the roughnecks back there and grab one, they were just out of the pot. You'd see juggling a hot, hot pie, you know, somethin' like that, takin' off runnin' 'cause they didn't want to get caught. We pulled some stuff on the rigs and, like I said, nobody ever got hurt. We pulled a few jokes on people. In fact, I don't know if this is any, of any interest or anything, but every once in awhile I'd be taking a shower 'cause you had the stalls and stuff like. Well I'd take my leg off. I'd set it on the side, you know, I'd be taking a shower, and I'd come back out, it was gone. It, they take my leg. One night [Pause] a, a toolpusher come out there and I'm sittin' on the bench, in fact I'm layin' down on the bench, you know, a towel on and stuff like that. The toolpusher said, "Larry," he said, "you're gonna have a run a certain time tonight." You know, I said, "Well, I can't go nowhere." Said, "What do you mean you can't go nowhere?" Said, "Somebody stole my leg." He said, "What?" [Chuckles] Said, "Somebody took my leg, man." [Slight pause] Oh he take off runnin'. And you could hear him on the PA sayin', "Whoever stole the Captain's leg, bring it back to him, he's gotta a run to make." And man, the whole place started laughin'. Then they come runnin' in there, "Man, what happened? What happened?" You know, and I tell 'em, "You know, well somebody playin' a joke on me. Took my leg." They had a, what they call the leg uh, search, you know. They go room to room, see where he hid that. And every once in awhile you'd see, one of 'em come back with it, you know, "Here you go Cap." But there was never a dull moment.

SW: He ever admitted to stealin' the leg or he just said he was bringin' it back?

LF: Uh, no nobody ever admit. And, you know, it was, I, I knew it was all in fun. You know, it's not like they take it and throw it overboard and I'd never see it again. They just hide it from me and it's, if they didn't do it, then they didn't like you. If figured if they know me enough or like me enough to pick on me, which was, you know, everybody did, you know, I was alright. I was in their graces. But uh, when you'd first go on the rig, you had to [Pause] I don't know how you'd say that. You'd have to earn their, their trust or their like or somethin' like that, 'cause you a stranger in, in, you know, in their domain, you might say. And some of them guys might be workin' that rig 10, 12 years. It was like their home away from home. And when you walked in there they, they wanted to make sure that, you know, you could be trusted or you could be liked or were you a horse's butt or something like that. 'Cause we'd get some guys, you know, they, they thought they were kingpin. And so uh, you learned to s-, uh, early when you go to work there you learn to, you know, you get along. And then I must have been doin' alright 'cause I never got run off no rig. So, I believe I was doin' alright. I enjoyed it, I really did. Like I say, there was good times and bad times.

SW: If uh, if you were 20 years old right now, would you uh, would you do it again?

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LF: Blink of an eye. [Pause] I miss it. Uh, uh, I miss it [Pause] in the sense of the word I missed the people I worked with. I made a lot of good friends. But since, you know, since I've left I've lost track of, you know, most of the people that were roughnecks and, and, you know, company men. Lot of 'em passed away. Uh, lot of guys that I worked with on the boats, you know, 'cause we, we were two boats, always two boats and two skippers. A lot of 'em that I know of passed away. Some of 'em I don't even know where they went to. Like what part of the country they are, they, or if they still alive or if they're not alive, you know. 'Cause you see, we all, we were all pretty much the same age. I'll, I'll be 65 in, in August. I, I consider I'm fortunate I'm still alive. I feel good, I'm healthy. I do most anything I wanna do. I like to work on old cars. Uh, my cars, 'cause all of my cars are old. And uh, 'fact I just worked on Julia's car a while back. Did a brake job on her car. It's, it's somethin' I like because I can be by myself, you know, get away from everything, and uh, and when you get through with it, you feel, you feel you've conquered something. Even, even though it just a, like a brake job or somethin' like this. It's, it's, a man to me has to have somethin' he can look back on and say, well, you know, I've done somethin'. Even though it's not, not that much, it, it satisfies me. I'm, I'm satisfied because my kids turned out to be the way they are. I, oh, I made mistakes during life, you know, everybody does. Man who hasn't made mistake hasn't, hasn't done anything I, I figure. I, we've been married, me and my wife for 41 years now. So we must've done somethin' right. [Pause] Um. [Pause] I don't know what else uh, I can [Slight pause] unless you got, like you said, unless you got somethin' you want to ask there.

SW: I've, I've-

LF: Over, overlooked.

SW: Pretty much asked my questions and then you added some stories which were good, even questions I didn't ask.

LF: Well there was, like I said, there were a lot of good times. [Pause] Uh, I don't, I can't think of, except o-, that one time that I had regrets of being offshore. Like I said, when I lost [Inaudible] and two guys fell overboard and I, we never could find 'em again. Like I said, that's somethin' I'd just rather not talk about. That was a long drawn-out affair. Uh.

SW: You want to take a little break and get some coffee and come back?

LF: Yeah, if you got anything-

SW: We can do that.

LF: To talk about, we can uh-

[END OF RECORDING]