

HHA # 00312
Interviewee: Roy Montgomery
Interviewer: Dr. Robert Carriker
Interview Date: February 27, 2003
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
Interview Module & No.: MMS: RCO05
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee speaks softly and is hard to hear at some points.]

Ethnographic preface:

Mr. Montgomery was born in 1920 in Lafayette, Louisiana. His father died when he was four years old. He attended Lafayette High School and then went to the University of Southwestern Louisiana from 1940 until 1941. In 1941, when his brother went into the service, he took his place as a rod man for City Service Oil Company. By 1942 he had been promoted to driller and volunteered for the Army Air Corps to serve in World War Two. When he returned from Europe in 1945, he went to work for Lane-Wells Perforating Company, where he started out cleaning and loading perforating equipment and moved up to helper and truck driver. In 1949, he went to work for Spartan, which was almost immediately bought out by its competitor Halliburton, which fired him. He came back to Lafayette, looking for a job and hoping to get out of the oil industry. After taking care of his invalid mother for awhile, he went to work for Citcon in Lake Charles. He retired in 1985 or 1986.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [RC]

Interviewee initials: [RM]

RC: Here uh, it is-

RM: Because [I'll talkin' a lot?], I'll put these hearing aids on. And my wife says I whisper, I whisperin'?

RC: No.

RM: I can take 'em off.

RC: No, you're doin' fine. You're doin' fine. Let me uh, talk to the camera here for a second and get, get what I need to get squared away. It is February the twenty-seventh, 2003. We're on the campus of UL Lafayette in Griffin Hall. And we are doing an interview with Roy Montgomery. And I am Bob Carriker. So, I just needed to set that up for us. Okay, now don't worry about this at all. It's just gonna run and do its job. Uh, so I guess the best place for us to start for me then, you know, get some background is uh, to understand where you're from initially.

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RM: I'm from Lafayette.

RC: You are from-

RM: Born and raised.

RC: Is that right.

RM: I was born and raised on East Vermillion Street. 'Bout three blocks down from [Don's Seafood?] Restaurant.

RC: Yeah, right, right downtown.

RM: Yeah. On Garden and Vermillion.

RC: Alright. And were, your family is from where? Your parents were from Lafayette? [Slight pause] Montgomery isn't a name-

RM: Montgomery, the Montgomery School.

RC: Oh, sure.

RM: Was donated to the school board by my aunt and my cou-, two cousins. They [had property and they through some property to the other uh, for the school?].

RC: Oh, that's S. J. Montgomery?

RM: Yeah. That's all that property back in school and all that up to Eras Landry Road. That was Montgomery property. And as far as I know buy couple of oil companies. They invested carefully. It went up to their property that [Inaudible]. And back there, when they divided property, they, that little road, farm road, it divided the property up to the road, end of the road, you know, [Inaudible] Road. On the other side. The middle part of the road was never, never divided.

RC: Oh!

RM: So I'm gettin' a royalty from one of the oil companies.

RC: Oh is that right?

RM: On account of McDermott had some interest in the property. That's oh, several hundred people I think that's involved in the interest.

RC: Sure, sure.

RM: So my royalty is 'bout 12 dollars. [Both laugh]

RC: So what, is um, 12 dollars a month or a year?

RM: A year.

RC: A year, alright. So once a year you get to go out to lunch. [Both laugh] Well what, what, what year were you born here in Lafayette?

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RM: Nineteen twenty.

RC: Nineteen twenty, okay.

RM: And my daddy died when I was four years old, 1924. My mother died in '61. On the same day.

RC: Really?

RM: [Twenty-seventh/Seventh?].

RC: Unbelievable coincidences, huh? I mean-

RM: But uh, uh, I went, after high school, came to USL for about a year and a half. [A year in the summer?].

RC: And when, when, when did you come here?

RM: Huh?

RC: When was that that you would've come-

RM: Nineteen forty.

RC: In 1940, '41.

RM: Then after '41, after the summer of '41, I went to work with City Service Oil Company. I was on seismograph-

RC: Okay, and that's "City Service Oil Company"?

RM: Yeah. My brother was workin' for 'em and he left to go to the service. And they needed somebody, so he said, "Well I have a brother." They said, "Bring him over." So they gave me the job, you know. I was a rod man, as a surveyor. You know, holdin' up the rods?

RC: Oh, okay.

RM: And tyin' the flags on the fence and everything. And uh, that was my job. And then I became, [when I'm through?], I, they needed somebody else and I had a friend of mine, [Lewis Donovan?], I got him and he took my place on seismo-, uh, surveying. And I went to drilling. I was a helper on the driller. And I did that for awhile and then I became a, a driller. The two drillers that was on vacation, I drilled while they was on vacation. Then right after that I went into the service. So I worked about a year, maybe a little over a year at uh, seismograph. Then I went in the service.

RC: Okay, so what year did you go into the service then?

RM: Uh, 1942.

RC: Forty-two, alright. So why did you decide to uh, stop goin' to school and go into the oil business?

RM: Well, just because I had this job on seismograph. And uh, I decide, well, I'll keep on workin' and uh, then I knew I'd be goin' into the service. I just decided, well, I'll just keep on workin' 'til I decided to go in the service. So I volunteered to go in the service. And uh, that's, well that's what they did. When I came out of the service, I went to work for Lane-Wells in Lake Charles.

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RC: Who was that?

RM: Lane-Wells Perforating Company.

RC: "Lane-Wells"?

RM: Yeah.

RC: Perforating Company?

RM: Yeah. It's not longer, you know, Dressler bought the company out. Dressler Food Company.

RC: Oh, okay.

RM: They bought a lot of service companies.

RC: Alright. So what year was that then that you came back to the industry after?

RM: What?

RC: What year was that that you came back to the industry after you had been-

RM: In the service?

RC: In the service.

RM: In '45. I was over in England for the Air Force over there. I came back home. We was comin' back to go to South Pacific and while we's on the ocean, that's when the war ended in Japan.

RC: Oh, so you were on your way.

RM: They, they sent us-

RC: To the Pacific.

RM: To South Dakota, North Dakota.

RC: After the war was over?

RM: And uh, to be uh, released from service. So that's when I came back and went to work for City Service Seis-, um, went to work for Lane-Well Perforating.

RC: Okay. And that was in Lake Charles?

RM: We perforate and gamma ray wells.

RC: Now what did they do?

RM: Gamma ray.

RC: What does that mean?

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RM: They take pictures of sand and all that. [Electrical?], the ele-, [this graphic deal?].

RC: Alright. And, and what did you do?

RM: Oh, I was uh, when I first started workin', I was loadin' the boats. It was little [clup?] deal, about this big around, 'bout that deep. They put powder in it and it was charged up with electricity. It was put in a big round cylinder gun. And uh, they could make it up from say eight feet to 16 [Inaudible]. And that was with the bullets. And uh, after that I became a helper.

RC: Wh-, what-

RM: On the truck.

RC: Tell me, so you load these bullets and then what do they do with that?

RM: Well, they put 'em in the, this cartridge, they put it in this gun. Lot of holes and cartridges screw into those things. And the barrel has a little brass cap, to cap it, to seal it. Keep the water and stuff out. And [Inaudible] gun down the hole with a wireline. And we just uh, well, it normally would find the bottom of the well to check it. And then you'd pull up to the zone, let the water shoot it, sand. And when they uh, when you got up to the right sand, then you'd fire your gun. You had so many shots per. So, in other words, we'd have to lower and raise the gun to a, this, you'd shoot your gun from bottom up. There might be, might be uh, 20 holes or, or could be eight. All depends on the height of the sand. How many holes they wanted in the pipe. And so-

RC: And, and, and why were they doing that? What, what was the point?

RM: To release oil from the sands.

RC: Oh, okay.

RM: See at first they'd gamma ray. When they drilled the well, you know, set the pipe. Then they'd go in and how they'd locate e-, each pipe has a, has a joint. And it has a collar to it. And the gun uh, perforatin' gun, we'd put at the bottom of, bottom of the gun, at the nose, we'd put some wires, like this. When you [brought that?] down, then you'd go below a collar. When you'd raise up, the wires [Inaudible] the collar, then it would register on the meter, weight meter. So you knew there was a collar. So took the measurement there. Then you dropped it down, all the way down. Then when they finished locatin' the collars, the depth, then you'd break the wires off. You just go into a collar and just pull the bars it breaks. They'd break off the gun. Then you'd come up and then you'd, it'd shoot in the zone that's they want it to shoot in. The gamma ray part was done before the shootin'.

RC: Alright.

RM: They did the gamma ray and they located the sands that they wanted. And then the ones that they wanted, that's where they wanted to shoot. And you'd go back with the gun and uh, well, go back with the gun and shoot the sand that they wanted.

RC: Okay. I'm trying to understand. So what I don't understand is it seems that you would be shooting the gun off in the pipe?

RM: Yeah. It's, see, they called it the casing. 'Bout uh, uh, eight-inch casing. [Pause] When they drilled the well. Drill the well, then they set the casing.

RC: But doesn't that explosion then break the pipe?

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RM: No. No. It's just bullets that's goin' through.

RC: Goin' through-

RM: It's like shootin' a gun.

RC: Okay.

RM: It's just like shootin' a gun.

RC: And where are the bullets going?

RM: It goes through the casing.

RC: Through the casing?

RM: And then the cement [borders?].

RC: Okay. And then into the sand?

RM: See they seamed the, when they put the casing in, they seam that around the casing. Well, further down they, at the top they seam that [so far?] around the casing.

RC: But once you shoot that bullet through the-

RM: Goes into the sand.

RC: But you shoot it through the casing and doesn't that compromise the casing?

RM: No. There's not that many holes. There's a hole here and a hole there. So it doesn't damage, it doesn't damage the casing a lot. It just opens a hole for the oil to come through.

RC: Okay. Okay.

RM: So you shoot the bullet, it goes into the sand. That's what it, it goes through the casing pipe. Goes through it. And then that gives uh, oil in the sand a chance to come in. And that's how they, they produce wells.

RC: And so the oil in the sand is only coming in through a hole about how big?

RM: Oh, 'bout this big.

RC: That's all?

RM: There's, there's different, different types.

RC: Sure.

RM: There's different types.

RC: But it's much smaller than a person would expect.

RM: Well, in a way it is. But uh, the pressure down there is really.

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RC: Yeah. Okay, okay. Well that makes sense. So it's quite a charge then that's shooting that bullet.

RM: Then actually Halliburton would come in and put a plug in. And then they could pull pressure [Inaudible], suck it up. Some of 'em was pressurized, some of 'em they got to suck it up. Put a pump in there and pump it up.

RC: Okay. Okay. I, no one has ever explained the process to me that way, so this is making more sense to me.

RM: Good. It's, it's just what, it's perforatin' a zone through the casing. Casing is set and you'd perforate through a footage so [Inaudible]. And into the sand that they want. Some sands are harder. They two feet, some of 'em could be 16 or 18 feet. Whatever sand you're goin' into, you don't know what the depth is. That's why the gamma ray. You use a gamma ray to figure out how many feet of s-, of sand they have.

RC: Once the hole is shot through the casing, is there any need ever to plug those holes up?

RM: That they plug it up? You mean, sand and stuff?

RC: No, no no. I mean, that it would be plugged up from the inside? Any reason to-

RM: Oh, to close the hole?

RC: To close the hole, right.

RM: They can do it with cement.

RC: Okay. And they would do that?

RM: And then they drill the cement [Inaudible]. I'm not positive about that, 'cause I never got into that part.

RC: Okay.

RM: Now my brother-in-law worked for Halliburton and he was a cementer at one time. He was also a Halliburton tester. Test plugs and stuff.

RC: I see.

RM: Uh, that's a altogether a different uh [Pause]

RC: Right, different end.

RM: See Halliburton cements the casing. They use cement to pump down into the, to the wells. Seal the casing.

RC: Okay. [Pause] Okay. So, so you came back and you were working at, and what was the name of the, the job that you had? What was your-

RM: Well, uh, uh, Lane-Wells.

RC: Lane-Wells.

RM: I was working and I was loadin', cleaning and loading the equipment.

RC: The equipment, okay.

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RM: And after I worked there for a little while and puttin' it on the truck as a helper. And then from the helper, I went to operatin' the trucks.

RC: Okay, what, what truck?

RM: Well, we had, at Lake Charles there was two trucks. Big Mack truck and a Ford truck, Busta. And uh, I was operatin' with the Ford truck, [oil truck?]. Uh, it was [Pause] um, we had a big spool of wire and its, inside the wire was electrical. It goes like to make the head connect to the gun. And inside this head, they had a controller, which when you pressed the trigger, number one would shoot. Press again, number two would shoot. In other words, it went around. And pick numbers that you wanted to shoot. That controlled bullets. The bullets would come [Inaudible].

RC: So this whole apparatus was set up on a truck and you'd drive the truck out to the site?

RM: Big old spool of wire. And uh, the wire had a, at the end of wire, they had, had salted or welded some [rays?], some little spots. Which, where you took measurements from and stuff like that. But uh, I worked there for, with Lane-Wells '45 to uh... Nineteen f-, e-, 'bout '49 and a half. And then uh, I went to work for Spartan. And it didn't last long because my brother-in-law at the time was in charge of Louisiana and Mississippi [this, this?] cementin' and all this. And he was in plugs and stuff. And the people that started Spartan was Halliburton [Inaudible]. And my brother-in-law was very friendly with the three of 'em that started it. And they talked him into leavin' Halliburton and goin' to work for them. Made him district for Louisiana and Mississippi. Um, Spartan started givin' Halliburton a lot of competition. So Halliburton bought Spartan out. And everybody that worked, that had worked for Halliburton uh, or associated with Ha-, Halliburton, they let go. They fired. They fired me too, 'cause I was related to my brother-in-law. Um. Then I went back, came back to Lafayette, got fired and I went, came back to Lafayette. And I stayed in Lafayette for about, I was lookin' for a job, but they, at that time, they didn't have any jobs that I could do around Lafayette.

RC: When, when you say you came back to Lafayette, where, what year are we talkin' about here?

RM: That was 'bout... oh, 'bout '49.

RC: 'Bout '49. And what type of job were you lookin' for?

RM: Well I was lookin' for anything that I could, that I could do. Uh, 'course I didn't have a college degree in any particular thing. I was just lookin' for a job. And-

RC: And so, I mean, when you say, "lookin' for a job," you mean in the oil industry or a-, anything?

RM: No, I tried to get out of it.

RC: Oh.

RM: I was lookin' for somethin' else.

RC: Uh, why were you tryin' to get out of it?

RM: Well, most of it was 24-hour call.

RC: Was what?

RM: Twenty-four hours.

RC: Oh.

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RM: You're on call 24 hours. In other words, they called you anytime, yeah. So I wanted to get away from that. But uh, then mother had arthritis real bad. And I was single, so I wasn't too interested in really gettin' a job at the time. I was helpin' her, 'cause she was invalid. And my brother, she got better after they started givin' her cortisone shots when they first came out. She got better. And my brother in Lake Charles, the one that worked on the seismograph crew, was workin' for Citcon, which was City Service. Citcon was City Service and Continental Oil Company. They formed this partnership to build this [lube and wax?] lab.

RC: In Lake Charles?

RM: In Lake Charles. Which they called Citcon. And uh, anyway, he called and told me there was an opening in the lab. So I went down and they said, "Tell him, tell him apply first." I went down, they hired me. I worked in the lab from then until, for 33 years.

RC: Oh okay. And that, that was ba-, back to La-, Lake Charles, then?

RM: Yeah. Back to Lake Charles. I would drive, on the weekends I'd come to Lafayette or when my, my days off, 'cause some, when I first started, I'd shift work. And on my days off, I'd come to Lafayette. And I'd drive back to Lake Charles. And I did that for, for a time. I had a partner over in uh, Lake Charles. And I didn't want to buy a house. I didn't figure I wanted to stay in Lake Charles. [Laughs]

RC: Why?

RM: [Chuckling] I didn't like Lake Charles [so much?].

RC: No?

RM: Lake Charles at that time was blue collar, Lafayette was white collar. [Pause] Lake Charles was oil [business?]. Lafayette had more or less higher payin' jobs. Qualified more [Inaudible] collar jobs and stuff. And uh, at that time, the only thing with skills, the railroad and SLI. There was only two things that kept Lafayette [goin'/collar?]. They did have wholesales, they had quite a few wholesales which they distributed all around. But that was Lafayette had at that time. They didn't have oil, they didn't have Oil Center at that time, either. See. So really nice little small town at that time. We walked all over time.

RC: Is that right?

RM: We had a date, we'd walk our dates to the high school to the dance. Walk 'em to the show from SLI. Walk downtown to the show. Walk 'em back. We didn't have cars. We had, I'll think back uh, we had, a friend of mine lived right across the street from us, he had [Inaudible] Ford, a little rumble seat. And [Pause] that's, we started usin' that. And uh, we went to Bunkie one time we, several of the boys, SLI [was from?] Bunkie, we started runnin' around with 'em. And, at that time, Bunkie had the Blue Moon Club, which was a big club. And they got big name orchestras. And one of the boys that we ran around with, his daddy owned it. So we'd go to the club. And I got to know quite a few people in Bunkie. And my brother-in-law, we've had some bad tires [Chuckles] take it up the garage and change the wheels to his, to his car, company car. They changed it, the wheels and tires, and put 'em on our little Ford. So we had, we had some brand new tires on the [Inaudible]. [Both laughing] We went all, all over the country in that thing.

RC: Is that right?

RM: We went to Galveston, we went to New Orleans, every place else. We'd [fit?] four or five on that [Inaudible], 'bout three couples. I'd sit in the [roll?] rumble seat and the others would sit on each others [lap?] when we drivin'. [Both laugh] All over, all over the place.

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RC: But that was unique to have a car?

RM: Yeah. But that's more or less my experience in the oil business.

RC: So I, I'd like to get to Lafayette, but before we do that, um, when you went, when you returned to Lake Charles to work in the lab, what did you do in the lab?

RM: Well, tested. At first, I'm sorry, I take that back. I was uh, pickin' up samples.

RC: Samples of what?

RM: Oil and wax. I'd go around to units and pick up samples. Pick up-

RC: When you say "to units," you mean?

RM: Well the units big old [Slight pause] units that the, make the wax or oil. One unit had big old like wax, it had big old like [freezers?] on this. They distract, extract the wax from the oil. [Inaudible] Wax would be hard to come out. And that big old thing, big scrapers, they'd scrape the wax off, off these scrapers. The oil would go the other way. So then they'd haul in the wax.

RC: And, and what was the wax for?

RM: The wax was made into several grades. It was like the oil. The oil was extracted from the crude oil. The crude oil went into one of the units, it was separated, and we'd separated say the oil and wax. Then it went to certain units to be refined into grades, [Inaudible] grades.

RC: Okay. And, but what is the wax used for once it's refined?

RM: All kind of thing. [Medicine?]. Use for candles, use for Crayolas.

RC: Oh-

RM: Made for tents, sealing tents. Uh, there's several grades of the wax.

RC: I see.

RM: There's really white wax, that was more or less brown or yellowish wax. It was heavy. And that was used, the heavy stuff was used for like uh, sealing tents, canvas, stuff like water proofin' you could say. And then white wax, most of it they had uh... it was used for all kind of things. Uh. They, there was also, I don't know, just you could name several things which-

RC: Wh-, whatever is wax.

RM: Yeah.

RC: That-

RM: What needed wax.

RC: I see.

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RM: Uh, they re-, just like the oil, they made like a less [ten-weight?] oil. They'd rerun it through the unit. It was very refined. They use that medically.

RC: Oh.

RM: So a lot of things. Uh, very refined like, like machine oil, you know. It's somethin' like that. It was real clear. Doesn't have anything in it, so it's, it's raw. It's thinned down to ten-weight oil.

RC: What, do you know what they would use that for in medical profession? I'm just curious.

RM: Oh. [Pause] This, I can't think right offhand.

RC: Yeah, okay.

RM: There's a lot of things that they use this for. Dressing, for one. Stuff. Yeah, quite a few things.

RC: There's so many different uses for petroleum products that um, most of us are just really not aware of.

RM: That's right. Uh. Like, tell you another thing, uh, you think that when you go by Texaco or [Bilfor?] or what, that you gettin' their product. Sometimes you're not.

RC: No?

RM: Like New York Turnpike up there, that big road. City Service had the contract to supply the oil, gas up there. [Pause] So Gulf or whatever company's up there you go into their station, they think they're buyin' that, but they's, it was supplied by City Service.

RC: Oh really.

RM: City Service also had a contract with the U.S. government for aviation oil. They had the biggest contract. City Service was considered a small company, but it was a big company in a sense. It wasn't a major. Texaco, Gulf, Mag-, Magnolia, several others. All the major companies. City Service wasn't really a major, but it was, they had quite a few holds. Uh, [Mount Helium?], can't think of the other thing. City Service had that uh, can't think of, I can't think of 'em, but I'm gonna try and think of 'em.

RC: Okay, okay.

RM: But uh-

RC: Well what, let's see, you, you initially, when you came back to Lafayette in '49, you were trying to get out of the oil industry. But then it brought you back in. Was that difficult?

RM: Yeah. See, no, see when I came back, my brother-in-law got fired from Spartan. Started workin' for a company in Lake Char-, I mean, in Shreveport. Oil, oil service company. And [Pause] uh... Mobil and uh... Sh-... hm, can't think of the company. Anyway, it was two companies. I said, "If you go into business on your own, we'll give you all the business you need." So he opened up [Green's] Pressure Test. My nephew's runnin' it now. My brother-in-law died and my nephew was, started, was workin' for him. And uh, he took it over. And he did a good job with it. Uh, he enlarged it. My brother-in-law didn't want to enlarge it. Didn't want to go into several other things. And my br-, my nephew kept on sayin', "Why don't you go into that?" He didn't want to do it 'cause he didn't want this runnin' around like he was doin' with Halliburton. He wanted just a small outfit that he could handle. And that's what, but uh, he wanted me to go to work for him there. I said, "No." [Chuckles] That's when I was at Citcon. He said, "Why don't you

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leave them and finally come to work for me?" I said, "No way." He said, "I'll give you part of the, part of the company. I says, "Well [Inaudible] started the company with most of my tools." Come over to the house and I'd be [Inaudible] garage and take what he want. I'd come in, I was, "Now, what happened to all my tools?" [Inaudible] [Laughs] I'd go to his shop, I look at the tools hangin' up. He said, "Well you're not usin' 'em." [Both laugh] Anyway. That was most of my experience.

RC: Yeah. Well, did you eventually buy a place in, in Lake Charles?

RM: No.

RC: Is that right?

RM: Uh hm.

RC: So you always only had a, what, an apartment over there?

RM: Well I lived with, first I lived with one old lady, [elderly age?]. She used to do her own gardening. And she had a garage apartment in the back where her daughter lived. One winter steel steps, there was some ice on it, she climbed the steps, fell and broke her hip. From then on she just went down. She finally died. So I moved and moved in at another place where his lady had the parish [C?] store. And a big two-story house. She rented little apartments. So I moved in there with her. Then she finally died. So I moved into the, not too far down, on down the street, there was a little garage apartment that they just finished up. It had for rent sign, so I moved into it. My landlord said, "That's not my apartment, that's Roy's apartment." [Both laugh] I stayed there for 33 years. I paid, paid for the apartment.

RC: Right. [Both laugh]

RM: But I finally moved back to Lafayette.

RC: Now did you keep a place here in Lafayette during that time?

RM: No. Well, my sister, one of my younger sisters, was livin' with my mother [Inaudible].

RC: Here in Lafayette?

RM: Yeah, at the old house. Then when I uh, after I retired, I came to Lafayette and I was stayin' at the house. And uh, my mother died. And the rest of the family wanted to sell the house and all, you know, [how family's do that?]. So my younger sister and I said let's buy a house of our own. So we went bought a house in White Subdivision. It's over by the Four Corners [Inaudible]. And uh, we bought a house there. And uh [Pause] I stayed there for awhile.

RC: Wha-, what year was this that you bought the house there in the Four Corners?

RM: Nineteen sixty-one I think. [Pause] Sixty-one. I think it was '61. November of '61. And uh, then I left my sister with the house and I moved into Bayou Shadows Apartments. And uh, stayed there for awhile. I started datin' my wife, [Pamela, I was datin' her?]. And she was head of, or managed the Bayou, Bayou Apartments complex for [Country Harris?]. He had several places.

RC: Okay.

RM: And-

RC: So, let me just clarify the timeline. You're still working in Lake Charles at this point?

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RM: No.

RC: No-

RM: I retired.

RC: What, when did you retire?

RM: [Sighing] Oh. [Pause] Uh. Eighty... '85 or '86. [Pause]

RC: Okay. So '85 or '86.

RM: I believe. [Pause] I-

RC: Well, that's fine, I was just tryin' to get a, a general timeline.

RM: Uh, back in, back in that time somewhere.

RC: Okay. And, but I thought you said that you bought the house in Four Corners in '61? [Pause]

RM: Uh... yeah. [Pause] Well, let's see. That's right, that's, see, I wasn't retired then, I was still working.

RC: Okay.

RM: Um, like I said, my mind is-

RC: Yeah. [Laughing] I understand, I understand.

RM: I was still workin'. And I'd come in, we bought the house in '60, when I was still working. And I'd come in, when I'd come into Lafayette I'd go stay with my sister at the house. We did that for quite awhile, but after a long time, you know, it got to where we couldn't see eye-to-eye, so I moved into the apartments. And from there, a good while later, a while back, uh, when I was 70 years old, I married, I got married.

RC: Oh.

RM: For the first time. And I was, the lady that was runnin' Bayou Shadows. So uh, Country Harris lost his [Pause] property. Another company moved in and my wife didn't like the person that was gonna be over her. So she decided uh, guy had some apartments in Baton Rouge knew her and called her and says, "Come [Inaudible] for us." 'Cause they had three big complexes. Lower Bend Apartments is one, I don't know if you know anything about Baton Rouge.

RC: Uh uh, no.

RM: Well there's three. [Little?] Lake was another one. It was about three big apartments there, right off on 12. And uh, she worked there for three years. And like again, another company bought that particular company out and there was a lady that was gonna be over her. She would still be manager, but she was gonna be the district overseer. But she didn't like her attitude. Well, she says, I said, "Why don't you just quit and we'll get married." And so we got married.

RC: Wow. Interesting, interesting story.

RM: Oh yeah, well, [we were for?] 12 years. [RC laughs]

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RC: Quite a long courtship.

RM: Grandkids. I helped raise her grand-, two of the grandkids because the daddy was off workin' offshore at the time. And they were small. And [Chuckles] he was away most of the time. And I was with the kids more than, more than the family was. [RC chuckles] I bought the boy his first bike, two-wheel bike. I put, he wouldn't ride it, all the other little kids, little girl's smaller than him was ridin' that bike. And he wouldn't ride it. I think he fell, got scared. So I put training wheels on. He did pretty good for a couple weeks, I lowered, I raised the training wheels up a little bit. I noticed for a week he wouldn't ride. I said, "How come you're not ridin' your bike?" [Laughing] He said the wheels were [loose?]. [RC laughs] So I had to lower the wheels. Well, I lowered 'em for about another two weeks, I took 'em off. I said, "Now, either ride it or leave it."

RC: Right. And probably rode it, yeah. Hard for all of us to learn how to ride the bike.

RM: When he was in school, during summer he'd come stay with us. The idea was to get money from his grandma, get it from me. [Both laugh]

RC: It's always, [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

RM: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] go to the mall.

RC: Yeah.

RM: He loved the high price stuff. [Both laugh]

RC: Well, so, how have you seen Lafayette change then?

RM: Oh. When I was in high s-, like I said, we'd walk the whole town. We didn't have the cars. Family mighta had a car. Uh, usually there was one car in the family, you know. Mamma might take you to school or somewhere else, take two or three other kids to school. That's where, but we walked to school. I walked from the old house to Lafayette Senior High School.

RC: Where was that?

RM: Hm?

RC: Where was Lafayette Senior High at that time?

RM: It was on H-, Highway 90. Uh, that would be uh... University.

RC: Okay. [Pause]

RM: On, on the...

RC: The [Evangela?] Thruway?

RM: Uh, no. Uh. [Pause] Well, what's the, what's the street in front of [this lot?].

RC: That's University.

RM: Okay. It was on University. It's uh, oh, you know where Four Corners is?

RC: Yes.

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RM: Well it was between the University and Four Corners. It's on the left-hand side when you're goin' [Inaudible], left hand side.

RC: Oh, okay, I know, I kn-, it's a, it's a middle school now.

RM: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] comin' from Don's Seafood downtown, you zigzag by the school, Catholic school, it zigzag at the Boulevard. Run right into the school.

RC: Okay. [Pause] Yeah, I-

RM: And that was Highway 90.

RC: Oh, I see.

RM: [Inaudible] University [Inaudible] that whole Highway 90. [The old?] Spanish Trail.

RC: Alright. So, yeah, the streets have changed a little bit around here so it's hard to get our bearings.

RM: We walked from my house, like I was sayin', right there close to Don's Seafood. We'd cross the tracks, railroad tracks, and the swimming pool where the golf course is across the draft, city, city [Inaudible], a swimming pool was there. We'd walk there three times a day. [RC chuckles] Pool would open at six o'clock, we's there at six o'clock, and close at 11. We had to get out. At two o'clock it'd open again, 'til nine. I was there at two o'clock. I was there at nine o'clock when it closed. I stayed there.

RC: [Chuckling] Oh, a big swimmer, huh?

RM: Uh huh. At one time I was on the swimmin' team, but uh, it dissolved before we really did any competition. But uh, Rex Cullo-, McCulloch, he was the coach.

RC: Oh.

RM: Swim coach. [Pause]

RC: Any memories of him?

RM: Oh yeah. Knew the family real well. In fact, in Lafayette at that time, you might not have known the first names or last names or what, but you knew where they lived or you knew their names and you knew where they lived. Lafayette was small. You could walk almost all over town.

RC: And what seemed to be the, the driving economic force behind Lafayette?

RM: Well what really drove it up was oil business. What really brought it up was oil [Inaudible]. And Heymann opened up that Oil Center. That's, see at that time, the oil companies find a place in Lafayette because it's centrally located between [Inaudible]. Well, there was no place, so Heymann found out about it and Lake Charles, they wanted to open it up really in Lake Charles. But there was about three or four families in Lake Charles [Inaudible] didn't want no competition. So they didn't want any part of it. That's when Heymann said, "Well I'll move it, so I'll move it here." So that's how we got the Oil Center.

RC: So do you remember when that happened?

RM: Uh...

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RC: And how do pe-, how do people in Lake Charles feel about Lafayette goin' in-

RM: Well, at that time Lake Charles had their own airbase. But, then they had the [plants?]. So uh, they was pretty well s-, satisfied with what they had. And Lafayette at that time [was/had little?]. But wholesales and school and the railroad. When the railroad moved out, moved to [Inaudible], so that cut down. So Lafayette, especially when they had the old steam engines, steam [run?] engines, Lafayette was the main watering between Lafayette and, [Inaudible] between Houston and New Orleans. The trains, when I was growin' up, actually they had 'bout three or four passenger trains that came out, came through Lafayette all the time. Freight trains, several of 'em. They had, the railroad had what they call the "brown [Inaudible]." It was where they repaired the box cars and engines. It was, run up the track and have circle, half, half moon circle track. Do this. The building was in a horseshoe slots. So they'd put the box car up first, they'd put it in a slot to work on it. They put another in another slot [Inaudible]. They called that, they used to call it the brown [Inaudible]. Why, I don't know.

RC: Oh.

RM: But uh, that uh, the railroad was the biggest employer. [Inaudible] SLI was the biggest employer in Lafayette at the time. So when the oil business came, well, that's when everything started. People started moving in from Texas, every place else. And movin' in, 'course that's when Lafayette didn't have any housing. They started building houses. And houses got to where they was high, high priced. 'Cause they didn't have hardly and there was a big demand for it. Lot of oil companies bought that, houses, and moved people in. And that's how Lafayette grew. The way I see it.

RC: Sure.

RM: I believe when they started growin' everything else, wholesales and everything else, started enlarging. So.

RC: So what was it like with um, all these people coming in from different places?

RM: Well, a lot of people couldn't understand the food. [Chuckles]

RC: Is that right?

RM: And [Inaudible] and they all think, like Texas people, Texas is the number one, you know. There's people comin' from New Orleans, came from Shreveport, come from Arkansas, I know a lot of people that came from Arkansas, oil-related. And uh, they moved to Lafayette after they were down here a little while. You couldn't kick 'em out. [Chuckles] They, they liked it. And then hospitals started, they started improving on the hospitals. I'd say [Inaudible] and Lafayette [Journals?] would never have quit. [Built two things they built?].

RC: Why do you think they liked it so much?

RM: Oh, actually the Cajun people with their hospitality and their goodness, the other people just fell in and liked 'em. They then started doin' the same thing. Most of the people that moved in here, they was unfriendly.

RC: Oh you think so?

RM: Yeah. Yep they were. We was meet somebody and, "Hi, Hi bud, how you doing?" you know. And you'd tell that to some of the people that moved here, "Hi, good morning, how you doing?" They don't want to talk to you. So, so that's a little bit different [Inaudible] [manners?]. Lot, lot of the people that moved here from other places wouldn't move out of here.

RC: Yeah. So any other, any difficulties then in, in those people movin' in? You said they were kind of unfriendly. And-

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RM: Oh, they got friendly. You know, after they stayed a little while and realized that they, they started likin' it so, they blended in with the regular people here.

RC: Did you have any friends who lived here in Lafayette who had come from other places?

RM: Oh yeah.

RC: Any, any funny stories you recall about them?

RM: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] "Oh I don't like this, y'all don't have this and you don't have that. Give us time." When I was in Lake Charles I used to argue with people I worked with. Between Lafayette and Lake Charles. They said, "What you have in Lafayette?" I said, "Well, we got this and we got that. You don't have this in [Inaudible]." So Lake Charles built that civic center. "Y'all have a civic center." They used to call that the son-, that was later, [Sully's Sandbar?]. [Just closin' and fillin' in the lake to build a, the building?]. Uh, Lafayette, we've had the, what they call the [dome on the SLI uh?].

RC: Um, Blackman Coliseum?

RM: Blackman Coliseum. I said, "Y'all don't have a Blackman's Coliseum." [Chuckling] [They built, and then?] later on they built a dome. I said, "Y'all don't have a dome." [Both laugh] We, we'd all go back and forth about-

RC: Yeah. Any funny stories you recall about people uh, comin' here and how they had to change the way they ate? [Pause]

RM: No, not really.

RC: No.

RM: No. I [recall?] my wife, like I said, from south Texas, they never did eat rice. The only way they ate rice was in their pudding.

RC: Oh okay.

RM: As a dessert. They didn't eat rice. They didn't make brown gravy. They, they had white gravy. There's a difference. She came down here. [Pause] Uh, eatin' out, the seasoning of the food was too hot. Crawfish, she didn't know what crawfish was. [Both chuckle] "How can they eat those bug?" [Laughs] And stuff like that. That's the only thing-

RC: I can relate, because I come from, from somewhere else, also, but-

RM: [That seems like?], I don't know his name, but guy from the city came gave us a talk 'bout the computerized stuff.

RC: Oh, this was at your meeting the other day?

RM: Now he was from uh, he was from Oklahoma.

RC: Oh.

RM: He says, "I've been down here for now about 20 years," I think. He said, "Boy, you couldn't kick me out of this place, because I love the crawfish." He said, "When I first came here, 'Crawfish, what's y'all doin' with that stuff?'"

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Couldn't see why it we'd be eatin' stuff like that. He says, "Man, I started eatin' it," he said, "now when crawfish season's in," he says, "I buy crawfish just about all the time now." [Both chuckle] Like I said, it all depends.

RC: Yeah. What about uh, changes that you may have seen in the uh, religious development of Lafayette?

RM: Well, lot of the people that moved from Texas, let's say, or Shreveport [Pause] were mostly Baptist religions. Methodist maybe. Lot of 'em are Baptist [sort of thing?]. They moved here and uh, uh, Lafayette back then was most dominant the Catholics. We had a Baptist church and a Jewish church. Uh, Methodist church. But when people started movin' in, those churches started to [mount?]. The Jewish church was on Jackson Street and... can't think of the other street. Over there by the ci-, old city hall. Uh, anyway, uh, that was a little tiny building. And when we was kids, [Felix?] [Inaudible, struggling over the last name], [Hermanity?] and his brother and other kids around us, their house was right behind the church. And on summers when it was [Inaudible], we'd [Inaudible] every summer. We'd crawl up underneath that church [bangin' it with sticks?] and [Chuckles] the people come [Laughing] that was, that was our mischief you could say. We did that quite a few times until they finally got to where, put somebody out there to watch us. [Both laugh] But that, that was mainly like uh, on Halloween we'd make a, we'd go around somebody'd have a brand new bridge. [Bridge was over ditches. So bridges, they were boards, they had iron plates like fit in a hole in the sidewalk. So we would pick up a bridge put it another place where there was an old rickety bridge, we'd swap 'em. [Both laugh] Stuff like that kids don't do that now.

RC: No.

RM: Not, not our group, but a older group one block from us, put a buggy on top of a roof of a house.

RC: My gosh.

RM: [Chuckling] How they did it, I don't know. Next day everybody [Inaudible, laughing]. How, how they did it, I don't know. Eh, least they probably took it apart or something and put it up.

RC: Would take a lot of ingenuity.

RM: Well a buggy was not much, if you know what a buggy is. It's not hardly anything. You could pick it up. No, it's not heavy.

RC: Okay. Interesting.

RM: We did things like that, we'd swipe watermelons. We'd, we used to go swimming at Chargois Springs. It's over there by the airport. Right over Vermillion [Bayou]. Pond back there, it was fed by springs. It was Chargois property. And his brother was sheriff [Inaudible]. One day bunch of us, we was swimmin'. Takin' a short cut, we cut across the pasture, watermelon pasture. Somebody said, "Let's get some watermelons." Take a watermelon. Old man Chargois took his shot gun, bam! Shot in the air. [Laughs] We through our watermelons over the fence and [break?]. [Both laughing] Well he knew who we were. He, he knew, 'fact his grandchild was, was one of us.

RC: Who was that?

RM: Huh?

RC: Who was his grandchild?

RM: Uh, Paul Chargois, who died. But uh-

RC: I know J. C. Chargois.

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RM: J. C., oh, that's his brother. And, anyways, [A. J. Moss?], [Pat Duya?], Pat Duya later had a distributorship of slot machines and pump stuff. Well, they done put us in jail. So Pat Duya's daddy, well, he'll pay for all of us [Inaudible]. But I was deathly scared 'cause my oldest brother, my daddy died when I was four years old, so my oldest brother, much older than us, the one that's raised us, was strict. He was workin', that, that's in the Depression, he was transferred to Morgan City. And he'd come in on weekends. And we was, got so scared that he see that we was goin' to jail, man, we'd do anything. [Chuckles] And, well anyway, we didn't go to jail. That scared us, though.

RC: Oh I'll bet it did.

RM: That we decided no more sw-, watermelon swiping. [Chuckles]

RC: Uh-

RM: But that, that, at that time, that was the sort of thing we did a little mischief with my sister and her gang. [Clears throat] [Inaudible] [sleepin' at somebody's house?], actually it was at uh, F. B. King's house. Uh, at that time they had quite a big family.

RC: Who was that house?

RM: F. B. King.

RC: F. B. King?

RM: Yeah. His boy my age, we used to play football and stuff. Uh, he died. His brother was policeman. There were several family members. But anyway, he took off and pulled the fire alarm. [Chuckling] I tried to [Inaudible] 'bout ready to put them in jail, never found who he was. At that time they, you couldn't hardly do anything 'cause the town was so small, everybody knew you. If they didn't know your name, they knew what family [you were from?]. [Chuckles]

RC: Lafayette's changed a lot.

RM: Oh it changed a lot. [Pause] I'd hate to be [Inaudible] teenage kids. [Inaudible] 12 years old and up.

RC: It's not stealin' watermelons anymore.

RM: At my house kids smoke pot, I'd have to chase them out of the woods. We're right up against the woods. One of 'em, well, actually, 'couple of 'em was doctor's kids. Right across the street. I never did tell the doctor or anything else. But uh, I had to chase 'em out. They'd have about 19 kids.

RC: Things have changed.

RM: They shot my window out of my little shop with a pellet gun. And then two boys told their momma, said, "We didn't sh-, we didn't shoot Mister Montgomery's window out. Uh, we don't know who did it, we didn't do it." So their mother called me, says, "Roy, I'll send somebody over to repair the window." I said, "Forget about it. I'll repair it."

RC: Well, yeah, you never know what, what these kids are gonna do."

RM: They oldest boy, after they moved, after the doctor moved from us, he came by and says, "Mister Montgomery," he says, "I know who shot it. I found out who shot it for you." He says, "My sister's boyfriend." When I chased 'em out, they was all in a [group?]. I was mowing my yard then, [mowed/board?] up the uh, fixed, goin' to see where [Inaudible]. And I walked in the woods, got right up, back, I said, "If you boys and girls want to smoke, you go on your

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side of the woods." Boy, they took off like [Claps] like [Inaudible] Quail. [RC laughs] This boy that, that shoot, he was [Inaudible]. [Chuckling] Well I guess that's why he decided to shoot.

RC: Yeah, I'll bet. [Laughs]

RM: Next day I told my wife and what happened, I said, "Well, you can expect some eggs or somethin' on the house. There'll be something."

RC: So they got your window, huh? Listen, I'm gonna, I'm gonna turn this off right now.

RM: Okay.

[END OF RECORDING]

