OFFSHORE ENERGY CENTER

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Dr. Casey Westell Jr.

Date: July 9, 2010

Place: Houston, Texas

Interviewer: Jason Theriot

File 1

JT: This is an oral history interview with Dr. Casey Westell Jr. We are in Houston, Texas. It is July 9, 2010. This is Jason Theriot. We're talking to Dr. Westell about his career as an ecologist for Tenneco Inc., beginning in 1971 up to—how many years were you there, sir?

CW: Thirty-five years.

JT: Thirty-five years as an ecologist with Tenneco. So what we're going to do here is just asking Dr. Westell if he'll just briefly summarize how his name got thrown out in the big board meeting in the early 1970s about the need for an environmental perspective as a management position within Tenneco.

You were talking about two big changes that were occurring in industry, one of which was the role of a unionization led by [César] Chávez basically impacting the Kern County industry and business in California, and the other is the gradual environmental movement, the emergence of the environmental movement through the sixties into the late sixties. These are two big issues that Gardiner Symonds [president of Tenneco] was very concerned about and was in some sense forward-looking to prepare his company to respond effectively to those two issues.

CW: Right. You remember this time period, Tenneco was a conglomerate of many different industries, and each having their own peculiar environmental issues and problems. At that time, historically, the laws were being enacted for environmental purposes to improve environment in the United States with result in regulations. Many pieces of government and divisions of government were involved with environmental problems. Historically your examination will show there was much regulation, litigation, quite a bit of publicity, and Tenneco was responding to this.

As you pointed out, in the sixties and the seventies there were environmental issues that involved Tenneco locally in Houston and in California, but the other divisions, like oil, pulp and paper, chemical, all had environmental problems. You remember, we had, I think, at one time twenty different plants in New Jersey alone, chemical, so you know there were many environmental problems that were surfacing and gaining local and national attention.

JT: Right, and one of those you mentioned was the mercury in the Houston Ship Channel.

CW: Right. At that time there was a mercury scare in the Houston Ship Channel and we had one or two plants on the channel, and that environment impacted the board of directors, which was largely made up of the presidents of the ten different companies Tenneco formed.

JT: And one of which was the paper and pulp company that you worked for.

CW: Right. Packaging Corporation, Pulp and Paper Company that I joined. After I left the university [of Michigan] in 1954-'55, I went with the government as a researcher in forestry, was sent to northern Minnesota at a research station. The company that sponsored the research that I use in my doctoral dissertation was about a third of a book we published called *Aspens: Phoenix Trees of the Great Lakes Region*, and that was the relationship between forest and wildlife. But the theme of the book was the proper management of aspen forests, which was never fully explained in earlier research, showed that things had to change in the management of the aspen forest if companies like Packaging Corporation that uses vast amounts of cord wood to make paper every year, for that to be maintained. Because the aspen is an intolerant species, we had to change some forest management procedures.

I was involved in that transition. They called me from Minnesota, recruited me back to implement what I had been writing about. Well, that was very flattering, and not many scientists get a chance to do the work and then implement it, so I took that chance. I was busy there for a number of years, ten years, and then this environmental thing started to develop, and Gardiner Symonds got involved with his presidents. Then he followed up with them to find out what they were doing towards this end. The president of Packaging Corporation said that he found out he had an ecologist on the staff who was a general manager at the time, not a working ecologist, and promoted him to a staff

position in Evanston, Illinois, in charge of environmental affairs. Gardiner Symonds said, "I want to talk to that man," and the rest is history, because shortly I was brought to Houston and I was here in 1971.

JT: Let me back you up, if you don't mind. I'm very curious about not only your research, but your tenure at whatever university as an ecologist. First, if you don't mind, tell me where you were born, Dr. Westell, and a little bit about growing up, what town you grew up in, and maybe how you came to be influenced by or to choose a career in ecology. It must have something to do with your growing up, possibly.

CW: Well, possibly. I'm a product of the depression because I can remember a little bit of it. My folks lost their house and everything during the Great Depression.

JT: Where were you born, sir?

CW: Born in Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and in '35, my dad was an automotive engineer for an outfit called the Seaman Body Corporation, which was a supplier of steel automobile bodies for Nash. You remember the old Nash cars? The curious thing, I think, is that business was so bad they simply closed the plant for '30, '31, and '32. There were no cars made in that plant, and so my dad lost his job.

They packed up one day and went out to my mother's folks, who lived on a farm, a dairy farm south of Manitauk, Wisconsin, in Lakeshore, Michigan. I spent the first four years there. I went to school at four years old, first grade, and in a one-room schoolhouse with about twenty-one students and one teacher, and kids in all grades, and sat there for four years and did very well.

Then the plant opened in Milwaukee, and we moved back to Milwaukee in 1936. I went to a small Catholic school, and I graduated eighth grade at twelve years old, went to a public high school in Milwaukee, Riverside High School, and graduated there at sixteen in 1943.

In 1941 the war started, if you remember, and my class of 1943, every man was accounted for. He either went willingly or unwillingly into service, and I was left alone at home, much to my chagrin and disappointment. I just thought that war would end before I could get in it.

JT: And you were sixteen too, so that was a little underage.

CW: Yes, sixteen, a little underage. So I worked in a defense plant for a while. My folks, in the meantime, were in Indianapolis. My dad took a job with General Motors in the development of jet engines, and so that got me to Indianapolis.

From there I tried to join the Navy Air Corps, and I passed the test and I was told I could get in pilot training. They deferred me and deferred me, and finally they called me and said, "Hey, young man, we now have 29,000 pilots in training," and they could see the end of the war in 1944, "and we doubt if you'll

ever get in. But we have a new program called combat air crewmen, and we'll train you as a combat air crewman. As a gunner you'll board a bomber," or torpedo plane or something like that, "and you can get your chance to fly."

And that's what I did. I flew in that airplane, that PB4Y-2, four-engine expanded liberator bomber, very powerful, six turrets, twelve men aboard. And we patrolled in our squadron, after thirteen months of training, flew out of Miami looking for subs. That was the mission. We didn't fly in the Gulf, but once in a while we flew over the Gulf. Other ships out of Pensacola were patrolling the Gulf.

As an aside, I know from the records that at least twenty-seven German submarines sunk twenty-seven of our freighters containing oil in the Gulf of Mexico. It was not publicized. In fact, the guy from New Orleans was astounded. He says, "We would have panicked if we knew subs were out there." They didn't hear a word about it. And the very curious thing is, as an ecologist, I can tell you this, I saw oil that deep on the beaches and not one gallon of it was ever cleaned up by man during the war, 1944-'45. That's not a simplified answer to the problems out there, but it's not the end of the world. Man's work plus nature's work will get that cleaned up eventually, as it did before and many times in history where there were natural oil seeps out in California.

You mentioned that earlier. I was out there trying to work with GOO, Get Oil Out, in California, and Tenneco was trying to put a—we were going to put a gas-receiving facility on the peninsula on Indian land there, and they fought and fought and we never did build it.

JT: The other interesting thing is, as I'm sure you're well aware, is with the threat and the sinking of tankers by the U-boats in '42, mainly in '42, that became the impetus to build the pipelines across the country, which is part of how Tennessee Gas came into being.

CW: Well, that brings us up to me coming here.

JT: So where did you go to college?

CW: Well, I enrolled at University of Wisconsin, it's an interesting story, in 1946. We were married out in California and we came back here, married. My folks at that time were in Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin, they called me up or wrote me a letter and said, "We are so packed with GIs, there is simply no place to live. We don't know what we're going to do about these courses. We know we will be teaching English 1 by radio." That's how many students were on campus. "Now, we advise, since you only live sixteen miles from Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, there is a small Presbyterian college there which we have accredited, and if you take your first year there, we will transfer those credits all to the University of Wisconsin."

After that happened, the first year I did very well, smartest thing that ever happened because there were fifty-five GIs on that campus and nobody flunked, nobody left a lesson until you understood it, whether it was one hour or two

hours, and they were so proud to have the recognition from the university that all those GIs, and some of them were pretty dense, like me, and out of school for a while, some of them four or five years, to get back into a college atmosphere.

So from there I went to Indianapolis. My wife's folks and my folks at that time were living in Indianapolis. That summer I went downtown to Purdue Extension Service and took Chemistry 1, just to keep on going, and I went to Purdue and did very well, so well that the dean said, "Well, what do you want to do?"

I was in the forestry school. "I want to get into wildlife management or something like that."

And he says, "Okay." So I was getting a letter of top 5 percent of the students at Purdue. The dean was a Michigan graduate, and he said, "I'll deny I ever said this, but if you're interested in that and you're going to get into graduate work, you'd better go to Michigan, because that's the place at this time has the finest staff in that area and is world renown."

So then I transferred to the University of Michigan after two years at Purdue. The dean up there was very happy. He says, "I'm going to do something I've never done before. You've got all these credits from Purdue. They're on the quarter system and you get more credits, more courses than you do on the semester basis. You only need only one course to get a degree from Michigan. If you take that course, promise me that you're going to go to graduate school, I'll give you a degree from Michigan." So I got a bachelor's degree from Michigan

in forestry. I took one course in forest management. He said, "Never did it before." And that was Dean Dana, who was world-famous in academic areas.

Then I stayed there because my GI Bill ran out in four years, so they hired me for research assistant and teaching assistant in my fifth year. So we had enough money to live on. We lived in Willow Run, which was temporary housing for the war, because at Willow Run they built B-24 bombers, one every hour, came down, flew it off. That all caved in. Then after the war, Henry J. Kaiser built his cars there at Willow Run.

So then after the fifth year, they convinced me I should stay for a doctorate because they ran into a bunch of money that was collected. Dean Dana and other deans went to industry and started the Phoenix Project, which is the peacetime use of atomic energy.

JT: I'm familiar with the Phoenix.

CW: We were Phoenix Project number 29, right near the top. There were hundreds later on. Then what it amounted to was they wanted us to figure out ways to use atomic energy, radioactive materials, in our research, but we weren't qualified to do it and we never did it. We were going to bring in a third man who was qualified, but it never worked out because there was all this fieldwork to do. So for three years we went up north to do the fieldwork that formed the basis of the research for two theses. The other man that was in there was a forest

entomologist, and I was the ecologist, and then the three of us, including the professor, wrote the book, formed the book.

JT: Let me ask you about some of your influences. Let me get the years correct. Your Ph.D. doctorate work at the University of Michigan was from what years? What period of time?

CW: I started in ’52, ’53, ’54, ’55.

JT: Okay, so that’s very early days of what we refer to as the Age of Ecology, at least as environmental historians understand it.

CW: As historians, yes. You remember ecology was taught at University of Michigan fifty years before that. It was one of the earliest forestry schools in the country, and then they brought in wildlife management, then wildlife ecology, and then entomology and pathology. And that’s what we got: entomology, pathology, forest wildlife, and forest management in the book.

JT: And all those are courses or research skills taught at Michigan?

CW: Yes, right.

JT: You were trained in those areas.

CW: Fantastic staff.

JT: So what are some of the books that you read in graduate school? I'm assuming all the Aldo Leopold writings...

CW: Oh, yes. I've got them upstairs. My job now is to get rid of all that stuff. Many of those authors I knew, like Aldo Leopold. I met him at meetings at that time. He was senior guy, and a few other fellows like that.

JT: What about Eugene Odum? He came a little later.

CW: I didn't know him. I knew of him, but I can't remember meeting him. I might have, what context, I don't know. I'm eighty-three years old and some of this stuff is sixty years old.

JT: Well, the reason why I ask is, as a historian and as someone who spent a lot of time in the marshes in the South Louisiana, I'm fascinated by ecology, the science and how it works. I'll never be an ecologist, but I can study those who have studied and written about it. One of the chapters in this dissertation that I'm writing deals with an ecological perspective on the oil and gas industry and its environmental impacts, primarily on coastal Louisiana, wetlands and marshes, including the pipelines. It's an entire chapter dedicated to what I refer to as the

transition for resource managers, for oyster biologists at the conservation department who are looking at changes in seafood habitat and in wetlands habitat, but they're not quite sure what are the main causes of it.

Then in the sixties, you have a core group, what I call a core group of wetland ecologists who are trained in very similar scenarios as you were trained, just at different universities, Georgia, University of Georgia, which is where Odum was. So a handful of guys came out of that, and this a core group of what we refer to as wetland scientists, who began researching and writing about and explaining to everybody, to the industry, to the State of Louisiana, about what some of these impacts are over the long term. In those studies, scientists begin to influence policy decisions in the seventies and eighties.

CW: Well, with respect to your—the bell was ringing thirty, forty years ago about the loss of Louisiana marshes through erosion, water-level changes, Mississippi deflection or—what the hell's the word I'm looking for? So that environment was lost, and you don't have the birds that they used to have years ago. You don't have some of the fur-bearing animals like we used to. The environment isn't there. Maybe it's compensated by other things, but I found that very fascinating.

Now, when I got here, I wrote my own job description because nobody—I wrote it up with pulp and paper companies that said, "What they hell are you going to do?

And I said, "Well, here's my—."

In fact, my boss, the way he wrote to me, he says, "So-and-so, the president, wants a description to take to Tenneco."

"Of what?"

"Of an environmental officer. What would he do for a pulp and paper company?"

And I said, "Yeah, well, I'll think about it."

He said, "You don't think about it. I want it Monday morning. This is Saturday morning, because I'm going there Monday."

So I called my secretary in, we hammered that thing out, a potential position as environmental officer.

Then he told me, after he went to the president with it, they scrubbed it and took it to Tenneco, and then they offered me the job. Well, that's history now. I took it.

I was getting organized up there and working. Packaging at that time maybe had twenty-five different plants scattered all over, all with environmental problems because in the industry, if you're dealing with water, you've got an environmental problem. I don't care whether it's just one toilet or a thousand acres of land, you've got a problem.

So I started working with the companies that had real problems. The plant on the Mississippi River went back to the Civil War, the site. They had problems from the Civil War and Revolutionary War, but not as a plant, but as other land uses in that area, because everything went along the Mississippi River as far as development into the interior. It was the only way in for a while.

So as I was working then, this thing developed in Houston. I was just getting going and I had an office in Evanston. I was commuting, looking for a place. "Nope, you're going down there. And he wants you there by August 1, 1971."

JT: So your boss told you you were going down there. He didn't ask if you wanted to go?

CW: Well, in a big corporation and you're talking to the president and you get the message. It wasn't much of an option. "Don't worry about anything. It'll be—." My kids were in school and stuff like that, and it'll all be worked out. But he gave me an offer I couldn't refuse.

JT: And how many kids did you have at the time in '71?

CW: Four.

JT: You had four?

CW: Yes, one was in college up in Michigan and three came down here with me, fighting and screaming because they didn't want to—I promised them, I says, "In one year, I'll know whether I'm in this job or someplace else, and I promise you I'll bring you back here," I got a corporate aircraft," for Fourth of July," which is

a big thing up there for us in that little town of ten thousand people. And I did, and they came back after a year and then they compared to what they had here, and I didn't hear very much complaining after that.

JT: My wife grew up in Houston, and I'm from a small town, New Iberia, Louisiana, twenty-five thousand people, so we make those comparisons all the time.

CW: Yes, we had a helicopter based at New Iberia, I think, too.

JT: Yes, PHI.

CW: Yes.

JT: So you're managing a department primarily dealing with a pulp and paper company and its environmental impacts on the forestry and the ecology and the water and the wildlife.

CW: All the plants. Some were manufacturing plants and some are repackaging and all kinds of stuff.

JT: Were you aware of, first of all, the offshore oil and gas industry, the Santa Barbara spill in '69, the two or three other incidences in the Gulf of Mexico,

meaning the Chevron spill in ’70 and the Shell spill in ’70, were you aware of the oil spills that occurred in that short amount of time?

CW: Peripherally, yes. Well, as part of the corporation, I knew and—I want to say this properly, but few corporations, oil and gas particularly, were ever properly aware of environmental problems except as demonstrated or required in the permit. If the permit says you use this kind of fertilizer on the ground, you did it, and that kind of stuff. If it specified, carved in stone by the government or the agency or the people involved—

JT: The landowners, for example.

CW: Landowners or subcontractors, it was done. Beyond that, don’t talk to me. “I’m really not interested.” is what the typical manager would say.

That brings me to an interesting thing, because when I came down here, I was comfortable in the pulp and paper area, big plants, one enormous plant up here in Tennessee, because I understand what the raw materials were, I understand the process, and I understand that effluence, what the problem is. That’s not simple, but it’s understandable. But when I got into all these other chemical plants, I couldn’t even pronounce half the things, or oil or gas. And considering their history and their mentality about their job, their dedication, I always said that the pumping stations on a gas pipeline were like battleships. You lead off the fore. You ever been in some of those?

JT: I worked in a fabrication yard for a couple of years.

CW: They were shipshape. They were just perfect. But the guys that build the pipeline were hell-for-leather, weren't they? You've got to remember, Tennessee was built, Tennessee gas pipeline from Brownsville or down in that southern part all the way to Tennessee, in nine months. You couldn't build that pipe in nine years now. It'd take you five to get permits, another nine to build it. Now, how was it done? It was done by guys that, some are still living and you know, and they'll tell you stories about bulldozing the porch off the front of the house as they were going by, a guy was warned and stuff like that, and stories you couldn't believe, but the work got done, and they had high priority and it was important.

JT: A lot of the stories that I get from some of the managers is summarized as such. "Mr. Symonds said we need to get this pipeline through such and such by such and such date."

CW: "And it will be if you guys are working twenty-four hours a day."

JT: "And we need to get it done, so go get it done." Then that fed down to his upper management, his senior guys, and that fed down to the supervisors and the chief of engineers, and they sent those guys to work.

CW: Okay, now, take that ahead. That was 1940, '41.

JT: Forties and fifties and early sixties.

CW: Those young guys out of high school or a great engineering school are now vice presidents in Tenneco. Joe Foster and whole bunch of these, especially in a pipeline, engineers, you can name them off, all came up in boots. They were intelligent, they were quick, they were good men, but they had that mentality of "It's going to get done." Don't tell them we can't do it. And, "Environment what?" [laughs] And "Get that damn pipe in the ground." Okay, that's fine. But when they got to be vice presidents and executive vice presidents, senior vice presidents and presidents of the company, that just didn't turn into a different philosophy or a different ethic. Legal, yes, but it was that hard-driving group of people.

So when I came down here, I met with these guys. Holy mackerel. [laughs] They just thought I was great. They would take me out, try to get me drunk and have a good time, and ship me back on the company plane to East Tenneco, to Houston. So I had to develop a different kind of strategy with these people. It worked for a while, and some very successful and sometimes it wasn't.

And that was money. If you know, pipeline and gas pipeline are heavily budgeted, very tightly budgeted. Everything is budgeted. As these problems developed, whatever they were, chemical or water or political, it wasn't budgeted, it wasn't provided for. For the first year or two I was quite effective because

they're glad to see me. The vice president says, "Yeah, well, we know we should clear that water problem up, but it's not in the budget. What's it gonna cost?"

"Million-five."

"Oh. What you gonna do?"

"Well, we got it all engineered, but we just don't have the money, so, Casey, go get the money and we'll do it." And I would get the money and it would get done. They thought they found a real easy way to get around the budget, extra budget, and they did for a while.

JT: So you had a certain budget in your own department to handle environmental issues?

CW: Well, I had an open checkbook. I would just simply say to my bosses, who were on the board of directors, "We've got to do this or we're in real trouble. They're going to shut that plant down or we're going to be fined," or whatever it is.

"Well, what's the alternative?"

"We give them a million and half to do it."

JT: Million and a half or ten million lost for six months of a new operation, something like that.

CW: Right. But that's because of the tight-fisted budget process, for one thing, and that worked pretty good. Simultaneous to this, in each of the divisions I looked

for and found the man or men who were shepherding the environmental movement. He wasn't very high on the pole. He was kind of a weirdo sometimes, and he was a chem engineer or a mechanical engineer who was concerned with the environment just because it was an interesting thing.

JT: Not because his job description required he knows about it.

CW: And then sometimes if he's willing to worry about those damn permits, let him do it. And he developed a little job cell for himself, see. I'd look for those guys, and sometimes they were formally appointed, sometimes informally appointed. And if he was real good and doing a good job, I promoted him to Houston, on my staff, to watch his buddies. He knew how they talked and thought. I didn't.

JT: That's one of the questions that I have. I have a little short list of questions that I prepared this morning, Dr. Westell. Tell me a little bit more about that, about the organization of the industrial ecology department. Tell me about the hierarchy, how it's structured, and how the management process worked, and the work that you guys actually did.

CW: Well, I'll go back to Packaging Corporation. The president called me in and said, "How you gonna attack all these problems?" He said, "You want a staff of people?"

I says, "No, I don't want anyone."

"You're gonna do it yourself?"

I says, "No."

"Well," he says, "how are you gonna get—?"

"Well, I got to get to know the problem." And I says, "If you authorize me to put together a team of people that I know in the company, a chemist here, an engineer there, and give me the company plane, and I'll fly over to that plant to get an analysis of what's wrong, how it's wrong, how it can be fixed, and how much it's gonna cost."

He says, "You got it."

So I would call these guys and I knew them. I said, "Hey, Joe, I need you Monday morning." And I'd pull him in off their job for one day or two days. "Go in and diagnose, prescribe, come back to me with an answer."

I'd go to the vice president in charge of that division of that plant and say, "I've had these guys, these are experts and they say this is what you're going to have to do to solve that problem. Are you ready?"

"Okay."

"What's it gonna cost?"

"Well, so much."

"Where you gonna get the money?"

I said, "I'll get you the money. You get it done."

JT: And so you took that same kind of management philosophy and took it to Tenneco?

CW: Right. Essentially, yes. The president says, "Well, you're the first guy that's ever been here didn't ask for a staff."

I said, "Well, what am gonna do with a staff? I still don't know anything."

JT: Any idea what might have been the first project you worked for at Tenneco, or one of the first big ones maybe that you recall might have been real challenging?

CW: Let me think a little bit. My head is swimming. I know there was one over here on the [Houston] ship channel. There was a guy there. That was a water problem, but I can't remember the details of that. But after a while I had four or five of these going all the time.

I know that in Kern County they were in trouble with the water supply. They cleaned up potatoes as they came out of the ground. They washed them and dried them, and the potato peelings would ferment and pollute. They had a real smelly problem, and we cleaned that up. That was one at one of their big packing plants.

JT: What about anything to do with the pipelines?

CW: The pipeline? Now, let me think. There was this one, there was a big confrontation. Sheriff was out there. I can't even think of the town now, but we had gone through some private land and the guys looped the line. You know what

looping the line is? And it looked like hell. The landowner—they had a permit for the original line, then they got a permit to loop it and they didn't leave it like it was. They didn't sod it or anything. I remember getting a company plane and going there with a couple of guys and looking at it. Where the hell was this? In Kentucky? Wherever it was, I took two, three guys with me and we stayed overnight, and by morning we had worked out a redo of the area with the landowner. Get the equipment back in there and pretty it up because they were suing us, shutting the pipeline down.

JT: So, again, you took that management philosophy, went down there, surveyed the problem, might have brought maybe a land guy with you, and said, "Okay, how much is this going to cost? Can we get some equipment and some resources to fix this problem? That's might cost us 500 grand, but it'll keep us from being sued."

CW: In business and—

JT: Keep this landowner happy.

CW: Yes, that I know. And an oil company—we had problems at Chalmette [Louisiana]. You know where Chalmette is? We have a—

JT: Big chemical plant. Refinery.

CW: Refinery, yes. And that was water to the Mississippi River. When nobody was looking, they'd flush the toilet. That's what a lot of plants do on the Mississippi River. And when you get caught, it's hell to pay, but it happens. That was one I know that was early on.

JT: One of the things that I've been looking at is the whole period, as I discussed earlier, beginning in '69 with the Santa Barbara oil spill and how that led to new federal regulations, new federal environmental laws such as NEPA and Coastal Zone Management and a few other things. They had a few other spills, and you begin to see, as you mentioned, the engineering mentality is now confronted with new realities, and it was a reality. Environmental regulations, environmental lawsuits, environmental problems were a reality that these engineers had to confront. And one of the things in the 1972 lease sale for the Environmental Impact Statement was Tenneco sponsored a report from B-a-t-e-l-l-e, Batelle, the research group, on the impacts of pipelines on the wetlands. It's 1972.

CW: Yes.

File 2

JT: This is part two with Dr. Westell.

I want to show you this, because I had found this a year ago and I put it aside, and then once I got studying on this oil spill and with other oil spills and

how NEPA began to effect some changes within the industry, but this is the Offshore Management Committee, or whatever it's called, that funded this study in 1972 on pipelines, the environmental impact of pipelines in coastal Louisiana and other areas. The head of this committee was a Tenneco guy, and they took this report to the 1972 Environmental Impact Statement hearing for the offshore lease and used this as evidence in the hearing.

Once I kind of put it all together, there was a delay in offshore leases for a number of years, beginning with Santa Barbara, the other two or three big ones. It took the industry a while, and the federal regulators, a while to figure out what NEPA really meant. So this report, at least to me, illustrates how—

CW: Awareness.

JT: Yes, right, an awareness that "Oh, shit, we've got to do something. This NEPA is real. The ability of environmental groups to file lawsuits and injunctions to stop projects is a reality."

CW: That's it. It wasn't a love of the environment; it was the interruption of production that motivate. It's a hell of a thing to say, but that's true. It gets your attention. That was my greatest contribution, because they'd say, "Casey, if you make me do this to correct this problem, you're cutting into my Christmas bonus because I won't make the bogey." That's the heart of it. So when production

stops, when profits go down and the quarterly report comes out, there going to be a change in managers if the figures are bad. I can guarantee it.

So you're right. The thing with NEPA and the regulation is that, look, you don't want production to be hurt. It's not painless, but it's the lesser of two evils. If you want to look at it that way, go ahead. They cuss and fume and swear, but that's the way it was and that's the way it still is, is that that fear motivates a lot of stuff for which corporations get credit. Look at the great job that they're doing, Exxon or Mobil or Shell, and they are, but it's not altruistic. They want to still stay in business to make money, right? So you've got to do it. It's one of the things. It's compliance. Whether it's with the banking laws or the speed limits or the pollution laws, you've got to be in compliance to stay in business. That's no reciprofication. Every management meeting we hold once a year, we hold what we call senior management meeting, in Miami or some good golf course someplace, and California, all over the country. We flew everybody over there and had this meeting, and I'd be on the program automatically.

If you want to look at and get an idea, that's why I gave you this little biographical thing that was put together, and my secretary kept it current, you'll notice that I was a member of committees and associations, and what I did was with each of the principal companies, I'd find out what was the organization that they were members of that had an Environmental Mandate Committee, and I would either get somebody on that committee or I would be on that committee, and that way I got in tune with what their industry felt about environment.

JT: And vice versa.

CW: And vice versa, right.

JT: You were, in some sense, playing the middleman because you had access not only to the company itself or the companies in the interest of the companies and their shareholders, but you also had an inside track to environmental groups or environmental committees and movement or action within the federal or states environmental-issue groups, and so you were able to inform both, it sounds like.

CW: Right. And I had total freedom and access in Washington. I frequently testified because I managed and I was member of certain groups. I was not a lobbyist, because we had a Vice President of Government Affairs in Washington, big office and staff and lobbyists. But I worked with them, and I had no problem with access, because as you can read here, I was a member of many government organizations, and I was appointed by Kennedy, Senator Kennedy, to this special group of mostly academic people, to improve curricula in universities and research projects.

So I worked everywhere I could to maintain knowledge, credibility, position, to bring back to Tenneco all this and use my personal credits with all these groups. And I had a lot. It worked very, very well. I know a lot of those managers are still hating me, but it was for the good of the corporation and good for business and kept the production up. That was the name of the game.

JT: Who did you directly report to?

CW: When I came here, I reported to executive vice president, a guy by the name of Duke Walser, W-a-l-s-e-r. He was one of Gardiner Symonds' right-hand men. Duke retired, and then I reported to the senior vice president in charge of law; legal. Then a guy came down here, was president of Packaging, Gordon Bonfield, came down as senior vice president. He was promoted to senior vice president in Tenneco, and I reported to him and I knew him very well. He was about my age.

JT: So this Industrial Ecology Department, was that the name of your department?

CW: Right. I went back to Michigan, and I said they want Environmental Affairs and my peers down there, my professors, especially Spur, Steve Spur came down, he was president of U.T., University of Texas, for a while, then he died. But he said, "I don't like that environmental affairs name." He says, "It's gotta have some meat to it, some credibility." He said, "How about industrial ecology?"

I said, "Well, there isn't anything like that."

He said, "Well, there is one."

It never took on with industry. They like environmental affairs and public relations and stuff like that, that's traditional, but I was stubborn. I told them, I said, "I want it." Then I had a small staff, ten or twelve, added my own attorney.

I couldn't get along with—Tenneco had about ten attorneys reporting to various divisions, and I could never get their attention in environment, so finally—who was president at that time? Dick Freeman. I knew Dick very well. Said, "Hire your own damn attorney." So I did. I got a young guy who was in the Personnel Department, got a law degree, but they wouldn't hire him in the Legal Department because he didn't have the right striped tie. Wasn't the right school he went to. You see it's heavy in forestry, because that was at pulp and paper, but then later on start picking up other divisions.

JT: Here's one question. One of the foremost environmental historians is a fellow by the name of Don Worster. He wrote a book in the late 1970s called *Nature's Economy*, which is basically a history of ecologists and the field of ecology, and he argues that our views on the environment has been partially influenced by views of ecology and ecologists over time, how different views of ecologists have changed. So my question is, how did your particular view of the field of ecology and your background influence the environmental understanding of a company like Tenneco? I mean, everybody has their own different ideas of the environment or of ecology, so from your background and research, how did that influence Tenneco's, and how did you apply that to a mainly oil and gas business?

CW: Well, one of the things that I did is about once a year I would call in to Houston, sometimes someplace else, but most of the time to Houston because it was always nice for young people to get to see what it was like in Houston, because otherwise

it was just something they read about in the annual report or saw on pictures or something like that, the prestige of being called to Houston for a meeting. I would have twenty-five, thirty, forty people. I would want the guy who was in charge of environmental affairs at J.I. Case, for instance, and I'd say, "Bring your two brightest people with you, younger or older," as a reward for doing a good job, but you want to broaden them into the corporate thing. Who knows? Then we would develop a program, my staff, and then people would give presentations on current big successes, big failures, big projects, and report to them and keep them in the know. That was very good.

Most of those people that were coming up in the group were not trained biologists or entomologists. Some of them were business people, some of them were engineers, all disciplines, accountants, but had this interest in the environment and thought that the corporation doing good in that area was good for the country, good for the company, and good for me. I thought that that would penetrate and permeate and tell people that there is some substance to this, and that you can call it what you want; environmental awareness, or fitting the corporation into the environmental program, and that you can do things the right way is the smart way of doing stuff, and in the long run, it is the best way in terms of profitability and contributions and attractiveness as a corporation to sell stock. Now, that's a long-winded explanation, but I figured these meetings and this type of information and me going out to the corporations was good. And I still believe it. I hear from people. I just threw a letter away. Maybe I'll get it in the garbage can.

When I retired—the day I came down here from Tenneco, I got a call from Kirby Lumber Company, vice president, says, "You've just been elected to the Board of Directors of Texas Forestry Association."

I says, "I have? I just got here."

He says, "Well, you're elected." Turns out he was a Michigan man.

And I said, "Okay."

Then later on, I would give talks to all these divisions. When an oil company had their annual meeting, all their leadership in, I'd get on the program, give them a progress report on how I think they're doing and what their challenges are and what their problems are and what their successes are, because it was a big organization, far flung, farther than a pipeline, and try to elicit, solicit, impress the idea of environment's good business. You can think what you will of me. It still keeps the wheels turning. So I did some of that.

JT: You were speaking their language.

CW: Yes, and I could talk their language.

JT: Now, did you learn that at the paper mill or did you learn that when you got to Tenneco in Houston, how to speak the language of environment is good business, it can be profitable and it can help—

CW: I was trained as a scientist, and I remember being impressed by—the university would say, "Goddamn it, we've got a lot invested in you. Don't screw up." They used to tell us that a Ph.D. out of Michigan, they have a million-dollar investment in staff, facilities, time, that it's a million-dollar commitment on their part to get you to that degree. So you get—I wouldn't say conceived, but you kind of feel, "Well, I've accomplished something. I've gotten through this thing."

But later on—you put your finger on it. I took the job as general manager. That's where I got a feeling for business, because the vice president said to me, "Okay, you're a general manager now. You're an automatic member of the Union Committee." Hell, I didn't have anything to do with the union. Then I found out I could only fire a guy, a union man, if he was drunk on the job or stole from the company. And then those guys would be reinstated next time we had negotiations, part of the signings. That, plus being forced to focus on the budget.

JT: And managing money. Right.

CW: Managing money and managing people. You know, a scientist, he sits in a room this big, if he's lucky, and never see anybody again and he's happy. As long as he's got somebody to type the damn stuff and get the reports out and fix his expense account, to hell with the world. Many of them, and I don't knock them because they contribute, but they're not people oriented and they're not business oriented, they're not really environmental oriented. They're problem oriented. That's okay. We need them.

I would have been very happy to stay secluded in my science and solve problems. Dr. Grant said, "Well, you screw it up, you can always come back here. The problems, I guarantee you the environmental problems will be right where you left them. You can take right off, or new ones." Because, as they used to teach it, they used to say, if you've done your work and you did a good report and you got good results, you should have two or three big questions without answers that require further study. Then you've done your job. If you've solved it all and all the answers are there, that's no contribution."

But when I got into business, then I learned how to talk their language. "Don't tell me about production or quota or irate customers or all the other stuff, the union. Don't tell me about union. I've got the scars to show you on that, see?" And that gave me credibility with the vice president, the managers of the corporation. So I played on that. I mean, it worked for me. I wasn't a college kid coming in here trying to kick them around.

JT: How old were you when you took the job in '71?

CW: Forty-three, I think. Yes. I was the youngest general manager in the corporation.

JT: With the paper company.

CW: With the paper company.

JT: And you had done that for about ten years, you said?

CW: About ten years, and I was very successful. It was just really timely. I had a good staff. You learn how to delegate.

JT: Before I get into more really detailed questions which you may or may not have answers to about specific projects in the Gulf of Mexico and in Louisiana, I want to ask you just a few more things about your department. I ran across an article in *The Line* magazine, which is the pipeline magazine. A fellow by the name of B.J. Whitley Jr. was discussing—

CW: He was on my staff.

JT: —the role that EPA is beginning to play in—

CW: What's the date?

JT: That would have been in '74.

CW: I hired him.

JT: Right. It's a question-and-answer article, and so the writer of the article is asking very good questions, and he's coming up with good answers. The question line

is, basically, how is Tenneco or Tennessee Gas Pipeline conforming to new regulations. What are some of the new regulations and some of the new laws that we, as employees, and administrators need to be aware of? Et cetera, etc., etc. So, as a timeline of events, all this is following very well for a historian to sit down and write, like me, which is what I'm planning to do, but tell me a little bit about that, about this guy, about articles like that, that started coming up in the early seventies.

When Nixon comes on television in 1970 and gives a presidential address and says, "I just signed the National Environmental Protection Act," as an oil company or an energy company manager or employee, you've got to look at that and go right back to what you were doing. It's probably how it worked for people, I'm assuming. And it wasn't until the bottom line started becoming affected in a very short amount of time, within a year or two, that the industry began to see the need to make the changes. Can you talk a little bit about that, about how you interpreted environmental laws, environmental regulations, and informed company people about this?

CW: Well, that's why I had the staff. Whitley was on my staff from pipeline, and I had a guy from the oil company, he was refinery, top engineering man from the oil company, and so on. And then the guy from the chemical company. So they made up my staff. Well, what we did is most of those divisions had their own little magazine that they came out with, and we planted stories or interviews or

responses. If you have access to the Tenneco magazine—you know there was one.

JT: Yes.

CW: Well, I ran across it the other day, and I wrote an article there about the North Pole. I went up. We had a cooperative program with the Canadian government and other companies in the high islands, drilling for oil back in the eighties, a number of wells in the most harsh environment that you can possibly imagine for man to get in. Worse than the North Slope in Alaska, and we were part of that consortia, too, and I've been in Alaska a lot on the pipeline. I had my people up there too.

So then I came back and everybody thought that was fantastic that I went and spent a week up there. I was thinking the other day, what the hell am I going to do with that four-hundred-dollar parka I bought? I came back, and I forget the guy's name who did the magazine, the editor said would I write an article. I said, "Okay." So I did. Got big play out of it. Here's Tenneco in the North Pole, and we were worried about the environment. The whole thing was slanted to the environment.

My lawyer and a couple other guys—Whitley was one—I says, "What you do is you scrutinize the stuff coming out of the regulatory people and how it impacts your business, the pipeline or the oil company or the chemical company. Then come to me and explain it to me, because I don't know that science. And

then what we'll do, we'll set a strategy. We'll say, okay, these new regulations require this, this, this, and this. This and this and this are our big budget items in order to—we've got to clean up the ponds at Chalmette or one of the chemical plants or they're going to shut us down sure as hell. Now, what is the straight stuff on this?"

And you let them know some of the chemical plants in New Jersey, some of them were a hundred years old. I mean sites, and the ponds and areas we used for years and years, and seepage was rampant and stuff like that. That's how they came up; well contamination.

JT: So these guys would find out the data and the details for their specific department.

CW: Right. Because they knew it.

JT: They came back to you and you could establish a kind of attack plan.

CW: We had a strategy. Okay, whose button do we have to push? Politically, the best thing to do was to get the lowest guy on that job who was in charge of the ponds and say, "Can you alter the procedures here to conform with these new regulations?" My man. Not me.

And the guy said, "Jeez, you can't do it. It can't be done because of this."

"Why?"

"You've been here twenty years working on that problem, and I can tell you it can't be done."

"What do you got to do?"

"We're going to have to go back to square one. We got to abandon this and go here."

"How long is it going to take?"

"Oh, god, I don't know, but the technology is not here."

Now, with that kind of information coming back to me, I go back to him in the next meeting they hold. According to the chairman, when he introduced me to the Board of Directors in Tenneco, said—and I'm paraphrasing; and they gave me a kind of a send-off, you know, a welcome and all that stuff—but, "I want you to work all your environmental problems and changes and needs through Casey. Now, you don't have to tell him all the trade secrets and stuff, but make sure he knows, so that the board knows, so that the government knows, so that we can react properly. Don't start covering up."

JT: Transparency within the company.

CW: Then he added words to this effect, "He's an automatic member of every committee for changes, new construction, new business, that we form anywhere. Now, he can't get to all these meetings, but you can get to him, because it's going to be a lot easier."

JT: You had an office in the Tenneco building?

CW: Yes. Corner office on the twenty-sixth floor.

JT: And then, as you were saying, you'd take frequent trips to go and check on sites.

CW: Oh, god, I had the company planes at my disposal in all directions. Yes. So I let the technicians, even the scientists, work at their level with their problems. It's when they hit the brick wall that they called me or notified the right man on my staff, and then we took it from there.

Now, one of my biggest problems was new business, or new acquisitions.

File 3

JT: This is part three with Dr. Westell.

I want to go into this a little bit, and if all you can do is provide some generalization, that'll be more than what I have. I know you didn't have—

[interruption]

JT: Any chance that this fellow B.J. Whitley is still around?

CW: I heard he died, but I'm not sure. Most of my guys were senior and had the most credibility. A guy from chemicals died. But oil, he's still around. Well, I'll think of his name. He's living in the Memorial area and he is an archeologist. He's an oil engineer, but his hobby's archaeology and he's written about three hundred papers in archaeology. Well, some of them. Patterson. Name is Patterson.

Before I forget, I want to tell you two stories that signify why I was effective and why in so many big companies, the environmental guy, he's got a nice office and a staff, but nobody hears from him. I got to know these leaders quite well. Gardiner Symonds hired me, or I was responsible for my position. I came down here, and before I reported, he died on the operating table. He was being operated for gallbladder, I think. I was too.

When I got here, Dick Freeman was chairman, and I knew Dick, got to know him very well. He was a real nice guy. He was people oriented, and he was not a fierce, dedicated leader like Gardiner Symonds was, a visionary. He was in the bank and he was someplace else. But he was a good man, and at the time he did a pretty good job bringing the corporation kind of back together. Then when he retired, and I was under him for a while, but he says, "Casey, you report to Duke, Duke Walser, because I don't know what the hell you're doing and it wouldn't help you anyhow." [laughs]

He retired and Jim Kettleson came in. Jim was a CPA that got to be president of J.I. Case, and he was young and aggressive. I got to know him pretty well. I knew him when he was at J.I. Case. We had a good understanding. He said, "I don't want you backing down off these guys." He's talking about the

presidents and executive vice presidents. "If you got trouble, you come and see me, but I'm going to let you work your way through it. You know what's got to be done. I know what's got to be done. I was president of corporate. I know what the resistants are. I know how they're going to bury you in details and stuff, but you work it out."

So when he introduced me, and I told you he says, "I want him a member of all—." The new business just scared the hell out of me, because if there ever was an aggressive bunch of guys, the people they put together to buy a new business or start a new business, these are the young out-of-college MBS, Ph.D.s, business, and want to make a mark. "Buy this corporation. I can be a vice president." So anything and every goes. And I mean the data just slipped right by you. They manipulate everything, and I was always scared of buying problems. It's just like I don't buy that lot on the corner if there was a gas station on it at one time, because you accept all the liabilities for seepage if you got into that problem. That's why I say if there was a gas station there, there would never be another gas station there. No company would ever put one up.

So we went along, and one time we were going to buy Anaconda Copper, a big outfit. So I put all my guys on the job. I said, "You go here and you go there, right down the Rocky Mountains, because they're very serious about acquiring it," because they were down flat on their ass. They could buy it real cheap and make millions.

Well, they came back a couple weeks later after their trips through there. "Casey, they got environmental problems that you haven't even conceived. We

got one plant in Wyoming killed six thousand horses in one emission. They had to buy six thousand horses. One plant over here in such and such a place has got the contaminant in the domestic water supply. They're buying bottled water."

So I went to Kettleson and I said, "Hey, I've talked to those people on this project and they just want to buy."

JT: Oh, they hadn't bought it yet?

CW: Oh, no. I says, "I'm just telling you that they got problems that you will have for a hundred years, and everywhere you got copper, you've got contamination. Whole cities are built on copper up there in Wyoming on landfills with that stuff." And it kept adding up, and I says, "Jim, this is not a good deal for us."

"Well," he says, "I've got to let them ride to come up with their report, because it's gonna make so much money, it's fabulous."

I says, "But you're going to spend every cent of it and more in litigation. They have litigation. I was at a cocktail party in Wyoming and the governor of the state came up to me and said, 'Boy, are we glad you're buying, because we've been holding off on those guys all these years, but when Tenneco comes in, you're going to get it.'" He told me that.

So he said, "Okay, okay, okay."

So I'm sweating blood and I'm coming home, I'm grouchy. I said, "Jesus, I can't believe I'm going through this." I had to go to Washington a couple days later, and I remember this so well because I'm walking through the air station, the

depot—what's the one west of town, the big one? All right, anyhow, I'm walking through there and the loudspeaker says, "Dr. Westell, please call your office immediately."

And that's unusual that it comes through on this. I said, "Jeez, something's really wrong."

So I got to a phone and I called Barbara, my secretary, she says, "Mr. Kettleson called and wants to talk to you immediately."

And I thought, oh, no.

So he says, "Casey, I just thought you should know, we're not going to buy it. It's dead."

I said, "Thank god." [laughs] See? Now, that's how close you come to an environmental disaster, and that'll never be in any book or newspaper. That's the way it was. Oh, man. [laughs] I don't know what I did, but I know I was very happy.

JT: So, not only the benefits of having an environmental specialist on board, but having one who has access to the chain of command and who has the respect and can influence, understanding decisions.

CW: Right. You know, I don't have the data and I don't have the dollars. It's 180 million dollars the first year you own them. I can't argue that. But I do know that these are obligations up and down that Rocky Mountains where these people were working.

And the other one involving Jim Kettleson, who was a good supporter of mine, is I talked to him a couple times, I says, "We've been discussing and I'm going to suggest that we start an environmental audit, division by division. This is significant."

And he says, "Have you run this by any of my presidents?"

I says, "Yeah, a couple of them. They want nothing to do with it." Because they ran it by their people and their people said, "God sakes, no. We don't want an audit."

JT: Any idea what year that might have been? Late seventies?

CW: Oh, yes. This was late seventies, early eighties, right in there. We prepared a long time, because other companies like Shell and Exxon had instituted environmental audits. But, you see, they're generic; they weren't a conglomerate. Narrow, but I mean a wide field of interest, of course, but they're monolithic in terms of organization, where we were a conglomerate.

I bounced this off certain people in each of the divisions and they went back and said, "Hey, Casey's thinking of an environmental audit."

"Jeez. Haven't we got enough trouble with Tenneco? What do we want to do that for?"

"Yeah, they're going to send his people in, they're going to go over our books and everything."

JT: Explain to me, I kind of have an idea, but what is the basis of an environmental audit?

CW: Environmental audit is looking at the policies and the programs and the results. How many cases you got going, violations, how many fines have you paid, how many citations have you got, you're working under extenuating circumstances or something, all of the hot points that you've got. This is like confession in church. Well, it's like a financial audit with the auditors. They start clanking up. Our guys are not looking for blame, but we want to know what the real problems are. You've been horsing us around for five or six, eight years now, no problems, no problems. We'll set up a format and I'll send a team of guys in based on the competency in your—so this went on for a couple months, and I was getting hell from all over. I was being romanticized, and, "God, don't give me another audit, whatever you do."

So there was a big meeting. All the presidents were there. Jim Kettleson came in, and he said, "I got Casey here. We'll take up his business first. I know he's been talking to all of you about an environmental audit, and there will be an environmental audit. Every one of the divisions will be audited annually on the environmental program problems and accomplishments. That's the end of it. No discussion. Thank you, Jim," and walked out.

I was out of that program, oh, god, but it worked. First of all, he wasn't going to back down to all those presidents; secondly, he knew it was the right thing, and third, I prepared him and most of the presidents, if not personally,

through their people. Some guys didn't want to talk to me. Contrary to opinion, you had to be a damn strong leader to lead those ten aggressive presidents without a revolt going on or something, I don't know. But Jim did, stood right up there. He didn't sit down. I think it's significant.

You want to know why I think they had a good program, we had a good program that worked pretty well, had good accomplishments and respect? And I'm not saying, I know there was a problem. It was a problem in the oil company. So many of the permits, especially in water, as you probably know, require sometimes daily checks, sometimes hourly checks. Just like in buildings, is the bathroom clean, a guy has to sign his name on it, check it off every hour, whether he comes in or not. So many of our monitoring stations have to be entered in on a daily, monthly, weekly, some basis, to comply with the permit. Maybe the instrument isn't working quite well, but it gets checked, and there are so many places and so many times that things can go wrong.

That's just one end of the thing, but through the whole area in production of any kind, you know, there are checks and balances at all times on running equipment, especially. Environment was just another one. It was installed. I'm not saying it all worked perfectly, but it was there and it was another thing that professional managers had to contend with, just like budgeting, billing, collections, or any other function that they're involved with. Environment was one. And managers had to be sure it was done.

JT: Now, I know there must have been an enormous pushback. Is there a time in your career that you can pinpoint where that pushback eased off to a point where concerns about production and profit and environment were all talked about in the same breath, the same equal decisions? Does that make sense? Was there a period in your career from the seventies till now when business managers placed environment on an equal footing with other aspects of business?

CW: Yes, reluctantly with some, and gratefully with others. They finally had the same professional attention to environment that they had to other problems, and that management understood it and management accounted for it and management provided money for it.

JT: Can you give me a time period of when that might have been or some events that occurred?

CW: Well, it wasn't the same in every division, because the management style of each division, I wouldn't say is unique, but it's different, so that culture changes came with more difficulty, or in some case was easier because of a guy like Kettleson, who was president of J.I. Case, it got done.

JT: What about from Tennessee Gas or Tenneco Oil?

CW: Tenneco Oil was difficult because you've got to understand how it was put together. Bits and pieces were purchased, right? And each thing you bought was a different set of problems and a different management style. Pipeline was monolithic in the sense that it was built for one purpose. It had one purpose and that's all, and the guys that they hired, many of them stayed with them into senior management so that they're used to regulation, but understand, it was federal regulation, not state. Their history, they got that ticket, they always waived that ticket that they got to build something, and then that was it. They don't want any more discussion about it, because they wouldn't have had the ticket if they weren't going to do the right thing, but it wasn't always the right thing.

They'd fly me up and down the pipeline, and they did a good job and they knew what they were doing, and they were, I wouldn't say preeminent at one time, but they were like kind of prima donnas in the gas pipeline industry. For a while they had the know-how, they had the reputation, and they had the accomplishment.

JT: Well, being monolithic and being the first company of the many Tenneco divisions, going back to that earlier question, when do you feel that management in the Pipeline Division came to an environmental understanding, if you want to call it that? Is there a point in time that you can look back when that occurred?

CW: You know the pipeline ran in divisions, right?

JT: A through G or whatever.

CW: Yes, and some bits and pieces were like underground storage, was a problem. I remember Harry Long, who was the chief vice president then in that area, was an engineer and lived right over here. He died recently. He was a character. [laughs] He took me to lunch one day, had lunch in the executive dining room, and we went through all the pleasantries and he says, "Casey, just what in the hell do you want?"

I said, "I don't want anything, Harry. I just want the pipeline to have a clean bill of health on environment and to stay out of trouble, because these feds are bound and determined to shut the damn thing down if they have to, to make their point." Harry was convinced that if he offered me enough money I'd get out of his hair. [laughs] Don't quote me on that, but, I mean that "What the hell do you want?" Because they did just about everything I asked him to, you know, but the pressure was there and then when the audits came along, Harry was just befuddled. He just couldn't understand why the corporate office was messing in his affairs so much.

JT: It's a contrast of understanding from an engineering mentality to one of an environmental mentality.

CW: Most of the engineers, not most of them, but the mentality was, engineering was engineering. Now, if you're talking sanitary engineering, those are those guys over in another building. [laughter] You know what they called it?

JT: We design things and we build things, and if they break, we fix them. We don't really concern ourselves of what's going on around us.

CW: Yes, we're not interested in sanitary engineering.

JT: Let me get into this. And again, I know you were up at the head in charge of a lot of different areas of Tenneco. This is one small piece of a small piece of the pipeline and the oil business, but it's important to me, anyway, and I think it's important to the history of the offshore oil and gas business, so tell me if you know anything about it or if you comment on it, okay? So, in the late sixties, Tennessee Gas was on an expansion program to build pipeline systems out into the deep water Gulf, so fifty miles out where pipelines had not gone yet. There was a big whoop-dee-do with another large consortium that had put together a plant to build another large gathering system, and Tennessee Gas won out for various reasons I won't go into.

Well, that one little finger extension over time became the largest offshore natural gas-gathering system for Tennessee Gas and Columbia Gulf; it was a joint venture. Basically, if here's the coast of Louisiana, the pipeline came down and went due east and then came back up and tied into the Cocodrie processing

facility over there, so it gathered all that gas and it extended out over the years. It was called the Blue Water system. Over the years, they would just continue to add larger pipeline; they would loop it.

So this is one of the pipelines that I'm writing about right now and researching. An interesting part of it is that the early stages of the pipeline are designed, approved, and built in the late sixties. The other half is designed and approved and built in the early part of the seventies, but it's different because the FPC finally jumps aboard with Environmental Impact Statements with NEPA, with complying with all the various regulations.

CW: What agency?

JT: The Federal Power Commission. That's the ticket that the pipeliners always had in their hand, right? So it's interesting because the history of this pipeline, you see how it's changing, how the strategy of building, how the business plan is changing due to new environmental problems or environmental awareness or environmental issues.

CW: Requirements.

JT: And environmental requirements. You can see that in the permits, you can that see that in the opinions that the Federal Power Commissions are giving.

So one of the big areas that has since become a major debate is the impact of the pipelines on the coastal wetlands, particularly in Louisiana, and this is part of what my dissertation is about. It's about a history of the industry, but it's also what we refer to as environmental history. It's an environmental history of the industry. So one of the things that I'm interested in finding out and talking to people about is the impact of the pipelines on the physical environment in coastal Louisiana. Did you have anything to do—did the pipeline managers ever come to you with any kind of environmental problems associated with either offshore or pipelines offshore or the impacts on land or land use for processing facilities or any of those kind—

CW: I remember I had a Dr. Zigada on my staff, and he spent a lot of the time with the oil company. I have a vague recollection of him coming back to witness pipelining in the marshes, and all I can say is it didn't alarm me or ring a lot of bells with him either. I asked him if it was irreparable, the damage of pushing that pipe in the marsh, and he says, "I don't think so. Now, it's not like stopping up a river or a creek or a stream, or it's not like going through a farmland. Marshland is marshland all the way down." He did not feel that it was irreparable, that properly done and properly amended that the thing—he showed them areas that they had done and they'd re-vegetated. You couldn't tell, except for the markers, that there was a pipeline there. Now, that was his oral report to me. I don't remember any written stuff. It was not a problem. Now, that was in

the marshes. Now, with the other areas, I don't know. I don't know if that's the project; there was some oyster bay problems.

JT: Yes, there always was. Way back in the fifties Tennessee Gas has been fighting with the oyster interest for a long time.

CW: Because those are solid, and once you tear them apart, you tear them apart. They take years to build up, if they will.

I went out there on one of those in the pipeline. The engineer that was with us, pipeline and oil. He landed on one of those oyster beds. You know how they are, wide as this room and maybe fifty feet long. I was scared to hell he was going to lose the helicopter. He said, "Nah, don't worry. It's fifty feet down, solid rock with shells." Then we cracked open oysters and ate them. It was fun. He was just demonstrating.

Oh, I had a professor from LSU. I hired him. I can't remember his name. I was a member of committee of LOOP [Louisiana Offshore Oil Port]. You remember LOOP? It was an effort to—

JT: I'm writing about LOOP right now. It's funny you should mention that.

CW: Yes. I was on a committee, and we met in the Texaco building regularly in Louisiana to build LOOP. What's the status of LOOP? It never was consummated, was it?

JT: Oh, yes. LOOP is a big project out there.

CW: I mean, has it got gas in it or oil?

JT: What LOOP does, it was finally built, it was completed, the construction was completed in 1980, and what it is, it's a five-point mooring system for the large heavy tankers coming from Saudi Arabia.

CW: Start coming in, they come in deep water.

JT: Right, and it's about twenty-five miles offshore of Port Fourchon.

CW: But it's functional?

JT: It's functional, and they come in and they pump all that, and there's a platform that has all the pumping equipment and all the generators.

CW: Tenneco was part of it through Chalmette, probably? I don't know.

JT: There you go. LOOP was owned by LOOP, which was a consortium of three or four oil companies. Texaco was one of them. Forty-five-inch pipelines that ran back to the beach, and then from the beach, which was an onshore terminal, to a

salt mine that they had leached to store the oil, and from there it branched off. One pipeline went to an Esso refinery, Exxon, one went to Shell, maybe one went to Tenneco. I wasn't aware of that. I'll have to look into that.

But anyways, the interesting thing about LOOP—and we can talk about it later—is that it is the first project, aside from maybe the Alaska pipeline, that is almost environmentally bulletproof, I mean the amount of work that went into it. And I'd be interested to hear what your role was, because you know they did a big environmental impact study.

CW: I was on the committee, and we had a man from the oil company, and I was on it officially or unofficially, but I went to several meetings, and all we were doing authorizing appropriate studies at that time. I don't know who the firms, the consultants were, but I know that the studies were made, that reports were issued, and the permit apparently given..

JT: I'm writing about it, and it's interesting because it is the first big project that really conforms, in some sense, goes above and beyond, and maybe that's just written down in paper, but I don't know what it looks like out there, physically, but it looks like Louisiana and LOOP did their homework to stay ahead of regulations.

CW: Well, it's a point terminal, that's all.

JT: Well, it's a terminal, but it's the onshore pipeline that was the big—forty-five—because they had to dredge the big canals to put in the big pipeline.

CW: It was supposed to save money and time, right?

JT: Right, yes. The brine storage as well was a problem.

File 4

JT: Well, just the last two questions and then we can finish up here, Dr. Westell. How did *Valdez, Exxon Valdez* oil spill impact what you did at Tenneco?

CW: Well, first of all, that was Exxon, but we had part of the pipeline. We still do, or Tenneco, whoever bought it. I was up there a number of times on environment. The big issue in the pipeline was how will it affect the environment in Alaska, especially the permafrost areas. Those problems are all solved. They were problems, but they were not insoluble.

I can't remember any big meeting over the *Valdez* incident. I went up there, and I had a helicopter and we landed in a little town south of Valdez Harbor. For what reason? There was a biologist or I was with a biologist, and I wanted the straight information. Now, who the hell was—who'd he work for? I think he worked for the University of Alaska, and our committee hired him or had him explain the results of that spill, not its causes, but environmental losses.

About 90 percent of any spill, this one included in Valdez, is emotional, and there's no question. There, we didn't have all of these collateral impacts that they're having here from a guy's hamburger stand revenue down to zero and he's going to get some compensation. We didn't have any of that there.

We were interested in knowing what the liability was going to be for us in the pipeline, and Exxon particularly, on the clean-up and damage. I don't think it had any impact on any policy on ours, but knowing me, I certainly reported to the right people that these are not simple problems, nor are they to be ignored. It wasn't an act of god. That guy was drunk on duty or wasn't responding, wasn't guiding the boat properly, steering the boat.

Looking back on it, all I remember is a biologist, one of the professors, saying that the kindest thing you can do to contaminated birds is to throw them in a barrel, that the practicality of cleaning them up and that they would survive was almost nil in that environment. Now here, I don't know.

JT: So no real response from Tenneco higher-ups, or from you, or a push to interpret what the new laws and regulations—and I'm referring to what they call the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, the result of *Valdez*, which ups liability costs, which provides all kinds of other—

CW: You see, I retired in '91, so it would be minimal. But I didn't get any kickback or I would've heard from some of my people. I don't remember anything like that. I do remember going up there, and I do remember talking about it and taking the

message back, but to whom—I was never called on the carpet for it or to get up at some meeting and explain the liability because it was pretty well covered in newspapers, the extent of the cost and stuff like that.

That goes back to the gas pipeline people. I wouldn't say that pipeliners were indifferent, but they saw the greater need was the pipeline. And your victory garden, your garden or your pasture was the least of their worries if they had permission and prior agreement to go through there, and the guy knew he was compensated and he knew they were coming. Didn't make him feel any better and it was a big public relations problem, but the pipeliners didn't worry about that, and the oil people are that way too.

The irony of the whole environmental—I don't want to get going on that because that's an hour's lecture—is that we have so much proven resources in coal, iron, and gas and oil in the continental United States and Alaska, Canada. They're working on the pipeline—remember I told you I'm going to the North Pole in the early seventies, mid-seventies. Finally, I see in the paper that they're working on that pipeline to bring that gas down the Mackenzie River. That's the route we had picked back then. I had biological teams up there hired with Canadian biologists and zoologists and whatever, ecologists to get that. Now that gas, it's pretty good.

We had a tar sands project. You know what tar sands are. I was up there. We had that going in conjunction with Shell, I think. It's a hell of a big thing. They got the price down at the end to about fourteen to sixteen dollars a barrel, and it's not being really exploited.

With Occidental Petroleum, we had a big project in the Rocky Mountains I went to see a couple of times, was oil shale. If you conceive of a big tank in the mountain of this oil shale, and they fracture it like a pipe. You know, you smoke a pipe, you smoke long enough you get a lot of goo in the bottom that you've got to get out. That's exactly what you're doing with oil shale. We had a big project with them, and it was to get to be fourteen dollars a barrel. Then it would be economic. And this is in the eighties.

They showed me that—we looked at the curves. He said, "Well, you see this is the curve on the world price of oil that's ten dollars and something. And this curve here parallel like a railroad line, that's oil shale. That's fourteen dollars. Now, when these curves cross, then oil shale will be economic." Guess what? They never crossed. The Arabs won't let them cross. Same way with oil shale. Their job is to control world markets by making ours uneconomic up to now. Now it's getting a little crowded. But anyhow, that's the irony of the whole thing, that we can't get our energy policy in the right context.

JT: We've been living with abundance and haven't figured out exactly how to manage it.

CW: And then all of this stuff, you mentioned Santa Barbara. I went there many times. I had a committee one time, I was chairman of a committee for the oil industry, we rented a barge, big elegant barge to take GOO, all the GOO members that wanted to go out, because you could stand in Santa Barbara and look and see oil

rigs offshore. They were blending tarballs. Well, it turned out the tarballs are off of Tarball Point since time immemorial coming to shore. My brother lived in Santa Barbara. He said the kids get oil on them the first time they went down there swimming.

I took him out there, and I had some biologists there. They had been fishing and I wanted to show him the fish that were down below the water on the platforms. We had starfish this big. You know starfish are like that. But they had such good living down there that they grew giant size. Made the papers and everything. Didn't make any difference. GOO doesn't want to see those rigs out there. Off of certain places off of California, they have to decorate them, make them look like windmills and stuff like that. But you're right, they don't want any drilling, and this is going to set that program back years.

JT: Maybe this is something we can take up for a lunch conversation, Mr. Westell. How's that?

CW: All right.

[End of interview]

[Final edit by Jason Theriot, 30 August 2011]