

Interviewee: Gremillion, Ed
Interview Date: May 20, 2003

HHA # 00209

Interviewee: Ed Gremillion
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz
Interview Date: May 20, 2003
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW051
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The interviewee clears his throat every few seconds and most of this has not been transcribed; this interferes with audibility. A woman, presumably the interviewee's wife, also participates in the interview and is denoted as "MrsG." The interviewees' speech is difficult to follow at times because of false starts and incomplete sentences.]

Ethnographic preface:

Born in 1930 in Port Arthur, Texas, Ed Gremillion was raised in Sunset, Louisiana. His father worked for Humble Pipeline and his mother was a cook. He went to Southwestern Louisiana Institute to study commercial art and then entered the Navy; after his two-year trip was over the Korean Conflict erupted and he was forced to stay in until 1954. In 1956, he went to work as a sales representative for Wilson Supply Company in New Iberia. In 1959 he was recruited by Lamb Rental Tools to open and run a rental tool yard in Marksville. The yard, however, never was built and Gremillion stayed in Lafayette working for Lamb as a sales person. During the interview, to which his wife contributes heavily, he describes flying planes to and entertaining customers, particularly noting his legendary cooking skills.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [EG] and [MrsG]

SW: [Laughs] As long as we see red you're okay. Um, this is an interview with Mister Ed Gremillion and it's uh, May twentieth, 2003, in his home. And you said you wanted to tell me something about your background, if you could tell me where you're from and, and things like that, that'd be good.

EG: Well uh, we were [Clears throat] pardon me. I was raised in the little town of Sunset. And uh, I left there in nineteen... fifty-six. And uh, and uh, I got out of service, I come to work, went to work in New Iberia for little uh, Wilson Supply Company. Which is a uh, Wilson's are comin' out of Houston. But anyway they uh, are uh, supply, you know, supplies we need stuff like rags and soap and rags and whatever you might need to run on a drilling rig. You know, this. And then the uh, in 1959 uh, I come in one afternoon and my wife said uh, "Do you know a Mister W. C. Lamb?" And uh, so I said, "Well I, I know of him, I know about him [Inaudible]." [Clears throat] Pardon me. But anyway, so she said, "Well he's called here a couple times today and he'd like for you to call him." And this is six o'clock at night. I called and he was still at the office. And he had a, he wanted, he wanted to know if I was interested in comin' by and visitin' with him. He, he had something he'd like to talk about. So uh, six, seven o'clock the next morning I was in his office. I was over, his, his yard was over near Scott Highway. And uh, anyway, so 'bout seven o'clock, seven-thirty I was workin' for Lamb Rental Tools and I've been there ever since.

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SW: So he sou-, he sought you out to give you a job?

EG: That's right. And his, what he wanted me to do uh, is to open up north Louisiana, the old Amoco, which PanAm, the old PanAm and uh, he would, they were doin' a lot of work up in north Louisiana and he wanted to open a little yard, rental yard in Marksville, Louisiana. And he wondered if I would go up there and uh, get a, fix up a yard and one thing or the other and move up that way and I'd run the yard in north Louisiana. [Clears throat] Pardon me. [Get some water?]. But anyway, so uh, we uh, I went, went to work, but we never did open the yard in, in Marksville. And I spent, stayed here and I've been here in Lafayette ever since. 'Course I worked with Mister W. C. Lamb and then he passed away. His son Ed Lamb and now it's his nephew who runs Tongs Specialty, which is the old Lamb Rental Tool. [Pause]

SW: What, when you uh, if I can ask, what year were you born as well?

EG: Nineteen thirty.

SW: Nine-, 1930. And then you left Sunset-

EG: In Jan-, January twenty-seventh, 1930.

SW: And you uh, you left Sunset and you went to work in New Iberia for that supply company.

EG: Yes, that's right.

SW: You ju-, you kind of worked in the warehouse and, and you kind of-

EG: Well no we, I was a sales representative.

SW: Sales rep, okay.

EG: And for, like I say before Lamb, for uh, uh, Wilson Supply Company.

MrsG: [Barely audible] Drink.

SW: Oh.

MrsG: Didn't you start drivin' a truck with, with Wilson? You were on the road with them?

EG: Well, yeah, for a little while. And then they put in the field and uh, when I first account was Union Oil Cal. Union Oil California was there, there offshore and inland uh, office was in, in New, right, right across from the old airport in [Aven?] uh, New I-... [MrsG chuckles] Abbeville. I knew I'd get it out. [MrsG chuckles] But anyways, so that's uh, and from there just boomeranged. Well I say two jobs since 1955, Wilson Supply Company and Lamb Rental Tools.

SW: And within the same sort of, the same service industry part of the industry.

EG: Yes, right. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

SW: The same service sector.

EG: That's right.

SW: Why-

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MrsG: May I add somethin'?

SW: Uh hm.

MrsG: Okay. Between, between the original job with Mister Lamb and U-, your current job with, with Rusty Lamb, you had other service companies that you worked for in between.

EG: Well I worked for a little while.

MrsG: Yeah.

EG: The old Superior [Olox?], Superior is, was Superior. Anyway, it was another service company and uh, the man that owned it had, had a place in South [Murka?]. Well he was a young man but he passed away down that way. And so the widow uh, of, of this, and the young, two young sons, well she wanted me to take s-, to take it over and organize and, and run the company. And that was in the '50s. But anyway, and then, then I, like I said, went, left there and went to work for Mister Lamb. And here I am.

SW: Okay. [Chuckles] When you uh, when you were in Sunset and you took this job in New Iberia, were there any other jobs, were you comin' out of high school? Is, is that what uh-

EG: Oh. No, I come to Lafayette and to SLI. The old SLI, Southwestern Louisiana Institute at that time. And uh, I went to sch-, went to study there. And uh, then I went off into the service, in the Navy. And uh, then I spent, b-, back then you signed up for two year hitches, but I went, went in the Navy and uh, uh, and I was stationed first, uh, first time in San Francisco. And we uh, uh, like I say I went aboard aircraft carriers and I was a, in a, in a squadron. And uh, went my trip for two years, but after these two years you had to sign up for seven, it was seven year deal that if they needed you, they could call you back. Well that happened [for it came?] to the Korean Conflict and I had to go, I went back in and I got out again in 1954.

MrsG: [Whispering, inaudible]

SW: Oh and that's when you got married she said. [Chuckles] Uh-

EG: I, I forgot all about that. [SW and MrsG laugh]

SW: What did you study at SLI?

EG: Uh, commerc-, well, back then what you call "commercial art." And now it's "graphic art."

SW: Graphic arts.

EG: And we have a son in Houston who is a graphic's artist.

SW: I see. Not necessarily uh, oilfield-related or anything like that.

EG: No, no. At that time, back then-

SW: What you were doing in the Navy wasn't necessarily connected to that either.

EG: No, I, I was in a squadron and uh, uh, aircraft. And I, I, I'm, among other things I'm a pilot. And I wasn't flyin' back then, but I, I loved airplanes, still love airplanes. And uh, so I spent a lot of time, uh, I flew for Lamb Rental

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Tools. Flew uh, light twins and the uh, and uh, amphibians. You go out, out in the marsh, you call on these people, these barges and one thing you had and we used that to, to do all kind of things, play with.

SW: So you would run supplies out to the barges in, in the marshes area and offshore?

EG: Yeah.

SW: And uh-

EG: No, no we our, our c-, our, our company had pick uh, pickup trucks or floats, whatever they had, and they'd go to the landings and they'd unload, unload onto, onto barges. And the barges would go offshore or inland and.

SW: And you would bring-

EG: Yeah, and we just had our cust-, one of my customers back then was U-, the old Union Oil California out of, out of uh, Abbeville. But I had, like I said, uh, start countin' on my fingers I'm tryin' to remember who, how many companies I was callin' on and one day or another. But uh, it was uh, I enjoyed it, I, and I love the people, I love to entertain, do things like that.

MrsG: So his plane was not used just for work. In a sense it was work also plus entertainment and bringin' customers.

EG: Oh yeah, we, we flew all over the United States.

MrsG: Bringin' custom-

EG: Entertaining, entertaining. We were uh, just one, one example. Have a friend of ours uh, Mister [Man's name].

MrsG: [Whispering] Don't mention names.

EG: Okay. [MrsG laughs]

SW: It's okay.

EG: Anyway, uh, we were havin' lunch one day [Inaudible]. And he says uh, "When we goin' to Mexico?" I said [Knocks on table] "I'm leavin' at two o'clock. If you wanna come, be at the airport, you and Betty," his wife. So he hurried up and got to the telephone and called Betty, told her to get ready they was goin' to Mexico. And we had a, we had a uh, a villa leased. And I p-, and so we spent a lot of time and lot of fond memories. And our villa was right on the coast. We had a, a little cliff and down that cliff was our swimmin' pool right on that cliff and, anyway. The, and we were the o-, end, when you look right down about oh, 50, 60 foot was the uh, Pacific Ocean. And uh, like I said, we had live-in, live-in servants and stuff like that.

MrsG: And daddy'd go out there a lot for, for entertainment and unlimited expenses.

SW: So you, you'd bring potential customers for the company-

EG: Well-

MrsG: Potential and customers.

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EG: And people who were not well, we, I'm sure thinkin' back uh, some potential customers, people and you'd get 'em obligated to you for somethin' like that. You'd take 'em here, say leave, leave here today and go to Acapulco and spend two or three days. And uh, with their wi-, men and wives. And uh, so we, you'd get 'em obligated and you'd get business.

MrsG: And also thank yous for, for business.

EG: Well thank you, that's right for that, you know. And old customers [Inaudible]. So. Anyway, so it's been a, it's been a joy workin' all through the years. So many stories go along with it.

SW: Um... I wanted to ask you again about the uh, wh-, it was Lamb Rental Tools was the name or a service-

EG: Yeah, Lamb, Lamb Rental Tools.

SW: Rental Tools.

EG: Mister W. C. Lamb. And I worked for his son [Inaudible], I worked for his son and now his nephew. So I've been since 1959.

SW: What year did you retire?

EG: When did I retire? I'm not retired.

SW: Still workin' for 'em?

EG: Still workin' for 'em. [EG and MrsG chuckle]

MrsG: And on uh, you, he, it is his grandson, Rusty is his grandson.

EG: That's right.

MrsG: Mister Lamb's grandson.

EG: The grandson.

MrsG: Yeah, yeah.

EG: Yeah he's, he's, he's the man now and his, his, his dad, Ed Lamb, is uh, is uh, retired. Mister Lamb himself is passed away a long time ago.

SW: You, you spent a long time with the company, I don't-

EG: I'm-

SW: I don't hear that a lot these days.

EG: That's right-

SW: Is that somethin' special?

EG: Well I said 1959 and I went to work for the Lambs.

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MrsG: It was like, more like a circle uh, starting with Lamb and through other things in comin' back, so it sort of fitting circle to, you know, to come back and work for the original family.

EG: Yeah. One tragedy uh, I was, I ga-, I went fishin' one day. And uh, me and a customer. And uh, oh yeah, got back to my car about five in the afternoon and they'd been tryin' to get ahold of me. And uh, our, one of the planes that I used to fly went in and it flew [right seat in?] had crashed in Houston and killed four people. And uh, so I was some uh, [Inaudible] just uh, something had happened and but uh, it went along, go along with the story of.

MrsG: And it was Mister Lamb's wife, the young uh, Ed Lamb's wife was killed among other people. They were going to an oil show uh, in uh, Tulsa or Oklahoma City.

EG: Yeah, yeah.

MrsG: One of those.

EG: Yeah, in Tulsa.

MrsG: And he could've been flying the [flight seat?]. And I didn't know that until the end of the day when he called in. But those days they weren't in touch with tel-, by telephone like we are today. He always had a call, a phone in his car, but not, you know, one that he carried with him.

SW: Right.

EG: And uh, it was a, it was a, it was an accident, but it, [Inaudible] and the, anyway, pilot uh, they were in Houston and like I said I was fishin'. Anyway, this uh, man uh, took off and I had a, a couple, we had just hired a man, we just hired an engineer, he and his wife, and pilot, and the co-pilot. Anyway, it took off in Houston, took off in a crosswind instead of waitin' five more minutes to get a, to get a uh, takeoff. And uh, he uh, uh, a gust of wind, let's say he's flyin' this way, gust of wind come across like this and tipped it, and the wing, wing, left wing hit the runway. And the plane flipped and killed 'em all. And that was like I said I pilot the plane, I was, I'd flown many hours in it.

MrsG: It was also as a result of working the oilfield that he learned to fly. Because he was flying right seat to the company pilot and unbeknownst to wives-

EG: Well-

MrsG: He learned how t-, he learned how to fly. [Laughs]

EG: Well I did, but I learned how to fly the, fly amphibians, you know where you can land here and flo-

SW: Float, yeah.

EG: Go out land on the water and then-

MrsG: The safest thing in Louisiana. [Chuckles]

EG: Then you put your wheels down when you come back to the airport here and put your wheels down. So.

SW: When you were, when you were working, well, you not only did, not, not only did you do flyin', but you did other work for the company, right?

EG: Oh yeah.

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SW: What kind of schedule did you have? [MrsG chuckles]

EG: I don't have schedule.

MrsG: He works every day of the week.

EG: I, I [thought?] if they don't see me for a week, nobody says, "Where you goin'? When you comin' back?" or anything else. But I have kind of a clientele, [have been?] people that fed our family very well through the years. And uh, we have a lot, now, a lot of uh, I don't uh, these young engineers today I, I don't even call on 'em because uh, [I'm such older and everything?]. I let the younger sales people call on these other young people.

MrsG: His friends and customers call him instead of the other way around.

EG: Uh hm.

SW: So it just keeps [you/it?] goin' like that. So you work, you work basically every day of the week or do you have some time off-

EG: Yeah.

SW: Do you have a very flexible schedule? Very flexible?

EG: Oh yeah, yeah.

MrsG: He made his own.

EG: Like I said I, if I do, we disappear for a few days or a week, 10 days, that's we, nobody says, "Where you goin'? When you comin' back?" or anything else. I go, I go to the office two weeks to get, get my expense check and my paychecks.

SW: Well how did you manage that? That sounds like it's too good to be true.

MrsG: It's trust, trust.

EG: It's just the way it's been all these years. And uh, so.

MrsG: And service. You know, when, when you get a person like Ed, he's not gonna say that, but I'll say it. When you get a person like him who'll work when there is work, not when his schedule says he's supposed to be workin', and he never had one. It was like from four o'clock in the morning he might go on the job as necessary and work on weekends when it was necessary. So when his schedule was cut to five days a week, I said, "Well maybe you might work five." You a-, you know, he used to work seven, unofficially. But because he worked when he had something, so.

EG: Yeah, but nobody, I've never had in all these years, I've never had a man lookin' down my throat and said, "You, you be here tomorrow," or, "You be here," [Inaudible]. And we, I've worked, like I say, on average I guess maybe six days a week, because whether I'm here I, I'd call, ti-, pick up the phone and call and say, "Hey, Don or [Inaudible] Bob or [Inaudible], uh, we're uh, how 'bout goin' out to dinner tonight? Bring, take your bride." And uh, so that's the way we operated, still operate. I don't ma-, gonna, [I'm gonna?] make any long term deals or anything else. But uh, I know and when I, man, you treat 'em well one thing or another, he's gonna give you business. And I, I'm not, I didn't call on, lot of, most of my people that I called on were people like the independent oil people. Some, some, some of

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the uh, small companies now, uh, I never wanted to fight the, fight the uh, majors 'cause uh, Exxon uh, I did. We used to do a lot of work-

MrsG: And [Citys?].

EG: Got a, got a lot of very close friends with Exxon.

MrsG: And City Service.

EG: And City, oh, I did 90 percent of City Service's work when they had uh, offices here. And even after they left, I went back to Houst-, I mean to uh, Oklahoma. But uh, I, I very close friend that give me much, many, many [dollar?], Mister Lyle Mellington and Exxon. And I still see him every day [Inaudible], and he's one of my closest friends.

SW: [Inaudible].

MrsG: Retired. [Chuckles]

EG: Yeah, oh yeah. He's retired, but hell we still, we still, I see him every morning for coffee, visit. Talk about women and [All chuckle]

MrsG: Wives.

SW: I'll come out and meet you guys and, and talk to him.

MrsG: Yeah, he would, he would love that.

EG: You can come sometime. Come down, or when you get in the [mill/middle?], if your in, when you walk indoors big old table on the left hand said and a-

MrsG: It's reserve-, it's reserved for the-

SW: I know exactly which one you're talkin' about.

EG: So, so we start congregatin' there about six thirty in the morning and 'bout eight, eight thirty. And uh, and hear a ni-, hear a lot of lies and stuff like that.

MrsG: His, his side [life?]-

EG: How many, how many women you went out with, you know, stuff like that it.

MrsG: His, his extracurricular activity in the oilfield, I had told you about it [and?] you read it. That is his entertainment and his cookin'.

SW: Ah yeah, you mentioned that.

MrsG: Okay.

SW: I'd like to get that.

MrsG: Yeah.

SW: If you don't mind me asking um, oh, go ahead.

EG: So you see that cooking-

MrsG: Well he's gonna ask you that in a minute.

EG: Uh, anyway, but uh, nowadays uh, you meet a uh, want a [oh?] question one thing or another, they don't say, "Hey, Ed how is the family one time, [they're like?], hey coonass when you gonna fry some more catfish?" And I fried tons of catfish.

MrsG: Okay.

EG: [And that stuff?] [Inaudible] and very seldom, very, I can almost count it on hand uh, days on my hand, if I barbequed [having?] you know, because fried fish was there and I'd buy Henderson uh, uh, catfish, [give me?] catfish wholesale. And you get the little filets about this long and this wide and about this thick. When they hit that hot grease [Inaudible] and it's mighty thick.

SW: We, we can talk about that if you want to tell me-

MrsG: Yeah right, well why we o-, why we're on the cir-, on the, okay.

SW: Yeah. She said you had some stories about the cooking, people wanted you to, to fry fish for them or-

MrsG: Elsewhere.

EG: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

MrsG: Out, out of state, ou-

SW: Out of state or they were calling you all the time?

EG: Yeah. But I, I've never turned anybody down, you know. But majority, I'll say 95 percent of 'em were oilfield people one thing or the other. And s-

MrsG: What about the time the, the airplane, well I told him about the company sent an airplane to pick you up.

EG: Oh yeah.

MrsG: And brought you to Ca-, to California to fry the fish.

EG: Yeah. [MrsG chuckles] [She?] did. [Chuckles]

SW: California?

MrsG: That's right.

SW: They eat fried fish in California?

MrsG: Yeah, yes.

SW: Wow.

EG: California.

MrsG: Well wasn't it some of the natives-

EG: And we had private plane and I was the only customer on, only man aboard it beside the pilots.

MrsG: And it, [Recording breaks out]. [Laughs]

SW: So, so you became legendary within the oil community down here.

EG: That's right.

MrsG: Yeah.

SW: Because you fried fish. How did that happen? Who did you start cooking for?

EG: Well I've always-

SW: I'm curious.

EG: My, my dad was a big fishermen and one thing and another, and I, and I loved catfish and I don't know of anybody who don't. Especially, like I said, we filets about this long and this thick and about this wide. And uh, now you put that in that hot grease. A couple minutes.

MrsG: I don't know how you started, though. It, it just evolved.

EG: Well I always-

MrsG: You know it started small.

EG: Always liked to cook. I would-

MrsG: Started small [and in August?].

EG: My dad was, my dad was a cook. He, he loved to cook, he loved to fry fish and one thing and another. And daddy uh, remember in New Iberia [he was so anyway?] he was a, he, he, we had something good a lot for dinner at night, sometimes. And daddy would know, we'd have, we always had leftovers. He always knew some poor colored or white that, that family, he thought they might be hungry. And he'd get up from table and pick, pick the leftovers, especially fish, and go, now he might drive six or eight miles to, to show this family that, you know, that he knew that they, they would appreciate it. And I'm kind of, got a [self-full, I'm determined, went in that schedule, still like that?].

MrsG: So, and he was from a cooking family also. His, his mom worked as a cook uh, for the, the boarding house in Sunset, 'cause his dad was oilfield as well, you see. So it's kind of like tradition. And his mother worked side by side at the station in uh, in Sunset.

EG: My daddy worked for Humble Pipeline. Exxon, it's Humble, Humble Pipeline that time. Yeah.

SW: If y'all ever fry some catfish, y'all can call me. [MrsG chuckles]

EG: Okay.

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MrsG: He will, he'll call you.

EG: We, we'll do that.

MrsG: He'll call you. [Chuckles]

SW: I love catfish. Like you said, there's not many people that don't. [Chuckles]

EG: Oh is that right.

MrsG: Right.

EG: And, I'm not one to go out and catch the fish, not, I'm-

MrsG: Like your daddy.

EG: L-, my, like my dad.

MrsG: You do it the easy way. [Chuckles]

EG: But uh, I like, like I say, I don't wanna [clean out nothin'?], I'm not, oh I'll clean 'em I guess, if somebody give me some fish. But I don't, my dad he didn't, ver-, very seldom he ever fixed catfish. But he had brim and sac-a-lait, that was his two, his two. And he'd fish, oh, he dish-, fished once or twice a week. You know, he loved that.

MrsG: We digress.

EG: Yeah. [SW laughs]

MrsG: We talkin' about you. [Chuckles]

SW: It's okay, it's part of the story.

MrsG: I know, I know it, I know it.

SW: So you've uh-

MrsG: And when he w-, one story leads to another.

SW: You, you ever brought any of your, your cooking equipment out onto a rig?

EG: Oh yeah.

SW: And cooked for those guys?

EG: Oh yes. Many of times.

SW: Tell me a bit about that. Did they call you out specifically or was it treat?

MrsG: No.

EG: Oh no, no. They, they good to me and I'll be good to them.

SW: Oh okay.

EG: And like I said very seldom a week goes by somebody say, "Hey coonass, when you gonna fry some more catfish?"

MrsG: And that's all he has to say.

EG: Yeah. And uh, so uh, I said, "Tell me when you want 'em for and I'll go." And like I said, and, it's been a, it's, it's been my life.

SW: It's all part of the, the, keeping the relationship with the customers.

EG: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] that's right.

MrsG: Yeah. When he can't, when the facilities would not be available or it was not conducive to cookin' fried fish, he would cook something over here and bring it and serve it.

EG: And, oh yeah, well if I, like I say if I'm gonna make a, a [pot of?] dressing, cornbread dressing, something, I'd bring cornbread and I'd make my stuff on here. And I, when I get the job I mix it, that way it's fresh-

MrsG: Or shrimp.

EG: Shrimp or anything.

MrsG: You know, anything.

EG: Or cat-, well like I say, shrimp and catfish.

MrsG: That's-

EG: I'm not a, I've, I've cooked a lot of catfi-, I mean crawfish, but I'm not a, a, if I never cooked another crawfish well it wouldn't make any difference. But uh, I've got, I've got Marshal deep fat friers in my shop right here now for, for us to use here and one thing and another. But I've got other things-

MrsG: Tell him about the pots, kind of pots that you use. I mean, he has equipment like you wouldn't believe, big stuff.

EG: Yeah. I got a lot of things. Uh, [and I bought?], I'm sure you wouldn't know what a wash pot would be.

MrsG: Yeah.

EG: And old [Inaudible] uh, cast-iron uh, wash pot. Well, you're grandmother and my, it, uh, put a, that wash pot and put, put kindling under it, and start. And they'd, and they'll-

MrsG: Boil the clothes. [Chuckles]

EG: Boil the clothes and one thing and another. But uh, like I say, I can show you back here the wash pots and the, some of the equipment that I use, one thing and another.

MrsG: And some you have special designed, too.

EG: Huh?

MrsG: On occasion he's had some special design equipment so that he could make it easy. Uh hm.

EG: It was uh, anyway, that's uh, that's, that's been the story of my life for, since 1956.

SW: Cooking for those people. [Chuckles]

EG: Well, cooking and entertaining and, and uh, and I, I'm not making a tremendous salary, but I make a good salary, one thing and another. And I, and, after all these years I can sit down here and get uh, expense account every two weeks [have?] so I can [Inaudible] 500 dollars or 5,000 and it's never been questioned.

MrsG: Because he produces the customers produce. And that's why he could afford to having expense accounts. That it wasn't, he was told I think by Mister Lamb that do what you have to do as long as you can justify your sales to cover it. And so he, he had a carte blanche-

EG: Well-

MrsG: Uh, you know. Uh-

EG: We had, we had all-

MrsG: Way of life.

EG: We have other salesmen too in our, in our [Inaudible]. Well they'll, "Hey Ed, uh, we, we hire, how 'bout fryin' some catfish for my-"

MrsG: My customer.

EG: And I might, I might know the customer at all, but we, we worked as a team. [Slight pause]

SW: Okay.

EG: So it's been uh, it's, like I say, it's been just a fi-, a fun, fun since 1950.

MrsG: And you know what? He can't, he can't give it up. [Laughs] He likes it.

SW: So you still kind of do it?

MrsG: He likes, oh yeah, he likes his work so much that he can't give it up. There's not that many people that can do that.

EG: Oh it's not, to me it's not work. [MrsG chuckles] You know I could retire. But, and sit on my behind here. And, and play with the dog or the wife or whatever. [MrsG chuckles] But I just, I just enjoy doin' it. It's not, to me it's not work.

SW: Well you mentioned a second ago uh, you didn't make a ton of money, but uh, you must've made some money that-

MrsG: At the time.

SW: It keeps you-

EG: Oh yes.

SW: I guess my question is uh, what e-, I hear from other people that work in the oilfield that it was good money.

MrsG: At the time. In the '80s, I mean before the '80s yes.

EG: Yeah. Uh hm.

SW: You could make, you could make a decent living?

EG: Oh yeah.

SW: But you, you were working seven days a week sometimes-

MrsG: Plus, plus, in his case bonuses for sales sometimes. You see?

EG: And, but like I said, but uh, the uh, uh, hell, I, we lived off expense account.

MrsG: Used to be.

EG: My-

MrsG: Used to be.

EG: Used to be. Well, yeah, I could do it. Hell if I'd've turned in 500 dollars a week they'd still pay me and never look back. Uh, sometime a lot more. We, we entertained in Mexico for [Inaudible]. And [hell?] nothin' to turn in a five, six thousand dollar expense account for a trip to Mexico. And 'course we had our own planes and on thing another.

MrsG: And also the gifts that were during the good days, the gifts that people expected in the oilfield for sales got so out of hand that I like to say that it ha-, that the oil industry changed because they had to change, because it had gotten so generous and so big that it got out of hand for the people.

EG: Okay, but back in the '60s and '70s and the, through probably '85, hell, uh, it, it was uh, we, this, we were one big happy family, you know. Everybody knew you, knew you and one thing and another. And it was just a, it was a, it was a pleasure workin'. It still is, but it's not nearly like it was.

MrsG: It was more personal.

EG: Oh yeah, back then.

MrsG: Secretaries in the oilfield, he was on a first name basis with secretaries. He always, he always appreciated the working woman in the office. And I think that's admirable because he respected them and their job and he, he let them know it was generosity. Gifts, you know.

EG: One of my, uh, Dee we called her, Delores, and she worked with me back in the '60s. And uh, she and I are very close friends, in fact she's like uh, I could call her right today and she'd do anything I, I, you know, if I needed some help and one thing and another. And uh, so, and I, she like another wife, really.

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MrsG: But today, today it's an automated thing when he, he's so frustrated when, you know, if he were calling on the offices like he did before, he, he could not relate beca-, to not having this personal person to speak with. And this is what everybody's frustration is, you get the automatic answerin' thing and he, you just lose that personal, personal touch.

EG: Well I still, like I say, go to Houston or New Orleans.

MrsG: And he went to Houston a lot to, to [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

EG: And the older, older crowd. And uh, they don't, when you walk in the door they'll say, "Hey coonass when we gonna fry some more catfish?"

MrsG: But, and, and-

EG: And that's the way, that's the way they greeted me.

MrsG: But in Houston it was a different kind of calling on people, too.

EG: Well back then, yes. Back then I called on Houston and them. And uh, but now, oh I got a lot of friends in Houston, but not like it used to be. They, there most of 'em retired, the ones I'm, know so well in Houston.

MrsG: You also called on people in Tulsa, too, you know. That was another market.

EG: Tulsa, every, everywhere. Tulsa and, yeah, Oklahoma City, I, uh, uh, out in west Texas, and just uh, New Mexico, whatever. Well they kne-, well when, well we'd get business, we got. I can get it.

MrsG: So that's what's changed now. We don't, you know, you don't have that kind of contact with people.

SW: Okay. That's why you let the young ones handle it now.

EG: Yeah.

SW: To call on the other customers.

EG: And like I said I don't, didn't have to ask anybody, I, oh I had bosses all the time, but, hell, I, I didn't have to ask these people say, "Hey, look, uh, I'd like-"

MrsG: Permission you mean?

EG: Tell 'em, "Hey listen, so and so and I and his wife goin' to Los Angeles this week for the weekend," or, "We're goin' to Oklahoma City," or, "We're goin' North Dakota hunting," or uh, "Up to, up in the Washington State to hunt." And, hell, I didn't have to ask, I just, I was a pilot, had the, and I, unless somebody else, you know, had already had the plane reserved for something and not, but, but uh, I didn't, didn't have to ask anybody.

MrsG: Sure is different, it sure is different. [Chuckles]

SW: [Inaudible] said it had to change.

MrsG: It had to change.

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

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MrsG: That's the way I felt. That it had to change 'cause things had gotten out of hand, you know. But, as he says, the people who survived that downturn were the ones who didn't owe any money.

SW: Right.

MrsG: And they had kept their company going with everything paid for. So when they went, when the oil c-, industry came back, a lot of these people were ready, you know, because they had, they had the equipment and the knowledge and the personnel, and they didn't, they hadn't lost their companies.

EG: One of the, you know, companies that I did was the old, old City Service Oil Company. And uh, like I said, we have a, 'fact still got close friends [Inaudible] in Houston and Okla.

MrsG: Yeah, Oklahoma.

EG: Oklahoma uh, Oklahoma City. Uh, and-

MrsG: Jim.

EG: He and his wife, and Jim [Ganders?] and his wife, and, and uh, hell, he's like my brother. And today I could call him and if he, I need him he'd be there. And we were, like I said, just, we brothers and like. And they, his mother and dad uh, were about like my mother. I called 'em mom and dad [too/two?]. So that's how close you get some, some of your customers.

SW: Sounds like it and, like you said, that's the difference between then and now.

MrsG: Uh hm, oh yeah. It was a, it was a friendly relationship uh, not, not all business.

SW: You mentioned that the, your dad was in the oilfield too, is that what, what brought you into the oilfield? H-, how did you end up-

EG: Well I, I ra-, uh, not, not necessarily I don't guess, but dad was work, my daddy went to work in 1930 with Exxon. And, and one of the reason he, he went to, he was workin' for the old, he was over, he lived at Port Arthur. I was born in Port Arthur, Texas. Okay. So he was working just in a crew and he was on top of a, one of those big old storage tanks which you've seen I'm sure, store oil in it. Dad was uh, was on that tank, we had a crew of six people, they were workin' on top of that tank. And uh, he had to come down off of the tank to get something, material or whatever he was gonna do. And that tank exploded and killed every man on this crew. And so he left, he was workin' for the old uh...

MrsG: Whatever.

EG: Whatever. [MrsG chuckles] Anyway, so he, he and mother uh, he left Port Arthur and come to Bunkie, Louisiana. And then that's where I was born.

MrsG: No, you mo-, you moved to.

EG: I moved to, yeah, that's right. That's right, I was six months old when daddy got uh, this, this tank blew up. And so they moved to, they moved to Bunkie. And so that's where I was, we lived Bunkie, from Bunkie 'til nineteen... prob-, no, anyway. So, but uh, daddy was the only man out of six that uh, that survive this explosion.

MrsG: So, and he was, his dad was a pipeliner and so he could've influenced you in the oilfield, it was somethin' that was familiar, you know.

EG: Daddy was-

MrsG: Other than that it was a way of life where they lived from station to station in those days, you know.

EG: And one, and think back two memories. [Inaudible] we moved to Bunkie, when we moved from Port Arthur. Well, out in the country where my mother was born, uh, anyway, so he, ev-, every morning he would still work for the pipeline, but they'd have to pick him up 'bout six o'clock in the morning and he had about, oh, a quarter of a mile from the house back to the, to main, main highway. And to catch a, a crew. And sometime they'd be gone for two days, a week, or two weeks. And they workin' on the pipeline. So uh, [Inaudible] I've been oilfield all my life.

MrsG: But I don't know if that was an influence, but you never know if that really influenced. But oil, oilfield was the way to go. His first job after we married was entirely different. That was in Sunset. And so uh, he worked for my dad who was, who was, had a bottling company. And so when a better, you know, he wanted to better himself, children came, so that's when he moved into the oilfield, where the money was.

SW: I guess that's what I'm sort of, I'm sort of getting at there is there was an opportunity there within that oilfield to make money.

MrsG: Yeah, it was there.

EG: Well, yeah, like I said, I work in the oilfield but then I married her. Her dad was a, one of the leading [Inaudible] shippers in the world at one time. And he owned a bottling company in Sunset, Squirt bottling company. And uh, so I, when I my first job when we got married I was working for her dad uh, in the Squirt bottling company.

MrsG: But after the first child we, he realized we needed more money and he couldn't offer it in, in a small town, so he moved to the bigger town, New Iberia.

SW: Okay. And that's where this work.

EG: Yeah.

SW: What, what else could you have done if, you were working for the bottling company, was there any other opportunities outside of the oilfield that you could've made decent money?

EG: [If I'd know how to?], I never thought about it. Uh, uh, how, this is what [were?] handed down to me. And I [Inaudible] and I've made a success out of it for me, as far as I'm concerned it's a success. We don't, this, this, we don't owe a nickel on any, [Inaudible], we got [Inaudible], we got kids that [Inaudible]. So, [Inaudible], and they, they, they doin' very well. We lost-

MrsG: I don't see anything bad.

EG: We lost our, we lost our daughter uh, when she was young. And when his little grandson and he's sev-, 18 now. And uh, when he was four years old he lost his mother. And uh, so anyway, so it's been a, it's merry-go-round.

MrsG: You know, I, I'm gonna quote one of his famous quotes, 'cause I've heard it enough. He said, "I was in commercial art, I was in commercial art in, in college," and he had a part-time job in commercial art before he went into the service. And so they said, "Well Ed, how you got into the oilfield?" He said, "Well, when I came back from the oil-, from the Navy I had a wa-, I had a wife, I got married, had a wife, and needed a regular paycheck, so I went to work in the oilfield." [Laughs] "And w-, so we could eat pretty good," is the way he put it.

EG: Well I studied, I studied now uh, it was commercial art in college. Now it's uh, it's uh, graphic arts.

MrsG: Is there anything else you need?

SW: Well um... let me see. We have one hour-

MrsG: We cov-, we covered-

SW: One hour tapes.

MrsG: Okay, we covered a lot. I don't know of anything else you need to-

SW: Um-

EG: We didn't tell you, we didn't tell you about our dog.

MrsG: That's not part of the oilfield.

SW: I've got a couple of questions that we can attach it to and uh-

MrsG: Okay.

SW: That I'd like to ask. And then um, like I said, we go on one hour tapes here.

EG: Okay.

SW: But uh, I, I often times I go back to the office and I go over the interview and I realize I could come back.

EG: That's fine.

SW: If you ever want to do a follow-up interview-

MrsG: Oh yeah.

SW: We could probably do that.

MrsG: If you need some [Inaudible].

EG: We got nothin' to hide. [SW and MrsG chuckle]

SW: But like I said you can say names, it won't hurt anybody. I'm gonna get you to sign a release form so it's all nice and legal.

MrsG: Alright. [Chuckles]

EG: Yeah.

SW: [Inaudible]. I wanted to, when did you guys move here to Lafayette?

MrsG: Sixty-four.

EG: Sixty-four.

MrsG: Uh hm.

EG: Yeah. Yeah, I guess we lived in New Iberia-

MrsG: Yeah, yeah. And this was, hey, hey, you gotta tell him about this house.

SW: This, that's what I wanted to-

MrsG: And how we got the house because of Mister Lamb and the oilfield. In a sense, that's when, you know-

EG: We, we bought this home. Paid 14,700 dollars for it. [MrsG chuckles]

SW: In 1964?

MrsG: Sixty-four.

EG: No not-

MrsG: Yeah, in '64. Yeah.

EG: Sixty-four, okay. And uh, so uh, anyway we, my notes was hundred and five-

MrsG: A 105 dollars.

EG: Hundred and five dollars a [month?]. [MrsG chuckles] And we-

MrsG: Well Mister Lamb-

EG: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] later on, but-

MrsG: Said, "Buy a house, [Ed?]."

EG: Yeah. No, I, well I was workin' for him and I told him one morning, I said, "Mister Lamb, I done something today, or yesterday." [MrsG chuckles] "And I thought I'd never be able to do." He said, "What's that?" I said, "I bought a home." And uh, he's, his next words is, "How much you're notes?" And I said, "A 105 dollars a month." And we only paid-

MrsG: The fourteen seven.

EG: Fourteen thousand dollars for this home. But we added on-

MrsG: But that was a big, but that was a BIG amount of money for us, you know.

EG: That's right. Well anyway so-

MrsG: And what did Mister Lamb tell you? [Chuckles]

EG: So uh, he said uh, he said, "That's alright son." He said, uh, I, when I told him 105 dollars a month, he said, "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of it." And he did. [Chuckles]

SW: So-

EG: He paid for this house.

MrsG: In, in other word, in a sense, in a sense he meant he'd be covered by his salary. Because you gonna have enough to g-, to pay for your house.

EG: Give ya, give me, give me a, give me a raise, like just enough to co-, a little more than the, covered my note on the house.

SW: But still your house, you had-

MrsG: Oh yeah.

SW: You had the deed.

MrsG: [SW chuckling] Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, but it was, it was indirect thing 'cause he said, "We'll cover that with your salary."

EG: Yeah I said, yeah, "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of it," he said. [MrsG chuckles]

SW: So you guys, you guys moved. Was this the edge of town at that time?

EG: What's that?

MrsG: Was it the edge?

SW: Was it the edge of town, I mean uh-

MrsG: Of town? No, it was, it was, it was uh-

EG: We [was?] livin' there in New Iberia.

MrsG: No, no darling, we talkin' about here. Wh-, this location.

EG: Oh, oh yeah.

MrsG: This location was pretty good because I was at UL uh, and lived in home management house, which was across from Fatima. And when that was, I finished in '51. No, I started in '51, I finished in '54, right before we got married. And actually the area around Judice Inn, which is not far from this location, was considered out in the country.

EG: Yes, it was.

MrsG: That we had to get special permission to come in a car that the university owned to Judice Inn, because it was in the country. So this was really a relatively new development here.

EG: That's, that's how long Judice Inn has been here.

MrsG: Yeah, right. Okay.

SW: I've heard from more than one person that was the edge of town.

MrsG: Yeah. So that was, yeah, that was the, that was it.

EG: That was the edge of town.

MrsG: Further, further than that, but you see by '64 it had s-, it started, you know. So this was some of the first development. Uh, and we've been here ever since.

SW: And there was a few houses out here.

EG: You know well I said I-

MrsG: It's perfect.

EG: We paid 14,000 dollars for the house.

MrsG: Yeah, yeah.

EG: This property.

MrsG: So to me this is a perfect location. We were across from the school, where our children went to first, and in those days that's how you found your locations, you see. Yeah.

SW: Okay. What they, did they have city services out here at that time or did-

MrsG: Oh yeah. [Laughs] Did they have city services, you remember about this? [Laughs] The city services.

EG: Oh the city s-, oh yeah.

MrsG: Oh yeah. But one-

EG: They just had at that time. I don't know if we, it was-

MrsG: But what happened, the story was that this house and the house across the street were on different utilities.

EG: Oh that's right.

MrsG: So we went for a year and I, I didn't realize I wasn't payin' my electric bill, that shows you how, you know, money had been taken over and not converted to the utilities. So that's, that was relatively young uh, you know, subdivis-, [all?] subdivision. And this who subdivision was developed by [Juan Hilda?].

EG: Uh, uh, the house across the street was owned by Maria [Plase's?] mother and dad.

MrsG: But that's a sideline that has nothing to do with the industry. [Laughs]

EG: I'm just sayin' Maria [Inaudible] you know, it will relate to it, see.

MrsG: Yeah. So watched our neighborhood change.

SW: Yeah.

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MrsG: Uh, it's, it, we had a lot of people our age, children the same age, they grew up and moved away, they, we saw transitions in our neighborhood of uh, older people uh, leaving and sometimes like us stayin', you know. We have a very few of the same original people.

SW: Did, did any of that change that influx of people or exodus of people have anything to do with the oilfield growing or shrinking or anything?

MrsG: Sure it did, I'm sure it did though.

EG: From then it, it grew.

MrsG: But it changed always because of that.

EG: Well, we had a couple. In 1958 uh, there was a slowdown and I think in the '70s there was a slowdown, you know, people were, they laid off a bunch of people and one thing and another. And again in the late '80s, as far as I remember, the three. But uh, I, I survived all of 'em. And uh, but, but the, it was a-

MrsG: 'Cause you were with good companies.

EG: I'm with good companies and I guess I may have done a good job. I, I believe I [Inaudible], [me to believe that?].

SW: You, I guess I'm trying to see that there was a, the growth of Lafayette as it was tied to the oilfield.

MrsG: Oh yeah.

EG: Yeah.

MrsG: Oh yeah. Right and I, I see it too.

EG: But back then uh, it was a oilfield I won't, I wouldn't give you a, I won't even, [when you say it's?] 50, 25 percent or 15 percent people in the oilfield were living in Lafayette. And right now I wouldn't guess either, I have no i-, have no idea.

SW: Actually they just did a study-

MrsG: Oh did they?

SW: The medical industry has passed the oil industry.

MrsG: Uh huh, yeah, oh yeah.

EG: That's right.

SW: In terms, in percentage of employment in Lafayette.

MrsG: Right.

SW: And they said 20 percent I think Laf-, the oil is still at 15 or somethin' like that.

MrsG: Oh, we saw a lot of our friends come and go, you know, through the years.

SW: Especially when they-

MrsG: And they moved to Houston. They moved from Lafayette to Houston or Lafayette to uh, Oklahoma. Uh, so it was not just our friends, but a lot of the customers would move to Lafayette, from Lafayette to Houston. And that's where he'd follow 'em, to Houston.

SW: Because a lot of the, the offices closed here and-

MrsG: Yeah.

SW: And that was during the '80s. What can you tell me about the '80s? What did you see that was happening here, uh, during that big bust period? Everybody remembers that-

MrsG: You remember all the different, the losses of airplanes. That was true.

EG: Yeah, well that was [wild time?]. That was one of the uh, but like I said I, I guess that uh, there was so many people that have a lot uh, what I'm tryin' to say.

MrsG: Loyalty to you?

EG: No, well not, no. Were not, well they got fired, let's put it that way.

MrsG: Oh, released. [Chuckles]

SW: Laid, laid off?

EG: Lease, yeah, released, laid off, yeah. And I was for-, one of the fortunate and I didn't. I always had a job.

MrsG: Briefly.

EG: Huh?

MrsG: You were out so briefly.

EG: Yes.

MrsG: Very briefly he was without work. And what did he do? He didn't stay idle, he went and started making these little things to keep busy until he got, he always said you could always find something to do. [Phone rings] It didn't have to be oilfield. It didn't have to be oilfield. [Phone rings] That's, that's how he felt. Excuse me, y'all go ahead.

EG: I still, I, I make these [Inaudible] but I don't sell 'em I give them away. And everybody says, and I meet a new friend, you know, that's what, I give 'em a [pack?] like this [Inaudible] right now.

SW: Oh okay. Thank you.

EG: And uh, so uh, but anyway, and one thing uh, always tell, other thing I started makin' and I used to had a mold, molds to make uh, [other alligators?] so I had a, I had mold that's green, green alligator is one of things I, but the uh, we di-, discontinued makin' molds of crawfish, I mean for the uh, uh, alligators. So I still makes these and like I said, I give 'em out. And meet a new friend, well, hell give 'em some crawfish and alligators.

SW: That, that's pretty much what I wanted to ask you. Uh, we can go ahead and end right now if you want and uh, we can end the interview.

EG: Oh.

SW: I, I've got all of my questions.

EG: Fine, whatever.

SW: I thank you.

EG: Okay. Uh, like I said, I-

[END OF RECORDING]

