

HHA # 00404
Interviewee: John Shaw
Interviewer: Dr. Robert Carriker
Interview Date: February 13, 2003
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
Interview Module & No.: MMS: RC004
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of "uhs" and "ums", repeated words, and the interviewer's backchanneling have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability.]

Ethnographic preface:

John Shaw is from Stanton, Illinois. He graduated from University of Illinois in 1949 and had a series of jobs in different parts of the country before moving to Louisiana in early 70s. He worked with a variety of companies, including Shell Oil, Exxon-Mobil, and Superior Oil. He also discusses Lafayette, changes in the oil industry, and the Lafayette oil industry in the 1980s.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [RC]

Interviewee initials: [JS]

RC: -ay is Thursday, February the thirteenth, 2003, and we're on the campus of UL Lafayette in Griffin Hall doing an interview with John Shaw. And the interviewee, excuse me, the interviewer is myself and that is Bob Carriker. I just needed to get that at the very beginning there. So I guess the best place to begin is where are you from?

JS: I'm from Illinois.

RC: Oh is that right?

JS: Yes.

RC: Okay. And where in Illinois?

JS: Place called Staunton, Illinois. It's in south central Illinois in the coal mining area.

RC: Oh okay, okay. And so when did you come to this area?

JS: Well I went up, graduated from University of Illinois in 1949 and I came to New Orleans in 1969 with Exxon. I worked in their offshore district division over there. And then in 1972 I transferred over to Lafayette with Exxon and have been here ever since.

RC: Okay. So what was the in between time? What took you from Illinois to New Orleans?

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JS: Well when I left Illinois I went up to California and worked for a geophysical company for about a year. Then I was recalled in the service for two years and went to work for Shell Oil in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and then was transferred to Rapid City, South Dakota, and Billings, Montana, and spent about seven years there. And then... J-, resigned from them and joined Carter Oil Company, which became Humble, which became Exxon, in Oklahoma for, in... 'til 1969.

RC: And so what were your jobs? What was the, your job progression?

JS: Well, let's see. With the seismic company I was called a computer. With Shell I had a title of stratigrapher.

RC: And what does a stratigrapher do?

JS: Well it, we more or less work with the samples from the well cuttings. Up in that part of the country you get a lot of well cuttings and you can log those and decipher those. Work back out, work the stratigraphy of an area out. Then when I joined Carter I was in exploration, an exploration geologist. And then when I came to New Orleans I was, went into the production department, became a production geologist.

RC: Okay. And what does a prog-, production geologist do?

JS: Well, essentially they work with, in and around fields where production has been established rather than exploration where you were doing wildcat work where you're a long way from [Inaudible]. Essentially the exploration geologist would find a field perhaps and then it would be turned over to the production department in the companies I worked in. They all may not work exactly that way.

RC: Okay. And then what do you actually do as a proj-, as a production geologist?

JS: Well you map fields, you plan and propose the... what's the word I want to use? The development of the field. It requires you going out on the wells, logging them when they are ready to log. [Slight pause]

RC: Okay. And so that was in New Orleans, right?

JS: Uh hm.

RC: And then you came to Lafayette in 1972?

JS: Uh hm.

RC: And what brought you to Lafayette?

JS: Uh, the, Exxon had the offshore division and they kind of split it into an eastern and a western district, I guess their title, I'm not for sure. But anyway I came over to be in the western section of it. Then there was a Texas section too, also.

RC: Alright. And so that was headquartered-

JS: Here in Lafayette.

RC: Here in Lafayette. Where was that?

JS: Office building you mean?

RC: Yeah.

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JS: When I came here we were on Calico Boulevard, back, I'm not sure who's office is there now, it's, backs up against the Hilton Hotel.

RC: Okay. So, but not in the Oil Center?

JS: No, it wasn't, well, not the Oil Center per se.

RC: Right, I mean, the Oil Center generally, but not specifically.

JS: Right, uh huh.

RC: And did you have the same position then when you came to Lafayette?

JS: Yes.

RC: Okay. And when did you retire?

JS: Well, I resigned from Exxon in nineteen seventy... eight and joined The Superior Oil Company. And worked onshore and offshore there. And then in '85 Mobil bought out Superior and I worked for a couple more years then I retired.

RC: Okay. So you saw a lot of changes I imagine then in the offshore industry.

JS: Yeah, quite a few.

RC: Yeah. [Both chuckle] Um, what would you say was the most dramatic change in that industry? [Pause]

JS: I suppose the further out we went, you know, over the years. Stepping out further and further into the Gulf.

RC: Yeah. What was it like workin' out there? I mean, it, it's something I've never experienced, so it's [hard?] for me to understand.

JS: It's... it's different, I mean it's, you know, you're, now, as a geologist you would go out perhaps for just a few days usually it would be at a maybe a logging point or looking for a logging point, we're doing the logging or somethin'. Other employees, you know, they were out there for, when we first started out, it was sort of seven, it's what they call "seven and seven," you worked seven days, you were off seven. I think now with overseas things and that, they extend those periods of time to some degree. But it was somethin' that, you know, you were confined on a small area and you, it was sort of a hectic pace, and then nothing to do, you know, hectic pace, and nothing to do sort of arrangement.

RC: So how would you get out to the rigs?

JS: You either, you just take a helicopter. And, or a crew boat or, well you hardly ever took a work boat out, but you could go on a work boat, too. Usually a crew boat or a helicopter.

RC: Okay. And what difference, I mean, what would determine whether it was a crew boat or a helicopter that you'd take to get out there?

JS: Probably the need for you to be there and availability of the craft.

RC: Okay. So did it, did... I understand that mostly now they use helicopters.

RC: But there must have been a transition period in there?

JS: Yeah, yeah, well, I think now, you know as I said, they're goin' further and further out there, you know. That was probably the big thing was to, it would take you so long on a crew boat to get out there now. I think even crews probably change out with helicopters now, I'm not real sure about that. Some of them probably say, "Yeah, wish we did."

RC: [Chuckling] Yeah right.

JS: 'Cause those boats ride were kind of long at times. I remember we were out, and I retired, let's see it would have been... better than 15 years ago or something, and to be out there and it seemed like no matter how far out you went in the Gulf you look south and you could still lights on another operation further south.

RC: Oh is that right?

JS: And someone joked and said eventually the Mexicans would be coming north and we'd, it would be continually all the way to Mexico. [RC chuckles]

RC: So, I mean, what, how did the work that you do, did change over the years?

JS: Well uh, well one of the things I guess that changed more was the way you reported things. At first we kind of reported by phone and then we had, I don't remember exactly what it was called, it was sort of the precursor I guess to fax machines or somethin'. I remember it was a cylinder that you called on the phone and then you put the phone in a cradle and-

RC: Oh okay.

JS: And you, it transmitted information that way. It was pretty shaky in that, but it was that way. And then moved up, you know, and had better phone connections and... they, we weren't usin', at least I never used a computer operation to transmit, transfer information back and forth, but I'm sure they, there's somethin' to do like that now.

RC: So it, was it critical to get that information back to shore quickly?

JS: Well yeah, because your [Slight pause] well, what you might plan for your next operation, particularly if it was not su-, if it was something didn't turn out the way you thought it was gonna turn out. You had to make some change in your plan or somethin'. Usually you had to go through your headquarters to get a approval to do some of those things.

RC: What about the people workin' out there on the rigs? Any... funny stories, any interesting occurrences or events that come to mind?

JS: Oh I'm sure. I remember taking a picture of a drilling superintendent one time. We were doing something and he was lookin' down the hole and his glasses fell off into the hole. [RC chuckles] And there's a lot of fishing goes on out there. And so he got a fishing pole and hook on it. And he could see his glasses, they had, they'd lodged down there where he could get to 'em and he was tryin' to get it. And there's a operation called "fishing" in the oil business or something and I took a picture of that. And I said, "Well that's 'fishing' in the oilfield."

RC: Right. [Laughs]

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JS: And sometimes there'd be practical jokes played on people and that, but for the most part it was fairly serious, you know.

RC: Yeah. I mean like practical jokes and things, was it a light atmosphere or was it pretty serious atmosphere?

JS: Well, it was serious, but you tried to keep it somewhat light because you gonna be in close confines with several, you know, a few people for several days and that. A lot of card playin' goin' on. Dominos and things like that. They had television all the time I was ever goin' out, they always had television as a entertainment. And a lot of 'em fished and things like that, so.

RC: They were allowed to fish?

JS: Yeah. Food was really very good early on. It kind of deteriorated as time went on-

RC: Oh is that right?

JS: And how it is now I'm not real sure. It was really somethin', you know, I mean, you really ate well when you were offshore.

RC: Is that right? I mean what made it so good? I mean what-

JS: Well I think they were tryin' to keep the moral and just keep everybody happy, you know.

RC: Yeah. So was it what they call "comfort food" or was it gourmet food?

JS: Well, just good cooking, yeah.

RC: Yeah, okay.

JS: One of the, I talked to one of the cooks one day and he told me that, I had complimented him on his meal and he said, well he said, "When I first came out here," said, "almost lost my job the first week." And I said, "Oh?" And he said he didn't fix rice very often. And one of the people said, on the rigs said, "Do you know how to fix rice?" And he said, "Oh yes, it's easy." Says, "We want it every meal." He said after that he could fix almost anything as long as he had rice it would satisfy them.

RC: And why is that, why did he have to have rice?

JS: [Inaudible] south Louisiana, Mississippi where the crews were coming from.

RC: Right, right. And where was he from? Do you recall?

JS: Oh I, I don't remember.

RC: But not from this region?

JS: Well I think he probably was from Louisiana area, but I guess no one, you know, on the menu had had said, you know, rice or something, that was just a given, you know, that you made rice everyday. And so the other stuff was listed on the menu deal.

RC: So would they eat the fish on the rigs that they would catch?

JS: Sometimes, sometimes, uh hm.

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RC: Then the cooks take those and make meals out of 'em?

JS: Yeah, well I don't know that it could feed the entire crew that was out there, 'cause sometime it got to be pretty high count, but, you know, he'd fix 'em for the fellas that caught 'em and that.

RC: Yeah. How many people are on a rig?

JS: Well-

RC: I mean I'm sure it varies, but.

JS: Yeah, under standard operations you got, you know, you're workin' 24 hours a day so you've got a, when something particularly, in addition to that running casing, logging operations, thing like that, I think one time I remember livin' on a board and thinkin' that that seemed like a lot, I think there was like 64 people on board at one time or somethin'.

RC: Oh, back to the food. I'm always interested in food. [Chuckles]

JS: Yeah, we all are. [Chuckles]

RC: Uh, you said that it kind of deteriorated in quality over time, why do you think that would happen?

JS: I think the uh, as offshore operations became... more and more common I'd guess I'd say, more and more rigs started workin' [out there?], I think that... economy just kind of dictated that you just couldn't do all you could when it was in earlier times.

RC: Yeah. You think there was any residual effect from the food in terms of if people were gettin' especially good food out on the rigs that they brought any of that desire or that need back home with them? [Slight pause]

JS: I don't know if I understand exactly, you mean they would, say you know they ate better out-, offshore than at home or something?

RC: Right and so they expected somethin' different back home?

JS: I don't know, I surely don't wanna say, you know, that the wives and, as good as the people out there.

RC: [Chuckling] Right.

JS: But I think, you know, there were different rigs that had reputations of having better facilities, better food, and things like that, would be more attractive to work on. Those rigs that you could.

RC: Yeah. So that was one of the calling cards kind of I suppose.

JS: Uh hm. It was one of the perks to attract people.

RC: Uh hm. Uh hm. And what about, I, you were in a different area of work than a lot of the people out there on the rigs who would stay seven and seven, for example. I mean, how did they... what was the interaction between somebody from your end of the business and their end of the business? I mean, everybody just did their work or was there a delineation of jobs out there?

JS: Well everybody was pretty much assigned and had their duties to perform. And I never saw any... favoritism toward one thing or another. [Slight pause] I don't know if I'm answering what your asking here-

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RC: Well, I mean, was there any, was there a hierarchy? [Pause]

JS: Probably if you were, what they considered a professional person, a geologist, an engineer, the drilling superintendent who was the platform supervisor, and things like that, had maybe a separate room or something.

RC: So would you stay in the same, how were the accommodations? I mean, were they rooms with bunks-

JS: Sometimes, depending on how many were out there you did sleep in sort of bunkhouse area. Or most of the times there would be an extra bed in the drilling superintendents room or something, you'd stay in there with him. There, I never was on a, in a operation where they had a room set aside for me, say.

RC: Uh hm. But you were kind of an extra person who would show up.

JS: Right. Right.

RC: At, as an as needed basis.

JS: Right, uh hm.

RC: Okay. What about, you worked for a couple of different companies. What was the, like Exxon, and then where did you go after Exxon?

JS: Superior.

RC: Superior, which became Mobil right.

JS: Mobil. Which now is Exxon-Mobil. [Both chuckling] Since [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

RC: [Chuckling] Come all the way back around, right.

JS: And it's sort of interesting, I worked for Exxon for, Ex-, through Carter, Humble, and Exxon for 21 years, and then resigned and went to work for Superior. And Superior by Mobil, then Exxon bought out Mobil, which now entitles me to go to the Exxon retirement.

RC: Oh, okay.

JS: [Chuckling] Arrangements. [RC chuckles] So it's kind of went all the way around in a circle.

RC: And what were the differences working, say, in New Orleans as opposed to working here in Lafayette?

JS: Well, I personally enjoyed a smaller place and so Lafayette was to me much more desirable than New Orleans. But as far as work goes, it was very similar. I can remember some occasions in New Orleans where when I was telling you about the thing that was kind of the precursor to the fax machine or something, you know. You'd get a call maybe two, three in the morning or something and have to go down to the office to what we say "catch it." Get it, look at it, and examine it. It always sort of surprised me and amazed me that there seemed to be as many people on the street in New Orleans at two in the morning as there were two in the afternoon. It was like it was the night culture and the day culture over there. [Both chuckling] There was always a crowd on the streets there, it's always. [Slight pause]

RC: But not here in Lafayette.

JS: Oh yeah, I don't see that in Lafayette.

JS: No.

RC: And what about the reception here in Lafayette of the oil business? Have any-

JS: Well, personally, I mean I've lived, well I've liked everywhere I lived, but Lafayette I think is probably the most friendly place I've ever lived.

RC: How so?

JS: Oh just people that, well, you're really not a native here probably ever if you didn't, weren't born here. [But?]-

RC: [Inaudible]-

JS: You know, the people accept ya and I just really felt very comfortable here, I liked it very much.

RC: I mean a lot of people came into this region from other places because of the oil industry.

JS: Right.

RC: And so one of the things that is kind of intriguing is learning about how those people were either accepted or some of the hurdles that they had to overcome coming to this unique culture down here. Did you encounter any of those hurdles?

JS: No, not that I considered anything. We were always involved with churches and schools and things like that where you were thrown in with the people, you know. Just like almost any place else except I don't speak, didn't speak French, I still can't speak French. And talk about various things, I remember one time was stepping into a drafting room. And the draftsmen were all speaking in English, when I stepped in it all changed to French. [Chuckles]

RC: Oh.

JS: [Chuckling] And so I didn't know what they were talking about.

RC: And why was that?

JS: I don't know. [Both laugh] Probably somethin' they didn't want me to know about.

RC: And where did that happen?

JS: That was in Exxon.

RC: In Exxon. So in New Orleans or here?

JS: Here, here in Lafayette. Yeah, I don't remember people speaking much French in the offices particularly in New Orleans, but quite frequently over here.

RC: So was that a way of kind of separating a person out if they didn't speak French?

JS: Possibly. I don't think it was... really severe or anything, I mean it just, it might have been some personal thing they were talkin' about, just felt that it wasn't your business, which it probably wasn't. [Chuckles]

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RC: What about out on the rigs and the language?

JS: There again there was French spoken, but it, all communications was normally in English, I mean, you know, they all had to be able to speak English.

RC: Yeah.

JS: Be able to take orders and follow through on what they were told to do, asked to do.

RC: So you came to Lafayette just, during the boom years, what they call, right?

JS: It was really pretty boomy, yeah. [Both chuckle]

RC: And how did you see the impact of that boom in this area?

JS: Well it certainly had a booming economy, I mean, you know, it was... I remember when I went to work for Superior. There was a clamor to hire people. And we were bringin' people in and I said one day, "When you bring these young people out of college," I said, "instead of bringin' 'em through the front door, why don't we bring 'em through the parking lot?" Because our parking lot was full of sports cars, all kinds of cars, and I said they'd see that, they'd say, "Hey" [Chuckling] "these people here are doin' pretty well."

RC: [Chuckling] Right. And so people were spendin' their money.

JS: Oh yeah, I think so.

RC: Yeah. What other manifestations of that boom were apparent? [Pause]

JS: Well I guess the period of time I was here Lafayette grew considerably. And it grew I'm sure because the oil industry, several of my friends with Carter came to Lafayette in... I'm gonna say the mid '60s or so. And several of 'em purchased homes in what they call the Broadmore area. And they said at that time [Clears throat] excuse me, that was sort of out in the country. One of 'em was tellin' me that Blackham Coliseum was about the edge of town when he moved out there.

RC: Is that right?

JS: And you can see how much bigger it is now than, I know that, you know, they've, we've talked, comments have been made about the diversification of the economy here in Lafayette, but it's still pretty heavily oil-oriented, I'm sure. I think a lot of the growth was, and it seems to me always is Lafayette was ideal offshore place to take off from, you know.

RC: Why?

JS: Well, your transportation was fairly good here, you had good facilities around here, and-

RC: Like what sort of transportation?

JS: Well you could get to the Gulf very easily. You had Petroleum Helicopters here, which was one of the big movers, you know. Some companies, when I was with Exxon they had their own helicopter deal, was out of Grand Isle. And... you had to drive down either early in the morning or late some night to go out in the mornings. Get held up a lot of times with the fog and with sugarcane, burning fields and things. And it just seemed like, and there again goes back to my own personal desire to live in a smaller place, I just thought that this was the ideal place and I hated

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to see it kind of start losing companies and that, you know. And consolidating the companies in New Orleans, and Houston, and various places.

RC: So the helicopters, Exxon initially had their own, you said, out of Grand Isle.

JS: Uh hm.

RC: Did they maintain that or they eventually go with contracting that out?

JS: I'm not really sure. The arrangement they had then, I believe, was... I believe they had the helicopters and they had contract fliers from some place.

RC: Okay. [Slight pause]

JS: I think that's the way they operated.

RC: What else in Lafayette in terms of the boom years, did you, how did you see this area change? Was the change rapid?

JS: Well I think... well... I mean, I guess that's relative, I'm not sure, I'd say it was relative. Uh, one thing, you know, there was sort of shift from the Oil Center to the surrounding areas. Superior built an office down Ambassador Caffery, Exxon moved, although we said they weren't in the Oil Center per se, they moved over into I think it's called Corporate Square, the big building there I think. Marathon then went in there after they left and probably had a small office there. Chevron was on [Calico?] Boulevard at the time Exxon was down at the end of the street and their-

RC: And what time period are we talking?

JS: This... well let's see. [Pause] Exxon built their building after I left, so that would've been... maybe '80, somethin' like that. Superior built their building in '80, '81, '82, somewhere along in there I think. Chevron moved out over across to the mall and are still there. So companies started shifting sort of out of the Oil C-, the majors seemed to be moving out of the Oil Center and the independents more or less taken the space up in the Oil Center.

RC: Why were they movin' out of the Oil Center?

JS: I don't know if they were just having bigger staffs and office space wasn't available. I, 'cause I remember in Superior building there I think we had something like 600 people at one time. And Superior's office, when I first went to work for 'em, was... I don't know what the name of the building was but it was pretty much in the Oil Center, near the post office there in the Oil Center. I think it's now Whitney Bank or some bank building. But I think, that was a case where they just were growing and just didn't have room for all the employees.

RC: Right.

JS: In fact at that time they had people in different buildings, which is not usually a very good set up.

RC: So that allowed them to consolidate their operations. [Pause] Huh. [Chuckles] That's interesting. Um... and when did that all change? [Pause]

JS: The movement of those-

RC: Right.

JS: Into those buildings like that? I think that was probably mostly in the early '80s.

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RC: I mean when, um, so they moved there in the early '80s and then when did the bust come?

JS: Bust, oh... probably around '86, somethin' like that. Bubble kind of broke. Things started goin' downhill pretty quick.

RC: And then what sort of changes?

JS: Well then you saw companies downsizing, transferring people, 'course I think probably the only, don't know if it's a u-, another one moved, Union, Cal, moved sort of. They were in the Oil Center, they moved out just down the street from Superior there. They're in a building now that Tenneco was in. Tenneco kind of dissolved. They were bought out by some other company in seven-, and that, a lot of that goin' on too. One company was buying out another company. [Slight pause] Then movement to, it's always kind of seemed like the oil industry is either expanding to small offices in a lot of places or concentrating small offices into a central place or something. Seemed to be very cyclic. And at that time they were just consol-, concentrating a lot of their operations. But after Mobil bought Superior, Mobil then closed the office here and most of the people went to either New Orleans or to Houston. [Slight pause] I think Union or Cal, most of their people here, but much later, went to Houston.

RC: When did they close these offices down? This is the last-

JS: Superior closed their office I believe... well I left in '87, that's about the time they closed their office here. Union-Cal, I think is still here, but much smaller. Conoco's still here, but much smaller. Chevron merged with Texaco and I think they're still pretty good size office. See who else was here? Philips has a fairly good, well Philips I think is still here, but not near the s-, none of 'em are the size they used to be.

RC: When the bust came, what sort of changes did you see, you know, in the city of Lafayette? With the people living in Lafayette?

JS: Well I don't know so much in the city. People, there was, you know, some really sad situations where people... partic-, particularly people, you know, in their mid to late 50s or somethin', were losin' their jobs, which made it very difficult for them to catch on with somebody else. A lot of 'em went into consulting and unfortunately a lot of the consulting business depends on how good the majors were goin'. And so it was a tough, tough period of time. A lot of people, younger people just startin' out, you know, bought, mortgaged houses, families, cars, and that. Lost their homes. A lot of marriages kind of dissolved because of that I think. Just was kind of a sad time.

RC: Well how did you weather the bust?

JS: Well, age-wise I was [Chuckling] I guess in the ideal situation. I was ready to retire anyway. And so it worked out fairly well for me.

RC: 'Cause you just retired during that-

JS: I retired from Superior in '87 and then I went, I worked for them as a consultant for about a year finishin' up some work, goin' over to Houston once a month for about a week. At the end what I was doing was we were selling properties that economically weren't really that good for us, but would work out well for a smaller company that didn't have the overhead we had. And so I don't hear much about that goin', I'm sure it's still goin' on now, but we just sold an awful lot of properties and things. All the majors were doin' that at that time.

RC: And, so tell me more about why Lafayette is, was the hub for a lot of these offshore oil companies. You mentioned the transportation.

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JS: Well you had Petroleum Helicopters here, you had Air Logistics I think in New Iberia at that time, still down there, uh, wasn't so far to get down to the water operations that you could get out on the water, you had places that fabricated stuff around here, had a lot of... oil industry already established here, service companies. I think when I came in '72 and, I think someone told me there were over 700 companies in and around the Oil Center that were either almost directly involved with the oil industry, and if not directly, very indirectly. Almost all of 'em tied into it or somethin'. And you had a lot of experienced people in this area that, that they liked this area, didn't really wanna move to other places like that. Now a lot of your crews can live in one place and work almost anywhere. For instance, you can live here and work in Africa. Just a matter of gettin' ya there. But. [Pause]

RC: So when you retired in '87 you decided to stay here in Lafayette?

JS: Yeah, well [Chuckles] I think when you retire you always kind of think well you'll move someplace else, but we had friends here and we'd been, this is the longest, I've moved around so much, that this was the longest we'd ever lived anywhere. And just, it, like I say, it's a very friendly place. It's a nice place to live.

RC: Yeah. I was just interested because you've, you have lived so many other places.

JS: I think... my thought was, I think when you're young you kind of think of places to retire to. You say, "Oh, I'd like to live in Colorado, in the mountains," or, "I'd like to live someplace." As you get older I think you realize that place is not as important as people are. And uh, I remember when I was in New Orleans with Exxon questions came up, not that we were ready to retire at that time, but just, you know, where were you thinkin' about retiring. And I said somethin' about, "Well I'd like to get someplace on the water." And somebody looked at me and said, "Well you're in the perfect place then aren't you, right here." And I said, "Well, I really meant water that was running, you know, like streams" [Both chuckling] "not swamps." But now...

RC: There's water and then there's water. [Chuckles]

JS: Yeah, right. [Chuckles]

RC: So you're pretty happy with the way that, the whole, the industry treated you and-

JS: Oh yeah. I had a good life. I'm not, I don't consider myself a rich man, but I certainly live comfortably most of the time. And didn't, I moved around a lot early on in my career, but toward the end, like I said, I was here for 30-somethin' years I guess. Was a good place to raise your family. I have a son that works for a service company here that supplies housing facilities and tanks and it's on a temporary basis operations. Not just in the oil business, but primarily in the oil business. I have a daughter that's married to a young man who's, was in Texas City in the refinery for several years and then switched over into environmental end of British Petroleum. I don't think they call themselves that anymore. Not before Petroleum, but they, BP stands, but we all think of it as British Petroleum.

RC: Right. It's hard to keep up sometimes.

JS: Officially I think that is, but there's another name for it. So they've had a good life 'til now and I assume they will continue to [Both chuckling] as long as there's automobiles running.

RC: I don't think that's gonna change any time soon.

JS: Yeah, the other, one of the other things that I hadn't thought of in Lafayette, you know, it's a university town. There's a lot of things that the university adds to people's lives that, if they wanna take advantage of it. And we took quite a bit of advantage things here. And, had one daughter graduated from here, one went to school for a couple years here and then she married. So it worked out well.

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RC: Yeah. And you think then that other people that you know feel the same way about this area and-

JS: Most everybody I know, I can't really think of anybody that said, "Oh, I don't wanna stay here," or somethin'. Now in New Orleans you'd hear that quite frequently that, "I don't wanna stay here. When I get a chance to get away." But-

RC: But did you have a lot of friends and associates then who weren't, who had come here from other places?

JS: [Hesitates] Yeah. Quite a few, you kind of cross paths back and forth. Found somebody the other day who I, my mind is beginning to kind of slip a lot and so I can't remember if I worked with that guy at Shell or [Chuckling] with Exxon.

RC: Yeah, I understand.

JS: If I can think back at what town we were in I can then maybe relate to what, who I worked for at that place and then. Uh...

RC: So why did you make the switch from Exxon to Superior?

JS: It just was a opportunity to advance. My wife was from Missouri and not familiar with the oil industry and not, I'd oft time comes home and say, "So and so resigned today and went to work for another company," or something. Her thoughts were, "Well, why is that? He just couldn't make it or somethin'?" And I said, "No," I said, "it's just advantages come and different little set of circumstances and he'll change jobs." Now she grew up where her dad worked for the same company, well my dad too, but I said, "It's just part of the industry." I mean, movin' up. One of the things I was on a committee to find a minister for our church. And we interviewed several and one of the young fellas I thought, you know, be able to get him, and he finally said, no, he didn't wanna come here. And I said, "Well," said, "We've interviewed quite a few, what, why are you turning us down or what are we doing that's not right?" You know, "Why are we not being successful?" And he said, "Well, I don't know about all the others, but," he says, "for me," he says, "the transitory nature of your church is just, it kind of bothers me." And he said, "I grew up in a town where the old, the people were there when I was born are still in that church." And I said, "Well, that's part of the oil business is that people are always movin', they're gettin' promoted, they're offices are closing, this, that, and the other." So I said, "Hardly any congregation, there'll be a few, but I mean a congregation just doesn't stay stable, it's just constantly moving." And he said, "Well that just," kind of bothered him. And I said [Chuckling] "Well, I can't do much about that. Can't guarantee you that." But I think that is, you know, and you keep in touch with a lot of 'em, you know, we visit 'em.

RC: So what were the differences that you saw in, between Exxon and Superior?

JS: Oh, Superior was a smaller company and, there again, smaller, seemed to be more flexible. And they were both good companies, I mean, there nothin' wrong with either one of 'em. I, and I left Shell, it was because, not that I wasn't happy in that, but we'd had a death in the family and my wife wanted to get back to the Midwest and we tried to transfer and [Clears throat] I had been with 'em long enough to be that specialized or that hot shot to demand a job there. And so we just decided we'd change jobs and get back. That's when I then came to Ardmore, Oklahoma with Carter.

RC: Okay. Yeah, so I me-

JS: But it, all of my work has been, I can't complain about any of 'em, they've all been great.

RC: And so initially you moved around quite a bit and you changed companies, but-

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JS: When I was with Shell, and I've had two wives, both of 'em have died of cancer. My first wife with Shell, back in those days you moved on your own. Nowadays you, and I assume it's still that way today, they pay for your moves. But she had some curtains and she said, "I can't stand to move again." Because she would take those curtains and put another ruffle on 'em if they weren't long enough or [Chuckling] cut it off it was shorter. [RC chuckles] And she said, "We've moved so many times, I've cut those curtains so many times." I said, "Well," I said, "one of these days we'll settle down maybe." [Both chuckle]

RC: Get a permanent set of curtains. [Chuckles] That's funny. Uh, but those, initially when you were, you moved from company to company a little bit more, that, did that have more to do with moving up and promotions?

JS: Usually it was a, well I thought it was a step up. Like I say, with Che-, leaving Shell was more a personal, the tragedy of her w-, her mother was killed in an accident and she wanted to get back in the Midwest so that she could be near her father. After that it was kind of a move up, well then when Mobil took over, well that was just... wasn't much you could do about that [Chuckling] you know, I mean.

RC: Right. So what did your father do?

JS: My father was a mining engineer in the coal fields in Illinois.

RC: Okay. So you had mining background.

JS: Yeah, pretty much. And his father had been a general manager for a mining company out in Washington State and in Missouri also, so. And then had uncles who were mining engineers, so it kind of fell in line I guess.

RC: Yeah. Right. And what did you study at, it was the University of Indiana is that right?

JS: No, Illinois.

RC: It was Illinois.

JS: But I went, I... when I got out of high school went in the Coast Guard. But I was not in but not quite a year. And so when I got out I went, I tried to enroll at Illinois, 'cause that's where we lived, and you couldn't get in if you didn't have housing. There were so many veterans comin' back at the time. This was right after World War Two. And so I went down, my father and most my uncles had gone to Missouri School of Mining in Rolla, Missouri. And so I applied down there and got in down there, and I spent a year there and then I was able to transfer up to Illinois. And then the last year I was at Illinois I needed eight hours to graduate and I didn't, that was at the end of the spring semester and I thought, "I'd like to get out of here if I could." But I'd taken all the courses that they offered that summer. So I went out to Colorado School of Mines and picked up eight hours out there and transferred 'em back and graduated from there.

RC: Okay. An interesting road [Chuckling] to graduation.

JS: Well someone asked me one time how many hours did I lose transferrin' around. I said, "I didn't ever lose an hour." They said, "That's almost impossible today to do that." And I said, "Well if I'd lost an hour, I probably wouldn't have transferred." [Both chuckle]

RC: They made it easier you on because-

JS: Yeah.

RC: Because whoever you were talking to is right, today that would not be the case.

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JS: Yeah, yeah. I know I people [when they go back?] say, "Oh I gotta pick up, I lost five hours on movin' from one to the other."

RC: Right. [Slight pause] Okay, well I'm gonna turn this off right now.

JS: Okay.

[END OF RECORDING]

