

Interviewee: Andrus, Nedra
Interview Date: June 11, 2003

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Interviewee: Nedra Andrus
Interviewer: Steven Wiltz
Interview Date: June 11, 2003
Interview Site: Lafayette, LA
Interview Module & No. MMS:SW055
Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability.]

Ethnographic preface:

Nedra Andrus is the wife of Lafayette realtor Dwight Andrus. She was born in Merryville, but lived in a number of different towns in southern Louisiana while she was growing up. Her father was a manager for Morgan-Lindsay stores (a five-and-ten cent chain store). She moved to Lafayette when she was in the third grade and studied music at Southwestern Louisiana Institute (SLI) and Loyola. She describes the growth and changes in Lafayette related to the influx of oil-related business.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [NA]

SW: Interview with Mrs. Nedra Andrus, June eleventh, 2003 in her home. And we were talk with Mr., Mr. Andrus about how, he pretty much summed it up the, lookin' at the impact of the oil industry on Lafayette at different phases. And he went into a lot of detail about the economic impact. He talked about the social impact. He gave me a bit of his family background, so maybe we could start also there with you giving a bit of your family background. Are you originally from Lafayette?

NA: No, I'm not, Steven. I'm, I'm uh, sort of a... well a five-and-ten cent brat, I guess you'd call me. A southern Army brat. [Chuckles] Uh, my father was affiliated with Morgan and Lindsay, which as the five-and-ten cent store. And it was a uh, um, a tri-state, small, but very well-known. It was almost in every little community in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and I think they had a few in Texas. I know they're home office was in Texas. But, regardless of that, uh, I was born in Merryville, which is about 18 miles from the uh, the east Texas border. Around De Ridder, Louisiana. Okay. And then my father moved as he went up in the company, we moved. So I do not have a local accent, people always tell me. I lived in small towns in Louisiana, then we moved to Mississippi, and then back to New Orleans, and then back to Lafayette, and I married Dwight. So that's basically uh, my family background, although I went to school here, in Lafayette, when my father was moved here, originally when we came to Lafayette, before we went to New Orleans. Daddy was the manager of the Morgan-Lindsay Store, which was on Jefferson Street at the time. It burned and it is now, let's see, it's in the curve, uh, beside the bank. The curve of Jefferson Street by the bank, the bank building I should say. And uh, anyway, so I, we came here, I was in third grade. I was in the third grade in school and then we moved to New Orleans when I was a sophomore in high school. And then I moved to Lafayette when I married my husband, Dwight.

SW: So you, there, there's your connection to Lafayette is you met Dwight here-

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NA: Yes, I met, Dwight and I met in high school.

SW: And g-, I guess you had lots of friends-

NA: Oh yes.

SW: From third grade to sophomore year.

NA: Oh yes. In fact, uh, we just held our fiftieth class reunion. [Clears throat] Excuse me. Um, last, last Saturday, in fact, it was. And it was very nice. We had uh, a real, real nice crowd, it was our fiftieth, you know, so I guess a lot of people that don't join us, we've had several, and I guess the ones that have not shown just felt this was the important one. To see everyone, how everyone has changed, you know, so. Anyway, it was, it was very nice. It really was. Because I did graduate from Lafayette High. And uh, went to USL, which was SLI at the time. Was ULL, I'm sorry, and it was SLI at the time. And uh, then my parents were living in New Orleans, so they asked me to come back to New Orleans. And I did and I went to Loyola. And then uh, Dwight was in law school at Tulane at the time. And uh, so we both, we married and then both moved back to Lafayette.

SW: What did you study?

NA: Music. I was in music. The arts, I guess you would say, but music. Yeah, but in both places, SLI and Loyola.

SW: He mentioned y'all moved back here 'bout 1954? Abouts.

NA: Uh, yes. It was '54. It was the uh... [Pause] I want to say it was September, October of fifty, of '54, but I'm not sure. I want to say September probably, Steven.

SW: Okay. And he said he began working for his father.

NA: Yes he did.

SW: What did you do?

NA: I worked for his father also.

SW: Oh, [kept it all in the family?].

NA: There was a little, [Laughs] are you familiar with where [Winwood?] Shopping Center is?

SW: Uh hm.

NA: Alright. The very, at the very corner of, I guess you would say in front of Bank One, at that corner of uh, let's see, it would be Ja-, it would be Bertrand, exactly. There was a little green building. That property belonged to Dwight, Senior. He had bought that property. And uh, he, he had his office downtown, on Main Street. And the little office was just sort of a little green hut. In fact they called it the "green building." And so uh, he put me out there as a secretary. And I was his secretary. [Chuckles] I was majoring in music and became a secretary all of a sudden. [SW chuckles] But I worked there, uh, for about a year, Steven. And then, then I quit work and we started a family.

SW: Dwight said he was working seven days a week.

NA: He, he did for about 13 years.

SW: Did you work the seven days as well?

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NA: Oh no, no [Laughs] no I didn't.

SW: Weekends off?

NA: I had my weekends off, uh, mainly because I was the cook, and the shopper, and everything else. So uh, no, and then we started a family and so, naturally, I was, we couldn't afford help. [Chuckling] So.

SW: How many chil-

NA: So I was at home with the babies.

SW: How many children do you have?

NA: We have three sons.

SW: Three sons. [Pause] What did uh, wh-, that's the Winwood Shopping Center, that's over [more right in town] and in the 1950s, then, would that have been towards the outer edges of-

NA: Oh it was the outer edges. In fact, there were fields all around us at the time. And uh, there was nothing. Winwood Shopping Center was not built at the time. It was just, really, a, a field in the back of this little green building that he had built.

SW: There's some neighborhoods back there now, I-

NA: Yes.

SW: There was none of that there-

NA: Yes there was. Uh, I'm speaking of now the property is just where Winwood Shopping Center is. Right behind that, yes, there was subdivisions. Holden Heights.

SW: Holden Heights.

NA: Was the name of it. And uh, Dwight and I built our first little home on Oak Street, the first street behind that Winwood. It was on Oak Street.

SW: More or less, but like you said, more or less that was the edge of town then.

NA: Yes, oh it was, definitely. Positively.

SW: But uh, with the-

NA: But then they, people kept, the realtors kept opening up subdivisions along the way. And that's one reason he uh, he put that building there, because it was a long way from downtown to get, to show the people the homes in the subdivisions. And so with that, that medium, you know, the little hut being there, I called it the green hut, was there. It was really an office building. And he had draftsmen in uh, two draftmen in the building also. So it really was an office. And uh, it was nice because then the people could drive down Johnson Street and see the sign that it was a realtor. And they could stop there and then go from there out, you know, into the subdivisions. Because [Inaudible] Oaks, you see, and uh, [Mott Rose?], and all of these were, were, were open. At the time. He was selling lots and building homes. Dwight, Senior, I mean.

SW: Dwight, Senior, yeah. And so that was uh, as you said, it was in between-

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NA: It was, it was an in between spot. They could send them, if they stopped downtown, you see, at the office downtown [Vermillion?], they could send them straight out, down uh, University. And then, to uh, Johnson. And straight on out.

SW: Was Johnson a four-lane at that time?

NA: No, no, heavens.

SW: I think I heard it was a two-lane gravel-

NA: It was a two-lane. Well, it was a gravel road, I remember the gravel road, Steven. [Chuckles] But when I was out there, it was, they, they had paved it, it was a, uh huh. But I do remember the gravel road, because I had to ask my mother permission, Judice Inn has been there forever. And I had to ask my mother permission, you see, if I went on a date, to a picture show and we would go to Judice Inn after, I would have to have permission. It was that far out.

SW: That far out.

NA: When you left the university, well the French, let's say the French Home, now. When you left that corner of University, you were basically going to the country. Now that's when I was growing up in high school. That was in the early '50s. And uh, I had to ask permission to go. [Laughs]

SW: [Inaudible]

NA: Yes. And all, all Judice Inn was is exactly what it is right now, hamburgers, except I think they had their uh... oh, what did the boys play then. Not the uh, jukebox, the machines. Pinball!

SW: Pinball.

NA: Pinball machines. I think they've taken those out now. At Judice Inn, I don't think I've seen any.

SW: Yeah, I don't think so, I don't think so either.

NA: But that's what they, the boys, you know, everyone got together. It was a real nice crowd. And we all went out there and uh, all we had was, I don't even think they served beer. As I remember, it was just soft drinks, hamburgers, the little tiny packs of Fritos, potato chips, and the boys played the pinball machines. And that was it.

SW: I think they may serve alcohol now.

NA: Oh they probably do. And I don't remember, I didn't drink it, Steven, [Chuckling] so I don't know if they did or not.

SW: Everybody tell-, a lot of people tell me that, that Judice Inn was really the edge of town.

NA: Oh it was. It was, it was really the edge, positively. Well you know for for-, young women to have to, you know, ask their parents if they could go out that far [Chuckles], that was kind of like going out of town, you see. [Chuckles]

SW: Right.

NA: 'Course nowadays I don't think they worry about that.

SW: No, they have cell phones.

NA: Right. Exactly, you just call and say, "This is where I am," you know. [Chuckles]

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SW: When they do. [Laughs]

NA: Right.

SW: Uh, Mr. Dwight said that they were really, he, he and his, his associate were really busy in those years-

NA: Oh-

SW: The '50s and the '60s.

NA: Terribly busy.

SW: So you left, 'course you saw a lot of that, too.

NA: Oh definitely. In fact, I was basically a, a secretary in, at our home. Not only the office, but at our home also. Because he might have been out showing homes while people were calling, because they listed everything in the newspaper, the daily advertiser. And uh, but the phone numbers were listed in the paper. That you could call weekends, you see, Saturday or Sunday. They were available to show homes.

SW: You, you would buy an advertisement, and you'd list your-

NA: Yes.

SW: And so-

NA: Oh, you had to buy, it was, yes. You did buy your advertisement, definitely. And so and then someone in, within your office had to get all of the material, the data, and the facts and figures, and, and compose the ad, you see, and turn it into the advertiser every week. For it to come out.

SW: So that he could, so Mr. Dwight was receiving those phone calls on the weekends, he was, that's when he was still doing his business-

NA: Yes.

SW: In your home.

NA: Yes.

SW: He said it was mostly, mostly a lot of these oil company people that were moving in that he would sell homes to.

NA: Oh yes. Yes, positively.

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

NA: Oh yes. Uh, in fact, uh, you know, we call them "transits," but that's basically what they were because they were coming in from another, another part of the country, wherever it might have been. But, yes, I think the majority of his business then was relat-, oil, oil-related. Um, not until, Steven, well I guess sporadically it went on that people chose that, you know, or they, they realized that they needed larger homes, I mean. And as new subdivisions were opened and they liked it and all, and they knew they needed a larger home for their families, they would build or buy, whatever. But I think the majority of the business was oil-related. That was the oil boom during those days. And uh, it kept everyone very busy.

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SW: So the geographic center of town was closer to downtown was shifting to the south side?

NA: It, it shifted all to the south side is what it did. And I have to say, really, that Dwight, Senior, was responsible for that. Now there were other people that were involved also, other realtors, but he basically was the instigator and uh, and it, you know, if you see it now, they have it at the office, that's colored in yellow as to what the Andrew's Family developed in Lafayette, you would be surprised.

SW: All in yellow. The only other, I guess his competitor I can think of was uh, Mike [Donlan?]?

NA: Well, Mike Donlan was really more, well, he was uh, insurance.

SW: Insurance, oh.

NA: See Dwight, Senior, started with Mike Donlan. Uh, in the insurance business and then he formed his own insurance business. And then from there, he never, he never cared much for the insurance business. And his brother, now I'm speaking of Dwight's father. And Dwight's father's brother loved the insurance business, so they worked together. And his brother, Roger, tended to the insurance business while he started developing his real estate business.

SW: I see.

NA: And that's how it, it branched out into two businesses.

SW: Okay. I know, I know that, I think [we're] confused again. I know Mike Donlan does have some property that he-

NA: Oh yes.

SW: Is still rented out under his name.

NA: Certainly, certainly.

SW: I think-

NA: But he never really went into the big development of land, I guess I should say, Steven.

SW: Okay.

NA: As some did, like [Shawn] Young did. Uh, [Perret?], Perret did. They opened their own subdivisions. Mike Donlan, unless, um, Dwight might know more than I do about it, I don't know of many that Mike Donlan did. As far as subdivisions, you know. [Clears throat] He had land, but he might have let other people develop it.

SW: I think, I think that's it.

NA: That's probably what it was. Because uh, the one's that I remember most developing in Lafayette were uh, Perret, and Dwight, uh, Shawn Young, I'm sure I'm forgetting someone. But their names were always, oh, [Jayrod Foreman?]. Yes, Jayrod, of course. Um, now Jayrod and Dwight, Senior, opened some together. You know, they were in business together for awhile. And I'm, I'm sure I'm forgetting someone, Steven. But-

SW: [Inaudible]

NA: Yeah, there's more.

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SW: There's always the main players.

NA: Sure.

SW: [Inaudible] and, of course, Dwight, Senior, uh, Mr. Andrus, Senior, was one of the more prominent-

NA: Right, he was, really, yes. People used to laugh at me and say, well, you know, at my name, when I'd sign my name on a check. They'd say, "Well, I know where to get you." Because his, he used to advertise on the back of the buses. They might still do, I don't know, I haven't looked lately. I think maybe the insurance business might, I'm not sure. But Dwight, Senior used to, he said it was wonderful advertisement.

SW: [Inaudible] the name.

NA: Exactly.

SW: That was the point.

NA: It was, oh, yeah. The name was very well-known. [Chuckles] It was advertised all over the place, how could it not be known?

SW: What kind of, in your, of course this is opinion, your opinion, what can you tell me about how the advent and influence of the oil industry, economic impact on this city?

NA: Well, Steven [Pause] um. Ah, let me think about this a minute. It had a definite impact. It brought in [Pause] I feel like I'm in the Miss America contest. Let me think a minute, Steven. I don't want to be wrong when I say it.

SW: It's, it's strictly, it's opinion and if you need to come back to it we can come back to the question.

NA: Right, sure, sure. Uh, my opinion is that it definitely, uh, it, it affected the economy of course, because it brought in more people, that's where you start. And with more people, you have more business, and with more business, you know, the business flourish. That's, that's a natural progression of things. As far as the social end of it, I don't know if it really helped Lafayette that much. Lafayette was extremely social and always has been since I moved here in 1943. In fact, I like to tell the story that people really don't understand or believe me sometimes, but when I was very young, and I'm going to say maybe 12 years old, 11 or 12, um, we had a lot of local talent that was used in Lafayette in those days, because people couldn't afford to bring in, you know, your national talents, I should say. But when I was about 11 or 12 years old, I saw Nelson Eddie and Janet McDonald at SLI in the uh, in the gym, that's where they had the big performance. And so, you know, when you stop and think about it that way, uh, Lafayette's um, Lafayette's always been a cultural place, as long as I've known it. They've always had the Mardi Gras, which has brought huge social affairs every year in Lafayette. Uh, the uh, the uh, college, SLI at the time, their music department was fantastic, their art department was fantastic, their dance department was wonderful. We used to go to productions all the time and UL and sit there. Or, SLI I should say. And uh, and sit there and see wonderful performances. I mean, I know some that Mark Breau turned out to be a uh, uh, wonderful choreographer in New York. And, he and his wife both. And I saw them dance on the stage at, at uh, SLI. You know, for their senior performance or something. I don't remember exactly what it was, but we've had a lot of quality in Lafayette as long as I can remember.

SW: How, how did the people, the transients as they were called, that did not belong because they were transplants, right?

NA: Yes, exactly.

SW: How did, how did those people come in, I'm sure there was an effect that they, they affected the town when they came in and also the town must've had an affect on them as well.

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NA: Well, yes, I think-

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

NA: Uh, in, in the beginning, and I think it still might be that way, that the town has more of an affect on the people that come in, than they do on the people that are here. And I say that because the people were very anxious to blend in to all of their affairs that were happening in Lafayette. They were extremely uh, interested in everything. In fact, I know, personally I know about five families that when their oil companies moved them they quit and stayed in Lafayette, Louisiana, because they loved it that much. They liked the people, they thought it was cultural enough to raise their families, uh, the school system might have been a little, you know, here or there, as opposed to where they came from in Texas, a lot of 'em came from Texas and the school system there is fantastic as you know. But uh, I'd say that they affected the school system an awful lot.

SW: More children in there.

NA: Yes, yes.

SW: They added children to it because they were bringing-

NA: Well, and the-, they came in with, with different ideas about things that they were bringing in from where they came from. That Lafayette was complacent at the time, possibly. And they came in and, you know, they started joining the PTAs at the schools and developing these new ideas or the ideas that they brought with them, which was wonderful for us. It helped tremendously.

SW: What were the attitudes of the locals towards all of these people coming in?

NA: I think, uh, I think you could probably speak to anyone that came in during that period of time and still now, Steven, and they would tell you that, that people in Lafayette, they have open arms, they welcome you in. I believe it still holds. I know it did when I moved here. My mother could not believe it. We moved in, my father had come in prior to and uh, bought a little home. And my [Audio cuts out] two of us, my sibling. Moved in and everyone from the neighborhood came in with something. Mother couldn't believe this. You know, they were so generous, they were so kind. They came and they introduced themselves. They asked mother, you know, to come for coffee. And I think people are still doing that.

SW: That, that might have been a little different because your father worked for the five-and-dime and not for the oil industry.

NA: Right, right.

SW: Would you say it was the same with the oil industry people coming in, too?

NA: Yes, because if they moved in your neighborhood, it didn't matter. I think my point was that the people were so generous, and I think still are, that it doesn't matter where you work or where you come from, whether you're oil-related or not.

SW: Didn't necessarily have-

NA: If you're a member of the community, if you're a member of the neighborhood, you're going to be welcomed.

SW: So the oil people didn't necessarily have a disreputable reputation?

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NA: No, oh no, of course not. I think, Steven, that goes to people themselves. They, you know what I'm saying. There's some people that are going to join readily and there's some people that are going to be a little standoffish. And that's how people are made, you know. [Chuckles] People are different.

SW: What I'm hearing from you is more often than not, the people in Lafayette were very accepting-

NA: Very accept-, accepting and the people were, were, were very receptive.

SW: And you yourself experienced that, coming here yourself.

NA: Oh yes, oh yes.

SW: So you could really see it.

NA: Positively.

SW: What uh, what about the, the food? I know we have such a reputation here, and I'm born and raised in Lafayette myself, so there is a reputation for having this spicy Cajun, exotic food.

NA: Right.

SW: Did you notice anything, the people moving in from Texas and Oklahoma and whatnot, were uh, were they more receptive to the food or were they maybe a little leery of it at first because-

NA: Well, I'm sure they were probably, you know, I don't know if only a few of them, the, the friends that I became close to, you know, told me about it. But I, I can't speak for the broad majority. But I would s-, definitely say that they probably were a [Chuckling] little leery of it at first. Because we, we use such seasoning. [Clears throat] But I don't think it took them long to, to become accustomed to it. And I don't think I've spoken to many, [Clears throat] excuse me, Steven, I don't think I've spoken to many that just don't love our food. Absolutely, I mean that's one of our best things that we've got.

SW: I've, I've traveled outside of Louisiana and everything seems so bland. [Laughs]

NA: It is, it is.

SW: Once you get used to it you don't want to-

NA: Well, and it tickles me when you go elsewhere and they say, "Cajun Blackfish," or "Cajun this," or "Cajun that." And it's the furthestest thing from what we're accustomed to. [Laughs]

SW: They're just slapping a name on there.

NA: Exactly, yeah. Or trying to, you know, make the dollar on it. [Clears throat] Because people, even though they haven't tasted it, you know, they've heard of how wonderful Cajun food is, you know. Cajun cooking. They slap that name on.

SW: It gets attached. [Both laugh] Um. What did you notice, going along the social lines, we talked about economics.

NA: Right.

SW: And the social. What about politics? Was there any change? [Slight pause]

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NA: Well, no. Not um, I, I what period of time are we coming from, Steven, or-

SW: I guess maybe you-

NA: What, what are we within?

SW: I guess maybe as a child you weren't really into politics-

NA: I wasn't, you see that's what I'm saying, I, I, it wasn't. I, I heard my mother and father discussing it.

SW: As a-

NA: But it wasn't interesting to me at the time. So only, I can only speak, you know, after I was an adult and I was voting. Um. [Pause] You know, when I registered to vote, Steven, see you're young, you're young you don't know this, but you had to register Democrat to vote.

SW: Yeah.

NA: And so you had basically a majority of people in this area were Democrats.

SW: Whether they wanted to be or not.

NA: Exactly. [SW chuckles] Whether their, their thinking was different, it didn't matter. They, if they had, if they wanted to vote, they had to register Democrat. So I think probably that is the most important thing that happened in Lafayette politically. Is that the, the oil brought in a lot of Republicans. Registered Republicans. Which made the two-party system happen in Lafayette, Louisiana, which was great. And then, of course, when the rules changed and people could switch from the Democratic to the Republican Party, the Republican Party grew. Because I, I don't think there were too many Democrat oil people moving in.

SW: So what you saw is after they could make the change, there was a rapid, quick, immediate increase in Republican Party.

NA: Yes, yes.

SW: For those people all along who wanted to switch over anyway.

NA: Right. Right.

SW: So it's kind of maybe misleading to say that this area was Democrat?

NA: What-

SW: At least by looking at the polls they were.

NA: Yes. Yes, right. But I don't think, I don't, I don't think because you had a lot of people my age that had to register Democrat, and yet they didn't think Democratically, you see. So um, [Clears throat] I'm not saying it was, it was a, a very quick thing, but I, the Republican Party grew. And I have not been involved with it, so I don't know, how the numbers went. I don't know whether they had like in 1956 they had 100 members and in 1959 it increased to 250. See, I don't know the statistics on it. But I, I, just from word of mouth.

SW: Uh hm. And, well, what I'm hearing from you Ms. Nedra, is that the oil people were mainly conservative Republicans.

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NA: They were. Definitely.

SW: Regardless of what was here.

NA: Right.

SW: Those guys were [Inaudible].

NA: Right, right.

SW: Um, along the same lines, did you notice any religious changes?

NA: Um. [Pause] Probably so, Steven. You know, I've not given that much thought, except um, when I lived in Lafayette, and I have to go back to when I moved here, because it gives me some comparison mentally, myself. Um. And Dwight has even said the same thing. I could count on one hand, I'm Protestant, and I could count on one hand um, the people that I was in Sunday school with. Now that was First Baptist Church, if you can believe that looking at it in this day in time. Um. Dwight can count on one hand, he's Methodist, and he could count on one hand the people that he was in Sunday school with. You know, that type of thing. So the churches were here, but small congregations. And, of course, [Clears throat] they've not only increased, the Protestants have not only increased their congregations, they've opened new churches. You know, the Methodist church what has four, fir-, four churches here in Lafayette now, four of five. The Baptist church the same way. The Presbyterian church, we have uh, the big one downtown, we have the Grace Presbyterian out here. You know, so they've branched all over Lafayette now. Whereas you only had one Protestant church per religion, basically. Well, I shouldn't say that. Davidson Memorial Methodist was here at the time at the time the First Methodist was, so. But uh-

SW: So very small numbers?

NA: Yes, very small numbers, but, so, yes, I would say that positively they had an affect on the uh, religious community.

SW: So those people that were coming from Texas and, and out-

NA: They were not necessarily Catholic. Some of 'em might have been, but, but no. They, they moved into all your Protestant religions. Uh, the Ascension Church, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, you know.

SW: What about, uh, what about the Jewish population?

NA: The Jewish population, Steven, I don't know if you heard us talking about that the other day at uh, the meeting?

SW: Well, we had talked about Maurice Heymann, I remember

NA: Somebody, yes, but somebody said, and I don't remember who it was now, it might have been Leon [Chaston?] or maybe [J.C. ?], that said that they had heard that uh, they were closing the church, the synagogue rather.

SW: Right.

NA: And I was really surprised. We used to have a very, very nice, I shouldn't say large, but nice uh, Jewish community. But I was really surprised, but I guess they've all moved away, Steven, the younger and the old ones have died. You know, so I guess their congregation has just dwindled to nothing. But it was one of the first in Lafayette.

SW: The first non-Catholic kind of thing.

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NA: Yes, uh huh, right.

SW: Yeah, because Mr. Heymann himself was, was Jewish and then moved to the town-

NA: Right, right.

SW: Early, early in the twentieth century.

NA: Exactly.

SW: I, and if I'm not mistaken, I thought we had two synagogues at one point?

NA: Oh, well now Steven, I don't know about that.

SW: Oh-

NA: You might be right.

SW: The only one I can think of is the one right there off of [Inaudible, road]

NA: [Inaudible, repeats road's name].

SW: You drive down towards River Ranch, there's, there's a small synagogue right there.

NA: Oh, that must be new then. No, the o-, the old synagogue used to be on Lee Avenue.

SW: Downtown?

NA: Yes.

SW: That's why I, that's why I'm thinking there's two, because there was, I've seen-

NA: Huh, you see I did, I didn't, I wasn't even aware of that.

SW: It's on the right side of the road when you're driving down the road, and it's kind of, you have to look for it.

NA: Okay.

SW: Or you'll, or you'll drive past it.

NA: Right.

SW: It might not even be there anymore.

NA: Right.

SW: Maybe it's not there, but-

NA: See, I think a lot, though, Steven, you have to take into consideration, of course this is way away from the oil people, but not necessarily so. This might have uh, this might really affect uh, the thinking about a lot of the oil community. Is that, you know, they branched off not only from the Protestant religions, but you've got all of these Lamb of Gods and, and the Bethel, you know, all of these branches of Christians and their churches and, you know,

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you can't say that some of the oil people didn't develop those. I don't know for sure, but they had to come from somewhere.

SW: Right. [Pause] I agree with you there, at the very least there was, there was, the town experienced a change anyway.

NA: Certainly.

SW: And a small part of it, at least a small part can be attributed to them.

NA: Right, right.

SW: The influx of the outside people.

NA: Right, because I, I'm not so sure that would've ever happened without the influence of people coming into Lafayette, oil people basically coming into Lafayette. Because Lafayette was uh, stayed and true, you know. You had your Catholic religion and you had your small Protestant religions.

SW: Mainly, mainly Christian, at least.

NA: Exactly, yes, Christian. I should say Christian.

SW: Yeah, 'cause it encompasses all those.

NA: It does, it encompasses all of 'em. [Chuckles]

SW: Um, besides Mr. Heymann and his family, who else within the oil industry became um, that you can think of, became philanthropists to the town?

NA: Let's see, Steven. Um. [Pause]

SW: I'm thinking right now maybe Mr. [Alfred Lansom?]. [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

NA: Yes, Alfred was very instrumental, yes. He was. Alfred was, was one of, I'm trying to think, there was several of 'em, Steven, that I can't recall their names right now. That during the oil crash they uh, they lost everything. And they were philanthropists, they really were. You know, when I think of people now that are doing things like that, I think of more uh, well, and they're oil-related, because the drilling companies and all. But I think you'd have to name [Eddie Knight] as one of them. Eddie Knight definitely was one. Very fine man. Uh. [Pause] [Wen Hawkins?], Wen Hawkins was another.

SW: They just had the controversy over the, the monkeys in his house.

NA: I know, I know. [Both laugh] The monkeys on-

SW: I was [Inaudible]

NA: Was it ever, isn't that a shame. [Clears throat]

SW: Um-

NA: And I read it in the paper, I think it was on the front page, wasn't it? I, in fact, I had to read it to Dwight and he was going to a UL meeting and I said, "You better read this in case someone, you know, brings it up." [Laughs]

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SW: That was, that was certainly [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

NA: I know.

SW: Um.

NA: I'm trying to think of someone else that comes to mind. I'm sure there's someone else, Steven, that I'm just not thinking of right now. There was some that had already, they're deceased now that uh, that were.

SW: Their children have moved out of town.

NA: Yes, exactly.

SW: I think the Hawkins' family would be cons-, considered in there. They still have some descendents here, but I think they-

NA: Yes.

SW: More or less moved on.

NA: Well, you know, he didn't have any children. Wen Hawkins did not.

SW: I must be thinking of someone else then.

NA: No, you're probably thinking of, but, but see you're relating people to him, I'm sure. But he and Mrs. Hawkins, Mabel was her name, had no children. But uh, they had nieces. Nieces and nephews.

SW: Okay, that's what it is.

NA: That's what it is you're thinking of, I know it is, because Bill [Rox?], you're thinking of Mr. Bill Rox. His wife was a niece you see, Margaret.

SW: Oh.

NA: She was a Roy, Margaret Roy.

SW: I didn't realize that. I, I had interviewed, we interviewed Mr. Rox about six months ago.

NA: Right, yeah. Margaret was a Roy and she is the, she was the niece. See her uh, Mabel Hawkins was a Roy.

SW: I see.

NA: That was her aunt. And that's how the connection is. It's not through Bill, it's through his wife.

SW: His wife.

NA: Uh hm.

SW: You had mentioned the uh, you mentioned briefly a second ago the bust, the big oil bust in the 1980s.

NA: Right, right. Right.

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SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]. For it's uh, for its devastation [Inaudible, overlapping speech].

NA: Yes.

SW: What, in you-, in, I know you guys stayed here the whole time. What did you see? How did you see that it affected this town?

NA: Well, um, it affected it, Steven, in, in a way that was quite unreal, I thought, because every day that you open the paper, you saw someone else that went bankrupt. You know, which is a horrible thing to have to see. And uh, some of the people that, that you cared for and uh, you know they were losing everything, which is not fun to think about, you know. So it affected it in that way. I think it was a personal thing. It affected people personally, I guess is what I should say. Um. [Slight pause] And then some of 'em had to move out. Some of 'em moved out and came back in. [Pause] I, it, it affected the economy, of course, Steven, it had to. Because you had an influx of people moving out rather than moving in. And uh, it affected, you know, your retailers, it, it affected the whole economy of Lafayette. The whole area, really.

SW: Domino effect.

NA: Yes. Yes, it was.

SW: I, I, you know, I'm very interested in what you were saying about the personal, uh-

NA: Well it was. It was, it was a personal thing, because you didn't like to see people that you knew or that you had met, come in contact with, uh, and just the idea of people losing everything they had it's just not, not fun to see or hear about. And I got to the point where I hated opening the paper in the morning. You know, for that reason.

SW: And doubly because you knew some of these people.

NA: Yes, right. And I knew that they would, they would be moving. You know. And we had become friends and it, just didn't se-, it didn't seem fair. And then some, some of them you could understand why it happened. Because there were people that, I don't even know who listens to these tapes, Steven? [Laughs]

SW: Well, not really, anybody could go look at in the library, but.

NA: [Laughing] Okay.

SW: We're gonna put it all in the library.

NA: Do you cut out any parts of it?

SW: We edit things.

NA: Oh good, super. [Laughs] Then I can speak to you openly.

SW: If you want, I'll make a note here.

NA: Alright, please do Steven. No, I'm going to say that uh, [Speaking more softly] some of your oil people that moved in were very flamboyant. And uh, they loved to spend the money and they loved to make the big show. And so you could understand, I'm getting to, you know, you could understand how some people went bust. But then others, it just didn't seem right that they got caught in that, that draft. And uh, they, they couldn't do anything about it. Because of 'em were laid off, you see. And uh, they had to find new jobs. Now that's, some of the ones that I told you

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earlier that stayed in Lafayette that quit, that's, some of 'em did. They quit. And developed their own companies or they went to work for someone local, in Lafayette.

SW: Maybe even a change in career?

NA: Right.

SW: They wanted to stay here is what, is what I've been told.

NA: Yes, very definitely. They wanted to stay. And, in fact, we saw some that were really not in trouble at all, [Laughing] that quit their jobs, just so they could stay in Lafayette, Louisiana. Because they loved the food, the people, the atmosphere, everything. And they didn't want to leave. And they're still here. [Chuckles]

SW: Somethin's right about this place if they're stickin' around.

NA: That's right, something is right about it, I promise you.

SW: Uh. [Pause] Well that's, that's about all I have for questions.

NA: Oh, okay.

SW: Do you want to add something else?

NA: Well, Steven, I, we covered quite a bit. Um. You know, as I said, I'm, I'm not, I didn't know as much about the, the economic impact of Lafayette is going well of course. But I think the social probably is where the, and or course Dwight knew that also, he had to, because of the business he was in.

SW: The circles he was-

NA: Yes. But uh, I think that, you know, to be fair, I think I have to say that Lafayette has always been a social, cultural community. Because it was a community because it was a city, or a town, then a town, then a city. And as it grew. But um, it became, certainly, you know, everything mushroomed. It, it, more people to do one thing, that's why we, we're having all these gorgeous things happening to us right now. Building all these new Cajun domes and, and uh, the auditoriums and things like this. Uh, I wonder, [Inaudible, person's name] was not oil-related, so you can't say that he had an impact. I was gonna, that came to mind when I, I, when I said the auditorium. But I can't say that there's a lot of people that had an impact on Lafayette, but not necessarily because of the oil, you see.

SW: Well, yeah, and the [Inaudible] Family.

NA: Right.

SW: Were they, di-, how did they end up here, though?

NA: He came from uh, [Pause]

SW: You know, he could be connected.

NA: Cer-, was it cereal? I believe so. Years and years and years ago. And he, he developed [Evangelmade?] Bread, which turned into Bunny Bread. They sold it to Bunny, Bunny Bread. But uh, he is the one that started the Evangelmade.

SW: So he was really exclusive [of] the oil industry.

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NA: Oh yes, yes he was. R-, definitely.

SW: Part of [Inaudible, overlapping speech] Lafayette. But there are lots of stories like that, where someone came here-

NA: Right, definitely.

SW: Because of that.

NA: And, and, you know, when you, when you say that uh, these people were instrumental in, in a small way to the people that moved into Lafayette. I guess is wha-, how I should put it, you know, say it, Steven. Because they might have, some of our Mardi Gras associations, I'm gonna use this for an example. Some of our Mardi Gras associations, some of your oil people wanted to belong to. They had to but put up, their names had to be put up, and they were put up by local people. So in, in that respect, a lot of your local people had an influence on your oil people. In certain ways.

SW: Helped them work their way into certain circles.

NA: And help them work, exactly. Socially.

SW: That makes a lot of sense.

NA: They involve them, I guess is what I should say. They involved them in many, in many ways.

SW: And now you have someone with the last name Smith-

NA: [Chuckling] Right.

SW: You think he's a native of Lafayette and he only came here in the 1960s.

NA: Right. [Laughs]

SW: Because of the oil.

NA: Yes.

SW: But, but he's, he's a Lafayette native.

NA: Right.

SW: For all practical-

NA: Well that's what-

SW: His children were born here and-

NA: Right. That's what people always say am I native. And I say, "Well I don't know. I consider myself native, I've been here for so long." [Chuckles]

SW: I mean-

NA: Third grade, that's a long time ago. Nineteen forty-three is when I moved to Lafayette.

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SW: What, what was your maiden name?

NA: Reed.

SW: Reed.

NA: Uh huh. R, double E, D. And that's one of my son's names.

SW: I'm familiar with the De Ridder area, I don't know the name-

NA: I have, I still have cousins living. My, my uncle was uh, sheriff of Beauregard Parish for 28 years and I had two cousins that still live there in De Ridder.

SW: Far enough away that there's not accent from this area.

NA: Right. [Laughs]

SW: Protected you guys. You already learned how to speak by the time we got to you in third grade. [Chuckles]

NA: Well that too, and I think, Steven, because I was in music, I was in voice.

SW: Okay.

NA: And in voice, you know, you have to learn, your diction has to be almost perfect. And then as I graduated in my studies, in started singing in Latin, that changes your diction also. And so that's why people know I'm from the South, but they don't i-, they can't ever pinpoint me as to what, what area I'm from, you know. [Chuckles]

SW: It's good, a mystery's always good.

NA: Yeah, right. Right.

SW: [Chuckles] Well, uh, well thank you.

NA: Well you're certainly welcome, Steven. I certainly hope we helped a little bit.

[END OF RECORDING]