

HAA# 00096
Interviewee: Johnny Comeaux
Interviewer: Dr. Robert Carriker
Interview Date: February 11, 2003
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
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Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability.]

Ethnographic preface:

Mr. Comeaux was born in the early 1920s in Austin, Louisiana. His father was a farmer. He graduated high school when he was 16 years old and attended the University of Southwestern Louisiana (USL) while also working for the Civilian Conservation Corps (for two years) and for the college. He enlisted in the Air Force and spent most of 1942-45 in Europe. After going to a few trade schools, he worked as an electrician for Lake Charles Electric for seven years. In 1953 he entered the oil patch working for Mervin Taylor's rental tool business, first running the yard (11 years) and later as a salesman (3 years). During the following years, he did concentric work. In May 1981, with his son and two partners, he opened Workover Equipment Rentals; he worked there until he retired in 1999.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [RC]

Interviewee initials: [JC]

RC: Okay, go ahead.

JC: Then they [Beeping noise] when they bombed Pearl Harbor on the seventh. On the ninth I got a call from the Air Force people. Said if I still wanted to go in, they would take me. And I had my choice of where I wanted to go and do what I wanted to do. So on the eighteenth I left and I went, and, and electrical schools. I took my basic training at, in Mississippi. And since I had had the training in the CC [Note: Civilian Conservation Corps] camps, when I got over there they saw I could do all the drills and everything. So I went right up.

RC: Okay. Well tell me what did you do in, in the CC camps here in Lafayette, in Girard Park?

JC: In Girard Park? We went and all the [trainees, the chiefs?] around here. I was on a surveying crew. We went and took cross section readings of ditches and canals and whatnot that had to be dug before the dragline came by and clean 'em up. And then we would go afterward to see if everything was done right. And I was a rod man, you know, you hold a rod. And that's what I did. And uh, I could work, I could work half a day on that and uh, and go to school. But I, I'd, we'd, I'd go to work, we'd leave at six o'clock in the morning to go to work, you see. We worked 'til 12 and then I just ate a, got me a sandwich by the, by the uh, dining hall and went on to USL, you see.

RC: Right. And you were right next to USL.

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JC: Ah, well, yeah, we were, we was in Girard Park.

RC: Right. Yeah, but tell me, what is a "rod man," what did a rod man do?

JC: Well, you know what a rod looks like? It's got, got numbers on it to give you a reading uh, and footage, and foot, foot-

RC: Okay.

JC: Divided by tenths. Uh huh. And, it, it, it can go up to 12 or 15 feet high. And you'd have an instrument like this and that'd be, be down in the middle of the ditch, maybe. And giving you a reading. And he could tell you, he had, he had benchmark, what they call "benchmark" uh, and from that he could tell you the reading in each one and he could give the dragline operator how deep to go there. And every so often we had to take a what we call a "cross section." We'd take one on the bank, one on the middle, one on the bottom, then we right in the middle. Then same thing on the other side, see, so in case you had to excavate the sides, you would know just how far to go.

RC: Right, I see. Now, t-, tell me. Um, one of the things that I've heard about the CCC is that people worked in it were required to send a portion of their, their paycheck home?

JC: Yeah.

RC: Did, did you have to do that?

JC: Yeah, you, the first, when you went in they paid you 30 dollars. You kept five dollars and sent 25 home. You know. Uh, and, and uh, they, they, that was mostly uh [Slight pause] mostly the poor people that went in. We, we was uh, we was fo-, poor that, I, oh, my daddy wasn't a tenant farmer, he owned the land. But we weren't rich by a long shot. We owed quite a bit. And so I, I was in the, I was in the uh, in the crowd that was, what the regulation says that I could go. So I went. And, and uh, I had a [Slight pause] I stayed the whole time I could in there. Uh, you could stay for two years, that was it. And I got to be project manager which was an increase from 30 to 45. And, and then, at that, that time you, they just kept sending 25 dollars at your house and you kept your 20 dollars then. But that, that didn't s-, stay permanently because you write home for money, they'd send you money. You understand me?

RC: Uh hm, uh hm.

JC: The ki-, I, I, I, I never did, but most of the kids, they'd write home for money, they'd send 'em money. 'Course I never did gamble, I di-, I didn't smoke. So I didn't have to spend that five dollars except if I went to town or if I wanted to buy somethin' for my own self. So the gamblers and the smokers and the drinkers, they'd run out of cash and then they'd send home for some money, you know. [RC laughs] But, uh, I would go to the library and study instead. Or read. Or listen to piano players or stuff like that, but I didn't. And uh, I was, see, I was only 16 when I graduated, so I, I was still in my younger days. See I started in a four-room schoolhouse in the little community called Austin.

RC: Okay, I know Austin.

JC: Well-

RC: What there is.

JC: What there is. Well, there was a little bit more then than there is now, really. And uh, I went to first and second grade in one year. And then the third to the fourth in another year, so I gained [Pause] I started in Carencro in the sixth grade, you see. Which only was my fourth year of school. That's how come I finished at 16. And I went on and I came here to Southwestern. And uh, that's another story, but. [RC chuckles] We had a, we had a, the Dean of Man at that time was a fella name of [Rex McCulloch?]. He was also a state representative. And I had heard that it cost 35

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dollars for entry fee, tuition and everything. Well naturally it was 65 dollars. So I borrowed 30 dollars from my barber out in the country. I got here and I had five dollars of my own, so I got here and plumped down the 35 and the girl says, uh, "I'm sorry, Mr. Comeaux, but it's 65 dollars." So I didn't know what I was gonna do. But Rex had taught me Civic at Carencro High, you see.

RC: Who was that?

JC: Rex McCulloch, he was Dean of Man. So I went up to office, I said, I said, "Rex, I'm in a bind." He said, "What?" I said, "I need 35 dollars." I said, "They told me it was 35 dollars here," and I said, "It's 65." And I said, "I only got 35." So he wrote me out of a check for 30 dollars. He said, "I'll loan you 30 dollars. You pay me when you can."

RC: Really?

JC: Yeah. Said, "You owe me 30 dollars." I got over there at the registrars office and I handed the girl the check and she wouldn't accept, 'cause she didn't know Rex McCulloch. [Both laugh] So she [Chuckles] so I went back to Rex office, I said, "Rex, you gonna have to come over there. She don't, she won't accept your check." He said, "What?" He was kind of mad. Then he went over there and he, he told her, he said, "Well, I'm Dean, I'm Rex McCulloch, I'm Dean of Man. Here, my office down the road here. And this check you better accept it." [Chuckles] So she accepted it. So I went in that way. And I started workin' on the ag farm, on the agriculture farm over there on Johnson Street, where they, you, your greenhouse is?

RC: Right, uh huh.

JC: I was workin' [96?] hours there for 13 dollars a month. Thirteen h-, uh, 13 dollars. I would get my check on one table, sign it over to, it was room and board in those, in those hallway, you know, the [Mollaster?], they were little farther north than these two. Uh. To stay there and room and board was 13 dollars a month. So I would sig-, I would get my check, sign it over, and give it to the next, on the next table, see. And then from there I went to workin' as a janitor in the uh, in the hall where I was stayin'. And uh, I, I, I worked there 'til I left here. I had a 13 dollar a month-

RC: That's amaz-

JC: For 96 hours of work. And it was, on the farm, I'd work 'til dark to make my 96 hours, 'specially in wintertime. I didn't have much time after school. I had to study in the hall, because they'd cut out the light in the room at ten-thirty. So I would study in the hallways. [RC chuckles]

RC: But it was worth it I'll bet, for the time being.

JC: Yeah. It was, it was worth it, I figured it was.

RC: Yeah. And then it was off to Oregon with the CCC.

JC: Yeah, right.

RC: And then it was back here to sign up uh-

JC: Yeah, I stayed uh, from, from December the eighteenth, '41, 'til October 1945.

RC: In Lakeview?

JC: In-, no, no. No. In your, in, in the Air Force.

RC: Okay, in the Air Force.

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JC: I came back in October '45. And, from Lakeview. And in December the eighteenth '45, no wait a minute, wait a minute, I got that. Not '45. [Pause] Forty-one.

RC: Forty-one.

JC: Forty-one. [Pause] In '41, I came back and in December the eighteenth I left for the Air Force. And I didn't come back 'til October 1945. I stayed all except six months overseas. I went to, when I saw and knew what the training was, they let me take the test and I passed it. I went to Saint Louis, Missouri, for radio school. And then when I finished that [Clears throat] they wanted me to go teach receivers in South Dakota. They was opening up a new s-, new school. And I wouldn't go.

RC: Why?

JC: Because I had made a perfect score in receivers all through my classes. But I've got this accent and there was a lot of guys from Brooklyn and New York and all. And they was always makin' fun, but I only weight 122 pounds, so I had to keep my mouth shut. 'Cause I knew I didn't stand a chance with them physically, so I just took it. But when they told me I'd have to go up there and stand and teach, I told that colonel, I said, "Colonel, the first one that's gonna start laughin' about my accent, then me and him gonna [fist it?] and that ain't gonna work well." He left me in a tent that, with pellet, pellets for flooring. And south Missouri was mud and snow a foot deep. Nothin' to do, so bored, all alone, wouldn't give me nothin' to do. And I was a sergeant then. And, and, so finally [Slight pause] one day I went up to him, I said, "Colonel," I said, "I got enough of this." I said, "I wanna go to gunnery school." He said, "You dumb Frenchman." He said, "You know what you, what you tellin' me?" Said, "You're tellin' me you want to go to war." I said, "Well I'm at war now."

RC: And he called you a Frenchman?

JC: Yeah. See, I always had this accent. I couldn't speak English when I started school. I, I knew my ABCs and could cou-, could count to a 100 and stuff like that, but, and when I started school, it was against the law to speak French. They would whip ya on your hands and your fingers, that the teachers go up, caught you speakin' French, yeah. So I started, my folks spoke French all the time I was home. Everybody else did. And, and uh, so uh, I never got rid of the accent. And uh, I knew I had it. I mean, they s-, I'm, I'm proud of it.

RC: Sure.

JC: But these, these yous guys from New York and New Jersey and everything, they'd make fun of me, you know. And later on, later on it didn't bother me. I had 33 guys in the Air Force that was under me and I had some from New York and Brooklyn—my teletype man and my ra-, and some of my radio men and, and telephone people. See we didn't have computers then, we had teletype. And, and those guys was from Brooklyn and, those guys, and we got along fine. We got along, we stayed uh, well from June... '42 we g-, we arrive in Scotland, June forty-, 1942. And we left for, I left Marseilles, France and come back home in October '45. So we stayed together all this time. With very little any change. Very little. And uh, we never had any problems.

RC: Yeah. And so, so you, you were saying that you approached your, your officer in Saint Louis and said that you had enough, you wanted to go to gunnery school. So then what did he do?

JC: Well he, he said, uh, "You're dumb." He said, "You're smarter than that, Johnny." He said, uh, "You know that if you go to gunnery school, the minute you gonna get off, you goin' overseas." I said, "Well that's fine, that's okay." So he said, "You sure that's what you want?" He said, "Go back to your tent and come back tomorrow and tell me that's exactly what you want." He said, "Think about this." I said, "I done, I been thinking about it the last three weeks." I said, "I'm ready to decide now." So he said, "Well, I'll get your orders cut up." So he got my orders the next day, they come got me, I left for uh, Apalachicola, Florida. For gunnery school. Well I took my gunnery school at, there, and I

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finished. VHF then was just invented. Very high frequency was just invented. We had two P-51s in [Magdail?] Field that had VHF in it. So they assigned me and a fella by the name of Clint Wood, no, not Clint uh, Woods, from Flint, Michigan. They assigned us each a plane. And the only thing we did was in the morning we'd go check with the tower. Call in the tower, say this is number so and so, have you received any [S5R5?]. And that's all I did. If the pilot went up that day, when he come back in, I met him when he landed, then I ask him how the radio was and everything. If everything was alright, the only thing I did, I'd go in the morning and dust the radio and wipe the, the jacks, you know. [Inaudible]. And, and that's all I did for uh [Pause] oh, about a month I guess, or somethin' like that. And then, then they sent me to Kentucky and from there I went straight overseas. I wasn't, I was, I wasn't in the Army six months before I was over, actually overseas almost.

RC: But you spent most of your time, then, in-

JC: I spent most of my time, I spent 14 months in, in England, and then the rest of the time, see, I was in B-26s. And, medium bombers, and we followed the front line. So the minute that the troops would uh, get a new base, take over a base that the Germans or the French had, and we could repair and use it, we would go there and land, and then we be closer to the front lines, you see, to bomb the front line. 'Cause what we was, we, we would mostly bomb the front lines. Uh, I, from say nine to thirteen thousand feet. If it was clear weather, ten, twelve, thirteen thousand feet. And uh, then from there, I went to Belgium. And then when the war ended, I was in Holland. And then I came back to France to, they, they uh, was recruit-, they was uh, sending you back home according to how many points you had. Points were determined by how long you been in service for, what rank you had, how long you been overseas. And, in my case, I was flying status, so that give me some more points. So in October '45, I wasn't in the first [bunch?] that left to come home. I was in the second or third bunch that left to come home. [Clears throat] So, uh, I was a tech sergeant by then. So they offered me a master sergeant if I'd stay. 'Cause the master sergeant who was over me had left the previous shipment, you see. So he told me I could take his place and, "You can have it as long as you want. You gonna have to stay six more months, but then you can go home for vacation and come back." So I said, "No, I'm goin' home." My mother was gettin' a little old and I, she was wantin' me to go, come home, so I went home. I didn't take it. And I came on home and in October '45. And then I left in December '45.

RC: Okay. To go where?

JC: The, the, I left, I came back from CC camp in October s-, in October then, uh, not '45, '41. And then from December four-, 18, '41 to '45 I stayed in the Army.

RC: Okay. And then you came back?

JC: Then I came back. Then I went to uh, in, in uh, '46, I went to T.H. Harry Electrical School in Opelousas. I finished that.

RC: Oh, okay.

JC: Then I went to radio school in New Orleans. Radio mechanic school in New Orleans. And I finished that. And then uh, I went to electrician uh, the, the only people that would hire radio engineers at that time was the radio station. That's all, that's all the jobs were open and they paid 45 dollars a week. Opelousas Police Station was the one who offered me 48 dollars. The others, [KBOL?] here was just startin' in Lafayette, [KBOY?] in Iberia, uh, and, and Jennings was, they all offered me 45 dollars a week. So I said, "Well I can do better than that doing electrical work." So I went doing electrical work, went for Lake Charles Electric on the [Woof?] Bakery, on the seminary, on the charity hospital, and on the mental hospital. I work uh, seven, I guess must have been seven years with 'em, an electrician. And then, then uh, in 1953, I went, I joined the oil patch.

RC: Okay. And why? Why-

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JC: Well because that was the, the best job opens. You know. I was in the union. Electrical union. But I didn't have a card. See the boss, the people I was workin' for was on the wrong political side with the [business end?]. So he wouldn't give me a, a, he wouldn't give me a test for me to get a card. He give me a work permit to work in Lafayette, but then we had the labor permit to work on a, on a wood, on a, on the big lumber mill, lumber deal at Elizabeth, Louisiana. We had the labor contract, they furnished the part, but we had the labor, and there was a lot of remote work on that, and that's what I, was my specialty. So uh, they wanted to send me over there and the union wouldn't let me because there was some card, card guys in Lake Charles. So uh, I stayed six weeks without doin' nothin' and then I said, "This ain't gonna work." So I started wirin' houses, but there wasn't all that many, building wasn't, wasn't like it is now. You know, so uh, I uh, I joi-, this, I joined the oil patch.

RC: Okay. So were a lot of people doin' that at the same time?

JC: Oh yeah.

RC: Goin' for the oil patch?

JC: Yeah, there's a lot of, there was a lot of people doing medial work, not, not, not high pay. I started, I started in the oil patch at uh... let's see it was 50 dollars a week. Fifty dollars a week. But I didn't know the difference between, I knew what one inch pipe looked like and three-quarter pipe looked like, it's all I knew. And when the guy hired me, well, for three months before that, I'd gone in the, in the uh, I had a neighbor and my landlord—I was rentin' a house then, from him—wanted me to go in business for them in the floor covering business. Well I, we opened up a store in, on [the Scott?] Highway. And uh, then his daughter got married. And then his wife wanted the son-in-law [Recording breaks off] to come in the business. I said, "That's too many people to deal with." So I, he bought me out and then that's, we closed the shop there and he went and operated out of his garage and build a warehouse near his house. And we stayed good friends, you know, but as I said that, "This ain't gonna work," you know. So then I went to, then I rented the building. We had a sale for everything that was left from the store. So there was a sale there and this guy come in, a fella named Mervin Taylor came in from [Clears throat] Houston and said uh, "You want to rent this place?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well how much acreage you got here?" I said, "We've got one acre." I said, "But we c-, you can't buy this." I said, "We went with a blank check to the owners and told 'em to write the amount and we'd pay for it." We, we, and he said, "and they wouldn't sell it. But they give us, we've got a five-year lease with an option of five more years. So he said, "Who does the land, land next to you belong to?" So I told him the same ladies. He said, "You know 'em?" I said, "I know all three of 'em." He says, "Can you get me some land?" I said, "Yeah, how much you want?" So we went out there and stepped it off, well said, "'Til about right here." So I got in touch with them and they gave him a lease. And we started from there. Uh, they, they built the warehouse back of the office building. Used what was our store then, they used for an office building. And I had to build warehouse back there, I'd never done any carpentry work or nothin', but he come there and said, "You gotta my warehouse 26 by 70."

RC: And, and what was the business that he was-

JC: We's in the rental tool business. We rented pipe and tools to the oil companies. And uh-

RC: And where was this?

JC: On the Scott Highway, on Cameron Street. And uh, that was May, I started there May the first, 1953. And I stayed there 14 years. The first 11 years I ran the yard for him. The last three years I was a salesman out on the road for him.

RC: Oh, what were you?

JC: A salesman, on the road.

JC: You know, I'd go contact the rigs and the people in the office, [went out tried to get, rent 'em, rent 'em pipe?]. And uh [Pause] then the father wanted to retire. He was rich, his mother, his wife was rich. So he let his two sons take over and they, they one of 'em was a dope fiend, he'd, he'd, he'd leave for Mexico for two months, you never could find him. And the other guy wasn't smart enough to work his [way out of a paper bag?]. So it didn't work out. So I knew the ship was gonna sink. So I left before it sank. I left in, I left in May and, exactly 14 years to the day I left. In October, the following October, they sold out.

RC: So you, you were right.

JC: Yeah. Yeah. And I, then that's when I went into the, what they call the small pipe business, which was one inch and one inch, an inch and quarter. And that was what they called "concentric work." Concentric means a circle within a circle. So you had a two and seven-eighths or two and three-eighths pipe. You take this one inch and go inside and you pump mud and everything, take all the sand out that was in there, and bring the well back into production, you see.

RC: Okay.

JC: And that was [Inaudible] at that time, was really good at it. So I worked uh [Pause] I don't know exactly how long. Anyway, so the guy, the guy was takin' the money and buyin' mud boats instead of paying the bills and one night I was on call and they needed some trucks to send a string of pipe out. Then the trucking company said I can't, can't send you no truck, they don't pay the bills. Was one of my best customers, so I told him, I said, "Well look, Howard"—Clement, he was running the service truck—and I said, "Send me a truck and I guarantee you'll get paid if I got to pay you out of my pocket." So he sent me a truck, some trucks. And then next morning I told uh, I told my boss that, what had happened. He said, so he took off for Morgan City. Their head office was Morgan City and the guy knew he had messed up and he couldn't get to see him for three days. And then so, I quit, he quit. He quit and I quit. And then uh, they moved the business to, to Morgan City and then I opened up Concentric Pipe. And I opened up with a crooked partner. And pretty soon I found out that uh, what was goin' on, so we sold out. Then-

RC: So when did you open Concentric Pipe?

JC: Uh, see [Talking out loud to himself] '53, '67. Must have been about '70, I guess, somewheres in there. 'Bout '70. Seventy, seventy-one. But I didn't keep that very long, I just, less than a year I sold out. We were, we, we had made uh, well, we was 22,000 dollars ahead of the game and he just took the 22,000 and there's nothin' I could do about it. I didn't read the fine prints of the contract and I, he had a crooked lawyer, so. So I sold out and then I went to work for the people who bought it.

RC: Oh.

JC: Okay?

RC: Uh hm.

JC: And then uh [Pause] later on, they sold it. [Pause] And I worked for those guys for three years and then me and my son, Conrad—that's assessor here now, he's newly elected assessor here in Lafayette Parish. Him and I started our own business, Workover Equipment Rentals, in-

RC: What, what was it called?

JC: Workover Equipment Rentals.

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RC: Workover Equipment Rentals.

JC: In, in uh, May 1981. That was when the boom was here. I mean, everything was booming here. Booming. I'm talkin' about a boom. Uh, we was makin' money head over heels. And uh, we was, the bank at that time was Guarantee Bank—which is now First Bank One, but they were bought out—but, but they, they kept callin' me, said, "I heard you turned down a job." "Yeah, I ain't got no pipe." "Well, don't let that worry. Buy, buy, buy." Well, "buy, buy, buy," but it was at 13 percent interest. That's what the interest was at that time, 13 percent. So finally one day I told, I told Conrad [Slight pause] see, Conrad was workin' as my, as uh, sales manager. We were four in there, we were four partners equal, equal partners. Equal interests. But in the bylaws it was written, this time I had me a lawyer.

RC: [Chuckling] You learned.

JC: Yeah. Uh, it was written that I'd call the shots. Because the two guys were silent partners, they, they were a [lineman?] and a geologist, they didn't know nothin' about the rental tool business. And I didn't want to have to come to them when I needed to spend 100 dollars or 1,000 dollars or even 5,000 dollars. 'Course I never did spent five or 10 without talkin' with 'em, but, you understand, but uh, I coulda had if I wanted to. I mean, so I ran the business for uh... oh, eight, 17, 17 years, I guess. And then they, they uh [Pause] in that time we had a, in '84 the balloon busted. Last part of '83 and '84, the balloon busted. Okay. I had [two?] [Inaudible] on my hands, I put ['em unemployment?]. I had to turn lose Conrad that was at that time I had demoted him to dispatcher, because I had to let the dispatcher go.

RC: And this is your son?

JC: Yeah, that's my son. So finally I had to tell him, "You got to go, too." You know. So I stayed a year [Inaudible] by myself. If I get a call for somethin', which was rare, I'd call in the boys and pay 'em cash so they wouldn't have to turn that in, you see. They stayed on unemployment. And then when things started gettin' better, uh, I got 'em back, but by that time I owed money at the bank up to here. Well we didn't, we didn't, the company didn't owe the bank money. The company owed the two silent partners money. They, they were heavy, they were real heavy, you know. So they took care of the payments, but it was a loan to the company all this time. So all this time mine and Conrad's share was goin' downwards all this time. So when I hit 75, uh, I told him, I said, "My VIP insurance," see the bank [Pause] wouldn't let you operate unless you had a VIP insurance, like for a million, uh, a half a million dollars.

RC: What's "VIP" stand for?

JC: Well, "very important person." In, in case I would die, then the company would get 500,000 dollars. That's to carry them through a replacement period, you know. And that's the way the bank operates. They, they do, even now, you got to have it. And, and, so my insurance was gonna go up 29 percent. My car insurance was gonna go uh, 19 percent. So I call in the two partners that was left. And Conrad, Conrad part, share was so small [Chuckling] it wasn't even funny. So I called 'em in, I said, "Look, y'all can't handle, we can't handle this. This is not, this is not good for, for the company." So they put the salesman manager, which was an outsider, he didn't own no interest in it, so he didn't have to have all of that stuff I had. You understand? And he was a young man, so the insurance was a lot of less and everything. And they kept me on as a consultant. I was still partner, but I was workin' as a consultant. That was my title. But uh, and I, uh, would have some say-so in the running of the place, but not, not too, I didn't work no mu-, no more. I been on the road 30-some odd years. I was on the road 32 years exactly. And, and, and so I wanted to ease off. So uh, I sold it to 'em. I sold the business to 'em and they kept me as a consultant. Well, it went on for six months. They had a sales-, 'nother salesmen there, I was riding with him. I didn't even, I had a car of my own, but I didn't take it on the job. I just go back and forth with it and everything. Oh, so if I'd get a car for a special job, I'd have to go, you know, all, if I'd had to, if I had a, uh, meeting in the, in the [old center?] with some consultant or some superintendent, I'd come in my car, you know, and take 'em to lunch and stuff. But other than that, I'd ride with the salesman. And uh, so one day I call 'em in, they said, "Well, what's the matter?" I say, "Well look, I, I, there's no business out there. It's not that we not selling as good as we, we used to or we lost any friends or customers. It's just,

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they just, they just can't make a job to give us the job. It's just, it's just not out there. It's been six months since we runnin' in it, almost any, any big job, any amount we can make money on. And uh, we can't keep this up."

RC: Now what time period was this?

JC: This was uh, 'bout five years ago. Oh, well, no. [Pause] Three years last November. So they said, "Well, well, what, what would you do?" I said, "Well," they had [Inaudible] the salesman, they gotta let him go. I said, "Look, y'all can't keep me here. Y'all, you're paying me this salary and, and it, it's, it's water under the bridge. I'm not bringin' any revenues. I ain't brought in no revenues the last six months. I'm not too dumb to know that you can't keep this up." They said, "No, we were, been talkin' about it, but we hate to mention anything." I said, "Well, huh, I'm gonna be dumb enough to tell you that I'm gettin' out of here." I said, "I know you all can't keep this up." So [Slight pause] I said, uh, just about a year and a half, they had just built a new building. Four hundred and seventy-eight thousand dollars worth. That was before things really started going down. I mean, it wasn't very good when they built the building, but they had the money, they had the property, so they just build a new building. They said, "If we got to sell it, we got more chance of selling this than when we were operatin' out of a trailer. And uh, and uh, wooden warehouse." Which burnt down, finally. So, uh, we built this new warehouse. And this, and then, and the office building all together. It's still there on. So, I said, I said, uh, I said, "Well, what we gonna do about, 'bout the ownership?" I said, "Well you'll buy us out." [Pause] They said, "Well, what do y'all want?" I said, "Well, I think y'all can buy Conrad out for 10,000 dollars. And," I said, "it'll take you a little bit more than that for me, but." So they said, "Well, yes, [Inaudible] make you an offer." So they, they, they agreed to buy Conrad out for 10,000 dollars. So they, they came by and made me an offer, I said, "No, that ain't good enough." So they come back a week later, made me another offer. I said, well, I had a brand new Chevrolet Capris, and I said, "You throw the car in there and I'll buy that." They said, "Well, we was gonna give you the car anyway." [RC chuckles] So I sold out to 'em. And, and then, then I stayed. I stayed uh, as a consultant. And then, three years later, three or four years later, that's when I decided to call it quits.

RC: Okay.

JC: And, and I retired and uh, uh, I sold, I sold 'em, I had done sold my shares already, you see, so it, well I just, they came in there and they said, "We don't know what to do, John." I said, "Well, I tell you what you gonna do." I reached underneath my desk, I had brought a plastic bag from the house, I reached under there, got my plastic bag out and I said, "I'll clean, have this desk cleaned out in about 30 minutes. Goodbye."

RC: So you made it easy on 'em.

JC: Yeah. So I said, they said, "Well, wait a minute." Uh, I said, "Well, you got a guy here that can do what I'm doin', there's nothin' to do anyway. And y'all can't afford to keep payin' me." So I said that, "The best thing for all the way around is for me to get out of here." I'm, I'm-

RC: [Inaudible]

JC: I'm 78 years old, 77 years old. I said, "It's time for me to quite anyway."

RC: Yeah. Well, it was big of you to help 'em out.

JC: And I said, I said, I said, uh, "We been together 18 years, we never had this much dis-, this much uh, argument about anything." And I said, uh, "Let's, let's call it quits while we're ahead." Said, "Well, you, you stay on as a commission. You just keep the office. You make the call like you want, do whatever you want, and you get a commission." I said, "Look, I ain't sold nothin' for you all for six months, what makes you think I can sell it for me for six months? If I'd be selling on commission the last six months, I'da starved to death." So I said, "No, this, this isn't gonna work out. I'm not gonna accept that, it ain't gonna work out. It's not good for you and it's not good for me. It's

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good for you because you won't have nothin' to pay me, but it's not good for me. But you gonna be responsible for the car and the liability and all of that." And I said, "Th-, this, it's not good for you all and neither good for me. So I'm just gonna go home and y'all take it from there.

RC: And that's what happened.

JC: And that's what happened. And we're still good friends. We meet and we, they invite me for the big bash if they have one over there and everything. We still good friends. Really good friends. Talk to each other on the phone.

RC: Well, tell me, um, so the businesses that you were in dealt exclusively with on land oil?

JC: No, no. No, no.

RC: No?

JC: No, offshore, too. See our, our pipe would go inside the producin' well. And clean it out of mud or sand or shell or whatever was in there to keep it from producing. They could do that under pressure, you see. And that way you would have to put a big rig on there, [look and now can you see?]. [In the background you hear someone entering the house and talking]

RC: Oh.

JC: And, and so we could bring up the production with not too much cost. Not that much cost. And then, and then after awhile coil tubing came in. That coil tubing, one inch on the roll, on a big spool. Continuous tubing. And at first they wouldn't go bor-, they wouldn't go below five, six thousand feet with that, 'cause technology was just startin'. But then it got better, they made better steel and everything. And it got to where they could go to 10,000, it could go to 12,000, 15,000, 18,000. And you didn't have to have a rig, workover rig, you could just hook on, right onto the well head. To the well itself, they had a uh, a unit that's, that sit on top of the well, and there's a big spool sittin' on the truck with, with the ca-, with the, with the uh, continuous tubing on there. And they would run it on a [nigh?] up on top. [Curve it down?] and come in the hole. And it could keep comin', and they had a pump right there that was connected to the, the pipe on the, on the [cord/car?] you see. And they could pump through there and clean out the wells that way.

RC: Oh I see. So it's, it's kind of like a rotorouter?

JC: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. That's right, kinda like a rotorouter. That's what it do, the same thing. Clean out the pipes. And, see, when that came, when that came in, when the technology came in and they was able to go deep enough, that did away with our pipe.

RC: Oh.

JC: That did away with the small pipe, see, because it-

RC: I see.

JC: You had to have a workover rig to do our job, we didn't need that with the coil tubing.

RC: I see.

JC: They could rig up in a half a day where it would take us a day, see. So that would be less cost to the companies. So finally, just about petered out the small pipe business; just about gone. So uh [Pause] there went my specialty. See I got in on the ground floor with that stuff. We had, the company that I worked for, Taylor, was the first people

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that owned one inch pipe in this country. So I got in on the ground floor with that stuff. And I learned it pretty good. I was called a "small pipe man," but uh, nobody knew anything about it, you understand. And when I went, the first job I went to, I made it my business to, to, to look, observe, ask questions of the engineers and whatnot, and finally I didn't need to ask anymore. In fact, to some of their younger guys, I was tellin' them. So as long as that business was a growin' business, I was doin' fine. I had Exxon, I had Amoco, I had Sun Oil, I had Chevron, had Texaco. Doin' work for all of 'em, you know.

RC: Was, was there any difference in working for one company-

JC: Oh yeah, yeah, there's always difference. Different personnel, different uh, it was quite an adjustment to be able to make. I guess, not braggin', but I guess that's why I was uh [Slight pause] I was successful was because I could adjust to different personnels. That's what the, that's what doing the CC camp and the Army had done for me, tell you the truth. I could adjust. Guys do different things, do dif-, do the same thing different ways. And you had to be able be-, adjust. And if a guy got mad, you had to learn to smile even though you could've hit that son of a bitch on the head, you had to adjust. You understand, you had to bring yourself to his level. And I guess that's why I was successful. I stayed 32 years on the road and if I hadn't been successful, I wouldn't have stayed that long I don't guess. But anyway, and uh, it finally, it petered out. Now the company doesn't own any pipe anymore. They sold it all. They, they, they doin' the business with baskets now, to carry pi-, uh, uh, to carry the tools they need offshore. Like the, the uh, like the uh, packers and stuff like that. And the different that they use offshore, they put 'em in these crates and bring 'em offshore that way, you see.

RC: Okay, so-

JC: So that's what the company, it's [Francos Christ?] now.

RC: So it's a completely different business?

JC: It's a completely different operation, altogether. The same two owners still own it, but it's a different operation.

RC: Different operation.

JC: Different operation. And they doing, they holding their head above water, so they're doing alright. Which is the, is uh, I'm glad for 'em, I'm glad for 'em, because that way they'll catch some of their, they'll never catch up what, what the company owes, I'm telling you the truth, but uh, it, it, it keeps 'em, it's a tax shelter for 'em, let's, let's face it.

RC: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

RC: Well so, uh, was there, was there a big difference between um, when oil went offshore as opposed to when it was exclusively on land that you noticed?

JC: Oh yeah, there's a big, there was a big difference. Uh. There was a big difference in later years, too, when the environment people start uh, being uh [Pause] came into effect.

RC: Oh is that right?

JC: Yeah. At first almost everything went. Uh, offshore, if it wasn't oil it or just mud or shale, they would just dump it overboard.

RC: Like dump what, dump what overboard?

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JC: Well, the mud that they was using. You see, you, you pump through the small pipe and then it would pipe up that shale and sent it around the small pipe, back through the big pipe. You understand? You got two and seven-eighths, you inside, you would pump through the small pipe. And then what would come back, would come back around the small pipe.

RC: I understand.

JC: Through the big pipe. And, and uh [Clears throat] then they started, they stopped that business, see. And then we used to oil our pipes. And uh, when business was really good, the minute it came in, you worked the string over, you worked the pipe over, and you'd oil it to keep it from rusting. And then if there was some oil that stayed in there, it didn't matter all that much. But then in the latter part, you couldn't have no oil dripping even on the barges. Your pipe had to be dry.

RC: Why? Why was that?

JC: Because of the environmental [deal?]. They was afraid it was gonna go out in the, in the water, you see. So you had to be careful. So when we shipped, at last when we'd ship stuff offshore, we had to blow it, we blew the pipe out before we loaded it. To be sure there's nothin' left in there. So it, so when they'd pick it up, maybe, high on one end, on the other it wouldn't drip on the, on the barge or on, in the crate, even. You know. Well the crate were made to where it couldn't get out of the crate, but, still, they didn't like that idea. And uh, but now, then, then this coil tubing came in, see. And they start workin' deeper, offshore and whatnot, so they do that offshore now and they did away with the small pipe business, really. [Hear someone moving in the background]

RC: So, um, who would oversee these, these environmental regulations and make sure that-

JC: Well, each, each company had a, had a safety man, what they call a "safety en-, environmental man." And, and they would, they do that.

RC: And this was the same onshore as offshore? Or was this just-

JC: Well, a little bit more lenient onshore. Little bit more lenient onshore.

RC: Why do you think that was?

JC: Because uh [Slight pause] onshore usually there was, they would, they would uh, you'd have a little certain amount of junk, oil and stuff, that you, you'd have a hard time on a workover rig to really catch every drop of it, you understand. And some of it would fall on the deal. And what they would do, they'd pick up that shale and send it to the, send it to the uh [Pause] disposal area and put new shale. You know. So if you had a little oil in your pipe, it didn't matter all that much, because there was gonna be some form the well anyway. So. But we, we were, we were careful. I mean, we, we got, the worst it got, and then we had to change our, our waste system in the company, too. Yeah. Because they made us test our waters comin' out there. And, and they would, they would check that once a month. And if they caught you, they'd fine ya.

RC: Test it for what?

JC: Test it for oil or any kind of d-, d-, uh, contamination of any kind. Mostly oil and mud and stuff like that, see. Diesel oil and stuff like that. So what we did was it cost us 38,000 dollars. We made some pits, cement pits. One, two, three, four, five, six. We'd run it through there and then treat it, and then run it through the next one and treat, and the first one then would then catch all the solids. We'd let it sit, then they'd catch the solids. Then the next one would uh, would start the treatment, 'til finally when you go to the last one, you could drink the water. It was, it was just [Slight pause] we had a well to begin with, before we got city water, we had a well. So he, he would test, I had

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him test the water comin' out against the tests in the water. And the test comin' from the city, that last was the city. And most of the time it was just as good as that. 'Cause you see, and from there, it went into the ditch, into, on, on the side of the road. So you couldn't have no oil or nothin' in there because we had some little green frogs livin' in the water there, had, had turtles and whatnot. They're livin' in the water there. And every morning—well I would get to the shop early, five-thirty, six o'clock—and most, I had the headlights on and most of the time when I'd stop to open the gates, I could look in the ditch and I could see the little tadpoles and the, the fishes. And I knew things was alright.

RC: Right. That's a good way to tell.

JC: Yeah, that's a good way to tell. And-

RC: And so-

JC: Until, until I left we had a consultant came by once a month and check. And he had to send, he'd have to make eight copies of the inspection and send three to the U.S. government, three to the state, one to the parish, and one for us. And uh, everything was al-, I mean, solid, what, and if he come today and check it if it was a little, little not too good, well, he'd treat it. And then come back three or four days later and take another treatment. And then send that report.

RC: So-

JC: He put [allium?] or dies-, I mean, allium or uh, chlorine or somethin' like that in there and it. And, and all the solids were put in the barrel and sent to the disposal area. Hazardous waste.

RC: Okay. Was it, was it a burden to-

JC: Oh yeah, it was a big burden. Was a big burden. A lot of expenses. Uh [Slight pause] time, not too much time, but uh, you see, we also had uh, we also had to take care of the rainwater. That would come. You didn't want all that rain water blowin' through your system, because you'd have too much. So we had to work the system where the rainwater fell a little different part of the cement than what the, the, the, the uh, dust and the shavings and the oil pipe would go, you understand. And we'd send the rain water strictly to, right to the road, but the rest of the stuff had to go through the system.

RC: Oh I understand. 'Cause you didn't want the added expense-

JC: No, that's right.

RC: Of treating rainwater.

JC: That's right. So uh, and like I said, it cost us, well, it cost us 38,000 dollars in [one lick?], but it actually cost quite a bit more than that, 'cause a lot of the work we done ourselves. But, actually, actually uh, 38,000 dollars what we had outsiders do.

RC: Do you-

JC: To be sure, to be sure everything was alright.

RC: Do you think most people, um, abided by these new restrictions?

JC: They, they, they, we never did get checked by the EPA, because we was a little off, we [were no on?] Highway 90, you understand. That's where mostly all those rental tool companies were, [Inaudible] 90 close by. So there was, we never did get, get checked by EPA, but we had some of our competitors got fined and checked, and they had to

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[do/lose?] a lot of work. And we avoided that. Uh, we never did get checked, but we got ahead of 'em and done what we thought should be done.

RC: Uh hm.

JC: Before they came by. And uh, until, until we started sending them reports, I don't think they even knew we existed. You know. I mean, if they knew, they never did come by and check, I don't know why, but they, they drove by and saw the yard was not oily, nor, no nothin' black or nothin', maybe that's why they didn't come. But no, they never did come. Well, 'til the day I left, we never had any inspection by the environmental company. But we had hired these consultant, these guys, you know. From [Rowe Bridge?]. And, and uh, they come and check the water and send the reports in. As long as the report went in, everything was all right, well.

RC: So you were doing what you were supposed to do.

JC: That's right.

RC: But no one ever actually double checked.

JC: No one every actually came and checked on us.

RC: And you think it might have somethin' to do with just the fact that you were not Highway 90?

JC: I, I think it had somethin' to do with it, a little bit. We was off uh, see, we picked the place we was at because uh, we had a close, sim-, uh, we was close to I-10. We was on [Amady?] Road. That's right off of, right off of... one block away from, from [Willer?] Street, if you're familiar with-

RC: Okay, sure, yeah.

JC: Comin' this way. One block. But we, one of the first building next to them was [Buster Cafry?]. We was the fourth business on the right. We was on the last, last business on the right before you made [Colonel?]. So we's kind of off the beaten path. [But still for?] transportation is what the reason we bought there was because we was close to I-10. If we go west 'bout half a mile, we'd hit Highway 90 at Lafayette, Cameron Street, actually, you know. And that was a major thoroughfare in those days, beside that Buster Cafry and I-10. So we could get out any way we wanted to. And we bought that and we paid 54,000 dollars an acre. We bought two acres in '81. Fifty-four thousand dollars. And that was farm land, had rows in it, and grass as tall as this box here. We had to sh-, shar-, shred it and then break all these rows down and level it off and everything.

RC: But that was when the boom was-

JC: That was the boom was on, really boom.

RC: It was worth it.

JC: Was worth it. Yeah, we, we, we, actually, it was a fair price, 'cause we knew the guy who owned the land. Me and Conrad both knew the guy who owned the land, you know. And we, we talked him out, first he asked 60,000. Well we talked to him down to 54,000. And uh, it was uh, a hard sell at 13 percent interest, but business was there. The first six months we was, we was running about a 160 percent over our projections.

RC: Oh my gosh.

JC: So you can see the bank was, was all hepped up and so were the partners and everything. And, and uh, we had a good reputation. I mean, not braggin', but uh, I insisted [Pause] that everything was done right. I went to school, I

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sent my, I sent my, my inspectors, pipe inspectors to school to learn. And uh, I didn't let 'em take no short cuts. I mean, it was, I tested everything to 10,000 pounds and held it for five pres-, five seconds, hold the pressure. So when I sent a string out on the road, I was pretty confident I could go to bed and sleep, I didn't have to worry about any problems. Which was not the case with some of my competitors. I sent many a string out that they took theirs first, sent it out there and they leaked and everything, so they sent it in, and they'd call me and replace their pipe.

RC: What are you referring to as a "string"?

JC: A string is a, you know, a string of pipe is, is say, let's say the well was 10,000 feet. Well, okay, you get a string of 10,000 feet of pipe.

RC: Okay.

JC: You know. It could, a string could mean, was a certain amount of pipe. Wasn't necessarily 8,000, 10,000, 12,000, it just a string of pipe. Depending on how deep your well was, you'd get a string of pipe to do your work.

RC: And the pipe comes in sections?

JC: The pipe come in 30 foot sections. Thirty foot sections. And you, you'd, you'd uh, you'd figure out how many joints you'd need. Uh, like our pipe ran about 30 f-, 31 foot average. So you divide 12,000 feet by 31, see how many joints you got to set out, you know. And then we had the blowout preventers. The blowout preventers is, is uh, you familiar with that?

RC: No.

JC: The blowout preventers is uh, it's got moveable rams, moveable inside and they shaped like this, and then right in the middle here is a cutting, is an opening to fit your pipe. One inch or inch and a quarter. And it's all rubber. And then you close down around the pipe and nothin' can come, nothin' can come from uh, underneath, nothin' can come in, see. Or [Slight pause] [hydraul?] would, you'd put, you'd put two sets of rams. One blind. Blind was no holes. The two, they come in and meet just like this. Two rubbers would meet just like this. And so nothin' could come up. So if your well was blowin' or right before it blew, if you could pull your pipe out, you'd close those rams, and then it couldn't come through there.

RC: Okay.

JC: Until you start pumpin' on the side and kill it. And, and pump mud to kill the pressure, to do away with the pressure. You see. And then you'd put a set of pipe rams on top of the blinds and then they would put what they call a hydrail, which is a big rubber that would close tight, real tight. Now that was uh, your, your second insurance. If the first one rent, if the first set of blind rams would wash out, pressure would gradually wear a hole to 'em, then you'd, you had the hydrail to close on it. And on top of the pipe, you would put a safety valve, a 10,000 pound safety valve. And you'd close that. Then you had your, your well secured. Then you could connect somethin' on top of that safety valve. And when you had everything [Clears throat] connected up there and secured, then you could open the valve and start pumpin', and kill the well. You know, I mean, you, you'd over-, overcome the pressure that was from the well. And you'd, you, what we call "kill it." It, it, you, you didn't have any more pressure.

RC: I see.

JC: You see. [Pause]

RC: So when was the first time you went offshore?

JC: I never went offshore.

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RC: Oh, you never did?

JC: I never did go offshore.

RC: The business did?

JC: The, the, the, the, the pipe went and the tools went, but I never did go offshore. We wouldn't, we wouldn't send no personnel offshore. We wouldn't send no personnel. 'Cause you had to have special insurance. I wouldn't, I, we wouldn't take it.

RC: How come?

JC: Because it'd cost too much money. And what the hell would I do over there anyway? What would I do? I mean, the guy, the, the, I couldn't override the rig pusher, you know. Though it was my pipe, he, he was the last, he had the last say so. So it wouldn't do no good for me. Now they'd call me. You know, somethin' would happen, "What you think? What you think we oughta do?" Stuff like that, but I never did go out there. I never, I've never been on offshore rig.

RC: Okay. Well, how much of your business was offshore?

JC: Not too much. Not very much, not very much. I'd say about... maybe, maybe 10 percent, if that much. Most of my business was on, on uh... on land or in lakes. Like at Cote Blanche, and I guess you know that, Duck Lake, uh, inshore, inshore, but on water. You know, then I would go to the rigs. But uh, the company would take you boat and take you out there, you know, but, but uh, like at Pecan Island, stuff like that you see. But, but offshore, what they call offshore, actually I've never been there.

RC: And why was, why was only 10 percent of your business offshore?

JC: Because uh... it was different breed, breed of people. And uh, there was too much [Pause] there was too much, possibilities of uh [Slight pause] we, we sent out, we sent out a string of pipe with uh, [Name of a company]. I shouldn't have said that, but, we sent out and they loaded, we sent that out in four baskets, because of the uh, the uh... uh, cranes on the boat could only handle 4,000 pounds. So with the crate and everything, we could only put certain amount of pounds in each crate. So we sent that in four different crates. But when they come to load it over there, see, rig pusher was asleep, I guess. He can't, he can't stay awake 24 hours a day all the time. Those guys loaded it up in one crate. The crane picks it up, the crane broke the basket, and the crane fell in, killed a man. A pipe came up crooked like this. And then almost, we had to threaten a lawsuit to get our money, the pipe they ruined and stuff. So when that, that kind of threw us off, so we didn't, we didn't cater to it very much. We didn't cater to it very much, because in the first place, it would take you two days to get it out there. Well, they wouldn't want to pay you for them two days. And then two days to come back, they didn't want to pay for that, see. Well it was, they wasn't using it, it was in move, so. Actually your pipe was out there maybe 10 days and you'd get paid for six.

RC: I see.

JC: So we didn't cater for that too much. Beside we haul, we had everything we could handle onshore.

RC: I see.

JC: So, so we, we didn't, we didn't cater to that that much. Now we had some of my competitors would go for that. And so we just, "Well, you go ahead, you, you take it. And we'll, we'll handle that. We'll handle onshore." And uh, that uh, and I'll tell you the truth, it was less costly. Because to, to offshore, you had to meet those fellas, they went offshore, we met at the airport. They would take the Blue Goose, what they call was that big uh, amphibious airplane

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to go out to the rigs. You had to meet the guys there in the morning. They was always lookin' for somethin' for you to give to 'em. When you came back, they was always lookin' for you to go out there and get drunk with them for a day or two before they'd go home. That kind of business. So I didn't cater to that kind of stuff. So I didn't push my salesmen to, to, too much. I did most of it, tell you the truth. Because uh, you take, you push a young salesman out there and those old guys would take, would take advantage of him, you know. I can remember Conrad when he first started selling. He went to Vermillion Bay.

RC: Who was that?

JC: Conrad, my son. Was a salesman, you know. He went to uh, he went to Vermillion Bay. Westward on Johnson.

RC: Oh, right.

JC: Yeah. Okay. Well, that place was uh, that time was a big deal. Well he went there afterward with a couple of Chevron engineers to have drinks and eat, you know. Well, some old Chevron engineer would come by and they knew each other, they stop and they sat at the table. And pretty soon he run up, one night he run up a tab of 120 dollars. And he came in and he said, "Daddy, I messed up last night." And I said, "What did you do?" He said, "Well I run up a tab at Vermillion Bay of 120 dollars." I said, "Well how did it happen?" And he told me about it. I said, "Well, that's, that's part of the game. You just, don't worry about it. Just, this guy, don't call on him in the afternoon anymore. Call him in the morning, you know." I said, "You learn, you'll learn." I said, "Just make appointments in the morning with him. Not in the afternoon at four o'clock. In the morning. If he's a drinker, don't make a, don't make an appointment with him, go see him in the morning and take the nondrinkers at four o'clock." So it, you gotta learn, you know, stuff like that.

RC: Well why do you think that there was, that the offshore people were different in that respect?

JC: Well, they went out there for seven days. Nothin' but work and sleep. They'd come out, they'd, they want to sow their wild oats. You know. I know guys who, who been offshore for seven days, wouldn't go home for two days when they was off. They'd stay in town here and get drunk and chase women and whatnot for two days before they'd go home. You know. So uh [Slight pause] it wasn't all that profitable business. And then it would cost you so much for the business. You know. 'Course you could write that off, but that, that, still, still part of your profit. You know, so I didn't, I didn't, I didn't push it all that much. I didn't push it all that much. And when the business got poor on land, it got even worse offshore. So I wasn't missin' anything, you understand.

RC: Sure, I-

JC: So I, I, I just [tell it?], that's why my, most of my business was on land. And I handled everything from [Pause] I, I sent some to Midland, Texas, and Fort [Stockton?], Texas, [those over there?], those companies that I knew. Some people go here, they knew about us, they moved to Houston, they come in from over there. They, they paid the freight and, of course, I give 'em a little leeway on the freight goin' over there and whatnot. But uh, that was uh, that was uh [Pause] I had enough land business to, to, not to monkey with the offshore all that much, you know. 'Course I wouldn't turn it down, you understand. I had some friends, I had some friends that, that would call. Or, a lot time, they, they'd take uh [Slight pause] they'd call me and, and say, "Well, uh, Johnny, I know we don't rent from you. But I need some help." A young engineer, "I need some help. Uh, this got, they give me this job and I got to do, I got to make it, I not too sure what I need to order and whatnot." So I'd help 'em out, you know, I'd tell him, "Well you need a sack of blowout preventers [in sizes?]." How much pressure and all that kind of business. And I said, "Well here's what you need." And I'd tell him and they'd [write it down?]. But I was happier doin' that than I was if he'da said, "Send me the pipe." You know. So I, I, I never did press that all that much.

RC: I'm not, I'm not clear ho-, so all of your training in the oilfield was on the job? Is that right or did you-

RC: Right. Because you were, your education was in radio engineering.

JC: Yeah, yeah. All my, all my, all my oilfield job was, was uh, was uh, strictly on the job. On the job. I didn't know the difference be-, I knew the difference between three-quarter and one inch pipe when I went in the business, that's about all I could tell you about the oil patch. [RC chuckles] That's about all I could, and I told the boss that before. [Pause] The owner. A guy who first, he said, "Well I think you can learn." He said, "I, I, I've checked you out," and he says, "you got a good head on your shoulder, you're a good worker. So," he said, "I think you can learn it." I said, "Well I'll make a deal with you. I'll work for you for six months. If at the end of six months you don't think that I can cut the mustard, you be man enough to tell me that, 'I don't think you belong in the oil patch.'" And I said, "We'll part friends, no problem, nothin'." I said, "Six months, I'll give you six months. But if I don't like it in that six months, I, I, I reserve the right to go, too." You know. "In fact, I reserve the right to go anytime, but, but at the end of six months if you don't believe that I'm gonna cut the mustard, then you tell me and I'm gonna leave this oil patch. Goodbye." And at the end of six months, well, I, it didn't go six months, at the end of four months he gave me a raise and I stayed there, I worked for him for 14 years to the day.

RC: Well listen, uh, I wanna stop this for right now. And I think that it would be really worthwhile if we could continue later, at another time.

JC: What? [Pause]

RC: Oh, I liked-

JC: What, what makes you think that-

RC: 'Cause, 'cause you have some really interesting experiences and we've done a good job of kind of laying the foundation as far as, you know, what your background is and the work that you've done. And, and I'd like to hear more about um, the changes that you've seen in the development of this community. But I think that that might be better uh, better done, you know-

JC: Okay.

RC: In a couple days or so.

JC: I'm retired so when you wanna get together, just give me a buzz.

RC: Okay.

JC: And- [Recording breaks off]

RC: I believe that this interview was not initially capture in its entirety. At the very beginning of the interview I think we missed about the first seven minutes of the interview. So I would like to just state now that this interview's conducted on February the eleventh, 2003, at UL Lafayette in Griffin Hall. And the interviewee was Johnny Comeaux. And the inter-, interviewer was Bob Carriker.

[END OF RECORDING]