

HHA# 00132
Interviewee: Lee Dias
Interviewer: David DiTucci
Interview Date: June, 7, 2002
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
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Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. I often had a difficult time understanding what the interviewee was saying. He often repeated words and I've left out some of these repeats both because they were hard to hear and for readability.]

Ethnographic preface:

Mr. Dias was born in Paincourtville, Louisiana. His father worked as a truck driver and later operated a general merchandise store. He started his career in the oil industry working as a roustabout for Danos and Curole in 1967 or 1968. He worked for several other companies, gaining experience as he worked his way up to driller, before he went to work for Baker Oil in 1976. At Baker he worked in the tool division and went into management in 1982, where he stayed for 17 years.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [DD]

Interviewee initials: [LD]

DD: Lee Dias, it is 6-7-2002, it is 10 a.m. Mr. Dias, first we want to get some background on you. Where were you born, uh-

LD: I was born in Paincourtville, Louisiana.

DD: Paincourtville. Okay. I'm not too familiar with that place.

LD: Pardon?

DD: Panc-, that's in Assumption Parish isn't it?

LD: That's right. P-A-I-N-C-O-U-R-T-V-I-L-L-E. Paincourt. Do you know what it means in French?

DD: What's that?

LD: Short of bread, no bread.

DD: [Laughing] Short or bread.

LD: That's why they call it Paincourt.

DD: Yeah.

LD: It's short of bread.

DD: Oh, okay. Didn't know that.

LD: Yeah.

DD: What about your educational background?

LD: High school education, that's all I ever had.

DD: High school education?

LD: Yeah.

DD: So what did your family do before you entered oil?

LD: My father was a, my father was a, after the war he, um, worked for my father-in-law, I mean his father-in-law, my grandfather, bringin' uh, my grandfather had a general merchandise. You know what that is?

DD: Oh yeah.

LD: Where they have everything.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Clothing, hardware, plows, whatever a man needed. So the remote areas, most of 'em couldn't be gotten by vehicles, they had to go by boat or, or some, you know, some car. So they used to have a truck, a big truck, where they'd bring all the supplies up to the sawmills and to the little communities. And that, he did that for awhile. And then when my grandfather um, retired, he took over the store. So he actually was in the merchandising business.

DD: Okay.

LD: And then uh, he, he never did work in the oilfield. I'm probably the only one in the, besides my son and my son-in-law that, you know, so like my brothers and uncles didn't do any oilfield-

DD: They stayed with the merchandising and-

LD: Yeah, right. And my, my brothers, my dear father's uncles and things like that, they were, my uncles, they were farmers, you know, sugarcane farmers in Assumption Parish.

DD: Yeah. Uh, how did you get into oil yourself?

LD: Well after I got out of the Marines Corps, uh, there wasn't too many jobs available, you know, other than in that part of the country, oilfield, you know. Sugarcane and the machinery took over a lot of stuff, you know. And uh, and in the small communities there wasn't too many good paying jobs or anything, so I uh [Pause] I kind of played around with different jobs. I worked for a comp-, a [coffee?] company and, and

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[Inaudible] ice cream, and a envelope company, but they didn't pay you money enough to, you know, to, to [do better?] with a wife and children, you know. So uh, I said, "Well, let me see if I can get me a job in the oilfield that pays much better money, you know. So I started a-, on a [rung?], you know, as a, a, a roustabout out in the, in the uh, inland waters. On a, on a workover rig.

DD: Okay. What year was that, do you remember?

LD: [Pause] Probably around '67, '68, somethin' like that. I'm not definitely sure.

DD: Okay. Um. And then you started with what company was that?

LD: Uh, the company I went to work for... well it was Danos and Curole was the name of the company. They were a roustabout company, contracted to Gulf Oil Company. Uh, one time it was for [Peneco?]. Of course it depend what jobs you had and they would find a different job. Started out as a roustabout workin' pipelines and uh, structures offshore, you know. Supplies and stuff.

DD: You ever-

LD: And then a friend of mine, who I was workin' with on a, as a, he was the uh, foreman for the roustabout company. He had been a drill-, a driller before. And he asked me if I wanted to go work on a, on a workover rig. I said, "Well, I never did this before, but it makes, it makes more money what I'm makin' more," you know. So I went to work as a, as a foreman on a, on a workover rig [name of it] was Lake Over Com-, Lake Workover Company. And uh, went to work there and worked for about... oh, I guess about a year. And started out on the floor. And then went to work as a derrickman and uh, figure I got a little bit experience, so I figure I was gonna go get me some big money on a, on a big drilling rig, you know. So I went to work as a, the first major company I went to was uh, uh [Pause] [Speaking softly] at the time it was, I forget what they call it now, Murphy [Inaudible], but uh... ODECCO Oil and Gas, Ocean Drilling Company.

DD: Ocean Drilling?

LD: It was a big contractor at that time, you know. And I went to work as a floorhand again. And, and, and uh, but in the drilling department offshore. Drilling. [Pause] I stayed there... maybe four or five years, I'm not sure. Worked myself back to a derrickman on up to a driller.

DD: Okay.

LD: And then uh, stayed drilling. And uh, things started to get slow again, so uh, they were cuttin' back crews or the same thing I started off with again. Said, "Hey man, I need a driller on that rig that you got over there now, you know." And then that big thing in South Louisiana whenever the work comes off, you know, your chances on a, on stayin' on a contractor for 20 years is, is not great, you know. When I was goin' into a bigger uh, uh, even in the big company, drilling company, 'course no-, none of the big oilfield own any of their own rigs anymore, they contract all of it. At one time Gulf and uh, uh, Chevron and all of 'em had their own rigs, you know. When the oilfield first went into uh, offshore, they own their own rigs. They, Texaco for years owned their own rigs. And Chevron, Gulf Oil Company. Most of the majors. Mobile. Most of the majors. Kerr-McGee. So anyhow, I went to work back at Lake Workover but on, on a, we were on a drill job again. And all this time was learnin', you know, gettin' experience with different phases of uh, oilfield work, you know. Uh, you know, when you work on a rig, you can be drillin', you can be workin' as a derrickman, but you learnin' how to operate pumps and uh, new chemicals and-

DD: You learn a little bit of everything.

LD: Yeah. The drillin', you know, environment, when I first went, I didn't even know what, what, what, what I was doin' half the time, you know. And, of course, experience and uh, you learn, you know, and uh, 'course people, you know, teach you and, and you learn once you start, you kn-, understandin' what the, this [whole/old mother earth?] looks like, you know. Uh, the mich-, min-, the formations, you know, in other words, what's rock, what's salt, what's uh, this and what's that, [lymol?], limestone, whatever it is, you know. And then as the jobs come up and then you learn, you know. And then, of course, you go into directional drillin' and uh, lot of phases. You learn a lot, you know. Anyhow, I, I guess uh, I was gonna say '68 to '78, no, to '76 I worked the rigs, you know. Then I decided to go to work for Baker Oil [Tools?] in '76. Uh. As a completion hand.

DD: Completion hand, what do they do?

LD: Certainly, you know [Sigh] [Pause] Set packers, [production?] packers. Uh. Dome testin', cementin' work, uh, just a lot of, Baker Oil was a big oil, uh, tool company, you know. You maybe had a hu-, over, uh, different divisions. Uh, uh, you know, 'course I started off in the packer division. Uh, production packer, like I said, doing completions and all of that [Inaudible]. Baker decided that they gonna have a specialist, you know, for uh, instead of one man doing all the jobs, you gonna go to the cement department, you gonna go to the packer department, or you gonna go to uh, uh, sand, sand control, you know, division. So I went to what they call Baker Service Tool Division. Which was the tool department. And I guess we had, [Inaudible] maybe 150 types of tools that we could operate.

DD: Wow.

LD: You know, jobs we could do with conjunction of, of different tools, doin' remilian-, [remedial?] [Inaudible]. Since I had a stroke, I don't speak too good.

DD: Oh that's okay.

LD: Uh. Remedial and simulation work.

DD: Right.

LD: You know, you familiar with those terms?

DD: Not, not exactly.

LD: Okay. [Sighs] Oil wells, most of 'em, either drilling or, or workover, you have to treat the well, you know. [Some?] formations can't sustain uh... the formation, you know-

DD: It won't stand the loss of-

LD: Will wash out, like a, you familiar with a water well?

DD: Uh, not exactly, but what you try-, is what you're tryin' to say, when you lose the pressure down there, the formation may collapse? Is that what you're tryin' to say?

LD: Yeah. And formations, sometimes the casing collapse, sometime we get a busted [Inaudible] casing. Uh, [pack] work we did, we could do the [pack] work, we simulated, acidite it. [Speaking to an animal] Get out of there you. Dif-, different things, you know, you could uh... uh, what they call "[squeeze?] cement," you familiar with that?

DD: No.

LD: Okay, say you had a hole. [Inaudible; sounds like he is drawing], you had a hole and you ran casing in there. Okay. You make a, like, like, like a, if you're buildin' a big building, you got to build somethin' to...

DD: Foundation.

LD: Foundation, foundation, you know, you build. When you drill a well, you, your first thing would be like 36 inch pipe. Okay, hole. Okay. Then you case that hole with maybe a 30 inch or 26 inch pipe. Alright, then you'd use what they call a "float column," a [chute]. Just a valve so you could uh, where you can, you know, get open or close 'em. So then you could pump cement alongside between the earth and the pipe.

DD: The pipe, so that it'll hold.

LD: Right, that, that's the foundation. Same thing if you build a house or a big buildin', you gotta have a, you know, something to-

DD: To hold it in place, yeah.

LD: Alright then you gonna drill maybe thirty-five hundred feet. Then you gonna drill, uh, 20, 20 inch pipe in between that-

DD: In between the pipe and the 20 inch pipe.

LD: Yeah, in other words that, that first one might of went to uh, say, twelve hundred feet.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Alright, so they'll, they cemented it on the outside. They, and then they'll- [Clears throat]

DD: Put another [Inaudible, overlapping talking]

LD: Drill, drill that cement out and then drill down to the, to say, uh, 17 inch hole.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Or, or maybe bigger. They, because you gonna be runnin' 20 inch, they had 26 inch bit.

DD: Yeah.

LD: So you'd run that hole in a formation.

DD: Okay.

LD: Then you run that pipe to about two thousand feet, somethin' like that, you know. Then you, from the top of the, like that was the 20 inch, 36 inch pipe, you put it, say 22 inside of that. Then you would set your tool inside that pipe and run cement back up to the surface.

DD: Okay.

LD: And you, you would go on down, see.

DD: Okay.

LD: And you'd always [sizin'?] down.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Like you go 36, 20-

DD: And you fill in the gaps.

LD: Uh, right.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Then you do uh, you know, whatever size you gonna go to, down to two inches, it don't matter, whatever you want, you know. It depends on the depth. Like in the uh... type of hole they drillin' right now, [there no], in the uh... deep, deep water? You might have a three and a half inch case. So you actually have to drill in that maybe two inch. Are you familiar with the [Inaudible]-

DD: Can't just drill-

LD: A two inch, a 20 inch down there. Uh, six mile down the ground.

DD: [Laughing] No, that's not gonna work.

LD: It's uh, you, you gonna actually drill in slim-, what they call a "[slim hole?]," [Inaudible] slim hole.

DD: Okay, yeah.

LD: So that your foundation is always between the hole and hole.

DD: So did you do this on the rigs where you were-

LD: Yeah.

DD: Workin' with the tools?

LD: All on Bak-, Baker, uh, Baker uh, [Inaudible] they call that, that company, they, "I need you, we're gonna run casing. We got a hole casing." We could find a [Inaudible] by, by isolatin' between where the fluid is li-, goin' across, we detect below and test a, what they call a "backside" by these rubber packer elements. And see exactly where that hole is, where that fluid's been ruptured or, or somethin'. Or a couplin' had washed our or somethin'. And we, we, they can iso-, we can i-, we could find out what, to the foot where it was. Even closer than that [Inaudible]. Uh. And then you, you do a pack for it, like a pack, you know. Send some cement down there. Now sometime you, when you drill your [Inaudible] casing, uh, your formation, you got water, you got oil, you got gas. Alright, which one's the heaviest? Water. So if you got too much water in your formation, you got oil and gas but the [prevalent], it's a heavier fluid. So what you'd get a water well.

DD: Oh, okay.

LD: See? But, you can uh, with tools, what we call a "squeeze cement," pump cement in that water [Inaudible], or push that water back in the formation. Squeezes back up in that water. So that once you get

a, a, say a four inch slab so to speak between the water and, and the earth. The cement, then you do, your next thing's gonna come, either the gas or the water or both.

DD: Yeah, so you don't get the water.

LD: And they can separate both our water and gas on the, on the structure, on the production.

DD: Oh, okay.

LD: You know, it doesn't matter. They may be prevalent, more through gas or more through oil. But uh, you got to get rid of the water, you don't want a water well.

DD: Yeah, you, there's no [Inaudible] water.

LD: A six million dollar water well, you know.

DD: There's no point in that, right.

LD: So Baker Oil Tool did that type of work. And also your test a formation. Uh, you drill in a zone, especially in a, a proven field. You can test and say, "Well, we get to this depth in this field," and they got, say, 13,000 or 14,000, "Well, we're supposed to have gas in that, in the next field over they, they drilled gas there." So we could test it by-

DD: By drilling in one spot, you can-

LD: You don't want to go through a million dollars worth of-

DD: No.

LD: Com-, p-, completion. You already got four million dollars to drill a well, see.

DD: Wow.

LD: But you don't wanna just try to see if you got a water well.

DD: Right.

LD: So Baker tool-, had a tool that you could test the well for. You could, you could test it for one day or, or 10 months if you want to, as long as you wanted to. Or different zones. You know, uh, by doing the loggin', you know, Slumberger, are you familiar with that?

DD: Yeah.

LD: Uh... [Inaudible], they can log, you know. Whether there's oil in that zone, supposed to have oil in that zone. And the carbon [says that the] oil is there, but we want to see how much oil they got in there. We don't want to, you know, get a... a [pump/puff?] and then, spend a million dollars to get a [pump], you know.

DD: Right.

LD: So you use what they call "retrievable [Inaudible]." Fact, Halliburton calls 'em... exactly what they call 'em, uh [Pause] we did the same thing that Halliburton did. Retrievable, [Inaudible], and service crews. R-S, uh, R-, R-S-P, R-S-P-T or somethin' like that.

DD: Somethin' like that, yeah.

LD: That's what they call 'em. Because that's what it is uh... [Inaudible] and uh... a test tube.

DD: So, so Ba-, Baker was pretty crucial to the industry?

LD: Oh!-

DD: In all the tools that it developed.

LD: Baker is a very crucible, a big, big, uh, I guess you could say Baker is like a [minos?].

DD: Yeah, to-

LD: [Inaudible], you know, it's those people.

DD: Without that you can-

LD: Now, oil companies in the, in the, in the, in the, I guess in the '80s they said, "Man, we spend a lot of money to big companies like Baker and uh, and uh... Slumberger and big company-, uh, Halliburton," or other big majors that they had, you know. They said, "Well, we gonna bid all this stuff, you know, and the cheapest ones is gonna get it." Well they found out over lots, lost a whole lot of money that uh-

DD: [Chuckling] It wasn't the way to go.

LD: [Inaudible] is better to pay the premium.

DD: Yeah, instead of the-

LD: Instead of doing [Inaudible] and spend three times as much as [Inaudible] because somebody say, "Well, you can get it for a 100 or 200 dollars cheaper," you know.

DD: Yeah. Might as well get something good and, and-

LD: Well, they, and I'll tell you for about a year and a half they tried. Say, "Well, we gonna, we gonna get the best money, if you want to work for us, you got to pay it." You know. Well, Baker said, "We not gonna, we not gonna p-, you're not gonna get our-"

DD: 'Cause they knew they were better.

LD: "You, you gonna get [blue paint?] and you gonna get paid for bl-, uh, blue paint, you know.

DD: Okay.

LD: And Halliburton did the same thing and almost all the big companies, especially wireline companies. Now you only got 'bout two or three major wireline companies, you know, like Slumberger and Atlas. Now

you got a bunch of, but they don't have as many of them now. Back to in the '70s or late '70s and '80s there may have been a 1,000 wireline companies.

DD: Wow.

LD: Because everybody went in the business, you know. Everybody knew how to pull wire, you know, in the ground. Because there [was business?], [cutthroat?]. Oh yeah, we, man, we were, "I'll tell you what, we'll do for the second, for the next job, we do the first one." You know, "If you give us a second job, we'll do the first, and then the third we pay you, you pay us again. For every other one." You know? And com-, companies like Baker-

DD: [Cuttin' deals].

LD: [Inaudible] say, "Man, [look here, we got to cut costs?]-"

DD: And look who's still around.

LD: Now what they did, instead of, at that time, instead of laying everybody off, 'cause they knew, they knew it was gonna happen, you know.

DD: Right.

LD: And they went to the uh, oil companies and told the oil companies, said, "Look," we said, "we're not gonna, we not gonna cut our prices. Now you, you either go with those people and spend three times the money," 'cause they told 'em that, say, "You know what's gonna happen?" They told 'em exactly what would happen, "Those people are cuttin' throat and stuff like that. They're not gonna be here." You know. Okay, like okay, [Referring to audio recorder] I don't know who manufactures this.

DD: Sony.

LD: But if I could make this-

DD: For 10 dollars cheaper, say.

LD: Yes.

DD: Or what-

LD: Yes, 10 dollars cheaper. And, and, you know, and you buy it because I put it, a name on there, Lee [Inaudible], whatever, but Sony's gonna be around longer than I'm gonna be around.

DD: Right, because you're spending less on it-

LD: That's right.

DD: You're not gonna have the investment in it-

LD: That's, that's right.

DD: It's not gonna be as quality a product.

LD: If, if you say, say you wanted to build something, anything, you wanna, you wanna get something that you gonna [Inaudible]. You're not gonna get it because you just gonna have [Inaudible] 'cause you gonna build it for, for uh, two-thousand dollars for a 40,000 dollar house.

DD: Right.

LD: You're house ain't gonna be there for 10 years.

DD: No.

LD: It ain't, I'm tellin' ya.

DD: I know that.

LD: So anyhow, that's what happened. And then they went back and said, said, "Well, we're not doin' that no more. Come back and, come back and do our work," you know.

DD: And everyone eventually came back to Baker?

LD: Yeah. Oh, well not [everything?].

DD: Well-

LD: I mean, in that y-, bigger, your bigger companies, you know, that didn't cutthroat.

DD: Places like Baker?

LD: Yeah, Baker and Halliburton and uh, uh, you know, different uh, majors, major people. Uh, [Inaudible] Atlas, different companies like that and uh, [B.J.?] at one time, but they, Western Cementer. But they, they got beat too, because they went into the bidding thing and they ended up, Baker tried to bail out, bail out B.J., but they wanted the equipment.

DD: Oh, okay.

LD: But they didn't want to pay for what their, the debt that B.J. [owed?]. They had [truckers?] out there as far as you could see to the horizon. [DD chuckles] Brand new equipment! But they couldn't move it because they owed money on it. So what they did, they sold it [Inaudible] for 10 dollars a dol-, uh, 10 dollars a dollar.

DD: Ten cents to the dollar?

LD: Yeah. And I'm talkin' about brand new stuff that never been out of the crates, man! [Inaudible] equipment, you know.

DD: Sellin' it cheap.

LD: Yep. Anyhow.

DD: Well, any-

LD: We went on and did work again, you know. Everything we were doing, testing, production packer, whatever it did. Everything. And like I said, we had, we could do a real multi function company. We could do a lot of different things, you know.

DD: So you're classified [one of those?] support industries, they weren't directly drilling, but they were very crucial to the drilling.

LD: We had two, we had uh, divisions of the company that did [directional?] drilling.

DD: Oh really?

LD: Yeah, we had drill 'em, uh, dry, uh, drilling motors, uh, Baker we had, had a, had uh, their name in everything.

DD: Yeah.

LD: It didn't make a difference, you'd want to have something [for?] Baker. It might have been a, a, what do you call a, a bulldozer, but it was made by Baker.

DD: Made by Baker, yeah.

LD: Uh, uh, but in the oilfield you'd want to, Baker was gonna get a piece of that action somewhere. Every day, somewhere.

DD: Yeah.

LD: They gonna get that action. Anyhow. After, I forgot exactly when it was, it might have been, well, I had stayed 17 years as a management, in management.

DD: Okay.

LD: Uh. [Speaking more softly] It may have been '82 when I started managing, I'm not sure. [Pause] Oh. Went into the management [Inaudible]-

DD: With Baker?

LD: And then, yeah. And so then, then you did everything, you know, sale, you did uh, insurance [Chuckling] you know you did the whole thing. [DD laughs] Uh. Speak at speakings, got testings, uh, employment people tryin' to get qualidad, qualified people. See, when I went to work for Baker, you had to have 12 years of pro-, experience before you could go to work for 'em.

DD: Wow.

LD: But then after all that stuff [Inaudible] all you had to do was have a, one arm, so to speak, you know. [DD chuckles] Uh-

DD: If you could do it, you got a job.

LD: Yeah, you could do it. When the crunch came, you know. Uh. And then when it came back and we had jobs, like I said, everybody, it didn't matter what you had. You had two arms and a leg, you could go to work.

DD: You could go to work.

LD: And then they went to a point uh, where nobody but knew anything but engineering.

DD: Oh. Yeah.

LD: I mean everybody was an engineer then, you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Even people like me uh, they redid our jobs and say we're a uh, "product line specialist." We're no longer a manag-

DD: Manager, you're, yeah.

LD: Because we didn't have an engen-, uh-

DD: Engineering.

LD: A degree.

DD: Right.

LD: And I couldn't, we couldn't run a-

DD: Every, all the upper level management had to be engineer.

LD: And at first when they did that, these guys that were engineers didn't know what they were doing.

DD: [Chuckles] They had not experience.

LD: And we told them when we went to the meetings. When they, when they told us, "You're gonna have to be a, you know, engineer to have these jobs." "Okay, that's fine," I said, "But when we come, when they get, they prove to you that they can't do the job, can we get our jobs back?" And they did, you know. [They run every engineer off?] that thought he knew [Inaudible]. And, and came [Inaudible] say, "We made a mistake." You know.

DD: That's pre-

LD: "We made a mistake." You know. But sometimes you can have all this education, but you can't nail a nail, you know.

DD: Right. It doesn't do you any good if you can't apply it.

LD: I mean, I'm not saying that a person can't do that, but some of 'em, oh, they got this education.

DD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

LD: But they can't do the mechanics of the stuff. You gotta have the, the, the drive, the nail drivers, too, you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: And, and a lot of people that uh, mechanical mind rather than just have, you know what I mean, if you know all the answers, but you don't know what to do with it, you know.

DD: Right. You can't apply it.

LD: You cannot apply it. And that's what happened to it.

DD: Okay.

LD: Oh, we could talk about this stuff for a million [Slaps hand on table] I mean, I know a million stories. I know a million things [to keep talking?]. I can tell you uh, how to pick apart and build just about any kind of tool that's ever been made, whether Baker made it or Halliburton make it or.

DD: Somebody else, right.

LD: Because basically once you know tools, they're basically the same.

DD: Yeah, it's all-

LD: You may call it a big red one or the big yellow one or whatever it is. When you come to it a [set down packer?], a set down packer, [hook wall packer?], [Inaudible], it don't matter what it looks like. It's got two sets of clim-, a slip, to be able to bite the casing on it and two, three packing elements to [tack/pack off it?].

DD: Right.

LD: The fluid between the pa-

DD: In other words, if you know what it has to do, you can make it do it.

LD: That's right. I, I had in situations, especially offshore, where they needed to do the job, but they had contacted, say, Halliburton to do the job, but say I was doing a different type of job, but I know how to do this, 'cause I'm a tool man.

DD: Right.

LD: Say, say we did not get the cement work on that particular job, Halliburton got it. But we did the testing previous to the cementin' work.

DD: R-, okay. Yeah.

LD: Say. So, but here comes the day that they want to test and uh, they can't fly anybody 'cause the weather's too bad.

DD: Oh.

LD: So they come in, they say, uh, "Hey uh, Baker, can you, can you uh, cement that job [like Halliburton do?]" "Yeah, sure." Or vice versa.

DD: Right, you need to work with each other.

LD: But, you know, if you have, you, if you have experience, I mean, a car. You know how you can drive a Chevrolet or Ford. It don't matter. Maybe there's a radio maybe over here, like an airplane, you know.

DD: Yeah, it's a little different.

LD: Yeah, you know-

DD: It's the same principle.

LD: Same thing in the oilfield. Your basic, basic concepts matters of what job you're doing. If you look at it, it gonna be similar. A bit, it may be a [lock?] bit, it may be a uh, steel bit, it may be a diamond bit. It's turnin' right and it's cuttin', cut, you know.

DD: Yeah, exactly.

LD: Now, how much you cut, how fast, and how [Inaudible] control those things, but basically you're doing a bit.

DD: The same thing.

LD: You know, you're running a Chevrolet because it's a diamond, you're runnin' a Ford because it's breaks everyday, or whatever you want to call it, you know. But basically you turn it to the right you need go fast, go up, [get the?] elevation, or slow down to go down, you know. The basic principle when you turn something, the faster you go with it, it's gonna go to the right.

DD: Oh, okay. Yeah, because it's turning to the right then-

LD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] drill something ho-, a hole, what hap-

DD: You slip.

LD: It goes to the right.

DD: If you hit it too fast, it slips and it goes to the right.

LD: That's how, that's how you do, that's how, exactly how you drill a uh, directional hole.

DD: Okay, you kind of let it slip to the right?

LD: Well, that's correct.

DD: Okay.

LD: Your basic point, the basic point [Audio cuts out for 10 seconds] north.

DD: Right.

LD: Like car, it's like old boy scout compass, you know. North is north. If you make a mistake, that's your problem.

DD: [Laughing] Yeah.

LD: Because the compass gonna be true.

DD: It's always there.

LD: The same thing when you drill an oil well. That north don't change. And another thing we did was uh, with Baker is what they call a whip, [whip sock?]. We have a, a, you runnin' a wireline, set in the casing, and you go in with like a probe and it's got a probe that can only [Inaudible], it's sort of like a, those Legos, you know, they only fit one kind of way, they can't fit no other way.

DD: Right.

LD: You go in that packer like that and that thing is set for say 40 degrees east.

DD: Yeah, and it's gonna-

LD: And that's where you gonna locate at.

DD: You go in there 40 degrees east.

LD: So your bit is gonna go to the, that east. Then they prod it like this. They come down say 10,000 feet, but they want to go at certain angle so many feet.

DD: So they g-, drill straight down, then go to the side?

LD: That's correct.

DD: Okay.

LD: You know. Now when you change, say, say you started going back [Inaudible], you may have to slow down a little bit or go through faster. If you go slow, if you go slow like that, a bit's gonna [deep?] like that.

DD: Yeah, it's gonna go straight down.

LD: [Inaudible] I mean, [you take a shovel, that's where your shovel's gonna go?]. When you push it, it goes down. They uh, but these are the same. If you want to go faster, pick the shovel up faster, you know.

DD: Yeah. Okay, that makes sense. Um, you had mentioned earlier that you did work on the rig.

LD: Yeah.

DD: What was life like on the rig?

LD: Life uh, oh, it's like the lady, you know, that came [Inaudible] I never met her-

DD: Emily, yeah.

LD: Just talked to her on the phone, yeah. I told her, I said, "What do you think the b-," I told her this, I said, uh, "What do you think would be the, the hardest thing to do in the oilfield?" You know. "I mean, you got to work hard, long job, uh, uh, days," and I said, "What do you think would be the hardest thing?" [At first you didn't?]. "No," I say, "Well, I'm gonna tell you." I said, "It's living away from your family. That's the hardest thing." The child can be sick, you can't go-

DD: Can't go in.

LD: No, you can't. Your wife has to do everything. Got to go to the grocery store, you got to go get the car fixed, you gotta get the car's oil changed, 'cause you gone all the time.

DD: Yeah. Right. Exactly.

LD: 'Specially if you a service man like I was. I with Baker. Now rigs, you worked seven-and-seven, or thirteen-and-seven, or thirty-and-thirty, it depends what you want, you know. But either way you gonna have time you not gonna be with your family.

DD: Right.

LD: Your birthday, your child's birth not gonna be, and that's important to a two year old.

DD: Very important, yeah.

LD: You know.

DD: Holidays.

LD: So those, those were the things that you, uh, have to learn to adapt to. I mean, I remember one time when I was a young man, my younger child [workin'?), baby at that time. He had a friend over at our home and she said to my, her friend, said, "Don't worry about that guy, he just comes around every once in awhile," you know. So, you know, they don't know who you are, because you're gone most of the time. Mama has to do everything.

DD: Right, just Mama.

LD: Just Mama. And that, that is the hardest thing about oilfield livin'. I mean, as far as money, you make good money, I mean, you make top dollar offshore.

DD: Oh yeah.

LD: You make good money. There's nothin' I, I, I mean, even in the, even in the bad times you make good money.

DD: Make good money.

LD: You know? If you workin', you makin' money. I mean, the first time I went to work in the oilfield, uh, I went, I came home and I told my wife, I said, and I didn't know how much they were gonna pay me. We never knew, you know, and I wasn't even gonna ask 'em, I knew it was gonna make me more money than I had. So I came back and I told her, I said, "You know somethin', they must have paid me for a year." [DD laughs] You know, after workin' in the oil-, uh, you know, workin' with my daddy in the farm and-

DD: So you were makin' that much more money?

LD: Oh, yeah. Back in uh, Nineteen... seventy or sixty. Uh, most jobs in town, you made 85 dollars a week, you know, workin' a service station or uh, unless you had a [Slaps table] maybe a degree or somethin', somethin' like that or a doctor or somethin' like that. But I'm talkin' about the [average?] workin' person, he might make 100 dollars a week, but you're at 500 dollars a week.

DD: Wow.

LD: In the oilfields.

DD: Is that every week or just the weeks you worked?

LD: Well it depends on how you work.

DD: Okay, yeah.

LD: You-

DD: So you worked seven-and-seven, you make 500, nothing, 500.

LD: Well, it depend. [Laughs]

DD: Okay. How d-, what d-, okay.

LD: It depend. Because if you figure the 40 hours, you gonna get paid 500 dollars for 40 hours.

DD: Yeah.

LD: But the week you out there you make 84 hours.

DD: Right.

LD: Time and a half.

DD: Time and a half you make, say, thirteen-

LD: A 1,000 dollars.

DD: Thir-, so yeah, 1,000 dollars plus.

LD: You make 14,000, fourteen hundred dollars.

DD: Yeah. But you don't make anything the next week when you're not out there.

LD: No. No, no, but you got this-

DD: So you're making about fi-, over 500 a week as opposed to-

LD: Oh no, you're makin', you makin' two weeks in one.

DD: Right, yeah, yeah. That's what I'm saying.

LD: Yeah.

DD: You divide it up-

LD: But if you say it's more than, you look at it, since I've worked when I a young man, I worked seven and seven days I was off. You know, you're driving trucks or doing something, go out and build me a house or my co-, children's education or whatever, you know. And then of course it depends after a while, like service maybe you can't do that. [Inaudible] you work on car.

DD: Oh yeah.

LD: But on the rigs you worked, you know, seven-and-seven-

DD: Seven-and-seven or whatever. But you-

LD: Fourteen-and-seven, or thirty-and-thirty overseas, or whatever you want to do it. But uh, life in a thing, I mean, most people uh, it depends on the person, but most people spend their time off sleepin'. You know. Eatin' when you get off, get cleaned up, you can go to bed, and then when you wake it's time, it's time uh, get, eat again and go to work, you know. Work twelve-and-twelve, you know. So, now some peop-, myself, personally, I had enough with sixty, six or seven hours of sleep, I didn't need 12.

DD: Yeah, exactly. This is when you were on the rig?

LD: I, yeah, on the rig, yeah. I couldn't operate goin' to bed and sleepin' 12 hours.

DD: No.

LD: My, normal for me was-

DD: Six.

LD: But then maybe I would've lasted a lot longer had I learned how to go to sleep.

DD: You think so?

LD: Yeah.

DD: Hm. Get that rest so that-

LD: Yeah.

DD: Hm, interesting.

LD: Uh, tension.

DD: Yeah.

LD: You don't get that rest and the mind rests and, and, and you always a-, you know, especially on the rig, every time that thing would make noise you, you jumpin' to see what's happenin'.

DD: Yeah.

LD: You know.

DD: You never know.

LD: You gonna be tension, ha-, you gonna have a tension [day, goin' to work with tension and, and you gonna be sleepin' on the job or you gonna try and hide somewhere?] to get a, you know, sleep, but you ought to be in the bed sleepin'. You know what I mean?

DD: Yeah, yeah. I know what you're sayin'.

LD: You can get a lot of people killed because you didn't know how to operate-

DD: Because you're, yeah.

LD: [Coughs] So, I mean, we see people in, in, in those rigs like that. They, they tried to, they do everything, you know. Uh. But life, you know what I mean, you had good food out there, good pay, uh, you know, good times. Most, most people for a long time did seven-and-seven. Then mostly these days, most of the oil companies go fourteen-and-seven. Most of 'em do now. The contractors, you know. And uh-

DD: I know some people that do twenty-eight-and-fourteen.

LD: Yeah, I did, too, overseas. And I'd go 30 days out there and come back over here 30 days.

DD: Oh, people in the Gulf that do twenty-eight-and-fourteen now.

LD: Yeah, they do it that way, yeah.

DD: That's, that's got to be a hard lifestyle.

LD: That's why I say, you know, but uh... that's, that's hard on a man, you know.

DD: Yeah, it is hard. And it's hard on the families.

LD: Uh, think, I think they could do it like uh, rotation, 10, 10 days and then other man comes in 10 days, then you come back 10 days, you know. You could do it like that.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Uh, you know.

DD: Ten-and-ten instead of-

LD: You could do it, you could do it. They did it before, you know. But a lot of times uh, the oil company they, they don't want, they don't want to rotate five people when they only need one.

DD: Right.

LD: For the simple reas-, "I know what this man's doin', that other man that's comin' in, [they're leavin'?), I don't know what he's doin'." He hasn't been on, he hasn't seen the job [started?). That's why a lot of uh, lot of jobs [with/at?) Baker they, they rather [it?) the duration.

DD: Yeah.

LD: You know. My son-in-law right now works for [Frank Casing Crew?). When he goes to job, he goes, he stays through the duration of the job.

DD: Oh, yeah. [LD coughs] And then, and then he's off until they get another job, basically.

LD: Yeah, right.

DD: Um-

LD: But it takes 10 days to do that job-

DD: Ten days. If it's two months-

LD: You know, one week, week uh, and you do the return and the company don't like that. They'd rather have a man go do, start and finish the job.

DD: Yeah. That makes sense.

LD: [But then you got two sets of figures?]. See when you're, you uh... I can give you a, a [tape?] [Inaudible] and I can take the same tape and I'm gonna get the different-

DD: Slightly different results.

LD: Uh, readin', because your sight is better, you showin' more, [the sight?]-

DD: Precise, yeah.

LD: Me-, than, than I am.

DD: Yeah.

LD: But when you're takin' a, when you're drillin' a 20,000 foot well, hey, that little [precise?] can be quite a few feet different.

DD: 'Cause it, once you're drillin' at-, drilling down, it kind of moves-

LD: So even though you're, I know what your [figures?] gonna do. You usin' the same figures for the whole job.

DD: Yeah.

LD: So I know, that engineer says, "Well I know that he couldn't make, he couldn't make a three foot error." But he can.

DD: Yeah.

LD: If you three feet off the [Inaudible], you, you, you got three million dollars-

DD: Wasted.

LD: Wasted. See?

DD: Yeah.

LD: So you got to be right.

DD: Yeah, you do.

LD: And, you know, my wife, one time she took my tape and uh, measured thing in 100s. In the oilfield. [But she wanted to?] tape measure her curtains, to buy some new curtains. Well when she come over there she was short.

DD: Oh.

LD: Instead of me-, uh, a foot bein' 12 inches, on my, uh, 100 tape it's 10 inches.

DD: Oh.

LD: It's all 10.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Ten-hundredths of a inch.

DD: Yeah.

LD: See? I mean, ten-hundredths of a foot.

DD: Right. Okay. [Both laugh] A little different there.

LD: Yeah.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Well, y-, the big number on the [field/deal?] would be 10 rather than-

DD: Rather than 12.

LD: Than 12.

DD: You were in the metric, more the metrics.

LD: That's right, ah-

DD: You were using the metric system? Okay.

LD: Right.

DD: Um, what about job security? How was that out there?

LD: Uh, job security was good. If you did your job then uh, uh, you know, you did, kept yourself, kept your nose clean, you were comin' back. Uh, now, a lot of times that, it didn't work that way, because uh, are you familiar with Cajuns?

DD: Somewhat, yeah.

LD: Know what a "partner" [Note: sounds like partna] is?

DD: No.

LD: Huh? A friend.

DD: A friend, okay. Oh! A partner.

LD: A partner.

DD: Okay, a partner.

LD: Part-, partner they call that in French.

DD: Okay.

LD: "Hey partner. [Inaudible] next week, but I don't know, you gonna have to, you're gonna have to watch it man, 'cause that other man, he's better, he's a better, actually a better man than you are."

DD: B-

LD: "[But?] you being my partner, you gonna co-, I'm gonna tell, I'm gonna lay him off." You know.

DD: Yeah. Okay.

LD: But uh, I don't know about, you familiar with politics in Louisiana? Just as [crooked?] as oilfield partner [and all?].

DD: Really? Well I know politics in Louisiana is quite crooked.

LD: That's right.

DD: It's about the same-

LD: Partners are crooked, too.

DD: Okay. [Both chuckle]

LD: I never was involved too much uh, for that, but I saw a lot of it. People that really, you know, had more qualifications for jobs, but partner. A lot of time in the oilfield if you didn't know somebody, you couldn't get a job.

DD: Really?

LD: You know, if you tr-, you, say you came from California or wherever, but you been workin' out in the oilfield, but the-, y-, they don't know you.

DD: Right. It's still-

LD: [It's like?] Louisiana old Cajun.

DD: It's still like that a lot today.

LD: That's right.

DD: If someone doesn't know you-

LD: Once you get in, you can get in with them, you know. And you my partner, I don't care what you do. You go to dance with my wife or dance with your, your, my daughter or whatever. But don't do it if you don't know me. [Both laugh]

DD: Well, I've, I've s-

LD: Same thing in the oilfield. I mean, that's the way it was in Louisiana oilfield.

DD: It makes sense.

LD: You see most people uh, in Louisiana didn't work in, out in the rigs.

DD: Really?

LD: No, most of those people came from Mississippi.

DD: Mississippi?

LD: Uh-

DD: Texas.

LD: Or north Louisiana.

DD: Okay.

LD: Most of the Cajuns didn't work out there.

DD: Oh really?

LD: No.

DD: What did they do?

LD: They fished.

DD: Fished. Farmin'?

LD: Shrimp. Shrimp.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Uh. Farm.

DD: Was this-



LD: Rice [cone?].

DD: Was this out there in Assumption Parish or you talkin' about around here?

LD: Oh no, in this, in, off-, offshore. I wasn't, I never worked on a land job in the oilfield. I worked on the, all offshore. Uh. You know, Louisiana a lot of rice cone, sugar cone planters. [Slaps table] Of course they always any time got, had people that work in town, I mean, you know. But uh, these, you go to a rig and you may have one Louisiana man, out of south Louisiana, workin' that rig. And you have 10 other ones from Mississippi.

DD: Wow.

LD: Or from north Louisiana.

DD: Yeah. Somewhere else, basically.

LD: Or Texas. Some, some are from Florida. But uh, once in awhile you see a few people from Georgia, but not too many. Alabama quite a, oh, we, we had a lot of 'em from Alabama. Mississippi and Alabama.

DD: Yeah. Um.

LD: Uh, for a long time, when I first started, I had a hard time because I wasn't a Ca-, a Louisiana Cajun, you know. I [worked?] and they say, "You don't know anything. You, you don't know anything. You got to go learn how to drill from Miss-, you a Mississippi, you can be a driller," you know. And lot of, we had to fight that kind of stuff, you know. But then you got some people that can do it, you know. And I did for 20 somethin' years, you know. So, don't matter what they said, I could do my job.

DD: Exactly.

LD: You know, it doesn't matter. But uh... [Pause] life is different in offshore work, you know. It's, it's, like I say, it's [Slight pause] you gotta know what you doin', you gotta, you gotta watch what you're doin'. Make sure that you [Slight pause] somebody, nobody's gonna watch out for you, you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: You gonna have to watch out for yourself. Dangerous, the rig is a dangerous place.

DD: I'm s-, oh yeah.

LD: You know what I mean. Most of those decks are uh, uh, grating, you know? And you step in a hole like that, you gonna, you gonna, you're gonna take all the meat off your bone. You gonna be out of work for a month.

DD: Wow.

LD: You know. Somebody's gonna, a welder's gonna uh, make a mistake and d-, and, and take a piece out of there, [cause they gotta bring something down there?], change a pipe or forgot to-

DD: Right. Forgot to put it back.

LD: You know you just [Whistles] and all of sudden next thing you know you're a dead man when that [Inaudible]. [You get every?] piece of pipe and grate-, grating out there and you dead.

DD: Wow.

LD: So you better be on your, on your toes, you know.

DD: On your toes.

LD: All the time. Now, uh, it used to be worse. Since the last few years, 'course I been, I retired in '95. But even since the last few years, safety is the biggest thing in the oilfield right now.

DD: Yeah. I've noticed that.

LD: They won't move a inch without bein', doin' a safety um-

DD: Safety check.

LD: Before that we'd [Inaudible], you know what I mean. We'd put a, uh, a piece of wood across the floor or somethin'.

DD: Yeah, just go.

LD: And say, "Well nobody's gonna see that hole. I mean, everybody's gonna see that, they won't, [Inaudible] we'd cut his leg off or whatever."

DD: You trust people to have enough sense to-

LD: Yeah. And uh, nothing with safety, you know, I mean. But now, everything is, is safety over any uh, you're not gonna get [Inaudible].

DD: No.

LD: If you do it, he's not gonna, he's not gonna stay out there very long. Somebody's gonna catch him.

DD: Do you think that's because of a lot lawsuits that they've been having?

LD: That is exactly why. That, that, insurance is, is a costly business.

DD: Oh yes it is.

LD: You know. And beside that, the people are, are uh, uh, sellin' their rigs to the, the, to the, Chevrons and to the uh, this uh, whatever. They're sellin' it, sayin' this is a, uh, rig they had worked safely.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Not bunch of mess-ups, you know. Only had 15 accidents a month.

DD: You don't want that rig.

LD: No, you only have one fatality in 10 years, that kind [brings the money?], you know.

DD: That's a pretty good rig, yeah.

LD: I mean, these kind [Inaudible] that you can have some pa-, even if you try to be ninety-nine and nine percent, that one day you gonna have [some?] killed, you know.

DD: It's gonna happen.

LD: You know, I mean, I'd, I'd go, I'd drill many, many well, worked with a lot of people, I never hurt one man.

DD: Never hurt one man? That's good.

LD: No man. But you know-

DD: Did you ever get hurt?

LD: Huh?

DD: Did you ever get hurt?

LD: No. Never have. Never have. And a lot of people that worked [me?], you know, once you get a, like, like a, uh, a crew and you work with that crew for awhile, the safety record's gonna get better, because you get to know your personnel-

DD: And you know what they're gonna do-

LD: You know what he, who you can trust and who not to trust.

DD: Yeah.

LD: I mean, I had a black guy, uh, I, I came into the oilfield when there were no black people.

DD: Okay.

LD: And then the blacks started comin'. And then I had a, the rig, the companies used to uh, send people out. Because before that you could [Inaudible] hire your own crew, brought who you want to, your partner or whoever you want.

DD: Right.

LD: But then there's, the rig companies started bringin' people because they had to bring blacks in. And so they assigned these people to us. So they assigned me supposedly a derrickman. And he never seen a rig [in the world?], but he was sent by the [Inaudible]. Said, "That man, that driller can show you what to do, don't worry about it."

DD: Right.

LD: Well I knew that, when I, first time I talked to him, he had never been on a rig before. You know. So I talked to uh, to the toolpusher and I told the toolpusher, I said, "Hey man, you can't go in the hole with that man."

DD: You can't trust the man. No experience

LD: He don't, well, he doesn't know his job.

DD: Doesn't have experience, right.

LD: I mean, you got to have a, those pumps workin' and know how to work, fix this pump. I, you can't, I can't go down there and keep drillin' while you tryin' to fix the pump. And don't know what you're doin', you know.

DD: Right.

LD: Is that toolpusher gonna be up there [Inaudible] fix that pump? No he's not.

DD: You got other things to do.

LD: See, I mean, you got four, four pumps on a rig. You gonna have two in that hole. You can repair them other two while you, while you-

DD: While you're work-

LD: While you're drillin'. 'Cause you can't shut down that rig to work with that pump.

DD: No.

LD: See?

DD: Can't do that.

LD: And, and you gettin' paid to do a job that cou-, that company man or this uh, Slumberger hand or somethin', he's not gonna be out there fixin' your pump, you know.

DD: Right.

LD: And you don't know what you're doin'. If you like a derrickman, I, I, I send you out there to do a, hire, the company hired you, I expect you to know what you're doin'. You the second man in command, you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: But if you don't know what's, what's goin' on, then you make my job harder.

DD: Ex-, and everyone else's job.

LD: And then my safety. See, because I don't know what he'd doin'. Just like a black man, I told him, you know, [he's got to keep the?] [Inaudible] weight. The uh, uh, the density and all these tests, and [make?] do that every 10 minutes. It's crucial. So. [Slight pause] I, I [Inaudible] daggone, that pump, you got uh, see that's what cau-, causes blowouts. It's somebody doin' what you're not, not [Inaudible]. But 90 percent some man, some human is not doin' what he's supposed to do.

DD: Right.

LD: But they have [tell-tales?], especially now in these days. They have electronic tell-tales.

DD: Oh, yeah.

LD: But at that time, you could, you could uh-

DD: You didn't know-

LD: Then, say like a [flow?], you could [cut out?]. [Slight pause]

DD: Okay.

LD: See? And make it [cheat?] for 20 minutes.

DD: Ah.

LD: First thing you know [Inaudible] and that 20 minutes [turn into?] three or four hours. And that well has been pumpin' salt water in that time. Somebody's gonna be killed. That s-, that well's gonna blow out.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Now, now some drillers even do that. I've seen 'em do it. [Inaudible], they drive you crazy. They, your flow it does have some [Inaudible]. He'd know when to make the cut flow [bob up and down like a boat?], you know, they're bobbin' up and down. So they'll go, the [Inaudible] goin' like this all day long. [Makes an oscillating sound] [Inaudible] "I don't know man, that's drivin' me crazy," you know.

DD: Yeah. And-

LD: And all that time he's got it turned off that flows comin' out.

DD: Yeah.

LD: So what happen? He's a dead man. Because that [Makes oscillating sound again].

DD: Can't tune it out.

LD: [Inaudible] [walk over there?], and say, "Look at it awhile." Well that things bobbin' [Inaudible], it's bobbin' two or three inches. [That's nasty?]. There's 30 mile an hour wind around here. I mean, I don't have to a, a, a rocket science, scientist to figure that out. [Cut that horn?]. Two inches of flow, put it on one end, and that horn's gonna take a [Makes a soft buRight.ing sound]. A whole lot better than that [Makes oscillating sound again].

DD: [Chuckling] Yeah.

LD: It make a noise. But you supposed to.

DD: Y-, and you can still hear a noise, but it's not as bad.

LD: Right. Now if you get a flow, you're not gettin' that [Makes a soft buRight.ing sound]. Well you go [Makes oscillating sound again]. It gonna tell you.

DD: Yeah, okay.

LD: But some guys, it don't matter what, they gonna do somethin', they gonna mess up somebody. Like I said, I, I, I was all conscious man, a conscientious man the whole 30 years that I worked in the oilfield. And I did my job. In fact, a lot of people work for me, they used to call me "Old [Hold Harmless?]" [Inaudible]?

DD: Yeah.

LD: Well a lot of time in, on rigs, you could actually be sittin' on buckets bull-shittin' with your friend, you know. But I wouldn't let my crews do that. I said, "It's time to repair this," you know, "It's time to repair that so that cable don't get frayed or, or just-"

DD: Right. Safety.

LD: "Things full of mud because [Inaudible] [I can't read it no more?]." Or, "The oil's bad in that, in that indicator," or somethin' like that. "We need to change that oil, it's too old." Or this or that or the other. You know, like, like a lot of times there was what they call wirelinin', Slumberger, or they're loggin'. You may log for two or three days. So you don't have to do nothin'. You don't have to do nothin'. But that time [you're onshore?] could be saving your life, too.

DD: Yeah, that's true.

LD: You know?

DD: That's true.

LD: Am I goin', I'm gonna let you get killed because I'm sittin' on my butt somewhere?

DD: I hope not. [Chuckles]

LD: You know what I mean.

DD: Ex-, yeah, I know what exactly what you're sayin'.

LD: But I seen it happen. I've seen guys in rigs, on, when they used to use, they don't use 'em no more out there. Uh, [get the scissor?] like that because the cable got bad. Cut 'em in two.

DD: Hm.

LD: Just like wo-, uh, spinnin' chain. You ever heard spinnin' chain, huh?

DD: Spinning chain.

LD: Well they used to pick up pipe with chain. And they throw that thing like that then you had to catch it with uh, right below with your tong. Like a big pair of pliers. Well, sometime you'd slip like that and that chain would go back around your hands like, your hand like that.

DD: Oooh.

LD: And that chain would tighten down and cut your hands off. Very dangerous. They don't use 'em no more.

DD: Oh good thing.

LD: No, they use spinners now. You know, like I tell you, the thing is a whole lot better than what it was. That's the way they used to make pipe, with chains.

DD: Wow.

LD: And a lot of things are, you always, somebody, you know [Slight pause] in the, in, get somethin' [Inaudible], somethin'. Either you did somethin' wrong, or did something with that chain, or somebody whooped the hell out of like a rotary [belt?], you know, that, if you don't [clang/claim/clean?] that chain goin' around that jo-, that truck, and let that thing get up, unravel up in there. [Inaudible] That, that blade, and that [rope?], and that [hose?]. Uh, lawnmower. That thing gonna cut you like a whip, man. I mean, it gonna cut your head off. Yeah, when you grab that chain like that, just keep it on there, then, then [roll yourself?] [Inaudible] until that driller pulls it enough. You watch that driller. Leave it on that until you see him, and if he's still pullin', you should hold it. Now he's, he nods your head, he's tellin' me, "I got it." And you let that chain off, but he's not gonna pull no more, you know. But he's pullin', you better keep your hand on that chain.

DD: Yeah.

LD: I mean, if it gets down to the [second wrap?] just hold it there. That thing will [foul that pipeline up?]. But if you just said, "Well, I think he's finished," and grabbed that chain, let it off like that, you're gonna find your head cut off.

DD: Whew.

LD: You gonna stand out there with your head off.

DD: It's a danger-

LD: Or your hand.

DD: Your hand, yeah. Well. It's dangerous work.

LD: It's dangerous work, but if you do your job-

DD: If you do your job right.

LD: And stay alert and uh, I used to [Inaudible] if you just do your job. Don't, don't say, "Well, uh, um, you know, nobody's lookin'." Because they u-, they used lookouts, too. You know, "You keep a eye, I'm gonna knock out an hour, then you go, I'm gonna go to sleep, you gonna watch out a while." You know, they got people do that. They always got a place on the rig that uh, somebody's gonna say he can find a place to sleep, you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Uh, say, "Where's uh, where's Charlie at?" "Oh I seen him out in the mud house." Well he knows where Charlie is, he's sleeping. [Inaudible] lookin' for me, you know. But uh, "Well see, see if you can get him over here, I haven't seen him hours ago." Say, "Oh yeah, I see him. He come out, he's been workin' that mud out there," you know. "Okay." When he comes out you can see the sleep in, sleep in his eyes. "Hey, where you, hey, [Bill?], what you want, man, I been out here cuttin' uh, tearin' them uh, uh, [tyin'] old bags, you know, puttin' 'em in the garbage out there." No, he's been sleepin' with them bags out there, you know. [DD laughs] I mean, but, bo-, like a, y-, you know they're sleepin', you know.

DD: Yeah, yeah, I know.

LD: Y-, all you got to tell him is uh, "[Inaudible], Hey, that boat be out here five o'clock this afternoon, just get on that boat. Or, or you can do [Inaudible] next week and don't, don't plan on comin' back, I'm bringin' somebody else out here." So, you know, I'm gonna bring out any man can make 12 hours and [give me?] 12 hours of sleep out here, can make it with, by sleepin' [Inaudible]. And I don't care how many hours you sleep, you know. But all gotta do work, all you gotta work a 12 hours for me.

DD: As long as you do that-

LD: How many hours you sleep that's up to you, you know. I can work with five hours sleep.

DD: Right. Some people just want to be lazy.

LD: No, it's not laze, some people need 10 hours.

DD: No, but I mean the people that are sleepin' on the job.

LD: Oh, yeah, they, they, they [Inaudible] get off of work, they get off of work at, say uh, noon, eat. They got a lot of people on the rig, like service people, like Baker people or, or people, we might have 70 people. There's always a card game around. Man I, you know, [Chuckles] I ain't goin', I, I'm not goin', I need to get 10 hours of sleep, but I'm gonna, I'm gonna gamble for six hours. I got a hot hand goin' here, man, I'm not get-, I might make 50 dollars, you know.

DD: Fifty bucks.

LD: But what the hell. That night while you sleepin' uh, [Inaudible, somebody's name], he died because somebody [in there was asleep].

DD: Right.

LD: You know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: That blew that well out. That well blew out. You know. Somebody, somebody called the cops. I had people relieve me. I had a driller thought he was doin' right and what, pumpin' a well on top [Inaudible]. I went in the back there and I seen out the, what they call a, the "mud pit," I seen out there look like a lot of uh, a tidal wave comin' over [Inaudible], you know. I said, "Man what are you doin'?" He said, "Well," said, "[Inaudible] [you pump it, pump it like-?]" I said, "That's bull shit, man. That well's flowin'." He's all, "Shit! Man." And he said, "Hey, I'm, I'm off anyhow, I don't care what you do." I knew what to do.

DD: Yeah.

LD: So the next thing you know, instead of drillin' that, that toolpusher, "What the hell is that guy doin' over there?" [I'm pickin' that son of a bitch off the bottom. I'm gonna go see?] what the hell's happenin' here. I took them pumps off and that thing is [flowin'?], flowin', flowin'. Whew. I close it in at a thousand pounds on the [Inaudible]-, on the [Inaudible]. And you don't want a thousand pounds on the [Inaudible].

DD: No.

LD: So we got, [Inaudible phrase, something about "kill"]. You know, you gotta get that pressure off.

DD: Yeah, yeah.

LD: So here comes that toolpusher, you know. Said, "What the hell is you, what are you doin' man?" I say, "What he's doin', how about a kill m-" [Audio cuts out for 10 seconds]

DD: Anyway, you were taklin' about um, that story with, guy was pumpin'-

LD: Oh and the well, when the well blo-

DD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech], yeah.

LD: Then I told the toolpusher, I said, "You better check it out." Some when he come back over there he said, uh, "Open that uh, [Inaudible]," he said, "See, see what happens then." [Inaudible] that mud blew out about 100 feet out [Inaudible] he knew what to do then. Set it back in and go back to pumpin' on that thing, get the pressure out of there. He said, "Where's that other driller?" I said, "Hey man, that drillers off. Didn't he tell you, you were off? That's your baby now. That's mine." You, you know. I, he said, "Well, but he ain't gonna [Inaudible] that happen to me no more." I said, "Well, you let it happen [more?] before."

DD: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

LD: And he say, well, it's [Inaudible] pumpin' instead of make what they call a "[crimp?]," see. You gotta work for six, seven hours to [slow that pipeline down?]. But once I start out in a half hour, if that, all I gotta do is try to keep pumpin' a bit longer. Let that man do the crimp one more time, [you get back?], all you gonna do is drill the rest. Politics and everything.

DD: Yeah. I see what you're sayin'.

LD: But you gonna kill me because you don't want to do somethin' for a half hour?

DD: I don't think so.

LD: You know what I mean?

DD: Yeah, ex-, yeah.

LD: And I seen it, seen it happen time and time again.

DD: Yeah.

LD: Now a lot of time it didn't, because somebody knew what's goin' on, but, and they knew what they doin', too, but they were tryin', liv-, livin' on the edge, you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: "Well all I got to do is," you know, uh, I know I can maybe pump for another hour, so it'd be alright, you know. And then he can uh, sit down and maybe charge that time to me, you see.

DD: Right.

LD: Oh no, I [Inaudible] lie like hell. "Everything was fine when I got off 12 hour, 12 o'clock," you know.

DD: Right. But, you had to come back and fix things-

LD: But, but I'm the one that said, well, I'll close the [hydri?] up and I, oh, I [checked?] [Inaudible] pressure? I had the pressure on it. You know. Well this, then that driller, he [Inaudible] go back and say, "Well look, uh," that, most of that stuff happened when they did, [Inaudible] by the, how they call that, flyin' by the head of your tail, or whatever you call it or somethin'.

DD: Yeah, somethin' like that.

LD: But now he can't-

DD: Seat of your pants or somethin'.

LD: There's too much, there's too much technology right now. But you still can beat the system. Always-

DD: Always some way to do it.

LD: [Though nobody's?] beaten Las Vegas, you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: The odds maybe, you know-

DD: Against you, but you can do it.

LD: You can do it, you know.

DD: Well-

LD: But, and, and people operate that way, even in dangerous situations. But you ain't gonna do it me, no.

DD: You better not.

LD: You know. I never did it and [Inaudible]. You know, like I told you, they used to say, uh [Pause] we used to drill uh, we used to uh, the drillers used to change half hour before the uh, rotar-, what they call a rotary, the uh, driller helpers and things, the driller would uh, share, change uh, 'cause [we?] would talk with the driller while his crew was workin', you know. For a little bit. And uh [Pause] they used to call me [Inaudible]. And then when the cold time, what I used to keep my feet warm uh, when you drillin' like that you got a, [Speaking very softly] like, like just like that [Inaudible].

DD: Yeah.

LD: To keep warm I used to always [Inaudible, speaking too softly] to be comin' down there, on the walkway, they be comin' down there like [Inaudible]. [Both laugh] [Inaudible], but they know that when you comin' [Inaudible] with me, you might joke with me on the way comin' up here, but you ain't jokin' with me no more. You gonna work. You know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: That, that don't mean you can be an ass hole, now.

DD: Right, but you gonna make 'em I-, do work.

LD: But you gonna have your mind, if you gonna be out there repairin' them pumps, or operatin' those pumps or, or you drillin', I'm lettin' you drill while I go eat, then I expect you, if I say you gonna drill to 12,000 foot on that uh, on that wave indicator, I want 12,000 feet, I want it 12,000 feet on that. If you can't do it right, pounds I mean.

DD: Don't do it.

LD: Then don't worry it.

DD: Don't do it.

LD: Don't, don't, don't come out here, you know. Just tell me, bring me a lunch out here, I'll be alright for 12 hours. You know, I've done, I can eat a sandwich, yeah. You, you know, just don't walk out there and [Inaudible], if you ain't gonna do it, I just leave it by itself anyhow, [you not gonna do it?]. [Coughs] Anyhow. [Pause] There's so many things that you could learn in the rigs if you wanted to do your job, you know. Like when I went to drillin', when I went to work on a rig, I could always operate the next job that I knew I was gonna have. When I drill, first time I ever drilled, actually drilled for my own, already in my mind [Inaudible], I had-

DD: You knew how to-

LD: You know your drill, you drill [by the tool?], you know.

DD: Yeah.

LD: The drill line.

DD: Okay.

LD: That thing is gonna be true. You got 90 feet to run, it's gonna nine-, it's gonna run 90 feet. It's not gonna run 180 feet.

DD: Right, okay.

LD: You understand?

DD: Yeah.

LD: So at one point in that [drum?], when I'm workin' down there [Inaudible], I know when that, when that block's gonna get to the top, and I know when it's gonna [get back?], 'cause I, it's gonna be the same way, it's not gonna change.

DD: Same way, yeah.

LD: I can time it, I can look at it, I hear it. [Slight pause]

DD: Yeah.

LD: So I actually could do the job by, just by lookin'.

DD: Yeah.

LD: See? I knew when the latch that pipe, I knew when to unlatch it, by lookin' at the drill line. [Laughs]

DD: That's what experience gets you. Well, it looks like it's all I have for you today, Mr. Dias.

LD: Okay, well, I can, I hope I can help you some, because that's all-

DD: Oh, you gave me some great stuff here. Uh.

LD: You know, I, I don't, I can't give you a whole lot of technical-

DD: Oh, we're not lookin' for technical stuff.

LD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] and uh, I just was a oilfield worker, I did my job, whatever job they gave me to do, that's what I did.

DD: And that's-

LD: And that's what they paid me to do, you know. And I made good money. I made 5,000 dollars a month easy a lot of times. I made some 100,000 dollar years.

DD: Wow.

LD: It depends how much you work.

DD: Right.

LD: And that's what I'm tellin' you about the lifespan.

DD: Right, it's hard.

LD: You know, if you gone all the time, you could make a lot of money.

DD: But do you want to be gone all the time?

LD: But what did you, what is your family doing?

DD: Exactly.

LD: The wife, what is she doing? Servicing in between somebody else's job? You know what I mean.

DD: Yeah, yeah. I know what you mean.

LD: How, how did you get six kids [DD laughs] and only been home six hours?

DD: Yeah.

LD: You know what I mean, so to speak. So-

DD: I know what you mean.

LD: Your wife better know somethin' about changin' the oil or know how to fix black eyes.

DD: Yeah, 'cause you're not there to do it.

LD: And all that stuff like that that you're not gonna be there, and that's the biggest thing. You're not gonna go to ger-, graduation unless somebody's gonna be mercy on you and say, "Well, I'm gonna stay over and let you get your-"

DD: Yeah.

LD: "Let your daughter's graduation or give you," because they're not gonna fly you offshore because you have, your daughter's graduating.

DD: No.

LD: They're not gonna do it, you know. Now they may do it. You know, they may do it.

DD: Really?

LD: But they g-, they can't guarantee, because that weather can get bad [Chuckles] at any time.

DD: That's true, that's true. That's true. [Chuckles]

LD: You know a lot of times you, you only get three days o-, three days off. Because two days-

DD: You catchin' up [Inaudible].

LD: No.

DD: Oh, no?

LD: You gotta wait on the weather that, to go back in.

DD: Oh really? Yeah.

LD: You late the next week, tw-, tw-, in the 10 days, you go four, you only home six days.

DD: Wow.

LD: See.

DD: Would you do it again?

LD: Oh, yeah! You know, you know, I got a [break?] of course when I got a little older and I gettin' to, you know, I was manager.

DD: Manager, yeah.

LD: I was home every day. I was home every day. You know, but it took a lot of years to get there.

DD: To get there.

LD: Yeah.

DD: Okay.

LD: Is there anything else you need to ask me? I can-

DD: Um, I think that-

LD: I mean, I, you know, I don't know what exactly you want me to [Chuckles] because-

DD: Well, actually I looked at these questions that I had written up, and you pretty much answered most of 'em in a round about way, so.

LD: Yeah.

DD: And you gave me some great stuff here.

LD: Well, hope so.

DD: I appreciate your time and-

LD: Alright. That's all I knew [is what?], you know, what I did for 32 years. [Laughs]

DD: That's what we were lookin' for. [Laughs] Well okay. Well I thank you very much.

LD: [Inaudible, overlapping speech] Sure.

[END OF RECORDING]

