

Interviewee: Jasques, Jesse des

Interview Date: October 8, 2002

HHA# 00130

Interviewee: Jesse des Jacques

Interviewer: Steven Wiltz

Interview Date: October 8, 2002

Interview Site: Lafayette, LA

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Transcriber: Lauren Penney

[Transcriber's note: The majority of the interviewer's backchanneling has not been transcribed for the purposes of readability. Audio is grainy and sometimes hard to make out. The interviewee seems to drop words occasionally.]

Ethnographic preface:

Mr. Jacques was born in 1934 in south Louisiana. His father was a truck driver. He joined the Navy in 1954 and when he got out in 1959, he went to work for Halliburton. He started out as a cook and then took a job as a marine service operator (MSO). He worked for Halliburton for 26 years before taking an early retirement in 1986. In all his working years, he never had a land job.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [SW]

Interviewee initials: [JJ]

SW: -Jacques. October eighth, 2002. You said you were uh, you're 68 years old.

JJ: Yeah. I'm 67 [Inaudible, overlapping speech] Sixty-eight November the fifth.

SW: November the fifth. What year were you born?

JJ: Nineteen thirty-four.

SW: Nineteen thirty. You from here in this area?

JJ: I was born right here in south Louisiana. [Pause]

SW: What did your mother and your father do?

JJ: My father was a truck driver. My mother was a housewife.

SW: Your father wasn't attached to the oilfield any-

JJ: No. No, no. Okay.

SW: How did you get involved?

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JJ: Well I went, I, I was a, I joined the Navy in 1954. And I come out the Navy and this friend of mine said, "You want to come to work for Halliburton?" I said, "Yeah, I need a job." So I went to work, I started October the twenty-first, 1954. I mean, whoa, whoa, whoa, '59 with Halliburton, I'm sorry. I joined the Navy in '54.

SW: You spent four years in the Navy.

JJ: Yeah. I stayed five years, I stayed, well, I stayed, let's see. I joined October the twenty-first, '54 until October the twenty-third, '59.

SW: You said your friend just-

JJ: And I went to work, uh, in October of '59 with Halliburton. And retired March the fourth, 1986, I think. [Inaudible, seems to be muttering to himself] [I don't remember what year/month?].

SW: Okay. [Pause] That's about 26 years.

JJ: A little over 26 years. I say 26 and a half, it might be more or less.

SW: Somewhere in there. What did you start out doin' when you started to work?

JJ: When I started out with Halliburton, I started out as a, a cook. [Pause] And then uh, I was workin' on the boats out of Venice, Louisiana.

SW: Oh.

JJ: It was, then uh, I seen a chance of makin' more money, so I transferred in the cement department. I became when they call the "MSO." Marine service operator. The [Inaudible], they call us, the regular, what they call a "cementer." But we'd do pumpin' jobs, cement jobs, and other jobs.

SW: MSO is a faster word for cementer?

JJ: MSO is marine service operator. But everybody say, "Well, I'm the cementer."

SW: [Inaudible]

JJ: [Inaudible] Cajun or, or mixed cement with the unit, you know. The unit on the rig in the Gulf. [Inaudible] jobs [out there?] cement casings, mix cement, up and down that [Inaudible] cement the casing in, in a [bowl?]. And we had what they call squeeze jobs, they had all kind of jobs. We had pumpin' jobs. All kind of jobs we doin'. Mostly pumpin', you know. Halliburton has [a few units out there?].

SW: So they drillin', they were drillin' into a hole in the floor and they had a casing around-

JJ: Well they'd set up a rig, they'd set up a rig offshore. They might drill as much as 24 holes without even movin'.

SW: In the same area?

JJ: You go this way, you go this way, like that. Might see a hole here in the fl-, on the same location.

SW: From the same spot they'd drill all these different hole-

JJ: Same spot that they drill, you have what you call "directional drilling," [keep 'em?] pressurized [on that?], you know. They have two, you know, you drill say 'bout five, six thousand feet or, depend how de-, how deep you goin'

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for them to start curvin'. They might go a mile this way. [Pause] Or [Pause] [I don't remember?] the [Inaudible] or the Christmas tree to put on that one platform and [Inaudible]. You know too much about the oilfield?

SW: Yeah, but uh, I haven't talked to a marine service operator yet. You're the first one that I've talked to.

JJ: Well my main job was mixing cement. And uh [Pause] well, we'd do pumpin' jobs, you know, like if they stuck in the hole [Inaudible]. We pump uh, oil-based mud or what they call... mac-, uh, forgot the name of it. But the oil-based mud would loosen up the pipe. And sometime where you couldn't, you couldn't get it unstuck so what they had to do, they had automatic [Inaudible] get out there and, and shoot, you know, like an explosion? Pack off the pipe, you know, and [Inaudible] bottom hold the sample. You see, the bottom of the, when you start drilling, you gotta have some heavy, heavy pipe, you know, solid iron pipe. So while you're drilling if you don't have somethin' heavy down there you gonna wiggle like that, you know. And call that a bottom hole [sampling?]. [Pause] And uh, sometimes you [lose/move?] it in a hole and then what I've have to do is set a, a cement plug about 200 feet. And then they'd go back and when they'd go back to drill, when they'd hit the cement plug they'd slide [over the plug?]. And you'd lose all that bottom [hole?], then the hole will stay forever there. [Inaudible]. All kinds of stuff happened.

SW: When they were drilling and they had that hole [Inaudible] casing, you put the cement inside the-

JJ: Well you see you drill, okay, okay. Say you, say you had a casing [job 10 and three-quarters at 10,000 feet?]. Your hole, 10 and three-quarters, say your hole is about 13 inch wide. Thirteen inches circumference, diameter. So you, you run that ca-, 10 and three-quarters casing in there. Then you mix the cement. The cement goes in all, fill up all the pipe. But then you had a plug. You drop a plug, then you close that plug and pump mud. You pump mud in that, in that, that plug, that cement plug would wax the pipe, [wipe/wax?] the, the, the casing and push the cement down where get it at the bottom of the hole, the cement would come on the side of the casing. In the hole.

SW: At the bottom, yeah.

JJ: And then you stay about 24 hours there 'til it set good, then you let it, you let it, you drill it deeper.

SW: I see.

JJ: And then when you drill, say you, you drilling a hole, say 15,000, 16,000 feet, well then you keep on drilling next time, next thing you, you run maybe some nine and five-eighths or seven and five-eighths casing. Set it inside the ten-, the 10 and three-quarter, and then [they're?] in the hole. Then you pump more cement and then you go inside the 10 and three-quarter casing and the nine and five-eighths. Cement.

SW: You makin' this wall.

JJ: Right.

SW: As you're goin' down? Makin' a wall of cement. So how, how, how often are you putting that cement plug down there as they goin' down?

JJ: Well you drop one plug and then you pump your casing down with mud. [Pause] As the, as you pumpin' down, mu-, the plug is [wiping?], it's got wings on it, you know, it's wax-, it's uh, the casing you know. Can't keep [the/no?] cement inside, you know. The [Inaudible] plug goes down there, when it gets to the bottom, it just comes up-

SW: Well, yeah, it forms by itself, okay.

JJ: Now you leave it there, you keep the pressure on there, keep pressure on the plug about 2,000 psi, 2,000 pounds per square inch. Until the cement gets hard. And then you, on the way you can't budge that plug. The only way you, the only way that plug, you gotta drill it out. So they go out there and drill a little further, they drill [through?] the plug.

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Then they go deeper. And sometimes, say, say you uh [Pause] say you want to save money, say you had 15,000 feet and y-, and you know you gonna have a good well. Slumberger comes out there and, and tests. They run what they call a ["liner job."?] [Pause] I'd have to show you on paper.

SW: Okay. [Pause, sound of paper being brought out] Just wri-, draw it on there.

JJ: [Drawing on paper] See the first thing you do when you start a, a hole, you might have [drive pipe?]. Might have 150 feet to 200 feet, it all depends how deep you goin'. They drive there, they, okay, that's about 30 inch. Then you come and you drill, you drill about thirty-five hundred feet, drill about thirty-five hundred feet usually. Like I say it depends how, how deep you goin'. And then you set, you set uh, uh, 30 feet and three-eighths, eighths. Thirty. Pump the cement through that son of a gun. That's open holes right here.

SW: Okay. Yeah, the casing stops here?

JJ: Right. The, the drive pipe. This is drive pipe. You don't, you don't, you don't uh, you don't uh, drill for that, you just drive it in the ground. [Makes grinding sound] Okay, now you said that thirty-five hundred feet is 10 and three-quar-, 10 and three uh, 13 and three-eighths. And then you cement down there. And when they get to the bottom right here, the cement comes all the way up on both sides.

SW: And it forms that wall?

JJ: And it forms that wall. And you keep on drilling above the plug and you keep on drilling.

SW: After this sets right here?

JJ: After this sets. So keep on drilling. You might go to 10,000. Usually you go to about 10,000 feet. [Pause] At 10 and three-quarters [Slight pause] uh, uh, casing. Then you do the same thing-

SW: You're talkin' about, when you say this, you're talkin' about the width of the casing, right?

JJ: Right. Diameter of the casing.

SW: Diameter, yeah.

JJ: It's all set inside this right here. Okay then when you cement this, you cement, the cement goes in that 10 and three-quarter. When that plug hits right there, the cement goes all the way up right here. All the way up right here. That's all, you got, you got 30 inch, you got 13 and three-eighth, you got 10 and three-quarter.

SW: The hole is getting smaller?

JJ: Smaller and smaller. Okay now [Slight pause] you drill some more then you go on to 15,000 feet. [Pause] Say you going to 15,000. Okay that's, you g-, okay, say, say the, say that Slumberger come and they shoot [coal?] and, and they test to see if they, if they got a good well. Sometime when they want to save money instead of running a, a seven, uh, seven and five-eighths a fi-, a five inch, they call it a "liner." [Pause] Let's say a five inch liner. Say they're saving money, they got a tool that they hang right here on, on the nine and five-eighths or the, or the 10 and three-quarter, or the nine and uh, sometime nine and five-eighths, sometime three-quarter. They got a tool right there. Instead of running five inch casing ALL the way, they run to where the [pay zone's?] at, they call it a "liner job." And they save money, they, they, they just run casing from, from uh, fifteen tho-, from 10,000, I don't know, ten thousand and fif-, 5,000 feet. Instead of running it all the way, they save that money, they got a tool they hook up right here. And then where the pay zone's at they cement and do the same thing, they cement it comes all on the side, that's all cemented. Now when, when you wanna, when you wanna bring the well in, Slumberger come and then they shoot bullets in there. See where the pay zone's at? They shoot bullets in there. But then they got to run tubing about uh,

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two and three-eighths tubing right here. And then, then they, they shoot p-, they shoot bullet, they shoot ca-, coal, c-, ca-, uh, bullets in that casing. And then so oil and gas well, the pressure of the gas pushes up-

SW: Yeah.

JJ: Pushes up there.

SW: At this point you were within that deposit?

JJ: Right. You in, you in, you in the pay zone. You might have a 100 feet of pay zone, you might have 200 feet, you might have 300 feet, it all depends.

SW: Okay. [Pause]

JJ: And then, when you want to bring the well in, well then when they're, after they, they, they do this, you know, that, they put a Christmas tree on top. You heard of a Christmas tree?

SW: Yeah, yeah.

JJ: And then you got, you got valves on there and then they come, well tests to come on there and see how many cubic feet of gas a day they gonna produce, how many ga-, barrels of oil a day, and all that. They all test all that and then they put it on the [trope?] you know.

SW: Yeah, they put the-

JJ: They don't want, they don't to open it all the way, because it might, you might suck too much, you might suck sand. And sometimes those holes get, those perforations get stopped up. They sand up, you know. That's when Halliburton comes and they, what they call the, they got a special tool called the RPPS B-, uh, squeeze tool. And we pump, we go down there and pump cement, just push all that trash back in the formation. [They reperforate?] and then they produce it again. Oh it's a, it's a-

SW: A "squeeze tool"? [Pause]

JJ: Ah, yes, "squeeze." [The treatment boom?]. hm, I don't know, I forgot its real name. RPPS... oh, they got all kinds of stuff.

SW: [Inaudible]

JJ: They got all kind of things that can happen.

SW: So at that point, after this they start pulling the oil up it becomes a production platform-

JJ: Well, yeah, well, they, after they finish they move the rig out of the way and then they get, they put a production platform in.

SW: Oh okay.

JJ: They might have 25, 30 wells producing all on that plat-, you know, same platform and then they put a crew on there.

SW: Yeah, and those guys-

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JJ: Production crew, they got production crew. They carry that, they watch the gauging, the pressure, and all that.

SW: 'Cause the sand gets in there and they [Inaudible, overlapping speech]-

JJ: Sand gets in there, well they put a, a workover rig on it. And they work it over. Well gets sand up or stop producing sometime we, they go down there and they, they [Inaudible], they put a small rig on there. They pull all the tubing out, oh, first they got to kill the well. They got pressure on the well. [You go with Halliburton?] [Inaudible] the largest company, you know, does the [sand/same?] work, you go down there and you pump mud. [Plug/Above?] that pressure. Push everything out, push everything back in the formation. When you shut off you, your pump like this. And you hold it awhile, after the gauges say come to zero pressure, there's no more danger, [come back?] [Inaudible]. Then you do your work, what you gotta do. Got all kinds of stuff-

SW: And they deal with the, the wax and all of those problems, too?

JJ: What?

SW: The wax-

JJ: Oh yeah, sometimes, we got [Inaudible] but it was perfora-, there's uh, paraffin wax usually in the, in the pipeline. [You get a?] pipeline and paraffin, paraffin wa-, the, that wax get in that pipeline, the oil can't go through solid [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech], yeah.

JJ: I've done that work before. I've pumped some stuff through [Inaudible] oil lines, pipelines, and it would come out like this, you know. Solid. You gotta pump five, six, seven, eight, sometimes 10,000 pound of pressure to get all, depends on what kind of pipe you got in there, the kind of pressure you [put in/go to?]. Get all that paraffin wax out of there. I've done that work before.

SW: Oh okay.

JJ: They got-

SW: Did all kind of stuff?

JJ: You got thousands of stuff that, that I-

SW: You, you worked mainly on that drilling rig?

JJ: I worked-

SW: [Inaudible, overlapping speech]

JJ: Seven-and-seven on the drilling rig. I'd work seven days on, seven days off. [Slight pause] And I'd work when you'd need me. I wasn't workin' all the time.

SW: Oh, okay.

JJ: But I had to keep the unit ready in case somethin' happened. In running condition. And after a cement job you gotta make damn sure you clean it good. 'Cause when you cement something, [Chuckling] [you don't do your job?], then you gonna get run off.

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SW: Oh so you, you were out there for seven days straight.

JJ: Right.

SW: You, you weren't working always on those seven days.

JJ: No.

SW: You were sitting there waiting for them when they needed you?

JJ: Well, we had-

SW: You had to be ready.

JJ: Some weeks I'd go, I never, I never did put the unit on.

SW: Really?

JJ: They were drilling. And some weeks I'd go, I'd stay up sometimes three days at a time. I had to take cap nak, cap naps layin' on the unit. [SW chuckles] I couldn't leave it, you know. They need me. And uh. [Pause]

SW: You, you always had to be ready?

JJ: Always had to be ready.

SW: Just in case they needed you and sometimes they didn't-

JJ: It wasn't a job for seven days workin' 12 hours a day, 12 off. You just was on 24 hour call. And sometimes I'd stay there as much as three days without goin' to sleep, but I'd get me a cat nap in between.

SW: Yeah. They'd come calling you if they needed you.

JJ: Yeah.

SW: But uh-

JJ: And some days I'd go out there and, and we, we didn't start the unit. Well, just start it to know it was working. But sometimes they drilled a lot and then they get, they get in trouble, you know. Like they did uh, they get a [hard?] goin', you know, [roust?] on there. They gotta chic-, come out the hole and then change the [speed?] every once in awhile [everyday?]. Oh it's a [Slight pause] it's an interesting job.

SW: But that made it kind of easier for you, I guess. You were-

JJ: Well, uh, overall, it was a pretty good job.

SW: Yeah. [Slight pause] What uh, when you did work, when you had to fire up the unit, how, how of-, how long would you work on, on a given day or-

JJ: On a given day, clean up and everything?

SW: Yeah.

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JJ: Well you got, let's see, you had uh, it depends. You had a casing job, that usually last b-, after you finished cleaning up and everything, about, say about six hours. [Pause] Then sometime you get some kind of job it might last all night. So it depend what kind of trouble you run into.

SW: Yeah. It was the never the same every time, right?

JJ: Never the same. Always somethin' different. You had casing jobs, you had squeeze jobs, you had pumping jobs, you had all kind of job.

SW: When you weren't uh, when you weren't sittin' on the unit takin' your cat naps, where did you normally-

JJ: Wh-, wh-, what I normally do? Play cards, watch TV, and sleep. [Laughs]

SW: So it seems to me that-

JJ: But you have to, you had to be beda-, had be damn sure you were ready. That unit was in workin' condition because if they catch you playing cards or sleeping, and your unit's not ready, well you were gone. [Pause]

SW: They would fire you?

JJ: [Chuckling] You talk about they'd run you off in a minute.

SW: Halliburton would fire you or you, were you-

JJ: Well-

SW: Working with other companies-

JJ: Well the way, the way it worked, see, we were contract, Halliburton is con-, they would contract Halliburton, you know. And if I didn't do the job right or the unit wasn't in working condition, they'd call Halliburton and they'd send you in. Then you'd get interviewed by Halliburton, and Halliburton would do the firing.

SW: Yeah, they want-

JJ: Or they, or they would suspend you for a couple of weeks without pay. Or they, or they'd bus you back, you know.

SW: To something else.

JJ: Something else. And uh, s-, sometimes, like uh, I know one guy one time cemented 10,000 feet at 10 and three-quarters in the hole. He cemented the casing, so they had move the rig and start another hole. And he got, he got run off. But they didn't run off many people, but uh, they bused back a lot.

SW: Yeah, that was sort of a punishment if you messed up? [Laughs]

JJ: Yeah. They cuttin' salary, too, you know.

SW: Oh, okay. That, that's the big punishment.

JJ: Right, yeah. Sometimes [you get/they did?] run off. And another thing when you ran a job, you had to make damn sure that you get a dry cement sample and then the water you use to mix the cement, in case, sometime you had what they call a "flash set." You get some cement, you always had to use special cement, you know, where they put the powder in it. You had to, sometime, way down there, it's hot down there. And you don't want your cement to flash



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set on you, so you had what they called a ["porter."?] I forget the name of it, [that was a common name of it?]. But they'd prepare all that cement before they sent it to the rig. That's why you had to get a sample, 'cause if you get in trouble, well that sample could bail you out, you know. You bring it to the lab and test it. The heat down there at so many feet and then the fault would be on the man, the people that was makin' the cement.

SW: Oh, so you were doin' that to, to cover yourself.

JJ: Oh, yeah, you had, better have a sample of water. And a lot of rigs go on, you got one water line comin', you got 10 barrels tank, you got 20 bar-, 10 barrels of this size, 10 barrels of water this size. And when, when, when you, when you finish with 10 barrels you, it switch. Then you open your [vile?] and then fill that up. When that would be over, [Inaudible] be dry, you'd switch over, and then fill this up. And [Slight pause] okay. It happened sometime with some people, it never happened to me, but some people. Sometime you go on a rig, you had one water line comin'. See, you got fresh water and salt water. Sometime you mix cement with salt water. You took it out of the ocean, the Gulf. Make cement with. But then you gotta be, it's gotta be, you can't go too deep with that, because that's, that salt water set that cement quick.

SW: Oh, okay. Yeah, you wanted to make sure you get the plug through and it comes out and quick sets.

JJ: Yeah, yeah. You got one water line comin'. And when you fill up your, your, both of your side and your, your 20 barrels of water, you had better taste the damn water see if it was sweet water or salt water. If you use salt water, mix that with salt water when you supposed to use it with, with, with fresh water, [Laughs] you in trouble.

SW: Oh no. Okay. [Chuckles]

JJ: So how many times did I tasted that [Inaudible] to make damn sure that I wasn't mixin' with salt water. Most of the rigs had two lines: one saltwater line, one freshwater line. But some of 'em just had one. Just had a valve you got to switch from salt to fresh.

SW: You had to be careful.

JJ: You had, ohhh, you got to be on the ball. You could be in trouble.

SW: So there was a lot of, a lot of down time and then, then intense periods of work, where you had to be real careful what you were doing and really pay attention.

JJ: And a lot of it, that stuff right there, you have a lot of [patience?]. Before you, before you mix cement [Slight pause] okay, cement, it, see, you have uh, uh... they tell you, "I wanna, cement gotta be mixed at fifteen point six pounds per gallon." You understand what I'm sayin'?

SW: Yeah.

JJ: You mix cement. And each gal-, you had scales, you know. Get like, they was always measuring it, they was always weighing it. As you mix the cement. You want fifteen point six pounds per gallon. So that means every gallon of cement mixed with that water had to weight fifteen point six pounds. And then they'd have a scale and they'd check. And sometime, you know, it'd go a little above, a little under. But just so you, you, you had, you were pretty close, they never say nothin'. But sometime they'd take these, say you come uh, 14 pounds. So you had to watch, you had to cut down on the water or sometimes the cement, you'd have trouble feeding the cement. The rigs gotta give you the cement. And sometimes the lines, uh, cement wouldn't drop good and things like that. You had to be, oh, you had to be careful. Shut down your water, less water. 'Cause it had to be, sometime you had to make sixteen point, sixteen point two pounds of cement per gallon. Oh they had, I could, man.

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SW: And then you mix the, you mixed up a block of it at a time and put it in the hole?

JJ: Oh no, no. It's loose cement. It's all-

SW: It's all loose, okay.

JJ: Oh, it's all in uh, there's the blender right there. The cement come and you lookin' at it right here. And you got all your valve and everything. And you watchin' that cement and that things over here doin' [Inaudible]. And they'd leave that there and go to the rig, flow in the hole.

SW: Straight in the hole, okay. And then the mud after that.

JJ: Well the mud, you push the cement in place with the mud.

SW: Yeah. [Pause] When you guys were uh, were playing cards, y'all, y'all played Bourre or what kind of card games-

JJ: Well, no we, well sometime we play Bourre, but sometime we play a game called Pinochle.

SW: Pinochle, yeah.

JJ: It's a very, very good game. [Pause]

SW: Was there a lot of uh, gambling that went on?

JJ: No, we [Pause] not much money. We play sometime like uh, a penny a point.

SW: Oh okay.

JJ: You never, you win a game you need 500 points. You know how to play Pinochle?

SW: I played it once. Uh, I know how to play Bourre.

JJ: Oh, alright.

SW: Everybody around-

JJ: Everybody knows Bourre in south Louisiana.

SW: Yeah. But uh, no, I, I've played Pinochle only one or a couple of times, I'm not too familiar with it.

JJ: Oh it's a very good game.

SW: You-

JJ: You got 80 cards. We, we use only the aces, the kings, the queens, the jacks, and the 10s. The ace, the king [Slight pause] and uh, the 10 is what counts. [Pause] Ace, king, queen. It's 10 points with uh, they're one point apiece. And after, after you show all your melds and all that, you lay down how many melds you got, if you got a run or you got a run and a roundhouse and you got all that. Lot of things. Say you bit uh, 80 points and you lay down uh, 50 meld, so you have to make sure you, then after that, you pick up your card and play like Bourre. Then you have [Inaudible] you bid 80, you have 50 there, so had to make sure you [pull?] 30 points. If you didn't have 30 points, well then you'd [Inaudible].

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SW: That's a-

JJ: We play it, that's what we play a lot. Somethin' like a penny a point. It wasn't, there was no big gamblin'.

SW: Didn't see much of that out there?

JJ: Some of those rigs wouldn't allow you to gamble at all.

SW: Ah, okay.

JJ: You could play for fun, you know.

SW: But they didn't want-

JJ: No, some rigs, no, no. Some rigs wouldn't allow you to gamble at all. Because, you know, some people would lose some money and get mad and, you know.

SW: And create problems.

JJ: Yeah, create problems. Some rigs you couldn't even, you could gamble, you could uh, but not for money. They wouldn't let you gamble for money.

SW: Ah. [Pause] And the, the, the television, did y'all, you had satellite hookup or um?

JJ: Most of the rigs had satellites, yeah. But if you were WAY out in the Gulf, say about, sometime I work as far as 100 miles out. Sometimes you couldn't catch nothin'. [Pause] But we watched TV. I never watched much TV. [Phone ringing in background] Is my wife outside?

SW: She's outside, yes. Um, how many rigs did you work on all told?

JJ: Oh, I don't know. The last eight years I worked, I was contracted to, uh, Mac-, Shreveport [MacMarain?]. [Slight pause] And the different rigs, I stayed four years on the moveable 18. And I stayed, when I retired I was, I can't even tell you the name of the damn rig. [Slight pause] All I remember was painted blue. I was over there in uh, [Alvin?], Texas. [Pause] Gaa. I can't remember the name of the [company?] that rig. I work uh, I worked with different rigs, you know, for Pennzoil. But, but it's been, it's oil companies, but I'm talkin' about the name of the rigs, I mean.

SW: But you weren't-

JJ: On Penrod rigs. Penrod's a drilling outfit. [Pause]

SW: You always worked for Halliburton.

JJ: Always worked for Halliburton, but we were contracted, we were contracted.

SW: That's right, that's right. And when your job was finished on a rig, then they would move you to another one.

JJ: Well. [Pause] Not necessarily. [Slight pause] See we finished these jobs right there, say we was out here in the Vermillion Bay or uh, south, south uh, what's that damn area right there, the Vermillion Bay, whatever. Man, that's so long [I thought of?] the name of them damn place. Uh.

SW: South Bay or South Pass? [Pause]

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JJ: South Pass that's, Southwest Pass is [Inaudible] Ship shore, Eugene Island, uh, Vermillion Bay, Vermillion Block so and so, uh, oh, East Cameron, West Cameron. Okay, say I was workin' on the rig and the rig had to move, say, to Texas. [Slight pause] Well that's, I, I'd be assigned to that rig, I'd stay on that rig. Sometimes it take two days to, to, the rig to move. So I, uh, I just return the rig and we clean up and wait 'til they get on location.

SW: They, they pick up the, the supports and they-

JJ: Yeah, yeah, they, they pick those, the supports and they float 'em, and then the, they, they had three tugs that, that uh, took, pulled 'em, you know. Two tugs pulling and one in the back [Inaudible]. You know, straighten it. And them big old legs, they put 'em way up. Then the rig would fall to flat on the water. And sometime the seas would get so rough, you just have to stay there and then put the legs back down.

SW: Right-

JJ: Yeah, because them damn things would-

SW: Yeah. 'Cause if it was too high it would fall over, right. Okay. So you had, if you were, if you were assigned to a rig, you stayed on the rig, even if-

JJ: Assigned to a rig, I stayed to a rig. But I changed rigs. I, I worked 12 years in the Gulf out of uh, Intercoastal City. Before I was over there in Harvey, Venice [Inaudible]. And uh, I might've worked, in the 12 years, I might've worked about on six different rigs. I mostly stay on the same rig.

SW: Most of this uh, you started in '59, so most of this time was in the '60s and the '70s you were-

JJ: Oh yeah. It was s-, oh, the '60s, yeah. So busy. Oh! [Slight pause] You don't know how busy it was in the '60s. But then it start slowin' down in the early '80s. And they start transferrin' guys from places to place. And uh, then it picked up again. And then in '85 [Pause] they were layin' off guys that had 20 years. [Pause] But what they were doin', they were forcin', they lowered the age down to 50 years old you can retire.

SW: They were retirin'-

JJ: They were callin' 'em in and giving option. You can retire, you get a, what they call that thing.

SW: Severance pay?

JJ: Severance pay. And so many [Inaudible], give, some of 'em take it. If they worked, may-, might've got laid off with no money.

SW: Yeah, so they-

JJ: They, well that, but that, that's what happened to me. That's why I retired so early. I got scared, 'cause I had profit sharing and all that. I had a bunch of money in the stock. And I said to myself, well, they might, they might lay me off, [Inaudible] money. So I, I was 51 years old and I told my wife, I say, "I'm gettin' out of this [damn thing?]." And I took an early retirement, because I was scared of gettin' laid off.

SW: So they, they were giving you the option to retire, but they were really encouraging you to?

JJ: Well-

SW: They kind of wanted to, to get rid of some of they guys.

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JJ: I could read between the lines, you know. [That was comin'?). They had guys, I had a buddy [Inaudible]. He had 18 years, they laid him off. [Pause] No pay, no severance pay, no nothin'. He had some money in profit sharing, but he had to wait a year to collect. So we had to go, he had to get a job drivin' hot shot truck, what he could get.

SW: Yeah. But that was-

JJ: They laid off some guys. [Pause] Well what it is, you know how it is, you know. If you [Pause] they had guys, you know, that weren't exactly doin' their jobs like they're supposed to. But when they see they got a chance [to put the screws to?], well, you the first one to go. [Laughs] You know how that works.

SW: Yeah, yeah. And you guys were, were working back in the '60s, when things were busy, in the '70s. The, the pay was good?

JJ: Oh yeah.

SW: Better than most at other, other-

JJ: Oh yeah, [Inaudible, overlapping speech] there's the place I made more money than if I'd worked on land. I never had a, you can put down on there, I never had a land job in my life. [Pause] I stayed five years in the Navy. Twenty-, over 26 years offshore. But I've never worked on land in my life. Never.

SW: Always around the water, huh.

JJ: Always on the water. Today I don't even want to go by a beach. [SW laughs] I don't want to see no more water.

SW: That's it, done. [Chuckles] [Pause] Was uh, when you were working with the cement on the rigs and in the hole, um, you said you had to be careful of the cement and everything, but what about being careful so you don't get hurt?

JJ: Oh, yeah. You had to watch the pressure. 'Cause uh, you had to wa-, you had gauges, you know. You see some of that pipe you work with, I was workin' with the, this unit with, workin' pressure 10,000 pounds. [Slight pause] And you had to be careful not to go over that, because you might bust a valve and then you might get killed or kill people around you. But when you ran a job, they had a lot of people out there watching, helping you out, you know, weighing the cement and doing all kinds of stuff, you know. Giving you cement, furnishing new water, and all that, you know.

SW: You were the MSO, so you were in charge?

JJ: Right. In charge, yeah. You're damn right. Somethin' go wrong-

SW: It's on you.

JJ: All on me. Oh, I've, I've done a few goof-ups, you know. Like uh... and then the bad thing about that is if you goof-up you know first, you got to write a letter to the company you workin' for. The oil company. Then you got to write a letter to Halliburton. Say what hap-, say what happened. Then they call you in. And then you get interviewed, then, oh.

SW: [A big mess, huh?]

JJ: It happened to me about three times I had to write a letter. And they call you on the phone when I was workin' for company. Shreveport MacMarain out of New Orleans, they called, the engineer would call me. "What happened? What've you done?" Ask me some silly damn questions that I don't know. Why do I know what happened? "I got the sample, call the damn place over there." [Pause] But you w-, when you had, when you were doin' a cement job, you was [Pause] anyhow it wasn't your fault, you the one caught. [Slight pause]

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SW: What, what did you see change uh, in terms of the materials and the equipment you were working with? Was the safety-

JJ: Oh, there was improvement-

SW: From the '60s and '70s, in the '80s?

JJ: Improvement in the materials since I started working with Halliburton. A lot of improvement. Uh, better units. Better way of, of mixing cement. Oh, it all with new technology.

SW: It made the job ea-

JJ: And now, now, right now, since I retired I, Halliburton got what they call uh, c-, computerized system. You, you set your, you set your unit, say, you got to mix cement at a certain amount. Set your computer and all you do, you run the damn thing [in the well?]. It, it, it uh, if the cement don't weigh the right amount, everything shuts off. You have to uh, it's computerized now. I probably would have to go to school if I'd have to go back to work. I wouldn't know what to do.

SW: To do the same thing that you were doin' 20 years ago.

JJ: Right.

SW: As, as the things got, as the mixers got better as, as you were working out there-

JJ: Oh yeah, you got-

SW: Did it make the job easier?

JJ: Oh yeah, the job's easier, yeah. Much easier. [Pause]

SW: How did you guys get out to the rig? Did you fly in helicopters or-

JJ: Well, uh, 90 percent of the time was helicopters. When it was too rough, well you had to get on a boat. And man, it was rough on the boat. 'Course I, I would, I come out the Navy, I had my sea legs, you know. I rarely got sick. I never did, I would, I would, you know, I'd, 'cause your sea legs, you know, you didn't. But some people, man, I road on boats that was, that was rough, 'bout 10, 12 foot seas. They had people throwin' up all over the place, man. Oh! They had some people that got seasick.

SW: But you didn't, you had gone, gone to the Navy-

JJ: Oh, but I [Inaudible, overlapping speech] yeah, I had my sea legs. You know, you call that, you get your sea legs. [Slight pause] When I joined the Navy, the ship left San Francisco February of '55. And we went under the Golden Gate Bridge, was out there in the Pacific, it started to groundswell. Man. I stayed sea sick for 17 straight days 'til we got to Japan. Not sick the throwin' up and everything. Wasn't hungry, [Inaudible] take crackers, somethin' dry. And you know, you stayed out there tied up about two to three weeks. We went back to sea and, you know, aft-, I never got sick after that. I got used to it. It was like walkin' in here. [Slight pause] But I've seen guys, I've seen guys, new guys that would come out of boot camp they were assigned to the ship, you know. And we had some rough seas. They were layin' on the floor, prayin', "Oh God, help us." [SW chuckles] They had the dry heaves, you know, [Laughing] they throwin' up, it doesn't come out, though. Yeah, let me tell you.

SW: Yeah, some-

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JJ: That's a bad, you ever get sea sick? It is bad.

SW: They say it's worse to throw up and have nothing come out-

JJ: Right.

SW: Than to throw up and have something come out.

JJ: The "dry heaves" we call that, yeah. I never did get those. I was lucky. At my first trip abroad it wasn't, it's ground swelling, you know, you were going up and down like that. It means like that whole [harbor?] come up in your mouth. [SW chuckles] [Inaudible]

SW: It make you-

JJ: All I could eat, all I could eat was them old [Inaudible] crackers. But after you get, what they call, they called in the Navy, you get your sea legs, you know, you used to it. [SW chuckles] How many times I went out there, we'd go to Japan, over there go get drunk like a skunk. The next day, you had to go out at sea.

SW: It's no problem. [Pause] When you uh, on the rigs, when you uh, you weren't sleepin' or workin', what did you guys eat out there? Did they have a, a-

JJ: What we eat?

SW: A galley for everybody?

JJ: Oh yeah. The rig would feed four meals a day. We'd have breakfast, we'd have dinner, we had supper, and we had a midnight lunch. We had four meals a day. You were pretty well fed. Of course, sometimes, you know, it varies on the cooks. Some cooks cooked better than others. But overall, it was fairly good food.

SW: Was it uh-

JJ: They fed you damn good. They gave you enough to eat.

SW: Always enough. Was it the, the type of diet we have here in uh-

JJ: Oh, there ain't no diet. They just cook.

SW: No, I mean the, the Cajun diet or was it the spicy food or?

JJ: Well, yeah, it all depends where the cook came from.

SW: Meat and potatoes, or things like that.

JJ: Well, you know, over here we eat rice all the time. They had, everyday they had rice. It all depend where the cooks came from. You know, they had some from uh, up north, you know, they had some from down here, they had some from all over. They cook a little different over there, but it was all pretty good food. Oh the spicing, you know, we spiced the food.

SW: Yeah. [Pause] But most of it was pretty good stuff, huh?



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JJ: Oh yeah. [Inaudible]. In fact I say sometimes some cooks were better than others, but overall you, you had a, you had good meals. No complaints about that. Oh, you had people that complained. [SW laughs] They can't satisfy, you can't satisfy everybody.

SW: Yeah, they complain anyway, huh.

JJ: Yeah.

SW: Did you, did you guys ever work with any uh, women out there on the rigs?

JJ: Oh yeah.

SW: When did that st-

JJ: I didn't, I didn't, eh, let me remember. [Pause] I... they had four Black women that came on the rig, they were roustabouts. There wasn't no roughneckin'. Roustabout is doing odd jobs, you know, clean the rig, unloading boats, and all that, you know. They had four Black women, the first time I seen women on the rig, they had four Black women on one rig. But they had, they, they had their own quarters, separate quarters. And they never, they never had no problems.

SW: When was that?

JJ: Huh?

SW: Do you remember the year?

JJ: Oh, let me think. [Pause] In the late '70s.

SW: Late '70?

JJ: Oh yeah.

SW: But you never saw anything like that before?

JJ: Early '80s. Late '70s they start coming in. Start. And they had some White women [doing some rigs?]. But uh, tell you the truth, uh, some of 'em didn't stay long. Because, let me tell you, uh, them, they, they didn't take no pity on them women. No, they had their work. They wanted to work, [Chuckling] they had to do the work like a man. They didn't get no uh... you know, what you call it? Uh... special treat.

SW: There's no discrimination, they had to work like everybody else.

JJ: No discrimination, you wor-, you wanted to be a roustabout? You gonna work your 12 hours. And you gonna get dirty, just like all the others. But some of 'em were tough, man. Some of 'em would stay, but some, a lot of 'em quit.

SW: A lot, a lot of 'em quit?

JJ: Oh yeah. [Slight pause] Now I don't know about today, now. They might still [Inaudible], I don't know.

SW: But you didn't see that then, you didn't see that in the '60s or anything? You saw that in-

JJ: What's that?



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SW: You didn't see that in the '60s, that was in the late-

JJ: No, no, no, no. Late, late '70, early '80s they started hiring.

SW: They started coming. What about uh, you, you mentioned Black women, too. What about Black men?

JJ: Well that's the first time I seen, the first women I'd seen on the rig, they were four Black women on this rig. They were roustabouts. And they worked a good while. I tell you where they were from, they were, have you ever heard of a place called Zwolle, Louisiana?

SW: Uh huh.

JJ: That's where they were from. And they were pretty tough. They, they held their own. They, they would, they did their work. [Slight pause]

SW: What about, what about Black men? Did you see any of-

JJ: Oh, yeah. They had Black men that started comin' in the '60s.

SW: In the '60s?

JJ: Oh yeah. They didn't have many, but [Clears throat] they had. [Coughs] Excuse me. You couldn't e-, you couldn't discriminate. You, you had to hire a, hire a Black man in the '60s. Oh yeah. In the '60s they had, they didn't have many. Well, I'd say by the middle '60s.

SW: Mid '60s. [Pause] And it was sort of the same thing with them and just they had to work as hard as everybody else.

JJ: [Laughing] Oh yeah, yeah.

SW: 'Cause I've, I've heard-

JJ: They never had no, they never, I never see no problem with them, I never seen no problem with Black and White guys workin' together. [Pause] Never had, no, no arguments in that. I'VE never seen it. They mighta had some in some rigs. [Inaudible]

SW: The women, the women themselves always had separate quarters?

JJ: Yeah, they always had separate quarters.

SW: Okay. [Slight pause]

JJ: They got some of 'em even work in the galley, you know, in the kitchen.

SW: Oh okay.

JJ: They hire some when, some of 'em would come and, and, I never seen a woman cook, but a helper, you know.

SW: Oh really, so mostly-

JJ: They'd help in the kit-

