

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HHA# 00251

Interviewee: Huey Kleinpeter

Interviewer: David DiTucci and Steven Wiltz

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

Interview Site: Lafayette, LA

Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW017

Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. The interviewee slurs some of his words and phrases, so in places I was unable to make out what he was saying.]

Ethnographic preface:

Huey Kleinpeter was born in 1924 and grew up down on the bayou, six miles out of Plaquemine. His father rambled out West in the oilfields a bit, before serving during World War One, and then making a career as a river pilot. Starting in high school, he worked summers on boats (e.g., towing timber in the Atchafalaya swamp) to buy school clothing. His two older brothers dropped out of school early to go work on the river, but he stayed in school and graduated in 1942. After graduating, he registered to go to Louisiana State University (LSU) to become a civil engineer, but received his draft notice. While waiting to be officially drafted, he worked as a timekeeper in Kansas City Bridge Company's Plaquemine yard. He ended up serving in the Navy on the USS Detroit in the Pacific. He went back to working on the boats with his father when he returned in 1946, but after finding out he could not get his pilot's license because of his eyesight, he decided to change trades. He went to work again for Kansas City Bridge Company, where he had various jobs including assistant payroll master and ironworker; during that time he also worked on the Big Inch Pipeline. After six or so years with them, he was laid off, and in 1956 he went to work for an independent producer, Temple [Hall Grove?], as a gauger in the Choctaw Field. He also worked as a roustabout for a time, but then decided to quit and returned to construction work as a welder. After leaving construction work, he went to work for a company (that was later bought out by Midland Enterprises) for about 11 years as a shipyard captain and port captain. At the age of 55, he went to work for BSF in general maintenance and retired from them 11 years later in 1990. The first half of the interview consists of them looking through pictures mostly from offshore construction work he did during the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout the interview he describes the various jobs he has had related and not related to the oil industry.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [DD] and [SW]

Interviewee initials: [HK]

DD: Um, interview with Huey Kleinpeter. It is August sixth, 2002, two p.m. in his home. We're gonna start with a few photos. Um, why don't you go ahead and tell us what's in this picture here.

HK: Well that picture is in the front of my house on Bayou Plaquemine. It's uh, what we called an [old build a cabin on it?]. And that's my brother on the front. I, has his guitar somethin'. But uh, they used to use it to, but this boat was the type boat that they used on Bayou [Grostate?] to take the oil crews out to the rigs and Bayou Choctaw. They could only get to Bayou Choctaw uh, oilfield by boat. You go to Bayou Grostate, get on, get on a rig, uh, get on the little boat, and they'd take 'em out to the rig, then they'd bring 'em back in after they, after-

DD: It's got a car engine on it to make it faster.

HK: But we took it, yeah, 'cause a lot would, they're slower, it's a good engine, but it's slow engine. And uh, so we traded over and put it, and even my brother and then used to go callin' there, we didn't have many call, we lived six miles out of the city of Plaquemine, down on the bayou. We weren't in town. And, but the water, reason I wanted to do with the oil deal is just wanted to show you somethin' that's similar to what my brother was usin' to bring the oilfield people out to the oilfield.

DD: Okay. So they used some boat like this for transport?

HK: Yeah right.

DD: For, okay.

HK: Yeah. And he was, huh [Introducing DD to people who came into room] my oldest grandson, Jared, uh, that's the one just finished medical school. These are two men from Lafayette.

DD: Hi, David DiTucci.

Jared: Jared [Inaudible], it's good to meet you.

DD: You too.

HK: And so then you would be interest, and my brother wasn't but about 16, 18 years old at the time. They wo-, 'cause uh, my daddy was a river captain pilot and we followed in his footsteps. We learned early, took us on the boats when we wasn't big enough to walk hardly. And so when my brother were, they quit school, I'm the only one finished high school, and they quit school at an early age, because that was back in the Depression time. And uh, and they went to work, they

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

was runnin' boats as captain 'bout 19 years old or so, 18. 'Cause they had, they had already, they would come up with my daddy, you know. We uh, learned the trade, that was [Inaudible] [trade look like?]. And that's why, they were real, very young when they run these boats out there to the oilfield.

DD: Okay. Um, any other, these other pictures you want tell-

HK: Okay, that one-

DD: Comment on or?

HK: Oh that's the only one on that particular.

DD: Okay that's same.

HK: That's, that's just a copy, yeah. I couldn't find [during the family company?], then I finally found it. And on this one, this was a little boat that my daddy's uh, brother, Mister Ed Kleinpeter, he, he built that in his yard and I helped him, I took it to New Orleans to get all the papers and all on it. And he went to work in oilfields uh, towin' barges back to the rigs and bringin' the rigs around on down Bayou [Shaw?], Bayou Pigeon, back up into Grand River and all those uh, different ter-, places, the Atchafalaya Basin. And uh, so he did that with that little boat awhile.

DD: Okay. [Pause]

HK: Now this, this uh, these photos here, they'll, they'll be uh, referrin' to what uh, Shell Oilfield that's out of the, out of Morgan City, past Eugene Island light, and your turn right, and you go out to your right, and they got what they call the Shell Field, I don't know what they call it, but you-

DD: Yeah.

HK: Go to Bu-, you go to Beacon 28, you turn right, and you're goin' out there, and uh, it's got a big o-, had a big oilfield back in between fi-, I would say between '56 and '60. In between, yeah, f-, I believe it was- [Hear papers rustling and HK talking to himself] [Inaudible] Kenner City Bridge from that. Uh. [Extended pause as HK is looking at papers] [Inaudible, speaking softly] [Pause] But anyway, it was between 1950 and 1956.

DD: Yeah, okay.

HK: Uh, uh, I would say it's more close to maybe around 1954. I was on other jobs 'bout that time that uh, Kenner City Bridge start goin' out in the Shell Field and we put in what we call the "sites" for the, for the platforms to come. Uh, barges to come in. We have to, we had to uh, build some dry pilings for just the width of the, the f-, the rig, so it could slide in, so that they could the rig in place. And then we had to take and uh, put what they call, we called it a "cage," which they uh, put down to drive the surface pipe, which is about a 30 inch pipe, you drive it down 'bout two lengths of that 30 inch pipe down for them to put the, put the, the drill and put the well head, so forth and all that, on. And we would do that and we did that for over a period of about a year. Uh, on and off. We'd go out, we'd put in about three, maybe three uh, locations at a time, depending on the size. Some locations we only had to drive the pilings. On some lo-, and put the cage and all

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

in. On other locations, we had to uh, build 'em a dock on the side piling they wanted a little dock for the boats to come in. And so some take longer, but we'd average sometime about three and we would, then we'd come back home. And then later we'd go back. And we did that over a period of time, I don't know exactly how many, uh, we actually put in during that time, but uh, then we did that for about roughly a year. And uh, I got quite a bit of experience putting that. Then we also did some work on the platforms out there, we put some new vessels, we put them up on uh, some new heaters and so forth on the platforms. Uh, we did some work for them on the platforms as well while we was out there. So that was some of the time that I had, had to do with the oil industry.

DD: Yeah. Okay-

HK: And I, if you want, I'll show you these, these pictures. This is Eugene Island Lighthouse after you come out the canal out of Morgan City and you're goin' down, and I don't know how familiar [Inaudible] stern right there. And you pass that and you go down 'til you get I think it was then Beacon 26 and you turn right, head across out to where the oil patch was. Uh, there's another picture of it. [Pause]

DD: How many years did you spend offshore?

HK: Just probably, really about a year that we, one year that we did this as I said. We did roughly about a year, maybe a little more, I'm not sure exact. 'Cause we did it some in the summer and some in the winter, 'cause, ooh, that wind was cold out there [DD laughs] on that water in winter, I froze. Summertime it wasn't bad. And uh, we had a big steam rig, we called it the Big, Big Bus that we all, it was a steam, big, uh, steam derrick run by steam and we had quarters on it for us to live, uh, sleepin' quarters, kitchen, there weren't a whole lot, but it was, in them days, it was alright. [Both laughing] You know, it wasn't a bit, we had no entertainment, uh, during the day when was work, we'd work from 12 midnight to 12 in the day [so?] we could [break the day up and the night?]. And uh, during my 12 off sometime of the day I'd fish over the side and we had, 'bout the only thing we had to do. And read. And that wasn't-

SW: TV or anything?

HK: No, wasn't, in those days you had nothin'. [Laughs] Had no TV or nothin'.

DD: Play cards or anything?

HK: Well some of the men played cards, yes. I never did, wasn't much on playin' cards. Some of 'em played cards, a few, but they weren't, we don't, we didn't like, they weren't equipped like these new modern with all kind of games and, you know, we didn't have no, nothin' really, just some bunks to sleep in and a place to eat. And then-

SW: How was the food?

HK: Wasn't too good 'cause-

DD: Really?

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HK: We didn't have a regular cook. One of the men cooked and he was from up north and uh, one day he was gonna cook some chicken for us and throws 'em in pot and boiled them rascals and that's the way. [DD laughs] I'll tell ya, I used to, what I used to eat mostly at night when I'd get off, I'd eat a whole box of cornflakes and find any kind of fruit we had that I could put in it, and that was my biggest meal to eat. [Laughs] I used to eat that cornflakes.

DD: Usually we hear that the food was really good out there, but-

HK: Oh yeah, on, on the rig themself, on, on the platforms, yes, well they, but see we weren't, we were the contractors and the way they, they didn't fi-, care about, we hardly ever used it, really, we hardly stayed on the rig. When we went on job with the Kenner City Bridge, we did mostly bridge work and we did pipeline crosses and things, but uh, we'd stay in a motel or get us a room somewhere or somethin'. And so this, but to go out there we had not choice for so 'bout three weeks at a time we might have to stay and so we just, kind of might say "roughed it."

SW: Yeah. So that, that's kind of schedule you worked was three weeks at a time you'd be out there?

HK: 'Bout, 'bout roughly, yeah. That's about what we would stay, put in about three locations, sometimes two, then come back in. Then might be in at, no we had other work, we had a yard that we worked at in Plaquemine. We called it down on the Bayou Plaquemine we had a, they had a big shi-, a yard where all our equipment. And so we'd come back to the yard or if we had another outside job, we'd go to do it and then maybe next month they'd call us back, come put in a couple more locations. And they did this on and off, you know, so it wasn't a, a steady thing. But we would do it, but we did do it-

SW: You go out, complete a job, and then go back.

HK: Yeah, go back, complete one or two or three, whatever they wanted, put in the time, then come back in. And I'll tell ya, it used to get rough out there sometimes. [DD chuckles] We got caught in a, a hurricane one time, couldn't get in. And so we did manage to get inside of one of the platforms with the rig. And the wind blew so hard, it peeled that w-, that paint off that, off our rig and stuck it on, on the other, on the side like that. That is how rough. We thought we had gone, 'cause they always would call us by radio ahead of time, on VHF radio, and uh, we'd hook up, we had a little tugboat with us, we'd tow back in, go back in to Eugene Island, might go up into the canal where we'd be out of the way. But that time, it was too late, they didn't have time to tell, get it to us, so we had to fight it out out there. [DD chuckles]

SW: That's how y'all communicated, you had a two-way radio?

HK: Yeah, uh, well, no, with a VHF, a marine radio.

SW: Oh, marine radio.

HK: On tugboats back even then has, [when we was out there on the Camellia?] we'd go through what they call a marine operator and then you'd call the, you couldn't call direct, but you go through a marine, and she'd call 'em, and then that's the way you used to talk.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

SW: Like a relay.

HK: Yeah, right, 'cause years ago they didn't have all that sophisticated now, but that's the only thing really even all your tow boats had was, was that type uh, uh, communication.

SW: Okay. You goin' out on the rigs three weeks at a, not much of a social life for you, huh?

HK: [Chuckling] No. I was married then had [some kids?] and uh, the, [Talking about the photos] now, I wouldn't take all of these, I don't even know where, it's just a picture I imagine of one of the [plat-, this is far off?] when I took it and uh, this is another one, a little platform. And like I said, a lot of these are some of the same thing. [Inaudible] just uh, took different shots. I was about to say they was, it would be worth your while to-

DD: Well, we'll take a look at it.

HK: Looks like barge and [Pause] I had, time, [worked?] these up last night to separate from [Inaudible]. [All laugh] And that, that just a barge, showin' where you can put a, okay. This, this is a picture of our rig that we, [Chuckling] so you can see it wasn't, there was the big steam rig, had a 100 foot bow on it. And this was a, they had just a boiler room, that boiler wasn't in the rig 'cause we had a boiler room and then we piped the, it to. And the, behind it was our quarters where we lived in.

DD: Hm. Get a good look at this.

SW: You got some good pictures back here with people, David, too.

DD: Okay.

SW: Like some of the other ones-

HK: And this here, the little barge was towed behind the rig with all our equipment, like our, uh, what all we need uh, to put in that day, [steel?] and the [pipe/things?] that we did. [Slight pause] And this shows the rig, just a little tugboat that we used to tow it with. [Pause] And this here the front of the rig. Okay, this, this, I was gonna say this wasn't pertaining to that, I thought this was the dive when we went up to Vicksburg and, when we had, with the same company, with the same rig. Uh, barge had hit the fixed pipe bridge and sunk. And they had, it was lo-, the barge was loaded with tool steel. It's very expensive. And so we put divers, two divers down, they go hook onto the steel and we'd pull it up, put in the [barge/bottom?]. And we did that for a good while. This one, I thought this was, but this is also this case. See this is the what they call the "cage" right there, well you see we's workin' out there get-

DD: The cage.

HK: Let's see what I'm doin'. Oh, we, we wrappin' piling right there. You [throw/road?] the piling, then you gotta take a cable, then you gotta wrap it all around the top of that piling, pull it in tight, then nail it. I used to hate the nail it with that sledge hammer, them big old nails every once in awhile I hit my hand.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

DD: Whoo.

HK: Bong. Ooh, that hurt. I used to hate that worst of any of the jobs I had was wrappin' that cable around there, 'cause you had to hold it tight, you know, clump the piling together. And you pulled it tight with a wrench and then-

DD: So that was to-

HK: And you had to drive these nails through that cable and boy they bo-, you know, [Chuckling] you ever try to drive a nail, just somethin'. Had little big old spikes like that.

DD: [Chuckling] Yeah.

HK: And that was, that was one of the jobs that I didn't completely care for at the time.

DD: That was to put, put a bunch of pilings together and make one big piling basically?

HK: Yeah. Make on, yeah, makes one piling for them, so your rig can slip in on the side of it. Drive about four pilings together, then you clump 'em together we called it. Wrap 'em with, tie 'em together with cable, make 'em come together. Now this'll show the, I used to ride, my main job was uh, sayin' up in the, in the pile driver. Uh, now that, that's it, the-

DD: That's the pile driver right there.

HK: Yeah, that uh, yeah, that's the, the, yeah. Where you drive your pilings with your-

DD: Right.

HK: And my job, I just stay up in the piling, 'cause what you have do, you have to have one man up there when, when the piling, you pull the piling up in there. You had to take a rope and you pull it in to get it right under the hammer, 'fore the get down on it. I put a rope around it and I'd get to where they, they set the pile driver [Inaudible] on it. So you always had to have a man, 'cause that's a 100 foot up in the [lead?]. Once you get up there. And while it drives, you just stay up there, stay [Inaudible] but uh, [DD chuckles] 'til they drive the piling, then they'll send you another. You pull it out of there again, you know. Uh-

SW: Some of this-

DD: Guiding it.

HK: And I used to like, a lot of men didn't like it, 'cause it was a dangerous job if you slipped, fell out of the pile. We had one man on a job fell out, hit the barge, and killed him right there.

DD: Whoo.

HK: We don't know why he fell, but he just, he was up there, the first time he'd ever went up there, he never [Inaudible] up there, but he wanted to go up in the leads. I was on another job.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

SW: So you had to be careful-

HK: You had to, yeah. Okay, you, you was only standin' on a couple pieces of [angaline?], you know, straddlin' there up in that rig, you don't have a platform or nothin', you just get up [Inaudible]. So-

DD: Uh, yeah, I se-, their look, whoever that is doesn't look like they're uh, pretty safe up there. [DD and HK chuckle]

HK: And so you don't have nothin' really much to hang on.

SW: Did you ever get hurt? I see you, you have all your fingers.

DD: No. No, I never did, really. Oh, I mean, I got hurt on it, but not nothin' serious. And that there's some more that are showin', see we got the piling in there, we're settin' it down in place.

SW: Just sometimes you beat up on your fingers with that hammer, huh?

HK: Yeah. That, that was, yeah, that was the worst, to be honest, the rest of I loved, I, I loved to ride the leads. We always called that "ridin' the leads." And I always'd be a leadman. And uh, and I used to love, see that, that's the top of the leads you see there. The steam hole's comin' to it, where it goes to there. And that me is right up there in. And they're gettin', puttin' the pilings up.

DD: That's you in there?

HK: Uh huh.

DD: Oh, okay.

HK: Puttin' the piling down.

DD: Hm. Lead men basically.

HK: Huh?

DD: Basically leadin' to make sure it goes down straight.

HK: I-, make sure it go, your, your, your hammer has got a, you know, pile driver hammer got like a round hole up in it like a [Inaudible]. And you got to get that piling right up in that, in under that hammer.

DD: Right, it has to be in the right spot.

HK: Yeah, for it uh, then, and it just pounds like that. It don't move up and down once they set it in the ground and you set, they go and they drive, stick the piling down into the, you know, ground. Uh, with the rig. And then we come down with the hammer and I pull it in there, and once you got both of 'em together, it can't get out, you know, they just hammer it down. And so that, that's the way that worked. And then, let's see, we'll come back to that. These are just uh

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

[Pause] I think that might be the Beacon 26 right there that we used to turn that to go out there. These were just some locations that's already set up at there that we may have already finished, I guess we was pullin' away from. [Pause] And this, this is kind of [Pause] this is kind of the way it, the location looked. You see, you got pilings on each side, and you got the cage here, and the surface pipe drive down in there between that.

DD: Okay, so the pi-, okay, this is where you put the platform on top of?

HK: Yeah, the, the, no. That, that's where the, the drilling rig slides in, front of the drilling rigs. You gotta have somethin' to hold it, it's not the platform at all.

DD: Right, okay, I got ya.

HK: But this is strictly the drillin' part of it. Uh, see the drilling rigs are floatin' rigs and they, you got, they got to have somethin', that gotta, once you get 'em, they gotta stay there right steady, 'cause they drillin' down and they can't move, you know what I mean. So they gotta put these pilings on, right, we just make them wide enough for they can get in there, you know, for the, tight in there, so that that rig, the waves and the bouncin' and all, 'cause they drillin', they can't, they can't afford to-

DD: [Miss?]. [Chuckles]

HK: They had to, they had to be in there, somethin' had to hold 'em in, snug 'em in there tight. 'Cause uh, it wasn't like be out there with a boat you could let it bounce around; that rig had to stay pretty steady while they're drillin'. And uh, so that, that was the rig. Now this here shows, I don't know which one, I might be right there. Now, that's, we're puttin' the cage over the side off the rig. And [we're gonna?] set it so you got the cable or the rig hangin' to it. Get ready to set it in the water. That's what they called the "cage." That's all pipe. [Pause] And this is what it looks like when we would finish with it. Uh, you got your surface pipe, you gotta [piling that pipe?], but, and what it is, you set, you had to set the cage. It, it was one, one, one level and it goes down in there, and then you drive a pipe in each one of the them pipes on each corner here, like this. In each of the corners, you had to drive a pipe in there. And then we'd weld that on the top. That was my job, I was certified welder two. So I'd weld them caps and uh, and usually it was right to the edge of the water they'd throw me a ply board down between here. And boy, sometimes them waves would beat and I'd be weldin' and the water'd hit me. [DD chuckles] And in the winter, it was cold.

DD: Oh yeah, I'm sure.

HK: That water, tell ya, that water would get rough out there on the Gulf. And uh, and I'd be sittin' down there weldin' them caps on. Them days I could take it, I was a young man. [SW laughs] And uh, and so that, that's what uh, and so then, then we'd set the other half, this top half, where they, where they work off. See, once uh, they take and drill through there, they'll have the, they'll have the christmas tree up here and uh, that's where the gaugers will come and walk around this little platform, check it and all like that, you see.

DD: Right. Right, okay.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HK: And so this [Inaudible] we'd set the cage in. It's, it's goin' down in the water there now. [Pause] I bet y'all didn't see some of this stuff.

DD: No.

SW: Oh no. [HK laughs]

DD: Never seen before the welding, [got there?] yet, so.

HK: But like I said, that's back to the '50s and '60s.

DD: How, how deep is this water right here?

HK: Very shallow.

DD: Okay, this is, this is in the swamps or is this-

HK: No, it's in the Gulf of Mexico.

DD: It's offshore. Okay.

HK: It's about, you just can, when it's shallow up in that area, where that Shell reef is, it's a reef out there they call a Shell reef. And they got a lighthouse way back and uh, if it's a good clear day, we could see the land, uh, the main bank. But it had to be a clear day. So it was several miles out in the Gulf. It had to be a real clear day and we could see a little outside of the land. That-

DD: This was in the '50s?

HK: Yeah, between the '50s and '60s, yeah.

SW: How deep, how deep was the water?

HK: Fifties, six-, huh?

SW: How deep was the water?

HK: I, I really, hard to tell. I would say maybe uh, well someplace real shallow, 'bout 20 foot maybe. Someplace they tell me where it get up close to the reef, you, you know, you might even four foot of water, it depends.

DD: Wow. Okay.

HK: So the reef is in-

DD: Did-

HK: Not, not much water. I don't know how to explain it to you [if your familiar with that?]. You would have to have a map of-

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

DD: Yeah.

HK: Of the area where the Shell Field was at. I guess they're still out there far as I know.

DD: Um, did, did you drill actually on top of the reef or?

HK: I, I-

DD: Or did they-

HK: No, they pushed out to the side of it. That's what I said, we, and then so it wasn't also it depends on how you go in there. You could go ground, we had to be real careful about goin' in with a, with a, 'specially bring a deep rig like this.

DD: Okay. [Pause]

HK: And these just some more of the, parts of 'em, like I said, you can see.

DD: Yeah, location. Movin' farther off. So after this was done, your job was-

SW: You were finished?

HK: Yeah.

DD: You were goin' to the next job?

HK: Yeah, uh hm.

SW: How many of these did you build?

HK: Like I said, I, we'd be [Inaudible] we were called, you know.

DD: A lot or?

SW: A lot?

HK: Uh, yeah, I [took?] quite a bit of 'em.

DD: I figured that.

HK: Uh hm. Quite a few. Uh. This here, this, this the what, that the back there is the boiler room and this old man, call him Mister [Rebenthoe?], called him "Old [Reeve"?]. Called him ["Rib"?], he used to f-, uh, fire the boilers sometime, him and fella by the name of [Grafio?]. And this is, this here over here is a steam wench and it got all these levers to use. That's what we'd put our anchors out with. To hold a work barge in place, we'd drop anchors. We had these big old steam winches on each side and we'd drop anchor in the back, then we'd go so far, then we'd drop one out to, to steady where we were goin' for to put in the platforms. So we had to use them to anchor. Now this is, we workin' on now, we workin' on a platform here, we're settin' a vessel

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

there, more probably a heater on one of the platforms out there in the Gulf, right in the same area.

DD: Yeah, okay. A heater, hm?

HK: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you got your heater, you got that r-, some call 'em "heaters," they're really "separators," or where you heat and it separates the oil and all that, so that you can, yeah, take them, to get the, get the crude out. You got that in the regular oilfield and, and [Inaudible] you gotta heaters, most 'em have heater. We call, we refer to 'em as "heaters," and I guess some people may refer to 'em as a "separator." Separate the oil and all, but 'fore you put your oil into the tank, it would go through a heaters. Now this, this is back in I would say, huh, early 1900 [Chuckling] maybe 1913, somethin'. This, this was a, some o-, oil rig, my own uncle, my daddy's brother, Uncle Ed, he was a, he was a driller on oil and that's him right there. And that's somewhere, he's out in Texas or New Mexico. Uh, and uh, that's the crew. This was some of the materials stuff. At that time, they didn't drill, they pound the hole in.

DD: Pound a hole in?

HK: Yeah, they didn't, they didn't have dri-, ro-, rotatin' drills. They had, they used to psh, puh, pow pow, psow.

SW: Like a pile driver?

HK: Yeah. Just did it. That's the way [Inaudible] way I was told by-

SW: Or a jackhammer?

HK: Yeah, like a [Chuckling] ptw. I don't know how you, I've never, you know, I never went into the study of it, but it uh, that's the way they used to do it in the early days, when the first well. But they would put very shallow wells, some of the wells wouldn't be over 2,000 feet makin' oil. But you got a lot of shallow wells out there. And so they, they was able to do this. And my daddy worked awhile out there with him as what they call "tool dresser." He would sharpen the bits, or whatever they used on it. Now I can't give [Inaudible], 'cause, I mean, [Inaudible] have to say what uh-

SW: What he said.

HK: What I was told, but that's what I was told. I [didn't hear more about that in the old?] they, they would drive up, you know, what they call rambling, rambling [Inaudible]. I don't know exactly how it work [Chuckling] or-

SW: Your father, your father did some oil work, is that-

HK: Yeah, and I think this is my daddy. This is the gang and this looks like my daddy right here in the center. I'll put the, uh, that's some more of a crew that was out there, yeah, out at, he was out in New Mexico and he was out in Texas, both, 'cause my, my, my uncle, what happened, he married a lady up in Ohio, named Louise. And her daddy was a producer, an independent producer of oil, of oil and gas. And uh, so naturally he went to work for his father-in-law. And uh, [Inaudible, speaking too softly].

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

SW: Is, is uh, is that what your father did for a living early-

HK: No uh, no, no. My daddy was a river pilot. He just, when he was a young boy he went out there. He was, probably wasn't but a kid when he was out there. No, my daddy worked as a, he was master pilot, river pilot. But uh, but he did that kind of like me in his early days he rambled some and then he went to World War One and he was out in the West for a little while. I mean, I don't think he stayed out there long with this, but uh, at one time in his life he was out there for awhile. I'm-

SW: Did you uh, how did you-

HK: Old pictures.

SW: How did you get into the industry then? What did you do, what brought you into it?

HK: Um, well, in, in uh, I, [Inaudible, laughing]

SW: You wanna move over into the, into the room in there to finish it up?

HK: No that's fine, [Inaudible]. Y'all com-

DD: Right here, I got it.

HK: Y'all comfortable here?

DD: Oh we're fine here.

SW: I'm fine.

HK: I don't have no more pictures now to show you.

SW: No, that's f-, these are great.

HK: [Today?] I wish I did more of the oilfield. But now, in my, your question you asked me, "How did I-"

SW: Yeah, how did you get involved in doing this?

HK: Uh, [when you wanted from bank?], when I, [do y'all, I know y'all said] related items like when uh, I first started towin' oil with boats uh-

SW: Okay.

HK: Or do you want when I went, actually went in the oilfield?

SW: When you started in the beginning to-

DD: Um-

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HK: See 'cause I-

DD: We could even go back to educational background and everything else.

HK: No-

DD: Or, and then, like right after high school what did you do and then-

HK: Oh, oh-

DD: Did you get to oil right after that?

HK: That's what I said, well, after I got out, I graduated in 1942, June of '42. And around of June of forty-, uh, after I graduated, I went to work like with my daddy and then on the boats. They was runnin' boats, towin' oil from uh, Standard Oil Refinery in Baton Rouge, which is now Exxon, towin' 'em to Texas, uh, to Pla-, to one, the one, one of the refineries, towin' the crude oil [Inaudible]. [Somebody comes in the room and HK introduces him to DD and SW; chit chat for about a minute] Well then uh, I went on the boats for a little while towin' oil from uh, [Inaudible] and that's what my daddy and them did, so we, we'd tow the oil from different plant, different, all over the country, but mostly at that time I was goin' across the Intercoastal Canal over there and then some down on the Mississippi Sound to Florida, [Carabel?], Florida. And uh, various places like that, towin' oil. So that's how, that's the first connection I had with oil if you wanna. But that, that was a related business oil that made my livin'. And I did that for, on and off for a few months after I got out of high school. See I did this, I went on the boats every summer for three summers before, 'cause back then it was Depression time, people couldn't afford [pay?] and I would work each summer on a boat to buy my clothes to go to school next year. And uh, I could tell you all about the hard times, [Chuckling] you don't want to know about that. But it was, [Inaudible] so, when I wasn't but uh, like I said, I, I started actually workin' on the boat when I was 14 years old on [Inaudible] steam boat. Just in the summer, towin' timber out of the Atchafalaya swamp, for the summer just paddle-wheel steam boat. My daddy chartered it and me and my two brothers worked on it. But anyway, that uh-

SW: Towin' the cypress?

HK: Huh? Towin' cypress logs, towin' cypress logs from all over up the Atchafalaya swamps out there. And we'd tow 'em to [Swings?] Mill. Then uh, we made 'em up in big booms and rafts. And uh, and uh, we'd tow 'em into the mill. So that first summer, I worked for my daddy, got 50 cents a day. And after workin' from daylight to dark. [SW and HK laugh] What we do, I'd ride the timber, 'cause them big booms they would be, I don't know if you're familiar with them, but they'd be long, long, you couldn't even see the end of it. And when we'd come around a bend, they sometimes they wanted to get hooked up. We had what you call a long spike pole, I got one out in the shed out there [Inaudible]. And I, you'd have to take and keep them low off the bank, you know. They get hung up. [Shoo/Shove?] 'em around. And then when you couldn't push 'em off, we had this [baton?] like I showed you in this picture. We had one like that, but we had [aide horse?] [Inaudible]. Well, we'd hook onto it and drag it out. So me and my brother, Paul, worked the timber. My oldest brother, J. B., he, I mean, we all, like I said, I was 14 years old then. They were two, Paul was two years older than me, J. B. was four years older than me. And that's all there was, three boys in the family. Daddy worked-

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

SW: Did they ever work in the oilfield?

HK: Did huh?

SW: Did they ever do any work in the oilfield at all?

HK: I don't believe any one of them ever worked in the oilfield. They stayed on the boats.

SW: On the boats.

HK: Uh, anyway, and so uh, daddy would run the boat and my oldest brother would fire the barge. We had a, a Black fella we called "Old Hutch," and he would help all around and cook a meal for us and take care. And we would tow just in the day and tie up at night. And we'd take the baton and go back home. 'Cause no where was too far, you know. Then we'd go back in the mornin' and start towin' again until night. But that, but that's not [Chuckling] oilfield, I don't know if y'all are interested.

SW: Well, just, just to see how you got into the oilfield.

HK: Yeah. And then, so after that, in '43, 'bout June, I went to, I went to war. I went in the Navy. I was drafted into the Army, I was goin' to LSU. I had signed a, already registered at LSU to be a civil engineer. I was gonna go be, study civil engineering when I got out of high school. And me and my two fir-, my first cousins or second cousins always stuck together, we graduate the same time. So all three of us were gonna go to LSU. We had our rooms in the barracks already, that's where we was gonna stay at that time. And uh, but then I got my notice, they was a year younger than me because the way my birthday fell I started school a year earlier, born in January. I couldn't go until I was seven, so I was a, I had [Inaudible] year, [Inaudible]. And uh, and so I got my notice, the draft notice right after I got out of high school. So I 'em, I said, "No use for me gettin' started, 'cause I ain't gonna get to go." So I didn't. So they went on. But uh, I didn't go. And about, but it took 'em awhile, the next, it was about June before they finally drafted me. Got called, you know, to show up. So I went-

DD: Show up, yeah.

HK: Went to Lafayette and when I got to Lafayette I was drafted in the Army. When I got ready to go, they said, "We need some men for the Navy, would anybody want to volunteer?" I said, "Sure do, I don't want that Army to start with." And so I volunteered in the Navy and I went in the Navy. And I served the [border light?] crew right at three years. Uh, USS Treet, U-, USS Detroit, my crew USS Detroit.

SW: Were you in the Atlantic or Pacific?

HK: Uh, in, all in the Pacific. I started out in Alaska at [Toinkiska?]. And we bombard [Inaudible], a island in the [Inaudible] [Natsuri?] above Japan. Then after that we stayed up there about 11 months defendin' that, because see the Japanese had took Kiska and [naturally we have to take it back?]. But I, when I got there they were just windin' up takin' back Attu and Kiska, [I was in after?]. But then at an island called Natsuri we were bombarded. That was our station where they would report when our [planes flashin'?] took a task force and went and knocked that

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

out and all, knocked all that out. Every time we'd send planes over, on this little island, they would pick us up and [Inaudible] we took 13 ships, some light cruisers, a couple heavy cruisers, and destroyed 'em [Inaudible] just flatten that island. And uh, my ship alone put out 342 rounds of uh, six inch on that, on the bank in 45 minutes. [So I was up three days before?] [Inaudible] but anyway.

SW: Were makin' some noise, huh?

HK: Yeah, we had another story [Chuckling] about [Inaudible]. Then after we finished that, they sent us to the South Pacific. And I was in the, the Carolinas, uh, [Leyte?], and [Aniweto?], and, and then uh, Marshalls, and then the Philippines, and then I was at the Battle of Iwo Jima, all the way through Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and then uh, we started bombardin' Tokyo and [Inaudible], with [Inaudible] bombard it. And then when they surrendered, we were one of the first ships to go in the Tokyo Bay. And uh, so we took over Tokyo Bay and, and the Missouri come in and when they signed the surrender, I was anchored right on the side of the Missouri, I stood and watched 'em sign the, Japanese sign their surrender. And so I got a lot of f-

SW: Today's the day.

HK: Huh?

SW: Today's the anniversary.

HK: Yeah.

SW: Of the first bomb.

DD: Hiroshima, yeah.

HK: That's right. Yeah, Hiroshima, yeah, I read that, I [reviewed?] that little history thing. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, when I, we were somewhere, we were about 200 miles from where they dropped it [Inaudible]. We had never knew what an atomic bomb, we heard it come over the speaker, "Just dropped atomic bomb." "What an atomic-?" [Breaks off laughing]

SW: They kept it a secret. [Laughs]

HK: Huh?

DD: "What is that thing," yeah.

HK: So-

SW: It was supposed to be a secret-

HK: Yeah, it was.

SW: A good secret.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HK: But uh, anyway, so then uh, [Inaudible] I through that in, in June of, uh, Jan-, February of '46 I was discharged. I come back to, brought our ship back to Philadelphia, went through the Panama Canal and we decommissioned and the whole, the whole [Inaudible]. And then I come home when I was discharged from the service. So after I got back from the service-

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

HK: I went back on the boat again for a little while. Uh, I, I went back, I go ahead and get my pilot's license, and uh, I, I already had the time ['cause?] to get a pilot license you gotta put through years on a deck of a boat, workin', just an. And then one year in a wheelhouse as a steersman. And then, 'fore you can even apply to get your license. It's kind of like a college, but you don't go in a college and, yeah, it's on the job trainin', but you gotta [Inaudible]. Then you gotta learn all the rules and [Inaudible], then you gotta go takes your Coast Guard test and it's quite a test. Physical examine you had to be perfect. Back then, I went to get it, I passed all my tests, and when they give me my physical, my eyes, I, I had to wear glasses. And you could not get your license-

DD: If you had to wear glasses?

HK: Wear glasses.

DD: Man. Pshw.

HK: So they turned me down on that and I told my dad and them, I said, "Well if I can't get my pilot license, there's no use for me stayin' on the boats, I'm a trade, change trades." And so that's what made me get off the boats at that time. And I went into, went to work for Kansas City Bridge Company, 'cause I'd work for them a couple months before I went in the service, uh, as a timekeeper on a, they, they had a yard in Plaquemine that they were buildin' wooden barges for the federal government, for the Navy. And I, I was timekeeper in the yard. I'd just got out of high school, like I said, in about the time, f-. That was one of the, I did that in between that little time I-

DD: Yeah, wait.

HK: And uh, so I come back and I went to Kan-, went, went back to Kansas City Bridge Company. And they was uh, had no work there at the yard for me. They were buildin' that bridge at Lake Charles, you know, big bridge you know? So they sent me over there to build that bridge. We were buildin' that bridge. So they, they said, "Well you, you can go Lake Charles and go to work over there on bridge." So I called the boss and I went to Lake Charles. And I, I worked on building that, that bridge there. [Chuckling] [Inaudible].

SW: When did you, when did you get married?

HK: In 1950.

SW: And so, married in 1950. And you worked, so you were married-

HK: April the first, 1950. [All chuckle; here a woman laughing in background]

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

DD: She makes you remember that one, huh?

SW: So you were married when you were workin', uh, offshore?

HK: Yeah, uh hm, yeah.

SW: How, how was that? Was that difficult?

HK: In a way it was. Uh, not too bad, I mean, I'd been used to, I'd found uh, construction and we used to go not just there, we'd go all over the state. And I'd have to go to stay for two or three weeks and come home and for a weekends and stuff. No, my wife was, was fairly familiar with me 'cause it was, we traveled, we worked around Morgan City, we worked Vicksburg, we worked in Natchez, and everywhere we'd go, we'd have to stay awhile. And maybe a couple weeks and we'd get a night off, we'd run and jump in our cars, run home for [Inaudible, mumbling]. I guess just like in any other thing, like boat people work, you know. When you was on the boats, you worked 30 days on, 30 days off. Some worked uh, 45 and 15, some worked 50 and different things.

DD: Forty-five and 15, wow. [SW whistles]

HK: And so, yeah, so that, man, that's what we did. And I was used to it because my daddy did it all his life, okay. We did, but uh, that was the way you worked, so boat's it's the same thing. I mean, most of 'em had a 30 and 30. Uh, your harbor boats four-, was 14 on and seven off and things like that, so. But anyway, so I, we'd go and uh, so where I was back were we? Or, okay, I come back from the war, I went back on the boats for a little while. And like I said, I couldn't and then after that, I left the boats and went with Kansas City Bridge. Then I went over there and I, I was workin', when I went there, I wanted to work in iron workers as, you know, 'cause they were makin' more per hour, they's union. And uh, and uh, that was in forty-, was in '46, 'tween '46 and '47. And uh, and so they put me to work in the office again, 'cause I was timekeeper and uh, and worked on the payroll, made the payroll, and I finally become assistant payroll master and all. So I took care of the first aide if somebody cut their hands or somethin' they'd come in office and I'd take care. So that's what I worked at was, while I was there, in the office. And, and I, I found after awhile before we finished the bridge, we, we only had the pier work. Some 'nother company, [Inaudible] I believe, did the structure steel. We put the piers in. You'd have to, that was anon-, that was another good job, puttin', 'cause that was time when they used to sink 'em, what they call as ["caseon"?] you would have, have a big round channel and you'd have a hollow out in the middle, and you'd dig out, and it, they would, had cut and they do all this in. And you'd load it with steel, pig iron steel all around there and keep sinkin' it as you dredge out, you know. And back in the old days they used to sell-, put men down there with shovels do what they called the "sand hoggin'." They were sand hogs. And they used to have to go down there, they had to have decompression chambers, 'special like the bridge at Baton Rouge and them when they put them deep ones. And they would have to have a compression chamber. And you had to take your time as you come up to decompress, 'cause a lot of pressure. But they used to go down in there. Some of 'em got trapped, I've read stories about bridge where they all drowned. Oh, but anyway, that's the way that bridge first started buildin' bridges, 'fore they had cranes and all. [Chuckling] I don't know that subject is what you're. But anyway, that was called sand hog, but then we'd dig through 'em. So now I told 'em, my boss, I said, "I'm quittin' 'cause I, I don't wan-, I wanna go to work in the gang." They say, "Well, okay, you, if you've made your mind up, go back to the

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

yard in Plaquemine.” [SW chuckles] So they sent me back to the yard and I start learnin’ how to weld, I was welder helper. And when that welder put that weld lead down, I’d pick it up and dry weld and-

DD: Yeah.

HK: Then they saw I was interested and they begin showin’ me, so I’d learn to become a welder. And I start weldin’ and then I went to Union Hall, Local 623 in Baton Rouge and got my ironworkers book ‘cause we all had to have. We had to be ironworker [Inaudible] depend what we gonna do. And so I got my ironworkers book and start uh, I stayed with Kansas City Bridge there ‘bout, quite a few years, five or six years. At that, that first time, I, I got laid off. But we, we worked all over the country doin’ different jobs, like I said. Went up Simmesport Bridge, wiped all that old Simmesport Bridge, worked on Morgan City Bridge, where our boat [went into?] different, all over. And then we also did pipeline cro-, river crossin’. Now this was oil-related. Uh, we put in uh, the pipelines across from the Standard Oil in Baton Rouge, uh, Exxon now, across they have that tank [farm?] in Port Allen. And they, we would run the line under the river and we would, we’d have to use what they call uh, uh, [slate/slide?] barge, we had a barge made with a ramp on it, we laid them pipes on that barge, and then we’d weld one joint together. We’d start from one bank, side of the bank, then we had this crane that’d hold it up and I’d go there and I’d weld the pipe. And then they would slide it out and I’d weld another leg. Then we’d keep on. And uh, we’d cross the river like that, put the line down. And then we’d send a diver down after that to walk it, to check it, make sure it was alright. And so that was related to the oil. We, we put, at one time, we put three of ‘em in a row up there. And then I worked the one up at Saint Francisville not many years, back in the ‘50s or so, between the ‘50s and ‘60s, on what they call the Big Inch. The first biggest line that ever was run for oil. We called it the Big Inch. That was about a, I would say about 24 inch, between 24 and 30 inch line. And we put it across the rive up there just above Saint Francis-, no I mean not Saint-, above uh, Livonia, between I guess somewhere in that vicinity. I, I know how to drive to it, but I don’t know where-

DD: Right.

HK: Exactly out there on the river it was. And we had to drive out there back by [Inaudible] it was back there. But we’d turn right there at Livonia, Louisiana, and go back to the levy then go down the river a little ways. And uh, that was a quite a project. It was never done, they at first tried to shovel it with bulldozers. That’s where they plug one in and they started the line on the bank and they try to push it, but it buckle. So we had to send divers down and get the buckle. And then we start weldin’ and, and puttin’, layin’ that in. And I tell ya they had people out there. We had, they didn’t spare the men, they, I don’t know how much that line must’ve cost ‘em, ‘cause we had so many men sometime you couldn’t even get your hand on the line, you had to pull somethin’, there be so many out there workin’ on that job. And some days if somethin’ went wrong we had to wait all the way ‘til they got news from Texas what to do. Some days we would sit a whole day not doin’ anything. Uh, so, until they got news back what next move to make [Inaudible]-

SW: They were paying you so that-

HK: Oh yeah, [Inaudible]. [Says goodbye to family members]

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

SW: So when you worked in the oi-, in, in, the year that you worked offshore and some of this other stuff, did, was the pay very good?

HK: Uh, uh... yeah, uh, for, for the time it was, yes. Because, I mean, uh, we were paid union pay uh, which is uh, which, you know, was about your highest pay anybody got paid. Was about two dollars an hour, but I mean it was supposed to be [Chuckles] good pay, you know what I mean, at that time. 'Cause, I mean, a lot of people workin' for maybe a dollar an hour, 50 cents an hour, you know, back in them days.

SW: So you were part, you were in the union? [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

HK: Yeah, I was union so we got union scale and that 'bout, was about the best scale-

DD: In the ironworkers union.

HK: Yeah. Even thought the, the scale wasn't the best. But uh, we worked [Inaudible], but when we got it set up with, no, we used to get in some trouble a little bit with all the union, but bein' the way we worked now on this rig it didn't matter. If we had a pile driver [book?] we'd work on, drive pile, you know what I mean. They didn't bother us much 'cause we was out in places where-

DD: Remote.

HK: Yeah, remote, and they didn't care, and so we really did everything. Uh, we might have, but we had to have a book, you know what I mean. Back in them days union was very strong. Greatly strong in Louisiana. I mean, you pretty near, belong to the union they have a job. Now it's a little opposite. So uh, so they, we just had to have a book, that was it. We'd [Inaudible] we got by doin' other work, so [Inaudible]. But that pipeline, that should've been pipe fitters. We did have pipe fitters weldin' 'em and stuff, but we'd have to rig, at one time the ironworkers did all the riggin' for all unions. Uh, uh, that was the way. Later on, as they years went, the, the each union began to where they could do their own riggin'. They finally got it. But in the beginnin', ironworkers rigged, they had to unload pipe, we had to go out there the crane, hook the cable, and unload or whatever at the time. So that's what we was doin' mostly on that job is hookin' the crane to the pipes and so forth. I didn't weld on that jo-, on that Big Inch. I welded on other lines, but not the Big Inch. But that there was quite a job, but it, uh, we did it [Pause] and so I was one of the, one of the, you know, [Inaudible] oil-related my, my work. But then we, and we had put another, we put another line but I wasn't on that when the, oh, and we also used to build, went down to, whoo, that the end of the world is that thing there. Pecan Island. [SW laughs]

DD: It is at the end of the world, isn't it?

HK: [Laughing] [It is about that?].

DD: No, Grand Isle's the end of the world. Pecan Island's pretty close to that.

SW: At least at the end of the state.

HK: [Laughing] Well uh, I went out there one time and build a, a, a dock for the crew boat to

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

come in and land and bring in, that was oil-related deal. Put a crew boat-

DD: So you pretty much did construction and-

HK: Yeah right.

SW: [Inaudible] bit.

HK: Uh huh. Mostly, most of mine in that, 'til, 'til I went for British out in uh, Choctaw as a gauger. But uh-

SW: And you've got all, can, can we have this by the way?

HK: Yeah, uh huh.

SW: Great. What year were you born?

HK: January the fifteenth, 1924.

SW: Twenty-four. I just basically have one other question unless David has somethin' else for you.

DD: [Unless?] you want to hear about the Depression.

SW: Maybe, maybe another day-

HK: Well about, you want me, about finish about that oth-, in the oilfield or when I, when I actually worked?

SW: Some of the questions we asked you, we were askin' you while you were showin' the pictures and I-

HK: Yeah, but that was, but then I worked at Choctaw full-time in the oil-

SW: Oh, okay, you wanna talk about that, okay.

HK: I mean, that, that really is my main place, I mean, I worked for oil. What, let's see what year was that I went into. Uh... in, on January nine-, 1956 I went to work uh, I was on, doin' construction, but I work had slowed down in the '50s, work got real scarce, construction work. So uh, I think it was a man, Mister Smith, was in our church, was superintendent out there in that oilfield for Temple [Hall Grove?], he was an independent producer. And uh, he asked me would I want to go to work as a gauger out there. I'd never gauged before, but they would teach me, you know. And so I told him yes, so in January the nineteenth fif-, Nineteen fifty-se-, January the nineteenth, 1956, I went to work in Choctaw Oilfield back of Plaquemine as a gauger. And uh, I worked back there. And the gauger we had to go to each well, you know, you'd stay and check out pressure on it and all, and check the chokes what they call on it. And sometimes if it was uh, producin' too much, we'd take one choke out and put a smaller choke. I don't know if y'all, if y'all, we talkin' about oilfield, I hope you all know about chokes.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

DD: A little bit, yeah.

SW: Some of the stuff, some of the stuff, yeah.

HK: But it's a little bitty, you screw it in there, got a little hole. Some of 'em ain't got a hole bigger than a, a, a needle really. But it'll pump I don't know how many barrel of oil out of there.

DD: [Chuckling] Yeah.

HK: I mean, that pressure comin' out, that gas pressure brings it up. And so that's how we regulate. The state would allow you only to pump so much oil a day out of the well.

SW: Yeah, so you had to-

HK: And uh, so we'd have to change the chokes. Uh, we must've had, I must've had 'bout 15 wells back there to take care of. And uh, we'd change the chokes, we had the heaters goin' that we would, there's, as I say, we had to where some tanks where we'd load, where, where the tank farmer would put all the oil 'til, 'til the trucks would come out and load 'em, and take it all. And then we had two great big uh, compressors that we used to pump the natural gas through to sell the natural gas. Some was gas wells, some oil producin' wells. And we sold gas. So we had to keep up the compressors. Uh, we had to keep up the heaters, uh, and the chokes, and then uh, we'd do some, but we had roustabouts would come out so often and clean up around the wells and all, we didn't have to do. But it, it was on, way back then uh, woods then, there weren't nothin' back there. And you were back there by yourself, one man workin' the field at a time. And I worked a lot of nights. It was real dangerous type of work, because you're by yourself back there. No one. Every night I would kill on average about maybe eight moccasin or rattlesnakes.

DD: Wow.

HK: Just, I kill 'em uh, around the wells. It was very bad uh, out there in the swamp.

SW: Did they like to come up to the well?

HK: Yeah, uh, one night I was uh, come up to my, one of my heaters and I was gettin' ready to get out of my pickup and I'd already started out and threw my light down there and this moc was just coiled up, ready for me. I couldn't go back in the truck [Chuckling] I just jumped right over and took off runnin', scared me to death. Oh! I like this, this step right here, right on top of it.

SW: Oh yeah, they don't move.

HK: No, I-

SW: They wait for you to step on 'em.

HK: No, they-

SW: I hate those things.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HK: That rascal [Inaudible]. That guys, but I'd see 'em and sometimes we see the rattle across the road, we'd take it, skid out tires, take the truck [Inaudible, DD laughing]. And uh, so-

SW: Did they like to get to those heaters because it was warm or somethin'? [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

HK: I believe so. I would imagine so.

SW: That's interesting.

HK: You know, but then like I said, it was a job where you was all along. That was one bad thing about it. But uh, and I would go out and you had to make up your reports and you had your charts on your gas charts, and you'd have to change them out. And then we had to go back in our shack and we'd have to read 'em and see how much we produced and all. I used to remember how to read all that, but I, I've forgotten it now.

SW: You work, you worked the night shift?

HK: I worked both. Some days, night, but I worked a good bit, I worked for a year at night from uh, midnight to seven in the mornin' for a whole year.

SW: Was, and, and did you uh, you did that every day of the week or?

HK: Uh, did that, I was tryin' to think. Uh, it doesn't seem like we had any days off. I think we may have one day off, 'cause I know, and then later I, I began to be what they call a "shift relief," 'cause uh, we used to get a day off, and I, I would work the weekend. I'd have to work that night. I'd work three 'til 11 at night. I mean, that 12 to se-, 12 to seven that night on a Saturday night and Sunday mornin' I'd get up and I'd go to church. And I'd go 'cause I, I teach Sunday School and I was active in the church, it was [Inaudible] Baptist Church. Sunday Baptist Church. And uh, and uh, I'd get up and I'd go and, and in the evenin' I had to go back at three again and pull the three to 11 shift. Then I was off maybe that Monday, maybe, I think, but I'm not, I, I, I cannot son, I, here I cannot recollect, you know, exactly how that worked. But it seemed like we worked at least six days a week. Uh, uh, most all your oil well now, those that on drillin' rigs, like my, my hu-, my wife's brother, he's spend his whole life in the oilfield. He was a driller, then he became a tool pusher, become superintendent, and he, you know, worked his way on up and-

SW: But you didn't stay too long and then you kind of got out of it, so you didn't [Inaudible, overlapping speech] move up.

HK: No. And I worked, I worked there and, and uh, so that was some of our duties and we had some little pumps there and we used to have to, sometime run, run pipelines and put that, they had them old heavy drills pipe, kind of heavy walled pipe with, we'd make our line to pump our gas. And we'd have to change, have to walk through the woods with 'em on your shoulder. It was, it was pretty hard work. And so later on, I decided to get out the gaugers for I could have a straight day job. And I took, went as a roustabout for a time [Inaudible] took a little while, but I was tired of that shiftin' and so I went-

DD: The changin' schedules everyday?

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HK: Yeah, so I got, took me a roustabout job where I worked, worked straight days. When I believe I started, I think, I started for a dollar and a quarter an hour. It was roughly, that's what I think it was, if my memory collect, I mean, I got [total/told?] what I got that year. And uh-

DD: Four thousand.

HK: I made 4,483, 83 in that year. And the next year I made uh, 5,000, so, 5,774 the second year. I left there in I think, let's see, in November and I went to, I wo-, uh, British America bought us out 'bout six months before I left. Uh, bought Temple Hall Grove out. And when British America bought 'em out, it was a big concern and they wanted, when Temple had it, we could do everything simple. All you wanted was a report thing. And just [Inaudible], but when British America take it over, they wanted all kind of paper. They wanted all kind of [forms?], everything, you know, everything had to be. And I didn't like it.

DD: So you left because of the paperwork? Too much-

HK: I left there because it just was and by that time the construction was kickin' off, they was begginin' to build Dow Chemical. And I went to work, I went back to the Hall, and they sent me out, I never did drop my book, always paid my union and so I kept my [work on?]. And I went back to the Hall and they sent me to, to build Dow Chemical as a welder. I worked a welder. Dow-

DD: So you went back to construction?

HK: Dow Chemical. Went back to construction work again. And then uh, I never did go back in the oilfield, you know. But I, I told uh, I went back on the river again for awhile, later on in life. And uh, and I towin' oil, you know, some, but that was the only other again I had. But that was, that was it. I had that because I, I always been uh, I don't know what made me do it, but I, I, over my lifetime, but I kept records of everything. I wrote everything down from since I've been a young, young boy, young man. At least since the '50s. And uh, I get, I wrote every job I worked on, every bit, that's why I've got these [prices/places?] out of my little books. And I kept track of all of this all these years, I still write everything-

DD: Good, really good.

HK: Uh, and when I was in the Navy, I wrote a diary as much as I could, 'cause it was against uh, the Navy rules to write a diary because if you would get uh, captured they say they would get the info, so we was limited. But I, I did write a limited amount. I took some chances and I just redid my diary recently. Uh.

DD: Right. Wow.

HK: I, I took and went back and compiled it all to one group. And uh, for them years. And uh, and but anyway, uh, and I always kept this wrote down. I can tell you every job I've been on from the first day I worked, how much I made every year since the first now, to now. And uh, so that's why I could pull up this, that's why I pull this out.

SW: Yeah, I see, 'cause you got exactly when it was.

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

HK: But, like I said, I, I don't know how [Inaudible], but it sounds like if I just roughly figured it out, it wasn't over two dollars an hour, 'cause if you, I figured it at two dollars it would come out to about 48, so, so it was between a dollar and a quarter, but I, I think when I first went in, if I'm not mistaken, that was good. And we good, 'cause we had insurance. And I had a wife and two kids then, my son wasn't born yet, but my two daughters was born. And uh, and we, we made it well. I mean, you know, I [had car?] and I [Inaudible] but things was cheaper then, I mean, our house [rent?] was 30 dollars a month.

DD: [Chuckling] Wow.

HK: Stuff like that. You could take five, 10 dollars and go fill up your car with groceries, you know. You know, livin' at the times, I mean-

SW: [Takes 50.] [Laughs]

HK: It really hasn't changed a lot, it's just that you make a whole lot now, but you, it cost you a whole lot for everything else. [Inaudible, all three talking at once]-

DD: It's inflation, it's just the way it works.

HK: They still uh, 'bout the same basics, I mean. We lived I guess you'd say middle class family. I mean, we never really want. My kids had good, I sent 'em to college, I did everything [else?]. Had a good life. But then later on, my life, like I said, after I left construction, I went back on, I went to the shipyard in Port Allen as a shipyard captain [Inaudible]. My company, I uh, [Inaudible] and they sent me back there and I, as supervisor and I built that most of that yard. They only had one, I built the dry docks and all, machine shop and everything, I was in charge of all that. And I, I, I run it for awhile. I had about 500 men workin' for me. And uh, I was over all the hirin', firin', all the men and the [Inaudible]. So uh, I did that for about three and a half years. And then they transferred me later to their main office on the river and made me what they call "port captain" of all their boats. You ever heard of a port captain, it's same as chief [Inaudible] of operations, I guess. I had to see that everything run, operated all the crews, all the men. And we had, I had several hundred men underneath me, just my office had 23 girls workin'. Uh, but I was chief. So I did that, that was for Midland Enterprises out of uh, it was [Inaudible], but they sold out to Mid Enterpri-, Enterprises in uh... in uh, Ohio. Uh, Eastern Gas and Oil. And so I worked out of there. We had a boat [store/stow?], we used to supply boats in the harbor at Baton, we'd go out bring 'em all that. So I was in charge of just about all of that. First my brother Paul was general manager. My oldest brother was superintendent of the boats. And then I b-, then I took, became port captain. They retired later, but, and then I stayed with them seven and a half years doin' that. And after that, uh, 'bout 55 years old then, and the stress gettin' me. We, we was growin' so much, and they wasn't givin' me no r-, nobody to help me. I, I, and I, I was, I was gone so much, I felt like I was gonna have a heart attack and I had a heart attack when I was 39 years old. And I got over here and I scared I'd have another one, so, so I, I quit, I resigned. And I went to work for BSF in, in, in general maintenance. I told 'em I didn't want no supervisor, I didn't want nothin', I just wanted to go to work with my tools and when I got done, I goin' home. And I worked for them for nine years. And I was 66 years old, January 1990 and I retired from BSF. And then me and my bro-, me and my son, one of my ex-son-in-laws went into contractin' business, buildin' highways. We built highways for three years around here. [Built a bunch of highways?]. And then I got tired of that, and gived it up, and I quit. [All chuckle] I gived up, I

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

figured I was old enough to [Inaudible]. So I, I [Inaudible].

SW: That pretty much, you've covered everything we need to cover.

HK: That sounds, sounds good.

DD: We need to get a photo real quick.

SW: Yeah, we'd like to get a picture of you if you don't mind.

HK: Before you know it they'd made me a, a foreman, and then next thing you know I'm a, a superintendent and, like that chemical plant right by Georgia Pacific, I was superintendent in the building of it. And uh, I went on the boats and started out just on deckhand, 'fore you know it I was a pilot, and then went up to port captain, which is the highest you go without ownin' a company. And uh, things like that, you know, I just uh, every, uh, everything [I worked at?]. And even when I was in uh, BSF, I mean, I, they tried to get me to go up, take a, other position and I wouldn't. And I really, when captain marine I, I uh, [Inaudible, company that was bought out by Midland Enterprise's name] and them, I didn't just uh, well, finally, actually become like a marine superintendent for, a marine engineer. We had a, hired a marine engineer from college that was graduated with a degree. And he, we start buidlin' a big boat [store/stow?] and he quit. And then they made me the uh, marine engineer and I designed special barges for, special fuel barges, water barges, finished buidlin' the boat [store/stow?]. I, I designed a hull some of the boats myself, sat down and draw it out and all like that. And uh, so I was more like even a marine engineer even though I wasn't licensed, I still could do the same as what he was doin'. [Chuckling] And I guess I just, [best place?] would be in leadership, I guess.

DD: That's the way it works sometimes.

HK: Huh?

DD: That's just the way it work sometimes.

HK: Well it's too, then you got not be scared. You know, for leadership. You gotta, you gonna make mistakes and then-

DD: Happens.

HK: My son is uh, uh, in management now with BSF and he got five plants under him and he goes over and looks. He always worry about, say, "Yeah, dad, [Inaudible]?" I say, "They ain't gonna fire you if you a good man." They, I mean, I, they used to chew my hide out once in awhile, "What did you do this, you, why'd you do that?" [Chuckling] But they didn't let me go, you know, they'd call me, "What kind of, [Inaudible] let me see you in the main office in little." They chew me, "Why did you do this that way or that?" you know. I told him, "They ain't gonna fire you, I mean, man, you might get chewed out, or you gonna make mistakes, but you gotta be able to say yes or no." What you gonna do. You gonna move it or ain't you gonna move it, see. If you can't do that, then you [Inaudible] I'll tell you, I mean. You gotta just take guts and say either go in- [HK and DD chuckling]

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

SW: Yeah, sink or swim.

HK: You know?

DD: Yeah.

HK: I mean, but you gotta be able take responsibility of it and be able to make a decision. And people, saw a lot of, you know, people don't [go?] up even though they got good, because they're scared to take that chance. But all you can do is just fail. And, like I said, if you doin' a job, they're not, you're not gonna, they're not gonna, they might tell you somethin' about it, but they, they're not gonna, they're not just gonna up and fire you like that unless you do somethin' [they're blame it on you, you better make?], you make mistakes and I made some mistakes, buyin' equipment and stuff like that, 'cause I had charge of all that and stuff. I'd go out and buy barges and stuff, and I'd spend a million dollars of their money in one day. [DD chuckles] But I mean, if you're doin' that, you know, sometimes you make a little misjudgment. I've seen some little misjudgment I made, but-

SW: It's okay.

HK: It's just a chance you take with it. [Pause]

SW: [To DD] Ready to head back to Lafayette?

DD: Yeah, we gonna catch some bad traffic as it is. [Recording breaks off]

HK: These are my pilot licenses right here and river pilot see. Uh, the inland waters in the United States [Inaudible]. This here, this here, when I crossed the equator, I don't know if y'all heard about shellbacks and pollywogs and mossbacks, it's an initiation the Navy have, a tradition that they had when you crossed the equator. 'Fore you crossed the equator you what they call a "pollywog." When you cross there you go through a whole initiation for about two days, they beat you, do all kind of things. [DD chuckles] And then, then you become a mossback. And then uh, and then a shellback. And after you cross it so many times, you become a mossback, that, then they give me that certificate in nineteen... what year that was. Nineteen forty-four, August. So the first time you cross the equator, that's when we hit the South Pacific and start crossin' the equator. Then uh, this my degree in electron-, in uh, radio and TV. I, I took that, I was always curious when TV set, they didn't have 'em, they came out in my days. I mean, down south here. They had TV up north, but we didn't have sta. And I, I was interested in how TV works, so I took a three-year course with uh, you know, [around here?]. Got my diploma on that. That's my, some of my war medals. Uh, my three Asiatic and uh, American uh. And uh, this is my [bachelor's here?].

SW: Thanks a lot.

DD: Bachelor of [law?]. [Pause]

HK: This here's a, union give me an outstanding honorary memorabilia of great service. [Pause] And I'm a collector of antiques and all. See I like hourglasses, [Chuckling] hourglasses, I get all the find. But I c-, I got a shed full of antiques, over 80 antiques out there. I got a steamboat

Interviewee: Kleinpeter, Huey

Interview Date: August 6, 2002

whistle that big [Inaudible]. These, these some of my old books, these, some of these books is a hu-, right at 100 years and stuff. This one's over a 100. It was last printed in 1898 in it. That's my [Inaudible] I got rid of all my law books, I give 'em to the librar-

[END OF RECORDING]

