MMS OFFSHORE GULF OF MEXICO

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: EMMET SELLERS

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Emmet Sellers

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Bio
Emmet Sellers was born in Abbeville, La. on July 27, 1927. He was drafted by the U. S. army in 1947 but was later transferred to the Air Force as part of the 55, 000 troops "to pay back the Air Force" for troops "borrowed" during World War II. He attended SLI (now ULL) in Lafayette and then went to work as a basic engineer for the US Coast and Geological Survey. His father worked many years and retired from a Texaco gas processing plant in Erath and Emmet went to work for Texaco in June of 1950 as a deck hand. Several months later, Mr. Sellers was roustabouting and he was also a pumper. He later became a production supervisor for Texaco. Most of his career was spent around Horseshoe Bayou, La. and Morgan City, La. He retired from Texaco in 1986.

Side 1

JC: This is Jamie Christy and today is Tuesday, July 20, 2004. I am at the home of Mr. Emmet Sellers. Mr. Sellers, could we just start maybe if you would tell us a little bit about yourself, where you are from?

ES: O.K., I was born and raised in Abbeville, Louisiana, the 7th month, the 27th day, in 1927. And I will be 77 years old next week. 7/27/27.

JC: That is a lot of 7's!

ES: Yes, a lot of 7's. People say I ought to go to the casino – it might be my lucky day to hit the 7's! I left there, went in the service in 1947.

JC: Were you in the army?

ES: I was drafted in the army. I spent a few months as an infantryman, and I was later transferred to the Air Force because during World War II, the infantry had borrowed

55,000 troops from the Air Force, so they were paying back the Air Force, and I was one of the 55,000 that was being paid back to the Air Force. And I spent 22 months in the service. Got discharged. Went to SLI in Lafayette at the time. I went for a couple of years. And then, went to work with the government.

JC: What were you going to school for?

ES: Basics. I was a basic engineer. I went to work. I got married. I went to work with Texaco. Well, first of all, I worked for the government – the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. We did surveying around airports and obstructions for airliners coming in. We had to plot these photographs on paper, and then they made photographs of it. I got married when I was working there and we were traveling all over the United States, so I wanted to settle down, and I went to work with Texaco in June of 1950.

JC: How did you find out about Texaco?

ES: Well, my dad was working with Texaco at the time.

JC: Was he working on the rigs?

ES: No, he was at a plant in Erath, a gas processing plant in Erath.

JC: So, you said your father worked for Texaco.

ES: Yes, he retired with Texaco. I came home on a vacation from my government job and applied to a couple of companies – Union 76 of California and Texaco was in New Iberia at the time. I got a job with Texaco. I was kind of reluctant to take it because I was newly married and it was working. I was deck handing on a boat with Texaco working twelve days out and four days home and being newly married, it did not appeal to me so much. When I hired out, the guy told me, he said, "Take this job. That is the only opening we have now. I assure you by the end of this summer" (this was June), he said, "By the end of the summer, I will have you roustabouting or roughnecking. So, I took the job and sure enough, I started roustabouting a couple of months later.

JC: Where did you go as a deck hand?

ES: I ran the intercoastal and in the bays, West Cote Blanche Bay, Vermilion Bay. At the time, we had steam rigs that were drilling for Texaco inland waterways and

we had to help sometimes move the rigs or sometimes carry fresh water and commodities to the rigs. But it was all inland. All my jobs were inland related.

JC: Was it pretty rough work, hard work?

ES: Do you mean deckhanding? No. All I had to do was tie up the boat when we got to the location and the waters were not usually rough, you know, bayous, so it was not too bad. Just being away from home, that was the worst part about it.

JC: How long did you do that job?

ES: A couple of months.

JC: And then, the roughneck?

ES: And then roustabout. Then I went roustabouting. And, in that, we laid pipelines to supply the rigs with power, with fuel. We had natural gas from the gas wells supplying the rigs, and we hooked up tank batteries as roustabouts – where the oil production would come in, into the tanks. That is what we did as roustabout.

JC: Do you remember some of the places that you went as roustabout?

ES: Yes. All of my roustabout career was right there at Bayou Sale, we called it. Horseshoe Bayou field. We took care of an outlying area called Rabbit Island and another placed called Belle Isle. That was all our jobs. We had a lot of those jobs from Horseshoe Bayou.

JC: Do you remember back in the early days, was the environment an issue?

ES: I mean, now the environment is a big issue. It is a big issue and I guess the oil industry has itself to blame for all these restrictions we have got now because back in the old days, we flared gas. We did not save gas. We flared it. And when we brought a well in, instead of putting it in a pipeline or a pit or a tach or something, we would let it go overboard. So, the oil was going overboard – did not mop it up enough. Then, there was the Environmental Protection Agency that did not care . . . well, they were not established then even. So, I guess we got ourselves to blame for the strict rules they have got now because we just did things, I guess, that now, we can see we were not supposed to be doing.

JC: The guys that you worked with, did they throw stuff overboard and everybody . . .

ES: Oh, yes. Cans, paper bags, whatever you had. Yes. Threw it overboard.

JC: So, as a roughneck, you worked West Cote Blanche Bay?

JWH: Well, I worked at West Cote and later in my career, with Texaco as a production supervisor. I went there.

JC: Let's go back to your roughneck . . .

ES: No, roustabout.

JC: Roustabout. I am sorry. How long were you a roustabout?

ES: In 1950, I went to work, and I came here in 1954 as a pumper, so probably 3-1/2 years.

JC: Do you have any days or experiences that stand out in your mind as a roustabout?

ES: Yes. At Horseshoe Bayou, this one year, the mosquitos were so bad, we had to tie

handkerchiefs around our noses like the Lone Ranger because you would breathe and mosquitoes were getting in your nostrils. They were terrible! And we did not have any sprays or anything like we have today for mosquitos. So, it was real tough then. You had to button up your neck, button the collar button in your arms, your sleeves, so as to try to keep mosquitos out. And it was rough. Normally, mosquitos today come out at sunset or early in the morning, but this was all day long. We were in the thick of them. That stands out in my mind. There was some tough going then.

JC: Did the company provide you with protective wear or you just had your own?

ES: You had to do your own thing.

JC: Did you have hard hats?

ES: Yes. We had to buy our own hard hats because they did not issue them to us. We bought them. Now, in later years, they gave you plastic . . . they came out and issued us plastic hats, but we had to buy our . . . we started off with aluminum hard hats.

JC: And you bought that with your own money?

ES: I bought that. And bought our safety toed shoes. You were required to wear safety toed shoes which is a steel toe. You were required to wear them but they did not issue them to you. But they had Red Wing, I guess it was, you could order them and get a discount through our warehouse. You would order them through the warehouse and get them at a discounted rate.

JC: Did they pay you pretty well as a roustabout?

ES: Yes, they paid pretty well. I do not remember right now . . . I remember, deckhanding on the boat, I was making $224 a month. I remember that figure. And naturally, I got a little raise when I became a roustabout. And that schedule was nine and three but we were home. We would go in, put in our eight hours, and were home at night. And I was living in Franklin at the time.

JC: And your wife was in Franklin?

ES: She lived in Franklin, too, so I would come home every night.

JC: Where were you shipping out of?

ES: Leave Franklin and drive to Horseshoe Bayou every day, which was about 18 or 20 miles, I guess. We would swap rides. We were a six men crew and we would drive each our turn. Had one car at the time. So, when I drove, my wife did not have a car at home.

JC: Do you have particular experiences other than the mosquitos?

ES: Well, I remember at one time, we worked about 20 . . . it was all day, all night, and eight hours the next day – 32 straight hours we worked because we had a rig coming in and we had to run a gas line to this rig and, you know, when they moved the rig in, they had to have service right away because you could not afford to let them stay idle. It was big bucks when you did that, so we had to lay this line. We worked all day, all through the night, and all through the next day. And we finally got a line. And what was the problem? We were using a secondary line, a second-hand line. We would pressure up the line. We would have a leak. So, we had to go back, find where the leak was, repair it, and this was our biggest thing in there. We could have probably hauled pipe in and ran a complete new line in less time than it would have taken us to repair it. But that

was a tough one, too.

JC: Was that a rig at Horseshoe Bay?

ES: That was a rig at Horseshoe Bayou.

JC: So, your crew worked on it 32 hours, everybody?

ES: Everybody. We told the head roustabout – he had gone in to get some food from the kitchen because we could not even come in and go eat at the kitchen. We had a facility that they would feed, a camp that they fed us. But he had to come in. And we asked him to call all our wives or call one of them and say, 'Hey, pass it on' that we were working. We were not nightclubbing – we were out in the field working and trying to make a living.

JC: So, no sleep in 72 hours?

ES: No sleep. So, needless to say, we slept like a lamb the next night.

JC: So, you did that for about 2-1/2 years?

ES: About three years. Then, I came to Morgan City here at Bateman Lake. I came as a pumper. In that job, we took care of . . . changed chokes in the well. The conservation department would set an allowable – an amount of oil that we were allowed to produce from each one of these wells per day. Based on the depth of the well, and we had to set chokes – 8/64th, 9/64th, 10/64th – you know, you would kind of play with these chokes and you knew what this little opening under so much pressure would allow so many barrels of oil a day. You would get it pretty close. And then, every few days, you would change this choke, you would adjust it to make it . . .say, if your allowable was 187 barrels a day, you might go 212 barrels a day, so you had to come back down a little bit, cut it back in choke size to bring it to within its allowable. And at the end, I mean, they were wide open. I guess Texaco and other companies wanted to get . . . they had a big investment in drilling these wells – millions of dollars – and they knew how much the reservoir was so they said, 'Let's get the oil out of the ground. We have to pay for these jobs.' So, it was more or less unlimited, man. You did not put any chokes in these wells, or you put a very big choke making 1,000 barrels a day. It was no more conservation then. A lot of good fields, I believe, would have lasted longer, but through this no chokes, we depleted a lot of our wells faster, a whole lot faster.

JC: The well at Bateman Lake, who was it leased from? Was that considered state waters in Bateman Lake?

ES: I do not believe, no. The Bateman heirs, I think. No, maybe some outlying areas. I am trying to think if we had some state leases. I know like out at Horseshoe Bayou, we had State Leases 329 and 340, which were out in the Bay, so that was state. But over here at Bateman, I do not remember. Wax Bayou leases and that was a bunch of stockholders from up the east coast. We had some school board leases, oh yes. O.K., so leased land from the school board. They got a lot of their revenues, the school board did, from Texaco leases.

JC: Do you remember lease 340? There was the controversy between the state and federal . . . would the boundary being three miles off the coast or would it be ten miles off. It was the Win or Lose Corporation. Did you ever hear anything about that?

ES: Yes, I heard. Sure did.

JC: What kind of things did you hear about it?

ES: I just heard about the Win or Lose Corporation.

JC: That was W.T. Burton. It was rumored that Huey P. Long was involved in there somehow. Did you ever hear that Huey Long favored Texaco or that Texaco got the most leases?

ES: No, I sure did not, but it would not surprise me. It would not surprise me.

JC: So, out at Bateman Lake, when did they finish draining that one?

ES: Since I left Texaco. I left Texaco in 1986. I retired, and enjoying every minute of it, too, by the way!

JC: When did you leave Bateman Lake? Did you stay there for a while?

ES: Yes, I left Bateman . . . well, after I was a pumper, I became a meter man which I took care of gas, meters, measuring the volume of gases going through specific lines for different companies. And then, I calibrated fluid meters. A meter man. That is what I did.

JC: Were you going to different . . .

ES: No, all in my area right here. All in my area in Bateman. Then, after that, I became a production supervisor and I left Bateman probably in, I would guess 1974, 1975. I went to Port Barre in the Lottie area which is right off of US 190, kind of east of Opelousas.

JC: So, were you driving?

ES: No. I was living there in camp. We had a little office/living quarter combination.

JC: Was your wife there also?

ES: No, just me. I had a drilling supervisor that was there with me and I was a production supervisor, so we had the two of us took care of the lease, the office, the field management, and I guess we had probably 22, 24 people working that area. Pumpers and roustabouts and what have you.

JC: So, as the production supervisor, what was a typical day for you like? Are you

still doing shifts? You are not doing nine and three anymore?

ES: No, I am not nine and three anymore. When I came to Bateman Lake, we were on a seven on, seven off – six and six. We started six and six, and then seven and seven – seven days on, seven days off. But I was home every night because I was living right here when I was at Bateman Lake. So, I would get back home after. And we had three shifts when we were pumping. We worked days which was from seven to three or four. Anyhow, we had days, evening and graveyard – work after midnight.

JC: So, you would get up early in the morning and you would go in? Did you go to the office?

ES: As a supervisor, yes. I would get up early in the morning. The pumpers would accumulate their production reports from all the leases we had and we had to relay this information. New Iberia office would call us about anywhere from four in the morning to six in the morning for their reports. And we had radio communication with all the areas so we could hear the superintendents on the radio calling West Cote Blanche Bay for their report or calling Hackberry for their report or calling Fausse Point. So, we would hear all the outlying areas and

say, well, we would kind of be on standby waiting for our call. They would call us by telephone. Well, I know those other areas had telephones, too, but some of them, they got reports by radio and some by telephone. I do not know why.

JC: So, you would get your reports in first thing.

ES: First thing. And then, the head roustabouts would then come in to the office around seven o'clock. We would give them instructions for the day what to do. One pumper would report he was having problems with a heater treater. It was not treating the oil so we would line them up to go ahead and check this thing out first thing. They might have had a separator that had a component that was malfunctioning and a separator separates oil from the gas, or a meter that was haywire or something. So, we would give them . . . if the pumper had a problem, he would pass it on to us and throughout the day, we would make our rounds and talk to the pumpers. Maybe the day pumper would tell us, 'I am having problems over here with this well. My pressure keeps building up on my flow line. I believe I have got an accumulation of paraffin in the line,' so we would go out and check this out with him and had to call the hot oil truck, line him up for the next day. They would come, they would take oil, they would heat it in the big old tank on the hot oil truck and they would run this hot oil through the flow lines to

melt all this wax that was in the line and it would relieve the pressure and the oil would flow more freely into the tank barrels. So, a bunch of little things like that is what made my day.

When I was at Fort Barre, Lottie was really spread out, especially after Texaco acquired Getty. We acquired some leases. I had just Port Barre and Lottie to take care of, and then Lottie included four of those fields, but then we had the outlying areas in the Opelousas, Mamou. So, this was a big loop I had to make. I was on the road quite a bit.

JC: So, you would go to your different spots and do basically the same task?

ES: The same thing, yes. Check with the pumpers and all that, to see if everything was going all right. If it was, well, we did not bother them enough and as long as oil keeps coming in the tanks, that is what it is all about, is to maintain our production. A lot of times, you have got so much production allowable a day and say, 1,200 barrels a day and if you came in with 1,000 barrels, what we are lacking here is 200 barrels. What well is not making their allowable? And that is where . . . well, that pressure on the flow line is building up over here. We know that is slowing us down. So, this would get us . . . well, we are going to have to

hot oil that flow line and you would have to call a service company to come hot oil.

JC: Oh, so you did not do that yourself?

ES: No, we would call a contractor. Most of ours came out of Lafayette and New Iberia. And another thing, we had safety valves in these wells, in the event that something would happen – a flow line would break or something would be wide open – the sudden change in pressure would close that safety valve at the bottom. So, you know, pumpers would come in and tell us, 'This well is not flowing anymore,' so we had to get a wire line truck to go into these wells and pull the safety valve. Well, first, they would go in with a stinger to try to equalize the pressure. Had to pull it out and combine and reset them. So, it is another one of my duties as a supervisor.

JC: So, you were a problem solver?

ES: Well, I tried to be, yes. There is no way on God's earth that we would have made all the wells we had, so you had to depend on your pumpers and occasionally, we would go out in the field to a problem well, and we would check them ourselves.

We would ride by. We had gauges on all the Christmas trees. We would see if the pressure was about what it should be and if it was not, well, we would take appropriate action to find out why.

JC: Do you remember some of the guys that you worked with?

ES: Oh, yes. I remember quite a few of them. In fact, after I retired, I went back and visited some at Lottie and Port Barre area. And when I retired with Texaco, I was back at Horseshoe Bayou where I had started my initial career with Texaco.

JC: So, did you leave Port Barre and go back there?

ES: Yes, I left Port Barre and went back there.

JC: Was that in the 1980s?

ES: I went back there probably in 1982 or 1983 and I stayed there until I retired in 1986.

JC: Were you production supervisor by then?

ES: Production supervisor by then.

JC: Had the mosquitos gotten any better?

ES: The mosquitos were better, yes. Yes, they sure were.

JC: You were production supervisor when you started early on with the company. How did you see things change with technology or machinery?

ES: There were some changes, a lot of changes. One in particular, back when I was a meter man at Bateman Lake, we had an engineer that came in. He wanted to automate all these tank batteries where we would not have to climb the stairs and run a gauge line in the tank to see how much oil. We would walk on the bottom and you had readings, tank readings on the bottom, and they would switch tanks automatically. We had, they called him a dome foreman at the time. The dome foreman told this engineer, he said, "Well son, you bring your toothbrush and all your shaving gear and everything because you are going to stay out there around the clock until I am assured this thing is going to work perfectly because I just do not have any confidence in the world in this." The tank would get full or float, we

would shut the valves off, and it would switch your oil into the next tank. That tank would fill up, it would switch your oil into the next tank, and I guess he feared running these tanks over and putting oil all over in the bayous. Had a few problems but everything worked out. So, that was a big improvement. It saved a lot of climbing up stairs, you know, to go up and check your tanks. You could do it from the bottom now.

JC: You were talking about changes in technology. Was it difficult for people who had been in the oil field to switch over to this . . . I mean, you said, he did not believe it was going to work.

ES: Yes, that was that dome foreman. We saw where it would work. I think it was a great change.

Another thing I might mention. We had tank batteries that had leases, different lease owners coming in, and we had what we called a flowco meter that would measure, say, this individual had two or three wells and they would come into this one separator, and the oil was measured in this one flowco meter but all the oil from all these leases were comingled, and you might have heard about the big lawsuit that the state of Louisiana had against Texaco. They said all these

flowcos were not accurate. But that was one of my jobs as a meter man. I had a little portable flowco meter and I would hook up onto the one that was measuring the oil coming in from the individual leases and who is checking the accuracy. You know, I checked mine in a little tank with a known amount of fluid. Then I would go and I would put it on this other meter and I would check my meter to this meter and it was factored. I had to factor in there was not quite unity, so we left the factor on this for the pumper and whenever he calculated his oil going, times so and so . . . I do not know if you are following me too well.

JC: Oh, yes. So, you think that the issue between the state and Texaco was not . . .

ES: I thought it was accurate. They pulled all kind of records. I know Texaco was fined quite a bit of money. Several million dollars. But I think it was all accurate. Nobody was trying to steal oil from anyone, especially from the lease owners. Texaco and the state of Louisiana had a lot of oil in this . . . some of the leases I am trying to think of. I know LL&E had a lot of state leases – Louisiana Land and Exploration.

JC: They sure did. Well, how do you think some of those companies like LL&E, for example, how did they get these state leases?

ES: I do not know. Now, I understand that was political and that probably maybe was Huey Long . . . I do not know though – it is just speculation on my part, but you are right. They knew somebody because they got a lot of leases. They sure did.

JC: You wonder, how did they get so many and good leases.

ES: Yes, I know. Very productive leases.

JC: So, when you were working at the different places that you went to, did you see the changes in safety as far as were there accidents, people got hurt in the beginning in the early days?

ES: You know, I guess I should have mentioned that my early career with Texaco, in 1950, I went to work in June. By November of that year, a guy by the name of Sam Tally, who was my dome foreman at Horseshoe Bayou, came to me and he said, "Emmet, I would like for you to be one of my first aid instructors." I said, "Oh, Mr. Bill. I am brand new. I am wet behind the ears. They have got guys over here that are old enough to be my father that have more experience." "If I would have thought they had more experience and I wanted them, I would have

asked them. I am asking you to take this job for me." And this was like on the side as an employee of Texaco. "So, I can see," he said, "It will help your career with Texaco. I will see to it myself." So, this man left Horseshoe and he came to Bateman Lake and he called the district office. "I want Emmet Sellers, I want Renee Seneca, I want Bill Becknel, and I want Red Reeves to come with me to Bateman Lake." He said, "Reeves is coming as a roustabout. Becknel is coming as a head roustabout and I want Seneca and Sellers as pumpers over here." So, that is what got me away from roustabouting. And also, I was safety chairman. I was safety chairman and a first aid instructor.

JC: All at the same time?

ES: All at the same time. And we would have a safety meeting . . . every month, I would conduct a safety meeting, and first aid instructors, every one of our employees . . . I went to school in New Orleans for a weekend, Friday and Saturday, and came back and I had to instruct all these employees in first aid – have an eight hour course and they were issued cards that they completed their compulsory eight hour safety courses. So, I would say that in itself helped us in our safety records. We were all conscious about it. Of course, we had a few accidents which, with as many men as we had, which were few, really . . .

Well, I remember one guy getting killed on the job over here but I was not safety instructor. A bursting plate. I do not know if you have ever heard of a bursting plate. Well, it broke in the manifold while they were pressure testing equipment and this bursting plate busted and hit this head roustabout. He was acting head roustabout at the time with a contract laborer, with a labor crew. Johnny Williams. You may have heard about him.

JC: I have heard his name.

ES: It killed Johnny Williams. That was a sad day. I was on vacation at the time and he was taking my place. I was temporary head roustabout from my meter man job and Johnny was replacing me while I was on vacation.

JC: It was the plate that hit him?

ES: The bursting plate burst and 2000 pounds of pressure behind that plate broke all the piping and that is what killed him.

JC: So, he was taking your place or you would have been out there . . .

ES: Yes, I would have probably been out there.

JC: So that was a malfunction of the equipment?

ES: Yes, exactly.

JC: Nothing you could have . . .

ES: We had a regulator that should have released the pressure. The regulator did not release the pressure so the next thing was the bursted plate and when it went, all that pressure hit that manifold and it broke the manifold. But, you know, very few accidents that we had.

JC: In the early days . . . I am sorry if I am kind of skipping back and forth but were guys trying to lift the heaviest or be the strongest on the rig?

ES: No, I never did see that. I have heard of guys carrying sacks of cement though because they used to have to do that by hand – mud and cement, a hand delivered bag. Now, they have the forklifts and they lift pallets at a time.

JC: That is a lot better.

ES: In fact, when I was roustabouting, sometimes they got in a bind with pressure and they had to get the roustabouts to the rig to help them unload mortar off the barges onto the rig – you know, the roughnecks, help the roughnecks out. So, we had to do that on a few occasions.

JC: That is hard work.

ES: That is hard work, yes. It is tiresome work.

JC: You had to be pretty strong then to be a roustabout.

ES: Yes, and roughnecks, yes. And a lot of weight.

JC: Do you remember, were you working with guys from around Louisiana? Were they from Texas? Mississippi?

ES: Starting at Horseshoe Bayou, this nine and three, all the guys were from around

our area, or they might have been from north Louisiana but they were living with their wives in New Iberia or Franklin or surrounding areas. But then after I relieved on the bays, too, at West Cote Blanche Bay as a production supervisor. There, you had guys working seven and seven and staying at a camp, they came from Texas and Arkansas and Mississippi – those guys that were staying on the water, they were not going home every night. So, they migrated to Louisiana and picked up jobs and then would go home for their seven days.

JC: Were you with Texaco when they integrated and they started hiring black workers for the first time?

ES: Yes, I sure was, and women. Boy, I would like to relate to you a story. My daughter-in-law, the little boy's mother, she was a geologist with Texaco and we were at Lagniappe on the Bayou one year. My cousin worked with Union Oil Company. He and I were talking, he said, "You know, that was the ruination of the oil patch when they started hiring women and blacks." My daughter-in-law put her hands on her hips and she got back and chewed him out. It was so funny! So funny!

JC: Do you think there were a lot of guys who felt like that?

ES: I do not believe. We adapted well. You know, we had to watch the way we talked our language because you could ruffle a few of their feathers the way we used to talk, mostly about black dudes.

JC: Was it hard for them to come out and work? Did the other guys accept them right away or did it take some time?

ES: I believe they did. Of course, you heard a few gripes, like in these crew cabs like, 'Man, when those blacks get in there, we have got to open all the windows and put all the fours down regardless it is summertime or wintertime.' So, I mean, they would not say that in front of them. They would come out and tell us . . . But overall, never had no qualms about them. I believe they all got along good. As far as I know, they carried their end of the load. I never did hear any gripes when I was production supervisor that you would have to talk to this guy because maybe they are not carrying their load but I never had that problem.

JC: Did they have any trouble picking up things you wanted them to do, learning and all?

ES: A little harder than white guys, I feel. Especially in the paperwork and the reading gas charts. To me, that was the hardest thing to teach them. They could not comprehend how to calculate the gas. They found that real . . . and I did not know this but one of the guys that we had said, "Man, he comes from Southern University. He is a graduate of Southern University and he can't pick this up." So, I said, wow!

JC: Was it the math involved?

ES: I believe that is what it was.

JC: That was difficult?

ES: Yes. Math, coefficients. You have an orphus plate that has got a coefficient – they did not know what to do with this coefficient, how to multiply by what and do what with. And I guess maybe just the word "coefficient!"

JC: Kind of intimidating!

ES: Yes.

JC: When did you see Texaco start hiring blacks and women? Was it at the same time or did blacks come first and then women?

ES: Blacks came first, then the women.

JC: Were they paid the same?

ES: Yes, exactly the same. Starting head roustabout, you know, white head roustabout, black, woman – they were paid the same scale as . . . and that is another thing . . . I guess we did get raises, but I was going to say a guy that has been roustabouting four years and one that has been roustabouting two years, they were making the same thing. You did the same type work so you were paid the same thing.

JC: How about rising up with the company? Do you think a black guy would have a harder time maybe rising up through the ranks?

ES: I really do not know. I have seen them move up the ladder.

JC: You had black supervisors?

ES: Yes. Black head roustabouts. And, you know, all the guys that I have known, the white guys that were there before the blacks were hired . . . the companies were in the right to give the white guy the next promotion because he has been there . . . just because this guy is black should not have passed in front of this. And I do not believe . . . I did not see it in my areas with Texaco that it did that but I understand some places that they did that – they moved because they said you have to have so many blacks and supervisors. But I have never witnessed that myself.

JC: Did you ever have somebody come from Texaco headquarters to say, 'Listen, we are going to start hiring some blacks and some women?'

ES: No, I do not remember anything like that. Maybe they did come out and tell us. I do not remember.

JC: What about women? Could they rise up with the company or did they . . . I mean, did you have women roustabouts with Texaco?

ES: Yes. We had some women. When I went back as my second term at Horseshoe Bayou, we had some women roustabouts.

JC: That is pretty rough work.

ES: That is rough work.

JC: Were they able to meet your standards?

ES: Yes. They had a few and they were able to do it.

JC: Were these women family women? Were they married, do you think, with kids?

ES: I know one girl we had over here was not married, did not have any children. She was tough. One thing I remember, and I griped about it myself, said, 'We will not have any more meter men. We will have a meter person.' I said, "Now why in the world is this?" because they were hiring women. We have got to change the classification now. So, I said, "Oh, my gosh! What next?" No more meter man. Some of them laughed and joked. 'We are not meter men anymore.'

JC: Meter servers, like a mail carrier! So, did Texaco have women like in higher management as well?

ES: Yes. Not in my area per se but Texaco, the corporate office, had some women vice-presidents and, in fact, one of them, public relations, we had a woman that worked with my son . . . my son is a geologist, by the way, with Texaco also, and he met his wife, she was a geologist. Two geologists in the family.

JC: That is three generations!

ES: She stayed and Texaco offered her a package and she retired . . .

End of Side 1

Side 2

JC: Texaco, when they came to Morgan City, they were a big operation here, right?

ES: Yes, they were.

JC: A big office?

ES: A big office.

JC: Do you remember when they laid off people, when they started letting some people go when they closed the office here?

ES: Yes. I was not paying too much mind because I was no longer with Texaco but yes, my son was with Texaco. He had some friends working in the warehouse and he told me . . . his friends were transferred to the New Orleans office. But yes, that was a shock when they closed this place.

JC: I have heard people say that a lot of the big companies, a lot of different people with the companies were not so happy in Morgan City because there was not really much to do here. Executives or people who worked in the office. Did you

ever hear that?

ES: I never heard that but I can understand where . . . I have a son who thinks like that, too. We talked about, my wife and I, moving back to Abbeville when I retired. He said, "Well, why Abbeville? I will tell you what: If you go to Abbeville, you will not see much of me over there." "Why?" "Because there is nothing to do in Abbeville." "What about Lafayette?" "O.K., well Lafayette is different." So, I can see where that is coming from.

JC: Some of the younger engineers, I guess. They were looking for more than that.

ES: Yes.

JC: Are there any of those women around still that you remember, with Texaco? Any of them in the area?

ES: I do not know of any. No, I sure do not.

JC: Probably left with the rest.

ES: Yes. I know like, where I was at Horseshoe Bayou, another company bought . . . well, Texaco released all their properties and some other company bought them out. Smaller companies. The production was down and it was borderline making money. And I do not know if these people went with the new company or if Texaco offered them a package to retire, I just do not know what happened to them.

JC: So, you stayed until 1986, is that right?

ES: 1986.

JC: What made you retire in 1986?

ES: I had a son that was still at Northwestern, at Natchitoches, and he was almost through with school so I said, oh heck, we can make it from here on out. And Texaco had given us a package, so I accepted and went out. And, like I said, enjoying every minute of it!

My first motor home I had when I was at Lottie, I bought a small Winnebago that was 23 feet long. My third son was at the seminary in Lafayette and she passed

through Lafayette and picked him up and drove down to Lottie and come spend the weekend with me. So, I had a place all hooked up where I could plug in my motor home and we spent a lot of weeks together like that. I was not away but for a few days she would spend the weekend with me and the next weekend, I was here.

JC: So, that was a way to get together even when you could not come home.

ES: Right, and that is how I got involved in motor homes. This is my third one.

JC: I saw you had one outside. It looks nice.

ES: Thank you, and we enjoy it. But I guess people are never satisfied. I would like to get me another one with slide outs now. They are making the slide outs. Three and four slide outs.

JC: Those look nice.

ES: So, I guess if I can convince her, that is my next adventure.

JC: Do you have other memories? I know I am kind of skipping around but did we miss anything or is there anything that you would like to talk about or that stands out in your mind?

ES: Probably after you leave, I will say, gosh, I should have thought of this but right now, no, I cannot think of anything. But I have enjoyed my career with Texaco. I moved around quite a bit but most of the time, like I said, she would come meet me in the motor home. Even when I was . . . that is another area I never mentioned – I relieved production supervisor in Hackberry, Louisiana, so I have been around. And the New Iberia district was from the Texas line to the Mississippi line. I had better rephrase that: Texaco, New Iberia district was Hackberry to Texas line to the Atchafalaya River. Then the rest of that was Houma district and Lafitte. But I am thinking that the division offices in New Orleans, we answered to New Iberia and New Iberia answered to New Orleans.

JC: So, New Orleans was your head office?

ES: Right.

JC: Did you have much dealings with them?

ES: Not much at all, no. Every now and then, we would have an engineer or management would call us when they would notice a big decrease in production, for instance. 'What happened to your field? Why did your production drop off 3,000 barrels yesterday?' And you had to have a good excuse why you dropped that much because if the state said you could produce 4,000 barrels a day, you had better have 4,000 barrels in that tank because they want to know why. And most of the time, we had a good answer, an answer for them.

JC: What happened if you did not?

ES: You had better be up tomorrow if you did not have it today! They would tell you, 'You had better be there tomorrow.' They never bothered us too much because we always kept our production pretty accurate. In adjusting those chokes, you know, we could keep the oil coming in the tanks.

JC: Are there any other Texaco people still around in Morgan City?

ES: Yes, this friend of mine, Rene Seneca.

JC: That was on the group that you were talking about that you got chosen . . .

ES: Yes, chosen to come here. He lives in Berwick and he lost his wife here about six weeks ago, I guess. He is 82 years old. Good close friend of mine. He was interviewed by Andrew. In fact, he and Andrew hit it off pretty good. He plays the guitar and Andrew said, "Next time I come, man, I am bringing my guitar with me and we are going to do a little harmonizing."

JC: He is pretty good. So, are there other ones besides Mr. Seneca? Texaco people?

ES: One of them, he is bedridden. He has diabetes. I believe they had to cut one of his legs off. Most of the old guys are gone, really. There are very few of us left.

JC: O.K., well, I am going to stop here unless you have anything else that you would like to . . .

ES: I believe I have just about touched on everything that stood out in my mind.

THE END