

HHA # 00427
Interviewee: William C. Terrell
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz
Interview Date: June 27, 2003
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
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Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of "uhs" and "ums", repeated words, and the interviewer's backchanneling have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. At around 16 minutes the audio begins going in and out for the next six minutes; most everything is inaudible.]

Ethnographic preface:

William Terrell was born in 1943, in Kilgore, Texas, and is a third generation oilfield worker. His father worked as a motorman for Gulf Oil and moved the family around southern Louisiana when Mr. Terrell was an adolescent. After graduating high school in Kilgore; he went on to several colleges studying geology and was attending graduate school at Texas Christian University (TCU) when he joined a seismic crew for National Geophysical. Soon after in 1966 he hired on with Gulf in New Orleans as a geologist; he spend most of the next 15 years working in western Africa (Angola, Gabon, Zaire, Nigeria). Back in the States, he worked out of Houston and soon got into domestic exploration work; however, five years later, when Chevron bought out Gulf (1985) he was sent to a new job in London. In 1990 he requested a transfer and moved to Lafayette where he worked until he retired in 1998; he continues to work now and then for friends on a consultancy basis. During the interview he discusses the distinction between geophysicists and geologists, describes Gulf's work in Angola in the late 1960s and the other African countries, discusses moving with his family overseas, and talks about independent geologists.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [WT]

SW: Is a interview with Mister Bob Terrell.

WT: Bill.

SW: It's uh, Bill, I'm sorry. [WT chuckles] Bob was um, one of the guys who gave me your name. Sorry about that.

WT: That's okay.

SW: William Terrell. It's June twenty-seventh, 2003. And I set up the camera to where you can lean back or forward or whatever, and it'll get you. [Chuckles]

WT: Okay.

SW: Other than that you just ignore it. [Both chuckle]

SW: Yeah, you were just mentioning that your father worked for Gulf Oil?

WT: Yeah.

SW: And what did he do for them?

WT: [Sighing] Ah, I guess today you'd call it a motorman. He started out digging ditches for Gulf Oil in Kilgore, Texas, where I was born. So I was born in Kilgore in 1943. And he, basically, you know, like I said started from the ground up with Gulf. And digging ditches. And then he got into, like I said, what you would call a motorman, working on compressors and things. And I was trying to think his, it must've been '54 or '55 he was transferred to Krotz Springs for, to the recycling plant which they just built and opened to facilitate the Krotz Springs Field, which is basically a gas field. He was basically working on, they had large compression units there, so he was a mechanic and kept the compressors running and things like that. So I, we, well, I say Opelousas, we moved to Opelousas first and lived there for about a year and it was what a 25 mile commute from Opelousas to Krotz Springs.

SW: On Highway 90, right?

WT: Yeah, highway. Is it 90 or-

SW: One ninety.

WT: One ninety, yeah.

SW: One ninety, I'm sorry.

WT: One ninety. And two-lane highway and that got a little old, so one summer he decided to move to Krotz Springs, so we moved to Krotz Springs and Krotz Springs is still a small [Chuckling] town. So basically that lasted about a summer. [Chuckles] And we were, he tried to find a happy medium, so we moved to Port Barre. [Laughs] And we lived in Port Barre about a year. And I guess, well for one thing [Slight pause] I had started in Opelousas high school and all this moving around, so I wanted to continue to go to Opelousas High School, so while we lived in Port Barre, oh, I guess they would drive me about a mile and I'd catch a bus for Opelousas High School. It was the farthest out that the bus came. So that lasted about a year and then we moved back to Opelousas. [Chuckles]

SW: Lot of moving around. [Chuckles]

WT: Yeah.

SW: And did you have a lot of brothers and sisters?

WT: No, I've just got one sister who is 10 years younger than me.

SW: So you have a pretty small family so it wasn't too much of a problem to move around like that.

WT: Yeah, yeah. No that was, well... that's part of the oil [Chuckles] part of the oil business.

SW: And did you get into the oil in-, business because of your father's involvement in it? Is that sort of what, how it happened?

WT: I don't know, my father was in it, my grandfather was in it, my grandfather was a drilling supervisor for an oil company there in east Texas. And I used to go out on rigs with him when I was five and six years old. So I've been

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exposed to the, and Kilgore is basically an oil town. It's one of those situations where I guess by the time I was a sophomore in high school I decided what I wanted to do. And I guess when I was a junior, which must've been '59 or '60, I built a drilling rig for a sci-, for the science fair. [Laughs] So I was basically uh, in the oil business there. Since I was in high school. Which is I guess one of the fort-, fortunate things, I kind of knew what I wanted to do.

SW: And so uh, you finish school and did you start workin' for a company?

WT: Now what happened was my father quit Gulf in... I guess it was '60. And moved back to Kilgore. So I finished my senior year in high school back in Kilgore. So basically went to Kilgore College for oh a year and two summers, transferred down to University of Texas basically didn't like it there, wound up at [Silveras?] University out in west Texas. And uh, was going to graduate school at TCU and basically got a summer job workin' on a seismic crew. And [Chuckles] first in Briton Sound and then in the Atchafalaya Swamp, Morgan City, that was an experience. [Laughs] In marsh buggies and everything. Then down out of [Sighing] uh... out of New Orleans workin' in the marsh down south of New Orleans. And was tired of school and running out of money and basically hired on with them. It was a company called National Geophysical, it doesn't exist anymore. And so they gave me a permanent job there in New Orleans. And I sent out some applications and got a job offer from Gulf and, working in New Orleans, which was where I was at the time.

SW: Company that your father had left in 1960.

WT: Yeah. [Laughs] And just happened that that was the, well that was the, I guess, one and only offer I got. Because the oil companies at that time were coming out of a down turn. There had been, they, there had been oh I guess a down turn in the late '50s. And this was, I guess I hired on with Gulf in... I guess it was '66. And it was really starting to come out of a down turn and I was about one of the first people that Gulf had hired. They had fired a lot of people, oh, four or five years before that, which was kind of unusual because that was, those were the first times that anybody had ever been fired from an oil company. And it was the old thing that, you know, you hired on for life basically, you didn't change jobs, you expected to, if you did your job and if you worked the hours and [Chuckles] went where they sent you, then you were going to keep on with them. Which is, it was a little different culture than it is now. Basically if uh, if they wanted you to, you know, to transfer to Houston, you basically went to Houston. Now they ask you if you'd like to [Chuckling] go.

SW: They ask you very strongly. [Chuckles]

WT: No, no. You know, back in those days your next pay check will be sent to Houston. [Chuckling] If you'd like to collect it-

SW: And you gotta be there.

WT: Yeah. [Chuckles] "If not the, you know, you don't belong with us," was the basic story. I moved here in 1990 and this is now the longest I've ever lived in one place.

SW: Really?

WT: The longest before that was five years.

SW: You've moved around a lot.

WT: Yeah.

SW: With the same company or you switched companies?

WT: No, basically I stayed with Gulf my entire career until Gulf was bought out by Chevron in, what '85.

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SW: [Inaudible, whispering, but seems to be agreeing]

WT: Yeah. Gulf, Chevron bought Gulf. And I stayed with Chevron 'til I retired.

SW: You studied geology in school is that right?

WT: Yeah.

SW: That's why you ended up with the seismic guys.

WT: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, and I worked with Gulf and Chevron as a geologist and now we're geoscientists, but back then we were geologists and geophysicists. But now it's, it's become blurred as to what you are.

SW: It's just a name. [Chuckles] You do the same thing?

WT: Well... not really. Well, back then there was really two distinctions. You studied geophysics in school and a geophysicist basically did seismic interpretation, and a geologist didn't. Back in those days. Geologists didn't look at seismic lines, geophysicists looked at seismic lines. Even though, you know, I was doing, well, I never did geophysics when I worked for National Geophysical, it was basically just doing the data gathering in the field. We never did any interpretation. But now, like I said, with computers and workstations it's become a lot easier in the, you do a lot of seismic interpretation. But there's still the distinction, because you can still get a degree in geophysics and usually those people are in more technical geophysical jobs. They're doing things other than interpretation. Working on more technical problems. So I stayed in, I was hired in New Orleans working on a field in... on the delta. Basically a bay, West Bay was the name of the field, it was a bay field there. And uh [Pause] yeah, I was hired on and I went to report to work there in New Orleans, which was within a district office, which was off of Saint Charles Street, it wasn't downtown, it was a smaller district office of Gulf there. Gulf had [Sighing] oh, I think four districts there and each office was in a different part of town, which was, doesn't happen today, but back in those days they were kind of separate units. And exploration was a completely different office downtown, in the Saratoga Building downtown. And I worked a field I guess for about a year there. And the separation, I never knew that there was any geophysical data on that field, I was never allowed to see it, it was all [Chuckles] it was all downtown with exploration, which was kind of strange. Now, back now it was kind of strange. But I walked into the office there and the, was introduced to the manager who was an engineer. And that engineer, we kept working together for the next 20 years. But I worked in, I walked into that guy's office and the HR guy, you know, introduced me. And the first thing he said was, "Damn, another geologist. We don't need another geologist, we need more engineers." [Laughs] That was my introduction to him. I kept running into him all over the place. And he's still alive and he and my mother went to high school together in Kilgore, Texas. He was from Kilgore. And he and my mother were in the same class together. Kind of ironic. But I stayed and worked in New Orleans in about, for about a year. And they were interviewing people for jobs in west Africa. And basically in Angola. And at that time Angola was still a Portuguese colony, it wasn't independent. They were fighting the independent organizations there. So there was basically a war going on, but uh, we never saw much of the effect of it. So they were looking for basically warm bodies to set on wells over there. They had five rigs running, they were drilling, continually drilling with five rigs. And they-

SW: This was onshore or offshore?

WT: It was both. There were two onshore rigs and three offshore rigs. And they had just made a major discovery there. So they were trying to get on production and up their operations. So they, like I said, they were looking for warm bodies. They basically called into, you know, into an office and, you know, "How would you like to go to Angola?" I said, "Great." [Laughs] "When do you want me there?" And said, "Okay," you know, "we'll send you the paperwork and everything." [Audio goes in and out for the next six minutes; most is inaudible] back in my office over on Saint Charles Street and got out an atlas tryin' to find Angola. [Laughs] I didn't know where it was, but I was ready to go. At the time I was going through a divorce and [Inaudible] so I had really nothing to lose by being out of town.

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SW: I was gonna ask [if you were married and how it?] [Inaudible] but uh-

WT: Yeah, uh, yeah, I was married [Inaudible] married when I was in college and [Inaudible] I guess [Inaudible] and we separated [Inaudible]. So I was [Inaudible] takes a little longer than that because [Inaudible] permits and [Inaudible] full physical [Inaudible].

SW: They weren't sending you there to work [for a month and send you?] back home or anything.

WT: No.

SW: You were transferred there for awhile?

WT: Yeah. [Inaudible] permanently [Inaudible] for [Inaudible] and a half years. [Just a lovely place?].

SW: Even with the [instability?] [Inaudible].

WT: Well [Inaudible] civil war. It was [Inaudible] guerilla war was going on. There were areas of the country? [Inaudible] working on a rig for seven days, come back in and I would [Inaudible] so I [Inaudible].

SW: [Where?] would you guys stay [Inaudible]?

WT: [Inaudible] [eight apartments and it was?] [Inaudible] it was really [Inaudible for several minutes] going back. But, you know, he was dressed and he was a member of the Portuguese army but-

SW: Oh so the guy didn't know-

WT: No.

SW: Looked like a normal occurrence.

WT: Yeah. And 'course he was scared to death and we had, you know, two way [signal cyban?] radios and he asked if he could call somebody to tell 'em, you know, what was happening and they guy said, "Sure," you know. So we followed on the radios what was goin' [Chuckling] what was going on all the time. He was calling in. But there was a, kind of no-man's land there between the two countries. And basically he got through the Portuguese checkpoint, well, I mean, he had the guy hostage, so they let him through. And before he got to the Congo he left the, well, he didn't let him, he got out and walked the rest of the way [when?] a toolpusher turned around. Can't go-

SW: He just wanted a ride. [Chuckles]

WT: Yeah, he just wanted a ride out of the country with a hostage there so he could get out safely. So, that was kind of interesting.

SW: I guess it could've been worse, that guy could've been held for awhile and-

WT: Yeah, I mean, he coulda held him for, they coulda held him for ransom or tried to, I'm sure they had probably politically prisoners there at that time, they could probably try to trade political prisoners.

SW: [Inaudible, whispering]

WT: But, like I said, right now [Inaudible] it's still very, very unstable up there, yeah. But there [Sighs] I'm di-, digressing here, but-

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SW: No, that's okay. I-

WT: And, come back to family life, before I left for Angola I had met a girl in New Orleans that I was dating and we corresponded all the year that I was in Angola. And came back for my first vacation, and this was probably, I guess, '68. Came back for first vacation and over there you basically got, you know, 30 days vacation. And so we basically spent the vacation together and decided we would get married. We got engaged, decided we'd get married, and I went back to Angola. Well, I couldn't go back for another year, so we started trying to figure out, okay, how can we get married. And she could either come to Angola like the, but Angola, or it was Portuguese or very, was a very Catholic country and you had to get married in the church was about the only way you could get married, and there was a long waiting time and everything. And the company wouldn't support her getting a visa and everything like that, so that was kind of out. We looked into going to South Africa and getting married and that was a little easier, but it was going to be more difficult because I had to take time off, fly to South Africa, and she had to fly to South Africa. So we got married by proxy. And I was on a rig in offshore Angola and she was in Kilgore, Texas, when we got married. [Both laugh]

SW: Can't get more proxy than that. [Chuckles]

WT: You, well, you kept hearing about people getting married by proxy, but it was uh, it was a lot more difficult because nobody seemed to know how you could do it.

SW: Yeah. [Chuckles]

WT: And you can't do it in Louisiana, so she contacted a lawyer.

SW: And had to go to Texas.

WT: So she had to go to Texas to get married by proxy. And after you found out what to do, it was very simple. She just went and got a marriage license. And I had to go to the embassy in Angola, well not the embassy, the council, and give my power of attorney to my stand-in, who was gonna stand in for me. And so sent him my power of attorney and so he stood in for me and it was, that was how we got married.

SW: So y'all were married on American soil the way that that worked.

WT: No I was on a-

SW: You were, but your stand-in and your wife were in Texas.

WT: Yeah. Yeah.

SW: So that's how, then you gave him power of attorney.

WT: Yeah.

SW: And that's how, it makes it legal where-

WT: Yeah, makes it legal.

SW: Huh, that's interesting. And you were in Angola for five and a half years you said?

WT: Yeah.

SW: And where'd you go after that? You came back to the States?

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WT: Well after we were married and she came over to Angola and we, five and a half years and I was transferred to Gabon. Which is up the coast. [Gets up; seems to be showing SW Gabon on a map] Gabon is there. So got transferred to Gabon. I was there for, oh... 'bout two years. Had a motorcycle accident, was medi-vaced to Gabon, medi-vaced into London, that's where they, that was the standard procedure for anybody who was very ill. Gulf had a large office in London and a medical staff, or a physician on call. So... yeah, as a result of that motorcycle accident there was uh, a native, well, supposedly a native was killed. [Slight pause] And so my wife and I got to London and I went in [Inaudible] had all the medical things and basically I was fine. But I had kind of concussion and, so they wanted to check me out. But I got to London and said, "Okay, I'm fine. When am I goin' back to Gabon?" They said, "Well you're not going back to Gabon. There's a warrant for your arrest in," [Laughs] "Gabon." So I stayed in London, oh, for probably two or three months. They gave me some work to do there until they could find another job for me. And I was, there I was transferred uh, back to New Orleans.

SW: Why was there a warrant for your arrest there?

WT: Well-

SW: If you don't mind me asking. [Chuckles]

WT: No, it's fine. Go-, I was going from work to home on my motorcycle, which is, my wife had a car, I had a motorcycle, but the weather was always good. And there was a boulevard and then the beach. And a lot of natives would gather wood, firewood on the beach. And there was a group of native women and they were crossing this boulevard. And there's a, there was a median. And all of 'em were on the median. I saw them and I saw all of 'em cross but one woman. She was still on the median. And so there was a car and me, and then there was an embankment on the other side. And at the last minute she decided she was gonna cross the road. And she actually, she didn't see me, she saw the car. And so she ran in front of the car and all of a sudden there she was. And there wasn't anything I could do, so I hit her. She was, she had a bundle on her back, which here's the, here was the controversy. I thought it was firewood, they said it was a child. And, but nobody ever saw the child. They said that when I hit the woman that I was unconscious for a few seconds. There was a guy from the office behind me in a station wagon. And he stopped and we go the woman and myself in the car and he took us to the hospital. And we saw no baby. But they claim that these other women scooped the baby up and ran off to the village, back to the village. I don't really ever think there was a baby, but supposedly the d-, the baby died and so that's, that was why there was a warrant for my arrest. [Chuckles]

SW: Sounds like it might've been a ploy to-

WT: I think it was because of course the family goes to the company and wants compensation. And so I don't know whether there was any, I don't know what was ever done.

SW: But they, for just reasons of not complicating anything, they didn't want you to go back.

WT: Yeah. Yeah.

SW: I see.

WT: Yeah.

SW: So you ended up back in New Orleans?

WT: Yeah, I ended up back in New Orleans. And was in New Orleans for a year. And they were opening a company in Zaire and a guy said, "Well you wanna go back to Zaire? I've got a opening for a chief geologist in Zaire." So much to my wife's distress we [Laughs] we packed up and went off to Zaire. So we lived in Kinshasa for five years.

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SW: You toured the African continent it sounds like.

WT: I, yeah, I went up and down the coast, yeah.

SW: Oh, it was all pretty much on the west coast then?

WT: Yeah, all on the west coast. That was where Gulf had a lot of interest, yeah. And from Kinshasa, and that's, there was, well, there's still a lot of unrest there, but that was the only place where we lived in the compound. A very nice compound, a swimming pool, two tennis courts, it was about [Sighing] oh, I guess 20 acres or so. But had it surrounded by a, by microwave fence. Just pick up intruders and. But I said-

SW: The rig was inside the compound?

WT: No. No, no. The rig was offshore here, so we would fly out of Kinshasa and go [Slight pause] actually we would go from there to [Kavima?] and then, because [Pause, gets up and shows map] yeah, this little neck here. I don't know if you know, Angola's down here, but Kavima's right there.

SW: Right there, okay.

WT: Kavima's on the other side of, other side of Zaire. Or the Democratic Republic of Congo I think it is now. But uh, you, we felt a little unsafe there mainly because the Zaire weren't that, too, weren't that friendly. They felt that they didn't really need you there at all, though. We were, they all felt that we were exploiting them. So we never had any incidents there, we had a neighbor that was almost killed and a couple of other people that were pretty badly beat up, so. But you went out at night. You would go with a couple of cars of people, you know. You'd go in a group usually. The problem there was most of the robbers were all military, where they had machine guns that they would stick in your face. We went from there to Nigeria, further up the coast. So we stayed, we were in Nigeria for two years. And that was probably, the places kept getting worse, and that was-

SW: More dangerous.

WT: Well it wasn't really dangerous, it was just the living conditions were poor. Electricity would go off two or three hours a day, usually at night. And our water had to be trucked in, we had a holding tank in the back. You had to boil all your water. And in the office the air conditioner would only work about half the time. Ah, when you got sweat dripping off on your maps and you're trying to work and uh, that was the only place of all of 'em that I asked for a transfer. [Chuckles]

SW: Get out of that town.

WT: Yeah, yeah, I said, you know, af-, well, you know, I said, "After my two years are up," because you were usually, that was kind of the accepted practice, you stay for two years and after two years, you know.

SW: You could go.

WT: It was kind of acceptable to ask for a transfer if you didn't like it, if there was other place to go. So after two years I requested a transfer. I was sent again to New Orleans.

SW: Back to, it always comes around. [Chuckles]

WT: Yeah. But it was, that was another unfortunate inc-, incident. [Chuckles] Well I got back to New Or-, I was promised, or they kept telling me, I kept asking, "Well what's the job going to be?" "Well it's, you're back in the district office there." And well, you know, "What's the pay and what's the grade," Gulf had different grades that went from [Sighing] oh, nine up to about 15 and that's, you got promotion, you got a grade promotion. And so, "Basically, you

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know, it's a lateral transfer, you're gonna keep your same salary, you'll keep the same grade." But nobody could tell me what the job was gonna be. Well walk into the office in Houston, I mean in New Orleans and here's the same engineer who was the boss there, and he was also the boss in Angola. He was, midway through Angola he was transferred in as the general manager. He was the same guy I started, same engineer I started working for. So here I am in New Orleans and walk into his office and there he is again. Says, "Well, we don't really have a job for you yet, you're gonna keep your same salary, but we're gonna cut your grade." And I said, "No, I don't think so." And so I called the office in Houston, the international office in Houston, said, "Have y'all got a job for me anywhere?" And so they found me a job in Houston, back in international, but working in a staff job there in Houston. So my wife was from New Orleans and she thought, her mother and father were there in New Orleans, so she was upset again. [Laughs]

SW: Did you have kids at this point too, did y'all have any kids while y'all were overseas?

WT: Yeah, we had two daughters. One when we were in Zaire, but she came home to have both children. They were both born in New Orleans in [Inaudible]. Because [Sighs] it was, you know, usually the facilities are fine, but we just, we always thought about if there was a problem that you'd probably never forgive yourself, so we took the safe route. A lot of women, you know, had their children, had their babies there. But we just took the safe route and. So one child was born while we were in Zaire, the other was born when we were in Nigeria. So they never went to school over there, they were, I guess when we came back to New Orleans and to Houston, they were I guess four and six or somethin'. Oh no, they were younger than that, 'cause they were not in school, they were, they went to a pre-, preschool. So went back to the international group in Houston uh, was in that job for a year and then got transferred to the domestic group in Houston. So I was back domestic and that was in 1980. I was, went back working [Sighs] oh basically the mid-, mid-continent. Basically all the United States we were working, but I was more into exploration. And stayed there for five years and then at the merger [Chuckles] wasn't really a merger, it was a buyout from Chevron. At the buyout they were letting a lot of people go and everything and basically they said, "We've gotta position in London if you want it." So I snapped at that one. My wife, again, has settled into Houston and loved it, and [Chuckles] we packed up again. And in '85 we went to London, worked the North Sea. And were there for five years. And when we, the kids and my wife grew to love it, they really enjoyed working, well living in England.

SW: But every time you told 'em there was a transfer [WT laughs] she wasn't too happy about it I would say. [Chuckles]

WT: She wasn't too happy about it. No. But at that point, 'bout nineteen... well, 'bout '89 I had a daughter who was in the ninth grade. And my other daughter was two grades behind her. And I had been there for four and a half years, you know, said, okay, projecting, you're usually, Gulf usually transferred you in five years. So I'd been there four and a half [Inaudible]. And me being the, having been taken out of school in my senior year in high school I decided one thing I wanted for my children was to live in one place through high school. Get 'em through high school in one place. So I requested a transfer. My children never understood this, they loved where they were and they never understood being pulled out of London. But I requested New Orleans, Houston... Lafayette, or Midland-Odessa. Those were the four places. And so they came up with a job here in Lafayette. So I came to Lafayette in 1990. Which out of all of those places was probably the best place beco-, to come. My wife wanted to go to Houston, 'cause we still had a house there. While we were overseas the house we owned, we liked it. So we decided well the chances are pretty high of being transferred back to Houston, so we just decided to keep the house and rent it out while we were in London. But out of the four Lafayette was probably the best one to be transferred to, mainly because of the kids. If we'd've been transferred to New Orleans, you know, it's where my wife's parents lived, but, you know, the high schools aren't that good, so we'd've probably wound up living in Slidel or across the lake somewhere, which are where a lot of people lived and commuted. Houston would've been fine, but I'm sure the two teenage daughters wouldn't have the freedom that they had in, or the security that they had in Lafayette. So out of, and Midland-Odessa, if we'd've been transferred out there, that office was shut down 'bout [Chuckles] 'bout two years later, so we would've wound up somewhere else. So out of all the places, Lafayette was probably the best.

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SW: And that's, and you've been here ever since?

WT: I've been here ever since.

SW: Are you still working or did you retire?

WT: I retired in '98. Both the kids graduated from Comeaux and they both went to LSU. I decided to hang it up in '98. I [Slight pause] a couple of reasons. I wasn't really... I loved geology, I always have, but I wasn't really in the environment in what I was doing, I wasn't really enjoying the job anymore. And at that point the stock market had gone up so much that I felt I had enough money to retire fairly comfortably. So I retired in '98, I was 54. But I had enough points and everything for basically full retirement. So I retired and both of our kids [Slight pause] I guess one had graduated, was in Houston. She's a landscape architect in Houston. And the other one was I guess she graduated from LSU I guess about that time. And she went to North Texas State graduate school in psychology. So basically I asked my wife, you know, "Where you wanna live? You can live anywhere in the world basically you wanna live." And since, I said, this is the longest time we had ever been in one spot, she decided just to stay here. And, again, she likes the house. [Chuckles] And she had, you know, has a lot of friends and everything, so we stayed here. I guess retirement was a lot bigger shock from, for her than it was for me. Be-, I have no hobbies. And so, you know, it was basically, "Okay dear, what do you wanna do today?" [Chuckles]

SW: I've heard this a lot from guys who used to work seven and seven and 14 and 14. When they retire, that's when their marriage gets strained.

WT: Yeah-

SW: Because they wouldn't leave. [Laughs]

WT: Yeah, yeah, and that's the thing. My wife basically had never worked. So she was home all day, you know, doing what, whatever she wanted to do and all of a sudden there I was. [Laughs] So I wa-, whenever a job came up, I would consult. I didn't go look for jobs, but I have a number of friends who had quit Chevron and there's a couple that started their own businesses here in town, so basically when they got overloaded or had a little project or somethin', I'd go work for them.

SW: It's not like you're requiring on that for your income, though.

WT: No.

SW: That's just [lined up?].

WT: Yeah, yeah. And that came in very handy for trips and-

SW: Things like that.

WT: Things like that, so we took a lot of trips and things.

SW: Seems to me at some point, though, your girls at some point were going to school in Africa.

WT: Uh uh.

SW: They never did.

WT: No, they never did.

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SW: You had kids later and then...

WT: Yeah, the, like I said, the children uh... when we came back to Houston they were [Sighing] oh, I guess they were like three and five or something like that. So, like I said, they got into grade school in Houston. And then did the majority of their elementary school in London. So they never went to school in Africa, but there were good school in Africa.

SW: That was my question, if you did, what kind of availability would you-

WT: There were good schools. In Angola there was, there were American schools in Angola, American school in Zaire, there was n-, an American school in Nigeria. The only cu-, country that we lived in with no American school was Gabon. And we were in a small of-, small Gulf office in Gabon and I was the only American in the office. It was real international office. The manager was Swiss, uh, the chief geophysicist was English, the chief geologist was Italian, and, like I say, I was the only American. So that was an interesting, that was interesting in Gabon, it was a very small office and a lot of our friends that were in the, we associated with a lot people in the American embassy. So those were the only other Americans in town were the people in the embassy. And Libreville, we lived in Libreville, which is the capital, but it was fairly small town, only about 20,000 people in Libreville, so it was a small community.

SW: Pretty small for a capital. [Chuckles]

WT: Yeah, yeah.

SW: [Inaudible].

WT: Well, and in all of Gabon there aren't that many people. There were like I think half a million people in that whole country.

SW: Very, very small.

WT: Yeah. Yeah it was [Slight pause] and, you know, that was an interesting place. Uh... yeah, we were there at the time, that's where Albert [Schweiser's?] hospital was. He was there, he, I guess he died while we were there, right before we got there. But a lot people, I never went, a lot of people went and visited his hospital where he was, his clinic he set up there. Huh, where was I? Oh, retirement, yeah. So I worked a little bit and the [Slight pause] I guess the last two years I worked, well, almost full time. On, still on a part time basis, I probably, total I probably worked, you know, six months out of the year. We're taking trips here and there.

SW: These last two years?

WT: Yeah, these last two years doing consulting. But in Lafayette the last job I had was in October. And the job market has really suffered since October, so I, I've only had [Sighing] oh, couple part time jobs since October. And I've actually been out, been looking for a job. Sent out a bunch of resumes and things, just to have something to do. You know, when you enjoy what you're doing and get out of my wife's hair. [Laughs] But uh, I have enjoyed it. But I'm still actively looking for a job.

SW: I had just basically one more question and this one should be an easy one and you sort of answered already, do you have any regrets for your geology career?

WT: No, but I wouldn't talk to my wife. [WT laughs and SW chuckles]

SW: Yeah, well she's not here being interviewed right now.

WT: She, my wife's a real homebody and she likes settling down and-

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SW: Staying in one place.

WT: Staying in one place. Especially pulling her out of a place she likes, you know. It was okay transferring from Nigeria or Zaire or Gabon, but when she had to transfer out of Houston to go to London, like I said, she wasn't very happy. Uh... I don't know, I was trying to think of any regrets. I really can't think of any. Like I said, I worked all over the, well, I've had the opportunity to travel about all over the world. [Slight pause] That's the, I guess that's the one advantage of the oil business. And that's, a-, that's one reason why you have a lot of independents sitting in Lafayette is they all worked for majors but at the point of them being transferred somewhere they refused to be transferred. And, like I said, back in those old days when the oil company says, "Your paycheck's gonna be in Houston," and you don't wanna go to Houston there basically is no alternative. You've gotta, you know, get out and find your own way or you go to Houston if you can't find a job with somebody else in Lafayette. So if you talk to a lot of these independent geologists around here, and that was kind of the major, you usually went to work for a major company for the training. Because the major company had the facilities and everything to train you and they always had, you know, courses that you went on. And so after, you know, four or five years working for a major then you were basically ready to go work independent. To me, I never really wanted to work as an independent geologist and I think most of it was, well, most of it was, I was foreign most of my career and I really didn't have the opportunity. The other is I really liked the security of a paycheck every month.

SW: More reward with the independent, but more risk too, right?

WT: Yeah. A lot more risk. And, you know, a lot of, you know, a lot of open-, independents have become wealthy and those are the ones you hear about. [Laughs]

SW: Yeah. Don't hear about the ones who starved, huh?

WT: No, no, you don't hear about the ones who didn't make it and they're either went back working for a major or they changed professions all-, altogether. But I started working with three people, two more geologists were hired at the same time I was there in New Orleans when I originally started with Gulf. And [Slight pause] one of 'em went with me to Angola, the other one basically was from New Orleans and he was gonna stay in New Orleans and there wasn't anything, he was never gonna leave New Orleans. And he-, he's still there. [Laughs] He is very successful, he quit Gulf, became and independent, and now he's the CEO for Dominion in New Orleans. Very successful with the company there. The other one went with me in Angola. After the five years in Angola he was transferred to Bakersfield, California. Quit Gulf, went to work for Occidental in Bakersfield, was transferred to s-, uh, to Perth, Australia, and stayed there for three or four years. Occidental shut its office in Perth and he stayed. He's become an Australian citizen. [Chuckles]

SW: Well that happens, huh?

WT: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that happens. He was very successful also. We have a west African reunion every two years. It's interesting we-

SW: [Inaudible] meet up with some of the old guys [that went out there?].

WT: Yeah. Well, that's one thing about living overseas like that, you form much closer relationships because you have to be your own entertainment. [Chuckles]

SW: There's fewer of you guys around, then you kind of latch on to each other.

WT: Yeah, yeah. And, like I said, in Angola there's, you know, there's no TV, there's no, basically there was no telephones. And, like I said, you have to rely on each other for entertainment. I guess the only other thing, I was heavy into skydiving there in Angola. So, they had a, I started in New Orleans when I was there. Still got tape?

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SW: We're about to run out, that's why I kept looking at my watch.

WT: That, that's fine. I was just gonna mention in skydiving I got a, I was on a team that went all over Africa. We went to Rhodesia, and Kenya, and South Africa on, doing championship tours and things like that. But that was [Slight pause] the engineer that I kept running into hated my skydiving. He tried everything in the world [Laughs] to s-, to get me to stop skydiving. He was really one of the old school that uh [Pause] you know. As an example, we were in an elevator one day and there was a Portuguese geologist in there with him and he takes a dollar out of his pocket and gives it to the Portuguese geologist, The Portuguese geologist says, "What's this for?" He said, "Why don't you get a haircut, your hair's getting a little long." And it was great, the Portuguese geologist put it in his pocket. [Laughs] I don't think he ever cut his hair. [Chuckles] But he was just very old school.

SW: Controlling.

WT: Hm?

SW: He wanted to control everything?

WT: Oh yeah, yeah. He was the boss. He wanted you to know it. But here I am in, here I am in Lafayette and I guess the, you know, talking about Lafayette and the oil [business?], you know, [Inaudible, audio problems, beeping] Houston.

SW: [Inaudible]

[END OF RECORDING]