HHA # 00359

Interviewee: Jack Proffitt

Interviewer: Steven Wiltz and David DiTucci

Interview Date: July 10, 2002

Interview Site: Sunset, LA

Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW009

Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling and "uhs" and "ums" have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee's wife, noted as "MrsP" was also present during the interview and contributed some. The tone/pitch/clearness of the interviewee's voice fluctuates quite a bit and I found it difficult at times to understand what he was saying.]

Ethnographic preface:

Born in 1926 in Iowa, Jack Proffitt was the son of a machinist. He graduated high school in Ottumwa in 1943 and enlisted in the Navy (V-12 Program). While in the Navy he attended Iowa State College, where he received a degree in electrical engineering in 1946. He tried graduate school for a bit, but then decided to look for a job instead. He was hired by Geophysical Service (GSI) and spent several months in Texas before being transferred to Louisiana; he continued to move around a lot while working with the company (both within LA and out of state). He had his first experience doing offshore work as a supervisor outside of Houma in 1953. Later in his career he became manager of operations in the Gulf Coast Region and then manager of operations in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. When he returned to the U.S. he ran the company's worldwide marine operations for several years. He retired from GSI in 1981 and began a consulting business which he ran for about 15 years. He consulted for companies that manufactured equipment for the geophysical industry; his longest term client was DigiCOURSE. During the interview they discuss the evolution of seismic practices, moving around, and Mr. Proffitt relates several anecdotes from his time doodlebugging.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW] and [DD]

Interviewee initials: [JP] and [MrsP]

SW: Is it on record?

DD: Uh hm. Interview with Jack Proffitt, it is July tenth, 2002, at his home.

SW: Just uh, like you said some of the standard questions, a little bit of background information. Uh, where, where you guys are from, where you were born and uh, what kind of s-, where'd you go to school. And some family background.

JP: Well I was born and raised in the state of Iowa. I went to high school in Ottumwa, Iowa. And I graduated from high school in 1943 and uh, I went into, I enlisted in the Navy. That was during World War Two of course and I went into the Navy and uh, I was selected for the uh, V-12 Program, which was a college training program. And uh, so I went on, entered that in 1943 and continued on in the V-12 Program until I got a degree in electrical engineering in early '46. Then I served in the Navy for a few more months after that as a, as an ensign. I got commissioned at that time and served as an ensign until, in the late 1946. Um, what else?

SW: What year were you born?

JP: Nineteen twenty-six.

SW: And you ma'am?

MrsP: Twenty-seven. [Pause]

SW: And after the war um, did, did I hear that right? You served in, in Europe or?

JP: Uh, no, I never got out of the United States [reserve?]. I was, I was border shift in the mid-Atlantic for a few months, we were comin' in and out of U.S. ports [during war time?]. And uh, like I said I was in college at Iowa State, it's Iowa State University now, it was Iowa State College in those days. And that's where I got my degree from. Uh, after the war, immediately after I got out of the Navy, I went back to school at Iowa State with the idea of gettin' a master's degree. But uh, pretty soon after I got there I decided that I really wasn't master's degree material and I better start lookin' for a job. So uh, I did and in that fall of 1946 uh, graduate engineers were pretty hard to come by. 'Cause there'd been a long, a big gap in there and very few were produced. Uh, so I had all kinds of opportunity to uh, for, for jobs. In fact I interviewed 56 different companies that fall. [Chuckles] And, and uh, just to give you an idea electrical engineers at the time were, were being offered somewhere between 180 and 200 dollars a month. That was the goin' rate. [Chuckles] And uh-

SW: That's pretty good for that period of time?

JP: So anyway uh, I didn't find anything I, I kept interviewing companies, but I hadn't really gotten excited about any of the opportunities. One company offered me a job on a pole setting crew, [Chuckling] electrical utility [company?]. On a pole setting crew, which wasn't too exciting. But anyway [Clears throat]-

SW: What your uh, what did your mother and father do? What did you family do?

JP: Well my, my dad at that time was a machinist workin' for a company in Ottumwa, Iowa. My mother was basically a housewife, although she did work uh, a little bit during the war years.

SW: How did you uh, how did you gravitate towards electrical engineering field?

JP: Well [Chuckles] I, when I graduated from high school I thought I wanted to be a chemical engineer. And uh, so when I got in, admitted V-12 Program they didn't offer chemical engineering, they offered electrical en-, electrical, mechanical, and civil and so forth, you know. I don't know why I just decided to, my best choice was bein' an electrical engineer. But anyway that's what I did and, and in that fall of 1946 when I was interviewing, like I said, I didn't get any jobs that really a-, turned me on until one day I saw something on a bulletin board that said uh, a man from geophysical service was gonna be there to interview engineers interested in geophysics. And I had never heard the word before. [Chuckles] Didn't, didn't even know what it was. So I went to the interview to uh, find out what it was and got kind of excited about it, interviewed a couple, three more companies in that area. But uh, Geophysical Service, GSI as it was known in those days made me the best offer, 235 dollars a month. [All chuckle]

SW: And that was, that was high money at that time?

JP: That was big money. That was big money. And uh, so I went to work for them in uh, January of '47 in Bowie, Texas.

SW: So you moved from Iowa to Texas for that job?

JP: Right.

SW: And, and-

JP: Well meantime after th-, at the end of the war my folks moved from Ottumwa to Amarillo, so uh, that probably had a little bit to do with, with my choice at the time. But uh, but I didn't stay in Bowie, Texas very long. I was there about two months and then I got transferred to Napoleonville, Louisiana.

SW: Quick. [All chuckle]

JP: And uh, I worked around Napoleonville for a little while and then uh, I got transferred to Houma, Louisiana. I stayed there, that was in 1947, I stayed there until the middle, middle of 1949. And meanwhile I met this lady here and we got married in 1949. And I told her mother, "Oh, I'm gonna be here for a long time," and three months later we got transferred to Alberta, Canada. [All chuckle]

SW: You were movin' all over the place.

JP: Yeah, we moved around quite a bit. That's, that was common in those days on geophysical crews. I was working on field crews and…

SW: How did you uh, how did you end up working uh, what was your, actually what was your relation to the oilfield work eventually?

JP: Well we did the, we were contract-, we were seismic contractors that uh, we contracted our services to the oil companies. And did seismic exploration.

SW: So you never worked directly for the company, you just a contract worker-

JP: Yeah, we were-

SW: For Geo-, Geophysical?

JP: Our company was one, was at that time the largest contractor in the business.

SW: Did you stay with-

JP: Just as in-, interesting side [light?], GSI, out of that company GSI that I started with, Texas Instruments grew out of that company. [Chuckles] When I went to work for GSI, TI, Texas Instruments, was uh, our laboratory, what we called our laboratory and mechanics division. They became the tail that wagged the dog. [All laugh]

SW: You stayed with GSI for your career?

JP: I stayed there for 35 years. I retired from GSI in 1981, that's when we moved back here. And I started a consulting business which I ran for about 15 years. And uh, it was kind of a practice for retirement, because that wasn't really a full-time thing there. [Inaudible], or at least not completely full time.

SW: Okay. In your uh, in your dealings with the, with the oil companies, can you, can you describe some of things that you guys did for them? Some of your fieldwork?

JP: Yeah, well, like I say, it was, we were doing seismic exploration in the field and when I first came down here I worked out in Napoleonville we were workin' in the cane fields. We were there using trucks and, I don't know if you're familiar with seismic operations, but uh, [Inaudible] workin' on land they drill holes and put dynamite in the hole and shoot off the dynamite and record the information that comes back up from, reflected back up from down inside the earth.

SW: That's what, that's the way you can tell what's down there?

JP: Uh hm.

SW: That's what [Inaudible].

JP: And it was pretty crude in those days. [Chuckling] I mean, we thought we were pretty good, but this was real-, it was really, it was pretty crude. Much more of an art than a science. [SW laughs]

SW: Yeah, we just drill holes and put dynamite down there and blast it and measure it.

JP: And you record, you record this and at that time we recorded on this paper, paper records and than those, geophysicist and a geolo-, and, or a geologist would interpret that in terms of what was, what was happening down underneath the ground.

SW: Sounds like you guys were goin' around blowin' things up. [All chuckle] How did the uh, how did the cities and the little towns you were going to, how'd they feel about that?

JP: Well we, we, we didn't do much work in the, inhabited areas in those days, we, well I say not, not heavily inhabited areas, there has been seismic work done a lot in some pretty big cities including Los Angeles since that time, but then uh, we was still relatively new and there was lots of country to explore, and we generally used, like on a land crew, like what I was workin' on then, we generally used the roads and trails that were available and laid out a grid according to that. We tried to stay away from houses, we had some rules of thumb on how far we had to be away from houses and buildings and that kind of thing.

SW: You ever experience any-

JP: We never really had, you know, at least the charges were fired 50 to 100 feet below the ground, so it wasn't a, it wasn't a big deal as far as shakin' things up. [SW and DD chuckle] And then uh, later on I worked in the, in the marsh swamp. Went to work in the marsh around Morgan City a good while and that was kind of interesting. It was pretty open marsh down there we used some of the early, very earliest marsh buggies that uh, there were some you probably heard of Higgins, Higgins' boats. Well Higgins New Orleans made some marsh buggies that were being used at the time and we had a couple of those. They were, they were not very good. We spent as much time workin' on 'em as we did workin' with 'em. [All chuckle] But uh, about that time a fella named Cheramie from down south Louisiana had come out with another much bigger marsh buggy, which was a much better, much better working piece of machinery. We used it quite a lot out there. And then uh, shortly after that I went to work in uh, I worked oh, I guess about a year and a half over in the Atchafalaya Basin. We were actually backpackin' stuff through the swamp over there. [Chuckles]

MrsP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JP: Had to carry everything. [Drill stem?] instruments, dynamite, everything, packin' through the swamp.

MrsP: And about how much did that weigh? [On the back of a rig?]?

JP: Well for one thing you had to carry two big batteries like a car battery to run the instruments and those things weighed about 40 pounds apiece. [Chuckles] Equipment was pretty heavy. And then uh, in the winter and the early spring, well in the spring, when the floods begin to happen up north the basin, water gets pretty high in the basin. And uh, we'd used pirogues then, we'd get around in the pirogues, that made it a lot easier. [All chuckle] But we were, that was, that was kind of a fun job because we actually worked part of that time right where I-10 goes through now. Workin' right in that area around Henderson and… oh what's the little fishing community down below Henderson there?

DD: Cecilia or something-

JP: No, no down [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

DD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

JP: Oh I can't think of the name. Anyway, we worked back in there in an area that was, you know, pretty remote at the time. You'd see a few fishermen back in there, commercial fishermen and a few sports fishermen back in there, but then you didn't see many people [All chuckle] back in that area. So that was kind of interesting. In fact I remember readin' in the Times Picayune and, in nineteen, early 1950s when they first begin to survey where I-10. And uh, this article in the Time Picayune made it sound like those surveyors that did that survey were the first, first people that had ever set foot in that swamp. [Chuckles] I never, we'd been walkin' that thing a good while before they, before that happened.

SW: When, when was that? You were doing your land seismic work about what time, what time period did you do your work on land mainly?

JP: Uh, the early, uh, when I was workin' in [Inaudible] that was early 1947. Yeah. And then before, by April 1947 I was workin' in the marsh and swamp. And later that year we moved into the Atchafalaya Basin. The period I'm talkin' about now is around 1947, '48.

SW: Did you ever do any work offshore?

JP: Yeah, I had-

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]?

JP: I guess when I really, my first job offshore was probably about nineteen fifty… fifty-three, although I knew quite a bit about it already with work that was bein' done, because we had some offshore crews workin' out of Houma at the time. [By the time they knew?] what was happening right from the beginning [Inaudible]. Not the first seismic work that was done really offshore, I mean aside from, I'm talkin' about offshore as opposed to in the shallower bays and sheltered bays and so forth, so forth [Inaudible] 1946 when the, when uh, Humble and Mobil and, and the California Company, at that time California, which is now Chevron. Humble's now Exxon. They were working off of Grand Isle at that time. And uh, then all this started that kind of operation, they were floundering around really trying to figure out how to work out there. And uh, one of their biggest problems was how to locate the, the shot points where the, where the cable was and so forth [out there?] and uh, they did pretty good when they were in close to shore, 'cause they would set up surveyors, surveying towers along the shore and triangulate in and so forth. That was fairly easy, but uh, after they got a little bit offshore it got kind of hairy. [All laugh] And they tried all kinds of different things. One of the interesting things they tried was, at that time at the end of the World War Two there were a lot of these surplus barrage balloons and they were just relatively small helium filled balloons. So they had the idea that if they could float those off the mast of the boat out there they could see it better from the shore and so forth, see it further out. And so they tried that and it worked a little bit. [Chuckles] They had an interesting story about the president of our company. He was down there, no, he wasn't the president at the time, but then he was later. But he was uh, down there and they were inflating the first of these balloons off a barge in Grand Isle. They were pumpin' helium into the thing. I don't know if you've ever seen that done, but you pump air or helium or something into those big old things and they don't, it doesn't

look like they're gettin' much in 'em until all of a sudden they go whoof like that and they start floatin' up. [Chuckles] So anyway they were pumpin' away and pumpin' that helium into this big old balloon out on a barge. And uh, didn't look like they were gettin' anyplace when all of a sudden it just popped up and started floatin' away. Well, turned out nobody had thought to tie it down. [All laugh] Well there was a rope hangin' down from the, from the balloon and uh, so Doctor Peacock, who was the head of the company, was standin' right by it, he reached up and grabbed the rope [Chuckles] and he wound up about 20 feet up in the air [All chuckling] before they finally figured out some way to d-, I'm not sure how they got him down, but they finally did. And that's in my article, you'll read a little bit about that.

SW: Okay, that sounds funny. Got kind of a shock out of that didn't he?

JP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]. [Chuckles] But anyway they uh, the offshore work uh, it developed pretty fast. They uh, came up with some ways for electronic surveying very, very early in the game. Some World War Two equipment was used for that. And uh, that enabled 'em to get further away from shore and get out of line of sight and so forth.

SW: Did you see that developing really quickly you said?

JP: Yeah, it developed pretty rapidly uh [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

SW: They [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

JP: I think probably by the end of 1947 they were pretty well using all the electronic, electronic surveying. Little company called ONI, Offshore Navigation, uh [Clears throat] started that. They were the first ones to offer that service, it's called [shoran?]. And incidentally the guy, one of the founders of that was uh, Bob Suggs who later founded Petroleum Helicopters here in Lafayette.

MrsP: Bob [Inaudible, overlapping speech; sounds like a last name]?

JP: Hm? Bob Suggs.

MrsP: Bob Stuggs?

JP: Suggs.

MrsP: Suggs.

JP: S-U-G-G-S. [Inaudible, mumbling]

SW: I've heard of the name.

JP: He died a few years ago, but his wife was runnin' the company until about a year ago I think. Petroleum Helicopters, yeah.

SW: We've been tryin' to talk to somebody over there.

JP: Yeah, oh yeah, you can talk-

SW: And I haven't had good luck.

JP: I don't know if Frank Lee is still alive or not, but uh, Frank was one of the founders of PHI and he was also an old geophysicist back in the, uh, he [was a good man?]. I'm not sure whether he's still alive, but he's probably around Lafayette someplace if he is.

SW: Try and look him up. What was Bob's wife name?

JP: Whew. I can't remember. You'd have to ask somebody over-

MrsP: Didn't they [murder?] her just a few years ago?

JP: Well just really probably within the last year she retired.

MrsP: Yeah, she had a big-

JP: [Inaudible] retired.

DD: Is she still around?

MrsP: Yeah.

SW: She's still around. She'd be good to talk to as well.

JP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]. [Slight pause]

SW: [Inaudible]-

JP: I think she was his second wife, she doesn't go all the way back to the founding of the company, but uh, she would know a lot of people who were involved with that I'm sure.

SW: I'll try to look her up and I'm gonna try to talk to Mister Lee, too. But um… how much, how m-, how much work did you do offshore?

JP: Oh. [Chuckles]

SW: Too much?

JP: I was, I was in and out of, involved with it in and out, but uh, I guess by the time I had, I had my first real experience offshore in 1953 or so uh, I was supervising at that time, supervising a crew, we was workin' offshore over there in Houma and uh, I went out with the crew frequently. And spent quite a bit of time out. Later on I moved to Shreveport and we'd be, we had an offshore [Clears throat] offshore crew that was workin' for a [Leading?] Producing Company at the time, Leading Producing was headquartered in Shreveport. So I moved up there to be close to our client and also we had an interpretation office in Shreveport was uh, interpreting the data that we were getting offshore. That, that time I made frequent trips offshore, too. Uh, then I went back to land work for a few years and then went to California and worked offshore California for about three and a half years. Different, different places that were offshore of the west coast, we worked

all the way from Alaska to Mexico just about during that time.

SW: Wherever the oil is, right?

JP: What?

SW: Wherever the oil is.

JP: Yeah, wherever they thought it was at the time. They thought it might be. And uh-

SW: What kind of schedule did you work when you were offshore or on land?

JP: Uh, mostly we worked uh, uh, in those days we used to work 10 and four or sometimes it would be eight and six depending on how many hours we got in. When I was workin' in the marsh around Houma right after we were married, we were workin' basically, our basic schedule was to work 100, we'd go out and work 100 hours and then, then come in [Inaudible] or 10 days whichever came first. Then, you know, in good weather and uh, summer time especially where we'd get 100 hours in seven or eight days. [Chuckles] Which was pretty nice.

SW: So you have a few extra days off?

JP: Uh hm. We were workin', during that time I was workin' actually shallow water, workin' in the bays uh, south of Houma and south of Morgan City, in that area.

MrsP: Are you interested in just Louisiana or the whole picture?

SW: Just Louisiana-

MrsP: Mostly Louisiana?

SW: Yes ma'am.

JP: And then later I came back to the Gulf coast, I was a manager of the Gulf Coast Region for a period of time. Later I went to [Clears throat] to England as the manager of Eur-, Europe, Africa, and Middle East. Then when, that's when work was going on in the North Sea and Mediterranean. We had w-, we had crews workin' north, offshore crews workin' in the North Sea, Mediterranean, uh, Persian Gulf, uh, off Africa, off Nigeria, off uh, a couple places in west Africa during that time. And uh, I traveled around, got to see those operations quite a bit. And then I came back to the United States and ran our worldwide marine operations for several years. Responsible for [everything?] during that time [Inaudible]. [Inaudible] 20, 25 crews workin' worldwide at the time offshore.

SW: You progressing-

JP: We had a lot of offshore, [Inaudible] most of 'em, most of my experience was offshore.

SW: Progressively worked your way up in the company [until the time?]?

JP: Uh hm.

SW: Okay. What um, using dynamite and things like that of course uh, it's kind of dangerous. [Chuckles]

JP: Very dangerous, especially offshore. [Chuckles]

SW: Did you ever see, did you see lots of injuries or?

JP: I never saw uh, I was never involved in an accident. I knew about some that happened. Our company was either lucky or good, we ne-, we never did have any major offshore dynamite accidents. Um, there were some other companies at the time that did. A couple of ships blew up and killed a lot of people. [That kind of thing happened?]. At the height of things there uh [Clears throat] during the oh, middle 1960s when I came back to Houston to run the Gulf Coast operations, uh, there was a, essentially a resurvey of the whole Gulf of Mexico going on at that time. [Inaudible] at one time I had 14 crews working in the Gulf of Mexico and all of 'em shootin' dynamite. And those would shoot 500,000 to 600,000 pounds of dynamite a month. [Chuckles] It's a lot of dynamite. [Chuckles] And we, we uh, carried that on a separate what we called the "shooting boat." And uh, it was a ammonium nitrate, we used the same stuff we used to blow up the [Oklahoma tower over there?]. [Clears throat] Which was, which is relatively stable, it's a very, it's [Inaudible] stable explosive. It's pretty hard to set off, it takes a detonator of some sort to set it off. So it was relatively safe, but the problem was we, you had to throw this dynamite overboard and we used balloons or what we called "turkey bags," which was just a big old plastic bag-

DD: Filled with [Inaudible].

JP: You took it like that, got a bunch of a air in it, wrapped your wire around the bottom, cap wire around the bottom, and that went into the charge and it floated, it floated the charge a few feet below the surface. And uh, every once in awhile one of those charges either wouldn't go off or it'd break loose and get away, and it'd be just floatin' out there in the ocean. [Laughs]

MrsP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

JP: Then we had to uh, uh, the common practice at that time was to use a, a air rifle, if that thing got away or start floatin' away, you'd shoot the turkey bag and try to puncture those turkey bags so it would sink. Which worked fairly well. But particularly off Texas there were currents and stuff that nearly started washin' those things up on the beaches. And in fact when I got transferred back to Houston that was about the first thing that hit me. State government and, and [Inaudible] people along the beaches in Texas were up in arms as you can [SW chuckles] well imagine. [Chuckles] So we had airplanes that would, we hired planes and had people go out along the beach and you could see these turkey bags they were [orange?], you could see it from quite a ways away and try to spot those things and then we'd get people out there to pick 'em up. And that was during 1966 and 1967. And, you know, there were I guess I'm gonna say 25, 30 crews workin' in the Gulf of Mexico at that time. [Chuckles] They were all doin' more or less the same thing, it was pretty dangerous. It was pretty [hairy?] operation.

SW: So when you're on land, you drill into the ground and put a dynamite, but out in the ocean

you just floating right there-

JP: Ocean, ocean you just throw it overboard and suspend it, so it's a-

DD: You kind of float it out-

SW: And that had the same effect for you to measure [what that was?] under?

DD: So it didn't have to touch the actual hard surface of the ocean floor to be able to-

JP: No, as a matter of fact it worked better if it didn't. [Inaudible] floated, in the early days they just tried throwin' 'em overboard and let it, let it go to the bottom. And uh, uh, that created all kinds of problems, besides that it wasn't, it didn't give good seismic results. [JP and DD chuckle] And so they learned finally that they could suspend the charges really not a very big, not a very deep depth, like five or six feet. And it was good there. So that's the way things operated from [early?] '40s to the middle '60s pretty much, or through the end, just about the end of the '60s. [But?] [Clears throat] during uh, 1967 uh… [Papers shuffle] we heard about some people that had invented was a called an air gun, it was a piece of, it was just piece of machinery there that, and used as a compressed air charge and we'd release that charge and it would give you enough energy to uh, use it as a seismic source. It'd been tried a few years earlier without much success, but by '67 they had kind of perfected it and uh, we tried it the first time in 1967, we tried it first in shallow water and uh, near Corpus Christi Bay, off Texas. And worked real good. And said, "Hey, maybe we got somethin' here." [Chuckles] Get rid of dynamite, which was a big thing. The other thing was too those ships of course were equipped to work 24 hours a day, but it was either against the law in many places or it certainly was against good practice to go out there shootin' dynamite at night. [DD chuckles] So we were, our productivity wasn't as good as it should be, so we were very interested in these air guns. And uh, um, we developed that as a, as a source I guess by… by 1969 [Pause] we had just about converted all our uh, ships to air gun sources. Which was a much safer source uh, we had, instead of carrying all this dynamite, we had these huge air compressors aboard and four or five of those big things runnin'. [Chuckles]

SW: And how, how exactly would it work? You said it would, you'd shoot it into the water?

JP: [Clears throat]

SW: And they'd-

JP: You, you would fill these containers I guess you might call those specialized containers with, with the compressed air. And there was, what we, we made a whole array of these things, which gave us a directivity affect [to 'em?]. And uh, then you just suddenly release this air and test the same, you know, it creates a bubble which was the same thing that the dynamite does in the water-

SW: Float it in the water and then you'd release the air.

JP: Right, float in the water and [it was?] released. Instead of firin' the dynamite we simply just released the air in these things. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

SW: Released all of it, released all of it at the same time-

JP: Yeah, all at once. And yeah, yeah.

SW: I got you.

JP: [And uh?], it uh, it had, no it was great, it gave at least as good if not better seismic results. Cut the cost by 40 or 50 percent, it was, big, big cost was dynamite cost. And uh, it created and the safety of it was great and it did not kill fish. [JP and DD laugh]

SW: That was the other thing I was gonna ask, with dynamite [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JP: They did a lot of experiments, we had to convince a lot of people it didn't kill fish in the early days and uh, we did a lot of experiments in different places around the world. Where they'd put fish in cages and put 'em around there, these air gun sources and whatnot, and uh, really everybody accepted 'em [Clears throat] pretty quickly. That [hey/air?] this is a good thing. So in the meantime there had been other attempts at what were called non-dynamite sources, that's what everybody was lookin' for, a non-dynamite source. They had used a, a gas exploder some [Inaudible], for uh, some high resolution shallow seismic work and uh, it was, wasn't very powerful, but it would, you had a mixture of uh, [sadaline?] and oxygen. And uh, fire, fire that, actually set off an explosion with that. Uh, it was somewhat better than dynamite, but it certainly wasn't anymore safe than dynamite because you, you're carrying boat loads of uh, sadaline and oxygen. [All chuckling] [We couldn'tve had two?]. So it didn't take very long for the air gun to become the standard source for the industry. And that's what's still being used today.

SW: How much time on the boats did you s-, how much time did you spend on the boats out to, when you went and did seismic work? Was it-

JP: W-, well, [in what way?], I don't really-

DD: Like did you stay off for a month at a time or-

SW: Did you stay off a month or?

JP: Well, [SW and DD still talking] as time went, in the beginning, like I said, they worked a schedule and they would shut down and come in and that was, [they?] say, "Hey, we got all these boats, we can't do that." So they started staggering crews. One crew would work for 10 days, then the next crew would come on and work 10 days. They would actually overlap some. That went on for a long while. In uh, later years as the ships got bigger and bigger, and they were workin' further and further offshore, and further and further away from home, they worked continuously and they would come to port and change crews and go. And then uh, in, a lot, in recent years they change crews by helicopters. Just keep workin' continuously.

MrsP: You didn't mention living on houseboat did you?

SW: I'd like to hear that.

MrsP: Yeah.

JP: Oh, okay, well, yeah, in the marsh and swamp work that we did uh, in the early days we lived on houseboats in, in shallow water, shallow water work, too. I, I think in the early, very earliest days of the offshore work we did the same thing, we were usin' much smaller boats and we had a houseboat where they used as a headquarters and a place to sleep, place to eat, then you went out from there. Uh, and these houseboats were, quarter boats we called 'em, which were different, different from I guess the pleasure houseboat. But they were pretty big affairs, they slept 40 or 50 people and had a big kitchen. They were quite comfortable most of 'em. But we towed 'em with [Slight pause] ordinary like shrimp boats. They were these boats that were available in the area, [we set up?] two or three of the boats [on the crew?] and when we wanted to move we just hooked on the quarter boat and moved out. We had an interesting experience up near Krotz Springs uh [Clears throat] um, Highway 190 goes across, there's a bridge at Krotz Springs that goes across there. And we had our houseboat right there, almost underneath the bridge, had it tied up for all of one winter while we were workin' in the Atchafalaya Basin in e-, around uh, well south and east of Krotz Springs. Down by [Alabama?], in there. And uh [Clears throat] anyway when we, we got ready to move further south in the basin, into the area where I was talkin' about, where I-10 now crosses, it was in the spring and the river was high, it was really high. And, and we were in between the highway bridge and the railroad bridge at Krotz Springs. And there was a very strong current goin' downriver [Chuckles] at that time. And that railroad bridge is not very wide when it's opened, 'cause it's a drawbridge and when it's open it's not very wide. In fact it wasn't much wider than our quarter boat. [All laugh] And so anyway we had this thing all planned out, we, we gonna have a vessel in front and a vessel behind, and when we let go from the bank they were gonna pull it out and the vessel behind was sort of gonna hold it back. In the meantime we were, we had to signal to the guy on the bridge so that he would get the bridge open for us. Boy, everything worked just fine, we got the signal, the bridge opened, they pulled the thing out in the river, they headed toward that bridge and just about that time the rope on the boat in the rear broke [Laughs] and here was this boat in the front tryin' to go as fast as he could to keep that thing straight. Well they went through, I was on the houseboat at the time.

DD: [Chuckling] Oh.

JP: And when they went through that bridge and I'm tellin' you there wasn't six inches on either side of that houseboat, and how we got through it I don't know, but we were four or five miles down river before we finally got the thing into the bank where we could control it. [All chuckle] That was a little exciting experience. There were a lot of funny things like that that happened.

MrsP: Some of, we didn't move that much. But some of the couples, families moved like every six weeks. Some people had children in school um, moved very often. Their children seemed to do fine, kept up. I'm sure they had a lot of help at home. Probably home schooling before it became popular. And they did alright. But a lot of times you moved with their crews, so it's like moving with a family. And if somebody got sick you helped each other. We lived in, well we, we didn't do too badly, but some of 'em lived in poor housing, whatever you could, [Inaudible] have to be, we didn't [carry furniture?].

JP: I know we lived in pretty poor housing over in Canada. [JP, SW, and DD laugh]

MrsP: Yeah. But you just more or less um, you took what you could get.

JP: Well-

MrsP: Plus we went into places that there not been a lot of oil people and geophysical people there. When we to uh, Canada I've forgotten how many crews moved into that little town.

JP: Yeah, town about the size of Sunset, like we were nine or 10 seismic crews moved in there all at once. Well obviously there wasn't much place for 'em. [JP, SW, and DD laugh]

MrsP: Yeah, we lived on top of a garage. And we shared the bathroom-

JP: Four girls.

MrsP: With five apartments. Goin' [Inaudible]. [JP laughs] We managed. [Chuckles]

SW: Did you have kids at the time?

MrsP: No.

JP: No, not at that time.

MrsP: We moved-

JP: We had, our daughter was born there later on-

MrsP: But we moved-

JP: We moved out of that apartment before she was born.

MrsP: We moved out of there and we bought a house trailer. We had to come to the United States to get a house trailer. We bought a hou-, small one and moved [that?] so that we could have privacy, you know, for the baby.

DD: This is when you were moving between Canada and England and the North Sea and all of, in the '50s right?

MrsP: No, for-

JP: No, uh, moved to Canada it was in '49 and then uh-

MrsP: From Louisiana.

JP: We came, we went to Canada, we went from Houma to Alberta, Canada, and came back to Houma again after that, and then we moved to Shreveport. That was all in the '50s. And in the '60s we moved to California and back to Houston, to England, and then finally to Dallas where I wound up my career in the home office in Dallas.

MrsP: [Inaudible] so we knew a lot of people in Dallas because a lot of them eventually moved back to the main office.

JP: We uh, people always ask me, "Well, you know, if you retired in Dallas why did you come to

Sunset, Louisiana?" [JP and DD chuckle]

SW: Well that was my next question.

JP: Okay. Well, we uh, as I say, we moved around a lot uh, Alma was from Houma and uh, we always knew, I think, that we were gonna come back to Louisiana when we retired. I loved Louisiana and she wanted to be closer to family. And so we decided some time in the '70s I guess we'd uh, we would eventually come back to this general area, and we kind of thought about the Lafayette area as uh, for a number reasons. We, Alma wanted to be close to her family, but not too close. [All laugh]

MrsP: Don't say-

JP: I wanted, I figured that if, if I retired, particularly if I retired early, which I was hopin' to do, that I'd wanna do some consulting and Lafayette would be a good place to [get/do this work?].

DD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

JP: And uh, so we started, in the '70s we started lookin' around for some property around here and uh, we found this place in about '76 or so.

MrsP: Uh hm.

JP: Somewhere around 1976. At the time I thought it would probably be 10 or 15 years before I did anything with it, but uh, I kept lookin' for opportunity to get there quicker because we loved this place down here. So the opportunity came in 1981 and uh, I took early retirement, came down here, and then started-

MrsP: And worked for a company out of New Orleans that had uh, worked for the uh, for GSI. They-

JP: Yeah my, the consulting work that I did was uh, for companies that were, I didn't intend it that way, but that's the way it worked out, I uh, got involved with, with companies who were manufacturing equipment for the geophysical industry. And uh, I, I knew a lot of people in the industry, so uh, and I had a lot of management experience and some product development experience and so I kind of sold my expertise in management and marketing and product development to the, to these companies. I worked for several different ones around [here?]. The one I stayed with the longest was a little company in New Orleans called DigiCOURSE. They were my client for I guess about 14 years. And not the first one, but they were about the second client and they were absolutely the last one. [JP, DD, and SW laugh]

MrsP: And they m-, and their main product to the geophysical industry-

JP: Well, you'll find that, you'll find that in uh, in, in my article. There's quite a bit about that, but they [Clears throat] there was a problem of h-, uh, when, when you do seismic work offshore you tow these long streamers [with/which?] a cable full of geophones that you tow behind the, the vessel. And uh, and there was always a problem of where was that thing relative to the vessel. You could position the vessel, but you couldn't necessarily position the, the streamers. We knew

it was somewhere out behind the boat, but it might be this way or that way or wherever. And DigiCOURSE had, some people at DigiCOURSE had invented a very small digital compass that uh, that fit inside this streamer. They actually made it for the Navy, to begin with the Navy was using it in submarine [earlier?]. And we found out about it and we worked with DigiCOURSE to develop to make it useful in the seismic, those offshore streamers. And it worked fine and, so when I, when I retired was lookin' around for some consulting jobs I talked with them and they took me on pretty much right away. [Inaudible] 'cause I had been involved with the development of it GSI and, prior to that.

SW: Did GSI have an office here in Lafayette?

JP: They did for quite a few years. They, GSI no longer exists. It was bought out by, first by Halliburton and then it was sold to a Western Geophysical and it's been, I don't know what's left of it. [JP and DD laugh]

SW: They were, they were in the Oil Center?

JP: Uh…

MrsP: [Where'd they go?]?

JP: Well, at one time they had an office, I mean, way back probably in the '50s they had an office in the Oil Center. I never was in that office. I never worked out of that office. I, [Inaudible, sounds like he's muttering about people working in the Lafayette office]. I'm sure they were in, somewhere in the Oil Center, but I don't know where it was.

DD: Uh, all this moving around that you did, was this basically where the companies sent you where they just needed seismic work or what-

JP: Yeah, yeah, well, uh, when, when we were, when I was workin' on a crew, on a field crew we sort of moved with the crew.

DD: Right.

JP: We uh-

DD: And they [sent 'em?] whenever.

JP: The, the, yeah, you, you-

MrsP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JP: We'll work a job, you'd work a job-

MrsP: You went of course.

JP: A company in one area and either that oil company would say, "Okay, we'd like you to move somewhere else," which was quite common in those days, or you'd finish up for that client and

you'd get a different client.

DD: Right.

JP: Move there. Actually when I, when I moved from Houma to Canada I, I had been workin' for several years under contract with Texaco. Then uh, Texaco was startin' a new operation, pretty big op-, in [Inaudible], pretty big operations in Canada and uh [Clears throat] so they hired us to actually went up here and started a new crew, because I was familiar with Texaco and they were familiar with me. Kind of asked for me and that's where I went.

MrsP: And we were just kids when we went up there.

JP: Yeah. We had only been married [three?] months.

MrsP: Just kids. [Inaudible] didn't think anything of it. Just went. I was 21 and you were 23.

SW: Did you uh, did you ever consider any other alternatives to this kind of work [MrsP chuckles] because of the lifestyle?

JP: Well once in a great while. [DD chuckles] Never very seriously. I guess the greatest, the biggest thing, we lived in Shreveport for seven and a half years and our kids had started school there and uh, the company wanted to transfer me to California. And that was a very hard move for everybody. And I did little bit of lookin' around then before, before we went to California, but really I, I never thought much about changin', changin', either changin' companies or certainly I never did think about changing careers.

SW: This is what you wanted to do.

MrsP: And the association with the people that we knew and that he worked with I think kept you in the industry.

JP: Oh yeah.

MrsP: And with that particular company. Think-

JP: That was a different day and time, too, when there was a lot of company loyalty from employees and from the company to employees.

MrsP: Yeah, both sides.

JP: [Since?] doesn't exist.

MrsP: On both sides. [All chuckle] Uh-

SW: I hear a lot that the work was arduous and kind of hectic sometimes, but uh, and company loyalty and the pay was good.

JP: Pay was good, yeah. Hard to beat.

MrsP: Wasn't always too good. [All laugh] [Chuckling] We waited, we waited for the check all, for many, many years. But it was worth it and, and I say the association of the people that we worked with and… we moved around and we, the industry, just the [dust?] today goes way down. Now when we went to Canada it was booming there, but it was beginning to dry up.

JP: Yeah, dryin' up in the United States.

MrsP: You see, and the same thing in Shreveport. There were so many houses on the mark, that was a big, lot of oil in-, people there too. So we just, if you wanted to stay in that line of work you had to move. You had to be willing to move. And we just didn't think that we'd ever be in one place.

JP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

MrsP: I mean, it was just sort of in our minds that we were only in a place temporarily, but we were [fort-?]

SW: So your willingness-

MrsP: We stayed longer in a lot of places than most people.

SW: Your willingness to move kept your job security.

MrsP: Just a mentality.

JP: Yeah.

MrsP: We didn't think it, we just, I never did like it, but I didn't think anything of it. We just moved.

DD: Did it affect your children when they were growing up and having to move that often?

JP: Yeah, yeah. Our daughter, our son and daughter both went to high school at the American School in London. And my daughter graduated from there, like she said it didn't sound so good at the time, but it looks good on her resume now. [All laugh]

MrsP: Oh. But, you know, as adults they really feel a tho-, uh, very, it was excellent for their growth.

DD: Good experience. Oh yeah.

MrsP: You know, it's like [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JP: Yeah, well they look back on it now they think that it was pretty [good?].

MrsP: Oh yeah, they think they had the most wonderful childhood [JP chuckles] but they weren't the only ones dis-, I cried all the way to Canada. [JP chuckles] I was so [embar?]. I couldn't quit crying. And I'm not a crying person. [Chuckling] But I didn't want to go. I didn't wanna go

again, you know.

DD: Yeah. One more move.

MrsP: But then of course that was fine. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JP: She was glad to move back when we [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

MrsP: We did well [Inaudible, DD and JP chuckling]. We did, we did, we, we enjoyed it everyplace we went.

SW: You have two kids? A son and a daughter?

JP: Uh hm. We have a son and a daughter.

SW: Did either of them go into petroleum or the oil industry-

JP: No.

SW: Or any kind of work at all?

JP: No, uh uh.

SW: They didn't want to? [Chuckles]

MrsP: No-

JP: Well-

MrsP: Our son-

JP: It was a different day and time. Actually my son-in-law uh, worked for companies that sold equipment into the oil industry. My son worked on GSI crew one summer while he was goin' to college. [Chuckles]

MrsP: And that probably deterred him. [All laugh]

DD: Yeah.

SW: That's what I was getting at is uh, did they look at the schedule or the, or the moving around and decide that that's not for them. [Chuckles]

MrsP: I don't, not our son.

JP: I don't know, I think they just, he just had different interests. His interests was…

MrsP: He, he uh-

JP: Journalism and so forth.

MrsP: Yeah, he went into journalism. So that, you know, that didn't, just didn't-

SW: There's no petroleum journalism, so there's not much you're gonna do there in the oil patch. [Chuckles]

MrsP: No.

JP: [Inaudible].

MrsP: No, he was uh, public, public radio for years and then he's with other company now. [Gives them a choice of hot coffee or coke; leaves the room]

SW: I've got kind of a broad question here and it might require a little bit of thought. Um, workin' for a company they moved you to lots of different places. You mentioned Canada where 10 crews moved in. How did, how did your work with the company and the company moving crews into areas, how did that affect the areas that you were moving into? Did, did you, were you able to hire people from the communities to actually-

JP: I guess in different ways that they uh, this is not a Louisiana example but uh, it could be. Uh, when we moved into this little town in Alberta, as I told you before, it was a town about the size of Sunset, about twenty-five hundred people. They had just made a discovery near that, near that town, which was a big discovery at the time. It really set off a lot of excitement. And so suddenly there was all this oil activity and not only seismic crews, but there were drilling crews and everything else movin' into this little town. Well it simply overwhelmed that little town, there was no place to live, uh, people were livin' in basements and uh, uh, had, a lot of us bought house trailers and moved house trailers in there eventually. But it was uh, you know, just really literally almost overwhelmed that town for awhile. 'Course the business people loved it probably doubled their [Inaudible, DD chuckling]. And the other thing too, I mean, we lived uh, this was a farming community and uh, unemployment was high a good part of the year there. And all of a sudden there were all these jobs available to, to local people. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

SW: Like these auxiliary positions that can help you guys out.

JP: Right, yeah. We hired, you know, we would move in with a kind of a core of a crew, but then we'd hire helpers to-

SW: Local people.

JP: Locally. And uh, 'course they all, the drilling companies did the same thing. So when we went in there you could hire almost anybody in town for 150 dollars a month. A year later it was probably up to around 350 a month. [DD and JP chuckle] So the town, that little town prospered from it and I'm sure that same thing, I can't, you know, I can't describe that same thing happenin' in Louisiana. Well, I guess I can in a way, because-

SW: You said you were in some isolated areas too, so.

JP: Houma. Houma was a seafood town primarily and when I first went there and when my wife was growin' up there it was a very small town, you know. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

SW: That's uh, that's his neck of the woods.

DD: Yeah. [SW chuckles] I'm from Thibodaux actually.

JP: You're from Thibodaux?

DD: Houma got all the money and Thibodaux got all the houses.

JP: The oil industry, you know, the oil industry changed Houma terrifically.

DD: Dramatically.

JP: And Morgan City. Morgan City was a little fishin' town when I first, when I first came down here. So, yeah, there was a tremendous impact of the oil industry on, on those places.

SW: Would you say more, more welcome or more not welcome? [Chuckles]

JP: Well there was a mixture. Yeah, well in uh, when I first came to Louisiana you know the oil industry had been in here for a few years. Maybe up to almost 20 years at, at the time. [They were doin'?] some kind of oil industry going on here. But we were still looked at as, in the first place everybody that came in there in the oil industry was a Texan as far as the Cajuns were concerned, we were from Texas. [Laughing] If you were a stranger, you was from Texas. [DD chuckles] And uh, uh, we were looked on with a little bit of [MrsP bringing in drinks at this time] suspicion I guess during that time. And uh, but uh, that didn't last too long, you know. Found out that those jobs were pretty good too. [Clears throat] I had, when I was workin' in the basin out here that's when I got promoted to [Inaudible] and my crew Cajuns from uh, down here, they were from around Chackbay.

DD: [Chuckling] Oh yeah.

JP: They were in that area. Boy, that was, I mean, they had grown up in the swamp and everything. Shoot, it wasn't nothin' to them to take on this swamp right there.

DD: Oh, that place is still a swamp.

JP: [Chuckling] Yeah.

SW: When they moved you around a lot um, did the company ever provide housing for you? I don't-

JP: No.

SW: You had to find it on your own?

JP: Yeah. Basically, I say no, we did live in a company house in England, but that was kind of a

strange situation. No, you, we, you had to find your own housing.

SW: They just told you you needed to go there and-

JP: Go there and do the best you can. [All laugh]

SW: I ask that because-

JP: In fact uh, in the early days they paid us a little bit mov-, moving allowance, but it was really small. I mean, it never covered your expenses. [Chuckles] Later on, as time went on they got better and better at that 'til finally they moved all your furniture and everything else. In the beginning you, you weren't expected to have any furniture or anything like that. We, we had a little luggage trailer and we'd rent a furnished apartment and so everything you had in that luggage trailer. [Slight pause]

SW: [Softly to DD] Can you think of anything else?

DD: Um, did you have to save a lot of money in order to keep moving like that or was it?

JP: Well, we tried. [Laughs]

DD: You tried-

[END OF CD 1 TO CD 2]

[NOTE: Second CD overlaps with first; starts at SW asking "Can you think of anything else?" Transcription picks up with new audio]

DD: To. You weren't able to when you were doing that I guess.

JP: Actually I, I can't say we lost a lot of money by moving but uh, moving allowances weren't too generous let me put it that way.

DD: Yeah.

JP: We we-, when we moved we moved the cheapest possible way, let's put it that way.

DD: Right.

JP: They give you a little mileage for your car and uh, so much a day to eat, and a little bit uh, about a day or sos worth in a hotel or something so [All chuckle] you could look for a place to live and that was about it.

MrsP: I wished I would've written down the moving allowance. [All chuckle] It was a joke.

SW: What did uh, you mentioned uh, you had to stay on boats sometimes out on the Gulf. Uh, and you had quarters on the boats?

JP: Oh yeah, yeah.

SW: What, what was that like?

JP: They were generally pretty good. In the early days they used uh, some old shrimp boats and stuff, which weren't too great, but really during that time they had, that's what I'm saying they had quarter boats and they would come in. Then they started using the uh, like, they weren't, they weren't uh, PT boats, but they were wooden, wooden vessels similar to the PT boats, I forgot what they were called now. There were a lot, there were a lot of those that were surplus from World War Two. And when the uh, very quickly they moved to those vessels and um, there would be several vessels on a crew and each, each one would sleep probably nine or 10, had a little galley and so forth. So they were, they were not terribly uncomfortable.

SW: Was the food good?

JP: Oh, the food was always good.

DD: Really?

JP: That was in that, that was the main thing. I mean, you know, if those crews didn't have a good cook they weren't a crew very long. [All chuckle]

SW: They serve a lot of fish or seafood when it was out there?

JP: Yeah, well a lot of meat too. I mean, we had a lot of-

DD: Wide variety?

JP: Oh yeah.

SW: Was there ever anything that you, that you had a lot of out on the boat that when you came back you wish you could eat when you come back home on land?

JP: [Chuckles] Well, it's good, I had, at Atchafalaya Basin I used to make my wife kind of made because I'd talk about this corn bread, they made such good corn bread. So finally she got his corn bread recipe. [Laughs]

SW: You had-

JP: And another little funny thing that happened there, it's kind of a Cajun experience I guess, I, when I, I had that quarter boat crew over there in the basin and most of the, I'd say most of the crew was from Chackbay and uh, Kramer area and-

DD: Which is near Thibodaux.

JP: Huh?

DD: Which is near Thibodaux.

JP: Yeah, right, yeah. And we had uh [Clears throat] uh, but we had a few Texans [Laughs] on the crew too. [Clears throat] And uh, one day I went down told the cook, I said, "Hey, you know, we have rice every night, every night, every night. Why can't we once in awhile have some potatoes." "Oh," he said, "it's no problem. I'll cook, if you want potatoes, I'll cook potatoes." So one night the crew all came in for supper and there was potatoes and they all started lookin' around, "Where's the rice, where's the rice?" And uh, almost had a revolution goin' on then. [DD and MrsP chuckle] And they're all, they're all, they said, "Okay, we gotta have rice or we quit." [All laugh] And, and that was one of my first experiences with, with that kind of a Cajun diet I guess. [Chuckles]

SW: They wanted to eat rice versus potatoes.

DD: That is a Cajun-

JP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] work hard in the field and [Inaudible], well we had, we had rice every meal.

DD: Every meal.

JP: We had beans almost every meal sometimes, beans.

MrsP: Good healthy food.

JP: Yeah, the food was always good.

MrsP: You had a conservation, so-called conservation agent on the boats.

JP: Yeah, state of Louisiana-

MrsP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JP: The state of Louisiana had uh, had these conservation officers that were supp-, there's supposed to be one on each crew when you're workin' in marsh and swamp and places like that. They were supposed to monitor that you didn't blow up big holes in the earth and leave big holes and all that kind of thing. And that you didn't kill any fish.

MrsP: Oyster beds.

JP: All that. I hate to say it, but it was a, it was a racket. [All chuckle] Those guys were all political appointees and they could care less about what we did and uh.

MrsP: Who paid the salary? The oil company?

JP: Well yeah, the oil company had, the oil company had to pay-

MrsP: Had to pay the salary.

JP: Had to pay the salaries. [Chuckles]

SW: They weren't going to say anything too bad about the oil company. [JP chuckles]

DD: I would assume not.

MrsP: Uh uh.

JP: That was, that was kind of a big joke.

MrsP: [Do they still have 'em?]?

JP: They had to fill out a form every week showin' where you had worked and all this kind of stuff. And uh, a lot of 'em would only show up on the day they had to fill out their form. [All chuckle]

SW: Looks like we're doing the wrong job here.

DD: I know, it does. [MrsP and JP chuckle]

SW: Um, what about bein' that you're not from here? What about uh, you mentioned the Cajun food that that was an experience. What about language? Did you hear lots of Cajun French with any of the people you were workin' with?

JP: Oh yeah. Yeah, well you know those guys that I was talkin' about that were on my crew some of 'em didn't hardly speak English. And uh, illiterate, I mean there were, there were some of 'em that didn't speak English.

DD: There are still people in that area-

JP: Yeah.

DD: Sh-, Kramer area today that don't speak English at all. Mostly older people.

JP: Yeah. They also had their own uh, variety of French, of Cajun French kind of, 'cause we had people from other areas that would talk with 'em and they could hardly understand. They didn't communicate too well. [Chuckles]

SW: Was that a problem sometimes?

JP: Not really, no, it wasn't a serious problem.

MrsP: They had a gambling problem. [All laugh]

DD: Oh really?

JP: Yeah we had a, they would have a bourre game every night on, on, on the quarter boat, there was a bourre game goin' on. And-

DD: Card game.

JP: This Texaco representative we had at the time wasn't particularly well-liked on the crew. And uh, uh, he thought he was a pretty sharp bourre player and so he, he would get into bourre, playin' bourre with these Cajuns. And he'd always lose and he couldn't figure out why he was always losin'. Well, some of those guys were, you know, there was always some bunch playin' and another bunch standin' around watchin' 'em. Those guys behind him were yackin' away in French the whole time [JP and DD laughing] tellin' everybody what this guy had in his hand.

SW: He was, he was an outsider.

JP: [Chuckling] Yeah, he was a Texan.

SW: So if you were an outsider that, that, they knew-

MrsP: It was okay, it was fair. Fair game.

SW: They, they treated you okay, though, you were-

JP: I, I, I always got along pretty well with that bunch.

MrsP: Oh yeah.

JP: 'Course I was the boss and I guess they had to get along with me. [Chuckles]

MrsP: But, but you had to shut the gamblers down, because they would lose their salary before they went home.

JP: Yeah, well. Yeah, there was two, that got to be…

MrsP: Yeah, [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JP: A bad thing on that boat and I finally told 'em, "No more bourre."

DD: You said they had a gambling problem, did they also have any other problems like alcohol or drugs? Any of 'em?

JP: Not t-, no, I don't, we never had a drug problem. Never had a drug problem and very little alcohol problem.

MrsP: Well they didn't take alcohol, they weren't allowed.

JP: No, no, we didn't allow alcohol on the boat, but I'm just talkin' about, you know-

MrsP: Oh, you mean-

JP: We didn't have a lot of guys showin' up on the first day out drunk or something like that.

MrsP: Oh, they weren't, they're, they wasn't no such things as drugs.

JP: And uh, you know, the whole time-

DD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

MrsP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

JP: The whole time I was [we were workin'?] un-, until, you know, the very last years I never knew of a drug problem. And that happened within the la-, that happened [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

DD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

SW: When you cut out the bourre did you have a mutiny on your hands? [JP and DD laugh]

JP: No, no I think some of 'em were kind of waitin' for somebody to say, "I don't, y-, you ought not to do this anymore." [JP and DD laugh]

MrsP: Especially when you get home without a paycheck. [SW chuckles]

SW: Yeah, so you were doing them a favor, they just didn't realize it right away. [Chuckles]

JP: Well I had some grumbling about it, but nothing very serious. [Slight pause] I'm kind of running out of stores. [DD chuckles]

SW: Yeah, that, that's pretty much all we have.

DD: Yeah, I think so.

MrsP: [To JP] I didn't know you were such a story teller. [DD chuckles]

JP: [To MrsP] Well you heard all of those little stories before.

MrsP: Yeah, but I heard 'em one at a time.

DD: [Chuckling] Not all at once in one sitting.

MrsP: We used to have a, a rule when we had a party on the crew that the men, we were sick and tired that they'd work all day long together and then that's what they'd talk about at night when we'd all have a party. So we said, "You have to," how did that go? [What's the rule, we had a little bitty?]-

JP: Somebody [at my party?] we had, somebody had a little end table about that high and we put a sign on that that said, "Everybody who wants to talk about doodlebuggin' please get under the table."

MrsP: Had to get under the table. [All laugh] We wouldn't allow it. I mean.

JP: We, I don't know if I told you we were called doodlebuggers. I don't know if-

SW: No.

DD: I've never heard that word.

JP: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] term. Well, uh, it came about from the old well dowsers, you know, the guys that went around with these sticks.

DD: Yes.

JP: And they were kind of like those little doodlebugs that the antennas that go up and down like a, and I guess they looked something like that. And so they started calling back in the early days, years, many years ago, I don't know how long, they started calling those well dowsers doodlebuggers. So when we started out we were kind of a black magic [SW chuckles] [bus?] too, out there lookin' for somethin' under the ground like the well dowsers. And so we got the name doodlebuggers and that's what we were called.

MrsP: [SW and DD whispering in background] Was that what, is that on your web site?

JP: Hm.

SW: Well that's good. I ha-, I haven't heard of that.

DD: Yeah. You have a web site?

JP: Yeah, sort of. It's not very up to date anymore. [DD chuckles] [Inaudible] for a while. I don't work at it too much anymore.

SW: We'll check it out. [To DD] And I, I he sent me to the other, I'll show it to you when we get [Inaudible].

DD: Okay.

SW: There's a society of geophysical engineers.

DD: Oh, okay.

SW: I think that's about it. Um, if we could maybe just get. [Inaudible, referring to recording equipment] this.

DD: Okay.

SW: It's all digitally, these things are amazing.

MrsP: It's a little Canon? Oh.

DD: Yeah. [Recording breaks off; continue to speak without realizing recording is on for a few more seconds; MrsP comments that the camera is neat]

[END OF RECORDING]