

HHA # 00161  
Interviewee: Orde Evans  
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz  
Interview Date: February 25, 2003  
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA  
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz  
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW042  
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The interview is saved as two tracts on one CD; originally in VCD format. The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling and "uhs" and "ums" have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. Repeated words have generally not been transcribed to aid in readability.]

Ethnographic preface:

Orde Evans was born in 1922 in Basil, Louisiana. After WWII, he moved to Lafayette in 1947, to work in rig construction. In 1979, he started his own consulting and production company called Oracle, and later expanded his business to Houston and then international markets. He was part of the Energy Committee in Washington, D.C., where they investigated different types of energy. Eventually Evans brought geo-thermal energy to southern Louisiana. An entrepreneur, he also invented many products. He also discusses the changes that the oil industry brought to Louisiana.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [OE]

SW: Mister Orde Evans. It's February twenty-fifth, 2003. And you just told me, you said you always said if you could make 10 grand you'd be happy.

OE: Oh yeah.

SW: What do you mean by that?

OE: [But?] 10,000 dollars a year was a lot of money then. Because the, you know, the dollar was worth ['bout?] four dollar. And as we went along, the dollar began to decrease and we did other things that it took more to live. [Slight pause] Oh we had uh, from rig buildin' I went to buildin' board roads and uh, bridges and stuff in the oilfield, all over south Louisiana. And uh, from there I left to make a business myself. And bein' a, I guess a natural born inventor, I started inventin' stuff and I formed a company to sell my own inventions. And it become a world-wide operation. The Mid East, the Far East, South America, and South Africa, everywhere. I had agents all over the world and I used to travel. I've traveled around the world some 48 times now before I started having problems. And from there I, I lost my feet first to diabetes and uh, then I had a staff infections and I lost my legs. Now I'm alright, you know, I do what I can do. I do a lot of conversations on the telephone. I got involved in the government while I was in business. I was selected to serve on the energy board. And uh, spent a lot of times [in that diary?], that book of clippings is a lot of work that I've done. And I was the grandfather of this uh, geopressure-geothermal in south Louisiana. And the first on

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

in Vermillion Bay we tested. Very successful. And showed that we could produce hot water, produce gas, and transfer this heat system from hot water to energy. And that's we were shootin' for.

SW: When was that?

OE: Oh that's back in uh... I forget what the, the dates are on that, down here at the bottom those things, when I was doin' all of that. But I was doin' that, tryin' to run my business too, runnin' back and forth from Washington, havin' meetin's and comin' back. Different types of energy we were studying. And I was assigned to four different groups. I was assigned to the geopressure-geothermal, geothermal, the uh... winds, waves, uh, oceans. We did uh, we actually did energy in the oceans with the, they didn't, they thought they [grabbed, you know?] platforms in the bottom of the ocean up and I asked 'em if they ever heard of semisubmersibles. Nobody knew anything about it. So I told 'em what, got all the information on semisubmers-, and that's what they went to. And you got a differential of cold water at the bottom and hot water at the top. And you can separate your gases come up and turn turbines and your energy. We were successful in [Inaudible], Hawaii, in doin' one, a small one that supplied power for all of the villages around there. And they, another one was a large one off the East Coast. And we planned later if it comes to [the point?] to be off in the Gulf of Mexico and all up and down the East Coast. The ocean thermal. Was very interesting work. I worked with all these people. They all were, you know, had Ph.D.s and uh, Navy architect or, or atomic energy [or/of what?]. And they were selected from all over the United States and I worked with those groups. [Inaudible] Washington and had meetings and look over stuff and they sent me stacks of proposals. I'd have to study those and say whether it's a good idea or a bad idea. Bein' an inventor they kind of leaned me a little. [Chuckles]

SW: What types of devices did you invent?

OE: I had [vendoring?] systems for ship docks and offshore platforms. I had splash [zone?] protection. I had downhole equipment for multiple completions. And I guess overall with the registered and the patents that I've gotten, I had around 56. So I'm just [layin' now?]. But I had enough in the business with my own stuff that I was sellin' and I traveled a lot. It was somethin' to look and see my own stuff bein' worked on, worked with all over the world very successfully.

SW: What kind of company was [ORACO]? It was a service company?

OE: It was a service company. And we had agents all over the world. And people workin' here and, locally, you know.

SW: You started here in Lafayette?

OE: Houston, Houston to New Orleans. But I started it here in Lafayette.

SW: And it built up and then you expanded with it.

OE: Right, I had ORACO, ORACO Incorporated, ORACO International.

SW: And it just kept goin'.

OE: And just kept goin'.

SW: And you said, I think you said 27 years you ran that?

OE: About 27 years, yeah.

SW: Why did you go from rig building to having your own company? What was-

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

OE: Well I went from rig building to board road building, bridge building for the locations. And I learned everything I could about that. And I even did production, I've been on drillin', I've been on roustabouts, and I learned everything I could about everything before I ever decided to, and I was encouraged by companies that I've helped with ideas. I was encouraged to go in business, they'd support me. So naturally I started a business right here in Lafayette.

SW: There was a lot of opportunities at that time?

OE: Oh world of opportunities. World of opportunities. People would call me to come visit them, they wanted to talk to me about somethin', they had a problem. And I'd work it out for 'em. And at the same time in sellin' products and stuff, you know, they said, "Boy we can use this here," you know. We'd supply 'em with the products they wanted. And they were good products. I just hated to have to give it up. [Chuckles]

SW: That, you started that in the 1960s you told me?

OE: It was in the, no, I started it in nineteen uh... nineteen... seventy-nine to eighty, somewhere along there.

SW: Oh okay. That's when there was tremendous activity in the oil-

OE: Right, there was a lot of activity and there were ups and downs, but it stayed regular. And I got into the international business because there's where the money is being spent. You had budgets, they'd show me their budgets, you know. They'd have five times more for their international work than they had for domestic work. But I wanted to hold onto domestic business, which it did, we did very well with that. But the big business was foreign.

SW: In Saudi Arabia or, or where?

OE: Saudi Arabia, all the Middle East, Egypt, uh, I guess in Egypt along I probably sold a couple of million dollars worth of business, of product. And South America was some. Africa was some. I sold a lot in Niger-, Nigeria, Gabon. And uh, Far East, in Indonesia, [Inaudible] in Indonesia. And I knew all the people who were runnin' these organizations from experience here. And when they were transferred overseas give me a great opportunity to keep up with 'em, see what their needs were over there. This is why I got into the international business.

SW: That's logical. [Both chuckle] That makes sense.

OE: But when you go into an office of chief executive offices, [you know?], and they start showin' you their budget that they're gonna have 200,000,000 over in the Far East and maybe 50,000,000 here in the States, it's time to go overseas. And see what they got there.

SW: Were you born and raised here in Lafayette?

OE: I was in Basile. [Pause] See I moved to Lafayette it was probably 47. I had military service during World War Two, I served in Guadalcanal. [Pause]

SW: So what year were born?

OE: Nineteen twenty-two.

SW: Okay, so that puts you in your 20s when you over there.

OE: Yeah, right.

SW: And then after the war you came back home and-

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

OE: Well, I spent 17 months in hospital after I left there and when I got to where I didn't have that old malaria anymore. Where-

SW: Oh, you got sick?

OE: Yeah. That [Inaudible] malaria'll kill you, you know, if you let it go. But I spent, from the time I was hospitalized on Guadalcanal and went through all the hospital and ended up in Tennessee. And uh, then of course at that time they were find, tryin' to find somethin', you know, to get that under control. And they said I would always have that bug, you know. And every once in awhile I get a little knocked down with it, a little, run a little fever and get cold, shakin', you know. But uh, I've been in pretty good shape.

SW: When you got here to Lafayette, when you arrived in Lafayette in 1947 I think that's when you-

OE: Yeah, somewhere around '47.

SW: Its, was uh, why did you come to Lafayette? Was it they had jobs here?

OE: There was jobs here in the rig buildin' business. [Pause]

SW: Can you tell me some things about the rig building? That sounds pretty interesting.

OE: The rig building, uh, you see, when you got a rig put up, they call it a rig, it's a derrick. It's 136 foot high and it's got to be assembled from the ground up. And that was my job. With others, you know, workin' on it to build these rigs, these steel rigs. And set everything up so that when the drillin' people come in they could move their equipment in and go ahead and get ready to drill.

SW: So you guys just built the platform and the derrick-

OE: Everything.

SW: Set everything up for them to come in.

OE: That's right. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

SW: How long would it take?

OE: Well it take about three days to build it. Take about a day to tear it down after they got through. But that was, at that time I was makin' three dollars and 75 cents an hour, which was big money then.

SW: In the late 1940s?

OE: Right. And that was the highest price for labor that you could find anywhere. And we got up, later we just creped up and got up to seven dollars and somethin' an hour, you know. It just increased, gradually increased. So, but we had, it was a rough life because you had to, it wasn't all right here. You had to travel to it. Maybe stay away from home for three or four days, you know. Live in hotels and motels and eat off of baloney and [Chuckles] you know, canned goods and stuff. But uh, it was-, it wasn't too bad. It gave my family somethin' to eat. Food on the table, you know.

SW: You were married at the time?

OE: Oh yeah.

OE: Uh, started having children.

SW: So Lafayette offered that opportunity to come and get a job.

OE: Right.

SW: 'Cause this was the hotspot, it was-

OE: It was the hotspot and there was a lot of oil companies around here and uh, the art-, af-, [Inaudible] for all the rig business was, there's four or five in this area. And there was one in Basile, too, and I worked with them for awhile. There was what they called a [Jim Pole?] group. They had Jim Pole [blow up?] on the inside of the rig and pick it up and put it together. I worked with that for quite awhile. But here there's scaffold boards. Put decks of scaffold as you went up and build it.

SW: So you guys would go out there, take a couple, three or four days to build it, and then leave. So you went out and you stayed there until the job was complete? Is that, that kind of?

OE: That's right.

SW: So if you had to leave Lafayette and go in one of the outlying areas, you were gone for three or four days-

OE: That's right.

SW: Staying in a motel and things like that-

OE: Right. Of course the company was payin' for our motel and food, you know. But we traveled to Mississippi, every once in awhile go to San Antonio, someplace. Even had cause to go to Alaska, you know. Because rig builders weren't available in that area and they'd have to pull 'em out of Lafayette or wherever. They were located here in the [Gulf?].

SW: So is that why the wage was so high is because you guys were in demand?

OE: Right. [Slight pause]

SW: How many hours a day did y'all work when y'all were buildin'?

OE: We worked eight hours and sometimes if we had problems or tryin' to complete somethin', we may work 10 or 12 hours. [Slight pause] Now, tearing them down, I've seen the times where we tear one down, we got eight hours for it, and the same day we tear another one down and get another eight hours for it. Tear two of 'em down in a day.

SW: In a day? [OE chuckles] Was it more fun to build 'em or tear 'em down?

OE: Uh, it uh, tear 'em down was. [SW chuckles] 'Cause it uh, you had to hurry, but it was through in a day and when you were through with that you to go to another one, you know. But we had, the company I worked for, who I started out with, owned a bunch of derricks. And he'd rent 'em out. And we, had big beds, he'd just tear 'em all apart and put 'em in that bed.

SW: On a truck?

OE: And then they could pick that bed up with a truck and carry it to the next location.

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

SW: Oh okay. So you guys were using the same parts?

OE: Same, or the same rig was used for years and years. And there was different makes of those rigs, you know. There was [Parkus Burgs?], they were makin' certain type. And uh, Smith was makin' another one. And there was... I forgot the names of the different types of derricks, but they all had to go up and make a big tall, strong, where they could drill a well and hold that pipe.

SW: You al-, you always worked with steel?

OE: Oh yeah.

SW: Or metal. Never wood?

OE: Not, that was after the wood. Once in awhile we'd get called to build a wood derrick. Wasn't often. It begin to fade away, the wood derricks faded away. And there was smaller derricks uh, I believe they were 79 foot tall. And the, but the standard derrick was 136 foot tall. [Slight pause]

SW: That's pretty much what you guys put up there was just the 136 foot?

OE: Yeah. We had lots of three-quarter inch bolts to put in [Chuckles] when you build one. We had leather bags we would carry those bolts in our pockets. And they'd send 'em up to us in a bucket. Fill that pocket up and start puttin' 'em in. Had to line 'em up with spud wrenches, put 'em in, make 'em up tight.

SW: That's the kind of tool you used, spud wrenches and-

OE: Yeah, your spud wrench, you had a wrench on one end and [it pointed?] on the other end, where you could line up your holes, stick the.

SW: Ah I see.

OE: It's what you call a spud wrench. Make it fit [put a bolt in?].

SW: Get it right up there, you jam the thing in there, you [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

OE: Yeah, there's usually two or three bolts in each side, you see, so you could take one and line it up, put the bolt in the other one.

SW: I see. It sounds efficient. [Chuckles]

OE: Now Superior Oil Company had their own derricks. They had some big ones. And uh, they used to, old man Slim Law was the superintendent here and he would hold that job for me when I got back for me to go build his rigs. [Chuckles] 'Cause I took care of 'em. He didn't allow one bit, brace, or anything, it had all to be straight and plumb, you know.

SW: The company you worked for contracted out to whoever needed a rig built.

OE: Right.

SW: But Superior had their own equipment.

OE: Right, they had their own equipment.

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

SW: You guys would just use it to build 'em.

OE: They'd hire us to go build 'em.

SW: Was that normal or was it more normal for-

OE: No, that's, that was not, well it wasn't normal uh, others had their own, the drilling people had their own rigs, you know, we'd go build 'em. But Superior had their own rigs. They didn't rent rigs or nothin', they had their own. They had some that was real heavy weight. Yeah, some of 'em was standard 136s. But that was [Chuckles] Superior was always big on everything. Superior Oil Company used 136 foot as a workover. [Chuckles]

SW: Okay. Yeah, I've also heard it called THE Superior Oil Company, right.

OE: They, that Mister Law if you said, "Superior Oil Company," he'd correct you right quick. "That's THE Superior Oil Company."

SW: I've interviewed several guys that worked for Superior and that's what they always say, they always say, "The Superior."

OE: The last superintendent here is a good friend of mine, Arthur Barry. He-

SW: We interviewed him.

OE: He comes over and visits me. We sit out in the carport, drink coffee, and [Slight pause] do you drink coffee?

SW: No sir. [Chuckles] If you need to make yourself some-

OE: I just, I made some. But uh-

SW: Maybe we can come back and visit you guys while y'all drinkin' coffee one day.

OE: Oh that, that'd be [Chuckling] [interesting?].

SW: Sit here and listen to y'all talk.

OE: We sit outside, he can barely walk now because he had a bad hip. But he drives over here and gets out and comes up. I got his ch-, special chair that he sits in. And I got a little, I'll show you this little seat I built. You told it up and you put it out and it's 10 by 14. I put it on the side of him where he can put his cigarette, ash tray and his coffee. Sit down, we sit and talk.

SW: [Notes he didn't interview Mister Barry; there are three interviewers on project]

OE: Yeah, he was an inventor. He invented the [hilodian?] engine. And, when he invented it, he was with Superior Oil Company, so he turned it over to Superior Oil Company. And Mister Keck told him, "You invented it, it's yours. You keep it." And he [drew orders on it?] for seven-, 17 years. And it's been used everywhere. So he's very fortunate in that.

SW: That's good. Um, when you guys, or whenever you finished the rig building, you said you went on to bridge building.

OE: The board building.

OE: Board building, board road building and bridge.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

OE: Well that was uh, that was where you laid three by eight boards for the trucks to roll on and cars. And this soft marsh and, you had to build a fill first. And then build this road on top of it. And I was the first one, the mud would seep through the boards and come on the top and they were slick. And I took, the first time I took felt paper and laid it on 'em, then I put the boards on top of it, which helped a lot. And then we went to the vinyl. Everybody was usin' it after that, but I was the first one that did that. So it'd make a good smooth road turn around for the rig to go in on.

SW: This is to get to the actual rig?

OE: Yeah.

SW: That [you?] built.

OE: Yeah, to get out to where they w-, where they, 'cause the hole is [staked?], it may be out there in the marsh or back in the swamps. And you had to clear and put some-, the dirt up, get a dragline pull the dirt up, so that you could build a road on top of it to get there. That was a big job.

SW: Sounds like it.

OE: And then if you had a bayou or anything that you'd have to cross, you had to build a bridge across. And it had to be strong to hold that big truck with that heavy weight. Haulin' that stuff in.

SW: Why did you move from the rig building to the road and bridge building?

OE: Well I had a be-, offer and a better opportunity to learn somethin' else.

SW: That's what you wanted to was progress and-

OE: Progress and learn everything I could about everything. Always had a idea in which everything I've done, I had a ideas of how to make the things easier. I did a, I never did apply for a patent or anything, but I things to take these boards up. Where you didn't have to get out in the mud to get it up. Turn them boards over and pull the nails out. I made a big, had a big bar and made a hook on the end of it where you could grab it and just turn it over. And it, where you would normally take up uh, 10,000 board feet a day with a crew, you could take 30,000 with this tool. And stack it.

SW: It tripled the u-, the production.

OE: Right, tripled the production, so everybody began to see what I was doin', so they all started makin' 'em. [Chuckles]

SW: Well yeah, they saw that you were workin'-

OE: All the contractors.

SW: You were workin' smart. [Chuckles]

OE: Yeah. [Chuckles]

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

SW: They wanted to do that same thing.

OE: That's right. Well, if you could do that, you could do it, it cost less. So you had a better job at biddin' at jobs. Others had to bid that didn't know that, had to bid for pickin' up 10,000 feet. And I could take 30,000 feet. It made a lot of difference.

SW: It's better deal. [Chuckles] How long did you, were you a rig builder and a road builder? How long did you [Inaudible, overlapping speech] at those jobs?

OE: Oh... rig buildin' I guess I worked on the rig buildin' for... about 10 years. And the road business, about that much too.

SW: Like you said they paid well, so uh-

OE: Yeah.

SW: I could see if you stayed with it for 20 years there must've been somethin'-

OE: Well I had a steady income, I knew what was comin' in every month when I work-, workin' for it.

SW: What else could you have done? What other kind of jobs could you have done at that time if it wouldn't have been for the oil industry? The rig building?

OE: Uh-

SW: Is there anything else that was, that allured you in any way or anything that could've paid you? [Pause]

OE: I've often wondered what I could've done. There was other things available. But they didn't pay as much as what I was doin'. But that's the reason why I stayed with the oilfield.

SW: Work, could've worked in the agriculture industry or something like that?

OE: Agriculture, I was born and raised on a f-, rice farm.

SW: You knew how to do that.

OE: Oh I knew how to do it. In fact my father was director of the Federal Crop Insurance. And he always thought that I did things, called me lazy because I did things make it easier, you know. [Chuckles] I was always lookin' for an easy way out. But one time on the farm we planted enough sugar cane to supply our syrup. We cut it and bring it to the mill and make our own syrup. That would last us all year. And one day I ask him, I said, "You know, the way they used to do cane was cut it and then bank it." You laid a layer of it down and you put dirt over it, big wide area, put dirt over it. And you laid another layer and you put dirt over it, you'd bank it. Well in spring of the year, got everything ready, you go start diggin' it out of there. And take it and lay it in the trench. Cover it up. And I said, "That's ridiculous. Why don't you plant the cane?" And I ask him for one row, just get me one row and I'll plant the cane, we banked the rest of it, but I planted the cane in there. He said, "It's gonna freeze, too." I said, "Sure it's gonna freeze." Those sprouts come out, they come up, and I took a hoe and come along and I shaved it. Shaved the top of it off, it was all dead. Well, you got several joints inside and each one of them come up. And we had a [crust?] of canes instead of just one. You had a crust of. And I made more cane on that one row than he made on all the rest. Now he says, and when he headed up that uh, Federal Crop Insurance, he told the cane farmers what I done. And all the cane farmers are doin' that now. [Chuckles]

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

SW: You were a trend setter. [OE laughs] So you weren't, you could make more money buildin' rigs and things like that [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

OE: Oh yeah, much more than you could. You couldn't make, the only thing on a farm you can maybe average five dollars a day, you know.

SW: But here you were, you said you were makin' three seventy-five an hour.

OE: Yeah. Started out at three seventy-five and ended up seven fifty an hour.

SW: Hard work though, right?

OE: Oh hard work.

SW: But you said steady income-

OE: But when I got to be a pusher and had my own equipment and everything, then I [Inaudible] from my trailer and tools and a car.

SW: You were like a foreman.

OE: Yeah.

SW: For the other guys doin' what you had started out doin'.

OE: Right.

SW: I see, so uh, did you, I thought I heard you mention earlier you worked on some oil rigs doing production or drilling?

OE: Oh yeah. Drillin' and production.

SW: Can you tell me some things about that?

OE: Well, in Thibodaux Amoco had a field inside the town. It was high pressure wells. And I had a, was, I had a fillin' station. And I heard this explosion and they said, "Well the well's on fire." It was by a railroad track, across the railroad track. So I got in my car and I drove down that railroad track. [Chuckles] [Coughs] Stopped outside and there was gas runnin' everywhere. Over the houses, had paraffin all over everything. And I run in through that fog of gas and I cut the well in. Turned it off. I knew what to do 'cause I'd been around before. I shut 'em off and it ended up there was a [Inaudible] tube in it and a gauge on the top of a blue [Inaudible] tube. And all that stuff come through that blue gauge. Blew out the [Inaudible] on it and then just scattered all over. The yard was plumb full of paraffin. And everybody was tryin' to get to it, but nobody could get to it because there was a train comin' along. So the superintendent and all come out and I had everything shut in. And I [redone?] takin' the valve off and plugged it. Turn it back on, turn the A1 back on, they had it on production again. And I didn't know it, but somebody took a picture of me goin' through that fog of gas and doin' that. And it was in the company magazine, [Chuckling] me goin' through there, they told about me savin' so, savin' the company so much money. And when he got there, he said, "How many crews can you get together?" I said, "I don't know. I'll get all I can." He said, "Well get 'em out here and start cleanin' them houses off and get all this stuff picked up in here, turn it over to where we won't have all this mess." So from then on with that company everything they had to do they'd hire me to do it. [Chuckles]

SW: You'd proven yourself to 'em.

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

OE: Right. Nobody could get in there and do it, nobody could think about gettin' in there. But I went in there done it. And it was a bad time because everybody was just gettin' up, cookin' breakfast. Fires and that gas floatin' everywhere. It was scary. But it had to be done.

SW: Is that how you sort of moved into the other areas of, maybe over time you moved away from the building and.

OE: Right. And when they had a new well built, they always got me to install everything. [Inaudible], everything, [the fire?], heat, treaters, and everything I had to install.

SW: Was your schedule any different then than it was before that? Was it more difficult or were you able come home more at night?

OE: Oh I was gone more at night. But everything was so active right in that area, it kept me pretty close in.

SW: When you first moved to Lafayette, I think you said 1947, what uh, where did you stay? Could you find a place to stay or was-

OE: Well I stayed in a boarding house-

[END TRACK 1 TO TRACK 2]

OE: And when I moved in here I built a house up here on Felecie Drive. And that house cost at that time 18,000 dollars. To build it.

SW: Including the lot?

OE: Including the lot. [Slight pause] And from that time to this time that house is worth over 100,000 dollars today, right there with the property. 'Bout 125,000 dollars. [Chuckles]

SW: It was outside the city limits at the time, though?

OE: At the time that I built there there was quail across the street from me.

SW: Okay. Yeah, there was nothin' but the pasture this way.

OE: Right.

SW: And uh, think one landmark I can think of, the Judice Inn.

OE: Yeah. The Judice Inn was there.

SW: They sell burgers. Wasn't that sort of the edge right there?

OE: Yeah, it was kind of the line. Felecie Drive, this right here, and I was on that side of the field, this side there was [nothin'?].

SW: But the roads were gravel in this area?

OE: Oh they were gravel, yeah. No blacktop.

SW: They, did they have blacktop in town?

SW: In the city of Lafayette they had-

OE: In the city, within the city, yeah, they had, and as they expanded they had to start puttin' blacktop in. They had, on Felecie Drive, after they put the blacktop in, then they decided they wanted to put a water main in [Chuckling] for drainage. They had to cut into the blacktop to be able to put [Chuckles] and everybody had to get water on, you know. Most of 'em had water wells. They drew their own water. But then the city forced 'em to take water. Couldn't use that well except to irrigate your flowers and garden or whatever. You can still use that pump, but you had to, for the house you had to buy water from town. Same thing with gas. [Chuckling] But they dug up, I bet you they dug that blacktop up in the middle three times. [Chuckling] [Well yeah?] it was rough after they done [Laughs] had big ridges in it.

SW: Not much foresight, huh? [Chuckles]

OE: No. No. Oh, [Inaudible]. [Pause]

SW: Why did you build out here on the edge of the city? Was there more availability out here?

OE: Well-

SW: Was it difficult to find a place in town.

OE: The Foreman's uh, Foreman had this property, I knew him. And he showed me several houses and the plans for this one. And I said, "This is what I want," at that time. So, and at that time window fans was the big thing, you know, you didn't have much air conditioning. But winter fans then were just ope-, crack the windows open, turn your window fans on, and suck that wind in.

SW: Pressure, yeah.

OE: Yeah. Then later on put air condition in. But-

SW: Now we can't live without the air conditioning, huh?

OE: Oh no. Oh no, that's addictive. [Chuckles] Ah, boy.

SW: Were there a lot of people movin' into town at that time, in the 1940s?

OE: It just begin to move when I come in here. All the real estate people were real happy, you know. 'Cause that's, they told me, said, "Now you build here," said, "you ain't got nobody across the street, but it ain't gonna be long before all of that'll be filled in."

SW: And they were right.

OE: And there are houses all over.

SW: They were right about that.

OE: And you're close to the school. Your kids get old enough to go to school, they can walk to school. And that was convenient. That's the reason why I built there is 'cause I was close to the school. And my wife was a school teacher. So everything was convenient for us. [Slight pause] She taught at this school here and b-, the Lafayette High. In the later years she was a Prairie Elementary.

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

SW: You think that the real estate people bein' real active 'cause people were moving in, that was directly because of the oilfield that was expanding?

OE: Yeah. It sure was. The oilfield was the big thing that made this boom in housing. And people being transferred by major oil companies here, that put some more in town.

SW: And where were they comin' from? Out of the city or out of the state?

OE: Out of the city. Out of state. They were bein' transferred in here.

SW: You saw a lot of these people coming in-

OE: Oh yeah.

SW: Did-

OE: And I made it my business to meet 'em when they come in. [Chuckles]

SW: Now where, with so many people comin' in, it must've been a problem to find a place for them to stay at some point.

OE: Oh it was at one time. A lot of 'em had to just live in a motel until, a hotel until the house was built. Or a pla-, the other place was sold, you see. They had to build a house.

SW: That must've been kind of rough for some of the people.

OE: Oh yeah it was. And you could see the price of materials was goin' up gradually all the time 'til it is what it is today. [Pause]

SW: Do you remember the names of any of the motels they stayed at?

OE: Oh, the old Townhouse [Chuckles] downtown. They, a lot of 'em stayed there. Some of 'em are no longer here, even the Townhouse is no longer.

SW: Ah yeah.

OE: I passed by there the other day and I looked out there and just open lot. [Chuckles]

SW: They tore it down.

OE: Somebody's gonna come here and establish somethin' here.

SW: Won't be long, huh?

OE: [Chuckles] It won't be long. It looks funny to see all the grass growin' just to pasture [Chuckles] you know. Now that place, before they built that motel that was a nursery there. Heymann's Nursery. [Slight pause] Before they built that motel there.

SW: And that was before the Oil Center, too.

OE: That's right.

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

SW: It was a nursery. What kind of changes did you notice after Mister Heymann built his Oil Center in 1952, 1953?

OE: I seen a lot of change. A lot of change nec-, the availability for offices and all over there and the cost of having an office in Houston or New Orleans, someplace, it was cheaper to come here. [Pause] And that made Mister Heymann happy when they moved in and took up the whole place because insurance, you can't get insurance on an empty buildin'. So [Chuckles] that made him happy not to have to put up with that, you know.

SW: Yeah. Plus they were payin' him rent when they moved in which was the whole idea.

OE: Right. Right. Had a lot of 'em bought it. You know, he sold a lot of different offices to different people.

SW: He started out with just a few buildings and expanded.

OE: Right. He was a big, Heymann was a big help to the oilfield. He was a big help. When he seen things available what he could do, you know, to make, he make money out of it, but he done it. He had the money to do it and he did it.

SW: So he made money but that was, if that was the reason that got it going than so be it, you know.

OE: Yeah. I, it always amazed me, I think to back to when I built that house over there, price I paid for it. It was three bedrooms, and a bath, carport and all of that, and I turned the carport, later on I turned carport into a room, master bedroom. And what I paid for that then and what the cost is now is just amazes you. And of course that's the case in any town. I had friends that moved way out of Houston on, out where I-10 goes way out into the piney woods. They build big old houses and when they were transferred they sold 'em for twice as much as they paid for 'em. [Chuckles] [Those/There's?] people were hungry for a house out there. On [Caty?] Road. I had an old boy I knew in Houston [Inaudible] west side. He went out there and bought a bunch of piney wood and they thought he was crazy. And he just held onto it and when that road come through there he started sellin' by the square foot. I bought a acre by the square foot [Chuckles] and made a fortune. Big buildin's goin' up and everything, you know, they, [Inaudible] opportunity. They were glad to pay for it. But he paid little money for it, he's, it wasn't worth much 'cause there was no Houston there. But it just kept bulgin' out and gettin' out deeper. They took it up. But everybody told him he was crazy to buy that old piney wood. [Laughs]

SW: Worked out for him.

OE: He knew what was comin' up. [Chuckles] It wasn't long before they built that bypass through there, you know. Two-ten comes loopin' through there and big offices started goin' up on each side of it. [Chuckles]

SW: Got it all.

OE: He got it all. [One of their?].

SW: I noticed in your news clippings here, I see that you have some involvement in USL?

OE: Yeah.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

OE: Yeah I can. Uh... the government had me lookin' for somebody to ['cause the university's?] [Inaudible] here. McNeese was a, was one of 'em. And... Texas Tech. [Slight pause] But I called the head of engineering at USL. And asked him if he was interested. And I believe at that time I had somethin' like 125,000, 150,000 dollars to, just let 'em have it. And they could, if it cost 50,000 dollars to do the research and they could take the rest and do what they wanted. And I give 'em papers to fill out, was very simple. And they never did fill 'em out. So I ask 'em if they wanted

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

me to come by and help 'em, you know, show 'em what. They wasn't interested. And to be honest with ya, president of the university told 'em, he said, "Who is this guy, Orde Evans, can just hand out money like that?" [Chuckles] He found out pretty soon. But anyway, they never did fill those papers out. So after we had started all of this we did a lot of research and I approached again to have a conference there, at USL. And they agreed to it. And we had the money for 'em to do it. And go gave the money to the university go ahead and do it and do some research for us. And that's when the engineering got involved. But Jack... what is Jack's last name? He was one of the vice-presidents of the uh... he's from Oklahoma. But anyway, he said, he come there and told me, he said, "Man," he said, "We've got news people all over our butts." [Chuckles] "What are you talkin' about Jack?" He said, "Man, why didn't you tell me you had this thing goin'?" And I said, "Well, the engineering's supposed to be handling it." Oh he was upset about it. And he got 'em straightened out. But they didn't, I know actually they didn't realize that I was sittin' here and the government had this money and this fund that I could take and get universities activated and do some research and laboratory work and stuff and they could make some money out of it. But they didn't realize that I could do it. But McNeese now, they sent their head of engineering to Washington to meet, and he met me then in Washington. And he knew and when I offered it to him, he jumped at it like a dog on a bone. Just, he took it and they ended up, I guess McNeese ended up with probably 250,000 dollars or some, just granted. USL could've had the same thing if they'd've just filled those papers out.

SW: Just fill those papers, huh? [Chuckles]

OE: [Chuckles] But I finally found out he [Chuckles] he knew exactly then what happened [Inaudible]. But those engineering people just flat refused to fill it out. It was a simple form to fill out and that's all they needed to do, they could've had the money.

SW: That's an interesting story. [Chuckles]

OE: But I did get 'em that meeting we had there. And they did a lot of work, they did some good work. [Pause] But that was an interesting thing. The education [Inaudible] to see these things develop, you know, and see it done and actually bring it to you. [Pause] They were all worried about when we tested this well this hot salt water comin' out, what we're gonna do with it when it comes out and the gas, pull the gas off of it. So we just pumped it back in, in another sand, you know. We found a good sand down below, large [grains?]. And very porous. And it had a suction on it, then we just suck it in. [Chuckles] If we'd come out with it, it just suck it down, go into that sand. And disposed of it right there. But 'cause everybody scared to turn it loose in the water, you know, it would affect, you had to watch everything. But we got it rigged up pretty well. I even had a concrete platform there where politicians, I'd fly 'em out there, helicopter people would volunteer to fly us and we'd go out there and land on that platform, go see what was happening. [Pause] Oh it was something. We had speakers, we'd talk to each other, you know, and 'course them helicopter's pretty noisy, you know. But it was interestin' takin' 'em out. And one of 'em, they wanted to take pictures of a, up on the rig floor, you know, [holdin' a brake?]. And she had a steel hat on. And I don't know, I guess that bees got up there and formed right on one of them girds, just fell [Laughing] went across her head. With bees just runnin' all over. One of them swarms had just, was swarmin', decided they'd land right there on that rig. [Laughs] Boy she was scared to death to move with them bees. [Chuckles]

SW: That's pretty funny.

OE: John Breaux come over and took him out, that's when he was representative. I wanted to show 'em what actually what we were doin' and then we had a burn pit out there and we burned the gas, you know. Had a big fire burnin' where the gas was comin' out of the water. It was quite a bit of, but in reserves of the geothermal, you see gas is formed and goes through the salt water. And goes on up, but a lot of it's trapped right there in that water and it's got pressure on it. Once you release that pressure it comes out just like opening a coke bottle, it starts bubbling, you know. And one of the professors made a survey [Inaudible] the locations onshore and offshore. There was enough gas in 'em to last the whole nation 120 years. Just in the reserves of those salt water, hy-, those geopressure-geothermal. Some of it had more gas than others, but the gas was there. Then people like Campbell's,

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

tomato soup, they were real interested in it because that hot water was just hot enough when it come out there they could have it and run it through a vessel and cook their own stuff after it's canned. They were real interested in it. I'd like to see 'em do it. But there were several energies involved with that, you know, that you could. The other thing in areas that you went through in oilfields where you get this trapped gas in salt water, you could pump it back into the ground and some of the old wells that were gettin' depleted to where you float that oil back up to the rigs. They got interested in that too. [Chuckles] But drill a well just for that, you know. Bring it up, bury it back in the ground under pressure. Get under that oil, you know, make it all collect and come up, give you more production.

SW: It seems you've been involved a lot of, several different aspects of the industry, not just one.

OE: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SW: Do you have any regrets for your career in the oil industry?

OE: No, I enjoyed every minute of it. I enjoyed it.

SW: Lots of positives that came from it?

OE: Oh yeah. [Pause] You know I have a friend in, oh he's a scientist in Houston, Texas, that uh, he invented a lot of stuff. And he and I got to be good friends. But he has got some stuff that he won't release, not unless we're in the... he told me, he said, "I can take an x-ray at 150 dollars and build you a [rig?] machine." [Pause] And he proved [it?]. [Pause] He got out in the desert with a trusted friend, he thought was trusted, and he set up on a Jeep and he couldn't see this jackass with a open, just with your eyes, you had to, you, binoculars to see it. And he set that machine up and shot that beam over to that jackass. And they got in the Jeep and drove over there and they took an autopsy, the blood was just like water. [Pause] And that guy was so excited he told about it. But he told me, he said, "I'll never release it unless the United States is invaded. Then I'll tell 'em what." But he does all kind of research. He's got a system of, well he sold it to farmers in Texas. [Inaudible] spark plug, a heavy spark plug [on it?]. Go through the ground and kill all bugs and everything a disadvantage to having on crops, you know. And he worked on one and got one that you go down into an old depleted oil well and set it off, sit there and it'll just push all the fluid up, [uphill?], you know, just gas it up and the well then you can pick up the rest of the oil that's in that reserve. Amazing person. And just to talk to 'em you'd think he was an old rancher or somethin' out here. [Chuckles] Very interesting person. He went to Russia and they tried to keep him over there and he had a hard time gettin' out, gettin' back. So, in his office, when I went to it, there was CIA and FBI there all the time. And I got to go through about four doors, secured doors, before I could get to him. [Pause]

SW: Interesting story.

OE: But yeah, I met some interesting people. I met some, I had to go to Houston one time and I met a Chinese there named Lee. He had a big old office, his office is about four times the size of this room. And just his desk and chair. That's all that was in there. But that guy was the guy that took a beam of, radar beam and bent it. [Follows?] the ground, go over a mountain. [Chuckles] With his equipment he could sit on this side of an [enemy?] on the other side of the mountains and tell when the thing was takin' off, whether he was armed or not armed. [Pause] We got ready for lunch, he says, "Would you like to have lunch?" I said, "Yeah. It's time for it." He said, "Well, we'll be leavin' in a little bit." We went to this place and they opened the door for us. And there was nobody in it. I said, "Where is everybody else?" "Just you and I." We sit and had dinner, talked. We left they opened the door for us. It was all private.

SW: He had some pull didn't he?

Interviewee: Evans, Orde

Interview Date: February 25, 2003

OE: Whoo. Boy he did all kinds of stuff. And very brilliant guy. But he's the guy that, when they use, the military's usin' that beam now to go, follows the ground about three inches off the ground, goes over a mountain and. We don't have anybody could've done that. He was a Chinese boy. He's American citizen now.

SW: They don't wanna let him go. [Chuckles]

OE: Uh uh, no.

SW: Not go back.

OE: They carried those things in planes and they carry 'em on the ground. If you gotta troop over here on the ground, they, within, well you can tell when a plane's takin' off within three seconds. Isn't that amazin'?

SW: [Yes?]. [Slight pause] Um, that's, I've asked you about all the questions that I wanted to ask you. And so we can finish up if you'd like.

OE: The only-

SW: Unless you wanted to add somethin'.

OE: Yeah, it's been a very interesting and I started writin' a book, but I stopped. And maybe somebody I'll get out and do it, but I had my open heart surgery, they jacked me open [Inaudible] my nerves and I'm left-handed and it's hard for me to write. I used to have beautiful handwritin' [Chuckling] I don't anymore. Oh you can understand it, read it, but gives me a little trouble to write. [Pause] I'd like to gather up everything, you know, all my travels, people I met all over the world, made friends all over the world.

SW: I can make you a copy of this if you want? [Talk about making him a copy of the interview; OE offers to talk to him again if he has any more questions]

[END OF RECORDING]