

HHA # 00294  
Interviewee: Jack McCord  
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz  
Interview Date: January 8, 2003  
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA  
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW032  
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of repeated words and the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee's speech is laden with "uhs"; for the most part these have not been transcribed for readability. Audio quality is poor.]

Ethnographic preface:

Jack McCord was born in Austin, Texas, and spent part of his youth in Houston. Beginning in 1949 in Houston he worked for Tidewater Oil Company, for Tennessee Gas as a geological draftsman, and for an independent oil operator. He moved to Lafayette in 1962 to go to work for his wife's father, who owned Gulf Coast Rental Tools. However, when his father-in-law died six months later, he got into the lease brokerage business. During the 1980s, in response to demand, he opened up an abstracting section in his company. He remained a landman until he retired in about 2002. Transcribing ceased 48 minutes into the interview due to poor audio.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [JM]

SW: 2003 in the OCS office on the UL campus. And just speak freely, I'll just ask you some questions and if you need to tell me story, you know, feel free to expand or go off, or whatever you have to do. Um, I just want to get some background information from you if I can. You are uh, where are you from, and are you from the Lafayette area?

JM: I grew up, my hometown is Austin, Texas.

SW: Austin.

JM: And then I lived in Houston for several years. And then I resident of uh, I guess you'd say Lafayette Parish or Lafayette, uh, since nineteen... sixty-two.

SW: You moved here on your own?

JM: Yes. When you say "on my own"-

SW: Well, with your family? Was it a uh, was it with your parents that you moved here or you-

JM: No uh, my wife is from Lafayette and her dad had a business uh, that I, was comin' over and was gonna work for him. And unfortunately about six months after I moved over with my wife uh, he was killed in a plane cr-, crash. [Slight pause] So uh, been a landman since then.

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SW: Okay. So that's-

JM: Well until I retired I would say about a year ago.

SW: You retired about a year ago, okay. What companies did you work for? You said, what was the name of that company that uh-

JM: Gulf Coast Rental Tools. [Pause]

SW: And Miss Patsy's father was involved in that.

JM: Correct.

SW: And that's what brought you guys here from Texas?

JM: Yes, uh hm. Uh hm.

SW: Okay. Well-

JM: He offered me a job to come to work uh, for him. [Inaudible] I lived, we lived in Houston at the time.

SW: You were workin' for an oil company in Houston as well?

JM: Uh, yes, I was workin' for uh... a little independent oil operator who had quite a bit of oil production. And owned half a million acres in ranch lands, and [coal?] lands in Alabama, real estate, a number of things there in Houston area. The ranch is not in Houston area, but uh, his office was in Houston.

SW: His office was there, okay. So how did you get, initially get into the oil business?

JM: I went to work for Tidewater Oil Company in Houston, Texas, in 1949. [Pause] Then I work-, then I worked for Tennessee Gas, uh, transmission company in their geological department as a geological draftsman.

SW: Okay. So you have a, an education in geology?

JM: No. No, I have a, roughly a year of college, University of Houston.

SW: I see. Okay. What made you gravitate towards this kind of occupation?

JM: Uh, basically I worked for Mister West in uh, and took care of a lot of his [Inaudible] and uh, did some land work and courthouse work. And he had these ranches, there was three large ranches. One's a 142,000 acres and one's 215 and one's 225,000. And they had no maps. Just, they had deeds, etcetera. And so one of my projects was to map those ranches from aerial photographs. So I would piece together aerial photographs, and I'd visit the ranches, and I would do research in the county clerk court's office. And to compile the information in order to build these maps, which would [show the?] improvements such as a landing strip on one, the bunkhouses, the different fence lines, wells, ponds, and your creeks run through uh, and they bordered uh, one of 'em bordered on the Gulf, uh, of the Rio Grande River. [Slight pause] So that gave me a background in land and land research. And then so I came to Lafayette it was to work for my father-in-law. But since he was uh, was killed in a plane crash, well then uh, the corporation set up that this, if there was a surviving partner who would maybe buyout the other estate of the deceased party. So uh, then I uh, gravitated into the lease brokerage business and I had done some leasing for Mister West in Houston. [Pause]

SW: Um [Slight pause] you like doing this sort of thing? Is it something that you enjoy doing?

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JM: Well I did it for almost 40 years. [Both chuckle]

SW: You must've liked somethin' about it.

JM: Uh, well it was a challenge, it was something new, something different. And uh, and it was a way of, it was a career. And I could see down the road that it could be a very lucrative career. I bought a little royalty here and there. And uh, I participated in some drilling deals that I had the, a partner with a geologist. I do the land work and he, [we'd sell the deal?]. And uh, unfortunately we were not uh, successful enough to retire. [Chuckles] So uh, when, I felt like that I was always depending on the geologist. If the geologist didn't come up with the deal, I couldn't generate one. So uh, geologists didn't, you know, if he wanted to take a vacation or just not, you know, just take it easy and not do anything for awhile, well then I couldn't do anything. So that's when I [set out?] to form my own company, which was a lease brokerage company. But uh, oh, we would, I worked for any number of oil companies. Probably over that 40 year period oh, 150, 200 different companies.

SW: You would contract your services out to them?

JM: It was, right. I would buy them the leases for their account. And do their land work. Which often meant research of title for all the, you know, the leases. That would come along with the acquisition of leases. But then they would uh, be ready to drill a well, well then they would want the drill site abstracted. And then the title to it basically to make sure that there's no title [flaw?].

SW: So you did abstracting work too then?

JM: Uh-

SW: Part of your-

JM: Well I didn't do abstracting work until probably the 1980s. That's when there's a shortage of abstractors at the parish courthouses and wanted to find s-, those having a... uh, a time crisis. In fact they had to drill a well, they were obligated by a contract to drill a well within three weeks of the time that they contacted us to see if we could get an abstractor. And they had tried to get an abstractor and couldn't, and so they ask us and then we couldn't find one in that area that they could do it in the time frame. 'Cause usually the uh, abstractor at a courthouse is usually one or two people. And uh, they have a back log of four or five months. Well that's, you stand in line. And in that, at that time there was quite a bit of activity in the oil business.

SW: Oil companies don't like to stand in line.

JM: Well, they don't mind standing in line, but they have rentals due and this company had, it was about 50 or 60,000 dollars rentals that were coming due. So if they could drill a well and then get it down, or to get, well, in this particular case it was a [farm house?] uh, from I think it was Texaco if I remember correctly. That if they didn't drill and they had gotten an extension from [them?], and they kept gettin' extensions, and they [of course?] this is the last extension. If they didn't get it drilled by that time, well then uh, they would lose their farm house and they'd lose all the acreage they had bought around it. You know, they were gonna lose the farm house. So they asked us if we could do the abstracting and get the title and everything [cured?]. In the three week period. And we said, "We [Inaudible]. We'll do everything we can. We can't guarantee you, but I think we can." Which we did. And we did, and I send a crew of landmen and they did the title research. And then the uh, we had somebody put it together in a bound volume. We got it to the uh, the attorney, which he did a very quick title opinion of it, which was very fortunate. And so they were able to move in. And then drill their well. Unfortunately it was a dry hole, but they were able to do what they wanted to do.

SW: In that short time.

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JM: In that short period of time. So then from there they asked us, said, "Well we've got three other areas. Will you abstract those and do the same thing that you did on this one." And I said, "Yes. We'd be happy to." So then that's when I built an abstracting section in my company. And so the abstractors they were doing this and were compiling them. And uh-

SW: So you can have a land leasing type of company and not necessarily do the abstracting?

JM: That's correct.

SW: You can separate those two? Okay. Can you describe to me, it sounds to me like there's a progression here. You've got your abstractors, your landmen, your attorneys, drillers, how does all of that work? How does all that fit together? Or where did it start?

JM: Well it starts by a company uh, and their [Inaudible]. They either generate a deal, uh, a geological play, geological idea, and, or either they will buy an idea from an independent geologist. "See look here. I've done all the geologist work for you. I want an override in x number of dollars." And they say, "Okay, we'll buy it." Or they'd either buy that or they'll generate within their own [Inaudible]. Then from there they will form [Inaudible] to a company in Dallas or Houston, San Antonio that doesn't have a land department. So let's say district office over here and so they'd have to send landmen over here. And Louisiana is a, the mineral law is different from any other place. It's the Napoleonic Creed. And uh, so uh, the, somebody, a landman from Texas comes over here can get in some really serious problems not knowing the mineral law in Louisiana. So they phone, [somebody phones me], says, "Here's, in Acadia Parish, such and such such such township, in range," and kind of give us an outline. And they usually followed it up with a letter. Uh, at that, in the early '60s, we didn't have faxes, and so they would send a letter. And with a map and outline. But we would go ahead and start working in the courthouse. We'd go to the courthouse to find out who the mineral owners are. And um, which is different from the [surface?] companies. I mean most time uh, for minerals and surface, but not necessarily. So uh, when you wanna lease the mineral owners, not the surface owners. So they would ask us to [figure?] out and make what we call a lease check to see if it's open and uh, and then get an idea of what it will cost per acre to buy that. To buy the leases. If it's all leased up, who's it leased to, and when the leases expired, when the rental dates come due. Some people don't, would not pay their rentals, so we could, we'd check it again the rental days to see if it's over. So then if it's open and you say it's gonna cost uh, back then 25 to 50 dollars an acre, and a sixth royalty or a fifth royalty, whatever, and what type of terms of the lease, a regular lease or a five year lease. And then so we would gather that information, talkin' the landowners, you know, if he'd be interested in leasing, you know, if I could get you x number of dollars, etcetera. So uh, then I'd write up a report, send it the client, and say, you know, that it's open and this is what it'll take, and [Inaudible] exploration [Inaudible]. And then when uh, the powers that be, the head of the land department and the geological department say, "Okay, it's gonna cost us x number of dollars for the acquisition of these leases. And is that too much or we can we make a profit if we find what we're lookin' for?" And then uh, we, they would make a decision, say, "Yes, we want you, we authorize you to put this block together. Your authorization's 50 dollars an acre, a sixth royalty, in a five year lease." And uh, then I would send my people out in the field and they would start buying the leases and start putting it together. And we lookin' at different strategies of how to go about uh, putting the thing together. And-

SW: So you actually purchase the lease from the landowner?

JM: Correct.

SW: And then you [sell?] or went back to the oil company, or as you said you make out the-

JM: No no no no. No, we were representing the oil company.

SW: Okay, okay.

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JM: We were buying for their account.

SW: For them, okay.

JM: So uh, is what we would do in this case is that uh, they'd authorize to do this. So uh, sometimes when we'd buy in the client's name, sometimes we'd buy in my company's name. The company would [Inaudible] and uh, for various reasons for not, if they didn't anybody to know it was Texaco or whoever, then uh, they, somebody might say, "Hey, look, Texaco's out here buying. You know they pay big, big prices. Don't take 50 dollars, ask for 100." And uh, or, know somethin' like that, which uh, but I would spend maybe 30, 40,000 dollars a week buying leases and then I would in turn invoice the client. And they would send the money over to the bank and I, we'd buy on drafts. Ten day drafts, meaning the land owner could take the draft, take it to his bank, and say, "Okay, uh... cash this for me." Which meant they would send this to the oil companies uh, bank say in Houston. And so then the oil company would honor that draft. They would, you know, they can get title drafts for maybe 34,000 dollars. They would have 10 days to pay it off. And if they didn't pay it off in 10 days, the lease was null and void.

SW: You have to start over.

JM: And we had to start over. And naturally a lot of landowners wouldn't be happy about that. But I mean, uh-

SW: It's doubly hard to try to go back and renegotiate.

JM: And uh, so uh, anyway, but then they would pay me for my services for my people. And I would invoice them oh, every two weeks or month-to-month, or however they want it.

SW: And you were acting, as you said-

JM: As their agent.

SW: As their agent.

JM: Uh hm.

SW: Were there ever, I'm sure there were landmen that were independent, right. You said that some people bought leases on their own and tried to sell 'em.

JM: Uh hm, uh hm, uh.

SW: That's pretty risky, though?

JM: Well, yeah, but that's uh, usually that's what we call "block busting." You bust somebody's block. So that's where you had to have your strategy. Uh... of how you bought your leases. You, an inexperienced broker would go and just start, you know, buying [Inaudible] uh, a section, I mean a township, which is 36 square miles. And [Inaudible] [not that way?] and they have a, it was a not a, have a perfect square or anything. Uh, but uh, then if you started buying the northwest corner, and buy some there and you buy down here, you buy anywhere, pretty soon you outlining your block and if there's anything in the middle and the middle usually's where the drill site was. So if you get somebody's drill site, you've got a pretty valuable piece of land, you know. [Chuckles]

SW: [If your quick enough?].

JM: You're not well thought of in the industry, but you'll be a pretty rich unthought of. [Laughs]

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SW: Oh okay. So guys who did this weren't necessarily well-liked, but uh, if you were smart and you did it, you could make some good money.

JM: Oh yeah, yeah.

SW: Doin' that, okay. You had to be clever and quick to figure out what was gonna happen, though.

JM: Uh hm, uh hm.

SW: Okay.

JM: But I mean, that didn't happen that often, but it happened, when it happened, particularly if it happened to you as a broker it meant that you let somebody come in your block uh, and buy, get in and out, and there you were, you know, with egg on your face.

SW: You did all the work and they kind of-

JM: Well, the client didn't think [Chuckles] wasn't, didn't think you were lookin' after their interest like you should.

SW: Yeah, okay.

JM: Sometimes what you, you know, you'd be lax and you'd be off on the weekend or whatever and someplace, and then have a good [report?] people in the field, the landowners, and here come an independent in and he'd buy just a little bit right in the middle of your block and you'd sit there and wait for the company, for you to get through putting it together. And then wait for the company to come to him and say, "We'd like to buy your, the lease that you [own?] in our block." [Chuckles] And so-

SW: It's right in the middle.

JM: That's right. And I, you know, you could probably make 10 times what you paid for it. And uh, givin' override and a royalty interest, you know, if they made a well. You could have a really nice income if [they drilled a well?].

SW: Speaking of dealing with the people, how was that? Did you have to deal with a lot of people who spoke French or maybe suspicious of oil companies?

JM: Uh-

SW: [Were they like that?]?

JM: Well, first question dealing with French. Uh, they, there was quite a few people, landowners, that uh, the elder landowners at that time, say in the ear-, or the late '60s, early '70s and even on into '80s some, some of the older French [herited?] land-, landowners did not speak English. And somebody, you know, a lot of times their uh, their, a son or a daughter or somebody that could speak, come and be an interpreter. And as time would go by uh, as I worked I had a lot of, a number of brokers that spoke French and spoke it very fluently. So uh, when we got into an area like that, well then I, I'd send somebody out that could speak French.

SW: And use that as an advantage to-

JM: Well, you could uh, you know, a lot of times I just, I couldn't, when I was, before I had people working for me and trying to talk [Inaudible]. And I had to go find somebody who could interpret what I was saying, somebody in the family or a neighbor, whoever. Because I, they couldn't, they could probably stand, probably understand more English than I could French. And so it just uh... it made it much easier and they felt much more comfortable with



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somebody speaking French. But [when it's so?], most of the time uh, with your larger landowners or the land on it's been leased over a period of time or if they had production other places where they owned land, uh, they would always go through an attorney. And uh, and then to make sure that what I was telling them was how they understood it, so the attorney would then, so often the attorney would get into the trade on their side, which he wasn't supposed to do [Inaudible].

SW: [Inaudible]. [Both chuckle]

JM: And uh, so uh, that helped quite a bit. About having the attorney, assuring them that I was, what I was telling them was true not a bunch a lies. 'Cause some of them had been lied before. [Chuckles] [Inaudible]-

SW: That was my next question, was there any mistrust and dishonest-

JM: Uh, yes, yes. There was some mistrust in different areas. It kind of depended a lot on some brokers that was there before. They had put blocks together and then they were drilled or either they, the leases were dropped for nonpayment of rental or they expired [Inaudible] [greater of the?] five years, whatever the term of the lease was. And some brokers would [or?] the client would say, "Well go out there and offer this guy 50, go out there and see what you can get for 25 dollars." Well he'd go out and get maybe 15, 20, 25 percent at 25 dollars. The ones who, you know, the brokers that would, I mean, excuse me the landowners that wanted to, wanted to get some activity, some drilling in there, well they would [go ahead and say?], "Okay, I'll take, you know, 25 dollars an acre." [Well some would get three of four thousand dollars?]. But then there'd be the ones that uh, that say, "No, I'm not gonna lease. I won't lease for less than 35 dollars an acre." And so the oil company says, "Okay, go out and get 35 dollars an acre." Well they go back out and start payin' people 35, well the ones getting 25, as you can imagine, 's upset. But, you know, they were in and out and gone, they couldn't care less. And then if they got too, uh, too many got to complain, they just sent a new broker in and he'd be taking somebody else's name, his own name. Uh, would be the lease in his name, which he would eventually assign to the client. Uh, and, then sometimes the price would, you know, they get everything they could, 35, then they got up to 50, then you go up to 75 or whatever to get their block put together. And the landowners would, some of 'em would, you know, "You come back talk to me later. Come back and talk." Well after they leased everybody they were sitting in the middle, says, "Hey, I want 50 do-, I want 100 dollars an acre." So it was kind of worked on both sides. So you had to use strategy to try to get ev-, try to get a price that was, that you could probably get it all. And get 100 percent leased. So uh, that meant the clients that had, go out and lease for 25 and then say, "You can't, you're not gonna get 25." You'd have to tell 'em why. And say, you're gonna get part of it and you [Inaudible] gettin' the rest of it. And you gonna have some mad landowners and if you have any title flaws out there you're not gonna get any help from the landowner, because it uh, you didn't [deal fairly with 'em?]. And uh, so I was kind of in between. I was tryin' to get the landowner to, you know, where he was not gonna get bent out of shape and I wanted the client to get the block together to drill the well. Well in my time it was a pretty strong fight because [especially/take your?] geologist, they're not traders, they're not negotiators. They were scientists. And so they [think?] so we go out and offer 'em, you know, this. And you need this guy right here that has a 1,000 acres will take 25 dollars an acre? Twenty-five thousand dollars." And I said [Chuckles] "He wants 50 dol-, he wants 50,000." "Well that's just [unreal?]." And I said, "Well, maybe if you'll go out and look at all those combines that he's got out behind his house and, you know, some of those combines are worth, you now, 50,000 or 100,000," at that time. I said, "Maybe you'll understand why. He's not dirt poor." [Chuckles] And, so then the, but it always was kind of a struggle to get the oil companies, particularly if you had any experienced personnel in the oil companies. Say you had one landman that graduated from Oklahoma in land management or land, petroleum management degree and had no field experience. And so, you know, he was, he didn't know how to negotiate particularly with people. So.

SW: There's stories I've heard about the unscrupulous oil companies always pullin' a trick over on the landowners, that's only part of the story, right? [Chuckles]

JM: Well, the landowners [sure?] they had their own trick-, own set of tricks. Uh, and the oil companies, you know, they want to get it as cheap as the can. 'Cause the cheaper they get it, well then the more money they have to spend

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on other lease [plans?]. And uh, so, and then there was people in companies that wanna look good and say, "[Inaudible] everybody else had to pay 50 dollars, we got ours for 25 dollars an acre." Or somethin' to that affect. And uh, but that's just human nature.

SW: Right, right.

JM: But anyway, then we put the block together. And uh, then they say, "Okay, we're gonna drill on this particular tract here. We need to get this tract. And the tracts arou-, and touching it," I mean, you know, [they would say?] a block maybe 200 acres or so within the block. "Let's abstract that." Make sure that there's not any title flaws, there's not some unleased interest out there that uh, someone, somebody didn't tell us about a brother or sister that was in the family uh, the black sheep of the family, nobody want to talk about. [Chuckling] You know. And, so we would, you know, go back and run the records and uh, and then take that uh, the recorded history that was in the courthouse, to an attorney. And he goes through [and because of the?] mineral law, it's a very unusual mineral law. And uh, then he would [Inaudible] title [payment?]. And most of 'em had, ended up in any number of title they called it [Inaudible]. And so it required that you get [an heirship?] statement from so and so, because it's his uh, needed the [Inaudible], the property's [Inaudible] transferred to the deceased. And uh, and, or either he died and needed to get the affidavits of [death and heirship?] because it, he died and he was not married, and so then all of that, his interest went to, you know, the siblings.

SW: You guys have to find all of this out?

JM: Yeah, we had to, well, at least we had to we'd do that. The attorney would have say, "We want a death and heirship on such and such." "We want this or that," or he described what he wanted and you had, [we had?] contact with other people in the field or [he wanted?] the leases old oil and gas leases. So there was no way that those were in effect. So we would contact the oil and gas companies as to, to get them to sign the release and we'd pull the record that they, the lease is null and void, that they had released it. And uh, from then, then they made a well. And we would, they'd probably want a pipeline rightaway out of there. See and that's the other part of the strategy of tryin' to get everybody but uh, not have everybody mad because you paid different prices in your block. And uh, 'cause you go back to try to get a pipeline rightaway out of there to pipe your product out of there. Well then they're just waiting for you, because it's gonna cost you 10 times of what it would ordinarily cost. And some of 'em wouldn't sign at all. [Chuckles] And so you'd have to figure out a way to do, to get out of there some kind of way. You know there's a lot of uh, a lot of things that you had to do and you had to keep [faith?] with the, your client that you, but you [Inaudible] you had to keep faith with the landowners. And uh-

SW: You were the middle the guy, the negotiator.

JM: Well yeah, we had to, we had to pull everything together. And you're dealing with people and so you've got to know how to deal with people and a lot of times you have to do a quick [read?] of people. And you have to size 'em up very quickly: are they tellin' you the truth? Or are they gonna be somebody that will tell you anything you want to hear and then go ahead and say, "Yeah, well go ahead and I'll meet you next week, I've got to go out of town," whatever and let you go ahead and start leasing. And then they're gonna lease the price that they said they'd lease for? The things for various reason have changed [Chuckling] whatever's changed. And you get all kind of excuses, you couldn't [Chuckling] [Inaudible]. But uh-

SW: They wanted to go do their research after you left, huh? [JM chuckles] And then-

JM: Well they just wanted to be the last one with their lease.

SW: Oh, okay. They put you off.



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JM: Yeah. Yeah. And so uh, be the last one to lease, but they had somethin' to bargain with. And uh... [Inaudible] doin' the lease check. And uh, and when you're tryin' to get to the information, the correct information to say to your client, "Well this uh, the guy, everybody else was agreeable on the price," and I don't remember the exact price, say 50 dollars an acre. And they, they, yeah, and then you say, "If I can get you this, will you uh, will you lease for that?" And they said, "Yeah, yeah, I'll lease to that. If you get that, I'll go along if everybody else go." And then uh, then I got one guy and I don't know he, I don't know if he woke up in a bad mood that morning or what. [Chuckles] Anyway, he says, "Ah man, I won't lease for less than 100 dollars an acre." And I said, "Well," I said, "I'll, I'll go ahead and I'll," I said, "That's kind of out of our range." And he said, "Well that's what it's gonna take young man." [Chuckling] And I, "Well, tell you what, so that I won't have to come out and spend any more time out here, I'm gonna put that and you won't lease nothin' but 200 dollars an acre." Said, "I'm fixin' to go on vacation, I want to get out here as quick as I can, so this oughta just blow the whole thing right out of the water. I mean, they gonna, like I say, I got five other areas I got to go check." He said, "Now, wait, wait a minute. Now I, I didn't say 200 dollars, now, [Inaudible] 100 dollars." He said, "Well now I think that we, we could come up with that sum." And I said, "Well the only, the only thing that, if everybody agreement on 50 dollars an acre, I think I can, you know, I can uh, submit that and they may, may want to do that. But, like I say, I got these other areas and they may even sell their's maybe be even cheaper to me," I said. So anyway, he followed me all the way out to my car. [Chuckles] And says, "Now, now look I didn't tell you that 100 dollars an acre." [Chuckles] So, it, it, you know, everybody, they have their tricks, I have mine.

SW: Cat and mouse.

JM: [Chuckling] Yeah.

SW: What ended up happening? Did you-

JM: Uh, I submit it and they uh, [put us?] in another area. I mean, they, we bought another for the company. I did have several other areas I could check on. And I, this was not a, as good a prospect apparently as the other ones that we, the other ones that I bought up.

SW: It's a good story. What kind of hours did you work when you were out on the job?

JM: [Sighing] Well uh-

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JM: When I was in field uh, this was in the '60s and '70s, so you still had a lot of landowners that would uh, you know, rice farming and out in the field and uh, or they worked at home, you know, during the day for whatever reason. Uh, so, you know, get up and the hours would be uh, all early in the morning. Um, I'd leave around seven o'clock or so and uh, sometimes go by the courthouse first and maybe check some records and then go out in the field. Or make some telephone calls uh, from the courthouse to see if they're at home, "Can I come out to see ya?" And this type of thing. And then uh, a lot of times if I was buying a lease, then uh, well let me back up. I'd go to the courthouse first and I'd do the recording checking. And so I'd spend, the courthouse didn't open 'til like eight o'clock in the morning and then it close at five. And so you work from eight to five and you may have to drive now two hours home unless you would spend the night, which most of the time if it was less than two hours you drive home, if it was more than two hours you maybe stay in motel. Then when I started leasing, then would be um, there in my office. So there in the Oil Center. Well, I had a little one room office and so I would type up those leases and in some cases get 'em all ready [Inaudible] some of 'em say, "Yeah, I'll lease over the telephone." And say [I'm leasing that point?]. "So yeah, come on out, fix up the papers, come on out." So I'd type up that and sometimes I'd have to type at their house, and I had a portable typewriter. And uh, so the hours were uh, in the leasing stage, a lot of times wouldn't go out in field 'til maybe after lunch or in the afternoons, trying to catch people comin' home and I'd catch 'em at night, and this type of thing.

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SW: Weekends, too, as well?

JM: Weekends. Um, and then when I got to thinking about all this, "Well, maybe there's a better way to do this. Now if I, if I get, if I can get the clients and we get enough work, then I can hire people to go out and do that for me. And they can work on the weekends and I can uh, you know, stay in the office and telephone and-"

SW: Do eight to five.

JM: Play golf on the weekends.

SW: There you go. [Both laugh]

JM: And uh, when is it uh, it turned out within uh, I built an organization where I had somebody that was kind of the operations manager for lack of a better word. Somebody that would [run the brokers?], somebody to tell them, says, "Okay, you're workin' on this project here," and [Inaudible] the leases and I had somebody in the office that would process the leases and correct 'em for uh, for, you know, review 'em for correctness and [Inaudible]. And uh, and then compile it and do a lot of the paperwork there in the office. And then my job basically would, you know, I was in the office quite a bit, but I spent a lot of time in Houston and Dallas and uh, Tulsa, New Orleans, wherever I could find uh, visit potential clients. And so my uh, my main responsibility is to keep the business coming in, keep the oilers comin' in and buying [all this stuff?]. It's kind of like a sausage machine, you put in meat in this end and sausage comes out this end, so you just have to keep feeding it and then uh, [one of those things?] when the machine stops, that's when you thinkin', "Wow, the world's comin' to an end." 'Cause uh, you [lose?] all your brokers, well then, uh, then you really start uh, the money stops comin' in. There's no one to invoice.

SW: So you're dealing with an industry that goes up and down, so you must've experienced that uh, a couple of times.

JM: Very much so. That was always, not a couple of times. [SW laughs] It was damn near yearly. One uh, one year it would be uh, that the oil prospects were very popular. And that's what the companies, they were looking for oil. And then the next year it would be the gas, 'cause there'd be kind of a shortage of gas and the price of gas would be goin' up, so then they'd start trying to find the uh, basically gas uh, you know, fields, uh, prospects. And then the next year it would be somethin' different, so the [and the deals?] they way they were [traded?] were all uh, there were different way to trades [these fields?]. That kept changing. [Inaudible] innovative way of uh, putting the deal together and selling it. The independents would [sell?]. Then the companies would put 'em together and they could get partners. 'Cause they didn't want go out and spend two million dollars on a well, well they'd put it together and get kind of a [carried?] interested, maybe 25 percent carried interest. Well what they had in it and then the others get two or three other partners and they would [partake?] and pay 100 percent uh, toward the cost. And they'd only get uh, they'd only get uh, uh, what would be uh, 25 percent less, 25, 20 percent. So they, they'd, they'd pay 100 percent of the cost, for 20 percent of the uh... I don't know if I'm makin' this clear. Uh, [Inaudible] would have uh... partners with, the other three partners would [share inc?], one partner 25 percent interest. But [they'd never?] pay 100 percent interest.

SW: So that's kind of how you guys weathered the down times.

JM: Well, a-, that's where the independents, the brokers, if, if, if they were, if they were not, not a whole lot of drilling goin' on, then [just say?], you know, like if you're, if your clients had money and they were busy, well you were busy. In the bay down the street, that was, were a competitor of sorts and the [brokers were our customers?]. Uh, then his clients, were either bought out or they had drilled a bunch of dry holes, and so the, their company out of Houston said, "Hey, we're not, you're not gonna drill anymore in Louisiana." And so they, they're not busy, so it was always up and down. It was always one of these deals where, you just, you had to keep finding all the new people that kept coming in. 'Cause Louisiana was, is a small area compared to Texas and some of the other um, coastal [Inaudible]. But they, they, there's vast reserves which are very, very prolific. Whereas, at that time in, in, in like east Texas,

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central Texas where reserves were not that, were not that big and not that prolific. And so when we found production in Louisiana [Inaudible] it was Texas [production?].

SW: Okay. And that was even before the offshore industry came in.

JM: Uh hm, uh hm.

SW: [With that group of people?]. Because as a landman you don't deal with the offshore, you guys deal with the land.

JM: Uh, well, there's offshore landmen, because that's the, knowin' the regulations, but most of that it becomes political. Uh, there's [landmen companies certainly?] in Denver, or at Tulsa, at Houston. But, the, the MMS or the Mineral Management Services is in New Orleans. So when you have lease sales and they'd all come in and go to those lease sales. But if they have any work, research or anything, in, offshore, then usually somebody in New Orleans would handle that, but I've gone to the MMS to do research for a company and they said, "We want, find out this, this, and this," so I go down and, and, you know, do the research for a [Inaudible] report. So I drive down, you know, do that. But most of, most of 'em in New Orleans. We'll find somebody in New Orleans that they feel comfortable with. So, that they, I guess feel comfortable with [Inaudible] say that they could trust, but, most of the people are trustworthy. Like anything there's bad apples, every industry. [Pause]

SW: Um... at the time that you got into doin' all the land work and into the oil work, what, that was over in Texas, what kind of other opportunities did you have? Or, or was, was the oil industry the most, alluring to you or exciting in some way? Or?

JM: Well it, it had the excitement [Inaudible] you could become very wealthy. If you were uh, well at that time it didn't occur to me you had to be at the right place at the right time. And, it's kind of like the little cliché of being at the right place at the right time, and acting upon your opportunity. And then work like hell to see that things, you know, bares fruit. And I guess the, the story of uh... [Billy Brooks and Jim Flory?], you see, is probably the [of our era?], you see [Inaudible] [Audio goes out for 10 seconds] So what Lee Trevino said about the, the, the more I practice, the luckier I get. And so the harder they work, the luckier they got. [And they did an excellent job?].

SW: You make your own luck sometimes.

JM: That's right. [SW chuckles] That is exactly part.

SW: Luck plays a part of it. Let's um, let's shift gears for a second.

JM: Okay.

SW: You got here in Lafayette in 1962.

JM: Uh hm.

SW: Um... the rest of my questions tend to deal with uh, the City of Lafayette, the changes experienced directly from the oil industry. What, what did this town look like when you got here as opposed to what you see today?

JM: Uh, well [Chuckling] let's see, I mean-

SW: A big question-

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JM: Think back that far. [Chuckles] Uh, it was a, a little small town. And, it was very progressive I thought because, basically the Oil Center. And there was a lot of activity and a lot of it was uh, associated with the industry that I wanted to be in. And so that made it very attractive to me. [Inaudible]. The funny thing uh, when I moved over here, I like Houston, but I thought my opportunities would be greater over here. Than uh-

SW: In a city much smaller than Houston.

JM: Uh, right. But I would come over here and I could make my fortune over here and I could move back to Houston. And uh, but that, that didn't [Inaudible] long. [SW chuckles] I mean, I, I enjoyed uh, Lafayette where you could go across town in 10 minutes, whereas in Houston the traffic was beginning to be a problem. And commutin', not commuting, but uh, when I lived in Houston lived [Inaudible] east side of town. It was about a 30 minute drive to downtown. Traffic [Inaudible] downtown. And then when I got married I lived on the other side of town, on the west side, and it was very much the same. But uh, it was just a big city and we had a very small [Inaudible]. Because [Inaudible] in the east side of Houston [to go and visit with him?], I think he had [little?] [Inaudible]. But we had to [Inaudible] drive [Chuckles] an hour across town to visit with him, drive an hour back. So you could have a small group of friends. But Lafayette, you had a lot of and so, you know, [Inaudible] graduate from high school

[END OF TRANSCRIPT DUE TO POOR AUDIO]

[FROM INTERVIEWER'S SHORT INTERVIEW SUMMARY]

Lafayette: attractive to him because of the industry activity, which made the city seem progressive; small town feeling. Oil Center attracted many companies to Lafayette; this helped create jobs and grow the community. Cyclical nature of the business helped show the weakness of depending solely on oil for community's economy; had to diversify. Initially planned to return to Houston after making his fortune, but decided to stay in Lafayette and raise his family.

No regrets about working in the oil industry