

**MMS OFFSHORE GULF OF MEXICO**

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interviewee:** CHARLES PEARCE

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**Interviewer:** Jamie Christy

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Bio

Charles Pearce was born in the Atchafalaya Basin and grew up on a houseboat. He is the son of a commercial fisherman who moved to Morgan City in the early 1940's to work in the oil field. His father roughnecked for Humble Oil and then transferred to production at Duck Lake. He went to work at Chicago Bridge and Iron Works and learned to weld at age 16. Mr. Pearce went to work for Sun Oil's seismograph department in the early 1950's. He was first part of a "water crew" that worked south Louisiana and then he joined a "land crew" and went to Brownsville and the Valley. He quit Sun Oil to stay in one location and went to work as a welder in Morgan City. Mr. Pearce mainly worked for LeBlanc Welders and for South Coast Welders. He did rig welding for Brown and Root, Kerr-McGee, Texaco, Shell, and other oil companies out of Morgan City, La.

**Side 1**

JC: This is Jamie Christy and I am at the home of Mr. Charles Pearce at 1492 Evergreen in Bayou Vista. Today is Tuesday, July 6, 2004. Mr. Pearce, could you tell us just a little bit about yourself, where you are from?

CP: Sure, I would be happy to. I came out of the Atchafalaya Basin, born and raised in the Atchafalaya Basin. We lived on a house boat. My dad was a commercial fisherman – catfish, horned frogs, trap coon – whatever was in season, to make a living. And when the oil field business started coming into being in the early 1940s, my dad moved to Morgan City and started working in the oil field. He actually started working on a boat, driving a boat for different companies and then went to work for the oil companies in later years.

JC: Do you remember which companies he worked for?

CP: Well, he roughnecked for Humble, which was Humble Oil Company then. Back then, a lot of folks did not know it but Humble was actually a branch of Exxon. In later years, they consolidated all their little companies and went strictly to Exxon but

he stayed with them and retired with them. He roughnecked for, I do not know – five or six years, and when they made the . . . found up in what they called the Duck Lake area, started drilling up there and he finally had a pretty good sized field at one time. And so, my dad transferred into production and worked out of there until he retired. So, it worked out something real good for him.

JC: Did you live on a houseboat when you came to Morgan City?

CP: We were living on a houseboat when we came to Morgan City. We moved in to what they called back then was “the pit.” You probably heard some talk about “the pit.”

JC: Back there like by Swift Ships?

CP: Yes. A lot of folks lived in houseboats in that period back then. And we stayed in a houseboat there for a few years and my dad bought a house on Second Street in Morgan City. We lived there a number of years. They bought another house on Seventh Street. It was a new house . . . Mr. D.C. Walsh built those houses. My mother and dad moved to Seventh Street and they sold the little house up on Second Street, and they lived on Seventh Street until they both retired and passed away.

JC: Did you go to school here in Morgan City?

CP: No, I did not. I went to school out there in the Basin. I went for a few years to what they called Bayou Chien's School. We moved around quite a bit in the area and what they did was we moved into an area and they fished around and they would catch the fish out so they moved on somewhere else and that is kind of what was the lifestyle. So, I did not go to school that much in Bayou Chien for that reason and for some other reasons.

When I was getting on up in age, a little older, some missionaries came to that part of the country, some Baptist missionaries, and I was converted, my mother and dad – we were all baptized at the same time in the river out there out on the sand bar and it was quite unique. But they established the Baptists and started working with the people in the area and they saw the need for a school in the area where we lived, so under the Iberia school system, they established a little school down at what they called Hog Island. That is where I finished grade school, right there on Hog Island. A huge graduating class. It should have been two of us to graduate but my partner, he got tired and he dropped out before graduation. So, I was the sole graduation class at that particular year.

JC: What year was that, do you remember?

CP: That was in the early 1940s. From there, I went to school over in Eunice which was another Baptist center, too. The Baptists had a high school over there that was kind of like a second chance for older people who felt like they were called into the ministry but they did not have a high school education, so they established this school primarily for those and for people like myself who did not have an opportunity to go to high school. I went to school over there. I graduated there in 1947.

JC: Hog Island, one graduate!

CP: From there . . . actually, I had finished the school a little early, went to work on a boat for a good friend of the family who was running this boat at the time, and I went deck hand for him. I think I was about sixteen years old then. From there, Chicago Bridge and Iron had put in a huge shipyard in Morgan City after the war broke out and they were building dry docks, huge dry docks for the Navy. The dry docks, they would take them out there where all the fighting was and if one of the ships got damaged, hit or something, well, they could dry dock it right there and repair it. So, I went to work in the shipyard and that is where I learned how to weld. They had a school set up there in the yard because when the war broke

out, they drafted every available man that was not too old, that was not crawling, really! They drafted young married men, middle married men with families. We were not prepared for that. When the Japanese came over and started hitting, we had to hit back, of course.

I worked in a shipyard for a few years. When I became eighteen, I registered for the service and I was turned down because I had an extremely nervous system. My stomach gave me a lot of . . . still gives me problems. But they turned me down for the service for that and that is when I decided to go to high school and see if I could get a little more learning and I ended high school over at Acadia Baptist Academy over in Eunice. When I graduated from there, I was 20, I guess, or 22, 21 or 22. And then from there, I worked about one year, then went to Clarke Memorial College over in Newton, Mississippi. This was a junior college back then. I stayed that one year, learned enough to know that I was not college material, so I gave it up! I followed my welding career after that.

I went to work for Sun Oil Company before this in the early 1950s, real early 1950s. I worked for them five years. That is when I worked with Leonard. I worked for them almost five years in seismography, oil exploration. They did not pay that much money but it was a living. But we moved a lot. We were a water crew. When we first went to work for them, we worked all south Louisiana bayous and the edge of the Gulf. Then, they made a land crew and we just went

kind of up the coast, all the way to Brownsville and from there, we went down in the Valley. I quit them down in Laredo, Texas. Two of my children were born in Texas. Our first one, my daughter, she was born in Beaumont, Texas. Then, my oldest son was born down in what they called Pharr, Texas, down in the McAllen area. That is right down in the Valley. Beautiful country down there. There is nothing but vegetables and fruits and stuff like that. It is beautiful.

JC: So, when you were working with Sun, you moved from place to place?

CP: With Sun, we moved, yes. Once we hit land, the last year that I was with them when I quit them, we had twelve moves that year and we had the two children. They were a couple of years old. So, I told my wife, I said, "You know, these kids are going to be ready to go to school and we just cannot move them in and out of school like this," so I decided to quit and come back home.

JC: Did Sun pay for you to move when you moved?

CP: No, they did not do that back then.

JC: They just expected you to . . .



CP: I gave them a notice that I quit, in the manner that I should have. I gave them the notice. The party chief was an extremely nice guy - everybody on the crew was – but the party chief and the surveyor . . . I worked with the surveyor. We did a lot of surveying work, laid out the line for them to come back and shoot and take the seismic readings. And it was nothing with the company or with the people that I worked with. It was just the fact that it moved too much and I felt like we needed to get settled somewhere when these kids got ready to go to school, you know, to put them in school and keep them there. So, that was the reason for me quitting Sun Oil Company.

JC: What did the people you worked with that had children do?

CP: Well, we were pretty much all young couples back then. I do not remember that any of them had school kids, I do not think. The older ones that would have had kids in school did not have any children so there were not any in school, I do not think, that I can recall.

JC: So, when you started out with the seismograph, you were offshore with them, is that right?

CP: Yes, in a sense. They had what they called a quarter boat that we lived on and we

would stay out ten days, worked ten on and I think it was four days off, and that was our schedule. But we were not very far. We did not go offshore. We just worked the edge of the Gulf but the quarter boat was not out in the Gulf. It was always behind the islands or somewhere.

JC: So, what was it like shooting from the quarter boat?

CP: Well, we just lived on the quarter boat. All the work was performed by boats away from the quarter boat. It was a real nice setup living on the quarter boats. They fed us good. We always had good cooks. It was real nice. It was kind of like in later years when the offshore business started with the drilling and production, whoever worked for the oil company, they stayed out there seven days and then they were off seven. They finally went to fourteen and seven, so you were out there fourteen days, come in for seven. So, it was not bad. It was not that bad.

JC: What was, say, a typical day like for you when you were living on the houseboat and shooting?

CP: On the quarter boat? Well, we would get up about six o'clock and eat breakfast. The cook would get up, call everybody. We would get up, get ready to go to

work, eat breakfast. I worked with the surveyor . . . we would get whatever we were going to need to work with that day. We would go out and survey and put up stakes where the crew that did the shooting would come back and know exactly where to drill. They had a drill crew that had to drill, put down a little pipe and then they would drop the dynamite down in there, so much of it, and then they would get off a distance and ignite it whenever they would get everything set up just right and the guy would be in this other boat up there where he would record the readings and develop the films. So, it was real nice. Everybody that was working with the drilling crew, they got everything together and got ready to go out there to do the drilling, and the shooting crew, the same thing; the surveyor . . . we all had different boats. It was just a routine operation.

JC: So, they carried a lot of dynamite on the boat?

CP: Well, we carried some – whatever they needed. Did not carry that much. We had a little barge with a special made box where they kept all the dynamite. It was always kept away from where the quarter boat was. So, like in the morning when we were getting ready to go out and work for the day, the shooting crew would go by and pick up . . . they say, ‘we are probably going to shoot a line today that has 50 holes.’ So, they would get enough dynamite for 50 shots and then lock the thing back up. So, that is all they would carry on the boat for that day or maybe

25 holes or whatever the case may be.

JC: I know dynamite can be kind of tricky and you had to be careful. Did they ever have any accidents or did anybody get hurt?

CP: No. We never had any accidents. In later years, they had pretty much the same operation or a little bit different but offshore, they started doing this offshore with big boats and they would . . . they did not drill and put up stakes like we did. They had a different system and they would carry all the dynamite on the boat because they worked out far. They had a little accident a time or two out there. It was nothing serious but it could have been. But it was a pretty safe operation, really.

This type of dynamite that they used back then was kind of like a coke can. It was a can and it had threads on it that when . . . it came in singles and when it got ready to shoot this particular hole that may call for just five sticks of dynamite, explosives, or whatever they called it. So, they would just screw these five things together and attached the detonator to it and dropped them in the hole and they would go off over there and set it off. So, it was pretty safe, really.

JC: Did it make a big splash, noise?

CP: Yes, it made a big splash, pretty good noise when it went off. That is the principal on which this works. This charge down there, when it goes off, it sets off a lot of vibration, and you have an instrument up there – it has a technical name but right now, it slips me. We refer to them as jug lines. This huge cable and they had these little, what they called jugs on them every so often and these were real sensitive. That is what picked up the vibration, sent it to the operator up there but the instrument that was recording did the recording. So, whenever a fellow was ready, they would set off the charges and then he would record it so many seconds. It was all figured out. And then, he would develop the films and we would take them back at the end of the day, take them in the quarter boat, kind of look at them, get them ready and sent them on . . . Beaumont was the headquarters so that is where they really . . . the engineer took these readings and determined whether they were all there or the possibility of oil or whatever.

JC: Did you ever have anybody say that it disturbed them in their home or on their boat? You see a lot like in “Thunder Bay” where the shrimpers did not like the oil men. Did you see any of that?

CP: We did not have much of that. Now, once we got on land, out in the country sometimes, we would be running a line right on the side of the road. A company

would have to go and get permission from all the landowners to do that, to shoot. And we had a little complaint with too much vibration close to the house. We would tell them it was a one-time thing. It was this one time and we are gone – we are moving on. But not really out in the water. We had a conservationist with us at all times because sometimes, if it was enough vibration, if there were some small fish around or even some pretty good sized ones, it may kill them. So, we had a conservationist that the state furnished to take care of all of that. He had to report whether there were any fish killed or whatever. Of course, it would come back on Sun Oil Company wondering why you were killing these fish, whatever.

JC: Did you have to pay for it?

CP: We never did have enough to even report because it was not like we were shooting right out in the open water. We would drill down so deep and put what we called a three inch or four inch casing – pretty good size, and they put the charges down in there all the way, way down in the ground, so it was not that much vibration up in the water. So, we did not have . . . you may kill a little fish, a couple of little small ones once in a while but that was about it.

JC: So, the conservationist was from the state?

CP: Yes, he was from Jena, Louisiana. A real fine old gentleman. We called him Pop Payton. Payton was his name. A real nice old gentleman. He got along with everybody. If you killed one or two just little bitty old fish, he would not even report it. It was not enough . . . well, we never killed any amount of fish to amount to anything.

JC: So, he would write a report?

CP: He would write a report every day or every week - I do not know how he did it – and turned it in to the conservationist department and they may have read them or they may have not – I do not know. You know how all that goes. Formality more than anything.

JC: All the conservationists went with all the seismic crews?

CP: Well, I am sure they did. I know, on our crew, we had one at all times. Yes, the whole time we were in water, doing shooting in the water. He went out with us. As long as we were out working, he had to be with us. We would work ten days and the whole crew would come in, they would shut down for five days, then go back for another ten days. So he would come and go with the crew. And he lived

in Jena. It was kind of convenient. My wife was from north Louisiana and on my days off, well, I had to go see her. Jena was on the way – just a little bit out of the way, so I would bring Pop and drop him off and then pick him up on the way back.

JC: So, he was a friend.

CP: A dear friend. He really was. A fine Christian gentleman. Not perfect by any means which none of us are, but he tried. He had one of these, for lack of a better word, one of these “political” jobs is all it was. The type of shooting and everything we did, we did not kill any fish. Now, in later years when they went on out in deep water and started dropping these charges just out in the water, they killed some fish then, so I could see where it was necessary to have a conservationist to say, ‘Well look, you are killing too much fish. You cannot shoot there. You have to condense your charges so they do not kill fish,’ and things like . . . but the type of shooting that we were doing, we just did not kill any fish. So, it was just more or less a formality to have him out there really. He did not do anything. He stayed on the quarter boat. He very seldom went out in the field with us. We just had . . . ‘No, Pop. None.’ ‘Oh, today we had one little old crooker came up or something like that.’ ‘Here, write it down.’



JC: Did you ever hear like back in the days about a dispute between the state government here in Louisiana and the federal government where the boundary would be? Three miles off or ten miles . . .

CP: Oh, yes.

JC: Do you remember that?

CP: Oh, yes. There was a lot of talk about that. I am not sure . . . well, I assume that they settled that and came to an agreement because I think they do have now so many miles out is state and from then on is federal government. But yes, there was quite . . . the federal government wanted it to start way in here and the state said, no, you are going to go way out here. This is state, this is not federal. And they finally settled on . . . I am not really sure what it is but it is so many miles out is state and from there, the federal government claims it.

JC: I understood it held up some leases and all.

CP: Yes, it did because the companies were ready to lease this huge block but because the state was saying, well, we go out this far and the federal government said, no, you only go here and they could not start any exploration on that block until that

was settled so they know who to pay the money to because they had to pay several kinds of taxes that these companies pay to drill out there. Until they settled that, they did not know whether to pay that to the state. I think what they finally did . . . it went on for so long that they started putting the money in escrow. And then, when they settled it, and said, well, this money is what we drilled in this area and then the state and federal government got their share of it, whatever it was.

JC: I think old Huey Long was involved with some of it.

CP: Old Huey was involved in it, yes. Earl Long and Huey. But Huey started it all. He was quite a governor. He is still being talked about.

JC: He sure is. Did you ever hear about him favoring any of the oil companies, one over the other?

CP: Not Huey. Maybe Earl. Not Huey. Huey Long was the one who put in all these bridges. Anywhere you are out in Louisiana, when you see a bridge, Huey Long put those in, had them put in. And that was back in the Depression days. His motto was, "A car in every garage and a chicken in every pot." Back then, it is kind of like it is now. You had your wealthy and you had your real poor. You

only had two classes back then. And he was fighting for the underdog. He went after the rich people. That is how he was able to put these bridges and do all the road work that he did because this was back in the 1930s and the early part of the 1940s when there was very little money. And he was able to do all of that. Today, they have millions of dollars and they cannot find money to repair a bridge or to paint. The bridge in Morgan City needs painting so bad.

JC: So, you think Russell may have been more involved with the oil companies?

CP: Russell, yes. Earl and then Russell definitely more than Earl or Huey. Huey was probably involved with them but he was in their pockets. That is why they put a bullet in him.

JC: Do you think so?

CP: Oh, yes.

JC: Do you think it had to do with the oil companies?

CP: Well, I am not saying with the oil companies but with money people.

JC: Wealthy people.

CP: It could have been some with oil people but it is just money people in general because he was going after them and saying, 'Hey, these poor folks have got to have a little bit, too.'

JC: Were blacks working for the oil companies?

CP: This seismographer at Shell was. At Sun Oil Company, we did not have any black people.

JC: Never?

CP: Never. I do not know the reason. Well, this was back in the early 1950s and they really had not come in to their being, so to speak. They were still kind of held back. It is not like it is now. Boy, they have more rights than you and I.

JC: Did Sun ever go to hire any blacks?

CP: I am sure they did.

JC: Later on?

CP: Yes, and I am sure they had some in production and drilling but in the seismograph, to my knowledge, they did not have any back then.

JC: So, after you quit working offshore, then you started doing seismograph onshore, right? On land?

CP: Yes.

JC: And where all did you go with them?

CP: When they made the land crew, we started back in Lake Charles. Then, from Lake Charles, we went to Beaumont, Texas. From Beaumont, just right up the coast. I do not remember all the little towns, until we got to the Valley. Do you know what we are talking about, about the Valley?

JC: I had a roommate from McAllen.

CP: Yes. And then, we just went right straight down in the Valley and went to a lot of little towns – McAllen, Pharr . . . I cannot remember all of them now. Laredo.

That is where we were, in Laredo, when we quit, came back to Houston and took a job there.

JC: When you were down there, did you work with any Mexican people?

CP: No, but we rented from one.

JC: You rented a house?

CP: We rented a little house. They were very nice people. Of course, they had come across years before and they were probably illegal citizens. I do not know. There are a lot of Mexicans in Laredo.

JC: But the company never hired any?

CP: No, because we already had our full crew whenever we moved down in there so they never did hire any.

JC: So, when you started on land, you moved a lot?

CP: We moved a lot, yes.

JC: Like how often?

CP: Well, like back in Lake Charles, I remember how long we stayed there. We may have stayed there two months. Went to Beaumont, we moved to Beaumont and were working in an area there – we may not have been there but two weeks. We moved a lot of places. We were only there about two weeks. They gave you a little piece of land, so much land, to explore and there may be one line or two lines or three lines – it may take us about one week or two weeks to do that and then we would move on further down.

JC: Where did you stay?

CP: We rented. Some of them had small trailers that they would load and parked them and then stayed . . . my wife and I and Aucoin . . . he did the same that we did . . . we rented. Whenever we moved into a town, we would just find a little place to rent.

JC: Did the company pay for your place to rent?

CP: No, we were on our own.

JC: You had to take that out of your salary?

CP: Yes.

JC: Did you keep all your things with you every time you moved?

CP: Yes. When we first started, my wife and I had just married. When we got married, I was working for Sun Oil Company on that seismic crew, water crew, when we got married in 1953 and shortly after that, they made a land crew. We did not have . . . just clothes, more or less. We would move in the car. It was not long until we had to have a little trailer. You know, you keep accumulating.

JC: That must have been difficult to pick up and move.

CP: Oh, it was. And the longer you do it, the more difficult it gets because the family grows and then your belongings get more extensive and you have got to have bigger trailers. When you move in to town like at first, right there in De Ridder. We had to move into De Ridder and work some of the marsh down below there. And we moved in the river and we rented just a little bitty, like a shotgun house – real small but it was just the two of us so we did not need anything very big.



JC: And could you find somebody to rent you a place for two weeks or one month?

CP: Well, we would usually have to pay them at least one month but the rent was pretty cheap back then. It was not a lot of big expense.

JC: Did you know where you were going next or did they kind of just come to you and say this is where we are going?

CP: Sometimes we knew, sometimes they would be right at the last minute before they would say they might have some . . . ‘We either going to go on to,’ blah, blah, blah, or ‘We are going to be going over here. We have not gotten our marching orders yet.’ But sometimes, most of the time, we knew pretty much ahead of time when we finished this area where we would be going next. But I loved it down in the Valley. That is beautiful country. It is extremely hot in summertime, extremely hot, but at night, it cools off real nice. Back then . . . I had not been down there since then but we have not been back down there. But back in that area, they did not have . . . very little air-conditioning. They had window units, water cooled air window units is what they used. And that was all you needed. I mean, it is kind of like desert country – hot in the day and at night, the temperature just drops. So, it was not too bad.

JC: Were your children born when you were still with Sun over there?

CP: Two of them. We had two of them while we were still moving. We have five. My daughter was born in Beaumont. And then, one year later, just a little over one year later, my oldest son was born. He was born down in McAllen.

JC: In the Valley.

CP: Yes, down in the Valley. And then, we came back . . . I quit them and we came back before my third child. He was born in Louisiana, in Shreveport.

JC: Did you quit because you wanted to stay in one place more or less?

CP: More or less, yes. We wanted to try to get somewhere and get settled where we would be kind of permanent, you know, so that when the kids started school, we would not have to be taking them out of this school and moving them around.

JC: So, you decided to come back to Morgan City?

CP: Well, I quit and when I quit Sun Oil Company, my wife's uncle was working for

Texas Instruments there in Houston. He said, "Come to Houston. We need some men. Texas Instruments is hiring some hands now." So, I went, took a job with them. I am not an inside person. I have always worked out and that just was not for me. So, while I was working there, a friend of mine knew . . . well, I had learned how to weld one year before this, you know, then I went doing all this other stuff but a friend of mine put in a welding shop here in Morgan City and he needed a welder, a shop man to take care of the shop and do a little welding, so he asked my dad where I was and he told him. He called me and wanted me to come. His name was Johnny Reeves. I said, "Johnny, it has been so many years since I welded, I probably forgot how." He said, "No, you never forget. You will have plenty of time in the shop to get your hands back in it. We want you to come, if you will." I said, "O.K." So, we moved back in the middle 1950s, I guess. I have been here ever since.

JC: And so, were you working on oil rigs or things like that when you were doing welding?

CP: Yes. Did a lot of repair on the rigs, did fabrication in the shop – the stuff that went on the rig and we would take it out, install it and stuff like that.

JC: So, you climbed up on those rigs out in the water?

CP: Oh, yes. I swung off of those ropes off of those boats on there. I felt like a monkey! I went to work for Kerr McGee . . . Johnny Reeve . . . in 1958, we had a pretty good little recession. Republicans in charge up there. Luckily, it did not last very long. But it got tough here.

JC: It was bad?

CP: It was bad. Absolutely. So, Johnny Reeve was a fine Christian man, and Brown & Root had a yard out here during that time and they were going pretty strong. And Johnny . . . we had some work at their yard. But it was getting so slow, Johnny said, "Well, I am going to have to close the shop, Charlie. I hate to tell you" . . . I said, "Johnny, you have to do what you have to do. Things are just falling apart here, that is all." He said, "I am going to be honest with you. I can keep a couple of welders at that Brown & Root yard but the man wants me to pay off under the table and I am just not going to get in" . . . I said, "Johnny, I admire you for that. Just don't do it. Don't worry about" . . . he did not have about three hands working for him, four hands at the time . . . I said, "We will find some work. The good Lord is going to take care of us somehow." So, he did. He closed down shop. Then, I went to work for Kerr McGee rig-welding for them out in the Gulf.

JC: Do you remember some of the rigs you went to?

CP: Well, when I was rig-welding for them, I went more or less to the same rigs all the time. We would go out and pull . . . we were working seven on or fourteen and seven – I forgot, whichever . . . I would go to that one rig and we stayed right on it. It was a pretty good sized, what they called these semi-submersible rigs. They were built on some huge pontoon types of deal and they would fill those with water and lower it down to a certain level and then anchor it. And it was a pretty big rig but we had a lot of maintenance on there and whenever they got ready to drill, they would always have a lot of welding to do to hook up for them to do the drilling and everything. They had another crew that worked opposite of us. But we went to the same rig all the time.

JC: Was it difficult work?

CP: Not really. It was just regular welding. You know, welding is welding. When you are welding a pipe, whether you are welding here on land a six-inch pipe or you are running one out there, it is basically the same.

JC: Did you have safety equipment?

CP: Oh, yes. They were always pretty strict with safety.

JC: Kerr McGee, that is?

CP: Yes, Kerr McGee.

JC: They were strict?

CP: Well, most all of the oil companies. Shell Oil Company – I did some work for them. They are fanatics on safety.

JC: I am beginning to see that.

CP: They are fanatics. They are going to tell you they never had an accident. Never. But they do not report them is what they do.

JC: Oh, is that right?

CP: Unless it is something that they have to . . . if it is real bad that you have got to go to the hospital, then they have to report it but if it is anything else . . . if you break

a leg, send you to the doctor and he will put a splint on it or whatever, and you go back to work. You may sit there for three or four weeks until that leg gets to where you can walk on it but they are going to bring you out there. That is not lost time. It has to be a lost time accident for them to report it. As long as they keep you on the job, it is not a lost time accident. There is a lot of that that goes on in these companies. They pull the wool over people's eyes and make them think they are . . .

The last time I worked for them . . . well, I went to work for Brown & Root in latter, just before they closed the yard down here in Morgan City . . . I do not know if you are familiar with it. Probably not. Were you?

JC: Sure.

CP: I worked out there three years prior to the time they closed the yard. I was working there when they shut it down. They sent me . . . they had a couple of welders they would send out to Weeks Island. Shell has a little field out there and they were doing some fabricating and some work. They were kind of getting behind so they sent me out there to help them weld out a bunch of pipe that they tacked up together. Had a whole bunch of little two-inch pipe, that old small stuff, all kinds of turns . . . had it all set up in jacks. Of course, I had a helper. I

would do the welding, he would do the grinding and the clean up and every thing.

I wear glasses to see . . .



Side 2

JC: So, you were saying that when you went out to weld for Shell, you had to wear your glasses, safety glasses and then, the . . . what were they called?

CP: If you were doing any grinding, and when I was welding, all I needed was the safety glasses and my hood, my regular glasses. But, like, my helper, for him to do the grinding, he had to have the safety glasses with the side shield, mono goggles, what they called mono goggles over that, and then a grinding shield. Well, while he was grinding over the pipe and you have got to bend over and look up under there with that grinder, you know . . . he got a little something in his eye, it flew in his eye. Every morning, we would have a little safety meeting before they would send us out to the field. Up in the safety meeting in the morning, started talking about it and I said to the man, I said, "Well, we don't have any accidents in this facility." I said, "Well, my helper got something in his eye yesterday." "Well, he was not wearing all the safety equipment." I said, "I beg your pardon, sir, but he did and it was just lucky that the welder inspector was right there when it happened." He came up and he said, "Yes, I was right there. That boy had on all of the safety equipment when he was grinding." That Shell man said, "No, he cannot get anything in his eye if he had all his equipment on." He never would admit that. I said, "Well, I am going to tell you one thing, sir. In

this type of work, the law of average is going to catch up with you. You may work for weeks and not have a single thing. One day, a little something is going to happen. You are going to have a little accident.” “No, we don’t have any accidents in this field.” I finished welding out what they had for me to weld that day, so the inspector said, “Well Charlie, since you finished up there, we probably won’t need you tomorrow.” I said, “That is fine. You don’t call me. I will call you.” I let them know that I was not coming back, going back anyway – a nice way of letting him know. They still had some hands working out there. The very next day, they had some guy working up on the vessel. Right down at the bottom, there is a pipe rack with just all kinds of pipe, different size pipes and they were working in there doing something. Had this vessel with a big ladder hanging on the side of it. The cherry picker was doing something, bringing something around, and somehow or another, he hooked on the ladder and unhooked it and dropped it and this guy down there could not get out of the way. It hit one of them pretty good but it just luckily, the way it fell, I guess it broke the fall before it really hit them and they were not hurt real serious. But just to show, the day before that, that man said, “We never have an accident.” Then, that next morning, this happened. The guys I was working with came back and said, “Charlie, you were 100% right. They had an accident off there this morning,” and they told me about it. And, you know, in that kind of work or any kind of work, you work as careful as you possibly can, you can have a little accident. That is just life. That

is just like a little accident with your car today. If you drive long enough and on these highways, sooner or later, you are going to have some kind of little accident. Not your fault - somebody else's fault, but still you are involved in it.

JC: So, Shell's perfect record is not really so perfect!

CP: That perfect record is not that perfect, believe you me.

JC: Yes, I noticed the employees that work for Shell seem to want to say that as well that they do not have accidents and that they are the most . . .

CP: They kind of drill that into their heads and they more or less kind of have to go along with the company, I guess, to assure that they hold their job or something – I do not know. But yes, they are not as . . . and not only Shell. There are a lot of others out there the same way. They will make you think that they are 100% safe and they may preach it in talking but it is not that great once you get out there in the field.

JC: Were there some companies that you liked to work for more than others?

CP: Well, Kerr McGee was a good company to work for. Yes, they treated us good.

In fact, the rig I was on, *Rig 41*, right after I quit, they sent that rig over there off the coast of Africa to drill. So, I could have gone overseas if I would have stayed with them. Some of the guys I was working with did go but I never really did want to go overseas.

One time, I started to go on a pipeline over in some part of Africa. Went down to the test lab. Well, I got a work order to go down to the test lab and test. And that night, I got to thinking about it and I told my wife, I said, "I do not want to go to Africa." So, I did not. I did not go down to take the test. It is good money over there. A lot of guys went over there and made some real nice money but I never did really want to go for some reason or other. A guy that was married to one of my first cousins, he went over there with one of the oil companies and they did real well. He made some real nice money. They came back, bought a couple of rent houses and got set up pretty good. They did well. But it just was not my piece of cake. I would have probably been a lot better off than I am now if I had.

JC: That is a long way from home!

CP: Oh, isn't it though? I am kind of . . . I do construction work and a lot of years, I got to working up north quite a bit because of the money. It was good money up north.

JC: When did you stop working for the oil companies? When did you stop working for them?

CP: Basically, well, in 1964 is when I joined the union and got a union book, started doing construction work on all those plants along the river. But in between there, I worked the oil field some.

JC: What did you do?

CP: I worked with LeBlanc Welders and the South Coast Welders. We would go offshore and do work repair, whatever.

JC: Do you have any specific memories of working for these different companies?

CP: Well, when I was working for Leblanc Welders . . . I say this in all humility, but I am a pretty fair welder, and they got to send me out on jobs where they were having problems. Like, he called me up one night and the dispatcher said, "Charlie, I did not know. We have got a hedge out." When they drove all the casing, they have got to go and weld a special head for the connector and all the equipment to start drilling off of that. In those days, when we went out on those,

that was 24 hours a day. They paid us 24 hours a day. He said, “We have got a hedge out. If you want” . . . he said, “You know how to change that. Be up at the airport at 7 o’clock in the morning at Patterson. They are going to fly you out.” I said, “Sure, I will go.” We had another guy, lived down in Amelia, used to do most of the hedge work. I said, “I will go.” Well, I got out there on the rig that morning with my little tool box and stuff I needed. When I walked into the office, the tool pushers, the driller, and all of the personnel were standing there and they looked at me, said, “Well, what do you have to do to get ready to go to work.” I said, “I am ready. What do you have?” He said, “Well, my welder welded the outside and it held. He has been welding all night on the inside and he said it keeps cracking on him.” I looked at him straight in the eyes and I said, “Well, sir, first of all, I am not Jesus Christ and I cannot perform miracles. Normally, when a head is in that shape, you have to cut it off and start anew, but I will go down and take a look at it and see what the problem is. Maybe I can fix it. Maybe I cannot.” He said, “Well, I would appreciate it if you would go down and take a look and see what you can do.” Well, the rig welder, he was the one that stayed on the rig and did all the maintenance and stuff. He was a pretty fair welder – a young guy. LeBlanc, they just contracted welders. We were just sent out for different companies.

JC: Who was the rig for?

CP: I cannot even remember right now. It was a contract drilling company. They were drilling for one of the oil companies. The new welder was a pretty good welder but he just was not familiar with welding these heads. The way these heads are designed, it is like you have a part that is just pipe about so much of it and it is double walled. You weld the outside, then you get on the inside and weld the inside. Maybe a 16 inch or 20 inch. You had different sizes. And they had on the side, a fitting where they would screw . . . once you get it welded and let it cool down, they attach a grease gun there and they pump it up to 2,000, 3,000, 8,000, whatever it called for, to test it and make sure there are no leaks. And when they sent that head out, they put a plug in there to keep trash and stuff from getting in there. Well, he did not know about that so he welded the outside and did a good job. But when he gets on the inside and starts welding, it builds up pressure. That welding builds up pressure. And when he gets ready to close it up, well, it starts cracking back. He cut it out and he started again. He fought it all night. He took stainless steel, and this is mild steel pipe . . . he said maybe he will try stainless steel, maybe it will hold. With stainless steel, it was doing the same thing. I looked out and I saw what the problem was. I went back to him and I said, "I think I can salvage it." He said, "All right. My welder is going to work with you. He will get you anything you need – you just let him know." So, I did, I told that welder, I said, "Get me the biggest gouging tip you have, torch

everything.” So, I got in and had to burn that out, gouge out all that on the weld, all the stainless, and got it cleaned up to where I could see it pretty good and I started welding. You have got to preheat it and everything, and I started welding. That welder was handing me the rod and I welded. He said, “Welder?” I said, “Yes?” He said, “That well is not cracking?” I said, “No. I do not think so. I do not see anywhere.” He said, “I have been sitting here watching you. Man, I did everything just like you are doing. Just as soon as I finished welding, it started cracking.” Well, you see, when I went down there and looked at it, I saw that plug and I pulled it out because that relieves the pressure then. When there is pressure on that side, the pressure would not be relieved. So, I kidded with him a while and I told him what the problem was. O.K.

Another time. They sent me down below Venice, down out on what they called the Green Canyon for Exxon. The welder was repairing the pipe off of a pump, high pressure pump, and he had the same problem. He could not get . . . he ran a strainer. What they do with that high pressure pipe is they run a strainer, then they would x-ray it to make sure the strainer was holding before you come back and weld it out. Well, as soon as he would weld the strainer, it would crack. They would x-ray it and he would cut it out. So, they sent me out there and that man sat down . . . real nice. He said, “Man, I have got a problem down there. I hope you can fix it.” I said, “Well, I will go down and take a look at it and see.” He



said, “Whatever you have to do, it has got to be fixed. Whatever it takes, you just let me know and we will do it.” So, I went down and looked at it and I said, “Well, I think I can fix it.” So, I went ahead and started welding and, you know . . . what he had, he had too much of a crack. When he cut it, he cut too much out. And he was trying to run a strainer in there and it just would not hold. So, I started building up on the bottom. I would run a strainer, clean it up, run another strainer until I closed it up where I could get a good one pass in there. And they x-ray’d it and it held, so I finished welding it out. But anyway, I am saying all that to say this: Leblanc finally made me up a cap, a special cap that said on there . . . well, I forgot what the title was now but they gave me a special title, of going out and doing all these . . . fixing things that they were having problem with fixing!

JC: Things nobody else could fix!

CP: Yes, something like that.

JC: So, that was a good company to work for, Leblanc?

CP: Leblanc Welding was good. They were good people. They treated us good. South Coast, they were good people. I alternated. I worked for . . . if they both

called me the same time, I would work a couple of days for Leblanc Company, finish the job and come in. South Coast, may have a couple of days and I would go off to them. It was okay.

JC: So, you could tell them, “Yes, I will work” or “No, I won’t work today?”

CP: Yes because we were not really working directly for the company on account of we were just contractors – they would just call us when they got . . . kind of like a contractor. When they had work, they would call us. When they did not have work, well, we were on our own. We did not get paid, so we would work wherever we could find work.

JC: Do you remember working on any of the other rigs for any of the other companies?

CP: Oh, I worked on a lot of platforms out there in the Gulf: Texaco, British Petroleum. There were several of them. Right now, I cannot even think of their names. I am getting senile. I cannot remember anything.

JC: You have got a good memory. I just got you on the spot!

CP: I cannot remember things.

JC: How was Texaco?

CP: They are not a bad company to work for. They were good. Leblanc, the people they worked for, the supervisor, had what they called the west end of the . . . it was dividing their field, divided in the east and the west, and they had a supervisor over the west end and a supervisor over the east end. And most of our workers in the west had a colored guy . . . right now, his name slips me but a real nice guy. He was superintendent of that west field. Well, we were doing a lot of work out there and I had been working out there about a couple of months, I guess. And one day, he flew in on the platform where I was working. He said . . . came in, introduced himself and he said, "I am sorry I have not gotten around to meet you. I have been wanting to come see you. I do not know what you are doing but whatever you are doing, you are doing right because all my people, when I have something to do, they want to call you out." I said, "Well, I appreciate that. I try!" But Texaco is a good company to work for. They do not believe in keeping their platforms up . . . well, they did not back then. They let them get in pretty bad shape until the government came down on them and said, 'Hey, you have got to repair this thing.' So, they would call LeBlanc. They would say "Send me three welders or two welders, and whatever we have got to

repair, fix this and fix that.

JC: So, sometimes, they would not repair it until they had to?

CP: Until they had to. A lot of the grating on those platforms would get rusted out. As long as it would hold somebody, they would not worry!

JC: Isn't that something!

CP: But basically, they were a good company. Not a bad company to work for but they just did not like spending that money until they had to.

JC: But some of the other ones would keep the rigs up on their own?

CP: They would keep the rigs up very well. Once in a while, they would have something special that they needed done and they would send us out to do it. Like I said, if a little crane got old and they were replacing it, and the base had to be welded down to the platform, well, they would send specialized welders like myself and others. They would get us out there to weld that base down because that had to be right, because they pick up heavy loads with those cranes off of those platforms, off of the boats, and it had to be something where they knew they

were going to stay there.

JC: So, which of the companies would you say kept their rigs up the best or better than some others?

CP: Better than others? Shell kept their rigs up pretty good and there was another company but right now, I cannot even think. They kept their rigs up, too. But Shell kept their platforms and things in pretty good shape.

JC: I would imagine all that salt water and all would really . . .

CP: Oh, yes. A lot of rusting. They had to do a lot of painting. If they did not, that salt water would just eat up everything. There was quite a bit of maintenance that had to be done just about all the time. No matter how good they tried to keep it, that salt water was going to get to certain areas and rust it away and they would have to replace it, renew it.

JC: I mean, now, everybody is really environmentally conscious but, you know, it was not always that way, right?

CP: Right, and that really got underway after I quit welding out there.

JP: So, like, when you were out there, there was not any kind of environmental . . .

CP: Well, there was but it was not enforced. They had it but they did not go out to those rigs. When it really got down to the nitty gritty with it and they started going out to these rigs and seeing what shape they were in. Well, that is when things began to change. They said, 'Look, we can't have this! You have got too many people here out there working on these platforms and stuff. They have to be in shape.' So, they got all kinds of rules and they started enforcing them where they have to keep them up now.

JC: Did you see . . . now people are worrying about polluting the water, throwing wrappers in the water.

CP: That came about since I stopped working out there. Believe it or not, in the early days of the drilling out there, the Louisiana government did not have any kind of stipulation. They threw everything overboard. Everything. Scrap iron. Old crates. Garbage. Some of the mud that they used in the drilling. Everything went overboard. It polluted Grand Isle. Well, that has really had a big part in bringing the environmentalists into this and to start saying, hey, we have got to do something about this. But all that debris started washing up on the shore and it

got real bad there for a while. And really, that is when the environmentalists began to take over and to look at this and say, hey, we just cannot have this. It was just about to ruin Grand Isle where you could not go down there and go swimming or anything, fishing, and that had a big part in the environmentalists coming stepping in and saying, well, we are going to do something about this. And it took them a few years but they have it pretty much under control now. Not nearly like some of the other states. Now, Alabama, they have got it together.

When I worked at Leblanc Welders, they sent me in this and this other dude over there, it was on a Texaco doing some drilling off the Alabama coast there. They sent us over there to weld a head. Well, they usually get you out there a day or two ahead because when they get ready to do that head, like maybe they are already drilling and they are going to a bigger casing where they have to go to a different size of head, so they have to change, cut the old one off and go to a bigger head. They usually get you out there in plenty of time because once they shut that rig down, that is costing them money. They want to get that head replaced and welded and get that rig back drilling as fast as they can. So, the rig welders were doing a little pipe work they came and asked me and Marshall, "Would you mind having my welder to weld this pipe out while waiting for the head?" We said, "No, we will do it." I went out there and started welding a little bit and I burned a rod down about like that and I flipped it over the side and this

roustabout that was helping, he said, "Hey welder, I do not mean to be smart or anything but you cannot do that over here." I said "Do what?" He said, "Throw the rod stuff over. We cannot even throw a cigarette overboard out here. They are strict. They keep everything aboard and make them haul it in to land." Well, I guess they learned from Louisiana, what we went through, before their environmentalists just came in and started monitoring all of that. In the early years, they threw everything right off the rigs out there.

JC: And the company did not have any kind of policy or anything?

CP: No. The drilling companies or oil companies, it was to their advantage. It was not costing them anything to do away with their debris. They made more money drilling because they did not . . . now, they have to contain everything and bring it in. They have special tanks made that they put all that in and it is brought back in to shore. So, that is costing them money there, you know. But in the early days, hey, that was paradise to them. They were making big money at very little expense.

JC: Yes, it is a lot different now.

CP: It is a lot different now. The environmentalists have done a . . . and, at one point,



I think they kind of went to the extreme in the other direction and they got really too strict, but they have done a good job and I admire what they are doing because it is a lot safer out there for the people that are working and it is a lot better for the state of Louisiana that they are containing all this debris and it is not polluting our water and our shores.

JC: Do you have any memories of like some real bad pollution or dumping that you saw?

CP: Not really. It was just a common everyday thing. I mean, all of those platforms and rigs out there did the same thing, no matter what company it was. When the garbage can got full of garbage, the helper took it out there over the side and dumped it over. They used a lot of cement and mud, different kinds of mud they used to bring in out there in the early stages in sacks. Then, they would cut the sacks and put it in a hopper and mix it, mix it out there. Now, they use mostly bulk mud goes out in tanks already mixed. But back then, they would stand there, ripping those sacks and dumping them in the hopper and then mixing it. And all the paper sacks, bags, go over the side. When we were out there welding and cutting iron, if we had some scrap iron left, kick it off to the side. That is where it went, which that was not too bad of a deal because those old platforms and the iron around there were really good for the fish. It made a haven for the fish

because barnacles always gets on that iron and the fish would come and feed. So, that did not cause a lot of problems there. In the long run, it really worked out. I think it enhanced the fishing. But all the other stuff that would wash ashore like plastic bags and those cardboards and boxes and wooden boxes and stuff, it started washing into shore and it got pretty bad.

JC: Well, do you have any other memories that you would like to share?

CP: Well, some of those guys on those platforms used to fish a lot. They used to catch a lot of big fish.

JC: Is that right? They would bring their gear out with them?

CP: Yes. Oh, yes. A lot of them always had their fishing gear off. A lot of them just left it on the rig, you know. They were working so many days on, so many hours, but they loved to fish out there and it was good fishing. I never did fish. I never was into that salt water fishing but some of the guys did. They would catch all kinds of big fish. Sharks. They caught some big sharks in there. Yes.

JC: With a rod and reel?

CP: Oh, yes. Sometimes with a rod and reel or they may have a special line with a hook with a chain that they would fish those with so that it would not cut the line. They would catch them, cut the heads off and throw them back in.

JC: They did not eat them?

CP: No. Back then, they did not.

JC: Oh, no?

CP: No. But now, I understand they eat them. They are pretty good eating. Anyway, they say alligator is good, too. Do you eat alligator?

JP: I have had some alligator. Fried alligator.

CP: I can't . . .

JP: It is not too bad. It is pretty good.

CP: I don't know.

JC: Just can't do it?

CP: Eat frogs?

JC: Frog legs.

CP: I can't go that frog leg either! I guess because when I was growing up out in the basin, we hunted frogs and sold them to make a living. We would catch them by the sack full. Hunted all night and filled up a sack with frogs. I guess I have seen too many.

JC: They don't look good anymore?

CP: They don't look good! I might tell you about Hugo.

JC: Oh, yes.

CP: Do you remember Hurricane Hugo that came in to the Gulf?

JC: I remember hearing about it.

CP: I spent Hugo out there on one of Texaco's old platforms when I was working for Leblanc Welders.

JC: They did not pull you all in?

CP: They waited too late. They thought, well, it is not going to be as bad as they say it is, you know, that kind of thinking. They sent us out there to do some welding, repair work on that platform – it was me and my helper, and when it started getting real bad, well, they made a trip and took some of the Texaco personnel in but then, by the time they did that, it was too bad and they could not come back out. So, me and my helper and a couple of the Texaco guys were stranded on that platform. And the living quarters on it were nothing but an old trailer. A trailer is what it was. Of course, they had it anchored down. We spent that hurricane out on that platform.

JC: What was that like?

CP: It was not very pleasant.

JC: You saw it coming?

CP: Well, you know, yes, we could see it coming but when it got real bad, those waves got so huge, they looked like . . . it is not choppy water. With that wind blowing, the waves got to where they looked like mountains. Just huge rolls. And we had a standby boat anchored out there on about 1,000 feet of line, rope, and we could watch him coming up on that crest and going up, going up, and after a while, they would break over and go down and we would not see him no more . . . it looked like it would be another 5, 10, 15 minutes before the wave came back up. How they made it on that boat, I do not know.

JC: They had guys on the boat?

CP: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

JC: And you were in this trailer thing?

CP: That was our living quarters. That is where we slept in that trailer, yes. Had a little kitchenette there where they cooked and things like that. But it was bad. That old trailer made it. We lost the water. The line broke, the water line, and that water tank emptied but we had some jugs of water so we made it on the water. But we were just about to be completely out when the thing was over with.

JC: How long were you out there?

CP: Several days. Those platforms, the way they were constructed, you had what they called, I think they called it the Texas deck. It is the first deck and it is just above the water. Then, the next level is quite high. So, they have a set of stairs that goes up to the next level and it is usually made out of about eight inch pipe, all welded construction, and its constructed from the top level, it is made on hinges – big, huge . . . of course all that is welded out of heavy iron. So, when it would get rough, they had a winch attached and they could pick this thing up where the water wave would not be hitting it. Well, all that was gone. That was rusted out. There was no Texaco platform. The winch was not working. But those waves were so strong and coming in there . . . that stairway was about at least 40 feet, maybe more . . . those waves would come in and would pick that thing up and just slam it up against that top deck, and that whole platform would tremble. And it would make a terrible noise. Well, those guys working for Texaco had some come alongs and other devices, chains. They went out there and did everything to try to keep it from breaking off but nothing would hold it. That water was too powerful. It just kept throwing that thing up and pounding it until finally, the hinge and everything broke and it went. We never saw it again. It was powerful. I do not ever want to witness anything like that again. And I am good-natured. I should have charged them 24 hours a day and I did not. I charged them just 12

hours.

JC: Oh, no! Poor Mr. Charlie!

CP: Looking back now, I should have made Texaco pay off for not bringing us in but I did not. We could have probably cashed in on that for a little money. But at least I should have charged them 24 hours a day but I did not. Hindsight is always 20/20.

JC: Well, that must have been something.

CP: It was quite an experience. Hugo came in the Gulf and it went on up towards Texas and calmed a little bit. Then, it turned around and came back into the Gulf. So, we got it going and coming.

JC: What year was Hugo?

CP: I do not even know what year that was.

JC: I always get it confused with Camille.



CP: Camille hit Cameron. Camille is the one that wiped out Cameron.

JC: Hugo was after Camille?

CP: It was after Camille, yes. I do not want to get caught out there on another one of those. It was something else. We kept thinking maybe that trailer was going to blow off, but the way it was, it had piping and stuff around it so it was pretty safe but the wind could have torn it up. We were fortunate it did not.

JC: Well, good. Do you have any other memories that you can . . . I do not want to wear you out.

CP: Well, while I was working rig-welding for Kerr McGee . . . Kerr McGee, back in the early 1950s, started out down here. They were a contract drilling company. They did not have any holdings in the Gulf. They drilled wells for like Texaco, Shell, British Petroleum, whoever, and they did contract drilling. They were drilling off of Cameron for Gulf Oil Company. Winter time. Beautiful sunshiney day, but the north wind was blowing up a storm. But it looked real nice, you know. They used helicopters back then. We went on by boat. Got on that old boat. It was crew change. Time for a crew change. The crew got on that boat, we got off there and unloaded while the crew on the rig would load on and come

in. It started out it looked real good, but after we got offshore a little way, it started getting real . . . by the time we got off of that rig, it was 18 feet seas and we had to get off of that boat in that personnel basket in 18 feet seas. That was no fun.

I always got seasick. I was the last one on the boat . . . It was me and another guy on the boat. All the other hands went first. I said, "You go. I am going to wait." I was trying to make up my mind whether I wanted to get off of there or not because that boat was going up and down, they are trying to tie it to drop that back enough where you could jump in it and they would jerk you up before that boat came up and got you. They had a guy that went out, he hired out with Kerr McGee, a roughneck, he was going – this was his first trip out. He got sick just as soon as we left the landing and he stayed right there. Did not get up. We got out there, everybody got off. That skipper said, "Well, it is time for you to get off. Everybody is off except you and the welder." He said, "Man, let me tell you one thing: I am not getting off of this boat. If I ever get back to land, I do not ever want to set foot on another boat as long as I live!" So, the skipper said, "Welder, are you going to try to get off?" I said, "Yes, I guess so." So, I did but I was the last one. We had 18 feet seas. That is a hassle to get off of. This was a crew boat, about a 65 foot boat. They used small boats back then. They did not have the big crew boats like they have now. That was quite an experience.

While we were drilling that hole after this weather calmed down now, in one trip, we were working, I think, seven and seven at that time. Time for a crew change. The welder did not show up and what they called a motor-man, the guy that took care of all the motors, that ran the rig, the light plants and all that. So, the tool pusher said, "Would you two stay until we get these other guys out that did not show up at the landing. They are probably going to be a little late. We will fly them out later and the we will fly you in?" I said, "No, that is fine with me," and the other guy said yes. So, sure enough, later on, after the crew change, they came and they sent them out special flight in one of those old bell helicopters. I do not know whether you are familiar with them, with the little dome top on them, plastic, where you can see out of them? It hauled two people and the pilot. We came in. They came out there, the guy was unloading, we got on, come on in to shore. That was fine. Came home. The next day, this same little copter went down to Leeville and was flying out two Gulf Oil company personnel, some of the key personnel, and he crashed before he got off of that thing. They all perished – the one that we had rode in the day before. So, that kind of got you thinking whether you wanted to get back in another one or not.

JC: The same helicopter?

CP: Yes, the same one.

JC: Did he have technical trouble?

CP: Something went wrong with the copter and they did not make it.

**THE END**