

Interviewee: Steinhorst, Richard S.  
Interview Date: February 13, 2003

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Interviewee: Richard S. Steinhorst  
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz  
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Interview Site: Lafayette, LA  
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SWO39  
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of "uhs" and "ums", repeated words, and the interviewer's backchanneling have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee cleared his throats many times during the interview; unless it caused a significant disruption, it has not been transcribed. The interview is saved in two separate tracks.]

Ethnographic preface:

Richard Steinhorst was born in Oklahoma and graduated with a degree in Petroleum Engineering from Oklahoma State University in 1937. He worked for Texas Company in Oklahoma, Illinois, and Kansas. Then he switched to British-American Oil Producing Company, working in Colorado for 2 years before ending up in Lafayette in 1957. Eventually he became an independent contractor in 1962. Steinhorst discusses changes in Lafayette over the years, and also his role in the oil industry.

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#### TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [RS]

SW: -born and raised in that town in Oklahoma?

RS: No, I wasn't. In other words, I have maybe a little bit of a peculiar deal because when I was in the second grade my father was involved in the oil business, in land end of the oil business. And he m-, we moved to Kansas. And I went through the fifth grade in school in Kansas and then we moved to Long Island, New York. I went through high school in... actually Hempstead, New York. And then I, and I started out I wanted, I thought I wanted to go into the refining end of the oil business. [Slight pause] And so I started out in [Inaudible] Poly Tech. And found out that to get anything involved in, concerned the oil business I had to go to graduate school. Back in those days, graduate school was for the idiots [Chuckling] you know what I'm sayin'? And so anyway I transferred then to O-, back to Oklahoma University. And started out from there.

SW: So in order to get some sort of employment in the oil industry you to have-

RS: Uh, well, actually I had started out in chemical engineering, that's what I registered in to start with. And then my, when uh... my idea was to go into the refining end of the business. And then when I couldn't get any shall I say [Inaudible] the oil industry because most of your engineers, chemical engineers from [Inaudible] Poly Tech went to, either with Kodak or DuPont. And that was not for me. But anyway, when I switched and dad said, "Well why don't you go to petroleum engineering?" 'Cause OU was at that time, and still is in my books, the best petroleum engineering school in the country. And, so I did. Then, my first year in school was in chemical engineering. And

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actually when I went to OU and had to take additional chemistry, I knew more than the profs did. [Inaudible] just a difference in schools, you know.

SW: Okay. Did you get into the oil, were you gravitating towards the oil industry because of your father or?

RS: Well, I can't answer that because actually... well not only because of my dad, I had an uncle who was a chemical engineering graduate of Oklahoma University. And, but he worked in the oil industry. He worked in the... not in the refining end of it, but in the... I don't know what you call it now at this point in time. Uh... the processing of the gases and whatnot from production.

SW: Production, yeah, I heard that word a lot. Drilling production.

RS: Well actually, they were gasoline plants. In other words they extracted the liquids from the gas that was produced from the wells, rather than say the liquids that came. In other words, I mean, forgotten now what you call it, but it is a phase of the industry. You got plants that process gas, put the gas in one place and the ch-, and the liquids and gas in another place.

SW: So he did this processing-

RS: Yeah, and so he worked in that. I, that may have been the thing then, what's, I don't know. But going from chemical engineering to petroleum engineering, well there was no really big transfer. I had all, I really had more chemistry than petroleum engineering needs. But.

SW: Yeah. [Both chuckle]

RS: All I did was take one course in chemistry at OU and I knew more chemistry than the teacher did. Because O-, [Inaudible] really crammed it down your throat.

SW: Yeah. If you hadn't been in school at this time, what else could you have done? What kind of employment options did you have?

RS: I don't know, because actually peculiarly where I went to high school you had a choice. You could take a engineering curriculum or you could take a, what would you call it? A lit-, no, a literal curriculum. And I knew even then that I was gonna be an engineer. So I took the engineering curriculum. And there never was any question in my mind when I went to school what I was gonna be. I was gonna be an engineer of some sort. Well actually I [Inaudible] gonna be a chemical engineer. But it wound up, wound up in petroleum engineering.

SW: But you always wanted to be an engineer anyway?

RS: Right, in other words the engineering profession, I never really thought about any other type of employment.

SW: Okay. After you finished college what happened? Did you start working?

RS: Well, yeah, I got, I, when I got out of college I went to work for The Texas Company. And I gave them 17 years of my life.

SW: They were a drilling company?

RS: No, The Texas Company is what is now Texaco.

SW: Oh, okay.

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RS: [Chuckles] In other words, it was The Texas Company then and it's old Texaco gasoline, but it was The Texaco.

SW: And that's the physical name, "The Texas Company"?

RS: It was The Texas Company, Tenneco.

SW: Oh, Tenneco.

RS: Tenneco, Texaco.

SW: Was that in Oklahoma or did they-

RS: Na uh, that was nationwide. In other words, the, that was The Texas Company which is now, or in later years became Texaco. In other words, they dropped The Texas Company. But when I worked for 'em, it was The Texas Company.

SW: And you started workin' for them where?

RS: In Oklahoma.

SW: Oklahoma, okay. And what did you do for the Te-, for The Texas Company?

RS: Well, uh... drilling and production engineering.

SW: You started right off doin' that with them?

RS: Well, actually I went to work in the drilling and production department of The Texas Company. [Pause] In other words, they had, I guess they were divided and they had, and I never thought about it, but at that time they were probably divided at least in three basic parts. You had drilling and production, and then you had refining, and then you had sales and distribution. See. When I went to work for 'em, The Texas Company was just starting work in Saudi Arabia and whatnot. So I mean, you know.

SW: Overseas. What, about what year was this?

RS: Uh, I went to work for Texas Company in, I went to work for 'em on June the seventh, 1937.

SW: You remember the date exactly.

RS: [Chuckling] Oh yeah, I remember the date exactly, June the seventh, 1937.

SW: So going back in time, the, it seems to me the oil industry wasn't really big at that time, yet.

RS: Well it was. In other words, yes it was. It was um, in other words, okay, you had some, a lot of oil and gas production throughout the United, when I say throughout the United States, in areas of the United States, plus the fact you had The Texas Company and I don't know who else, Shell, Gulf, uh, were all producing oil and gas in the United States and they were looking for oil and gas in foreign countries. In other words, like I say, matter of fact, during World War Two [Slight pause] some of the fellas that I knew in The Texas Company uh, were working in Saudi Arabia and places like that.

SW: While the war was goin' on?

RS: Yeah, while the war was going on.

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SW: They didn't get called off for service?

RS: Uh, some of 'em did. I happened to be one that wasn't. In other words they... co-, I had a company... exceptions.

SW: Okay. So you stayed in the States and you worked, okay.

RS: I stayed in the States, I stayed in the States and worked for-

SW: It's just as important to provide the oil for the machines. [Chuckles]

RS: Oh yeah, as matter of fact, I don't know whether we get credit for it now or not, but back in those days when the war was over, the industry got credit for furnishing the oil and fuel that was required to win the war. [Pause] They, at that time it was an important industry. [Chuckles] Oh you have all the airplanes and everything flyin' around, they had... produce fuel for 'em. So the industry, I don't know how it stands now, but I can remember back after the war was over that the industry was given credit for being a factor in winning the war.

SW: Had to get the fuel from somewhere, the gas-

RS: Oh yeah. Well, they had to produce it, you know. And actually it, back in those days, although I'm not an expert on that particular phase, but I think back in those days I would say the bulk of oil and gas production was in the United States. [Pause] And I don't know, 'course I didn't work out of the States, I worked in the States, so I don't really know. Although I'm acquainted and, with several engineers who worked in Saudi Arabia and some South America, Mexico, you know. They worked out of the States. And then some of my classmates, I remember one classmate in particular whom I thought very highly of, he was in the service because he had taken ROTC in college. And he went, when he came back from the service, well he was workin', I don't remember now who he was workin' for, but I know he got killed in a car accident, which was a, in my books a great loss, because he was really a fine engineer. So I mean, you know, the industry did have a part in... in [doin' it?], I don't know how we stand now, but back then it was, well when you look at the production, look at the production in Louisiana 25, 30 years ago we were producing 11 million barrels of oil a day. I think now it only runs about a million.

SW: That puts the 1960s a decade when things were really booming.

RS: Yeah, right. Sixties and '70s.

SW: Okay. Did you move around a lot for the company?

RS: Uh, well, okay. I started out in Oklahoma, I got transferred to Kansas and I became a district engineer in Kansas. [Chuckles] Matter of fact when I went up there I was junior engineer, acting district engineer. There weren't that many of us runnin' around at that time. And actually I was in route uh, from Wichita, Kansas, to Tulsa, Ok-, back to Tulsa, Oklahoma, back to division office the night Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. But, so then I came back to Oklahoma. And I worked four years there. Then they transferred me to Salem, Illinois where, Illinois at that time was a pretty big oilfield. I don't remember now what our production was, but it was, the area was... Gulf, and Shell, ourselves, ourselves meaning Texaco, uh... were, and a bunch of independents. ['Course I don't remember who?] they were, but [Inaudible] in Indiana. Were being pretty well worked over for oil and gas production by the major companies.

SW: When did you arrive in Louisiana?

RS: Uh [Chuckles] well, I quit The Texas Company here in '52 and went to work for British American Oil Producing Company. You probably never heard of 'em. [Pause]

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SW: No I haven't heard of them.

RS: And I went, I worked for [Inaudible] and I was assistant general superintendent for them. And they got busy in Colorado. And they had been workin' in Colorado for several years, had production. But I don't know why it suddenly got busy, I had 26 rigs runnin' at one time.

SW: Over there in Colorado?

RS: In Colorado. Northeastern Colorado. And... well, one [Chuckles] I don't remember now exactly how long I was over there, over about a year and a half to two years. And one morning I called in my reports. My boss asked me, he said, "What are you doin' today?" [Chuckling] I never will forget this. So I outlined my day, what I had lined up, what needed to be done. He said, "Can you be in Tulsa tomorrow morning?" "Well, no, I can't be in Tulsa tomorrow mornin'. What's goin' on?" "They're transferring you to Louisiana." [Pause] So, 'course I had to get my ducks in a row. And [Pause] I don't remember now exactly what day it was. [Slight pause] It was either in April or May of 1957 I landed in Lafayette, Louisiana. And they were just... actually what had happened, British American had production in Texas, east Texas. And, well even south Texas too as far as that's concerned. But they were just getting, they purchased properties and wells of an independent here in Louisiana. And they were just, you know, setting up an operating crew and whatnot to operate. And anyway they sent me over here and that's how I got in Louisiana.

SW: Just like that.

RS: Just like that, yeah, in other words-

SW: [All you'd said?] "You gotta go." [Chuckles]

RS: Yeah, in other words, they said to me, "Can you be there in the morning?" [Chuckles] No, I couldn't be there in the morning, but-

SW: They wanted you there fast, though. [Chuckles]

RS: Oh yeah. In other words, actually I was supposed to, let's see, I don't remember what day of the month it was. But anyway I was supposed to... catch a plane the next morning after got, that particular day. Well I didn't catch a plane the next morning, but I c-, I caught a plane the next morning. Well uh, had to fly out of Denver. And supposedly, in other words, the flight flew into Oklahoma City. British American's headquarters was in Dallas. And... so I had to fly to Oklahoma City. And then my plane, which was comin' out of Kansas City, was late and so I didn't get into Dallas until um... well late in the afternoon, I remember that. And so my boss then met me at the airport. And I was supposed to have gotten into Dallas and then go to the head office and then catch a plane for Lafayette. Well anyway, I caught the plane to Lafayette and that's how I got here. [Chuckling] I've been here ever since. [Phone ringing]

SW: What was going on here? Why did they need you here so quick?

RS: Uh, well, they were setting up [Phone ringing] and operating [Machine calls out incoming call number] r-, in other words [Someone answers and talks on the phone] ev-, the whole works. All they had here before that date was a drilling foreman. And we had a couple people that, you know, they employed and used. Well, they had set up, I had, in other words, they made this in a district. When they bought this production they had to have an operating force. And, so along with me came four or five other people. And then of course locally we hired the help we needed, wherever it was. But I wound up with, in other words we wound up with a district geologist, I had district engineer, and clerk, etcetera etcetera. I mean, you know, whatever it takes, I had an operating force. And that was where it got set up, that was the beginning. So that's what started the whole thing.

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SW: Is it because they had lots of activity goin' on here and-

RS: Well they, on, the, actually the uh, I can't remember right now the name of the independent that they bought out, but they had, we had uh... production uh... also my introduction was a blowout in Amelia. That was fun and games. And, [yeah/hell?], I don't remember how much the production was, you know, figures you forget, but we had, and they had a... down at the mouth of the river, I'm tryin' to remember the name of the field. They were drilling wells down there. I remember I had a whole bunch of drilling, I had two, thr-, couple of rigs runnin' down, one had three or four rigs runnin' in the state. In other words, they bought the, this independent producer out and he had production. But he also had potential production. And BA [they want?] that potential production. I mean we drilled, I don't remember now what our production was, but we, I had four or five engineers workin' for me. I had, we had a district geologist and he had two or three geologists. And these men were busy. They weren't just sittin' around drawin' their salaries, they were workin' at it.

SW: And they had lots of oil activity goin' on at this time.

RS: They had a lot of activity goin' on. Plus, in other words, you had the production, which needed attention, and also, and needed workovers and so forth. And then you had, you were drilling new wells on some of the old leases and on new leases that this independent operator had acquired.

SW: I imagine there was quite a bit of exploration goin' on. [Slight pause] They were looking to buy new leases.

RS: Yeah, because, as I said, they had a district geologist and he had three or four geologists workin' under him. And they weren't [Chuckling] drawin' their money for fun, you know. And I had a district engineer. And we had... four, five, or six engineers working. So, I mean, it was a growing concern. Or it became a growing concern. We started out [bang?] with a, with the whole set-up set up by the Dallas, Dallas was the headquarters for BA. And peculiarly, this an interesting incident in the thing. About four months after I went to work for British American Oil Producing Company, now British American Oil Producing Company was a subsidiary, or the American subsidiary of BP in Canada. [Pause] And about four months after I went to work for BA, BP, British American, which was the United States phase of their operation, was sold to Gulf Oil Company for Gulf's properties in Canada. And what the tradeoff. But in the deal Gulf couldn't take over operation of British American for 10 years. [Pause] So we continued to operate, in other words BA continued to operate in south Texas, central Texas, Odessa and out in that area, and east Texas, uh, and 'course over here in Louisiana, and... Colorado, let's see, out in Colorado they had operations in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado. And 'course my [association?] with that area was strictly Colorado, because they had, they sent me up there because I had a, as I said, I had 26 rigs runnin' at one time. And the, now I don't remember how many engineers I had up there, but I had four, five, or six of 'em. They were good and some of them wound up down here later on after I left BA. I left BA when, before Gulf took over. Some of the fellas got transferred down here out of Colorado and Wyoming, whatnot. And...

SW: Did you guys move into the Oil Center? Is that where you had your offices at the time?

RS: Yeah. Well, not in the beginning. In the beginning it... I'm tryin' to... on Vermillion.

SW: Downtown.

RS: Downtown. On Vermillion Street where they, on the corner of Vermillion and, what else? It used to be the Ford Garage. Right next door to 'em was a nice building. I can't remember... maybe the building is still in, is still there. M-, I think it is, I think the building is still there. Anyway, we ran at the bottom section of that building. That's where we started. While that was goin' on the Oil Center was being built. And... we had, we acquired an office... on the corner [Voice gets fainter as he walks away] oh, let me get a Lafayette map. [Extended pause] That's where they were until I left 'em. Let me see, what's the corner that they were on. [Looking at map, pause]

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SW: The Oil Center was expanding at that time when you guys were-

RS: Oh [Inaudible] Oil Center was being put together at that time. I mean they were still building the buildings and they b-, and, anyway, we took, had a cor-, on the corner of... let's see, where's Saint Mary. On the corner of... Heymann Boulevard and Oil Center Drive. [Chuckles]

SW: Okay, I know exactly where that is. So you guys moved into there.

RS: Well, actually, the building was being built. And when they got it built, why we moved in. But in the meantime our office originally was downtown next to the Ford Garage.

SW: Was it hard-

RS: Or what was the Ford Garage then, I know it's not now. [Chuckles]

SW: Was it hard to get an office in the Oil Center? Were a lot of companies trying to get offices?

RS: Uh... no, I don't think so. I mean it was the beginning of the Oil Center. In other words, that was... how many, I don't remember now how many buildings were in there at the time, but you're lookin' back at 1957. And I don't remember exactly when we moved in there either, because I arrived here in Lafayette in May of '57. And my clerk and... my drilling foreman and they had already been there and they had hired a girl to, and the, huh, I don't remember the... the geologist was... he had to be here, though. I don't remember him officing in that building. His office was out in, I mean, when the, when we got to move in the Oil Center then we had the geology department, engineering department, and production. [Pause] But... hm. And then later on, well of course actually... when Gulf took over they moved. [Slight pause] They moved down to Heymann Boulevard and catty-cornered across from the post office. I remember that. Well that all happened after I left.

SW: Okay. You stayed workin' in that office until you retired?

RS: No, no-

SW: You did, you switched companies again?

RS: Well, what do you mean? Now I, yeah, I was goin' into business for myself.

SW: Oh okay.

RS: In other words, I became a consultant.

SW: When did you do that?

RS: I did that... I think it was... sixty, hm... [Chuckling] I'd have to go back. But it was in the early '60s. Either '62 or '63, somewhere along in there.

SW: So you finished up workin' for British American and-

RS: No, I quit British American. 'Matter of fact, although I was drilling and production superintendent for this area, I worked under a guy. In other words, they had a division superintendent. And he and I didn't get along. And... so I quit. And I went 'round tryin' to get another job and one of the independents here in, said, "Well why don't you go into business for yourself?" I said, "[Inaudible] I can't make a livin'." But he said, "I need somebody to look after my stuff and whatnot." And [Chuckles] the funny part of it was the going rate at that time for a drilling and production

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superintendent in south Louisiana was a 1,000 dollars a month. [Chuckles] And I went out on my own and in the first three months I cleared 20,000 dollars. [Chuckling] That's how ridiculous it was.

SW: So you upped your salary-

RS: Consultant for 100 dollars a day at that time.

SW: You upped your salary more than six times.

RS: Oh yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean it was... and then of course I, as I say, I retired in '82.

SW: Eighty-two.

RS: Had my own business.

SW: As, when you were workin' out here out of Lafayette did you go out into the field a lot or did you stay in the office? What kind of-

RS: No, actually, no, you, well, I didn't have an office. Well, I did too, I wanna take, I take that back. I did have my office. And... uh... I would say most of your t-, most of your time was spent in the field. I mean, as a consultant your job was on the rigs. In the field where, you know, either settin' up production equipment or designing or checking and seeing that the job was being done as it was prescribed and whatnot. So, I don't know, lookin' back... I was drivin'... thirty and forty thousand miles a year. Runnin' around over in south Louisiana and Mississippi. And we did some work for, over in... Alabama, Citronelle. You ever heard of Citronelle?

SW: Uh hm.

RS: I worked over there. And we did, so I, actually I would say the biggest part of our work was in the field. I mean, you were actually out there either running pipe or de-, seeing that the job was being done, or... back in the office, naturally, you were planning work to be done. But that was, time-wise, it was probably, when we lookin' back, I spent more time away from the office than I did in the office. 'Cause the work wasn't in the office [Chuckling] the work was out there in the boondocks. And uh...

SW: You put in a lot of long days if you had to go out [Inaudible, overlapping speech] to a site-

RS: Well, that was the oilfield. The oilfield ran 12, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And that was true whether you worked for a major company or whether you worked for yourself. Or at least it was in my experience. I don't know how it was with everybody, but in my experience, as I said again, every-, everything ran 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And one way or another... there was no office hours or anything else. I mean, you had work to do in the office, okay, that could be in the middle of the night. You know what I'm sayin'. And I'm thinkin' in terms of like back when I was district engineer for The Texas Company I had seven or eight engineers working under me. And all they, and they were out in the field or in the office, they all had a desk in the office, but they also had their field problem. Well, they'd be out on a well doin' somethin' and they ran into a problem or they ran into something that wasn't planned, they'd call me in the middle of the night and we'd discuss it and decide, you know, make decisions as to what-

[END OF TRACK 1, TO TRACK 2]

RS: [Transcript picks up with new material] needed to be done. And sim-, same thing went on with, not as much, in other words, not that type of thing. In other words, that was major company operations. In other words, when you were workin' for yourself, you were doin' all of that anyway, but you didn't have to worry about callin' somebody to decide what we was gonna do, you were the one that had to do it. If you didn't do it right, well you were in trouble. So

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it was a little bit different situation, but actually that, back in those days, I don't know how it is, I don't think it's really changed that much. Back in those days, there again, if you worked for major company the probability was you were workin', you were on call 24 hours a day.

SW: And that was just the nature of your job. That's how you get-

RS: That was the nature of the job. In other words, there was a job to be done, if you didn't, if you weren't needed, well you can go sit in the corner, you know. But if you were needed, well you were out there.

SW: You have to be ready.

RS: Right. So, and that was true for all of the engineers that I worked with. Men workin' for Gulf, workin' for Shell, uh... and the consultants that I was acquainted with around here, worked not with, but together. That's the way it went. That was the oil patch. And a lot of people didn't like it. Matter of fact, I lost a hell of a good engineer because of the fact he couldn't go to church every Sunday morning.

SW: You couldn't promise him that time off.

RS: No. Well, I didn't know that he was havin' a problem with it until he quit. Follow me?

SW: Yeah.

RS: In other words, he never complained, but I guess because everybody else was doin' the same thing, he decided that wasn't where he wanted to be. So he quit. Hell of a good hand. [Chuckles] So, but that was the oil patch in those days. I don't know how it is now. As I say, I resigned-

SW: In '82, yeah.

RS: In '82.

SW: I'd say if somebody was workin' in 1982 it'd even be different now from then and so-

RS: I'm sure it was. Matter of fact, I think probably, and particularly I think the independents, 'cause a lot of the independents, geologists and engineers, at that time were, again, the job, whatever the job required, that's what they got. Time-wise. You were [say?], I mean, you go out and you work, you've got a rig goin', you've got your drillin', you got 10 million bucks in the ground, and you're sittin' there [drillin?], you don't worry about anything but that job goes like it's supposed to and that nothin' happens and to not, that screws things up. Or you get sent out in the middle of so-, of a situation where the damn pipe's stuck, damn thing's tryin' to kick it, blow out or somethin', well that's another deal. But that was the way it was back then. I don't know how it is now. I got suspicion that it's quite a bit different.

SW: Did they have a lot of guys back then, as of now I see them workin' seven and seven or 14 and 14, seven days on, seven days off-

RS: I think that was starting. I mean, I think that sort of came from... the offshore activity increase. [Pause] Also I think that, I think that was more or less the major companies doin' that. Uh... most of your consulting engineers and I guess geologists too, I'm not, uh... they usually, well I, when I was in business there was three of us. And depending on how much work we had would depend on how much time you had to spend on the job. I mean, we had three jobs goin', well, okay, you got three men on the job. If you had two jobs goin' and three men, one of you alternate around, you know.

SW: I see. So kind of break up the schedule-

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RS: Yeah, kind of break up, yeah, where in the major companies I'm sure it's where the seven on, seven off or the seven on, or the 14 on and, you know. Because [the ne-?], I think the offshore deal more or less started that, because the land jobs weren't that rough as far as havin' to be away from home. And then too... when I was back, I did, I had, when I was workin' for a major company where I had a staff... the fellas would alternate in... somebody get relief or whatever. We never had any, but we didn't have any, we didn't have offshore, we had stuff down at the mouth of the river. I had some... we had a drilling foreman, only one drilling foreman. But he, all he had to do was see that the drilling operations were running according to [oil?]. And if he had an emergency, then he'd go, personally go take care of it. But otherwise he did the planning, he kept up with what's goin' on and whether you were doin' it right or whether it was bein' done wrong, or what needed to be done, be done properly under the circumstances. But then he had [term in there?]. But otherwise he didn't have to be there. [Chuckles] Which made a big difference between bein' pinned down right here and bein' able to keep up with a whole bunch of things.

SW: But you yourself, you didn't, what I'm hearin' you say, you didn't do much offshore work.

RS: No, not a whole lot. Uh-

SW: It's kind of a different game than the onshore.

RS: Uh, actually we didn't do any offshore drilling. We did a lot of offshore workover. But we didn't do it, 'cause in offshore drilling you're looking at months. Matter of fact, I recall having drilled a well in Lake Pontratrain and I, my memory is that that job went on for... several months. And we worked one week on and one week off. In other words, one week you were on the rig all 24 hours a day, seven days and then you got a relief and he worked seven and, and the only time you get into trouble is if you had one tryin' to blow out or kick on you or trying to stick the pipe or somethin' like that. And then you'd be nailed and then, so, as I say, it kind of depended a little bit on, but mostly, you know, we didn't run into that type of thing. That was the major companies, the big operations doin' that. However you might get asked to help. I mean, I, but... as far as offshore drilling, and of course drilling operations were the ones that required everybody to be there all the time. And a workover would maybe only last a week, 10 days, or maybe even less. So-

SW: Because the platform was already there and-

RS: Yeah.

SW: The hole was already drilled.

RS: A workover would not be any big problems when you're gonna move in a workover rig and all that stuff. And usually you're not lookin' to [say?] two or three or four months to drill a well. [Pause] Any-, well even onshore, like... well like I say, drillin' out in like Lake Pontratrain and places like that. Then on towards the end, they got into a lot of this turnkey stuff, so that the so-called consultants were sort of pushed out 'til they got into so much trouble with it, they had to go back and get the consultants back out there. [Chuckles] Drilling companies were gettin' in too much trouble. 'Course that, by that time I had retired, so I-

SW: Got out of the game.

RS: But I understand back there, they had to go back to getting either the consultants or company hands.

SW: Thought they didn't need 'em, but it turns out they did, right?

RS: Well, well yeah, as I understand it, I remember there was a period in there just before I retired in which a lot of the wells being drilled were bi-, or being drilled on turnkey basis. And everything went fine for awhile, but... they still came back to the fact that once you had drilled the well you had the production equipment to put in and everything

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get set up to produce the well. Or if the well needed to be stimulated or whatever, you had to have somebody supervise that. And your drilling con-, and your drilling contractors, even thought they're very necessary and very capable, for some reason or other they can't substitute for a good engineer. [Chuckling] Whether it be me or one of the guys that I know that are great, you know. So you require that ability, which the companies usually provide for themselves. But, and I don't know how the independent business is nowadays. I haven't really heard. I don't, the fellas that I know or knew pretty well in the oil industry are either been transferred or [Chuckling] or retired or whatever. And so I don't know ho-, really know how the situation is right now. But I can see what was happening when I quit. And a lot of course uh, when you look at it those of us who were very prominent back in that period of time uh, have retired [Inaudible] we don't really know what changes have taken place. I don't. I don't think the major companies are as active as they were. [Pause]

SW: If uh, do you have any regrets about workin' in the oil patch like you did?

RS: Oh no. No. I thoroughly enjoyed it, I mean, uh... lookin' back, I have no concept of what else I would have done. I had more fun than [Chuckles] bein' an idiot I guess, uh... I've got a regret or two. I did some things that... I fired a driller one time. And lookin' back I was probably not being kind. But other than that, I have no regrets. In other words, I didn't, I had a bunch of good friends and I had a lot of good friends in the related industries, Halliburton... etcetera etcetera. Uh... no. I can't imagine what I would, else I would have done with my life. 'Course I'm sure that things are done a lot differently, or not a lot differently, because after all the industry is the industry. But I'm sure that things that we didn't think about, we didn't concern ourselves with are... required now. And-

SW: Such as safety and things like that.

RS: No, not safety. I mean, there could be some safety rules and regulations for, maybe we didn't think about, but no. I mean, we... in all of the time I worked in the oil patch, my personal experience was only one time that we ever get anybody hurt badly. And that was on a well that we were drilling out in Pontratrain years ago when we were gettin' ready to run the pipe. And I don't remember what happened, but anyway this guy got jerked up and fell about 30 feet. And I don't know how badly he was hurt, but it was serious. Other than that, uh... I don't have any memories of the industry that was, like I say, there'd probably be some things that we did regularly that today are taboo. But... the... 'course we were all learning. I mean, when I got out of school it was really just the beginning in petroleum engineering. I mean, the fundamentals of petroleum engineering is, were set up and being practiced, had just been formulated in the late '20s and the early '30s. In other words, when I went out, when I started work in the industry, petroleum engineer, "What's that? What do you know?" [Chuckling] "What the-," and we fought, we and, me and my cohorts, we fought the battle [of the?] engineers. We had to prove that engineering had a place in the oil industry. And I think the guys did a hell of a good job. [Inaudible] some of my classmates are pretty sharp gentlemen. [Pause]

SW: Sounds like y'all made it work, though.

RS: I think so, I mean I look back, I can think of several fellas that in my books, in my experience they contributed considerably to the industry. Individually. And 'course there was a lot of 'em that contributed [Sighing] engineering functions to the industry that weren't engineers. And I worked for some [Inaudible] for and with some drilling and production superintendents that were not college graduates that grew up with the industry and contributed considerably to engineering and drilling and production. And 'course [Chuckling] [Inaudible] few of 'em too. You learn some things not to do and some things to do, you know. But I don't know how the engineering situation is today. I really don't. I-

SW: You're too far removed from it at this point, yeah.

RS: Well I, I've been out of it and I do know that, for example, I don't personally at this particular mo-, moment know of an individual is a petroleum engineer. But I have had in the, not recently, I've had some friends that, for instance one fellow worked for Halliburton and he was in this horizontal drilling phase of Halliburton. Well that, I still haven't

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figured out how the heck they do that. [Chuckling] They drill down and go two or three thousand feet horizontal. [Slight pause] That came way after me. [Chuckles] And I know that people been tryin' to turn those things and do something like that. But how they perfect it to where they can do that, I have no idea what they do. So those kind of things have happened and some idiot like me figured it out somewhere, you know. And... the, I don't know who did it, I don't know who, you know, but... the... to me the engineering profession has contributed considerably to the oil industry. Not on-, not only in the drilling, but in, and production, but in refining and utilization and quality of products and etcetera. 'Course they were, probably weren't, they probably weren't per se petroleum engineers. I know I had some friends that were chemists who were chemical engineers, worked for major companies. What they did, I don't know. They just, we all [Chuckling] we didn't discuss the job. I mean, their job was different than my job therefore we didn't have, but I had two or three really good friends that were chemical engineers workin' for major companies. But they were in the product end of the business. Now just what they did and what their responsibilities were, I don't have any idea.

SW: I see.

RS: Once you put in the tank and put it down the pipeline [Chuckling] I don't know anything about it.

SW: You're done with it, huh? [Chuckles]

RS: [Chuckling] Yeah, I don't know anything about it.

SW: Okay. That's about all the questions I had, unless you had anything you wanted to add-

RS: Well, I don't know. I mean... in lookin' back I guess we all made our mistakes, we did stupid things. Why we didn't kill ourselves or somebody else, I'm not right sure. I had some real good friends that I went to school with and graduated with in the engineering, and to my knowledge several of 'em, you know, did a good job for the industry and for themselves. And... I don't know, it was, maybe we're learning and we're learning more about how to live with it, but right now we're kind of in trouble because if you don't own a car, you can't hardly even get a job today. And a car requires oil and gas.

SW: Yeah, there are more cars on the road today than there were back then.

RS: Oh boy, you talk about. And I mean [Chuckling] when [you?], when you look back at it uh, well just look how Lafayette has grown. When I came to Lafayette it was a... sleepy little south Louisiana town of about 35,000 people. And, matter of fact [Chuckles] [Coughs] when I came to Lafayette after eight o'clock at night you couldn't find a place to get a meal.

SW: Hm. Why was that?

RS: They weren't open. [Chuckles] [Coughs] I come back into town in the middle of the night... I couldn't, there wasn't a restaurant open.

SW: And now. [Chuckles]

RS: And now, well, yeah. Well even later, but I mean back during the beginning I'd come in, if it was after eight o'clock at night there was no place to get anything to eat. They were all closed.

SW: There are place that are o-, that'll serve you 24 hours a day now. [Chuckles]

RS: Oh yeah. Yeah, right.

SW: Big change.

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RS: Well of course that's true, I think that's kind of, when you look at it, it's sort of true everywhere when you boil it down. I mean, 'course, well... in my career in the industry I lived in... four major towns. I lived in, when I say "major," I mean they were, well we were talkin' about Lafayette bein' 35,000, I'm talkin' about towns that were maybe around, oh, like Tulsa, Oklahoma, Dallas, Texas... Wichita, Kansas, and places like that. And so I lived in four places in which the town was not necessarily dependent upon the oil patch. And of course [Chuckles] I don't even think Lafayette was not dependent on the oil patch, so they didn't function like the oil patch. [Slight pause] And people went home [Chuckles] you know. [Chuckles] Went to bed. They didn't spend half the night runnin' around somewhere. So that was true in a lot of places, but... the, 'course I think it's changed all over the country in that respect. I think there's more 24 hour a day operations than there were back then. Lookin' back if you worked in the oilfield how many... [things?] required somebody 24 hours a day. Not a whole lot of places. Nowadays it's different, there's a lot of places, a lot of businesses that are open 24 hours a day. [Whether it be?] the service businesses or somethin' else, but I mean back in those days there, you know, there wasn't that much. There probably was some, but there wasn't a whole lot of people to make it a big difference. So.

SW: Just a different time period. [Chuckles]

RS: Oh yeah. And, well yeah, I mean, and like right now, Lafayette is spread out when you think about it all around here. Uh... 50 years ago... town went to bed at eight o'clock, nine o'clock at night. Gradually it stayed open, stayed open, stayed open, to where now you can go, get almost anything you want. There's some places open if you really have to have somethin'. And that was true back then. I think that's pretty true a lot of places, but not even, not even related to the oil business.

SW: I agree with you on that.

RS: But, well I don't think Lafayette today is as say "dependent" on the oil business as it was back then. And it really wasn't back then. In other words, the oil business moved in kind of ahead of me. When I came here the oil business was here, but it was not, matter of fact, most of the offices of what oil companies were here were downtown. So the oil business was no big factor. I think the oil business has a lot to do with the expansion of Lafayette. But when you look at Lafayette in the order it's expanded and how it's expanded and what's goin' on? The oil business is just another business in town. Right now your biggest business is the, that, what's the name? [Stervinger?], no, not Stervinger.

SW: [Stellarsets?].

RS: Yeah.

SW: [Inaudible]

RS: Stellar-, Stellarset, yeah. That's the big individual business in town. And some of the other businesses that were starting back then, uh, I'm tryin' to think of the name of the... canning outfit. [Slight pause] Anyway.

SW: [Steve's?]

RS: No. Oh fiddle. They're down between here and New Iberia. [Slight pause]

SW: I know what you're talkin' about, but I can't think of the name either.

RS: [Chuckles] Yeah, I can't think of the name of the outfit. But anyway, I mean, when you look at it, and this is, been true everywhere, not just here. Everywhere. I know, I lived in the town of Sterling, not Sterling. Uh, Salem, Illinois... for... oh... six of seven years. And the oil business was big. It was just a little town of about 10,000 people. But the oil business was big outside of town. I don't remember how much production we had, but it was sizable.

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Alright, I went back there the other day, hell, they got a plant building football helmets, they got a plant building headlights for automobiles, in this little town. And it has grown, expanded out for living space and etcetera etcetera etcetera. And it's located, my understanding is that the reason for it is because of where it's located. It's located in access to various business and requirements and therefore it's grown. And I'm sure there are a lot of other places just exact, but that one really floored me, because here you got a little town of about 10,000 people, maybe like Abbeville, say. And now you got four or five plants and you got, it's a distribution point and so on and so on and so on. I mean [Chuckling] I was flabbergasted when I went into town. [I mean?] the town still, downtown still looks the same to a degree. I mean, you know, having, but uh, but, and of course wife and I were through there, let's see... probably 20 years ago, maybe 25 years ago. It hasn't changed all that much. And then we were back there last year, not last year, the year before last, no no, it was last year. [Clears throat] And we were, or I was, I don't, we were just flabbergasted at the change in the town. Mainly because of it's expansion. And there was a school that the kids went to school, a rural school. Shoot man, that thing has grown, you know. I don't know what their population change is. There you go. It's just a fact that uh... it was just a sleepy, Illinois, little small town 'bout 10,000 people, like I say, kind of like Abbeville.

SW: Yeah. It kind of grew.

RS: And now, and I don't know what the population is. But.

SW: I'm gettin' ready to run out of tape. [Both chuckle] So, I'm gonna go ahead and cut it off.

RS: Yeah. But it's a-

[END OF RECORDING]

