

HHA # 00306
Interviewee: Jim Miller
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz
Interview Date: June 20, 2002
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW004
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's back channeling and repeated words have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee stutters a bit, but I have left most of that out of the transcript to make what he is saying more streamlined; he often speaks incomplete sentences. The interviewer often kept talking while the interviewee was answering his question. For the most part, this is inaudible and has not been transcribed.]

Ethnographic preface:

Jim Miller was born in 1937 in Iowa and grew up in Missouri. The two degrees he earned in geology at the University of Missouri were broken up by a summer working for the California Company in Colorado and a stint in the military with service in Korea. In 1963, he got a job with the California Company and moved to Lafayette. Over the next 36 years he moved between Lafayette and New Orleans several times, spending two years working in Angola, before he retired from Chevron in 1999. During his retirement, he continues to work part-time as a consultant for Sydboten and Associates. He describes how Chevron handled new hires and terminations during industry downturns. He also details how his two sons and his wife handled the family's moves between Lafayette and New Orleans. He expresses that he has no regrets for his career in the oil industry, and that Chevron was good for him and his family and that he was good for Chevron.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [JM]

SW: There we go. Interview with Mister Jim Miller, June twentieth, 2003, in the UL campus in the OCS office. Like I spoke to you guys at the Pioneer Club meeting and-

JM: Chevron retirees.

SW: Chevron. I'm thinkin' of the other one, I'm sorry. Let me uh, we're interviewing you guys on your personal experiences in this uh, I like to get a, I like to start off by getting a little bit of background. What year were you born?

JM: Nineteen thirty-seven.

SW: Thirty-seven. That's my father's generation. And are you originally from this area?

JM: No, I'm originally from Missouri, well, I was born in Iowa [Inaudible], but grew up in Missouri.

SW: Born and raised in thereabouts. How uh, how did you end up in the oilfield, did you get schooling?

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JM: Uh, yeah, I went through uh, to the University of Missouri and I uh, got two degrees in geology. I did a military stint between two degrees in geology. And uh, and then I uh, got a job with, yeah, with Chevron. Actually it was called the California Company at that time. And uh, and was assigned to Lafayette and so I started here in 1963 with the California Company, which was part of Standard Oil of California. Years later the name was changed to Chevron.

SW: So right out of school you got on with them and they transferred you here?

JM: Yes. Uh huh, yeah, I was uh, I interviewed you know with uh, well actually I uh, I had worked for them one summer after my undergraduate, when I got my undergraduate degree I worked in, one summer of 1959 with uh, I got a summer job with the California Company and I worked out at, worked out of Grand Junction, Colorado. That was probably the best job I ever had in the oil business. I was uh, worked, I did fieldwork and I was on uh, a full expense account which as a student you understood you could, imagine what full, how good a full expense account does when I traveled around northwest Colorado doing fieldwork. Work eight days in the field, come back for two days and draw strip logs and write it up and then be off for four days. And I uh, was finishing, do different things that are fun to do in northwest Colorado.

SW: Oh yeah, so you go out in the mountains and do all that kind of stuff.

JM: So I've been lookin' for a job like that [SW chuckles] good ever since. [Chuckles]

SW: If you hear of one let me know.

JM: Okay.

SW: I, I've heard of these expense accounts, but I don't know, I haven't any experience with 'em. [Both chuckle] I'd like to. Uh, so yeah, you did that and you did that for a summer.

JM: And, well, okay, I derailed you a little bit there.

SW: No, that's fine, that's okay.

JM: After I got back there I, my undergraduate had uh, part of my undergraduate degree I also got a, had an ROTC commission, so in, but I was uh, wasn't due to go on active duty until uh, March of 1960, so I went to school, went, came back after I did that summer job, I came back to graduate school for a semester and then I went in the uh, service. And, you know. Started out for two years and uh, but, and was, went through the basic course and then I spent 13 months in Korea and then I came back from Korea, I got married on the thirteenth of August of 1961, which happens to be the date that they put up the Berlin Wall. And so I got an involuntary extension in the military for that. [SW chuckles] But then I got out of the service the next, or uh, the next September and went back and finished my graduate work and by then it was 1963 and I got a job with uh, [Inaudible] interview Chevron or California Company. Got a job and they assigned me to Lafayette. So I came down, so moved to Lafayette.

SW: So this was your first assignment?

JM: So first assignment was in Lafayette.

SW: And you stayed here the whole time?

JM: No, I uh, actually I guess I was on Chevron's I-10 plan. We lived in Lafayette three times and New Orleans twice and uh, I worked for a little over two years in west Africa, but I commuted from Lafayette to west Africa to do that.

SW: That's when you were doing a month on and a month off, is that how they kind of did.

SW: They'd fly you out there.

JM: Yeah.

SW: Twenty-eight-

JM: An interesting job. They had somebody doing my job while I was off and then I, so that I can pick up and-

SW: Do theirs while they were off.

JM: Yeah.

SW: Okay. Now that's, where was that, in the west coast of Africa?

JM: Yeah. I was in Angola. And they were havin' us, they were involved in a civil war at the time, so, which made it-

SW: Oh, how, what was that like?

JM: Well, we, our compound got shelled one time when I was there, so.

SW: Wow.

JM: [Not good, it was dangerous?].

SW: Kind of dangerous?

JM: Yeah, yeah. We, uh, well we... it wasn't, I don't think it was as dangerous as it sounds to, at least to the ex-pats. It's awfully dangerous to the Angolans because they were killin' each other. But uh, our compound was on the coast, all our production was offshore, and lots of it. Uh, and uh... we lived in the compound, we did do some business in Luanda, which was the capital of Angola, but every place we'd go we'd fly and essentially never, except in the, you know, in the city limits of Luanda, essentially wouldn't, you'd almost never drive anyplace out there for, you know, for kidnapping or accidentally getting shot, whatever. And uh, it was, fortunately it was on-, in the interest of both uh, both sides fightin' the war to protect the oil business, because that was, whoever won, that's, that was their source of income and-

SW: So they let you guys be basically.

JM: Yeah. So we uh, ex-pats were reasonably safe, although there were some, there was, or there was instances where someone got harmed and stuff, but uh, the ex-pats were reasonably safe. Angolans were, [not trouble from them?].

SW: Yeah, they were in a bad spot. [Chuckles]

JM: Yeah.

SW: Well the I-10 plan, they moved you up and down. About how many years total do you think you were here in Lafayette.

JM: Oh, we were here more [Inaudible], we were here from nineteen... sixty-three to 1971, and then we were in New Orleans from '71 until '76, and we were in Lafayette from '76 until '81, and then we were in New Orleans from '81 to

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'89, then we moved back to Lafayette in '89, at the time that Chevron bought out the [Tenaco?] properties, you know, came back over here as divisional development geologist. And uh-

SW: And you stayed here after that.

JM: And then, yeah, we stayed here during that time. I did a uh, my, 'bout two and a half years or a little over two years in Angola was in that period, it was '92 to ninety... '92 to '95 I think, or '94.

SW: But you were living here at the time.

JM: I stayed here. And then after I got back from Angola I worked out of the Chevron office here in Lafayette again, until uh, '99 when I retired from Chevron.

SW: Okay, it was '99 that you retired?

JM: Yeah.

SW: You started in '63, '99, so that's... almost-

JM: It was a little ov-, it was almost 36 years with Chevron and then I uh, I retired to stay retired, but I was retired for about a year and a half or so and a fella that actually used to work for me for, at Chevron gave me, has a consulting office here, gave me a call, wanted to know if I wanted to come work part-time for him. Uh, Ben Sydboten, it was Sydboten and Associates. And by the ti-, by then I was kind of missin' the oil business, so I went back to work for him part-time and so I do some consulting part-time with, you know, [Inaudible] goes up and down depending on the business.

SW: Yeah, but your not relying on that for any income or anything, 'cause you're retired, so it's-

JM: That's right.

SW: Kind of just gravy I guess you could say.

JM: Yeah.

SW: Gives you the satisfaction of working a little bit, making a few extra bucks.

JM: That's right, yeah.

SW: But you don't have to sweat it out. [Chuckles]

JM: No, that's right.

SW: Like some of the guys do right now.

JM: That's right. It's for my wife, it gets me out of the house [SW chuckles] and get a few extra bucks here and there.

SW: [Helps you go do things?]. Uh... it looks to me like you spent most of the time here in Lafayette.

JM: Yeah, Lafayette was, we spent more time in Lafayette than, we were more in Lafayette than anyplace I've ever lived I guess.

SW: Yeah.

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JM: In my life. Which is not bad, Lafayette's a good place to live.

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JM: Good place, both of my kids were born here back in the '60s, they, [think they're standard?]. But uh, got one that lives in Portland and one that lives in Fort Worth, and a couple of grandkids up in Pennsylvania so.

SW: Either of these guys, uh, it's two boys you have or?

JM: I have, we have two boys, yeah.

SW: Did either one of them uh, worked in the oilfield at all?

JM: No, neither one of 'em. One's a veterinarian and one's a financial advisor. [Slight pause]

SW: The uh... when you got here in 1963, they transferred you, I guess they told you, "Hey, we're sending you to Lafayette, Louisiana." What'd you think?

JM: Well, I, first thing when they, when they hired me they told me I'd either go to uh, to Pensacola or New Orleans or Jackson, Mississippi. And then uh, when it got closer and they told me exactly where I goin', they told me I was goin' to Lafayette, Louisiana. So first thing I do is find a local map, see where Lafayette, Louisiana was.

SW: You never heard of it?

JM: I'd never heard of it. [Inaudible, mumbling] so, uh, we... [go where your job?] and I uh, finished my thesis defense, [Inaudible], and my wife's sittin' out in the parking lot with the car engine running and [Laughing] we drove on down to here.

SW: Oh it was, it was that close huh?

JM: Yeah.

SW: Wow. What did, what, what was your impression when you got here?

JM: Uh... I liked it, I mean, Lafayette was a probably more pleasant place in 1963 than it is now, because it was not quite as overgrown as it is now. It was uh, a little bit strange because an awful lot of people spoke French and you go sit in the barber shop and you hear a lot of French spoken and, or you know, if I went offshore on rigs and stuff, you'd hear a lot of it, you'd hear more, I heard more French spoken then than you do now. 'Course you still, if you get in the right spots there still is.

SW: You still hear it. Well that must've been strange for you comin' from up north and not having any experience with that before.

JM: Yeah. No, it was different. It didn't, and up north we fished with crawfish and in Missouri we fished with crawfish and in Lafayette we eat those.

SW: Yeah, exactly, it's not bait, it's food. [Laughs]

JM: Yeah. And uh, like, I guess one of the things that I found out over the years is that when I lived in the Midwest I ate an awful lot of bland food and I didn't realize 'til I got down here. And I've realized that I traveled a good bit uh, from over the years and uh, having spent so much time in New Orleans and Lafayette, I can't find a good place to eat anymore other than Lafayette or New Orleans.

JM: We've hit the top and [SW chuckles] [Inaudible]. It doesn't get much better.

SW: You've uh, you've taken the food then, it's not too spicy for you or anything?

JM: No.

SW: You like it I guess?

JM: Oh yeah.

SW: How, was it at first a little difficult for you?

JM: Not really, I liked, I had, I guess it's different, but I like, I've always liked spicy, my food spicy I guess. It, but I didn't know what spicy was until I got here. So I don't remember [Inaudible] being [Inaudible], except it was good and-

SW: It was no problem for you?

JM: No.

SW: What about your wife? Did uh, was she, is she have the same taste as you?

JM: No, I think it took her a little longer to get used to it probably.

SW: But uh, they eventually come around-

JM: But it was not, but no uh, it was a good uh, a good place to work. Lafayette was a uh, '63 was a real bustling part of the oil business and there was a just an awful lot of people down here that were about my age and my experience level almost none that had uh, and so, you know, it was uh, just an awful lot of camaraderie, lot of work to do, lot of uh, a lot of new. I, you know, I grew up and I did my geology in the Midwest and I, so I really didn't know what the oil business was. But I was geologist and the oil business hired geologists, so I came down here I actually learned what to do. I had never seen an oil-, a drilling rig [Inaudible], I mean an oilfield size drilling rig of any kind I don't think before. Well, I guess I did out [Inaudible] in the summer I'd spent in fif-, in uh, in Colorado, I did see some rigs and stuff, but not the, there really wasn't that much associated with 'em. So I started out in uh, workin' in development geology and so we were, dealt, you know, first hand with the drilling crews and the petroleum engineers and uh, [Inaudible] development prospects and things. So it was uh, to get a uh, on land get a heavy dose of the oil business [Inaudible]. At that time uh, Chevron, the California Company had an exploration and a production division in Lafayette, so we had, you know, production had the [full suite?] was there for eight years uh, it was eight years and then I had worked in development geology, I worked in exploration geology, and I uh, worked in seis-, I worked on a seis crew, little uh, it's a seis crew that had an office in an abandoned lum-, lumber yard in Scott. And so, you, I got a kind of a full suite of it, uh, grounding in the oil business right here in Lafayette.

SW: Was that common for a company like Chevron or California Company that, they'd hire you guys right out of school with no experience?

JM: Yeah, yeah.

SW: You just had your paper in your hand and they took you and trained you basically.

JM: Yeah, but [Inaudible] [you have to?], particularly for the large companies generally hired people uh, out of school, hired most, almost all of their people out of school. Uh, it's partly it's a good source of new hires at that time and

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partly it helps uh, to get the right spread of jobs to, you know, geolog-, engineers because they have, you know, constantly maturing, they're constantly going, getting older as long, along with more experience, so they keep have to feed, having to feed into the [pot?], otherwise they'll end up like, well, a lot of companies are right now with a lot of real experienced people that they could lose all of a sudden. You look around, there's no, find out there's no, you don't have any [new faces?]. So that was uh, it was pretty typical for the big companies. The smaller companies, as they still do, tend to be more apt to hire experienced geologists. Uh, you know, 'cause they didn't have the training problem that uh, they had with that.

SW: Did you need to have that, you got your masters? Your bachelors and then your masters.

JM: Yeah.

SW: Could you have gotten hired with just your bachelors or was-

JM: Not, well, yeah, you could have, but it would've limited the number of companies, most of the, at that time, uh, most of the major companies required a master's degree for a geologist. For a geophysicist they generally hire a bachelors because it wasn't as strong master's programs for geophysicists. Uh, generally the major companies required a masters so uh, well an awful lot of us went for a master's degree because you wanted to start out with a uh, with the major companies. Kind of the idea, "Well I go with a major company, I'll learn the works, and then I'll go out with a smaller company or an independent and I'll get rich. And I" [Both chuckle] I never did get away from the major company. I enjoyed workin' for Chevron, it was good, Chevron was good to me and I hope I was good for Chevron for 36 years.

SW: If they kept you for that long and you stuck around, then somethin' must've been right. [Chuckles]

JM: I managed to go, to pass by a lot of times when they laid off people. Uh, when companies laid off people including Chevron, so it worked out for me.

SW: That's interesting, that was a question I was just getting ready to ask, 'cause uh, you know, the industry goes up and down, how many times did you, or was there ever a fear or a constant fear, or was there, were you worried a lot about getting laid off because of cutbacks?

JM: I didn't... I didn't worry, didn't, I can't remember ever really worrying about getting uh, laid off. Um, uh, [that's right?], I guess I was lucky enough to be in positions where I wasn't that much at risk or at least I didn't, didn't know it. If it was sneaking up behind me, I didn't know it. Uh, I was associated with it, you know, all the cutbacks that came through Chevron. Chevron was uh, had some cutbacks and they've had some severe ones at times. Uh, less so than a lot of big companies. Chevron tended to uh, particularly in the earth sciences, uh, tended to work understaffed to, had a lot of people in exploration in the company in high places that really didn't like to hi-, uh, get in a position where they had to turn people loose. So it uh, protected Chevron people to some extent. Now the, in the big downturns there were some t-, I'll give you an example. In uh, in eighty... eighty-four, '85, was '86 I gu-, '85, '86, in that period, was a, where the oil business really took the [pinch you had?]. Uh, just before that, Chevron had hired an awful lot of, in '83, '84, had hired an awful lot of new hires out of school and they'd given, you know, promises of jobs to a number of, to a large number of people that were just graduated. And uh, and we uh, thought long and hard about whether to cancel those offers, 'cause if we could, we didn't want to but you could, to cancel those offers, because you could see all these other [Inaudible], you could see it was gonna, wasn't gonna get better for awhile. But uh, Chevron went ahead and sucked it up and accepted all of the offers that they had, accepted the employees that, 'course the employee, these guys all accepted all those offers 'cause every place else they were gettin' uh, the offers were being canceled. So nobody uh, turned down what, you know, what, an acceptance, they accepted the offer. So we took [that off?] a bunch of, I don't remember what the numbers were, but quite a number and boy we really needed the new hires. As it turned out it was a good, it worked well for Chevron as it did for the employees, because we did, we got a staff that, of people that were, you know, that came up there just about the right uh, good level of experience

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when people started peeling off for one reason or other somethin'. So that turned out good. But uh, there were times when we uh, [Inaudible], and I was involved with, I was in management position during those years and I was, so I was involved with some of the, with having to uh, to fire people or terminate their positions. It wasn't fun uh, for either side. We uh, we got better at it as, I remember the first time I had to do it. We thought we did a pretty good job of, you know, treating him as well as we could, but we went through that experience two or three times and did a better job, did a better job of warning people ahead of time, did a better job of provi-, providing help for 'em to find other employment and in, and with better benefits. 'Fact one guy had come back uh, six, 'bout a year after I had to terminate his position, came back on, bo-, stopped by my house one time and thanked me for having fired him. Said it turned out to be a good deal. [Both chuckle]

SW: Help with severance packages and things like that, too.

JM: Yeah, yeah. He ended up finding a position that he really liked better than what he was doing while he was working for Chevron at the time, so.

SW: Works like that sometimes.

JM: So sometimes it works like that. But an awful lot of people work in places where it doesn't work that well.

SW: Yeah, well, it's not, never any fun to be fired.

JM: No, or to do, or to be the person that has to swing the axe.

SW: Yeah, that's just the way it is sometimes.

JM: Yeah.

SW: You mentioned that, I have it written down here that you moved, you were on the I-10 plan.

JM: [Chuckling] Yeah.

SW: Uh, but your kids were born here, your two boys were born here.

JM: Right.

SW: So they must've been still kind of uh, maybe in secondary school when y'all moved to New Orleans the first time.

JM: The first, yeah, the first time wasn't a, wasn't really a problem with it, with the kids, because uh, let's see, Kirk, my youngest one, hadn't started school. He started kindergarten in New Orleans, so he, so for schooling it didn't hurt him. I guess Eric was uh... was in second grade I guess when uh, we moved in the summertime, I guess he was goin' into the second grade. Yeah, so it wasn't that, [it was just far as?] [Inaudible] wasn't that big of, you know, it was more excitement than uh, and we had, it may have been, I don't recall being that much of a task for them to leave their friends at that age. You know they were constantly findin', makin' friends and enemies as they go. Uh, when we moved from uh, from New Orleans to, back to Lafayette, I guess Eric was in uh... I guess he was in the seventh grade, he was in junior high, was in the seventh grade. We moved back the more troubles we moved back, that was in the middle, we moved back in the middle of the year. And uh, and actually I started the job in uh, in December and I think I stayed 'til we sold the house, everything, so we started back up, moved here the second semester and Eric I guess was in the seventh grade and Kirk was in uh, I guess the fifth grade or somethin'. That was a little more troublesome for 'em, 'cause they lost, had to move from friends and uh, and I don't remember, it's been so long, I think they took the year or took a semester off [Chuckling] goin' to school. So their education probably suffered a little bit from that second semester they didn't learn as much if they would if they'd stayed in the same school. And uh, the

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last time we moved from, then when we moved from, with kids from Lafayette to New Orleans, that was a, that was hard for the kids. Eric was a senior and Kirk was a sophomore, he just finished his freshman year. Actually it was harder on Kirk, the first one, than it was on, Eric didn't much care where he, gonna be a senior at any place, [I guess was quiet?]. Kirk was in the, they went to Acadian, and Kirk was in the Acadiana band and they, the, his freshman year they went to the Rose Bowl uh, Parade and they had sort of, Kirk didn't want any part of movin' to New Orleans, he liked it where he was. In fact I, we left and Kirk didn't open his, empty his suitcase I don't think 'til a month [Chuckling] after we got there, got to New Orleans. And that's all, that one, as far as kids, that one I guess was the hardship [Inaudible]. And they went to high school in New Orleans and when we left the first time it was a pretty good school, but when we got back, got there in September and they put 'em in school, we put 'em in that school and it turned out it was not that, it was [West Bank?] School, it was, it deteriorated a lot and so. Uh, that was, that was kind of troublesome.

SW: I've heard-

JM: [Inaudible] [a doctor?] without a high school education [you know what I'm saying?]. [Both chuckle]

SW: He turned out all right, huh?

JM: Yeah. Oh yeah, [you/he?] survive an awful lot.

SW: Uh, did your wife work outside of the home? Did she have a job?

JM: She uh, she taught over the years and uh, she did taught some in public schools, she taught in uh, she taught, when the kids were small, we lived in New Orleans, she taught in uh, in schools that were associated with Baptist church there. It worked good because she taught for half a day, so she'd be home when the kids got home. She taught uh, in uh, she taught adult education and she taught uh, parochial school in New Orleans. She's taught in public school in Lafayette and she, finally uh, she retired from teaching in uh, in '92. [Well, it was?] actually a combination of, I was o-, was working in, traveling back and forth between Africa and sh-, and her, she was in a car wreck, somebody hit her from behind and she had trouble with her neck for awhile. And she decided that was a good time to hang it up. So she hung it up.

SW: Did that af-, the moving around affect her in a bad way or?

JM: Oh yeah, she, I mean, she, I, she always had to find [everything?], you know, she was the, I guess the typical trailing wife. She had to quit a job that she liked and then come find a, go find a new one in, uh, we, I, we were more interest-, we fortunate enough that, 'cause we really didn't need her income. Some years was better than others. And uh, we were more interested in raising the kids than we were in the income, so it wasn't like uh, the first time we moved to, or when we moved second to Lafayette, when we moved back to Lafayette, uh, I was uh, went into a job that required an awful lot of concentration on my part and uh, kids were in the upper grades, 'bout r-, or one was about ready to start high school and all. And so those four years she didn't teach [there?] because felt it was probably better to [raise her?] [Inaudible] kids that were gettin' bigger then, too, so it was, it turned out there's, teaching was, uh, well she did a lot of it, but it was kind of a secondary [Inaudible]. Little bit of an artist so she likes to think, she does some other things. [Pause]

SW: Yeah I was gonna uh, I had some questions about workin' out in the field and how dangerous it is. But sometimes they say teaching nowadays is just as dangerous, right? [Chuckles]

JM: Yeah.

SW: Maybe it's good that she got out of it.

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JM: It's dangerous to go walk across the street.

SW: Did, you went out in the field a lot or you did a lot of office work?

JM: I did uh, did mostly all office work. I guess I went into geology back, 40 years ago so, you know, so you could get outside and do the stuff that I thought geologists did. But as it turned out this uh, most of the work is actually, you do most of the exploration work uh, working inside in the office and that work, you hunched over a work station to, you do an awful lot of it. I did, when I was in early years when I was doing development geology I did a lot of well [sites work?] as part of my uh, part of the job. You'd spend part of your time in the office, you know, making maps, various things, explorin' tryin' to find [prospects?], wells and stuff. And then somebody had to log the things when the logs and so we'd, development geologist would go out and he'd be out there for anywhere from a day to several days during the logging run on the well. And so uh, that was is generally the extent [Inaudible] with the fieldwork. I, when I was [birddog?] the seis crew I'd, sometimes I'd go out there and visit the seis crew every once in a while, but most of the time that work was actually in-, inside the office. They'd have to map up the work that they had, you know, the seismic [Inaudible] done. I did that in a little old office in [Chuckling] in the back of an abandoned lumber yard in Scott. [That was terrible, it was?].

SW: You weren't really, you weren't working a seven and seven offshore like-

JM: No, no, no I-

SW: And then, your schedule was more consistent.

JM: It was mostly in, even, well, when I was working exploration other than develop jo-, or worked a development job [Inaudible] [the geologist had?], was all office work when I was doing development geology is a uh, develop geology spend some time in the office and occasionally go out and log wells.

SW: Why did you wanna, why'd you choose geology? What drew you to that?

JM: Uh... well I grew up on a farm and I knew [Chuckling] I didn't want do that. Uh, and I had uh, and uh, geology sounded like it would, you know, get outdoors and you up explore the mountains, climb the mountains and stuff like that. I, actually I had uh, an uncle who was uh, who was, he was chief development geology for the California Company. And he was in New Orleans at the time. And so I knew what a geologist was, although I really didn't know what they do, what they did. So I guess the fact that I knew what, knew somebody that was a successful geologist and it sounded kind of good, I uh, geared me towards geology and I took, you know, took the, geology's fun, it's interesting, so that's why, you know, take the course in geology. What looked like a good thing to do.

SW: You got one summer in the mountains. [Laughs]

JM: Yeah, I got one summer [still lookin' for?] [Inaudible].

SW: [Say/so that again?]. Uh, I guess sort of the same question. Um... well, I guess there's not much, as a geologist what else can you do outside of the oil industry? Are there a lot of openings or opportunities for geologists outside of petroleum?

JM: Now the... the oil business has been the big employer of geologists. And uh, and I guess the big money side of geology. There's, you know, there are geologists with the, you know, with government positions and teaching positions and state uh, positions, things like Mineral Management Service, USGS, and over in recent years uh, an awful lot of geologist are goin' into environmental work. There's a lot of places that uh, underground water research and things like that's important. There's, [Manning?] has always used a certain number of geologists and never uh, the number, has never commanded the number that uh, the oil business has. The oil business has always been a,

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well it's been a high-risk business for, because lookin' for oil's a high-risk business, it's also a risk business for jobs, because it's always been uh, cyc-, cyclical ever since, you know, ever since 1859 [Chuckling] when they, [Inaudible] up and down. And the result is part of the risky nature is jobs are cyclical, but business it's always paid well, so if you get, if you could hang into the, onto the jobs one way or another, either goin' to business for yourself and hang on or be, or stay employed by someone, you get paid more than most other people. Most other people [Inaudible] just because of the risk, the job risk, they're demanding higher salaries.

SW: Besides not wanting to maybe work on the farm or something like that, there was that allure that you could make decent money?

JM: Did that allure me?

SW: Yeah.

JM: Uh, no I don't, you know, when I, I put myself in your position, I don't know what it is, but when I got out, I'm guessing that you're not partaca in, you're not particu-, necessarily looking for a tremendous amount of money is not your, not what, what's drivin' ya, and wasn't me when I got out of school. I, you know, it didn't, what I considered was a lot of money then wasn't what I consider a lot of money later for one thing and the other thing it just, it wasn't that important. I guess it's still not tremendously, you know, important. But I, you know, I was just lookin' for somethin' to do that was interesting and paid me enough to buy me a car and meals and whatever [Inaudible].

SW: I'm a-

JM: I think what the thing that's, I guess what I was, the thing is that, is what, one of the, I guess two things that keep people in and have kept people in geology over the years is that it's uh, it had, as long as you stayed employed, it's been a fairly well paying profession [on there?]. And uh, it's probably more because it's, because it is an interesting profession and a challenging profession. Uh, one of the things, I guess one of the reasons I wanted to go in geology is uh, is the time you could see it as a [travel?] [Inaudible]. Geologists like to go all over the world and do these [Inaudible]. Turned out, didn't work in that many places, Lafayette three times and New Orleans twice and went overseas for a couple of years, but uh, you know, the potential was there to travel if you wanted to. And a lot of geologists have bounced around an awful lot of places. Some liked it, some didn't.

SW: There's the opportunity.

JM: Yeah.

SW: Yeah, I'm uh, I'm not looking for a lot of money in my field. Well, it's not there. [Chuckles]

JM: I don't think very many people, I don't think money's what their eyes ri-, is what drives people to uh, into posses-, professions usually, you see.

SW: The money's not there in my field anyway, so I can look all I want. [Laughs] Liberal arts doesn't pay that much.

JM: Well Newt Gingrich is a, he's a history-

SW: Yeah.

JM: History major. He's, I think he's probably very wealthy.

SW: I think he's doin' alright. Woodrow Wilson was a, had a PhD in history.

JM: That's right, that's right.

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SW: And so yeah, it can get you something, depends on what you want. [Chuckles]

JM: Yeah.

SW: Did you go and see, did you ever uh, I guess within geology there was a lot of union activity down here?

JM: Union activity?

SW: Yeah. Did it ever catch on?

JM: Uh, no. No it was, actually the union activity's never been particularly strong in the oil business, particularly in Lou-, in Louisiana. They, on the west coast there's a oil, there's and oil and chemical [Inaudible] workers union, they have some of that, but it's not [particularly?] strong in uh, and essentially there's never been any movement for us, professional part of the industry.

SW: What do you think is the reason behind that? Is uh-

JM: It's because it's not a particular advantage to uh, people. It's that uh, for... for [locals?] for south, south Louisiana and these Cajuns were all too independent to want to work for a union for one thing anyway. They'd rather go out and work until they could, you know, just say a little bit of tongue in cheek but not completely, that he'd go out and work, work enough to go back and [Inaudible] and eat crawfish and shrimp and [Inaudible], then go back and work some more. And but for, you know, generally the oil business has been a fairly well payin' uh, jobs have been p-, you know, not just professional, but for, it's been a fairly well paid [Inaudible]. Yeah it was a fairly [Inaudible] a big push for, you know, from a salary point to unionize.

SW: I end up askin' that question and, yeah, it's almost industry-wide. There's just been hardly any union activity. I've seen it a few places, maybe in the boats, but not for a long period of time. I just, I always ask why because I'm curious. [Chuckles] You know, there are other parts of the country and other industries where the unions are very, very strong.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

SW: It just seems it never took hold down here at all.

JM: Yeah-

SW: I always wondered about that.

JM: Didn't pay, never thought too much about it, but I think one, the unions tend to be strong in parts of the country where they've always had strong unions. In the northeast and, you know, the coal mines, and the steel workers, and in automobile industries and stuff. There generally is, it's been a, [strong unions to take?]. Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, never had anything to unionize before and so it's never, they never really developed.

SW: Maybe it's a regional thing. [Chuckles] Um, at one point did you notice, uh, and I'm speakin' specifically within geology, did you notice women start to come on and start having, start working in geological positions?

JM: Uh... [Extended pause] not much until uh... not really much until the '80s I guess, I'm tryin' to remember, I guess in the '70s, but I can't remember much in the '70s. I guess in, during the ei-, sometime during the '80s they started to uh, a few women started coming in. And uh, then of course during the '90s and uh, [been up early?] fairly rapid uh, fairly rapid increase. But uh... [Extended pause] now even, I guess I was, I think the women, I guess there was a number of women started takin' uh, serious, significant number of women started takin' geology courses I g-, you know, takin', they gave geology majors in probably af-, sometime after the boom in uh, in the late '70s and early '80s

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and then when, and then they came into the business. Before that there were very, very few uh, women taking, you know, taking geology courses and engineering, petroleum engineering courses [Inaudible].

SW: When you were in school you didn't see much of that at all?

JM: No.

SW: And that was in the '50s.

JM: No, back there, in the '50s when I was in school, women took uh, were in education or taking secretarial science and stuff like that. That's why there was, why uh, it's not the case now, but 15 years ago people were screamin' 15, 20 different people were screamin' 'cause there weren't enough women in high, in high places in corporation. Well the reason they weren't is because they, because at the time that they were startin' at the ground level jobs, they weren't, they were goin' into secretarial science and education, they weren't goin' into the engineering or science degrees, stuff like that. Now as for, the point that they uh, they earned those degrees and then, you know, did the ground work in the businesses and then they start goin' in and become presidents and vice presidents and various things.

SW: Interesting. It's like you said, it follows that generational pattern it kind of just [Inaudible].

JM: Right, yeah. Back when I first came to Lafayette the uh, they wouldn't serve women in the Petroleum Club for uh, during lunch. Uh, during the lunch hour. And the reason was that I guess they tried it at one time and it, essentially the women in the petroleum, you had to be in the, you know, you had to be, at that time you had to be in the oil business to be in the Petroleum Club. Now they've, in later years they boosted, or changed that requirement, but during the '60s and early '70s, you had to be in the oil business to be a member of the Petroleum Club. And there weren't any women working in the petroleum business at that time, so if you were a women, and you was in there at, and it was, you know, it was essentially a business man's club and place to eat. So if you were a woman in the early '60s you, you know, you're somebody's wife and uh, [and it's independent business?] and uh, they had so many tables and so if, and if they, they found out if they served women there then all the wives would, were in the Petroleum Club at lunchtime and there was no place for the oil men to eat. So they set the rule, they had a rule that no women at lunch time in the Petroleum Club. And of course later they took a lot of flak over that. And uh, and then as women came into the oil business they-

SW: Well when did they change the policy? What year?

JM: I... I think in the early '70s, I think. I uh, I left here in '71 and I'm not sure if they, I think that was probably still in affect then, in '71, 'cause '71 wasn't much different from '63 when I first came here. I moved to New Orleans when they uh, Chevron, California Company moved their exploration office to New Orleans, I was the exploration part at that time, so I went to New Orleans with exploration. I, it was sometime during the '70s when they changed it.

SW: The '70s somewhere. Well speaking, going back to when you said when you got here in town. I, we had talked about that earlier. Um, you said you didn't mind coming here and you sort of enjoyed it. What were the attitudes of the local town people, though, towards all of you guys that were in the oil industry comin' in from out of town?

JM: I, the, Lafayette is uh, has always liked the oil people, at least all the time that I've been associated with it. And Lafayette was a uh, wasn't an oil center, but it was a, but it was part, it signif-, significant part of the oil business goin', you know, back into the uh, the '40s I guess and before, so it's uh... in general in south Louisiana there, you know, the oil business has been pretty compatible with uh, with the people, so there, I, there really wasn't any [Inaudible] any t-, any significant antagonism between the oil people and the, and anybody else that I'm aware of. You know, [Chuckling] individual grudges. But that, it, Lafayette was, you know, like I came here, Lafayette was an oil town.

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[Inaudible] there's a lot of other uh, [Inaudible] was there, things change about Lafayette, boy, it's just grown and, and I guess it's, now it's, Lafayette's less of an oil town than it was when I, in 1963.

SW: Definitely. They just did a poll-

JM: Because the Oil Center was fairly new, they were, you know, they still had lots of buildings in the Oil Center. Uh, Mister Heymann did a wonderful thing for the, Lafayette and the oil business by uh, [Inaudible], you know, sellin' the Oil Center and that just started it up. And uh, it was uh, South College Road was, it was two lanes at the time. Pinhook was a two-lane road. It was, still a two-lane road, but now they got four lanes of traffic down. [SW chuckles] We lived at, we first moved here, we lived at uh, I think there were only about four apartment houses, very big, you know, apartment house in town. We lived at Greenwood Village over on South College Road. And Angie pushed uh, Eric in a stroller down [Chuckling] South College Road, there were no sidewalks and stuff. [In the traffic?].

SW: Was it, it was difficult findin' a place to live when you first got here?

JM: It was, it wasn't e-, it wasn't extremely hard. There was not an awful lot of choices. 'Course there weren't very many apartment houses, there uh, we didn't have, really have trouble findin' a place to live, just didn't have, weren't very many choices. Uh, most of the people that moved here, you know, the people that had enough money to buy a house were, they were, like a number of 'em were building houses because there was not, you know, it was a building boom here because of the oil boom. Stuff like that, so. Uh, you know, it was kind of boom. It was, [Inaudible] when we came here.

SW: Yeah lots of, you said it was bustling. That's the word you used. A lot of people were comin' in and sm-, it was still a small town. Like you said, there weren't a lot of, not a lot of availability. Now you have your choice basically, but uh, you take the good with the bad. Now we have traffic and. [Chuckles]

JM: Yeah. It was more, actually Lafayette was more of a, it was more of a boom town uh, in the '70s, more the second time we came here than really in the '60s, because by then it was pay-, you know, it was a real oil town then. And then in the oil business was booming uh, in the '70s, so it was uh, it was harder to find a place to live when we came back the second time than when we did, was the first time. Because there was uh, because it was really, it really boomed then. Then uh, we moved back to New Orleans before it collapsed in the mid '80s. And then when we came back in '89, it was uh, you saw an awful lot, there was an awful lot of empty office buildings and uh, things here. We thought when we came back it would be easy to get a, you know, we'd get a good deal on a house. But as it turned out by then, well at least in the ones we were lookin' for, were, weren't very many of those to pick and choose from. But they had some you could afford and some that you didn't want and then [Inaudible]. But not [Inaudible] just an inconvenient. [Pause]

SW: One more question.

JM: Alright.

SW: Any regrets for your career in the oil industry?

JM: No, no, no. It's been a good, been a good life. Yeah, as I said Chevron was good for me and my family and I think I was good for Chevron. And I still enjoy the oilfield and I still got an opportunity to do that as well as do some fishing, things that I like to do as much or more than I like the oil industry.

SW: Fishin' is good down here, from what I hear.

JM: Yeah, yeah. It's good. The fishing's good.

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SW: Well thank you Mister Miller.

JM: Okay. Thank you.

SW: I do appreciate it. I'll go ahead and shut this off.

[END OF RECORDING]

