CENTER FOR PUBLIC HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

HOUSTON HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Les "Pe-Te" Johnson

Date: May 30, 2009

Place: Friendswood, Texas

Interviewer: Jason Theriot

File 1

JT: This is an oral history interview with Pe-Te. Pe-Te, your real name is what?

PJ: Les "Pe-Te" Johnson. Les Peter Johnson.

JT: Les, L-e-s, "Pe-Te" Johnson, up here in Friendswood, Texas. It is the thirtieth of May, 2009, on a Saturday up here. It's nice and warm out here in the summertime. I'm Jason Theriot. I'm the interviewer. This is for the Center for Public History at the University of Houston. This is an oral history interview with Pe-Te of Pe-Te's famous "Cajun Bandstand" [on KPFT 90.1 FM]. All right, Pe-Te, let's get started off, my friend. Tell me where you're from and about your family over there in the prairies of Louisiana, about growing up down there.

PJ: I'm originally born and raised five miles east of Eunice, Louisiana, in a little community called Tasso.

JT: Hey, Grand Tasso.

PJ: Grand Tasso.

JT: That's Eunice, E-u-n-i-c-e.

PJ: I come from a large family. My grandpa, August Johnson, he was born there right outside of Eunice in 1810 and lived to be 113. He was born April the fifth, 1810, and died the fourth of 1923. I'll get it right. Married four times, had twenty-one kids.

JT: [laughs] That's the way to do it.

PJ: He outlived all four wives and he's buried in Point Blue, underneath the oak tree in the rice field between two of his last two wives.

JT: Oh, wow.

PJ: When he died in 1923, had 21 kids, 58 grandchildren, and 157 great-grandchildren.

JT: Starting his own little army, huh?

PJ: My daddy was the youngest, and Daddy passed away at the age of ninety-six.

JT: Wow.

PJ: We was five children in the family. Two were deceased and I was the youngest and I was born in December 18, 1934.

JT: 1934. You're a young guy.

PJ: Yes, I'm only seventy-four. [laughs]

JT: So what did your dad do for a living?

PJ: He was a sharecropper. He knew two words in English: hello and goodbye. Went to school two days. The first day, he went and he got sent home for fighting, and the next day he went and they told him to go back home and he never went back again. So neither him—my mom never had no real education, because my mom was born and raised outside of Eunice somewheres in the bayou country and it would take over an hour to go to school and that was by pirogue. That was the only way they could get to school, so she didn't go but a very few days.

JT: What was her name and maiden name?

PJ: She was a Miller. I had two brothers and two sisters, and I have one brother living and he's eighty-nine, lives in Lake Charles. I went to school in Eunice, graduated from Eunice.

JT: Eunice High?

PJ: Eunice High. Spent four years in the Air Force, 1952 to '56, and I was stationed in Chateauroux, France, two and a half years. I was an interpreter when they opened a new base there in Chateauroux in '53.

JT: So you were a French interpreter?

PJ: Yes.

JT: So that's why you like that book I gave you, huh?

PJ: Yes. Very interesting.

JT: I guess that'd been during the Korean War, huh?

PJ: Yes, the Korean conflict.

JT: You're the first Korean conflict French interpreter I've met.

PJ: You've got to be kidding.

JT: Well, you must know old C.J. Christ, huh?

PJ: I've heard of him.

JT: He was from the Eunice area, right about your age, flew in the Air Force as well. He moved on down to Houma [Louisiana].

PJ: Yeah. So anyway, whenever I come back, I went to college in Lake Charles for a couple of semesters at McNeese [University], and then later on got transferred to Beaumont [Texas], and from Beaumont I got transferred to Houston. I was over at Wyatt's Cafeteria. Worked for Philco Ford for a few years and worked for Brown & Root, different companies and everything. I was always more or less in the food business all these years. I done one radio show back in the early fifties in Alexandria. I was in the V.A. Hospital and they had a studio inside, and that's where I first got started and everything. I thought it was fun, but I never really picked up the idea of ever doing it as a job, put it that way. I guess I've started—oh, I've started a barbeque place back in 1979 was when we opened, which I'd been doing it for some times on the side of the road.

JT: Really?

PJ: That's where I got started at.

JT: Now, when did you guys, you and your wife, move here?

PJ: Oh. Well, I've been married three times.

JT: Three times, okay. So from the Beaumont, Port Arthur area, when did you move to Houston?

PJ: I moved in 1959 to Beaumont and was there for a little over a year, and then I moved to Houston, got transferred to Houston in '61, remarried in '62 and divorced in '64, and remarried again and I been married forty, forty-five years.

JT: There you go.

PJ: I guess the third time's the charm, put it that way. We don't have no children. I have a girl with my first marriage and a boy with my second marriage.

JT: Grandkids?

PJ: Four, two and two, on my side. Now, altogether, we probably got about twenty-five. [laughs]

JT: She's got a few.

PJ: Yeah, she's got a few.

JT: So you've been here in Houston since 1961.

PJ: Since '61.

JT: Okay, wow. So that whole time you were working for the cafeteria?

PJ: No. I worked for the cafeteria until '63. Then from '63, I worked with Philco Ford.

JT: What were you doing with Brown & Root? You mentioned those guys.

PJ: I was an inspector, petrochem plant. Done that for four years, and I made a mistake of bringing a couple extra brisket sandwiches to work one day, and I guess about two months later, I was up to two hundred. I was making more selling sandwiches on the job than I was working and getting a paycheck. [laughs] That's how I ended up opening the barbecue place. Took a sick leave of absent, whenever the project got to do at Arco [Refinery] on Sheldon Road. So I had me a little truck and I started selling sandwiches on the side of the road, because they wanted me to go out of the state and out of the country, and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to stay here in Houston. So make a long story short, next thing I know, I open a barbeque place and was there twenty-eight years.

JT: So you were working for Brown & Root, that was building the Arco petrochemical plant and one day you started bring a couple—

PJ: Couple sandwiches.

JT: —of sandwiches for your buddies.

PJ: For my boss and one of the guys, inspectors, and everybody started hollering, "Hey, bring some more tomorrow and we'll buy them all. We don't want to eat off of the truck.

JT: [laughs] I've eaten off of those guys.

PJ: So next thing I know, the project manager, he comes over and says, "Hey," he says, " I hear you've got barbeque." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Hey man, bring me a sausage sandwich every morning." So next thing I know, I'm bringing in warmers into the office, and my secretary, she's on the phone taking the orders for sandwiches. Then whenever it come for lunchtime, she was taking in the money. It was a wild thing.

JT: It's an interesting story.

PJ: But anyway, it worked.

JT: About what year was that when you first started?

PJ: That was from '75 to '79, and I guess about six months, six, eight months after '81, one Saturday morning trail riders was coming through, and one of the trail riders was the general manager for KTEK in Alvin. I had an eight-track player set up and I was playing Cajun music on it at the barbeque place. He come in and he got all excited about it and he wanted to know who was Cajun and so I told him. He says, "I ain't got time right now to talk to you but," says, "can I call you next week?" I said, "Sure." So I gave him my card and he called me the following week and he asked me to come into the radio station.

So I went over there and he said, "Man," he says, "I've been thinking about putting a Cajun show on at the station. What do you think?" He said, "Do you think it'll work?"

I said, "I don't see why not. They got a lot of Cajuns around here."

"Well," he says, "I need to find some advertisement."

"Well," I said, "I know a lot of people at different companies. I'm pretty sure they'd advertise."

"Well," he said, "why don't you find out and give me a call?"

So I called eight or ten places and they all jumped on it and everything. So I called him back two days later and said, "Hey, man, I got twelve sponsors already that'll go with it."

He says, "Come on back here." He said, "I want to talk to you."

I said, "Okay."

He says, "How much should we charge?" So I told him, and so he says, "When do you think would be a good time to do the show?"

I said, "Oh, Saturday mornings, six to ten, or whatever."

He says, "I've got a spot open from seven to eleven."

"Hey, that'd be great."

He says, "Okay. When do you think we ought to start?"

"Well," I said, "why don't you advertise for a couple of weeks that you going to have one," I said, "You know, then let the people be aware of it and everything,

and then say you're going to start on the twenty-third or whatever, and see if you get any response."

He called me back the next day. He says, "Man, we started yesterday. I've already had about thirty people call in." He says, "You sure you think we ought to go ahead and wait another week?"

I said, "Yeah, I think you should."

He said, "Okay." He says, "Can you come in the Friday?"

I said, "Yeah," I said, "I can come in Friday."

He said, "Go ahead and bring me the list of advertisement," and all this other stuff. And he said, "If you can get their checks and everything for the first month, go ahead."

So I did. I walked in there cold turkey and I say, "Who's going to be doing the show?"

He says, "You are."

I said, "Do what?" I said, "No, I don't want to do the show."

"Oh yeah," he said, "I want you to do the show."

But I'd been going over to visit Huey P. at KPFT on Friday nights, and I was a good friend of Johnny Janot over in Beaumont at KLDI, so I called them up and he says, "Hey, man, go for it." He said, "Man, we need some more Cajun music in Houston." So I did, and so the rest of it's history.

JT: Twenty-six years.

PJ: No, I was only there a little over a year. When my contract come up to be renewed, the place was sold by a religious station out of Chicago, I believe. Anyway, they come up to me and they said, "You can only do a couple more weeks of it because we don't feel like your type of music is going to fit in with our religious music. So you're going to have to move on."

I went by and seen Huey P. the Friday night, and he introduced me to the general manager that was there and he told her that I was looking for a new home, which I really wasn't, but he felt like I needed to keep doing it and everything. So they wanted to know when the end of my contract was and so I told them, I said, "Two weeks."

They said, "Can you come over and start in two weeks over here and do a show from six to nine?"

I said, "I sure can." The rest of it's history. I been there a little over twenty-six years.

JT: And you were still running the barbeque place?

PJ: Still running the barbeque place.

JT: Then when did you shut that place down?

PJ: In 2004.

JT: Okay, so a little over twenty years you ran the restaurant.

PJ: No, no, no, no, I was there over twenty-five years.

JT: Twenty-five years on the air, twenty-five years on the restaurant.

PJ: Twenty-five and then I was on the side of the road altogether another four years, so twenty-eight, almost twenty-nine years, I guess you could say.

JT: So now you do what? You still have your radio show?

PJ: Oh, I'm still doing the radio show and play golf.

JT: There you go.

PJ: KPFD is a public station, and the only way we stay on the air is through people calling in and donating monies. We don't get paid, so everything is volunteer. Plus I support the station and been supporting it ever since the day I started. Still enjoy it. Everybody keep asking, "Well, when are you going to retire?" "Well," I said, "I think I'm only going to do it maybe ten years. That's all I'm going to do and then I'm going to call it quits, let somebody young get in there." The next thing I know, I said, "Well, I think I'll do another five years." Every time I open my mouth, it exceeds. Somebody asked me, when I had my twenty-fifth anniversary the year before last, they said, "Hey, when you going to hang it up?" "Well, I don't know. I feel pretty good. I'm still enjoying it."

JT: [laughs] Music still good?

PJ: It's my culture, so, you know, hey, that's part of me. And so many Cajuns still coming in and we get phone calls from all over the world. I even had a phone call from the Space Station, from the astronauts up there. So I enjoy it. I love it, put it that way.

JT: Well, good, man, that's some good stuff. I've got a lot of questions about all that and then I got some other questions, too. Let me back up just a little bit. I want to go back to the fifties. Where were you exactly? Where were you stationed in France? In what capacity were you serving as an interpreter?

PJ: I was stationed in Chateauroux, France, and it was a new base that had just opened up, the first one in France. It was a depot. That was in 1953 when it opened. I was number thirty-eight that checked in on the base at that time. I was one of the interpreters to go pick up the vegetables and the produce and the wine, the meat, and so on and so forth. So I did a lot of travelling all over France and everything. I did that for two and a half years off and on, mostly.

Then I wanted to see some new country, so I transferred to Wales, that RAF base, and I was there for a little over a year, and then I came back to Lake Charles and got discharged there in '56, August of '56.

JT: That base in France, give me a general region or location in France.

PJ: It was located around Orléans, between Orléans and Bordeaux. Nice little time. Matter of fact, me and the wife went back about four years ago and revisited Chateauroux for about three or four days and happened to meet the company

commander of the base, which is a NATO base now, heavily secured, and he took us on the base and gave us a grand tour.

JT: Wow.

PJ: All the buildings is all gone except the CEO, one of the quarters. Had two buildings. I'm trying to think. But anyway, that's all that's left. Everything is all gone. Plus a lot of the pictures from when they first broke ground on there and everything. It was a lot of good memories.

JT: How did your French from Eunice compare to the French in that kind of Brittany area of France? Was it a similar kind of patois or was it real different?

PJ: In Chateauroux, I didn't have too much difficulty. A lot of the words was a different dialect, but if I went to Bordeaux, I didn't have no problem. If I went to Paris, a lot of people thought I was from Nice or that part of the country and everything. But I never did have any great problems except one time I went on the German border in France, and I can't even remember the name, and I thought I was in another country altogether. I didn't think I was in France anymore, because it had so much German dialect that was mixed up with the French and everything. But that's pretty well it. Matter of fact, the last time I was over there, I spoke French the whole time.

JT: Still remember it.

PJ: Still remember it.

JT: Now, the Johnsons, how did your Grandpa Johnson and the Johnson family, how did they come to speak French in Eunice? Johnson is an Anglo name.

PJ: Well, J-e-a-n-s-o-n-n-e. We came from Nova Scotia.

JT: Jeansonne.

PJ: Yes. It first started J-a-s-o-n, and then it was later changed to J-o-h-n-s-o-n-e, and then it was changed to J-e-a-n-s-o-n-n-e.

JT: Wow.

PJ: Then J-o-h-n. Matter of fact, when I started going in the service, I had two birth certificates. I had one in church, J-o-h-n-s-o-n, the one in the state was J-e-a-n-s-o-n-n-e. So I had to get an affidavit and get a bunch of friends and the family to sign it and said that's who I was. Matter of fact, I've got two brothers, one of them is J-e-a-n-s-o-n-n-e, and the other one, and my daddy was the same way, his last name on his birth certificate is J-e-a-n-s-o-n-n-e.

JT: At some point—I'm trying to figure out how and who and why—

PJ: It was the priests and some of the people that didn't speak French in Louisiana or didn't really understand it. What they understood, Jeansonne, so they put it together Johnson. So that's why on some of the stuff is Johnson, the other one is really Jeansonne. Jeansonne, that's really French, but the family did come from Nova Scotia in the 1700s.

JT: That's interesting. Did they come to live in that Eunice area?

PJ: Yes, Prudhomme is where they ended up at, outside of Opelousas.

JT: I'll be. Joseph Theriot is my ancestor from Acadie, actually from Beaubasin.

PJ: Beaubasin?

JT: In Nova Scotia. That's fifteen, sixteen generations ago, or whatever, and he's the one came over with his wife, she was a Bourgeois, came over with his wife and had a baby, had a baby during that passage and they ended up in the Terrebonne area.

PJ: Yeah, that's close to New Orleans, in that area.

JT: Right. There's a little community called Chauvin near Houma, and there's actually a town called Theriot and that's where my Theriot—

PJ: Ancestors came from.

JT: My grandfather went to LSU right after the war and ended up, he was assistant county agent in the sugarcane business. That was his first job and he got it in Iberia Parish, so that's how we came to live in New Iberia. But we still got relatives over there in the Theriot, Chauvin, Houma area. We got a fishing camp down there that we still go to, and it's same kind of people, just a little bit different. But that's interesting, man, Jeansonne.

PJ: Jeansonne.

JT: Jeansonne to Johnson.

PJ: Yes. Yes.

JT: Well, good. Pe-Te, let me get into a couple of the migration questions here.

PJ: Go ahead.

JT: I don't know how well read you are on the topic, but anything that you can offer would be more than what I already have, probably. It's interesting, too, because I'm sure that a lot of the Cajuns who migrated here in the nineteen-teens, twenties, and thirties had a very similar experience as you all did when you moved here in the fifties, sixties and seventies.

PJ: Yeah.

JT: You know what I'm saying? So if you don't know the exact answers, maybe you can just reflect on your own experience, because what I'm really interested in, one of the things I'm really interested in is in that World War II migration. So what do you know about this early migration period? You've got the big discovery of Spindletop in 1901 at Beaumont, and you've got the emergence of an oil industry here in Southeast Texas and a little bit in Southwest Louisiana, but you begin to see a lot of these Cajuns coming across the Sabine River in the 1920s and 1930s. Do you have any experience or have you been told stories or any relatives that might have moved here during that time period?

PJ: Yes, I've got a first cousin, they moved over here in the late forties, in Katy, to harvest rice fields. They still live in Katy. He's in his eighties, eighty-nine, and he was in the service during World War II. I'm talking about Charlie Courville and his wife, Marie.

My best recollection as far as I can go back, I remember during World War II, at the beginning of World War II, I had a couple of first-cousins that was drafted, and they were in the Navy. Matter of fact, there was three of them. They all ended up in the Navy. I can't remember, I was probably about eight, eight or nine, somewhere in there, but I can still remember my middle brother going to New Orleans for a physical and he didn't pass the test and everything. But I do remember some of the farmers that moved over to the Port Arthur, Beaumont area to harvest crops, rice mostly, and a lot of them with very little education, moved to Port Arthur and that particular area to work the plants and in the Beaumont area also. But very few of them you ever heard that ever came to the Houston area. It was mostly around the Port Arthur area and I can't remember all the other little towns.

JT: Orange and Bridge City.

PJ: Orange and Bridge City, all them.

JT: Natchez, Sabine.

PJ: Yes, that's about the only memory I've got and everything.

JT: From what areas did most of these Cajuns migrate from?

PJ: You talking about for the Eunice area? From the Eunice area, some of them lived around Opelousas, Ville Platte and Basille, Elton. There's a lot of them from Lake Charles, would move from Lake Charles to the plants in Beaumont and Port Arthur back then, because that's where they paid higher wages than what they were making especially in the Eunice area, because back then, you was lucky to make fifty cents a day, to where if you went to work at the plants, you might make a dollar and a quarter an hour. So that was a lot of difference.

JT: Big money. That would be enough encouragement to move somebody and his family.

PJ: Yes, they would just pack up and start moving and everything.

JT: History tells us about the declining agricultural industry in Louisiana and the change into more mechanized equipment. You wouldn't need as many young men—

PJ: Oh yes. I was raised on the farm, so I remember we had a couple of mules and one horse and a couple old plows, and we raised cotton—we didn't do any rice—potatoes, and corn and sweet potatoes and miscellaneous other stuff and everything. In between, Daddy would take his team and wagon and he would rent himself out to some of the people that was harvesting rice, to go cut rice and haul rice and to combine. Back then they had old tractors, nothing like all this modern

stuff, had the tractors with the big lugs on that would kick you around, where it would take you to plow a field, twenty acres, it would take you all day and maybe two days, so to where it is now, everything is electronic, almost. You got air-conditioned tractors now and big plows. Well, like day and night. Everything is so modern and everything, it's unreal. It used to take fifteen people to harvest one crop and maybe two weeks to cut the rice and have it in the mills, now you can do it in one day. That's how much modernized it is from when I was raised to the present.

JT: Do did you have any relatives other than the Courvilles that came back this way, across the Sabine?

PJ: That's the only one that came across the Sabine that I know of. Well, there's some more families, but they're all deceased. But the Courvilles the only one that's still living, that came over here, like I said, back in the forties.

JT: So when you got around these parts in the sixties, like in the Beaumont area, did you have relatives living in the Golden Triangle area?

PJ: No, I was by youself, and I mean by youself. But I've been travelling all my life, as long as I can remember, so I adjusted real easy and everything.

JT: What was wartime life like for a young teenager in Eunice? What were guys thinking about, what were they teaching you all, and what were you all doing?

PJ: What were we doing? Well, we lived on the farm and we didn't get to town but maybe once a week since we lived out there in the country. Everything was rationed. Gas was rationed. Tires was the same way; you couldn't get no tires. You had to patch everything up and hold everything together. If we didn't have those means, we went by horse and wagon, which was five miles. It took a long time to go five miles, so you'd leave early in the morning and get there almost in the middle of the day. Then you could do your shopping, whatever things you would pick up at the store, bring some chicken and eggs to swap out for groceries and everything. So it was rough. Maybe catch a movie on Saturday afternoon, which cost maybe nine cents back then. So it wasn't easy back then during the war and everything.

JT: What about for your family or some of your relatives? If a large number of men and young women have left the family farm to go serve or to go work in the shipyards, who was on the farm to help raise all the crops.

PJ: Well, that's where they would hire a lot of the black people to come over and help out, because like when it come to pick cotton, my brothers, they were all gone, they done got married and had their family and they had their jobs, so we had to get outside help to come over to help pick the cotton and everything. It was the

same way with all the other farmers. They had to do the same thing. They had to hire people to come over, contract people to help them on the farms.

JT: Did you all have any of them German POWs up there working?

PJ: Yes, we did. Matter of fact, right across the street from Eunice High we had a barricade there, and they had probably a couple of hundred German prisoners there. Matter of fact, I used to go over there and talk to them. They'd let me go maybe ten or fifteen feet from the fence. A few of them could speak English. Not many of them, but a few of them could. I remember that. I'm glad you brought it up because it's been so long ago. Because they were there for several years and everything until about, I want to say, at least six months after the war. At least six months after the war the camp was still there and everything.

JT: Well, you know, Pe-Te, I don't have to tell you this, but some of the things that make our people unique are our connection to Roman Catholic faith, close kinship ties, intermarriage, and our French language. Those things were hard to come by for the Cajuns who migrated over here to Texas. How do you think most of these families were able to cope with moving to a big city like Beaumont or Houston, even for the wives and the women, without having that close—from where we come from, a lot of families lived in the same little communities, the same neighborhood, so you didn't have that support and you didn't have the big churches that we have down there in Louisiana and you didn't have a whole lot of

people speaking French around you. How do you think that the people who moved down here were able to cope?

PJ: It was very hard on them, because I can remember several couples that got married and they moved out of town, out of state, and the women, especially the women, they couldn't cope with it. Within a month or less, they'd be back home again, and the next thing you know, there'd be divorces and so on and so forth and everything. There would be family breakups. They just couldn't cope with almost like a new world. If you moved out of, say, Eunice and you came to Houston, my god, that was something that they just couldn't understand, all the people and all the traffic and different bylaws and so on and so forth. They just couldn't cope with it.

JT: And the same thing, in like the Beaumont, Port Arthur area, although you did have a pretty substantial population of Cajuns that have been moving there and living there since the teens and twenties.

PJ: Oh yes. Now, if they were moving to, say, Port Arthur or where other Cajuns was, they would pick up with other families and friendship and so on and so forth, and it was more comfortable. But if they would move into a area where there wasn't any Cajuns, and a lot of them didn't have the education and some of the husbands could barely read or write that would go to work in the plants or whatever, and it was hard for him to go to a bank and want to make a loan or

whatever because he didn't speak fluent English, it was broken English, and so he wouldn't be understanding all the new laws in a different community or state and anything. So it made it rough on those people.

JT: That could even be said for even like the more recent times in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. You still had people who you just described, that were probably migrating here who still were predominantly French speaking, who still came from these isolated communities.

PJ: I've still got some family back home with hardly no education at all, because they still work on the farm and they didn't want to go to school. They might have went to second or third grade, and they said, "Wait, why should I go to school when I can work on the farm or this, that, or the other?" So it's a big world.

JT: How surprised were you when you moved to Beaumont in '59 to find such a large population of French-speaking Cajuns there?

PJ: I was surprised. As a matter of fact, I worked for Wyatt's Cafeteria at the time, and when a lot of the customers would come in, I could pick up the dialect.

JT: [laughs] You knew what towns they were from.

PJ: I knew where they were from. So I just automatically started speaking in French or asked them a question or say something in French, and, boy, they'd get all excited, you know. And pretty soon word would get around, "Hey, we've got a Cajun over here at the cafeteria." So they'd come in to eat and everything. First thing, "Hey, where's Pe-Te at? We want to talk to Pe-Te." So it was quite a treat in a way and everything, to find a lot of Cajuns that did speak French, which you have a lot of them that was raised in Louisiana, from Eunice or whatever, and a lot of them never did speak any Cajun. They were taught, "Well, no, you don't want to speak that foreign language. You want to be high-class."

JT: Now, tell me some other stories. I know you lived in Beaumont for a couple of years. Other than the cafeteria, you were a young man then, what were Friday and Saturday nights like or even Sunday mornings? Were there still activities, social activities that these Cajuns could go to? Were there house dances? Were there parties?

PJ: Oh, yeah, there were house dances and parties. Matter of fact, they had a couple of clubs. They had the Rodair Club outside of Port Neches. They had a Cajun dance every Saturday night, so a lot of the Cajuns would go there, they'd go to Bridge City, then a lot of them would go back towards Louisiana and try to find some clubs over there. They had a few clubs close to the state line there in Orange.

I was the first one that had Cajun dances here in the Houston area. When I started the barbeque place, my dream was to have Cajun dances. So not even a year after we opened the barbeque place, we had our first Cajun dance at the barbeque place and I think we had about forty people. It was supposed to only hold about fifteen. [laughs] But I brought a band in all the way from Louisiana.

JT: All right. You remember that first band?

PJ: Oh, yeah. Lesa Cormier and the Sundown Playboys, and they played at the barbeque place for, god, for seven, eight years, I guess.

JT: Where were they from?

PJ: They're from Lake Charles.

JT: So that would have been—refresh my memory—'79 was when you opened the barbeque?

PJ: Seventy-nine and we had our first dance in 1980.

JT: All right.

PJ: That's quick.

JT: So there had not been any other Cajun dances here in Houston?

PJ: Nope, nope, not to my knowledge.

JT: So Pe-Te's the one who's responsible, now for places like Jack's Grill—

PJ: That's foreign. [laughs]

JT: —and all the live music that we have now, Cajun and Creole Zydeco music, that we have now, it all started with Pe-Te's barbeque.

PJ: Yeah, I had Cajun dances and then I started Zydeco, so we had the Cajun and Zydeco dance from 1980 until I retired in 2004.

JT: Your bands would start in the afternoon, on the Saturday dances?

PJ: The Cajun dances was at night. They would start at seven and go until midnight. Then the Zydeco, which started two to six on Saturday afternoon. So for a long time we done the Zydeco in the afternoon and then went from eight to twelve on the Cajun.

JT: That was a busy day.

PJ: That made a long day.

JT: [laughs] A lot of barbeque, huh, Pe-Te?

PJ: Yes, a lot of work.

JT: Wow. So back to Beaumont in the sixties. There was a lot happening where a Cajun family could move and become comfortable, with familiar surroundings.

PJ: Yes, yes. They would be very comfortable because there would be other Cajun families there.

JT: What about for like their kids going to school? I can imagine that many of these folks who migrated in the forties, fifties, and sixties, their little kids would have been able to speak some English, but I guess what I'm getting at is was there a level of discrimination to a degree for the Frenchies?

PJ: I think at first there was, from some of the people I've talked to that migrated from Louisiana into the Beaumont and Port Arthur area. It was hard for the kids, for them to pick up the English, which I had to go to school to learn how to speak English. So they had the same problem we did, just like, I would say, like the

people coming in from Mexico. Still, a lot of them's been here for seventy years and they don't speak any English at all. If they do, it's very, very few words.

JT: Did the Texans give you guys a hard time when you all moved here, the *Monde Texians* [damn Texans]?

PJ: No, no, they pretty well open, come in with open arms.

JT: Now, do you think that that's because historically there have been a lot of Cajuns that moved here and lived in the towns and worked in the refineries and the shipyards right next to a Texan, that maybe after a couple of generations, the Texans became comfortable with—

PJ: Yes. When I come over here in '61, I felt very comfortable, because I knew the work. So that's what they were more or less wanting, was somebody that knew their job. So it wasn't, "Well, I'm going to put a black mark on you because you from Louisiana," or, "You're a Cajun," or whatever. So it wasn't all that bad and everything like some of the places you go to anymore. Because a lot of places you go to and you tell them you're a Cajun, man, you almost on a downfall. Especially like the Texans, if you're an Aggie, they's, "Hey, man, we don't know if we want you here or not." [laughs]

JT: Well, that's good. So you did Beaumont for a couple of years before you moved to Houston. Beaumont in '59 and Houston in '61. Tell me the differences about the Cajun community of Beaumont and Port Arthur versus the Cajun community, or whatever it was, here in Houston. How different are we talking about in the early days, in the sixties?

PJ: Well, whenever I come over, I hardly didn't find anybody from, really, the Cajun country. Now, I did run into some people, say, around New Orleans, Alexandria, Shreveport, which I don't count that as Cajun country; I call that redneck country. So really when I got involved with or made a lot of friends with, they were all people from either Texas or they were originally from New York or different parts of the country, because I know I went, oh, maybe two or three years before I really would run across different people from the Cajun country here in Houston.

JT: So was that hard on you, not really having that close connection that we talked about earlier?

PJ: Yeah, the only thing bad, I almost lost my French on account of that. I didn't have nobody to speak to. That was my biggest problem, which I went back home maybe once a month or somewheres, in that particular timeframe and everything, but I went for a long time before I could run into somebody that did speak French and everything.

JT: So I take it that your wife was not from Louisiana, your first wife.

PJ: No, she's from Atlanta. She's a Georgia cracker. [laughs] Anyway, I guess the first ones that I really run into was at a Cajun dance in Galveston and that was Peewee Kershaw, who is from Lake Arthur, Doug Kershaw's brother, older brother. Matter of fact, I had the whole family playing at the barbeque place in '82.

JT: So let me see if I can get this picture right, Pe-Te. You're born a Cajun, you move to Beaumont, which is "Lapland," right? They call that Lapland, Louisiana Lapland. So you feel at home, but then you move to Houston for the big job, and you're making a good career start here for you and your family, but there's no other people like you. So in the midst of you cooking your good barbeque over here that I'm sure your mama probably taught you how to cook real good, you decided you wanted to change something about this town, right? A little bit?

PJ: Yes, I did.

JT: Bring a little bit of the Cajun flavor here, and you did that.

PJ: Yeah. Yes, I did.

JT: Let's talk about the Cajun music and the connection between East Texas Swing, East Texas honky-tonk meets up with the Cajun fiddle and accordion in the 1920s. What happened? What changes?

PJ: Well—

JT: You have to break out a cigarette for that one, huh?

PJ: Yeah. [laughs] I can go back to my early childhood. I remember I was only about two, maybe three, years old—you know; it's funny how things can stick to you for as long as you can remember. We used to have house dances when I was a kid, and matter of fact, they'd have a house dance at one house one Saturday night, then next week or the two weeks later, they'd have another one at somebody else's house. Back then there was only one musician, a couple of musicians, and Amédé Ardoin, that played the accordion. I was only about two and a half, three years old, and he played at my house. He was the only musician there. Back then they'd say, "Fais dodo," and they'd put the kids in the back room in the bed and everything, and you was supposed to stay in there and go to sleep. Man, I mean, man, that accordion music, man, it was in my blood, man. [laughs] And I'd drift out of there. Finally, after about the third time of getting a whoopin', they'd just leave me there and I'd just sit right there by his feet and everything while he played.

Then later on, had a fiddle player join him. Either Sady Courville or Dennis McGee would join him. But like I said, they'd move around. Then pretty soon a guitar player would come in. Different people would start, like Amédé Breaux or Joe Falcon, they would start putting bands together and everything. That's where all the dances would start, and pretty soon somebody opened a dance hall and then it went from there and pretty soon every town had a dance hall.

But all the music has changed so much. I remember when the Zydeco was first started, because we had some black folks that lived down the road from us in the country and they'd invite us to go out there. The way it started, they would pick beans, green beans. They had oh, maybe a half-acre of green beans. The Saturday, they would spend all day picking up the green beans, snap beans. Then the Sunday, they'd come over there in the afternoon, when it was cool and everything, and they'd all bring their instruments and everything. While the women was out there snapping the green beans and everything, they'd be playing their music and everything.

JT: After church, of course.

PJ: Oh, yes, that's what I'm saying, in the afternoon. Oh no, you didn't do anything like that during church. But that's how the Zydeco started.

JT: So you remember some names?

PJ: Oh, yeah, Clifton Chenier and—oh, shoot, I can't remember all of them.

JT: They would invite you guys to come and sit on the porch and listen to them?

PJ: Oh, yeah, we'd go over there, a few of us. I was just a little kid, but I'd go out there and break snap beans just for the heck of it and listen to the music. They had an old washtub turned over with a little rope tied to it to make some sound and everything, and pots and pans they'd beat on, and it'd make some pretty good music and everything. They had a few bottles of homemade brew and everybody would take a few little drinks. I was maybe eight or nine. I'd go over there and while they wasn't looking, I'd get me a little sip and everything.

JT: Was there ever any integration between the Zydeco musicians and the Cajun fiddlers, accordions, at these house dances?

PJ: Oh, yes. Matter of fact, Amédé Ardoin, he was black and Dennis [McGee] was white. Oh, yes. Matter of fact, well, poor Amédé, he was killed, I guess about a month after he had played at one of our house dances at home. Because back then there wasn't no air conditioning, they'd just open all the windows and try to let the fresh air come in. This was like in July, June, July, August, and it was so hot in there, you'd be wringing wet all the time. He'd be just a sweating, sweat would just run in his face while he was trying to play. One of the white women

would get up there with a handkerchief and try to wipe his brow because the sweat was running down his eyes and so on and so forth. One night on his way home from one the dances, still don't know who done it, but several people on horseback killed him with a post. He didn't die right away. He lived another couple two or three months, but his head was all bashed in and crippled, and he later passed away and everything, which was sad, because he was such a great musician.

JT: His family has continued that tradition?

PJ: Oh, yeah, they've continued, plus a lot of the other families picked up on the music and everything.

JT: I've seen Chris Ardoin play right down the road from my house at Jack's Grill.

PJ: Oh, you've got to be kidding. Oh, yeah.

JT: There's Zydeco every Friday and Saturday night.

PJ: Oh, yeah. Well, I knew Geno Delafonse was raised not too far from us and everything. So I knew all the whole Delafonse family.

JT: So now I see why that one guy chose you to run his Cajun music show, Pe-Te. You've had it in your blood since you were a little baby. So when you get to Beaumont, after you come back from the war, after you come back from Korea, and you get to Beaumont, is it the same kind of music that you grew up with in Eunice, Basille, and that little area?

PJ: Yes, if you went to Bridge City or the Rodair Club or any one of those places, yeah, they had good bands there. They had Andrew Cormier, because he was originally from the Eunice area, and you had Amédé Breaux. Boy, I could go on and on on the different musicians and everything, and Iry LeJeune and so on and so forth. Matter of fact, Iry learned the music from Amédé. But, yes, I felt at home. Matter of fact, I used to make quite a few trips back and forth to the Cajun dances.

JT: Somewhere along the line, you got a guy named Bob Wills and you got a guy named Hank Williams, and they have an influence. That style of music is beginning to have an influence on the Cajun fiddlers and the Cajun accordionists, and moving from the local house dances to the local clubs and then you begin to see a recording industry that breaks out. So tell me a little bit about how the Texas Swing music influences and changes the Cajun.

PJ: In the fifties and the early sixties, until, oh, say, probably the early seventies, Cajun music just about died altogether. Everybody started moving towards big

bands like Bob Wills and, you know, started playing the country music and so on, like Jimmy Newman went from Cajun to country. Peewee Kershaw, when him and Rusty and Doug broke up, he was with Bob Wills for about four or five years, toured with Bob Wills and played with him, second fiddle. Then probably in the middle of the seventies, Cajun music started to come back up again. You had Nathan Abshire and a bunch of the other big bands like Steve Riley and some of those.

JT: Balfa Brothers.

PJ: Yeah, the Balfa Brothers start coming up and they start coming in. They'd come into Houston, they'd go to Rhode Island and different parts of the country. Cajun music started picking up again. Johnny Janot started a Cajun radio show in Beaumont on Sunday mornings.

JT: What year was that, do you remember? In the seventies?

PJ: I want to say it was in the late sixties when he started.

JT: But before that, there had not been a Cajun music show yet. So the first Cajun music show in Beaumont would have been the late sixties.

PJ: Right. Now, Huey P. had a show back in the sixties in Orange.

JT: Cajun music?

PJ: Yeah.

JT: What station was that? It was out of Orange?

PJ: Out of Orange. KOLS or KSLO. I can't remember the exact call letters. But he had a Cajun show there, and then when he left there, he went to Texas City and started a Cajun show there. I know you know Huey P. from Freddy Fender and so on and so forth. But he had a lot of influence on me starting doing a Cajun show, him and the late Johnny Janot.

JT: That's interesting. You think that the revival of the Cajun music is placed more in the seventies.

PJ: Yes, it is. Oh, my god, it done exploded. Same way with Zydeco.

JT: Let me back you up a little bit. What happens if, let's say, Iry LeJeune does not record the "Love Bridge Waltz" in '47 and bring that accordion back, or let's say that Harry Choates doesn't record "Jole Blon" on the fiddle in the French style, which becomes such a national hit. It seems that if you're talking about the returning GIs of World War II, and the young men who were building ships are

now back on the farm, the history, studying history like I've done and studying the Cajun culture, you see kind of a shift towards wanting to hear more Cajun music in the late forties. That's when you see some of these guys coming back and bringing the accordion and the fiddle back again.

PJ: That's right. But then I'm going to say in the late fifties, everything started going to country.

JT: It was a quick little spurt and then it fizzled out.

PJ: It fizzled out, just like the Zydeco whenever it first started was the same way. It started and it migrated and migrated, then pretty soon it pretty well fizzled out, and then all of a sudden, it just went bang. I mean it just started opening up again.

JT: What do you think has been the influence of the record studios particularly here in Houston, the influence on Cajun music, like in '46 with Harry Choates and '47 with Iry LeJeune and Clifton Chenier? It's kind of ironic if you think about the song, "Jole Blon." If you read the lyrics, it's a song about a woman who leaves a Cajun guy for somebody in Texas, and here you've got a man from Acadia Parish, Harry Choates, who moves to the Golden Triangle to work in the shipyards and to play the fiddle at night and he's the first to record the popularized version of "Jole Blon" by a record studio here in Houston. It's kind of ironic that what we think of the song "Jole Blon" today is really a Texas version recorded here, played here.

PJ: Right. But I guess what I want to try to say is the melody is just something that just gets into your system and makes you move. I don't know what it is about fiddle music, I mean, or the accordion. It's just something, once that sound comes out, it just sticks to you and you just want to keep listening to it.

JT: Yeah, I know what you mean.

PJ: It's just that sound. I can't really describe it.

JT: It's different from a guitar.

PJ: Yes.

JT: It's even different from a horn. I like jazz music, but it's different from, let's say, like a Miles Davis trumpet. There's something about that fiddle or when they pull that accordion, and if you hear it and you understand it—I don't read music, but I'm beginning to understand it—it really is a completely different sound. You're right, it stays with you for a long time.

PJ: Yes, it does.

JT: It's dancing music too, makes you want to get on your feet and tap your toes.

PJ: Oh, yes. Yes. Oh, yes.

JT: What do you think about the song, "Jole Blon," Pe-Te? What kind of meaning does that song bring to you?

PJ: That's a Louisiana national anthem, man. Matter of fact, they've got two Louisiana national anthems. You've got "Jole Blon" and then "You Are My Sunshine." That's two. I guess I get just as many requests for "Jole Blon" as I do for "You are my Sunshine" on Saturday mornings. Very, very few recordings where they sing the "Jole Blon" in English. Now, some of them that will sing it bilingual; they'll sing it in French and then the next line they'll repeat it in English or French or whatever. I've even heard some of the Chicano bands do it in Mexican, and it tickles me. But as soon as you hear the music, you know what it is. You know the words regardless if it's in—well, if you don't understand French, you can pick it up pretty fast and everything.

JT: I heard Geno Delafonse play it the other day when he was downtown in Houston.

PJ: Did you?

JT: He played "Jole Blon." That was the first song. My wife and I drove up with our little daughter. He and his band, that was the song that they were starting up with. It's universal, right?

PJ: [laughs] Universal, yes, it is.

JT: I mean, you know the words, I know a little bit of the words, how does that make you feel when you hear that song?

PJ: Well, I guess I've heard it so many times, I still get a few little bumps on my arms and it's a great feeling to hear "Jole Blon." You've got so many people, so many musicians doing different styles. I guess I've got probably fifteen or twenty different styles of "Jole Blon" by different artists.

JT: What's your favorite version?

PJ: Harry Choates. Oh yeah, you can't beat Harry Choates.

JT: Now, Pe-Te, I'm going to ask you a question. I'm kind of fishing for an answer. I think you know where I'm going here. But if you go back to, let's say, your father, even your grandfather who lived to be 113, it was, and my grandparents, who lived in rural areas, isolated enclaves in Louisiana, lived on farms or shrimped and fished for a living, or trapped, hard-working, French-speaking, no

English, could not write, very illiterate, little bit of education, but yet on weekends there was always an opportunity for some social events. I mean, that's almost what brought the people together, the church communities, the weddings, and then, of course, the social events.

Here we are, you and I, two Texas Cajuns, and there's many of us in Houston and in the Golden Triangle area. We don't speak French anymore. You look around, this really isn't a rural community, there's not a whole lot of woods, swamps or marsh for us to go play around with, to go chase some ducks or to bring our kids out there to teach them about the wildlife. I guess people still go to church. I don't know how many Cajuns who live here are still active in the church communities on Sundays. We don't have as many get-togethers. Obviously we don't have as many family get-togethers as we used to, because like you, you were here by yourself, I'm here by myself, as well. I have my family who's from here, from Houston. So what is it that keeps us together? What is it that the Cajuns here in Texas and the Cajuns in Louisiana, what is that bridge that keeps us together?

File 2

JT: So does Harry Choates or "Jole Blon" have anything to do with keeping that Cajun identity alive on both sides of the Sabine?

PJ: Yes, he does, and it always will be. That why they call it the Louisiana [Cajun] national anthem. It's not really the Louisiana; it's worldwide. Just about any country—because I've traveled to Russia, France, Germany, Spain, Italy. I just got back from Italy and Greece and some of those countries. I've brought CDs with me, I've played in different radio stations in France and in Greece and in Russia, and in a lot of them I've played "Jole Blon," and, boy, they said, "Yeah, we heard that before." It really makes you feel good whenever they come out. But a lot of the other—you mentioned some other Cajun or Zydeco songs and they would just shake their head, they ain't never heard it, but they have heard of "Jole Blon."

Now, you was talking back then about when our folks was growing up back then in Louisiana, back probably in the 1800s, well, let's say the 1800s, early 1900s, well, back then it was work. You'd get up before sunup and you didn't go to bed until after sundown. Back then there was no entertainment, there wasn't no radio, there wasn't no TV, and on Sunday—well, Saturday was normally a work day till noon or later, you didn't go till sundown on Saturday, because that was the breaking point for you to start getting your rest and do whatever you was going to do for Sunday, and then start all over again on Monday morning. But that's when all the families got together. I mean, they would come for miles on Sunday, whether there was a wedding or just a family get-together, or the kids, they might have got married but they lived only a few miles. But Sunday, they would all gather at the parents' house.

Today my son lives five miles from here. I haven't seen him in three months, four months. People don't get together like they used to anymore. They just don't. They might communicate by phone or e-mail or like that. That's pretty well it.

JT: Which is kind of true in probably a lot of different cultures, not just in the U.S., but all over. But for a culture as unique as the Cajun, with so many identifiable ethnic markers that we have, the food, different kinds of food that's unique in any other part of the world, the music, the language, these kinship ties, intermarriage that is not so prevalent as much in this culture anymore, but it's really that music. Pe-Te, I can't speak for the rest of your listeners, but I know where I am on Saturday mornings.

PJ: Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

JT: I know where my little daughter is on Saturday mornings. You know, my wife was from here in Houston. She's either sleeping or she's somewhere else. But sitting around listening to a radio station that plays music is one way for us to associate with kind of our ethnicity, our culture, our cultural past. Dances, Cajun dances here in town, or Zydeco dances here in town or when the musicians come to town, you know, that's another way. I think that over the last probably two

generations, it's one way that we've been able to keep that flame alive, don't you think?

PJ: Yeah.

JT: Certainly after the seventies.

PJ: Right. It's getting better as you go along and everything. More Cajuns are moving in here in the Houston area. Pretty soon, if Houston don't watch out they'll be calling it *Ti Mamou* or *Ma Mamou*, I don't know which one, but one of them.

JT: There was a little community out there in Port Neches called T-Beville [Little Abbeville].

PJ: T-Beville, yeah. I've heard of it, yes, I've heard of it.

JT: Ti Mamou, you're right, you're right.

PJ: Yeah, Ti Mamou.

JT: Just a couple more questions here. So that first year on the radio, Pe-Te, what kind of response did you get? Did people start coming out of the woodworks and saying, "Man, I'm so glad you are playing this music"?

PJ: Yeah, I was really surprised. I didn't really think they had that many Cajuns here in this immediate area. Word was just passed on, one person would call the other one, and it would just go from there. As a matter of fact, when I was leaving KTEK, I started announcing that I was going to KPFT in a couple of weeks. My first morning, whenever I went on the air and I gave the phone number, you should have seen the board light up. I mean, we had ten lines, incoming lines, and I never seen that before. I mean, all ten lines just went straight up.

JT: How many weeks or months had passed between that one radio station that you first started at until you moved to KPFT? How much time had passed?

PJ: None of it had passed. I left KTEK one Saturday morning, the following week I went on the air at KPFT, so there was no change. The only Cajun, Huey called himself the Crazy Cajun Show on Friday night, but he didn't play but maybe a couple of two or three Cajun songs in three hours. He was playing more—he played anything and everything. He played a little bit of Zydeco, he played country, he played blues, he played bluegrass. He played a little bit of everything, just mixed it all up and everything.

JT: You still had a couple of guys in the Orange, Port Arthur area who had shows.

PJ: T. Bruce was doing a show at KALO, I believe, in Nederland, I believe where he was, and then they had another Cajun show in Orange, KOSA—anyway. Then Johnny Janot, he was at KLDI in Beaumont.

JT: How do you spell Janot?

PJ: J-a-n-o-t. Then I was here and that was it. But anyway—

JT: So what we have today, Pe-Te, is you've got a dozen Cajun restaurants, you've got probably half a dozen musical festivals that come through in kind of this Texas—kind of this region—

PJ: Oh, yeah, just in Houston alone, like right now the CFMA, Houston Cajun Association chapter, they've got one in Houston, you've got one in San Antonio, one in Port Arthur, one in Orange, one in Bridge City, one in—I can't think of the other town, but there's five of them, I believe, here in the Texas area.

JT: And that's not to mention a Crawfish this or that, the Creole this or that, the Cajun Zydeco this or that. There's a dozen—

PJ: They've got Crawfish Festivals during the summertime, they probably got, just here in the Houston area, I'd say at least a dozen every year. You've got the big one in spring every year and then you got one over here in Pasadena.

JT: You got an Alligator Festival.

PJ: You got the Alligator Festival. So if you want Cajun music, you can catch some every weekend. Matter of fact, you can go in the Bridge City area, Port Arthur area, they have them on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, just about every day of the week except maybe Monday night, where you can go or where they ain't got no Cajun or Zydeco dance, either one, either Cajun or Zydeco. They've got them all. Jack's Grill in Houston.

JT: Jack's is a bouncing place.

PJ: Friday and Saturday.

JT: When you pass by, it almost seems like that whole restaurant is bouncing up and down. They get after it. We've come a long way, Pe-Te, from the days when you moved here and there wasn't a whole lot happening as far as Cajun music, to now, it's like you say, every weekend it's here.

PJ: Yes, oh yeah, you got Cajun entertainment every weekend over here in the Houston area and periodically during the week.

JT: You see what you started? [laughs]

PJ: But I've enjoyed every minute of it. Somebody asked me here last week, "Pe-Te, you're going on twenty-seven years. We thought you was going to quit whenever you done twenty-five." Every time I get up to a level, I'll said, "I think I'm going to try and make thirty now." [laughs] I ain't too far off of thirty. I ain't got but three more to go for thirty.

JT: So, Pe-Te, you would agree with me that it's really the music that is kind of the main attraction.

PJ: It's not really the food that brings them in; it's the music. The crawfish and the étouffée and so on and so forth, they'll go for it, but you mention Steve Riley & the Mamou Playboys is going to be there or Geno Delafense, hey, let me tell you what. You might as well get ready for a crowd, because you going to have a crowd.

I remember my first actual dance, now, the first dance I had, that was invited guests only, and that was in 1980 until I added onto the building. When I added on and put a dance floor in there, opening night, it was in January, we was having a ice storm,

and we had over two hundred people that come in and there was only enough seating for about seventy-five. [laughs] We'd have never thought there'd be anybody show up with all the ice, because it was down to twenties, eighteens and twenties that night. We still had two hundred people that showed up, plus.

JT: Rain, snow, sleet or hail, if it's Cajun music, the Cajun's will come, won't they?

PJ: It didn't make no difference. They will show up. Three-fourths of them was non-Cajuns, non-Cajuns that loved the Cajun music. I'd say three-fourths of the people that listen to me on the radio is not Cajuns.

JT: Three-fourths, huh?

PJ: At least three-fourths.

JT: Any idea how many people listen on Saturday morning?

PJ: Oh, god, I wouldn't have the slightest idea.

JT: Are they able to come up with stats?

PJ: At one time they said I had more listeners than anybody at the station.

JT: So are we talking a couple tens of thousands, a couple of hundreds of thousands?

PJ: I wouldn't have the slightest idea, because we get calls from—I get them from Nova Scotia, I get them from Canada, I get them from New York, from California, all over the world. We get calls on Saturday morning that listen to us on the Internet. So just here in the Houston area, I don't care where I go, all I do is mention Pe-Te and I get people that comes over and introduces, they say, "Hey, man, I been listening to you for so many years," and so on and so forth, "and it's great." "Where you from?" "Oh, I'm from Corpus Christi or I'm from such and such, originally." Non-Cajuns, makes you feel great.

JT: It does.

PJ: Then here comes the Cajuns.

JT: Pe-Te, this is the last one. We already kind of answered this, but I think—you know, we all like to leave a legacy behind. I think that you've already done that. You're still making history every Saturday when you go on the air. What would you like people to read about in a magazine like the *Houston History Magazine*, Cajuns and non-Cajuns alike, today, or let's say a generation form now? What would they like to remember you by, your accomplishments here?

PJ: I'd like for them to remember me as I was and what I enjoyed doing to promote the Cajun heritage. If you want to do something for me, do it while I'm still alive, don't wait till I'm six feet under. Don't send me no flowers while I'm dead, in other words. [laughs]

JT: Pe-Te, it's been a big pleasure, my friend.

PJ: Great, my friend.

JT: I enjoyed it.

PJ: Thank you, Jason, appreciate it.

JT: I learned a lot, man. I'm going to turn this off.

[End of interview]

[Final edit by Jason Theriot, 29 August 2011]