MMS OFFSHORE GULF OF MEXICO

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Len Hartman

Date: March 14, 2007

Place: Bridge City, Texas

Interviewer: Jason Theriot

Keywords: Shipbuilding, fabrication, Burton Shipyard

Bio

Bio: Len Hartman is president of Burton Shipyard in Bridge City, TX. He has been in shipbuilding for 40 years. Hartman started at Burton Shipyard in Port Arthur, TX in 1962. He went to work for Zapata Marine and later started a company with his uncle and bought land in Bridge City from O.W. Burton. He later partnered with Mr. Burton and the yard was renamed Burton Shipyard. Currently, Burton Ship yard has 45 employees and repairs and refurbishes vessels for the offshore and fishing industry.

Early career: Began welding and fitting at Burton Shipyard in Port Arthur, TX in 1962. He didn't want to "burn rods" in the summer, so he went to LSU and finished his degree at Lamar. He went back to Burton and worked in engineering department doing marine drafting until 1969. He took a job with Zapata Marine and later opened H&H Welding and Fabrication with his uncle, Levi Hartman.

Company's history/significance: O.W. Burton began building ships in Orange during WWII. After the war he built some of the first supply vessels in the Gulf of Mexico for Tidewater Marine. In the 1960s Burton shipyard in Port Arthur employed 250 workers and built 12 vessels a year for the offshore industry. Many of the workers then were from south Louisiana and had little education but were skilled hands. Burton, a smaller yard compared to his neighbors, specialized in new construction "from the keel to the key." He later built a new yard in Bridge City for new construction in utility vessels. Today, the yard specializes in repair and refurbish only. The company is still family owned.

Work force/other issues: Hartman has seen the business change over 40 years. Originally, Burton employed "dependable family people" who took pride in their work, such as the Cajuns from South LA. Today, this has changed. Those people are no longer in the area. The greatest problem is actually finding manpower. Drugs are a huge problem. In fact, because of labor shortage, Burton no longer builds new vessels. Hartman is working with the next generation of Burton shipyard owners (OW Burton's grandkids) to begin a "modernization process" in the yard to bring more automation to make up for lack of labor. Also the shipyard is limited by the size and depth of its main water access, Cow Bayou, and its 59-foot-wide swing bridge. On a positive note, there are improvements in the labor crisis with the establishing of pilot technical schools through Lamar University. There are two schools running with a third school planned to open soon. Burton has a few Mexican workers, but cannot compete with other new comers, such as R&R fabrications.

Tape 1, Side A

JT: This is an oral history interview with Len Hartman of Burton Shipyards, by Jason Theriot on March 14th, 2007. This is for the MMS ShipFav Project. Burton Shipyard is in Bridge City, Texas, on the Sabine River. This is tape one.

LH: My name is Len Hartman. I reside here in Bridge City, 401 Inwood Drive. I've been in the shipyard business some forty some-odd years. I first started out after high school, I went and worked at Burton Shipyard in Port Arthur in the summer before going to college. It was the summer of 1962, one of the hottest summers around, and that's when I found out that shipyard work is hot in the summer and cold in the winter. I figured I'd better try to get an education and do something a little different than burning rods.

I went to LSU one semester and come back and finished my schooling at Lamar. In the meantime I was married, child, and I went back to work at Burton Shipyard. I worked in the engineering department, and mainly was doing marine drafting, that's what I did. I always found it very beneficial, working at a small yard you got to do everything. You did everything from the lines to the piping to the electrical to the machinery to the woodwork, piping—you name it, we did it, from the keel to the key. I was lucky in order to work at a small yard because you

learn every facet of shipbuilding, where at a big yard you might have been in the electrical department or the machinery department or whatever, if you worked in the engineering department. So I gained a lot of knowledge.

After that I worked for Burton Shipyard in Port Arthur for Mr. O.W. Burton, who owned the yard, from about 1963 to 1969. At that time I was approached by Zapata Marine out of Houston, Texas, who owned supply vessels which we built vessels for, and they were worldwide. I was approached by them to design and construct new supply vessels, which decided to make a move, and I moved to Houston and went to work for Zapata, in which I traveled all over the world to the different locations we worked at. We did conversions and then we started our new construction program.

While doing that for four and a half years, me and my uncle, Levi Hartman, who also worked for Burton Shipyard, decided we wanted to go in the shipyard business. Mr. Burton had retired from the yard in Port Arthur and he bought this property in Bridge City. So, us working for him before he decided to sell us twenty-six acres next to his home here in Bridge City, in which we started a shipyard called H & H Welders and Fabricators. We literally started the yard from the get-go ground up.

JT: Just right here where we are?

LH: The shipyard where we're at right now was nothing. This building we're in right now, this was originally Hormes Towing Company. This was their office, and just to the side of this building is a big brick home which was the Hormes home, which Mr. Burton bought all of that after the Hormes people died, and they had two children who were not interested in any of the towing business, and they sold the whole property to him.

So this building here was built in '57, originally it was Hormes Towing Company, and this is our office building which is now Burton Shipyard, because it got Burton Shipyard again by me and my uncle were in business as H & H Welders, and then my uncle sold out to Mr. Burton. Then me and Mr. Burton was in business for seven and half years, and then eventually I sold my interest to him and then he decided to re-name it Burton Shipyard. So to this day, at the old yard in Port Arthur, we built boats that were all over the world. To this day, I'll get calls from different parts of the world looking for drawings for some boat that was built at the original Burton Shipyard in Port Arthur.

When I worked there we had, like, two hundred and fifty men, and we were building approximately twelve boats a year, which was mainly for the offshore industry, offshore supply vessels. Mr. Burton was actually one of the constructors of the first supply vessel in the Gulf of Mexico, and this was with Tidewater,

which is now Tidewater today, which before that was called Twenty Grand. He was one of the innovators involved in the supply boat business. He also was involved in the menhaden fishing business, he was involved in all kinds of stuff. He was a man with an eighth grade education that was very—he was a big, dominating man. Big man, and he originally got his education from working at Orange Shipbuilding during World War II, and he became a lay-out man, and he was just fairly intelligent for just an eighth grade education.

Me and him were in business and then I sold to him, and now he is passed away and his daughter and son-in-law and the family own Burton Shipyard, where we're at today, and I'm the president of the company and more or less just run the operation. I no longer own it, but we have a good working relationship, and it's been a nice venture because we also built a menhaden fishing plant, which I helped design the plant, and we built our own boats. They're involved in other things, but they still have a love for the shipyard and they're very good people to work for. We work hand-in-hand. We're kind of like family, you know?

Other than that, I have more hands-on experience than anything. I've been in this business a long time, and I've seen it change. Business has changed a lot. Everyone has the same problem today—manpower. What I'm trying to do with the younger generation, her children coming up, we're trying to make a change in the yard. We're going to have to start modernizing a little more, because the old

personnel we had back in the old days—like, for instance, at the old yard we had two hundred and fifty people and a lot of them were of Cajun descent. A lot of them couldn't even read or write, but you had very intelligent men. They learned quickly, they knew their job, they were dependable family people, they weren't involved in—they may go dancing every Saturday night or something, but they took pride in their work. This is something that is hard to find today.

So, like I say, I miss the old days and a lot has changed, but the way we're having to get by with ship construction today, new construction particularly, is that we're going to have to go to automation. You have to get automatic welding, you have to have plasma burners and you have to have CAD drawing. I used to draw and I used to have a pink pearl eraser to make a change, would take me a half a day or a day, now today with the technology, with the CAD system, that change can be made in two minutes, and a lot better job. I'm sixty-three years old, I'm not computer literate, but I do see that this is all the way of the world today and very necessary.

JT: We'll get into some of the modernizing changes that you mentioned a little bit later on. I've got a couple of questions right off the top of my head. This slip that is located right here in this yard, to your knowledge, how long has it been here and when was that developed?

LH: Actually, this is called Cow Bayou, and if you look at older maps it was a typical bayou, it was like a snake—from the air view it'd be a snake. In the late forties, I guess the Corps of Engineers or the drainage district literally dug a straight channel down the middle of this snake, so that's why you see now islands on each side of this Cow Bayou. It was mainly done that way because of drainage, like north of I-10, a lot of the rainwaters, this will drain into the Sabine River, and from the Sabine River it will drain out into the Gulf of Mexico.

JT: So it wasn't necessarily to accommodate for any type of ship vessels?

LH: Not necessarily. Just north of the yard here up Cow Bayou is Orange Field, which was about one of the second oil fields in Texas—you've got Spindletop first and this is one of the—there's a lot of oil wells up there and at one time there was a lot of barge traffic of oil, but also a lot of shale traffic. There's a lot of material-based contractors on the bayou. A lot of that still goes up to down today, but it was not built—and also, like I told you before, this was Hormes Towing Company, and they were in the shale business so they brought a lot of shale products up this bayou. It was not built strictly for any shipyard business.

JT: Tell me just a little bit, briefly, about your family, where your mother and father came from.

LH: Okay. My father is originally from Kaplan, Louisiana, my mother is from Mobile, Alabama. My dad came to Port Arthur, Texas, in 1938, and he got a job at Sabine Towing and Transportation, he was on a steam tug. His father was actually a machinist in Kaplan that worked on all the foreign products and tractors, and built tractors, and etc., and my dad was a machinist at an early age. He went to work and his first job on a steam tug, I saw all his pay records. He made thirty-eight cents a day. Now back in the old days, up to a certain point, seamen did not pay income tax. I think it was in the forties when that changed. He had a home and you got fed, so thirty-eight cents a day, I guess it was better than—that was in '38. My dad went from that point to a marine academy, and at twenty-six years of age he was a full ocean-licensed engineer on a ship.

JT: Where did he get that education?

LH: He went to California, he went out to maritime school in California at San Pedro.

JT: That was quite a jump?

LH: It was. He was working, but I don't know the exact time he did all this, but one interesting thing—there's a riverboat. What is the name of that old riverboat that still runs up the Mississippi that's a true steam job? It was in California at that time, and that's what they used to study on at the school. When he retired that

was one of his presents, him and my mother got to go on that steamboat on the Mississippi. It came through the canal back to the Mississippi.

He became vice-president of engineering for Sabine Transportation. He sailed for a number of years and then he become port engineer. My father was a very intelligent man, had the patience of job, and could solve any problem. He was very smart.

JT: What did he do during World War II, 1949?

LH: He was in the merchant marines. He was a chief engineer on a Sabine tanker. Now, two of Sabine's tankers were torpedoed in the Gulf, were lost during World War II. Practically all of my uncles were either engineers or some form of whippers, fireman, whatever on a ship—they sailed for Sabine. When my grandmother died, Sabine Transportation had the big diamond S sent by the company because she had so many children that worked for that company, and it was a good company to work for. They treated my family very well.

JT: Did your father operate, I would assume, within the Gulf Sea frontier, the Gulf of Mexico region?

LH: He sailed the Gulf, they went up the East Coast, they went to Canada, they went to Puerto Rico. He made one trip to Israel and one trip to Japan, and they would go to Venezuela a lot, but it was mainly coastal service.

JT: Was it just regular Gulf cargo?

LH: Yes, it was mainly crude, it was tankers. It was T-2 tankers, that's what he sailed on. My father was known by many as Mr. Steam. He was an excellent engineer on any type, steam turbines, steam ship. Like one man said, "When all else fails, they call Ollie Hartman." He was a very smart man.

JT: Did he ever talk to you about any experiences in the Gulf, or with U-Boats?

LH: Yes, he did. My father, in his latter years, got cancer, lymphoma cancer. They think one of the causes of that is exposure to chemicals. It's nothing proven, but he was exposed to a lot of products, because I used to go on the ships and they didn't have the vapor recovery like on the ships they have today. They used to have the fumes just coming out of the tops of the tanks. I remember as a kid I used to go aboard the ships a lot.

During the war—it wasn't just a few years ago before the merchant marines was recognized as veterans. That's really something. They were floating bombs, in

fact, one of my uncles was torpedoed in the Mediterranean and they were empty, and they jumped ship, and he went to the bow. It was too high so he went to mid-ship and he jumped. It didn't sink and they went back on board, and later that night it sunk and it did go down, and they were lucky that only a few people got killed because the ship was light and it didn't have any product in it.

My dad, you know, they were floating bombs out there.

JT: That was the most dangerous place to be.

LH: It was a dangerous place in the world. You know he told me a story, he said he went to sleep one night and he had a dream. They used to have blimps that would patrol the Gulf of Mexico for submarines, and he had a dream about a German sub had surfaced and shot down that blimp. The next day they heard on the radio where a blimp had been shot down. He said, "I often thought that was pretty coincidental." That was something else.

JT: So his experience essentially carried on to you, and that may explain your interest in the shipping business.

LH: Right. Like I say, I like to build them, I don't like to ride them. [laughs] He also had another experience one time—they were going to Japan and were about two

days out of Japan in the calm seas, and the ship rocked and rolled. Of course, imagine being an engineer—he jumped out of his bunk and went to the engine room and everything. He thought maybe it was an explosion or something, you know. It was an earthquake, an undersea earthquake. It was on the news where they recorded that. He said, "That was pretty strange."

JT: Tell me about this shipbuilding community with the golden triangle area, Orange, the whole Sabine area. Tell me what it was like growing up in this type of shipbuilding environment.

LH: When I come up, you had the main yards, were Bethlehem in Beaumont, that was a big yard. You had Livingston yard, which was in Orange, and that was a fair-sized yard. You had American Bridge, which was right next to it, that was the old Consolidated, and you had Burton Shipyard, which was in Port Arthur, and you had Gulfport Shipyard, which was in Port Arthur. That was the main yards.

Actually, when I was coming up, refineries was the main industry here. You had Texaco and Gulf, which was two of the largest refineries in the world at that time. They employed about seven or eight thousand people each. They drew more employees than the shipyards, and I think that the shipyards actually acquired more of the uneducated people, just to be quite frank with you. Talking about the Cajuns that were uneducated, but they were still smart. They weren't educated

people, once they learned something, they knew it and they were dependable. Just looking back at it, I see that, and these people are gone now and it's sad. It's really sad because they were a big part of the shipbuilding industry here.

JT: You mentioned some of the big heavy hitters, some of the biggest, historical significance speaking, shipbuilding companies in the Gulf, and they're gone now. What do you think explains the disappearance or the shutting down of some of those big plants like Bethlehem?

LH: Actually, just in my lifetime, the eighties, the oil industry governs a lot of the south, and in the eighties was a bad time. That's when you seen Livingston go. The supply boats, which was a big part of what we were building, they were being—the government had MARAD financing and financed a lot of these boats and these people started going under because the usage of those boats were going down and they were having to take them over. The Beaumont reserve fleet over here was stacked with MARAD-financed supply vessels. You could go buy them vessels but you couldn't put it back into industry, because you didn't want to hurt the people that were still surviving in the industry.

JT: From new construction?

LH: Right, so a lot of it would be involved for other services like crab boats in Alaska, or they were being sold overseas. A friend of mine out of Seattle, they came down here, they were a salmon and herring fishing business up in Seattle and Alaska. They come down here and they literally bought a hundred and seventy-five foot supply boat for seventy-five thousand dollars. It had three hundred ninety-nine horse. Today the same boat would be a five million dollar boat if you built it, at least, minimum.

That's another amazing thing. Back in the sixties when we were building twelve boats a year, the boats were averaging five hundred and fifty thousand a boat. Today, of course they're bigger boats now, you're having supply vessels—of course your talking about two thousand horse versus sixteen thousand horse now—but you've got supply boats for the deep water operations running from twenty to thirty million dollars each.

JT: I've seen a few of those big two hundred twenty, two hundred fifty footers, they look like aircraft carriers.

LH: Exactly, unbelievable.

JT: Before we get into the sixties, when you stepped on, can you back up a little bit and talk a little bit more about Mr. Burton? You were telling me earlier about

how he came here and got involved in this industry. Just kind of mull over the beginnings, say World War I with Weaver, how they were building the wooden ships.

LH: Like I say, that's way before my time.

JT: What do you know about the history of that?

LH: Of Weaver?

JT: Yes, sir.

LH: I just know by what I've read is they were big wooden shipbuilding people and they built a lot in World War II, they built a lot of wood minesweepers in World War II, and mine chasers. Even after World War II I read where they built some patrol boats for the Korean War. Also, they go back to the 1800s, they're the oldest known shipbuilding company in Orange County, Orange Texas. It was mainly because of the timber we had here, the cypress and the yellow pine, and the workers that started in the wood boat building were good at working wood. The reason that wood was used, because steel hadn't come on the scene, and the reason that had been was you had tools that could work wood a lot easier. In the

olden days, the only way they could cut steel was with sheers and forging and stuff.

Later on the technology came out where you had your electric welding and you had the acetylene torch was a big factor in steel construction, so you could cut that piece of plate the way you'd need it to fit. That was a big factor, and like I said, Bruno Schultz who had Gulfport Shipyard, it was claimed at one time that he may have built the first all-welded barge. All the barges, even Weaver-built, were barges to carry petroleum and were all out of wood.

JT: Any idea what time period that may have been, when Shultz's first barge?

LH: I would say, I'm just guessing, this is all hearsay, it was in the latter thirties.

JT: So then you have World War II where it's been well documented the military vessels and navy vessels that were being built here.

LH: Right. A lot of military. In fact, Bruno Schultz, who as German, was building a lot of tugs and stuff for World War II, and there was a lot of resentment, even for Germans in America, during that time. He had a way of making it work, and he built a lot of stuff for the Navy.

JT: What ever became of his company? Gulf Coast?

LH: Gulfport Shipyard, yes. Eventually Livingston Shipyard was tied in with the Browns out of Orange. Part of the Starks and the Browns were part of the timber tycoons, and Livingston was involved with them. They eventually bought Gulfport Shipyard. That was done in the seventies.

JT: So Mr. Burton, when he comes into town working at the shipyards, that gave him the experience to go ahead and move into the offshore industry?

LH: Well, let me back up a little bit. When he went to work in Orange, he came from the farm, then he married his wife Annie, and she and Bruno Schultz, who owned Gulfport Shipyard, were related. I think his wife was her sister, or something. So that was his brother-in-law, so he coaches Mr. Burton from Orange to go to work over at Gulfport, to build on the tugs they were building for the Navy.

He does, he goes over there, and like I say, he was a big domineering man, and Mr. Bruno Schultz was a little short guy. They both clashed all the time, they clashed, but Mr. Burton knew what he was doing and Bruno knew that he needed him. After the war, that's when he decided to build his own shipyard. He started out on the Sabine Road, going toward Sabine Pass, and he started building small barges and shrimp boats, and little tugs, and all kinds of stuff.

Later, in the latter fifties he transferred his yard in Port Arthur, and that's where the old Burton Shipyard was, which is now called vessel repair.

JT: So when the steel new construction for what we know now as offshore service vehicles—supply boats, crew boats, drilling barges, etc., drilling ships—when that all takes off after World War II in the early fifties, tell me what is Mr. Burton's place in this historic timeline as far as—?

LH: Actually the offshore industry was just starting in his era. He was involved in the first production platform, building it, parts for it, and I think Kerr McGee, if I'm correct, was involved with him on that. He also was involved in building two small drilling rigs at his yard.

JT: So '46, '47, '48?

LH: Actually getting in the fifties then, it was in the fifties that all this started. So then he had two men, Delo Casbury and Jerry Wendell out of Rockport had came to see him and they were two go-getters that were getting involved in the oil production business, and they were using ex-military LST's and stuff—that's how that started out. When the platform started coming up they had to service the platform, so then he actually got them going. He started building boats for them,

financing them for them. They become, at one time, one of the largest supply boat operators going.

JT: Where were these guys out of?

LH: Out of Rockport, Texas.

JT: Where is that, sir?

LH: That's near Corpus. It's just east of Corpus. Rockport, and you've got Aransas Pass all right in that area there. Now one of them is passed away, Jerry Wendell, he was the blond-headed one. The black-headed one is Delo Casbury, he's still there. They were known as the golden boys of Rockport. Now you've been down to Louisiana with Breaux's Bay Craft? They built many a boat, and those two and Roy Breaux were some characters to meet, let me tell you. Now Roy Breaux is someone that someone could write a book on.

JT: I'm meeting with his heirs tomorrow.

LH: Let me tell you what, you're going to have some stories, that guy is something else. He started in the cane field, that guy.

JT: The supply boat business, the steel construction supply boat business for the offshore industry, which, in the early fifties is no more than ten, twenty miles off shore at the most. Tell me how Burton has been directly involved in pioneering that.

LH: Twenty Grand, which was the Grisco's out of Morgan City, good Italian family. They were the ones that got started, in fact, they were supposed to have the first supply boat, and that became Tidewater. They got with him and he built them a boat, and I don't know the name of it. I'd have to look it up to see what the name of the boat was. You see, the first supply vessels were actually first called self-propelled barges, and the houses were on the stern. The reason for that is it was similar to what was used in the military when they first started out, like the LSTs and everything. The layer on the house, the first one that the house was on the front was built by Mr. Burton, and that become the typical design of the supply boat.

Then there's another gentleman, he built boats for in the sixties, was Mr. Bill Henderson, Sea Service Incorporated out of New Orleans and Morgan City. He was the one that actually first started the pioneer of using the supply boat to be what you call a tug supply. In other words, instead of just supplying the rigs he put high horsepower in the boat and he towed the rigs, and that's when your tug supply came into effect. He's the one that put the roller on the back of the boat so

you could pull anchors up. He put the towing winch so you could do the rig, but you still had the boat to haul supplies. Mr. Bill Henderson was the first one to do that, and he was the first one to start beefing up his boat to be strong. He put heavy platting on the side because he always made the statement to me, "When my boat hits the rig, I want the rig to go, not my boat." He's also passed away.

JT: Where was he operating out of?

LH: He operated out of Morgan City, but he was from New Orleans. He was the owner of the Saint Louis Hotel, off of Bourbon, and the Saint Ann's [phonetic]. He passed away several years ago. Mr. Bill Henderson, the name of his company was Sea Service Incorporated. Actually, his company was what was Zapata Marine, who I used to work for. They bought his company and that's the start of Zapata Marine. Bought all—he had about eleven or twelve boats at that time.

JT: So in the sixties when you're coming around and you started working for Burton Shipyard, what were some of the sizes and the types of vessels that were being constructed?

LH: The typical supply vessel at that time was 165 foot by thirty eight by twelve, thirteen, fourteen foot deep, and the majority of the boats had 398 Caterpillars in them, and we used to order Caterpillars about forty at a time. Mr. Burton ordered

all of them out of Becking & Bering in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Now we had a Cat dealership right here in Beaumont, but they never would call on him so he ordered up in Oklahoma. We got to be close friends with them up there, and they would send in beaucoup of engines. We put many in many a 398 Cat.

So that was the typical supply boat. There were still some steel crew boats and utility boats were being built around that time. They were typically a hundred and ten, hundred and fifteen foot. A lot of those boats were used for production, but they were also used for geophysical. I have a boat out here in the yard now which was built at Gulfport, which I'm part-owner in, it's called the Blazing Seven, which is a hundred and twenty-two footer. Now, that's a dive boat, but originally it was a dynamite geophysical boat. That's the way they used to do geophysical—they would set charges of dynamite off and the echo sounds is the way they would check for oil.

JT: Is that the big gray vessel that's floating?

LH: No, it's one at the end of the slip, it's a nice looking boat called the Blazing Seven. It was built at Gulfport in '65 and I rebuilt that boat here. They had a fire and me and the owners of, both partners, we owned the boat. So we're going to be selling the vessel.

JT: What will it be used for?

LH: It will be mainly for diving, that's what it's been used for. It sleeps twenty-three, and it also has a cargo hull you can put a compression chamber in and compressors, etc. It'll be mainly for offshore diving where they work over wells and pipelines, etc, you know.

JT: So when you went to work in the early sixties, describe for me the yard where you were working. Who were the folks down there welding these hulls together?

LH: Like I say, the majority of the people had Cajun last names—had Galley, Broussards, Thibodauxs, you name it.

JT: That's something else. So tell me about how many folks were working in the yard then?

LH: We got up to about two hundred and fifty people.

JT: How many vessels could you all build?

LH: We built about twelve a year. One time we got up to about a boat a month, twelve a year, with two hundred and fifty people. Mr. Burton was fairly smart in his

operation. We worked nine hours a day, so there was an hour overtime. Year-round you got an hour overtime a day, and what he did—Gulfport Shipyard, which he was in competition with his brother-in-law Mr. Bruno, always paid about a nickel more an hour than Burton did, but he'd give them an hour overtime, which Burton employees made more money at the end of the week. So he was pretty smart in that respect.

Also, some other things he would do that was quite unique—we had mainly fitters and welders both at daytime, but it was mainly welding at night. That would utilize your welding machines and keep your welders from being interfered with your fitters during the day, so you got better production that way.

JT: Plus it would be a little bit cooler in the evening.

LH: Cooler in the evening also. Another thing he would do—I worked there five years and never saw a boat launched. The reason being is he would not launch it during the weekday, he would launch it on a weekend because he said he couldn't see nobody standing around—he didn't want to pay nobody for standing there watching and launching a boat. He always had an angle, he was trying to figure out how to do something a little more efficient and save a little money.

JT: After forty, fifty years, it looks like his success paid off.

LH: He said, "You add up the number of people that stand there for five minutes, and see how many hours are involved here." [laughs]. So he was pretty unique in that. He built a lot of fishing vessels also, the menhaden fishing business, and that was a gentleman named Harvey Smith who had a lot of plants down in Sabine Pass and East Coat and all over. He built a lot of fishing vessels for them, and then they got into an argument one time and Mr. Harvey Smith said he'd just go ahead and build him a shipyard, and Mr. Burton said, "Well, I'll just build me a pogy plant, fishing plant." Mr. Smith never built the shipyard, but Mr. Burton went and built, actually, three fishing plants and a fleet of vessels—out of spite is what it was.

JT: Of those two hundred and fifty-plus workers, where did they get their welding or fitting training?

LH: Actually, it was on the team. In other words, you would start off as a helper. You would start off and then you would tac. Then, once you got good at that, then they would put you as an apprentice welder. You had two choices, welder or fitter, of if you wanted to be in the pipe department. People would either see whether they wanted to fit that iron together, and if you started off as a helper you're going to go one direction or another. You're either going to fit or you're

going to weld, and they would make your choices, and then you would just keep progressing, and you would get paid accordingly as your ability improved.

JT: Was there ever any problems with laborers as far as labor shortages?

LH: Not really at that time. We seemed to have plenty to draw from at that time. Even though the refineries gobbled up most employees at that time, we still had plenty of labor.

JT: Did most of the guys you worked with—you mentioned many of them had Cajun last names. Could it be that they were holdovers from World War II, or maybe sons of the families—?

LH: A lot of them were sons of, yes. During World War II you had a lot of people, like my father for instance, in Kaplan, Louisiana, that's a farming community. A young man coming up there, and unless your father was a big land owner and a big farmer, then you didn't have much opportunity, you had to leave That's why they called Port Arthur the Texas capital of Louisiana, because there's so many people that are from that area. Even in Bridge City here, there's a lot of people from south Louisiana, and they came here to work.

JT: Tell me about your experience with Zapata corporation.

LH: I find that I treasure that experience. That was my first time to move to the big city. I'm a country boy and I worked in downtown Houston, and I found out what corporations are like. It's kind of like the government—there's a lot of stupid things done. I met some very nice people, they treated me very well because I was pretty well-versed in what I was doing, and they gave me a lot of leeway. I could do a lot of things, and I got to experiment with a lot of new designs and stuff that I had in my mind that I didn't get to do at Burton's because I had other people that were—the president, for one—was above, and I'd have a new idea and he didn't want to venture with a new idea. This gave me the opportunity to try some new designs on the supply vessels for Zapata. It worked, and I'm glad of that, because I look back at that as one of the big experiences in my life.

I got to travel, I got to go all over the world, and I learnt a lot of different cultures and I experienced shipyard work in different countries—Africa, Brazil, Norway, Germany, England. I went to all of these, and you pick up, you learn, from different—to be quite frank with you, the best shipbuilding area I ever was at was in Germany. The German people are extremely intelligent, and they work as a team. When you look back at World War II you can see what they accomplished, it's almost scary. If certain moves would have been made, we might be speaking German today.

JT: We came real close to being Germans?

LH: My last name is Hartman, so I've got some German in me. It worked real well in Germany so that whenever I was on a project over there, they would work as a team and the solution would be, they would come to me and ask me what I thought about their solution, or if I wanted to do it a different way. Nine out of ten times it was exactly what I wanted to do, and their production was great.

JT: How was that different from working here?

LH: They're just more efficient. I related to one incident of a little German that come and inspected my tail shaft. He come there with a little red wagon, with every tool in that little red wagon, and he walked from one end of that shaft and magnafluxed it and dial indicated—he did everything to that shaft that needed to check that shaft out, and I'm thinking if I was back home that man was going to have to go back to the shop to get some piece of equipment at least two or three times—he's not going to have it. I'm just saying efficient, very efficient people.

It was interesting. Like I say, the interest of learning from different cultures and different countries, that was very beneficial.

JT: So '69 is when you started for Zapata, around '69?

LH: Around ’69, correct.

JT: How many years did you work for them?

LH: Four and a half. I built boats—I had sixteen boats under construction at one time. We had boats being built in San Diego, and then Van Kemp—not Van Kemp—well, ship yard over there. We had boats built in Vancouver. We had, which is now Leevac, was called Zigler’s Shipyard in Jennings, Louisiana. I was also building boats at my old company, Burton Shipyard in Port Arthur, so they had to do it the way I wanted to then, because I was head of new construction.

JT: I understand Zapata’s been around for a long time, they’re mainly ship owners and vessel owners—is that correct?

LH: Zapata has changed up completely—they ain’t hardly anything right now. They sold all their supply vessels to Tidewater, eventually it ends up.

JT. During the course of when they were really busy—

LH. When I worked for them they were in the tuna business, they were in the mining business-Granby Mining—they were in the dredging business, they were in

Warrior construction, they had ships, they had some LNG tankers. They were in the drilling rig business, in conjunction with Zapata Ugland out of Norway, and then they were building those SS2000 semis at Avondale, in New Orleans, and then the eighties come and put the squash on all of them.

JT: Semi? Semi-submersibles?

LH: Semi-submersibles, yes.

JT: Was any of that what I would call major construction, big stuff, deeper water stuff from the continental shelf forward—was any of that being constructed here in this area at any point in time?

LH: They're doing what they call the deep water stuff, now that's two miles before you hit the ocean floor. The semis, a lot of semis were being built. You had some jack-ups being built at Bethlehem. They had the gorilla design or something like that—they were big into jack-ups. Avondale, in New Orleans, was building the semi-submersibles. Levingston might have built some jack-ups too, but of course LeTourneau was the big one, they had a yard down in Vicksburg, but also they had a yard down around Corpus, or Brownsville.

Yes, we had some of the rigs, but mainly the semi—well, they did build a semi too at Bethlehem. They built one there too.

JT: So by the time you got out of Zapata and started H & H, we're talking about 1975?

LH: Right. Actually, we had started H & H while I was at Zapata in '73, but I was traveling back and forth on the weekends and coming over here working.

JT: So you were right there at the beginning of the boom?

LH: It was booming in the early seventies, it was booming. In fact, at Zapata everybody had a company car, it was unreal. Then the eighties come and taught them all what it was all about. If you didn't have an oil well, I'll give you one, you know? That's the way it was.

JT: So '69 to '80, '81, tell me about your business and how things were doing so well here in this area.

LH: Actually, in the early eighties when the business started going down, we were small here—H & H Welders—and we were forcing it to be small because we could be a little more conservative. We'd just come through a lot of high

inflation, interest rates at twenty percent. A lot of people went out on a limb and they got hurt, and they went under. We played a little more conservative, but what hurt us was some of our real good customers that we had done business for years and years, went under. And you know, we cared—

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

JT: But your company survived?

LH: We survived, we survived. That's because we were very conservative. We hung in there and we had some people owing us some money, and we got some of it down the line, but it hurt us for a while, but we were able to hang in there.

JT: What about some of the big boys in the Sabine area, the southeast Texas area? What were their fates?

LH: During that time too—Mr. Burton sold the other yard in Port Arthur in '69, about the time I left him. I got out after—or '70. '69 or '70. They still kept the Burton name, and they built a few boats. After he left, the yard started going down. Actually, the yard went union, and he was never union. He always stayed above union with wages and different things, but after he got out of it they went union. Then they got a contract for some tuna boats, seven of them, for some west coast

people, and they were six million dollars each. Six times seven is a forty-two million-dollar contract, so buddy, that's going to be a big boon to that yard.

Campbell Shipyard was in San Diego, they built tuna boats. At the time, they contracted, when I was with Zapata, to build some supply vessels. So what you've got—two different yards with two different type of vessels. If you've ever been on a tuna boat, that is something to see. I mean, they're plush. You've got gold fixtures, you've got teakwood decks, they got bars and got a stereo in the engine room—a high class boat, kind of like yachts. Campbell's actually went bankrupt because they couldn't downsize to build supply vessels, and Burton's went bankrupt, but they ended up building some nice tuna boats. They had a year strike, and that's when inflation was and by the time they built the last tuna boat the tuna industry had dropped out, the market had dropped out, and the boats weren't worth nothing, and it actually bankrupt the shipyard.

JT: Was this in the eighties?

LH: This was in the eighties, right.

JT: So along with the crisis in the Gulf, the bust in the Gulf, you've got an opportunity with Mr. Burton to make a little bit of headway with the steamboats?

LH: He wasn't involved, he was out of it. In other words, they just had the Burton name, but he wasn't involved.

JT: It was a double-whammy?

LH: Yes. So he was more or less retired when he sold out. He also sold his menhaden fish plants to Zapata. He was one of the largest stockholders in Zapata at one time. You know, George Bush was one of the original stockholders—Senior—of Zapata, starting Zapata. By the time I worked for them, he was no longer involved in Zapata.

JT: What about Bethlehem, and Livingston, and Orange, and Consolidated, and some of those—American Bridge—some of those big companies that had been around for twenty, thirty years? How were they impacted by the Gulf bust?

LH: They went out of business, that's right.

JT: What happened to the work force? Did they move?

LH: This is one thing that hurt the shipbuilding industry in this area—they had to move. They had to get in something else, so that's why we always say one of our labor problems today is because the spoke was out of the wheel in the eighties.

Like you said before, some of the fathers, the sons worked at the same place and they learnt, and the older ones taught the other ones, but when that was broken you lost a lot of good people. Then the teaching, and now you've got a lot of young people that have no older people to teach them some of the crafts that they were well-versed on back in the old days. Yes, the eighties hurt us hard, the whole industry.

JT: A huge generation gap there.

LH: A huge generation gap lost because people had to make a living. A lot of them left the area, a lot of them got into different things.

JT: If you look back at it now, that was over twenty years ago, and even today we're still receiving the reciprocating effect of that.

LH: Very much so, very much so. This is why you have the Mexican labor situation today, because they're needed. R & R in Houston is full of Mexican labor. If I was them I'd want to come to where it's better too, you know? I'm just saying, I think people have turned their heads, not seeing the problems, because it's taking care of another problem—labor.

The Mexican labor is good labor, they're good craftsmen, especially welders, but the language has been a problem. The ones that become fitters become very good fitters, and the ones that become welders are extremely good welders.

JT: I'm sure back in the thirties, forties, and fifties when the Cajun folk that you mentioned moved down here and spoke a different kind of language—

LH: Exactly, it's almost an identical situation here. Instead of the Cajuns, now you have the Mexicans. What I'm saying is that the thing of it is they're getting paid good wages, they're not being paid low wages to work. In fact, when I started in business that's one thing I never would do.

[Telephone rings. Tape recorder turned off.]

JT: The labor problem—when did you really being to see, you personally here working in this industry, when did you really being to see this labor crisis, this labor shortage of skilled welders and fitters, begin to really impact the industry?

LH: At least five years ago, because we're a small shipyard and we built some boats, but we haven't built any boats in a while. One reason I've been reluctant was because of labor and qualified people. There's a lot of new construction going on now, but like I told you a while ago, you have to re-do the thinking of the yard,

you modernize. You really have to automate the yard in order to do new construction, so the last several years we've been mainly doing repair, and it's been because of labor, but I think we're going to turn this around and I think we're going jump in the picture of some new construction and start—because the people that own the yard now want to make it grow.

JT: Are you looking at the offshore service industry?

LH: Yes, it'll be some of that, and also brown water, the push boats. Barge work, I'm not really looking for that because you've already got some yards that are established for barge construction, and it's hard to beat someone that's already got the learning curve down.

JT: Who would be one of the bigger names in barge builders down this channel here?

LH: As far as barge building, of course R&R in Port Arthur just built a big barge for Harrah's Casino, and they're building a second. Of course, that's not a petroleum barge, that's about a two hundred and twenty foot barge by a hundred foot wide by twenty deep, and they've got two being built on the Mississippi, two in New Orleans, and they're going to put six of them together and make one big gambling deal. So there's a little money being made in the gambling industry.

To answer your question, in Galveston, West Gulf—Fiegel's are the owners—they're building some three hundred foot, double-skinned, tight barges. They do a very nice job, they're doing a good job. One of their big customers is Kirby, and I think Sanac, they built some for them. Now they have just recently opened a new yard down around Palacios.

JT: Where is that?

LH: That's going toward Aransas, that's past Freeport. I understand they're starting to take delivery on some of the barges there, so they've got a new yard started. There's also word there's a new yard will start down in Corpus, some affiliate out of Puerto Rico, to build some barges, seagoing barges, big barges. As far as the barges built, that's the main one here except for R&R built that one for Harrah's.

JT: During the nineties, tell me a little bit about the success that you had in building the big steel supply boats. What were some of the types and how many?

LH: You're talking about when?

JT: In the nineties, when business was down here.

LH: We haven't built—at this particular yard we were mainly building utility vessels.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

LH: We were building, in the nineties, utility boats, about one hundred fifteen, one hundred twenty foot class. The biggest boat we built here at the yard was the menhaden fishing vessels, which were about one hundred sixty-five foot. Like I say, we never really got big like the old yard. We've been more conservative because the smaller scale.

Also, we're kind of limited here on Cow Bayou as far—we have our swing bridge just before going into the yard, and it's fifty-nine foot six wide, so I can't get anything any wider than that in here. A lot of the big boats being built today are wider than that, so that would have to be built somewhere else, and that's why you're seeing a lot of construction in Homa, south of Homa, Chouest, they're building the bigger boats down there. In Alabama too, Binter, and all of them has built some big boats, but they got good deep water and bigger yards, you know?

JT: So you are limited here as far as the yard is geography?

LH: Right, as far as the size of the boats, we get two hundred foot supply boats in here, you know, they're forty-five, forty foot wide, or forty-two. Of course, my dry docking capacity is at—we usually dock boats about one hundred and eighty-five

foot long. Three hundred foot barges, that's no problem because there's no weight there.

JT: What kind of crew do you have running the yard today?

LH: What kind of crew as far as the personnel? Well, these are people that's been with me a long time, and this is another problem we're getting. We got these guys are getting older, you know? The younger personnel is kind of far and few between as far as qualified. We've got some coming up which will eventually take your place, but we're really having a labor problem.

JT: I know a little bit about some of the efforts to curtail that in Louisiana as far as immigrant work force, as far as technical schooling. Are you guys having some similar solutions or coming up with solutions as far as education-wise? As far as promoting in the communities why this is a good business to get into, technical schools?

LH: Just recently, which I'm glad to see, I think Lamar, Orange here has gotten some grants for welders, it's going to promote construction-type work. In Lamar, in Beaumont, you have L.I.T., Lamar Institute of Technology, which their graduation rate for employment is ninety-eight percent or so. This had really been good, this is what we're having to start getting from, getting labor from, and this

is what's needed. I'm all for that. Not everybody's a college student, you know? I'm all for these trade schools or institutes of tech—they got diesel, they got CAD, drafting, and anyone graduates from there, they're going to have a job and they're making darn good money today.

JT: Probably got a job the day they walk out the door.

LH: Exactly. Another thing that they promoted over there is an operator at plants. They got a small little refinery deal that they—and man, these plants, they pick them up quickly.

JT: What do you know about this program? How long has it been in existence and maybe how many people are going through it?

LH: L.I.T. has been in existence for a pretty good while, that's Lamar Institute of Technology, that's in Beaumont. Now, the Lamar Orange over here, I think they're just fixing just to start the program on the welding, but L.I.T. Beaumont also does the welding too, I think, and diesel mechanic, and the whole bit.

JT: Is it like a two-year program?

LH: It's a two-year program, right, very good program. Of course, now we've got Lamar and Port Arthur, and there's a lot of two-year programs there. The big deal right now is nursing, you know, anything in the medical field is really hot, especially for the ladies. They're big in that.

JT: You got any guys here who are graduates of some of those programs?

LH: We have a couple, a couple.

JT: How do they compare to—?

LH: They compare a lot better than what you just get off the street. There's another problem with labor, and it is a problem throughout the United States, and that is the dope. I've actually tested ten people and had eight with something in them. Now that's a high percentage.

JT: How many employees do you have here?

LH: I have about forty-five, but I'm saying when I hired—we test everybody we hire, we give extensive physicals and we give extensive drug tests, and these guys, it's sad. That's a sad situation what's happening in this country with the dope, because a lot of those people are good people until they get that in them, and then

they're entirely different people. Then they're not dependable. I've had people hired, and we spend close to $400 on each employee, that come punch in and walk out the parking lot and never see them again and never do a minute's worth of work. That's happened before many times. That's sad, isn't it? Anyone we see with any potential, we try to give it to them.

JT: Are you using the immigrant worker program?

LH: No, I have approximately four, they all got papers and all. Whether it's good or not, I can't tell you that, but they're very good workers, dependable.

JT: Do they speak English?

LH: They speak English, broken, but speak English.

JT: From Mexico?

LH: Nicaragua, too. Nicaragua, Mexico.

JT: Any idea where these guys got their welding training?

LH: I have no idea.

JT: Shipyards down there, I presume?

LH: No, I don't think so, I think—see, a lot of them come out of Houston, they get out of the Houston area. I don't know what the workforce in Houston is, but the majority is Mexican in the shipyard business. Over there they got so many that they have to have one person as an interpreter. In other words, one of the foremen or leader men has to be able to tell the guys what to do, they have so many of them.

JT: This is a what-if question. If you had fifty dependable, drug-free, legal migrant workers, or a similar fifty of any kind workers, what types of opportunities would that give Burton Shipyard?

LH: That would give us great opportunities, because our production rate would be—it's a win-win situation when the customer is happy with what is getting done, and then you're getting production and making the money. Say if I have a bidder job I can make money if I bid it and I do it in less hours—it's a win-win situation. Also, I am a new construction guy. I don't like repair, I do it because we got to, but I've seen one old boat, seen them all, you know? A lot of the stuff is just repetitious repairs, you see the same problems with every boat, where I like to build something, and this is what I would do because the opportunity is there.

I've got one good customer, Higman Towing Company, which is in Maryland. They've grown, they're a good solid—they wanted me so bad to build some seventy-two foot push boats. They got the plan to design the best push boat I've seen designed in a long time, they built a nice boat. Hope Industries out of Dulac, Louisiana, down in the bayou, which is where we used to—Mr. Burton built a pogy plant, a menhaden fish plant at Dulac, Louisiana. Do you know where Hope Shipyard is? At the pogy plant where Mr. Burton was, and they build a fine boat down there, and they're building one right after another for one customer. He'll take every one they can build, so they wanted more.

JT: Have you ever had to turn down customers?

LH: I've had to turn it down because I don't have the people to do it.

JT: You mentioned about modernizing the yard and the Burton family is in agreement with that. Just briefly, what does that entail? Are you talking about using automations to replace lack of employees?

LH: Yes, but also it's going to speed up production for new construction. There's only so much you can do for repair, you see. Like you have Mig automatic welders, that's good. You can use it some places on repair, as long as the wind ain't

blowing and it ain't raining, and it's a pretty confined area, or you're welding up a strut leg or something, you can use your Ming. A lot of repair when you're putting new plate to old rust, the old stick is still there, it has to be used, and it's still being used today.

In new construction—see, Orange Shipbuilding over here, which is owned by Conrad now, which the Clary's—fine people, they sold for twenty-seven million. Mr. Clary died during Hurricane Rita, fine old gentleman. Tommy's brother George—fifty the other day—died, and Tommy he was one of the owner's, he's still living. They went strictly for new construction.

JT: Of tugboats?

LH: No, they built some little tugs, little push boats at the start, but then later on they got involved with Charlie Wilson, the congressman out of Lufkin, and they got some government stuff. Some sort of platform that went off a ship, that's the first thing, but now they're involved in Corps of Engineer push boats, Army tugs, Army barges. You know the Army has more floating craft than the Navy, did you know that? A lot of little stuff.

Conrad bought them out and they're strictly set up for new construction, and they're just turning down stuff right and left, but they got plasma burning, all the plates are coming in willowbraded, and blasted, and painted. It's a matter of people putting the puzzle together, A to A, B to B—you don't have to think too much when that's already done, where we're talking about back in the sixties and fifties at Burton Shipyard, these guys had to lay it out and make it fit. It was the old way, but there's no more of that.

Then you get your welders. They haven't bought a welding rod in the last fifteen years, not a welding rod. It's all Suitcase, Mig. Then the guy, he ain't got to go back to the tool room to get any rods because that reel holds a hundred pounds or so, so you just keep welding. You ain't stopping putting a rod in there, you just keep welding, you see.

JT: So what do you see, if the price of a barrel of oil holds strong for the next ten years and there are no catastrophes with OPEC or the Middle East, and as the deep water continues to be fluid and continues to be producing, there's a demand for the big vessels, even in the brownwater as with 4D is just starting to show some signs that they're still a lot closer in—the next ten years with, hopefully, automating your yard here or modernizing your yard here, you're still going to have that labor problem. What do you see happening here in the next ten years?

LH: It's hard to predict what's going to happen. I've seen it go up, I've seen it go down. Back in the seventies, when we were talking about the heyday when I was at Zapata, they had analysts predicting this is good for twenty years. They were wrong, anything can happen, and if you don't believe that you just hang around long enough. I don't know what the future holds, I just know that if you automate and you get good equipment, you can jump into some other fabrication, if nothing else, you see? There's always going to be some sort of steel fabrication. If you got just the old way to do it, you ain't going to be able to compete with the guy down the road, southeast Texas fabricators and what they do. You're not going to go wrong by upgrading your equipment.

The last I heard we was looking at five years, not no twenty years. Like I say, this all turns to fuel. If that grows, they're fixing to open a plant in Galveston for soybean, corn, etc.

Stuff like that's going to start taking on because, as you can see, in your household and my household, that fuel cost is taking it's toll on me. My mother-in-law is in a nursing home and my wife has to go there three times a day, so I'm spending fifty dollars a week just for her to fill her car up, a tank of gas. They're giving us a little leeway, it goes down a little bit, but it's going to get three dollars here before long, you know that. I tell you, it's hard for Dick. I've seen people smarter than me trying to predict, but it's going to have its ups and downs, so you

just have to—I think you need to be conservative too, you can't really go out on a limb. Some people that do, no guts no glory. Some of them make it, and I've seen them hit the bottom before too. If you're in the right place at the right time, you might do very well.

JT: The history of the industry has been really interesting—

LH: We were down for a long time, several years. This is the heyday right now, it's the heyday my friend. But there's always little obstacles to a heyday, there's the labor situation, you see? See, R&R over there, that bunch—there's three partners over there—they're booming. They're booming. They just took a contract for supply vessels for Pelican Offshore, those two barges, they been doing rig construction work.

JT: This is here in Bridge City?

LH: No, that's in Port Arthur. Them boys, they got big ones.

JT: Where do they come from?

LH: Okay, where they come from. Gulf Copper. Gulf Copper is still in existence, they're in Port Arthur and they're also on Pelican Island in Galveston. They do

rig work, and Gulf Copper made a lot of money back when they deployed the MARAD work, remember when they were going to Somalia and—I forget what you call that, but they renovated a lot of the ships and got them going and stuff. These boys all worked for Gulf Copper, and then they branched off on their own. My father was vice-president port engineer for Sabine Transportation, he give these boys a lot of work on the Sabine ships, because Sabine did a lot of work at their office, and them guys thought the world of my father. My father worked until he was eighty-something years old. He had Hartman Engineering and they would contract him out to do certain jobs. The main property they have, he actually was one of the owners of that, but then he sold before he passed away, he wanted all out of it because these boys run pretty fast and pretty hard, and he didn't want nothing left for the family, which was his choice. Them boys has been down to the count of ten—nine—several times, though they were going under, but not now, buddy, they flying high.

JT: So OSV's and rigs?

LH: They just contracted for OSV, their main deal has been rigs. They just got a contract with ENSCO for one rig for fifty-two million, renovation. They're doing this all down in Sabine Pass.

JT: They got a yard up here and a yard down there?

LH: Actually, they got a yard down in Sabine Pass—the old Sabine yard right here, where this is, they bought that, they got that yard—and right by the old Burton yard is the other yards. So they got three dry docks, they built one dry dock, and then they bought two others coming down from up north. These guys fly hard. They got guts.

JT: Where's their labor coming from?

LH: As one of the friends of mine that runs the repair operations, he said it comes from three families—the Garcias. In fact, one of the partners is a Mexican guy. The R&R was—I can't say his name, but he's Mexican. He mainly handles the labor, that's his part of the business.

JT: They got a business scheme that seems to be working.

LH: Works good. The other two, one works the rigs and one's working the new construction down here, and he converses with the personnel, so they're doing good. They're doing very good.

JT: Interesting.

Listen Mr. Hartman, it's really been interesting to sit here and talk with you. I really do appreciate the time.

LH: Like I say, it's a shame Mr. Burton or some of the older guys wasn't here to really give you some insight on how it was in the past. Back in them days—I'm going to tell you a quick story about Mr. Burton. Those were tough guys. You know how they started their day off? They opened their locker and they poured a water glass full of whiskey, drank it, and then they were ready to go for the day. They had some tough characters back in his day, but they worked all day long.

JT: Didn't seem to bother them.

LH: Didn't bother them.

Thank you, sir.

[End of interview]

[edited by Jason Theriot, 30 April 2007]