

**Interviewee: Hoyt, Steve**

**Interview Date: June 18, 2009**

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON**  
**ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT**

**Steve Hoyt**

Interviewed by: Reed Amadon  
Date: June 18, 2009  
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes  
Location:

RA: Steve, my name is Reed Amadon.

SH: Hi Reed, my pleasure.

RA: Alright and of course I am from the Center for Public History and what we are doing is we want to get an archival record of a lot of the marine archeological and other archeological activity that is going on in the state. Since you are the official Marine Anthropologist here for Texas Historical Commission I thought you might be a good source to be able to pick your brain and to be able to learn some things about both you and the process. Do you have any other questions? Did you see any other questions you wanted to ask that I might add to this?

SH: No just going through it real quickly I didn't really see anything.

RA: Okay so if things come up we can go in different directions, very good. What got you first interested in marine archeology?

SH: Before I even started college I was a diver.

RA: Oh okay I was going to ask that.

SH: I liked wreck diving I thought that was really interesting. Then I went to school and became an archeologist and had an opportunity to go into marine archeology and it just seemed like a natural progression.

RA: Okay. What was your journey like to get to where you are now?

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SH: Long. (laughter). This probably is going to answer some of these other questions as well. I did not start college until I was in my late twenties. I went into the military out of high school. My brain was full.

RA: I understand that one.

SH: You know I couldn't do any more education I was just full. So I went into the military for a while and then I did various things. I was a truck driver for a while and I remodeled apartments for a while. Then I started at a community college in Alaska where I was living at the time. I took an archeology course. Actually there were two courses I wanted to take. One was archeology and one was marine biology and the same guy taught both of them strangely enough. He had been a marine biologist and had gone into archeology and there was a conflict and I was only able to take one and I took the archeology and that really got me interested in it. Of course there was a phase before that, I lived with my aunt and uncle for several years when I was in high school and they were notorious pot hunters. They would go out and collect off of sites, which at the time it didn't really mean anything to me, but it did give me an interest in the historic aspect.

RA: Was this in Alaska?

SH: No this was in Washington state.

RA: Okay.

SH: I actually grew up in Oregon, mostly. So I started junior college and from there I went to a field school from the University of Denver that was held in the four corners, it was actually in Utah.

RA: I used to live there.

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SH: Yeah it was down by **Mohave**. That was an all summer long field school out in the heat of that desert which was really interesting. So then I transferred.

RA: Did you **\_\_\_\_\_ (3:35)** out there?

SH: We did yeah cliff dwellings. So I transferred to the University of Denver for a year and then to Colorado State which is where I got my Bachelor's degree in prehistoric archeology. I decided I wanted to go into underwater archeology and there was really only one place at the time that was doing that in the U.S. and that was Texas A & M.

RA: A & M right. Even in the... that was in the 70's right?

SH: That was in the late 70's.

RA: Wow I didn't realize they had gone back that far.

SH: Yeah. I mean it was early in the days of Texas A & M's program in archeology. I had applied to the University of Pennsylvania in their Ph.D. program and I applied to Texas A & M in their Masters in marine archeology and was accepted at both so it was kind of difficult but I went to Texas A & M and went through that program for a Masters degree and have been working in the field every since, which I feel fortunate because so many people don't have the opportunity to work continuously in the field. They get the degree and there is no job and so I definitely feel fortunate in that sense.

RA: Well part of the journey is to this point what happened after that?

SH: You mean between there, between Texas A & M and here?

RA: Yeah kind of.

SH: Well you know how graduate school is. They want you to do a lot of things as a graduate student...

RA: I know.

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SH: That don't contribute toward you getting your degree. So it took a while to get through there, to realize that that was happening but it was also a great opportunity because I got to go to the Cayman Islands and I got to go to Jamaica and do projects and I got to go to...

RA: That's where you did all that work.

SH: That's where those jobs were. They weren't even jobs for the most part they were just graduate student, they pay your way and you are down there and nobody is paying your rent while you are gone. It was a great opportunity and I look back on it very fondly, all of those, the Cayman Islands and Jamaica. It was several summers that I did that. Then I was working in the library at A & M cataloging books.

RA: Exciting.

SH: Yeah it was real exciting. They came up with a job it was actually for the Institute of Nautical Archeology. The Institute of Nautical Archeology and the Anthropology department were not one in the same at A & M. They were separate.

RA: Like the Center for First Americans?

SH: Yeah probably. I took classes at the Institute of Nautical Archeology but I got a degree in anthropology, a Masters degree in anthropology.

RA: So they didn't necessarily match.

SH: You didn't have to take an anthropology course. You could go through completely through the Institute of Nautical Archeology's underwater archeology classes or the marine archeology classes, never having been in the field, never having taken an anthropology class. That has changed now fortunately. I was fortunate that I had an anthropology degree coming in there. But at the time you didn't have to have one.

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RA: Interesting.

SH: But the Institute of Nautical Archeology established a laboratory for doing conservation of artifacts coming out of underwater sites, mostly salt water sites. They had one already as a teaching laboratory; Dr. Donny Hamilton was the head of that. He was a professor there (and still is in fact he is the head of the department now).

RA: He is a hard man to get a hold of.

SH: Is he? Well I know he's in Turkey right now.

RA: Oh.

SH: He comes back on Monday so try next week.

RA: Alright.

SH: But he established a new lab called the Conservational Research Lab out there, you may remember at the time they called it the Annex out on the Brazos river where the old air base used to be. They now call it the East Campus or the Brazos Campus or something I don't remember. Anyway, he put together this new laboratory in the old fire house for the air field and they needed somebody to run it so I got the job of running that lab, that conservation lab for about a year and then I had an opportunity to go to Bermuda and I was married by that time and my wife was pregnant and she was also a marine archeologist and we packed up and went to Bermuda.

RA: Tough duty.

SH: It was tough. It was beautiful. Again it was like going to the Cayman Islands or Jamaica it was just a wonderful place. We lived in a big; we lived in the carriage house for a two story magnificent building called the Commissioner's House that was built by the Royal Navy in 18... I forget exactly when it was built the 50's, 60's. This was all

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inside a Royal Navy dock yard with big walls around it and cannon placements and everything it was just great. We were there for five years before we finally came back to Texas. We came back because my daughter by that time was school age and we wanted to get her into, she was born in Bermuda but we wanted to get her into some good schools here. So we came back to College Station and stayed there just long enough to find out that the job I wanted was in Austin which was about two or three months we were in College Station and then we moved to Austin.

RA: That's when you started with Texas Historical Commission?

SH: No that was in 1989 and I started with a company called SB Houston and Associates.

RA: Okay I was going to ask you about that.

SH: That is a...

RA: Engineering firm.

SH: Yeah engineering consulting firm and they had an archeology division basically. There was one person in there at the time who was doing underwater archeology and they were trying to build that up. They had a bigger division at times but in 1984 things went down real bad in Texas if you remember. So they were building it back up by '89 and I came in and I was there for nine years and eventually became an associate with SB Houston and Associates and then I quit as soon as I became an associate. But that gave me a lot of experience in Texas in the waters of Texas. In fact I had done some work in Texas as a student at A & M, they needed, they always needed, anybody doing work in Texas always needed grunt labor and the archeology students from Texas A & M were a

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source of grunt labor. So I had an opportunity to do several projects on the Texas coast in the early 80's.

RA: Now are we talking about, when you say that are you talking about older ships or ruins ships or recent... I mean were you doing actual modern work in the...

SH: What we were doing is survey for ship wrecks.

RA: Oh okay.

SH: Which basically means in this case there are two phases to survey for ship wrecks the way I define it as a state marine archeologist, based on my experience this is the way that under my job people come to me for permits to do underwater archeology and so this is how I define what survey is. There are two parts of it. One is the remote sensing part where you drag instruments in the water and try to find indications of where there might be a ship wreck and the second phase is the actual diving phase. So in the early 80's I was involved mostly in the diving phase of those types of surveys. Somebody else had already come out and done the...

RA: Then you've got a ton of experience with the ships and all that's out there?

SH: Oh yeah.

RA: That's great. I'm going to pick your brain a little bit on that one.

SH: That helped but it was really the starting to work for SB Houston and Associates in 1989 that started giving me the background. But when you go out and do these surveys and most of the work we did for SB Houston and Associates for those nine years and I also did terrestrial archeology but it was primarily underwater stuff and most of it is survey, that two phase survey. Before you go out and do that survey you do this historic

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research and background research and that's what makes you familiar with the maritime history.

RA: That makes it more interesting. When you were working in the Turks and Caicos in Jamaica and all that was that surface archeology?

SH: No that was all under water. Yeah it was everything from ship wrecks from the age of exploration, the time of Columbus or shortly thereafter. The sunken city of Port Royal that sank in 1692, it is a city but it's under water and it has ship wrecks on top of it so it covers both of them.

RA: It must have been fascinating.

SH: It was fascinating. I also worked in Jamaica on treasure ship wrecks, trying to find them before the Jamaican government. I mean it's not a treasure hunting expedition. We were looking for historic ship wrecks and they just happened to be treasure ships. In this case they were from 1692 and they sank on a reef 90 miles south of Jamaica. I mean again...

RA: Sounds tough that's wonderful.

SH: It was wonderful. Yeah it was tough, it was real tough.

RA: Well I'll get into that a little bit later I guess we'll get back. But that is fascinating it is just a real rich background, a lot more I want to kind of pick your brain about. What would you describe your education was like? I mean you went to Colorado, you studies land, terrestrial archeology right?

SH: Yes.

RA: Then your education at A & M was pretty much hands on with nautical archeology?



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SH: It was all nautical archeology but A & M, at least at the time and I think they may have changed some now, it was mostly theory.

RA: Oh.

SH: They didn't teach certain, for instance, how to run a magnetometer or a side scan sonar or do a mag survey on the water. That you pretty much picked up on your own through summer schools or through projects like I worked on.

RA: Well when they talked about theory what were they talking about?

SH: The history of ship construction over time from ancient times to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

RA: Oh that's important.

SH: That's very important to know how the ship is built, how it is put together and that sort of... a lot of history stuff. A lot of part of the hands on stuff was conservation classes that Dr. Hamilton taught where you actually did conserve objects.

RA: Oh well that's hands on.

SH: Right. That's why I say in those days you could get an anthropology degree without, specializing in marine archeology without ever having done any archeology of any kind.

RA: You think that was a good idea?

SH: No I don't think it was a good idea. I think it is much better now because they have integrated. You are really, the students who are maritime archeology are really more in the anthropology department now then they were before and I think that's largely changes that Donny Hamilton has instituted over time. I think it is much better.

RA: What was your experience with diving?

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SH: I started diving in 1974 when I was living in Colorado. I was driving trucks delivering explosive gases all over the state. That was fun. I took some classes there in Colorado. I did my check out dive which if you are a diver..

RA: I'm not my daughter was or is.

SH: Well eventually to get certified as a diver you have to do these open water check out dives. I did those dives in a lake in Colorado when it was snowing. It was cold. Shortly after that I took a trip to Mexico. My first real nice warm water diving trip and that's when I really became convinced that I wanted to do a lot of diving. I've been diving every since. But that has changed. I haven't done any sport diving in years and years and years. Just because I dive all the time for the job and I don't even dive that much for the job any more. When I was working for SB Houston I was on a lot of field projects where I was out and I was diving a lot and I was on a lot of field projects where I was out and I was diving a lot. But now working for the state which is a bureaucratic position, I do have an opportunity go get out and dive and I'm sure we'll talk about this more but I don't dive anywhere near as much as I used to.

RA: Is it physically straining on you?

SH: No. The hard part of diving has always been the hard part of diving is carrying the gear around because it's heavy.

RA: On land.

SH: On land but once your in the water and I don't find it any harder now that I'm 60 years old then I did (at least I don't remember it being any harder).

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RA: As you have gone through the process of kind of being known in your field or kind of knowing more about your field, how was your thinking about the field change, the maritime archeology?

SH: How has it changed? Well I'm not nearly as idealistic as I once was.

RA: I hear that a lot.

SH: Which is a natural process. When you come out of school, even though I was an older student but you've gone through all that and you've had all those great opportunities and you've been taught the ideal of how it should be done and then you get out in the field as everybody does and you find out "well it sure would be nice to do it that way but there's no time, there's no money."

RA: Well tell me what are the differences; like the ideal is and what is reality?

SH: Well the ideal would be that every historic ship wreck would be saved. The ideal would be that we would get every possible bit of information from those historic ship wrecks that we can. Of course we would have an infinite of time to analyze and write it up. The real is you don't have much time. You don't have enough money. You may have a very important ship wreck that is in the way of a big important project, federal project let's say just for example. It's a very important historic ship wreck but it's going to come out of there because this big project has to happen for economic reasons, it's vital to the development of the area or something.

RA: So is that frustrating for you?

SH: It is frustrating but you have to live with it. You find out real quickly that there are limits to how much money you can raise.

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RA: I see a parallel to the CSI shows that are on television where they spend weeks looking over one crime when they probably have four a day they have to solve.

SH: Yes. They also have technology that I wish I had that actually doesn't even exist but it looks good on TV.

RA: That's interesting. Also, as far as the techniques of working with wrecks, has that changed?

SH: Techniques have changed in a lot of ways, just because technology has improved. Particularly for survey when you are looking for a ship wreck. We are using pretty much the same devices that I started using early on, side scan sonar and a magnetometer. A magnetometer just measures the strength of the earth's magnetic field and if there's something made out of iron in the vicinity it distorts the magnetic field so you can see that distortion. It doesn't tell you what is there it only tells you there is something there made out of iron. The ship wrecks that we are looking for all have lots of iron on them. Just the nail, the fasteners, the iron fasteners are enough to set off a magnetometer. Side scan sonar is just a sonar that sends out a sound signal in the water in this case with a side scan you tow it directly behind the boat and it sends out signals on both sides of the fish and that sound bounces back and it paints a picture of what is on the bottom. So it has to be something that is sticking up above the bottom to see it, with a magnetometer it can be buried. So between the two of those you drag those around, they are pretty much the same instruments we have always used but they have been greatly improved. They are much more sensitive, much easier to use and much more controllable.

RA: Well here's another question, what do you feel are the greatest insights that you have picked up in your field of study?

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SH: That one we will have to come back to. I'll have to think about that, great insights yeah.

RA: What do you feel like your impact on the field, your impact in the work you have done? Do you feel you will be leaving a legacy or leaving something? Have you impacted the field do you think?

SH: I don't know if I have or not. You know I have changed some things; I've improved some things on the state level here for Texas as far as how we proceed.

RA: Do people have to go through you if like a school wants to do a dig or some people do they have to get approval from you?

SH: They do. Anything that is done on a ship wreck yes has to come through me because the state requires a permit. It is called an antiquities permit and anytime you are working on state property you have to get a permit and there are other circumstances as well but any time you are on state property and virtually all the water bottoms are state property in Texas so yeah they all come through me to get a permit. I have modified the requirements of the permits and doing that sort of stuff. That's not really a legacy.

RA: Well yeah it kind of is. You are kind of managing that process for the state.

SH: That's exactly what it is managing the process.

RA: That's your area of; that is your memorial to yourself.

SH: I guess although I'm sure that the next person who comes along in this position in a few years will change it all and it will all be gone.

RA: So you feel like the field is pretty much trucked along.

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SH: The field is getting better all the time I think primarily because more people are realizing the importance of it. When I started in marine archeology and maybe this is an insight.

RA: There you go.

SH: When I started in marine archeology it was not a well respected field.

RA: Really?

SH: Even by archeologists.

RA: Really?

SH: Yeah because we were just glorified treasure hunters and it was number one historic archeology and most prehistoric archeologists just didn't see why anyone would want to do historic archeology and then it was just thought of as treasure hunting, just glorified treasure hunting and I think we are past that now.

RA: Well archeologists had to go through that, being grave robbers and they certainly were all those things.

SH: Yes they were. But that took a while. It was not made easy by the fact that some people who identified themselves as marine archeologists did work for treasure hunters.

RA: As a crypto zoologist. If you study weird things you are a crypto zoologist.

SH: You are a crypto zoologist any weird life form yeah.

RA: Tell me about your greatest discoveries?

SH: Greatest discoveries? Hmm.

RA: Whatever, tell me about some of your discoveries that you thought were pretty cool.

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SH: The work in Jamaica was probably the most interesting. I love Texas and it's got a real interesting history and anytime I get a chance to dive in Texas it is wonderful even though you very seldom can actually see it. The nice thing about Jamaica is working on... particularly the old wrecks from 1692. You could see them. There wasn't really any structure of the wreck left but the ballast; the ballast is the big stack of rocks they put in the bottom of the ship to keep it balanced so it doesn't rock and roll too much. The wood may be gone but the ballast pile is still there and there's always a lot of stuff in the ballast pile. We found of course a cannon lying on top of it, a lot of big metal objects that are on top of it but buried in there you really have to dig. That stuff, they are rocks and in this case there were rocks that were about the size of a grapefruit or grapefruit to basketball size. They are just concreted together, they are stuck together hard. We had air hammers underwater to try to break those apart and you are really working at it and these air hammers, of course, are generating a lot of bubbles and they always made the backs of my eye balls itch it just was, it was horrible. But you are down there and you are pounding away and you get starting breaking out rocks. It's not like digging in the soil, even in hard clay soil your progress is measurable and these things you are just banging away, banging away. Pretty soon you get a rock loose and you get down inside of it and we found things like we found silver coins, we found gold rings, we found all that usual kind of stuff which I just assume not find except the silver coins are very handy for dating. The problem is that when you start finding treasure then you have people coming out of the wood work. So I'd just assume not find it. But we found things like wooden sun dials, pocket sun dials.

RA: Oh really?

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SH: About the size of a stop watch and you could pop the top open just like a pocket watch, open the top and the little sun dial was still in there. It still had the paper, it still had the little needle and the part that was missing is there needs to be a piece of string from the base up to the top, to the lid when you open it and that string was missing.

That's the one that casts the shadow just like on a sun dial.

RA: Oh how fascinating a little pocket sun dial.

SH: We found bunches of them. Something like that that I didn't even know existed until I did this study on it. We found it and I did the study, that to me is really fascinating. That is probably the most interesting thing that I have ever actually found myself. I found lots of stuff. We would go on like some of these Civil War period wrecks down here and you could find pottery and tools and all kinds of things but those little pocket sun dials I think.

RA: That's ingenious.

SH: What would you say is your greatest love in this field, what do you enjoy doing most?

SH: In diving on the wrecks, particularly if you can see them.

RA: It's real tough to do that here.

SH: It is tough. I've been diving here in Texas since the early 80's, steadily since 1989 and I've been able to see more than 2 feet maybe a dozen times. It's just bad visibility and particularly even if you have some visibility and you get down there and you start diving, it goes away.

RA: Why is that so much silt?



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SH: Silt, yeah it's just sediment in the water, suspended in the water. You can't use a flash light because you turn a flash light on and it reflects back off of those suspended particles so a lot of it is just brail work.

RA: Has that always been that way or the development as the population grew and everything?

SH: I think a lot of it is...

RA: Recent?

SH: Yeah as a result of economic growth basically, population density and agriculture.

RA: Okay a lot of stuff. Do you feel it is important; do you ever deal with Native American groups in your work?

SH: I don't. That doesn't mean I won't it just means I haven't had a circumstance where I have had a needed to do that. I think it is absolutely vital when it is called for but with historic ship wrecks it's not really a problem.

RA: Tell me the work you have done here on the Texas coast?

SH: Well I was talking about survey the nine years that I worked for SB Houston which the last year I was there it sold and became PBS&J which is still around, still doing the same kind of work. They have a nice big department now for marine archeology. But most of that work was survey, looking for ship wrecks, and it was anywhere from the Sabine river to the Rio Grande and way up on the Trinity river and way up on the Brazos river, just everywhere in Texas. Very little of that was unfortunately working on ship wrecks because mostly we were just looking for them and we weren't finding them.

RA: Oh you weren't? You weren't finding them?

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SH: We weren't finding them but there were two reasons we weren't finding them.

One is we were doing work mostly for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers under contract and they were very limited in what they would allow us to look at. We are doing surveys along ship channels, that sort of thing and just doing the edges of the channels, we can't get outside of that so you don't get much opportunity where you think the wrecks are.

The other reason is that those areas have already been heavily impacted by dredging, ship channel dredging and stuff like that.

RA: Oh really I see. So whatever had been there had already been pretty much messed up.

SH: Pretty much messed up. There are cases where wrecks in dredged channels have survived enough to identify them at least. There's always the question of is a wreck that has been heavily impacted by a dredge or a by dynamite sake or remove it as a navigation hazard which was very common, is it well enough preserved to be significant? My answer is always, "Yes." There's always some kind of information that you can get. I mean that's what archeology is, is digging through the remains. Even if it is the remains of what once was a single object, that object was made up of lots of little components and you can get a lot of information from it. Now since then working for the state I have had more opportunity to work on wrecks because I don't do very much survey, we go out and look at wrecks and that's a lot more interesting. We've worked on wrecks again from the Rio Grande. There's a wreck on the beach near the mouth of the Rio Grande that dates probably to the 1840's or '50's. I've worked on wrecks all the way up again to the Sabine Pass. Everything from, I guess the earliest, well the Bell would be the earliest one but I didn't really work on the Bell so much I was still working for the other company at

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the time and I did assist in early stages before they began the actual excavation. I assisted in some of the attempts to define exactly where the wreck was but during the excavation I was not part of that. I came to work here shortly after that wrapped up. So I just missed it.

RA: Was there some wreckage from **Cervasa de Vaca** (35.38), his ship wreck was there any remnants of that?

SH: No they never found any.

RA: They never found any traces of that?

SH: No. I can't just off hand list how many wrecks that I've worked on but one of the things that I do as the State Marine Archeologist is I maintain our data base of ship wrecks in Texas.

RA: Oh okay.

SH: This is a data base that was started by my predecessor who held a job for two and a half decades or something like that. He was here for a long time and in the 70's they started a data base and they did a lot of historic research and...

RA: Is there a map for instance of that?

SH: I'll show you. It's on the computer. They started putting that all together and over time they tried to computerize it in the early days of main frames and that was not really very successful. When I came to work here almost, well over 11 years ago now, the data base was on a disk but it was all coded. I mean you couldn't read it. You could look at the data it was all numbers, you couldn't read it. So I went through and modified it and put in real words so you can read it and have brought that up to modern standards and kept it up to modern standards. So one of those things I have done is keep that data base

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up. That data base currently has almost 2,000 wrecks in it. Most of them we don't know where they are obviously. They are from just historic records which may give us an idea of where it is and it may be very vague. It may just say, "Lost in Texas." It may say, "Galveston Bay," and that doesn't help us much. I can show you what that looks like. This is, in fact, it. This is we are looking at here Matagorda Bay, west Matagorda Bay, Indenola (38.30) area. This is the Indenola here. I'll turn on the layer with the ship wrecks.

RA: Oh look at that. You have Galveston Bay? Can you print that up?

SH: No. I mean I can, but I can't.

RA: Oh okay. You don't want people knowing where these things are?

SH: Well it's a limited access data base. We can sit here and look at it but it's for our people who have applied for a researcher's card.

RA: Wow! Good Lord!

SH: Yeah. This has got, let me get rid of that. Anytime this, you can't even see it, it's buried here but here is the entrance to Galveston Bay; the entrance to the major bays that is where most of them are concentrated.

RA: Now those are historical records, not literal sites.

SH: Some of them are sites. Some of them are just from the records. Now there's one, a bunch of these around Galveston are actual known sites that are recorded as archeological sites, including some out here off shore, like the city of Waco which sank in 1870, it burned actually. It was sitting out there ready to come in and they decided to sit there overnight and come in the next morning, it was a big steamer. It was sitting out there with I think 14 other ships waiting to come in and it caught fire in the middle of the

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night and burned and by the next morning it was gone. It was gone and everybody with it. Everybody died. And we know where that one was we found it, I've been diving on it myself. So there are quite a few of them that we know where they are. But yes most of those are just from historic records.

RA: There's no way to get a copy of that?

SH: No sorry.

RA: Okay, it's alright. When you were on the... that's fascinating though, all those wrecks it's just amazing.

SH: Yeah well let's see, let me pull back out to the whole state. I'll turn on the wreck so they will appear at that scale.

RA: I like your computer screen.

SH: It's nice isn't it? It just becomes a mass, it's all a mass. But you can see also there are some... I mean I can print that out for you because you aren't going to get any information out of it.

RA: Well if you could that would be great. I would love, whatever you can give me I'd appreciate it. But it shows it even in land too that's great.

SH: Yeah even up here on the rivers and that's important because we think about Texas waters and we think about the gulf and the bays but the rivers are very important. Even way up beyond the normal heads of navigation on the rivers where there are ferry crossings at all the major roads. I'll see if I can print this for you.

RA: That's a great data base. Can you zoom in and get real specific with the site?

SH: I can. I'll show you what I can do. This is my major tool for reviews. We haven't talked about reviews but I'll tell you what those are. I'll see if I can get this

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printed. It looks like it wants to do it on its own layout. I didn't do properties. That will take a minute to print. One of the things I do, like I said, this is... my job has many aspects basically. I do field work. I do field research. Since I have no staff I rely on volunteers for that.

RA: Oh really there is no staff?

SH: There is no staff, there is me. There is one other guy here who does a lot, he's not an archeologist but he works with the computers but he is a diver and does a lot of remote sensing stuff with archeology and I can get him to go out with me. But there is no staff so we rely on volunteers. The Texas Historical Commission has a system of volunteers called the Stewardship Network.

RA: I saw that.

SH: The Texas Archeological Stewardship Network and there is 125 or so volunteers in that network. Eight of them are underwater marine archeological volunteers. So when I want to go diving on a project I get the volunteers to go there and we go out and do our dive. So that's one aspect and it unfortunately has those limitations that I have to depend on volunteer labor which is great, I love the volunteers and they are very dedicated but you can't just get your staff and say, "We're headed out next week." So there are limits to that but one of the other things I do is this data base, I keep this up. The third thing is one of the divisions here at the Historical Commission one of the programs within the archeology division is called Review and Compliance. That program looks at projects that are about to start all over the state that might have some impact on historic resources. They get, we have information coming in all the time from federal and state agencies and city and getting lots of information that we have to look at to see if it's going to have any

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impact on a historic research, an archeological site. There are three full time people who do that in the division. I mean they go through thousands of those every year and I do that as well even though I'm not a part of that program, I'm the only one who is qualified to look at the under water stuff. So that takes about a third of my time, at least a third of my time is looking at all of those, we call them reviews, that's what this is. In fact this is a highway department project where they are going to replace a bridge. There just happen to be at least two and possibly steamboat wrecks on the river right where this bridge is. So that is a big project. Now it did come through and I required them to do a survey to look for ship wrecks because we knew it was historically a very active place but then the surveyors, the company that I used to work for in fact, went out and did the big survey and did a bunch of diving on the wrecks and they write a big report and that comes back to me and I have to review that as well. But usually when these come to me, when this project, this one for instance came to me and they said, "We are going to replace this bridge are there any underwater historic concerns?" I get this data base and I go right to that spot and zoom in. I can't see much here until I turn on some kind of a background. But I look at where they are going to build their bridge and I say, "We have a history of ship wrecks in that area and I know of one," this is over by...

RA: Texarkana?

SH: Logan's Port. So if I know the wreck is there, that's the aerial stuff. It's easier with the topographic map. I've got the wreck symbol. I can just click it, pull it up and get all the data that I have on it. Exactly where it is, when it sank and what I know about it. It's all in the background there. So that, having this and I put this all into GIS myself starting a couple of years ago and that has been a vast improvement and made my life a

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whole lot easier. It used to be I'd have map files over here in this corner where the table is in really big piles that were five feet tall and really big map files and I would have to go to the map files and drag them out, these old paper maps and that is the stuff that is accumulated from the 1970's which is what they had. But I have eventually managed to get through all of that and it's all electronic now and so my life is a lot easier. But there is the...

RA: Wow this is wonderful I appreciate it. Yeah, good Lord! Is there any reason why, is the coast any more particularly more dangerous than other coasts or is it pretty much...?

SH: No I think that's pretty common.

RA: Pretty common for a coast period?

SH: What you have to consider. I can make these symbols smaller and the resolution might be a little better. Most of these are concentrated around the major bay areas. Here at Sabine Pass, Galveston Bay, Matagorda Bay, Corpus Christi, Aransas Pass and then down at the Rio Grande or actually the Brazos San Diego Pass. They are scattered all up and down the coast but most of them are actually concentrated along those areas, either at the entrances to the bays or in the bays.

RA: What can you tell me about the work and discoveries at the Bell site? I know you said you kind of missed that actual thing?

SH: Yeah I did. The Texas Antiquities Committee, I'm not sure if you are familiar with them, Texas Antiquities Committee existed at the same time as the Texas Historical Commission for many, many years. Texas Antiquities Committee was really dealing with ship wrecks.



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RA: They were?

SH: They were. The original, when the 1554 wrecks, I don't know if you are familiar with those, the Spanish wrecks from 1554, there were three Spanish wrecks that went a ground on South Padre Island in 1554 carrying treasure. They were... one of those was found by a treasure hunting firm in the late 60's. The treasure hunting firm was called **Pletoral Unlimited (50.17)**. They were from Indiana as I recall. They came down and started salvaging the one of the 1554 wrecks that they found. Now when these ships wrecked in 1554 there were a lot of survivors. They tried to march over land back to Mexico. Almost all of them died.

RA: Oh they are the ones that thought it was only 30 miles to the **\_\_\_\_\_**.(50.44)

SH: Yeah it wasn't far. There were 300 survivors I think one of them survived.

RA: I do remember reading about that.

SH: The Spanish, there was a ship, a small boat that made it back to Mexico after the wreck that left the wrecks there and they sailed back to Mexico and told them about the wrecks and they came and salvaged them so the Spanish did a lot of salvage on them. But there was still a lot of treasure left because they couldn't get it all. So in the 1960's this treasure hunting firm found one of them and began excavating it and hauling the treasure away to Indiana. That upset a lot of people in Texas. They said, "No." The Texas General Land office said, "No you can't have it, it belongs to us." Now the regulations that we have now, the statues and regulations that we have did not exist that protect historic resources. So it went to court and it was in court until I think it finally settled in 1983 when it was determined that "Yes all that stuff belongs to the state, it all has to come back." They did pay the treasure hunting firm a couple hundred thousand

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dollars, I don't remember how much it was for their efforts but everything all came back. But as a result of this happening the treasure hunters finding this wreck and hauling it away, Texas developed the statute that protects ship wrecks and it is called the Antiquities Code of Texas and that has been expanded now and that's the same law that protects terrestrial sites as well, prehistoric archeological sites on land. But that was all done under the Texas Antiquities Committee and the previous State Marine Archeologist worked for the Texas Antiquities Committee not the Historical Commission. The Antiquities Committee was disbanded basically, was done away with was (52:58) and all those duties and responsibilities came to the Historical Commission in the 1990's, mid 90's, '95 or something like that. I forget when it was, before I came. So the Texas Antiquities Committee was the one who did all the 1554 wreck and developed and their initial data base and all that stuff was the Texas Antiquities Committee.

RA: Did they ever find the other ships?

SH: That's a natural question. Yes and no. One of the others was found by the Antiquities Committee shortly after the treasure hunters found the first one and they did an archeological investigation on it, a full excavation. The other wreck has never been found but that's because when the, I don't remember who did it, I don't remember if it was the federal government or the local interests but somebody dug a canal through Padre Island into Port Mansfield. It is called Mansfield Cut and in the process they apparently took out the third Spanish ship wreck. But I started talking about the Antiquities Committee because the Antiquities Committee began looking for the Bell in the 1970's doing survey in Galveston Bay using the magnetometer. They didn't have the

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sophisticated positioning systems that we have now with GPS and the magnetometer didn't have anywhere near the capabilities they have now but they did a lot of survey in 1976 looking for the Bell. They didn't find it but they were close because I plotted their survey areas compared to where it was. They were close. They didn't get an opportunity to go back until '95 and that's when they found it. That was shortly after the Antiquities Committee was merged into the Historical Commission so it was found in '95 and it took a couple of years to put together the actual excavation. I assisted as I say with trying to locate exactly where the wreck was. I mean pinpointing it not just knowing it's within this 200 or 300 square feet but pinpointing it and knowing what the orientation was because when they excavated it they built a coffer dam around it, which meant that they had to drive steel sheet piling 65 feet long into the sandy bottom and they didn't want to cut the wreck in half. So they had to know exactly where it was. So I participated in that. That was probably '96 or '97 it might have been '97. Shortly after that they really fired up and got the whole thing going. That was one, we talked earlier about never having enough money. That's one that was pretty well funded.

RA: It seemed like it from looking at the pictures there.

SH: Yeah it was and it was a combination of state funding, federal grants and foundation money, there was quite a bit of foundation money, mostly state funding as I recall. So it was done very well and it was done as a terrestrial excavation which made it nice because you had, you could actually see what you were digging on. It's not over yet. I mean typical of a large excavation like that, I mean they got over a million artifacts off the wreck and I wasn't involved in the excavation but since I came here, obviously I have been involved in the Bell project in the analysis of artifacts and all those have to be

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conserved. They are all over at the Conservation Lab at Texas A & M now, well most of them have been conserved and are in Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History which is the official curatorial facility.

RA: What is the wreck that is at the state capitol?

SH: That's the Bell. You are talking about the Bob Bullock State History Museum?

RA: Yes.

SH: What they did with the Bell is kind of, well it was very original, I think it was a great idea. Usually there is a huge and cry among the archeologists that you don't split up your collection; you keep it in one place. You can display it there and people can come do research on it but in this case there were a lot of museums in that area around Matagorda Bay that really wanted to be involved in the display of artifacts from the Bell. So what they did is they created the Laselle (58.32) Odyssey Trail basically of a number of little museums around the bay that each has some part of the story to tell about Laselle and they all have some part of the artifact collection to display. The major part of the artifact collection is at Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History and they are the official repository. However, the hull, which was completely excavated and taken apart piece by piece and pulled out of there, taken up to Conservation Research Lab at Texas A & M, the same lab that I ran for a while, that is still in treatment and will be for several years yet. But when it is completed it will go into the Bob Bullock State History Museum. That was part of the agreement that it would go there and they have some artifacts there as well.

RA: Have you worked on other sites on the gulf? I mean obviously you had to but to that kind of degree?

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SH: To that degree no.

RA: There haven't been any of them?

SH: The two big excavations on the gulf were the 1554 wrecks and there was really almost nothing left of the hull of the one that was archeologically excavated, just one piece of the keel and that was it.

RA: What about the 300, what was it called the 300 mystery or whatever it was called?

SH: I'm not sure what you are talking about.

RA: I'm trying to think I looked it up. What about, there were other sites; there were things that turned up. There was a wreck that got uncovered during Ike and it actually sounded like there may have been three other wrecks. What was that wreck that was in Sabine, well I know they don't want to talk about where it was.

SH: No we can talk generally about where they are. They were doing... the Texas General Land Office was conducting surveys with side scan sonar. They weren't using magnetometer just side scan sonar. They were looking for things that stick up above the bottom that would be classified as debris from hurricane Ike that they could remove. It was part of the clean up of the mess. There were obviously lots and lots of stuff on land that they were helping to clean up and they wanted to also do this survey. They surveyed everything from Freeport at the mouth of the Brazos River to Sabine Pass it's a pretty good size area that they surveyed off shore and then they went into Galveston Bay and did a bunch of survey as well. In the process of doing that and that was another thing that we had to coordinate with them because they wanted to do the survey which is great and we needed to get it done but they didn't consider the aspect of possible impact to historic resources. So I had to go down and meet with them and talk them through it and make

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them realize that they had to consider these things. So they hired an archeologist to examine all of that data and there is a lot of it as you can imagine looking specifically for things that might be ship wrecks. So the result of that was somebody contacted me, not the GLO person but somebody who was actually out in the field doing the surveys and said, "I think we found a wreck here." He told me where it was but he didn't send me a picture and they have, in fact I can show you what the pictures look like if you want to see what one of those look like.

RA: Oh I'd love to.

SH: The sonar images they sent me... well they didn't show me the sonar image to start with they just gave me a position and it hit the press in Galveston and got picked up big time. The press printed the sonar image of what it looked like and they were good about it. They didn't say where it was exactly or anything like that. But they did say it was a mystery wreck and nobody knows what it is. Well you didn't ask me. I knew what it was. Then as it progressed they actually found three wrecks. Actually they found another one, they found four between, well in that stretch between Galveston Island and down towards Freeport. But three of them that we have seen, two of them we know are previously recorded Civil War blockade runners. We know what they are. I have not been on any of them. I hope to get down there this summer and get on them. A third one we think is another blockade runner that we've never found before called the Caroline. We had the Will of the West and the Acadaia were the two blockade runners that we knew about. The third one, the third wreck that they found we think might be the Caroline. Which we knew it was down there somewhere but it had not been found.

RA: Now did these show up because of the shifting sands and stuff?

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SH: Well yes I think they were probably more exposed by the shifting sands but there's also the fact that nobody has actually done that kind of survey there before. So it was a great opportunity to get some great data but I still haven't got it their contractor is going through it all and will submit it to me but I haven't seen it. I'll see if I can find a picture here of one of these. I'm in Matagorda Bay that doesn't help.

RA: Now were these ships run a ground, they hit something they didn't mean to hit or were they shot up?

SH: Yeah the stories are a little different with each one. But the Caroline or was it the Acadia was forced a ground and shelled.

RA; They look like fairly, even the wrecks themselves look like fairly slick, they had pictures of the early wreck before it had disappeared and they were pretty sleek ships.

SH: Yes they were. They were fast. That's why they were blockade runners they were fast and they could elude the blockading ships. There is another one called the **Dinbe (105.55)**, this is between the jetties in Galveston in the entrance to Galveston. That one ran a ground and is still in real shallow water there.

RA: It looks like a fairly sophisticated data base.

SH: Yeah it is. I guess I don't have a picture attached to that one. It is and it has really made, like I say it has made my life a lot easier. Well that's one of the sonar images. Not very impressive but we have some much better ones here let's see.

RA: Wow that's great. Can I get a copy of that if I don't identify it?

SH: Let me see which one this is. I think this is the one that we think is the Caroline, yeah that's the one that we think is the Caroline.

RA: Now how deep is that?

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SH: It's pretty shallow. It's not far off shore.

RA: Are we looking at the top of it?

SH: Well this line here is the path of the sonar fish. So it is looking out to the side.

Yeah it's going to be below the fish. This is shadow from the whatever it is.

RA: Oh I'd love... that's wonderful.

SH: That's bits of the structure.

RA: Yeah that's great!

SH: The third one looks even more like it's got a pointy bow on it but it's from the end, you don't get quite as good an image of it.

RA: That's great.

SH: Yeah so we've got three of those and two of them are recorded and one of them is not but we really want to get down there this summer and dive on the one that is not but again I've got to get the volunteers together and get them down there and it's off shore so the weather is always a problem for getting off shore for diving.

RA: Did the hurricane destroy any sites? Did Ike mess up any wreckage sites as far as you know?

SH: Not as far as I know for ship wrecks. It obviously did for coastal sites. In fact after Ike I went down to meet with FEMA representatives in Galveston and then I visited several previously recorded historic sites. Not historic, prehistoric sites, both on the beach and on the other side of the highway that runs both on Boliver and down on Galveston Island and Fallits (109.15) Island down towards Freeport and the sites on the beach side were pretty much gone, the prehistoric sites. On the other side of the highway they mostly had stuff piled on top of them. So they weren't suffering.



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RA: Well I know on one of those beaches down there has a large settlement; it has all this stuff that floats in all the time because it's pretty far out.

SH: McFadden beach.

RA: McFadden beach is that one pretty messed up?

SH: That one is pretty inaccessible. You have to do a lot of hiking to get to that one and I have not been to it. I have never been to it except for off shore. So I don't know what the impact was there. When I toured sites it was all stuff that was accessible from the road basically.

RA: Well McFadden was or is or was never accessible from the road?

SH: It was at one time if I remember right we will see let me look here; that highway that runs up Boliver Peninsula and then used to go up to Sabine Pass.

RA: Is gone now?

SH: Is gone and has been gone for years.

RA: They never replaced it?

SH: They never replaced it. They finally just abandoned it when it washed out. I don't remember how far...

RA: It probably protected the site.

SH: It does help yeah. I don't remember how close that highway was to the McFadden beach area. It might have gone right past it. I just don't remember.

RA: How do you think the field has changed since you have been in it? I think you mentioned something about technology.

SH: Yeah well and of course the improved acceptance of underwater archeology as a legitimate field of study. That would be the main thing I think. That's not just in the

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U.S. that is world wide. We still have a lot of problems. There are seven states in the United States that have and underwater archeologist on their staff. So that...

RA: That says something.

SH: That needs to improve.

RA: Oh I see.

SH: No, no. It's better. It's better than what it was 20 years ago but it is still abysmal. It is really bad. California, Oregon, Alaska... none of those states.

RA: Oh that's bizarre.

SH: They have, California has a person who looks at underwater stuff but is not an underwater archeologist.

RA: Well what about the state here? You've got the office but do you feel like there is adequate funding for what you need to do?

SH: I could always use more. It would be nice to have a staff. I've talked about that. But it's not that they are under funding underwater archeology it's just that there is not enough money all the way around. We have... I talked about the Review and Compliance Division program in our division. We have another program called the Regional Archeologists and they concentrate on specific parts of the state: north Texas, central Texas, west Texas and they work with those volunteers with those stewards in their regions to do a lot of archeology because again, we don't have the staff. We used to have six. We are down to three regional archeologists. So it's just systemic. I don't feel like marine archeology is being picked on. It's just that nobody has any money. Yes we can certainly; we could use more money, more staff.

RA: What needs further excavation and study?

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SH: The one that I really want to concentrate on right now is that third unidentified wreck off of Galveston. That is very important. There are a number of wrecks that we have not found yet. There is a wreck called the **Caligula (113.50)** a little steam boat that served as a capitol of Texas for a couple of days. We think we know where that might be. That is going to be real interesting and very significant. This wreck down on the beach near the Rio Grande that I talked about which has been discovered but desperately needs to be further investigated because it is an early wreck for Texas coast. The problem is it is in a zone that is almost impossible to work. I've talked to a lot of people in my field about this and they all say the same thing, "Its right in the surf." You can't dive on it, you can't dig on it. You can't snorkel on it. If you try to dig the surf is washing stuff back in as fast as you can dig it out and that wreck really deserves more attention and we've tried we had scheduled more work on it last summer and just were unable to do it. You just can't get to it. So there are wrecks like that. There are 19 recorded wrecks at the entrance to Matagorda, the original entrance at **Pascavile (115.25)**. Now some of those are modern and we're not worried about those shrimp boats and so forth. But a number of them are early steam boats from the mid 1800's, mid to late 1800's. The missing Lasalle ship...

RA: The supply ship?

SH: The supply ship LaMable is still down there somewhere.

RA: What is it called again?

SH: Well it's French LaMable.

RA: LaMable?

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SH: Yeah it's still down there. We think we might know where it is and if we are correct then it's buried under 25 feet of sand. The Bell in Matagorda Bay was in eleven feet of water and it was excavated in a coffer dam, that coffer dam cost a million and a half dollars in 11 feet of water. In order to do a proper excavation on this other ship, if we wanted to do a coffer dam on it, in 25 feet of sand and 18 feet of water, it would be tremendously expensive undertaking. So the attitude we have to take, and this goes to the statement about the real versus the ideal, is that buried under 25 feet of sand it is fairly well protected and until somebody comes up with a real feasible method of getting down to it, in a way that doesn't cause more damage to the wreck than what you are going to recover in data, it's probably just going to stay there. But all the way up and down the coast we've got wrecks like that. It's not just on the coast, there's a steam ship on the Trinity River that I'd really like to look at. It is currently under private property. The river has shifted. It's under private property. Now the property owners are willing to work with us and interested in the wreck and we have done some work down there and we helped locate the wreck, we know exactly where it is. But again it is under 20 feet of fill. The cost to get down to it and do a meaningful excavation when it's in the water, it's under 20 feet but it's still in the water table. So once you get down to it then you have to pump constantly. It would be a fascinating wreck to work on. There's a wreck near Sabine Pass called the Morning Light that was a big sailing ship, a blockade runner, not a blockade runner, blockading, a Union blockading vessel.

RA: Oh interesting.

SH: It was captured by the Confederates. It was a sailing vessel and the Confederates had a steam boat and there was no wind. So they got it. They went to haul it in to Sabine

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Pass and the pass was too shallow. They couldn't get it over the bar and in order to avoid the ship being recaptured by the Union they burned it and all the cannons and everything were still on it and it's still out there. I would love to find that. I may have an opportunity to do some surveying to do that before long; which that would be good.

RA: Who in the field, you mentioned initially when we were talking some other people that would be good to talk to. Are there any other people that are kind of doing this kind of work that would be good?

SH: In Texas?

RA: Yes.

SH: Yes. The company that I used to work for has a couple of really good people working there now. In fact all their people are really good. But the guy who runs it, his name is Robert Gearhart, Bob Gearhart.

RA: How do you spell that?

SH: G-E-A-R-H-A-R-T.

RA: Oh there you go that's very simple.

SH: Yeah.

RA: That's German.

SH: When I went to work there.

RA: What's the company name?

SH: PBS&J. Which stands for Probst, Buckley, Shoe & Jernigan but you don't need to know that, PBS&J is all you need to know. When I went to work for SB Houston I started to work for Bob Gearhart. He was the manager of that program. Shortly after I started to work there he left and I became the manager of the program and managed it for

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several years and then when I left he came back. So he's there. He's got a lot of insights on underwater archeology in Texas and has done a lot of work, as I said for years and years and years in Texas. Another person who might be worth talking to is Amy Borgans, she also works there. She has a huge... (phone ringing)

RA: That's going to be on the tape. That will be interesting.

SH: She has a lot of information on marine archeology in Texas and she is a marine archeologist from Texas A & M University, has her Masters degree from there and her interest is Texas.

RA: She will be reachable here?

SH: She can be reached there.

RA: What about anybody and any of the other colleges?

SH: To interview on Texas archeology you can always talk to Barco Arnold. He is the ex State Marine Archeologist. You can probably reach him at Texas A & M too. He was working for the Institute of Nautical Archeology and I think he still has some kind of position. (phone ringing)

RA: Is that your phone?

SH: It is. Andy Hall lives in Galveston. He is one of the marine stewards and he is an excellent researcher.

RA: Do you have his number by any chance?

SH: I do.

RA: Because I actually think I was looking his name but, but I was not able to get anywhere with it.

SH: I would put him at the top of that list.

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RA: Okay.

SH: Andy Hall. His business number is (409) 772-8556.

RA: Okay.

SH: He's got a web site on Texas maritime history that you might want to look up.

RA: It's under Andy Hall or Texas maritime history?

SH: Texas maritime history I think. Let me see.

RA: The work phone is the best number to reach him?

SH: Yes. I have his cell phone number but if you can't get him at his work.

RA: I'll get back to you.

SH: Let's see...I'm even a contributor although I haven't contributed anything yet.

RA: Well that's okay I can probably. I'll call him and he can probably tell me what the thing is. Anyway after all this any insights?

SH: Actually I don't think I have any startling insights at all.

RA: Well you've covered an awful lot of stuff. I really appreciate it. It's really good and I will get you a copy. On your card I'll have your email address and I'll email you a copy of the transcript once I edit it. If I do anything too weird you can let me know, you can re-edit it. But I probably won't be able to get anything; I probably won't have anything until the end of next week probably. Well you're probably not in a rush.

SH: No I'm not in a rush. It's your schedule so when ever you have a chance.

End of Transcript.