

HHA # 00292  
Interviewee: Larry Mattei  
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz  
Interview Date: January 31, 2003  
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA  
Interview Module & No.: MMS: SW035  
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling and "uhs" and "ums" have not been transcribed for the purposes of readability.]

Ethnographic preface:

Larry Mattei was born in 1939 in New Orleans and raised in Houma, LA. Mattei earned a degree in Engineering from Southwestern Louisiana Institute in Lafayette. He discusses employment with Texaco, Magcobar, and Superior Oil who was bought by Mobil in 1985. His work often interfered with family life, but he ultimately enjoyed working with the oil industry.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [LM]

SW: Interviews, interview with Mister Larry Mattei.

LM: Mattei, yeah.

SW: Mattei? And it is uh, January thirty-first, 2003, in his home. And uh, I like to start out with um, with background questions and things. Uh, okay, now are you from Lafayette originally?

LM: No, uh, Houma, Louisiana. I was born in New Orleans and uh, raised in Houma.

SW: What year were you born?

LM: Uh, 1939.

SW: Same year as my father.

LM: Oh really? Oh good.

SW: And uh, what did your, what did your father do for a living?

LM: He was uh, uh, let's see, he was a salesman for [Woodrow?] White out of New Orleans. Uh, they was kind of a, they sold everything from refrigerators, the nails, the rope, or just, you know, it was just a general uh, sales-type uh, company I guess, you know.

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SW: Hardware, things like that?

LM: Hardwares, yeah. Paint, you know, any, whatever was available in Houma. He, he moved to Houma because uh, that's where the oilfield was and it was an opening for him and he liked to get out to hunt and fish. And he saw the opening and became a salesman and with all the uh, Texaco was big in Houma then. And so they had uh, and then all the little small uh, service companies that were starting, you know, start up for the oil industry. So he was sellin' all kind of supplies and, you know, he did the different, you know, just didn't [really make?] if there was a plumbing shop open, he'd go stop there and sell 'em pieces of pipe or whatever, or if it was a, uh, you know, a welding shop that was gonna do welding for the, you know, the oil industry, well he'd sell them welding rods, you know, it didn't make any difference. Whatever was needed, so-

SW: He was selling things to the, the shops that were supporting the oil industry.

LM: Right, supportive of the industry, uh huh.

SW: He went to Houma directly for that because things were booming back then?

LM: Right, that's when it, it started, yeah, back uh, let's see we moved to Houma uh... I was nine, so it would've been 1948.

SW: Yeah, and that's just when the offshore stuff was startin' to take off.

LM: That's just when it started takin' off, yeah, uh huh. Just the early times and uh, there was a lot of inland barges, you know, but that was it, yeah, that just about that time. Uh, I remember he was tellin' me a lot of stories, you know, about the different things that they were doin' there. That's when they had those barges out of Houma, they were storing oil out in the bay. They sunk some old uh, LSTs they got from the Navy and made, that way they could uh, pump off a lot of oil from the old uh, wells and platforms that were out in the, in the, in the various Lake Pelto and areas, you know. And that's what it was used as storage uh, facility. They could hold, you know, thousands of barrels of oil in those old ships.

SW: Yeah. But they didn't sink the ships did they?

LM: Yeah, they sunk 'em, yeah, they sunk-

SW: For storing the oil underwater or-

LM: Right, yeah, was uh, it was in like eight or 10 feet of water and they just sunk 'em and uh, used 'em as uh, a gathering platform I guess you would consider.

SW: W-, why would they uh, why would they sink it? Just to get it out of the way?

LM: No, to, to actually make it a uh, platform instead of building anything, they just took the ship and set it on the bottom. They bought, I guess, they must've picked 'em up from the Navy.

SW: Yeah, yeah, after the war.

LM: And uh, they had a lot of storage areas in there, so what they did, that's where they'd pump off oil from the wells and hold it as a, you know, holding area. And then they'd come in and pick up with barges and barge it all over the country, you know. So that was, it was good, ended up bein' a good fishing spot. That's why my dad liked it. [Chuckles]

SW: Yeah, the fish like to get around the-

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LM: Yeah, they love to get around all that structure, so. They had quite a few of those out there-

SW: How would they get the oil in and out, they pump it?

LM: They had, yeah, they'd, some, some of 'em they had uh, they'd bring it over in barges from their platforms. They had small, you know, smaller containers and then I, I'm thinkin' these things could hold ten, fifteen thousand barrels of oil. Maybe more, I don't know exactly. But that was, that was one of the first uh, na-, things that they used for storing, you know, this stuff. And Texaco had those, so it was, it was, it was quite somethin', you know. Interesting to know about, you know.

SW: What about your, your mother? What did uh-

LM: My mother was a German. Uh, her name was [Eckleman?]. She was uh, her family had a string of bakeries in New Orleans. All her brothers uh, were uh, bakers and uh, they each had a, their own uh, ended up ownin' their own bakery. And uh, so they, I guess one of the prominent baking families, you know, in that area. So that was kind of the way was brought up, I used to stay with my uh, grandmother a lot because of being able to go to the bakery, you know, and play around and then they'd let me uh, fill the jelly donuts on the weekends, you know, so. But that was uh, one of the things. And then we uh, I guess they, over a period of time, you know, the mom and pop bakeries uh, I guess got, started gettin' bought out by the big ones uh, and then they, they ended up sellin' out and uh, just, you know, workin' as uh, a regular baker, you know, in one of the spots. It was a lot easier, you know.

SW: Yeah, less risk. [Both chuckle]

LM: [Chuckling] Yeah, less work. Yeah, less, a lot less for them, so.

SW: Do you have brothers and sisters?

LM: No, I'm the only child.

SW: Only child?

LM: Yeah. [Inaudible].

SW: Okay. What uh, after high school, did you , did you go to college?

LM: Yeah, I went to Nicholl's State and then uh, on here, I was SLI and I was in engineering and uh, I was uh, then offered a job with um, um, Magcobar, which was uh, part of Dresser Industries back then, as a mud engineer. Which was uh... you know, beginning I guess because uh, when I was uh, going to school, high school and college, Texaco was, you know, the main name of the game in Houma. And so they hired me, started off me uh, in the galley as a, as a, you know, galley hand. And then their procedure if you are, what's, college student, they'd offer you a job later on, you know, after you graduate or whatever. And if you decide you want to stay with them it was fine. Or, you know, it was just kind of training ground and uh, I enjoyed workin' for 'em, but uh, it, the money was a little better workin' for a service company at that time. Um, back then Texaco was kind of hard, you know, they, they worked uh, various schedules uh, and I don't know, I think I started, while I was, one year I worked for Beaumont Cement Sales, which was a sub-, supplier of the uh, mud industries. And I worked as a dispatcher and I met one of the mud engineers. And he had a company car and access to an airplane and, boy, was just, you know, very inspirational for me. I said, "Wow," I, but, you know, that was the thing to do. You know, 'cause they had uh, a nice car, you know, and an expense account and all the goodies that went along with it and uh, so I guess it was in the back my mind and then when I was able to uh, just really start thinkin' about a job uh, my wife was workin', or was my girlfriend then was workin' for uh, one of the s-, uh, companies that repaired their radio, two-way radios back then for uh, the mud companies. And Magcobar was one of their biggest customers. And she knew the, actually it was she that got me the

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interview because she knew the boss, yeah. And ended up where we went out bowling together and met this guy. And uh, [she asked him?], she said, "Why don't you give my boyfriend a job?" you know. So that's how I got the interview with them. And then they had their own training school in Houston where we'd uh, go for six weeks. And then come back and you did a ride-along, you know, for a month or two until either you thought you were ready to go on your own or your boss, you know, your supervisor at that time thought you were ready. And so that's what I, where I started workin' offshore as uh, mud engineer workin' seven-and-seven. We had uh, oh, I guess a hundred and-, back then in '59, 120 mud engineers. It was really boomin' '58, '59, and '60.

SW: That's when you got into it, the late '50s?

LM: Yeah, uh huh.

SW: So you kind of went to school for a little while and then you came out and you were workin' for Texaco a little bit?

LM: Yeah. Right, came back and forth, yeah. And just how, you know, and just over the period of time and uh-

SW: You saw that guy that, that was, that was makin' the money.

LM: Yeah, yeah, it was un-, unbelievable back then uh, to uh, you know, be makin', it was fifty-, let's see, July of '59 when I actually started with, with Magcobar. And I had a, you know, a company car, an expense account, 415 dollars a month, you know, you were kind of, you know, ahead, the top of the line uh, bachelor runnin' around in town, you know. [Laughs] So and then with the days off gave you, you know, you had a lot of freeway to do, you know, a lot of huntin' and fishin', and that was uh, I guess, you know, a young person that was always interested in hunting and fishing. And then having work uh, was ideal, really [you liked that?].

SW: Yeah, you were seven-and-seven-

LM: Yeah, worked seven-and-seven. And uh, and then they have various programs that uh, became uh, available as you worked, you know, up through the ranks, you know, and uh, so after that uh, there was uh, you had a chance to either come in the office as a senior engineer or you could go as a pilot mud engineer, which I did that for awhile. And uh, flew a 180 on floats for a couple year, and then came back and uh, got into the office as a senior engineer. And uh, worked my way, you know, finally up and then as we're goin' into the uh, mid '70s uh, I uh, got to be uh, a completion fluids uh, manager here in Lafayette. And then uh, from there that's when I changed over, went into the other industry, I started with Superior Oil Company at that time. [Slight pause]

SW: When did you arrive in Lafayette?

LM: Uh, '78.

SW: Nineteen seventy-eight, okay. And that's when you started workin' for Superior?

LM: Uh, that was, I, I came here uh, promoted from uh, a senior engineer to a completion fluids manager here for Dresser, Magcobar, and uh, had uh, was given a list of customers here which were major oil companies. And uh, one of my better ones was Superior and Tenneco at that time. And as I got to know some of the, you know, the managers for, you know, the, both companies uh, you know, you learn some of what's goin' on in the industry and they were wanting to get started and get their own staff. And get different things goin' on and so uh, I heard about the uh, job as drilling fluids supervisor for Superior and Tenneco. And so I was uh, went in and interviewed with both companies and uh, Superior was my main, one I knew the most about. And I knew everybody, so I felt more comfortable. And uh, that's why I accepted the job from them. And then uh, from there then it was just a matter of time, you know, we

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did just about everything, you know, the drilling end. And then uh, see that was through '85. And uh, so that was '80 through '85. And then we were bought out by Mobil. [Slight pause]

SW: And that, that's kind of when the bust was happening too, so there was a, I guess some tense moments in those years? [Chuckles]

LM: Oh, it was, yeah. They were very tense, you know, uh, fortunately uh, the uh, Mobil wanted a drilling fluids division also. So I f-, kind of fit into the pattern and my boss uh, became the head of the drilling uh, depar-, department for Mobil Worldwide. So he kind of took me along with him, you know, 'cause uh, being experienced and uh, I was able to, you know, get myself a decent position with Mobil. And then from there it was just a matter of, you know, workin' 'til whenever they decided they had enough of me. [Both laugh] So.

SW: So you were with, Superior is a drilling as well?

LM: Right, Superior was uh, independent drilling outfit, yeah. Uh, they were uh, we had uh, all phases other than our own refinery at that time.

SW: Yeah, Magcobar was just a support company.

LM: That was a support, yes. Strictly-

SW: Superior had the whole thing.

LM: Yeah right.

SW: So you could be in a department somewhere.

LM: Right, yeah, they had everything. They had drilling, workover, completions, and we had the different phases. You know, production and all, all the stuff that the average major oil company. We were just a, probably considered one of the top independent oil companies at that time. And-

SW: Yeah, I hear a lot about it.

LM: Yeah, it was very large outfit and uh, well, well known. And they had some fantastic people workin' for 'em and, you know, various groups. And uh, the biggest thing I think with uh, management finally was seein' as, you know, as all the merges starting to take place, you know, in the, in the '80s and stuff was that to compete on a, on a level and stay, you know, on the level that Superior was, they didn't, they had to have some type of refinery, you know, type business because uh, we didn't have any, any filling stations, we didn't have any of the stuff, you know. We had, we were strictly, you know, an independent oil company. We owned, I think they had a uh, couple of other small uh, you know, pieces of I think, I'm tryin' to remember. They had some type of uh, winery or something or ranch they owned, you know, as an investment, you know, for uh, the company. But it wasn't anything, you know, in relationship to, you know, being in the big industry and the big, being a big boy.

SW: So you gu-, when, when Sup-, a company like Superior would finish its product, it would sell it to Chevron or somethin' else, somebody else for distribution or?

LM: Uh, right, what we do, yeah, a lot of times what we'd, we, we do uh, they sell uh, the gas or the oil to the pipelines. Now, you know, it could be Tennessee Gas or various uh, you know, buyers, whichever one they made a contract with. Uh, and then they would sell the oil to some refinery, you know. We'd come in, we had our own s-, you know, storage facilities. Uh, but from there it was, you know, contracts out to whoever wanted to buy, you know, that particular, you know, petroleum product. And then from there, then that's where the bigger people, you know, major companies, you know, could uh, diversify whichever they wanted to do with that product. So uh-

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SW: Do you think that was uh, a more of an advantage for the bigger companies to be able to have their hands in every aspect of the industry? Or, or was Superior doing better by just focusing and specializing what they did well and then-

LM: At that time it was the b-, that was the best way because uh, it, we were so specialized. We, you know, ev-, we had so many different groups. And uh, these were all uh, more or less handpicked type groups that the managers uh, knew, you know. People say uh, like myself and they, you know, they knew my background, so they brought me in as a drilling fluids specialist and they went ahead and they had workover, completion superintendents they brought in, they had drilling superintendents that uh, from other smaller outfits, you know, they were, they thought that we were top and they wanted to try to put a, a group together to where when they started a well from spud to, you know, the e-, to production, they had it covered in all aspects. What they considered or wanted to be considered the best. And uh, oh you'd cover all the bases and all the avenues. And that was basically uh, what their intent was. They were, we had some people that uh, came from Texaco, from Mobil, from Shell, from Exxon, Chevron, that were managers for Superior. And uh, they were lured from the big boys with a little more incentives, you know, better pay, better p-, you know, positions. The biggest thing back then was uh, office size. Everybody wanted a nice, big, pretty office, you know. And so that was one of the things that Superior had with the building we had here and we had in Houston, in the Woodlands. It was, it was kind of a showplace. And uh, so it made you feel like you were a little bit more important I guess in the job, you know. So [Chuckles] that was one of, one of the big things. And uh, but, but not having, you know, that refinery or another, say like a chemical outfit or something to, for the derivatives from, that were found from, you know, petroleum and uh, we, I guess they saw the handwriting on the wall, survive. And, which was fortunate for some of us and some naturally, you know, were, didn't quite make it because they didn't want to transfer or there wasn't any job availabilities they, they gave them a package, you know.

SW: Severance package.

LM: Yeah, severance packages and the rest of us, uh, were fortunate enough, the production and drilling and we had a lot of, you know, the geology departments, uh, they spread out 'cause Mobil was so big worldwide that uh, uh, we had uh, probably... I'm takin' a guess, maybe five or six hundred employees at one time. I think we had 300 here and a couple hundred in Houston, and we had some out in Midland, Odes-, [but they were?] small, you know, places in our production facilities. Maybe, you may've end up with fifteen hundred people, you know. And uh, so when they bought out, you know, Superior, when Mobil bought us out, well then all that went into place and then they just downsized, you know, the Superior end. And uh, got rid of the office space, excess office space and uh, I guess everything moved into the Houston and the Dallas area as the main offices.

SW: Did that affect you at all or-

LM: Uh, at first it did. Uh, I was I guess a little bit uh, concerned, devastated, because of the fact uh, you know, it is, if somebody with 25,000, 30,000 employees takin' over this small, you know, fifteen hundred employee, and uh, we were on a first name basis with the president of the company down, and I guess when we got into Mobil in-, and uh, you know, the only person I knew was my immediate boss who was fortunately, you know, was in charge of the Mobil drilling group. But anywhere else, you know, we were just like, you know, 1,001 on a list or whatever, you see, so. It, it made you f-, I guess feel uh, e-, probably were you gonna make the cut. Uh, you know, was this what they really wanted. And uh... I knew that, you know, I was capable of doing the job, but I didn't know how Mobil wanted to do the job. So right away then we started goin' to the Mobil schools that they put together. You know, continuing education schools. And we'd have to go to, you know, a couple of them uh, two or three weeks every year. And they would, you know, just keep us updated and uh, ka-, kept us goin'. And, and then finally had, was one of these things was, "Wow, this is really, you know, great," you know, because us they was givin' us a lot, you know, more to look forward to and to be involved in. And to see that, you know, they would, they'd call you in and, you know, had faith in you and put you in school somewhere, you know, for a week or two weeks and go through all their programs, you see. I mean, they had their own special, you know, way that uh, they had, everybody, they had some very well qualified, you know, people that they would uh, either hire from, you know, different agencies or they were in the Mobil system itself

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that did the training. We had tremendous amount of, you know, training personnel and the facilities were, you know, great. Uh, it was just, it was wonderful, you know, really it was, it was a chance to actually learn so much more. You know, because as you, you know you get in one little spot and you think your little niche is, you know, you know it all, but not, not really, because this was, you know, a universal company. We wasn't just, you know, Superior had some international and I worked, you know, some with it, but it was just momentary. You know, we had a spot here or a spot there, but everything was south Louisiana, south Texas, you know. And then we had some stuff up in the, in the mid continent areas, but nothin' really, really big. This is the mainstay, Louisiana and Texas. And uh, so that was, you know, kind of the basis for that, so I, like I said, I, I really benefited. Uh, first uh, you know, I was kind of adamant about it, you know, then and I, you know, "I don't like this." And uh, but uh, after you, say, you sit back and look at the big picture and if it wouldn't be for that I wouldn't be where I am today, because that's, you know, what made, you know, made it for me to be able to, to get to the retirement age and, you know, get the uh, goin' away present, you know, they, they [Chuckles] when they'd call you in and say, you know, "We, we're offering, you know, severance packages. You qualify," and I was fortunate that I was one of those that did qualify and I decided to take it. And uh, it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

SW: Sometimes also I've heard that if you don't take that severance package a month later uh, the layoffs come around right?

LM: The-

SW: I've heard that happens.

LM: I was told uh, and I don't remember where it was, it was in passing with somebody uh, that the first one's always the best. And I just remembered it and when I was offered it I did, you know, the normal thing. You go see your, you know, financial advisor, you get with your family and friends, and, you know, you try to, you know, s-, talk about what's what, what's expected, what you're gonna need for the future, and uh, you know, try to put that thing in perspective, you know, for a later date. It's kind of hard to do, but once you, you know, you see it and uh, I felt very comfortable with it. And uh, if I'da stayed an extra five years uh, probably overall I, we figured it out, uh, the difference would've been just, I, I would've just been getting a salary and working, where I was getting the same thing and being off. And then so I got to thinkin', I said, "Well let me try this, you know, con-, continually days off situation." [Both chuckle] So.

SW: Were you were ready to, ready to get out of it at that point anyway?

LM: Uh, it was getting to the point to where uh, the, we were, I guess the merges were beginning to look again, take place. They were downsizing uh, you know, the economy was changing so much that uh, we were having to go further and further away. It was getting more and more to where uh, you had to be ready to work anywhere at any time, international, domestic, you know, whatever. And I had been doing that for so long, I just said, you know, "Look, I, I think I had enough." And like I told you earlier, the first year after uh, you know, I really was very bored. I ended up doin' some [things/thinkin'?). Then I went back as a consultant for Mobil for a year. And that was just beautiful, you know, situation, because uh, I, I got back in the swing again. I was able to, you know, get, use the experience that I had. They needed some people, you know, in uh, I was down in the south Texas area and uh, it was also, you know, extra money for me to have. And uh, I was able, you know, buy me a nice fishing boat, you know, so that's why. I really enjoyed doin' that. And then after awhile, after a year, I uh, finally said, "Well, you know, I don't need this anymore. I don't think they need me anymore." And uh, they gave me about a month or so off for the holiday, which I never had all the holidays off. And then about that time uh, I think they were beginning to get set or be prepared to uh, be, get the merger with Exxon, which, you know, was, then again is another transition. And uh, we talkin' about the largest, you know, oil company in the world was Exxon. Now with Exxon-Mobil it was even gonna be bigger. So you would've had, you know, stair steps just amazingly, you know, it would've been, it would've been a tough road to climb I believe, you know. And especially, you know, because of the younger generation comin' up, you know. I mean, it's time to give it to somebody else, you know, let, let, let the young people have it. You know, I, I, you know,

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helped them as much as I could, but uh, you know, there's new ways, you know, new technology. And uh, it was getting to a point, you know, it was getting harder and harder, you know, for us uh, you know, trying to stay up to speed with the young guys coming in. Uh, you just have to give it up. And I, I, I enjoyed it, you know, benefited from it and, you know, I'm here today because of it. And uh, so, but hopefully uh, you know, some of the other guys that are comin' up, maybe they can end up, you know, benefitin' the way I did and then end up, you know, comfortable and feel that they did, you now, accomplish somethin', you know, in their life, so, that's what I feel, you know, the best thing about today.

SW: What, what year did you retire?

LM: Uh... ninety... let me see, I was, it's '97.

SW: Ninety-seven. It was about five years ago.

LM: Yeah. Or ninety-s-... it's '96, 'xcuse me.

SW: Ninety-six, yeah [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

LM: Yeah, it was in June, June, July of '96, yeah. I'm sorry, yeah. I was tryin' to remember and then I went back and then uh, actually uh, I just, you know, worked for 'em as a consultant that one year.

SW: I'm tryin' to get the-

LM: Yeah.

SW: Frame of time here.

LM: Sure.

SW: So you went from about 1958 to about nine-, almost 40 years.

LM: Yeah, uh huh.

SW: In the patch.

LM: Right. Yeah. It was total uh, yeah, right close, you know. So it was uh... it was, it was a nice road, you know, I really enjoyed it. I accomplished what I wanted to accomplish. Uh, and, you know, there was some good times, hard times. Uh, I guess uh, most of the guys'll tell you, you know, that when you do get into this industry uh, and especially if you're gonna get into the, I guess the drilling end, there's no such thing as any set time or day off or whatever, you know. You, you worked the way the work is. Uh, I, you know, you miss a lot. You're workin' seven-and-seven or we worked 30-and-30 overseas or when I was a supervisor, you know, you go 20, 30, 40 days. It's just depending on what the job, you know, what you needed to do. And uh, you got relief if you needed some. Sometimes, you know, it was late comin' and you missed a lot of stuff at home. You know, you, it, it's hard to explain, but uh, the only thing I've explained to my family was that the industry was so good to me that I made very good money all the time that we could celebrate Christmas whenever we wanted to celebrate Christmas, you know. It wasn't, you didn't have to be there for that specif-, specific day, you know, because uh, if, if we went off for 20 or 30 days, well, if we missed somebody's birthday or, you know, an anniversary or somethin' uh, it was something you, couldn't be avoided because that was my, my life, that's what I chose. And uh, but they still benefited because we did go and do what, you know, we thought we wanted to do and we could always say, "Well, this, you know, we're celebratin' it, you know, now, instead of, you know, at that specific time."

SW: Christmas in February. If you have to do it, you gotta do it.



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LM: Yeah, I mean, it, it, it, it, you had to kinda, you know, look at it that way, because there was no way that you, you could plan, you know. And uh, sometimes you were lucky, you might have Thanksgiving and Christmas off, sometimes you were gone all the time. Just depending on either how your schedule fell or what the workload was, you know. When I was in the office it was the same way. I, many a, on many times we prepared for somethin', then we had, you know, somethin' happened, you know. We had to be at the rig site. Uh, just those little things, you know. If you had a, a well givin' you some problems or a blowout or, you know, somethin' really, or environmental problem or somethin' like that, you, they wanted, you know, the supervisor to be there and uh, the staff. Uh, you know, it's real tough when you're out. I did it both ways, as a supervisor and as a, as, as a, a foreman in the field. You didn't like to be by yourself and take care of these problems. It sure look good when you saw your boss comin', you know, drivin' up or flyin' in in a plane or a helicopter or a boat or whatever. You know, at least you had some backup, you know, somebody to, you know, talk to, help you out. And that was the main thing that was so good about, you know, all, all of the companies I worked for. You know, all the way back as a mud engineer, you know, I had everybody would uh, you know, back you up. Uh, they, did not ever have a problem with it, you know, with uh, Magcobar. Man, I'll tell you what, we had some tremendous people that uh, I worked for, with and uh, and, you know, with Superior. And uh, gosh, that was unbelievable because it, it was so small and the close-knit group. Uh, then with Mobil it was very large, but we had a lot of backup, you know. I mean, you could, you could expect to get it anywhere. It didn't make any much difference where you went, they always had it. So it was just, you know, nobody likes change. And, and I [was the name?] of that game. And once you understood, you know, that uh, you were, you know, gonna be there for the duration and you felt comfortable and then you saw what, what they really had, I mean, just unbelievable, you know, resources. Oh my gosh, you know, it was just, you, they, Mobil never spared any expenses. I mean, they were always a first-class, first, top of the line operating type, you know. They didn't duck at anything. You know, if you needed it, you know, and it was justifiable, you know, they would do it. And they were always squeaky clean when it came to, you know, environmental, you know, but I mean, I was, it's kind of the, the field that I ended up in with uh, doin' a lot with them because we had quite a few problems as, you know, it always happens. And uh, I, you know, had to do many reports for 'em and I had to go [bust?], 'fact we had, you know, different things that happen to us in Alabama, you know, in Texas, in Louisiana, and uh, it, it was just amazing to see what you could, you know, the resources you could draw on to get this stuff back. You know, where you could sit and explain and know that, you know, that you wasn't gonna be put in jail unless this somebody, you know [Chuckling] you did somethin' really bad, you know. At least they had help, you know, and uh, 'cause Princeton is uh, we have, you know, a tremendous uh, group there, they work out of Princeton, you know, to back us up. And uh, and just, I've finally, you know, got to the point where I saw that was, you know, just a wonderful situation to have. That much, you know, at your hands, you know, just to be able to, you know, say, "Okay, well look I need this," you know, call it in and uh, they immediately, you know, you got an answer. And then depending on, you know, the magnitude and just depending on how many people were involved. And uh, that was uh, I guess somethin' eventually, like I said, I, I would learn to really appreciate. And so uh, that's why I, you know, stayed as, I was fortunate to stay and uh, where I am today because of that. So.

SW: Yeah. You, you mentioned that uh, you would miss things sometimes. How many children do you have?

LM: Only have one.

SW: One child.

LM: One son, uh huh.

SW: And so uh, I guess it wasn't too terribly hard on your wife to, to kind of run things in the house-

LM: She was the typical uh, you know, sh-, when we first got married uh... she was told when we were goin' out, when we were get, when, that when she met my boss at that time, you know, to, not to expect me home every night. And-

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SW: He told her that?

LM: Right, he told her that on a friendly basis at a company function. He said, you know, that, "He's gonna be workin' a lot, you know, and it uh, he's young, he's, he's f-, you know one of the newer guys, so naturally, you know, he'll always be the first out." And he told us when we got married, I had uh, you know, five days off and uh, the sixth day I was goin' back to work. And uh, so and sure enough, you know, we were able to get married and uh, have a honeymoon in New Orleans, came back home with, you know, some, got groceries for her and then next thing you know the next day I was gone, you know, for 10 days. And uh, it just started like that. So she adapted, you know, very early and she's always been a very strong person. And uh, she learned to handle the situations. She could do, you know, just about anything that could be done around the house, as far as the maintenance part other than anything she couldn't handle, you know, on her own strength-wise. But uh, she never had a problem, you know. It's the same thing like when my son was born. I was on a boat, you know, comin' in and I didn't get here quite in time. Uh, for, you know, to see the birth. But I, I was, I was here, you know, a few hours later because it was so rough offshore, you know. Instead of bein' a, a 10 hour boat ride, it was an eight- [Clears throat] 'xcuse me, an 18 hour boat ride because of the weather. But I made it in and then got to stay around a week and then went back, you know, and uh, so that's when she understood, you know, that she had to play a dual role sometimes, you know. And uh, but ah, she, she'd very independent today, sometimes I have to [watch her?] [Laughing] you know, she gets- [Laughs] Yeah, it, it stayed with her all these years, you know, because I, you know, she does, you know, she knows what to do and she's not afraid to do any of it. And uh, she makes her own decisions. And uh-

SW: Yeah, she just told you she was leavin', she didn't ask you. [Laughs]

LM: Right. Now, she, it's one of those things, you know, and it t-, it's worked well for both of us because of that situation. Uh, you know, if, if I had to sit and worry while, you know, if I was, you know, up in Oklahoma or south Texas or when I was in the North Sea or, you know, Indonesia or over in uh, Halifax, you know, offshore, uh, I wouldn't've been able to really do my job. And uh, if I had to worry, constantly worry about, you know, how she was or what she was doing or, you know, things like that. We stayed in, you know, communicated a lot because uh, we had, you know, decent communication, but uh... you know, that, she had been, like I said, she was brought up, she was fairly tough as far as that was concerned. It didn't bother her. She didn't have to wake up in the middle of the night runnin' around worrying about, you know, why I wasn't here or not. She understood, you know. So, and she's still that way. She's a very, very independent, yeah, she can. And uh, I guess uh, when we were dating it was that same way. She was used to it. You know, we da-, we'd see each other for a week and then I'd be gone for a week. And, and that's I guess basically how it started uh-

SW: Was her father in the oil industry at all? Did she get that kind of practice from before then?

LM: Uh... her family was, she comes fro-, her family, she lived with her grandparents. Her mother and father had divorced early, but yes her father was uh, in, in the industry, but uh, it was, didn't have any bearing on her because uh, she was just, just a little, you know, country girl that stayed with her grandparents. And uh, it was a little strange for her because she was, you know, well-taken care of by them. And uh, then when we started goin' out, it was kind of like, you know, "Here comes the wildman in town." You know, "He's on his days off and uh, you know, he thinks he can do whatever." And, "You're a big shot. Has a company car and," [Laughs] But uh, she adapted to all that because uh, you know, we got along so well. And then, well, I'd tell her, "Look, you know, I have to go. It's just my job. You know, and the job comes first. And, but [when we end?] this is the rewards of the job. You know, we get to go out, we have things to do, or," you know, we had a nice car because at that time uh, you had a company car, they'd let you use it, you know, wherever you wanted to go. So uh, a little prestige, you know. And uh, didn't have to sh-, she started seein' there was benefits uh, it was, you know, she didn't like it, I know she didn't. But she wasn't gonna let it get to her, you know, because, you know, she had, she had a job at the time and uh, then uh, when my son was born, that took up a lot of time. And then after that uh, she got him up, she went back to work, you know, and uh, they had, it was amazing uh, all these years, you know, she was kind of in the background, I was kind of the, the focal point. And uh, after we moved here, she's always said she wanted to go and go back to school and graduate from

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college. And uh, I think that a lot of times she felt, you know, with me always bein' around with, you know, people that had finished school and had the different uh, wives that had finished the school, she m-, may have felt a little iffy about it. So she goes back and she enrolled at uh, USL and uh, let's see it's nine years ago I think, yeah, she graduated uh, *summa cum laude* in criminal justice. And uh, she, I mean she just blew it out, you know, she did three, three point eight, three point seven, I mean, she was braggin' to me, you know. She said, "Well my average was a lot better than, you know, you ever thought you had." You know, so uh, that was some of the things, you know, that uh, to show you the type, you know, the, she just could do what she wants to do, you know. Nothin' ever bothered her. So [Chuckles] I felt very, very confident, you know, very comfortable, you know, while I was gone.

SW: Do you think it takes that kind of wife with that kind of independent uh, enab-, in-, and ability to be the wife of a, of a man who works offshore or?

LM: Yeah. Yeah, because there's so much, you know, that's happening like today, you know. I mean, uh, what's goin' on, you know, with uh, the serial, so-called serial killer. You know, uh, they have to be very strong. I mean, REALLY, where they have to be completely, and they have to have a very good head, because uh... you see a lot, I don't know, like I said, you know, we've been married 47 years, so I don't know too much about today's couples how they, you get along or what, you know, how independent. I know women have become a little bit more independent today than they were way back then. But for a guy to be gone all the time it, it takes a, you know, strong people. Yeah, very strong, you know, because uh, there's so many things out there, you know, that they wanna do or could do or be, you know, persuade to do and uh [Slight pause] uh, I just don't know, you know. I think that it, it would be a good point, because if you're gonna make that commitment, you know, that guy's goin' out there. Now he's not goin' out there, you know, just to, just to be gone. He's got, you know, a few things in mind. First that it's a job for him. Second, he wants to make some decent money to enjoy his life. But then again, he's got someone back home that he's doin' this for so they can enjoy it. And by being away when they get together, then again like I said, you know, you can celebrate any holiday, any birthday, or any occasion when you're in if you have a job that you're makin' some money from, you know. It's very simple. I mean, it's simple rith-, arithmetic, you know. If you're not workin', you can't enjoy yourself and then the girl or the lady or the woman you marry or whatever, you know, how they gonna enjoy themselves if you don't have anything to help provide. So, you know, it's, it works hand in hand. You gotta, you go out, you know, and suffer the consequences, but some nights, you know, my neighbors used to say, "Man, you got the best job in the world." You know. And I used to tell 'em I did, I had the best job in the world, 'cause uh, I was always, you know, off for seven days. If I wanted to go fishin', I could go fishin'. Hunting or if we wanted to travel, and we did that. We, we did have a good time. Then I was in the office for about hm... I guess about 15 years, 18 years. And uh, it was so different.

SW: Yeah that changed things, huh?

LM: Oh it, uh, it was uh, you know, seven to five every day, every day, every day. And then being in the office we were naturally 24 hours because we had all our, all our rigs worked 24 hours, you see, with Superior and with, with Mobil. So if they had a problem, you know, they just didn't call you up and say, the phone would be open at nine o'clock in the morning, you know, they called when they had a problem, whether it was in daylight, dark, you know, whatever. So uh, it was not much free t-, you had a lot of time, but not f-, actual free time. You know, it was, I enjoyed it, I got to be around my son a lot more, it was toward the end uh, I think he was uh, a sophomore in high school, so it was about the time that I needed to be around a lot more. And that was one of the main reasons I came in. And to, you know, got into the office. Uh, I love workin' seven-and-seven, I really did. Because of that time, but it was, I could see where, you know, enough was enough f-, she needed me, I needed, and that boy needed, you know, some, somebody to be around. So we worked backwards. And then after the mergers and uh, things that start taking place with uh, with Mobil, instead of me movin' and changin' everything, goin' to either Dallas or Houston, I was offered a job to go back in the field as a senior drilling supervisor and work as a troubleshooter or, or just, you know, wherever they needed. And all of a sudden, you know, from, had been doin' this years ago and then not doin' it and then back again, it was, it was probably my, the last five years probably the best years of my life really because uh, it opened up so many more things for me, you know, that uh, I, I guess I had thought, you know, I was a little bit more important,

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you know, had a little more authority uh, and then uh, whenever you pull up somewhere if you uh, supposedly the, you know, the troubleshooter, well everything, oh yeah, you know, so you felt big and then everybody felt relieved when you walked in. And uh, you got a lot of, you know, people helped you out and so uh, it, it worked out well, yeah. And uh, I, I enjoyed ev-, every bit of it. I'll tell you, boy, it was, it was great to, you know, it kind of made you feel, you know, like you really, really accomplished somethin' in your career, you know. And uh, so uh, I lo-, like I said, south Texas, I ended up down there, that was great at the end, you know. And uh, worked Oklahoma and I worked up in uh, the North Sea, worked uh, Halifax, off the northeast coast of Nova Scotia, you know, we had a lot of, you know, pro-, well problems up there, you know, stuff to do, so.

SW: What about uh, tell me a little bit about life offshore when you were out there. What was the, the rig like, the conditions and the food and-

LM: At first uh, I got some pictures I'll show you some of the old ones. Uh, but at first conditions back uh, in the f-, well when they started ear-, in the '60s, the early '60s uh... the, as a mud engineer you are probably I guess you're one of the most important people on the rig, but you didn't get the respect because you worked for a service company. Um... you the last one on if you got a helicopter ride, if they had a seat fine, then they put you on a boat. You were the last one to be unloaded off the boat because the crew was more important to get up there than you were. The cooks, they wanted the cooks and everybody and uh, but then you always got the, whatever bunk that was last or available. Uh, but you were a service person.

SW: Yeah, you, you weren't h-, you weren't-

LM: Per say part of the crew.

SW: Co-, yeah.

LM: Yeah, kind of like-

SW: The employee of the company that had the rig.

LM: Right. That's right. And, but they always needed a mud engineer and they still need 'em because, you know, as a, the fluid part is the intrical part of drilling. If you don't have that, you can't drill. But today it's changed so much. I mean, this guy's become known as a drilling fluid specialist and he's really, really treated. But we have bigger rigs and then a, a better, having the people seeing, you know, the need for this person. Back then you, they knew it, but they ran on you pretty hard. And that was just the old group. I mean, you'll be talkin' to all these people, you know, and you'll, you'll see. Poor mud engineer he did everything, you know, he was the first aid uh, guy, you know, he, he answered the telephone, you know, he did everything uh, the company man ask him to do, because he wanted to, you know, be included. And so they had an extra person there that they could utilize and it was like a freebie, because, you know, 'cause at first I was services, I can remember if you bought our product, my service was free. The only, and, th-, we didn't get anything. We even got the bill for, we had to pay for our own meal, our company had to pay for the meals. But that was fine because they had pretty decent profit in, built-in back in those days. So if I went on a job and the products were furnished by Magcobar, then I was free and all the equipment that I provided was free, and then any meals that I, you know, took or had to have, my company paid for. Uh, then it started changing, you know, in the, in the [Clears throat] I guess the, the late '60s to where the uh, they were chargin' uh, 125 a day for our services. And uh, then that, you know, was gettin' to the point where they gave a discount because then again they had to start if they, the company wanted, you know, that product and did your service come free or not. So it was again a bargaining point, you know. So, but still conditions were very rough because of the fact of the equipment back then. [Pause] You know, you had a, we didn't have state of the art equipment, we had good equipment, but uh, it was, it was, compared to what you have today, you know, uh, I mean, you, well you just, by the time you had the steam engines, you know, uh, the old [triplet pumps?], all the different types of uh, old-time equipment, you know. Uh, I can remember uh, everything was diesel back then, you know, diesel electric. And so

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the, before then they were steam, all the old rigs had steam, the old steam rigs. Just everything was run off of steam. Well those things worked, probably were the best of anything, you know, because they, they just, the steam is just uh, I, I guess most guys would consider, you know, those parts were probably the best. Then when they went to the diesel electric, then you start seein' the, the [point?], because you had electricity involved and generators and more, you know, problems that uh... livin' on the rig uh, at first offshore was small, crowded uh, very compact. Uh, safety was there but not, you know, they had a safety man but it was rare that you'd see him. You know, except when an accident occurred. Uh, so you kind of had to look out for yourself. The different companies had programs, but they weren't, you know, put into play like they are today, you know. It, it was, it was there, you know, you had a fire extinguisher and you had uh, first aid kits, and you had a life raft. You know, sometime you had fire drills, sometime you had abandon ship drill, but those took, you know, second place to the actual operation. If it were busy on the rig, didn't have any. So sometimes you would see that problems that did occur back then, you know, was just from neglect. Not that, you know, it was, I guess it was done on purpose, it was just a fact that the job or the conditions took over, and were so busy that they just didn't have time or didn't, well let's say they didn't have, they didn't take that extra time because you were trying to get everything done, you know, as quick as you possibly could, get everything finished, get, you know, and everything was lined up. And then if you came in and say, "I wanna have a safety meeting for, you know, an hour." And then you got 50 men and then you got crews workin' uh, 12 hours on, 12 hours off, so you had to have two meetings. You see. So that took time away. And, you know, naturally when you're in that drillin' mode, you wanna hurry up and get the well drilled. So that was some of the stuff, you know, it was overlooked. I'd pu-, yeah, it was not intentional, but, you know.

SW: If there were every any injuries because of the neglect or, how did the company typically respond to that?

LM: If they had any injuries? Uh, then they were actually, uh, that again, uh, that was something they really, really, I guess, got involved in trying to get that person wherever. But the problems that we had was transportation back then. Um, 'fore, you know, we had all the helicopters available, there was boats. To get a guy off the rig onto a boat you had to put him in a basket and have somebody go with him, take him off. And then if it was rough seas, then you had problems. Uh, you know, I'm, again, that was, the mud engineer would, would end up getting that job. I've, many a night I flew in in a helicopter, I rode a boat with somebody that was hurt. Because I was actually the easiest one to be able to take off of the job. Yeah, because my expertise could still be utilized if I left, you know, some notes on what they needed to do, when they needed to do it. Uh, there, some of the, the derrickhands on there were just as good at doin' the job as I was. They might not've known the technical aspects of it, but they knew what sack to mix, when to mix it, and how to put it in. So he was utilized tremendously in, in as part, as far as in safety, you know, bringin' people in. Uh, it was, it was tough because of that transportation situation, you know. 'Cause say somethin' happened like one night a guy, I can remember, got hit uh, in the neck with a joint a pipe and crushed his larynx. And we had to get him in. Well, the weather was bad. Well first we had, we, we anticipate puttin' him on a boat. Well we finally got a medivac. And uh, that was like a, I [Inaudible] by the time you had to go through the Coast Guard, you know, and everything, this is back in the '60s. Uh, they finally, it got there, you know, about two or three hours after. Well the only thing we knew to do was, we didn't have any oxygen bottle per say or masks in like, in those days, so the only thing I come up with was we had a welding set of oxygen and [setalene?]. So we took the oxygen bottle with a hose and stuck it in the guy's mouth. And then I was tryin' to carry this big oxygen bottle and to keep him. Well we finally got him on a helicopter and got him, you know, comin' in. Well about halfway in he grabs hold of me and I just knew it was a death grip because he start gaggin' and the pilot told me don't put a light on because it would blind him. And I didn't know what, so finally I got down and I was able to make, and he was, what was happening, the oxygen was drying him out. You know, so I happen to have a, a jug of water there, so I, I wet a handkerchief and uh, I put it in his mouth and he was, it finally was okay. But those are the things you didn't, you know, we didn't have. We didn't have-

[END OF RECORDING]