

(Tape 1 of 4)

An Oral History Tape Transcription

Of

Interviewer: Sarah Swofford

Interviewee: Mr. J. Rodger Read, Jr., and Mrs. Eudoxia "Doxi" Read

February 1, 1980

SS: Friday, February 1, 1980. My name is Sarah Swofford. I am having an oral history conversation with Mr. and Mrs. J. Roger Read, in their home at 425 Willow Lane, Baytown, Texas.

SS: Ok, Roger, let's find out a little bit about you. And first of all, could you give me your full name? What does the "J" stand for?

RR: Joseph. Joseph.

SS: Joseph Roger Read.

RR: Right.

SS: Where were you – when and where were you born?

RR: I was born in Mertens, Texas, February 3, 1907. My birthday will be Sunday.

SS: Oh, this coming Sunday?

RR: This coming Sunday.

SS: 1907. Ok, and did you say Mertens?

RR: Mertens. M-E-R-T-E-N-S. Just between Hillsborough and Corsicana.

SS: ...[Inaudible]

RR: On the Highway 22.

SS: Ok, M-E-R-T...

RR: T-E-N-S.

SS: T-E-N-S. Ok.

SS: Ok, who were your parents?

RR: My father was called Joe R. Read; in fact, I'm a junior. He was also Joseph Rodgers Read.

SS: I see.

RR: And my mother was Roxy Bennett Read. She was a Bennett before we married – before she married.

SS: And did you have brothers and sisters?

RR: Yeah, I had three brother – two brothers and two sisters. Two brothers that were older, and two sisters that younger. They ...

SS: And where did you come in the family?

RR: I was the middler.

SS: Oh, you were in the middle. Two brothers were older, you said?

RR: Yeah. Um-hmm.

SS: And the sisters were younger?

RR: Yeah.

(Tape reverberates for a few seconds)

SS: Roger, could you tell us a little bit about your life there in Mertens when you were small and going to school? What it was like living in a town like that?

RR: Well, the town I lived in was a town population of about 300 people at that particular time was a very thriving country town. In fact, they had two banks, and one large hardware store, two dry goods stores, couple of cafes, two barber shops, two lumber yards, blacksmith's shops, and gins and things like that. It was a very thriving town for its size. Of course it was a farming town, and my daddy was a – had gins and thrashers. He was a cotton buyer. Was in a farm called Reed and Davis. And, course we worked on farms, mostly. We lived in town, but we had to work on the farms: chop cotton, pick cotton, which I hated.

SS: How old were you when you did some of these things?

RR: Well, I started picking cotton going to the field when I was seven years-old. And I never had another summer off.

SS: Every summer?

RR: Every summer. I had to work.

SS: Did your brothers and sisters do this sort of thing, too?

RR: No, sisters didn't. My brothers did. We never were allowed to have a summer off. As soon as we get out of school, it meant go to work with some farmer. And my father always just told the farmer, "Take that boy out there, and put him to work, and pay him what he's worth. If he doesn't work, well, let me know." He meant it.

SS: ...[Inaudible]

SS: About – about what did they pay you? Can you remember what you made?

RR: Yeah, well, I started out, uh, working all day chopping cotton. I think I was getting six bits a day. Seventy-five cents from sunup till sundown. About 16 or 17 hours a day. And, uh ... I also drove a team of mules at a hay press when I was just a little bitty kid. And that meant walking all day long from sunup to sundown behind these mules. Round and round.

SS: Oh, in a circular ...

RR: Yeah, a circle.

SS: Oh, oh.

RR: This was a hay press, and the mules wasn't – didn't have any gasoline engines on the hay press. And the hay press plunger had to be moved backwards and forwards, you know, to pack that stuff in to make the bale. And so the mules were – did it. And you had to jump this plunger every time, because it was real long – the hay press was real long at that particular time. I drove those mules.

SS: So you walked behind the mules?

RR: Walked behind the mules all day long.

SS: Jump over the – the plunger every time you came around?

RR: Every time, yeah. Yeah. And uh, then I guess I was pretty small when I started holding sacks at the thrasher. What I'd do then was just go along with thrasher crew. My daddy owned a thrasher, and when we got to a field, well, I'd go up to the farmer and say, "Hey do you want me to hold your sacks for you?"

RR: And I'd get 10, 15 cents an hour to hold sacks. That's about the – you know to take 'em on and off of the spout. You didn't just hold the – you didn't just hold the sack there, you had to put it on this spout and take it off. The way you did that was you had a big sack with a mouth, oh, two-feet at the top wide. Which you wrapped it around this spout, and then made a tuck in it, and then you had a clip up here, and you clipped it down on there on that spout, and when you got a bushel-and-a-half in there, you took it off and put another – you had another one on the spout divided. So you'd click this shoot, which was a divider. And later on I drove the thrasher truck, and later on I got promoted to the top of the thrasher separator.

SS: That was a good job, was it?

RR: Oh, great.

SS: To be at the top of the thrasher? (Laughs)

RR: Yeah, it wasn't but a hundred and – that was metal, and you had to be out in the hot sun all day long. So you – top of that, you couldn't put your hand down on it cause you'd burn your hand. And you had to stand up there on that all day long; that dust and chaff and stuff blowing in your face. But ...

SS: Were you glad when school started? After a summer like that?

RR: Yeah, I was glad when school started, but I was glad when it was out.

SS: Yeah.

RR: I think this is one reason we were glad because they worked the tar out of us. (Laughs) Didn't give a chance, you know, to ...

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: They wanted us to get in to the field.

SS: Well, you didn't have much problem with juvenile delinquency there, I suppose? If the kids worked.

RR: Well, we didn't know anything about juvenile delinquency in that day. They, you know, everybody just was at – it was a town, we had our own school, had our own – as I grew older, I played baseball on the high school team. Then I was one of the two boys that made the town team. You know, every small town had a town team

SS: Oh, really?

RR: and a high school team. And I guess the ultimate was to make the town team. Cause these were our idols. We didn't know anything about radio and T.V., so outside of our community and the people that played there, you didn't know much about anything or anybody else. And ...

SS: That was your whole world, really.

RR: Yeah, these men were my idol. And, uh ... so I, my ultimate goal was to make the town team, which I made my last year in high school. And there were only two high school boys that made it. And – course playing ball, I kept my glove fastened onto my belt all the time, and where you had two boys together, there you had a scrub game going.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: You know, you just kept your glove on your belt.

SS: Just in case ...

RR: Yeah, just in case, and ...

SS: ... you got the opportunity to play a little.

RR: Yeah, we'd have about, uh, we'd make up enough money to get one baseball, and that had to last us pretty well the whole summer; that one baseball. I learned how to sew baseball – the cover on baseballs. When they'd – the old ground up there would tear 'em all to pieces, and we'd sew 'em up. And then ...

SS: So they weren't gone when they split open, you'd just sew them back up, and ...

RR: We sewed 'em up.

SS: ... turned it over.

RR: Sewed 'em up, and then when they wore the cover completely off, well we took the cover off and sewed the treads. You know, the wrappings in there. And sewed that, and sometime it look like a mud ball. We'd play in the mud, you know? And it'd look like a mud ball. But, you know, a nickel was a lot of money.

SS: Right.

RR: And a baseball cost you 75 or 80 cents. Well, that meant we had to work a whole week to get that much.

SS: So that's an investment, really.

RR: Yeah, that's right.

SS: Well, now, you mentioned to me the other day that your daddy was pretty involved in, uh, the local politics there.

RR: He was.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: He was – my daddy was, uh ... well, he was just kind of a leader in the community, and – and he was the mayor of the town at one time. And people called on him for everything. In fact, uh ... one little girl said to her mother one time, said, “Mother, who’s gonna burry people when Mr. Read dies?”

SS: (Laughs)

RR: You know, he’d preach a funeral if you wanted it.

SS: Oh, really?

RR: Oh, yeah. He’s been – people called on him to settle their problems. I remember one World War I Veteran died, and they said, “Who you wanna get to hold the service, and everything?”

RR: And he said, “Just get Joe Read. He’s good enough.”

SS: (Laughs)

RR: But he was a businessman.

SS: And he was willing to – to do that to help people?

RR: Yeah, I never heard my daddy complain about how much he went in my life. We went – he went night and day to help people. He solved problems, squabbles. There’s a ledger up there that’s – that my cousin has that has a lot of writing in it about my daddy. And one thing that was real amusing to me is a man that I knew, but I never knew this occurred till I saw it in this ledger just a few years ago. My daddy’s writing. Mrs. R called him, and she wanted Papa to come down because her husband and some other men were gambling at the house, and she wanted him to come down and break it up. And he did.

SS: He did? (Laughs)

RR: He went down there – he went down to this house, and it said in this ledger – I guess that’s where it got – why I write minutes up. He says in there what he’s told ‘em; what Mr. R and them said, what he told them to do; what he was gonna do if they didn’t quit, and all this kind of stuff.

SS: So he was kind of a ...

RR: Yeah, it was, it was just kind of a – oh, he was just ...

SS: ... peace officer along with a lot of other things.

RR: Yeah, he never did, uh ... I’ve seen him quell riots. I saw him quell a riot one time.

SS: uh-huh.

RR: Two Mexican factions were having a riot on a farm, and they called my daddy and said, “Joe, get out here. They’re killing each other.”

RR: I guess he was under the bed, really, cause he was scared of his shadow, this man. (Laughs) Was a distant cousin. (Laughs)

SS: The one that called him?

RR: Yeah.

SS: He was scared? (Laughs)

RR: He was scared.

(Laughter)

RR: So, Papa said, "Roger go get the car."

RR: And he went by the trunk, and he dropped his Colt automatic in his pocket. And, uh, I went by and picked up the constable, which was dead weight because the constable was likewise scared of his shadow.

SS: (Laughter?)

RR: And, uh ... we got out there, and my dad walked out – you know, and he always wore his stiff collar, tie, coat and vest. Even when he went to breakfast table. That's the way he ...

SS: Always dressed.

RR: Always was dressed when he went to – he just walked right up in the middle of these people fighting, hollering real loud.

RR: "Here! Cut that out!" Real loud.

RR: And for about 30 minutes he stood out there shaking his finger; and he never did pull his gun. And one thing I heard him say, "If I have to come out here one more time, I'm taking everyone in to town, and lock you up. I don't want to have to come out here anymore."

SS: So ...

RR: He settled that issue. Yeah?

SS: Well, you know, hearing you tell about this, and when you think back on your dad, uh – do you kind of feel like a man like that's kind of a vanishing breed? You don't – you don't really hear of people too much anymore that ...

RR: I don't know.

SS: ... that kind of man.

RR: I guess, uh ... they had to be independent then, because they didn't too much about the federal government. You didn't have – communications were poor.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: The federal – if they wanted a sidewalk built, they didn't go try to get a grant from the government to come down and build it, they just – the citizens of the town made up money. I remember one time when they made a – fixed a sidewalk from the town over to the I&GN Depot, which was a long way in that age. And they did it on a local basis; the people did it. If – you know – if somebody needed help, the people did it.

SS: Um-hmm. And they felt responsible for their own welfare ...

RR: Right.

SS: ... uh, more or less. It was up to them to see that improvements were made in the community the best.

RR: Well, they – they had this community spirit, you know. They didn't know anything about calling on a government or something like that to do something for 'em. Whatever they needed to do, they did it themselves. And this was good, because it kinda welded 'em together. They had a sense of oneness.

SS: Well, I wanted you to tell a little bit about your dad because you've been so active in politics, and ...

RR: Well, that's ...

SS: ... it sort of gives some background of where you got some of the feelings that you have about it, and ...

RR: Well ...

SS: ... and why you were interested in.

RR: Well, he was pretty outspoken, my daddy was. I mean, I never heard him use profanity or anything. But he – I grew up pretty fast in a way, because one day he just stuck his finger in my face and he said, "Now, the world does not owe you a living. You owe something to the world. And if you're not going to contribute anything, they ought to scoop the dirt on and get you out of the way. Says, "You're taking up valuable space that can be taken up by somebody that can do something."

SS: Hmm.

RR: And that was his philosophy of life. Of just – you know, that you need to contribute; need to be active. And he just taught me to be real active in things.

SS: Well, uh ... you went to school – elementary and high school – there in that town.

RR: Yeah, see the – well, I guess when I started ... I was trying to think if I started my first year in that old wooden school building, and I don't remember. I know that, uh ... I guess I did, because I got a whipping the first day. Cause, uh ...

SS: (Laughs)

RR: My dad, my brother – I was sitting with – you know those old desks used to be real long that – they're made for doubles, you know. Two ...

SS: Two, two students.

RR: Two people. You had a desk mate, what you called a desk mate.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And I was sitting between Robert and, uh, another boy that I can't recall who he was.

SS: Now, Robert's your brother?

RR: Yeah.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And the guy right in front of me, you know, and the seat had a crack right back there. You know, it folded up and then let down. It had a crack in the back, and they told me to stick that guy with a pin.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: So I sit down on that floor, and I rammed that pin. That poor boy jumped up there screaming just as loud as he could scream, and ... and boy I got whacked real good by Ms. Maddie Bryant.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: She tore me up.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: But they – Momma could hear me crying all the way across – we weren't very far from the school, but she could hear me yelling.

(Laughter)

RR: But we had a lot of fun. It was ...

SS: How did – how did parents in those days react to teachers discipline children?

RR: Boy, you – they just told 'em, just – my daddy always made the opening speech every year, which I hated to hear him speak, because one thing he always said before he got through, he said, "Now, if my kids ever need a whipping and you can't give it to 'em, send 'em home. I can."

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And I hated that part of that speech.

SS: Was this at the opening ceremonies when school opened? They used to ...

RR: Yeah, every year they'd – some ... my daddy opened the, opened the school with a speech.

SS: Uh-huh.

RR: He always did the auctioneering, you know, raising money for things. And things like that. I remember one time he was auctioning off a pie during World War I to raise money.

SS: Uh-huh.

RR: And, uh, I think he had about five or 10 dollars on it. You know, and he had it up like this. He said, "Going one time, going twice, three times."

RR: And about that time it slipped, and it was merengue pie, and it hit upside down, and that merengue was just - and he scooped it up. And he said, "Now it's mixed up, it ought to be better."

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And he got 25 dollars for that pie. People just bought it for fun, you know.

SS: Uh-huh.

RR: They were real patriotic cause – during World War I – because, I know my daddy, uh ... if it's supposed to be sugarless days there wasn't any sugar. If it's supposed to be flourless days, there wasn't any flour.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: We ate ...

SS: Did without.

RR: You bet your boots.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And whatever they wanted done, he did it. He would – he had a picture of every man from that town that went to the service. And he – they did patrol work, uh, the citizens. And my daddy and another man would go out, and they would patrol with guns.

SS: Oh, really?

RR: Yeah. He arrested a man one night with some nitroglycerin. He was fixing to blow up a bridge. And he said that was one time he was – he didn't know what to do. Normally he didn't mind ...

SS: uh-ha

RR: ... just flying in arresting a guy. Picking him up and say, "Come one, let's go."

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: But he said this guy said, "I'll throw this nitroglycerin down."

RR: So he took him over to gin, sit down the gin, uh, office porch.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Talked to him nearly daylight, and told him a lie. He said, "There's a – we got a man on that railroad bridge down there."

RR: He said, "He'll shoot you, and he'll kill you so quick you won't know what happened."

RR: He says, "You better stay away from that bridge. Now, you hit that dirt road, and don't you look back."

RR: He left. Left his nitroglycerin, too. Daddy said he didn't know what to do with it.

SS: Yeah. Well, he probably was not representing anybody but himself.

RR: Yeah. That's right.

SS: He was just a ... a coot somehow that was – wanted to get some attention, I guess. That was probably the best way to handle something like that, anyway.

RR: Um-hmm.

SS: Well, uh ... after you finished high school, then, did you – what did you do then?

RR: Well, when I finished high school, I went to junior college, Hillsborough Junior College.

SS: And how far was Hillsborough from there?

RR: About 13 miles. About 15 miles at that time, because the roads were so crooked. Now it's about 13 miles straight away.

SS: Yeah.

RR: On the Highway 22. It's due west from Mertens.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And, uh ... I was offered a scholarship, athletic scholarship to go to Meridian College. Meridian was a Methodist School over at Meridian.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And, um, they had one of the best baseball teams in the country at that time. And, uh... Well, I wasn't offered that till the next year. I kind of got about a year ahead of myself.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: I just went to junior college next year, and uh... I know I weighed about 118, about 125 pounds when I went up there, and I – football season rolled around. I went and asked coach, "Give me a uniform."

RR: And he looked at me, kind of grinned. And he gave me a uniform. I never had played football. See, this school, Mertens, was too small to have a football team. That's the first football I've ever really played. Except just out on the ...

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Just a bunch of kids. And I made the team that year. Next year I was, uh, quarterback.

SS: Now that was your first year that you made the team?

RR: Yeah.

SS: And then the next year you were quarterback of ...

RR: The quarterback. And I roomed, usually – the coach and I became good friends, and I usually, if we went somewhere we roomed together and everything. Man named Mark and I learned to love the man. I'd borrow his car to have dates in.

SS: Speaking of date, now, wasn't it there that you met your wife?

RR: Yeah. But I didn't meet her that year. First year. I didn't even know she existed the first year. She didn't know I existed.

DR: (Laughs)

SS: Uh ... and where – how did you meet?

RR: Well, uh, let's see – I guess this was second year, wasn't it? Second year, I think we just kind of started running around in a bunch, and I kind of – one of the boys on the football team and – he was a

track star, and football, baseball, basketball. And I participated in all those except track. I could have gone out for track, but I didn't care too much about it. But, uh ... we was running around together, and I kind of took a hanking to her.

DR: (Laughs)

RR: I guess you'd say.

SS: Ok, now we're kind of bringing her into this story, now.

RR: Yeah, she, uh ...

SS: What – what is your name, Doxi? Could you give us your full name?

RR: Eudoxia Amerson, I was ...

SS: Doxi? Now ...

DR: My name is Eudoxia.

SS: Oh, Eudoxia?

RR: Yeah.

DR: And, I – my family always called me Doxi. Unless they were mad at me, and then my mother would was calling a visiting, she might say, "Eudoxia."

SS: (Laughs)

DR: But, uh ... it was the second year we were in junior college. He was there the first year, and it's the – junior college was in high school, just as Baytown was. And Baytown ...

SS: Uh-huh.

RR: It started.

DR: ... started it in the high school. And ours was that way. And I never – I'm sure I met Roger in the hall, across the grounds, anywhere. But I never even saw him the first year. And the second year I saw him and asked who he was. And then, uh ... but I was going with somebody else. So in time, we ...

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: ... we got together.

SS: Got together.

DR: So then, I ...

SS: Now who were – who were your parents? What were their names?

DR: My parents were the Amersons. My mother was Eva, my daddy was Eugene. And my father died two years ago this next May at St. James.

SS: Oh, here in Baytown?

DR: He was here about eight years.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: Um-hmm.

SS: Your mother's name before she married was?

DR: She was a Young. My mother was Eva Young.

SS: Eva Young.

DR: Um-hmm.

SS: Well, how long did you attend, Roger, how long did you attend? At the second year, then – is that when you came to Baytown?

RR: No, no. I went – you know, I got so active in, uh s...

...[Inaudible]

RR: I got my main, my subjects all mixed up. My priorities were ...

SS: Yeah. (Laughs)

RR: ... pretty good, but not good enough, really. So I went a third year to junior college. Primarily because, I guess the third year I was there, we had about the best junior college baseball team in the state; we tied with Paris. And they wanted me to come back, and we all agreed to come back. And then there were some other people on there'd been playing three years.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And we had a pretty good football team that year, too. So I went back a third year. Got through, uh ... 1928.

SS: Um-hmm. Now, were you on your own, then? Where you, uh, supporting yourself, sending yourself to school? Or were you getting help from your parents?

RR: No, my father was – in fact that I guess goes back to the time – about the second year I was up there playing baseball against Meridian College, well this baseball coach over there was named Foster, and he really went for good baseball teams. That team could have beat Texas University any day of the week. They – in fact, they did. They beat any – nearly any school they could run up against. They had a bunch of guys that went to the big leagues. I think Ross Love was on there, and Ruel Love was on there, and Harvey Blue. These were guys that – Harvey Blue went to the New York Giants. And I played with Harvey in the summer. So this coach offered me 50 dollars a month, and room and board if I'd go over there and play. And I told my daddy about it one day at the dinner table.

RR: And he said, "Pay you to go to school? Man," he said, "I thought you had to pay to get an education. I didn't know you hired people to," you know, "to play ball."

RR: He said – and what he meant – he said, "I can tell you one thing: you can go, but I'm through with you. I mean, I'm through supporting you."

Unidentified: Um-hmm.

RR: "I don't want to be – I just can't go for this thing of paying a man to go to school. That's ridiculous."

RR: And he was very upset about it. He said, "I just, that just doesn't jive to me to pay a man to go to school to just to play ball." He said, "I thought the purpose of school's to get an education, and I thought you had to pay to get an education."

RR: Now, he said, "You can go, but don't be asking me for anything."

RR: So I went back to Hillsborough Junior College that next year instead of going to Meridian College.

SS: Well, now you told me the other day when we were talking that, uh, when you got ready to leave home that your daddy gave you some money, and ...

RR: Well, he always gave us 20 – he did at one, each time he'd give the person 25 dollars and say, "You're older." I mean, "You're old enough, you're a larger man than I am, you got just as much education as I have, now you can get out and make it. But if you get sick or something, I'll help you. Or if you need me, call on me."

RR: So Robert came on down here when he got out of school. Now, Robert went to Trinity University two years, and Baylor University one year.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And I went to Hillsborough Junior College three years.

SS: So he came ahead of you to Baytown? Your older brother, Robert?

RR: Oh, yeah, that's the reason I came down here, yeah.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: But when I got out of school, my daddy had kind of changed his tune a little bit. You know I was the last boy.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And my daddy and I, we could go sit on the creek, and just sit there. He wasn't much of a talker, but just me. And we'd just sit there, and we'd enjoy it.

DR: Um-hmm.

SS: Just being together.

RR: Being together.

DR: Um-hmm.

RR: And, uh ... time I got out, why, he was wanting me to stay home.

SS: He began to realize he was gonna miss that.

RR: Yeah.

DR: Yeah.

RR: He wanted me to stay home, so... Course there was lots of work there, you know, I'd work – I was working in a gin there. I worked in gins. One time my daddy and Mr. Jeff Davis owned two gins. Owned 'em both, but then they sold one, and I worked at this one they sold. And my daddy, being a cotton buyer, when I was working at this gin, my daddy could look at those samples that the farmers were bringing him, and he could tell me – he'd tell me at noon, he'd say, "Rogers." He always put that "S" on there.

SS: Rogers?

RR: Yeah. Which it is, really, but I knocked it off years ago. I – my sister does. I got one sister calls me Rogers.

SS: So your name really is Rogers.

...[Inaudible].

RR: Rogers, but I dropped – yeah, but I dropped that "S" off a long time ago. But my dad'd say, "I want you to, when you get back down to that gin, you go up there and get that lint and stuff off that cleaner. Those sample – it's messing up that cotton."

RR: He just looking at the samples.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: So I'd go back down there, and go up there, and take the – open the door, and clean the lint off of a screen on a cleaner.

SS: Um-hmm. Hmm.

RR: And that way I stayed – I could've gotten a job any day in the week, but I liked to work around machinery.

SS: Well, and what made you decide to come to Baytown?

RR: Well, this is a small town, and I was working in my dad's cotton office at that time. I'd quit working at the gin, was just working in the cotton office. And, uh, buying cotton. Taking down these cotton reports, you know? In the southern cotton market, in the northern cotton market, and ... I don't know. It – I guess every boy – you need to crawl out of the nest. So I wrote Robert and asked him can he get me a job? He said, "Yeah, come on down."

RR: So I thought that was good enough, you know, I thought I'd get down here, they'd make me vice president or president, and I didn't know which job I's gonna get.

DR: (Laughs) You weren't sure, but you were gonna get one or the other.

RR: (Laughs) Oh, yeah. (Laughs)

DR: (Laughs)

RR: I was sure of that. You know, I came pretty ... feeling pretty good. But when I got down here, they were hiring a lot of people. And Mr. Nad Hall was the employment agent out there, and he was pretty

gruff, you know. I go down to that gate every morning. Stand down there till around noon, you know. It was January. Strange town. Drizzled rain every day. About noon Mr. Hall would come out there say, "Y'all go on home. No jobs."

RR: Ok, go on back. Next day I'd get up and go back down there. That went on for about six days before I got a job and one day they hired me. And that's the day I showed up down there with all that paraphernalia, that beautiful jacket.

SS: Well, before we get into that, um, now what, what – this was in January, you said?

RR: Yeah. January the 26th.

SS: Of 19 ... 29?

RR: Um-hmm.

SS: You came to Baytown?

RR: Yeah.

SS: Ok. Uh, before you get into your first day at work, uh, I was interested in how you got to Baytown. You came on a train – on a ...[Inaudible].

RR: I came on the I&GN, which is now the Missouri Pacific; it ran north and south.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And I caught the I&GN train one morning. Tis drizzling rain and freezing. And I had coats and slicker – all kinds of stuff to keep warm.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And, uh... Got down to Houston, there, I felt like a dummy because everybody's running around in their shirt sleeves.

(Laughter)

RR: And I had to hang onto all that stuff.

DR: All his coats and wraps, and ...

RR: So I caught the interurban out to Baytown after I got to Houston. And I got into Hous-, I got into Baytown about, oh, 10:30-something that night. Dark as pitch. And my brother had told me to look up the track, you know. And they said it'll be flashing a light. Said to look back up the track. And I told the conductor to let me off at the San Jacinto gate. And, uh, got off at the San Jacinto gate, looked back, and I saw that light.

DR: (Laughs)

RR: Took my suitcase and all this paraphernalia, and took it up there, and... The docks manifold used to be up here back that way, which is...

SS: Now, this is called the docks? Uh ...

RR: Yeah, but it was on the inside of the fence.

SS: Oh, ok.

RR: It was on this side of Market Street.

SS: I see. Ok.

RR: But it was called docks manifold.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And, uh... I threw the suitcase and coat and stuff over the fence, and we crawled under.

DR: (Laughs)

RR: And I stayed at the pipeline manifold there, docks manifold, till, uh ... midnight, and we went home, and ... and his – he'd had the first baby. First... niece or neph.....

SS: He was already married, and – and settled?

RR: Yeah.

(End of tape)

(Tape 2 of 4)

RR: ... got home back to his place about midnight – a little after midnight – and I wanted to wake Delores up, who was a baby at that time. And, uh ... Cleo didn't want us to. (Laughs) Kind of a battle there, anyway. That was my first night – that was my first introduction to Baytown out at night. I – I guess it, um, I felt like I was just about at jumping off place.

SS: I guess you did.

RR: Yeah, I felt like I'd gone to the end of the world, really.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And, uh ... So, at uh – went down to the gate there for six days, and finally got a job where they put me in the boilermaker. I was boilermaker helper, which was about the nastiest job I think they could find because it's working on the old thermal packing coils. Then ...

SS: That's when you still had your clothes?

RR: Yeah, it's when I showed up in my, uh, Indian Navajo jacket. Well, it really was; it was an Indian Navajo jacket, and foot chord boot trousers, and nice boots, dress boots, nice new corduroy cap and nice pair of gloves. And when I came out of there at noon, I was just as black as the ace of spades. Greasy, dirty, filthy. Fact of the matter is, when I got home that night, Robert came in the bathroom and scrubbed me. Had to scrub that stuff out all off my back trying to get me so I could go to bed. I was oily. They oiled me up good the first day. Cause every time that – I was holding that frog underneath those bell caps, and every time that guy up above me – he was on the top. He had the best job.

(Laughter)

RR: And you couldn't – you'd just lay under there, too. It was about that much space. I was just laying down under there.

SS: A couple of feet?

RR: In a bubble tower.

SS: Oh.

RR: Ray knows what that is. And, uh, boy every time he'd dig one of those things off, that stuff just come running down on me. And, uh ...

SS: Well, what'd you do about your clothes?

RR: Well, I took 'em home, and I washed 'em in gasoline, and I put 'em in a tub. I mean a pot.

SS: A wash pot?

RR: One wash pot.

SS: Yeah.

RR: These old black wash pots out in the yard. And built a big fire under it. And what I didn't do was dry 'em out real good before I put 'em in there, and they got – the gasoline got warmed up and began to vaporize. And it caught on fire, and I burnt up all my clothes except that jacket. I gave that jacket to Robert, and he took it down to the plant, and put it in a naphtha line.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: Got all that stuff cleaned out by getting it in that line with that pressure on it.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And dyed it black. That was the only color he could dye it. (Laughs)

SS: Yeah.

RR: From the color it was. Anyway, it was black. I worked in the boilermakers then for – till about April of that year in those. I started in January. It rained – I worked at night. I'd work, go to work at seven in the evening, work till seven in the morning. Out in the rain working 80 feet up in the air. But it didn't bother me because I could take height then real well. Fact of the matter is, I could put a – I could put an iron beam or something like that on my shoulder, and run across a two-by-twelve just 80 feet up there. But I remember one man started across one night and froze. He got down there, and he – he was a great big fella. He got down there, and he just holding. You couldn't get him loose. You know, he froze. Looked down.

SS: He's scared.

RR: Yeah, and I told the supervisor he'd better get him down or he'd have a dead man if he didn't. He was gonna fall out of there. Said give him a job on the ground. But I stayed up in the air. Climbing around. I hadn't been in there any time before they asked me would I kind of be a group leader or

something. I don't know. I think they were fascinated because one time we marked to – we marking off and things, and I marked eight and I put that feet mark, and then I put 10 – eight feet and 10 inches, and I put ...[Inaudible]. One guy got boggle-eyed and had a dip of snuff up.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: [muffled] “Hey, you can wrote that way from college?”

SS: (Laughs)

RR: I said, “Well, junior college is about all.” You know. I said, uh – he thought I was ... you know, to him that was real educated. Now, it doesn't mean anything, really. Most people use that mark and two marks for inches, yeah.

SS: It was not that common, I guess?

RR: No, people wrote “in” or something like that. And I just wrote eight, dash, 10, two small dashes up there, I mean marks. And it really impressed him. But it wasn't any time the supervisor asked me if I'd be a group leader. Which was still 40 cents an hour. Same as everybody else. (Laughs)

SS: Did you feel like that was some good pay? I mean, were you satisfied?

RR: Forty cents an hour? Well, when I'd been working for – you know what I'd been working for, it was real good pay. And not only that, the hours were short for me.

SS: Yeah.

RR: Twelve hours a day.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: I thought this is a breeze.

SS: So you kind of liked this life down here?

RR: Well, I – you know I – well, it was all new to me, so ... The first time I had ever been in a refinery. And I was learning something, and I'd always figured if you're learning something, well, you're way ahead of the game. You can learn something whatever you're doing.

SS: Right after you came down here, Doxi, you came down to visit him some. Right?

DR: I came down to visit him the year before we married.

SS: Oh, ok.

DR: And I came on the K train to Houston. Changed over to the interurban, came out to Baytown on the interurban, Roger met me, and we walked home. He didn't have a car, Robert didn't either.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: So we walked from there, home, which was a pretty good walk on Harbor Street. And it began to rain. It wasn't raining at that time as I remember. But it began to rain, and it rained so much that they

dynamited a portion of the San Jacinto Bridge to save the rest of the bridge. And, um ... I couldn't go home for quite a few days. Not quite a few – I guess it was two or three or four.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: And then Roger took me in a borrowed car to Dayton, and I caught a train at Dayton into Houston and then home.

SS: Well, now, the other day when we were discussing this, you showed me a clipping out of the newspaper.

DR: Yes, uh-huh.

SS: About this – the Tri-Cities were isolated

RR: Um-hmm.

SS: because of this heavy rain and the bridge.

DR: We had no airport, and so there was no contact. A plane couldn't come – well, we did have a place for a plane to land, too, cause that's the way food was brought in. But we had no, uh – uh, we couldn't use, I couldn't even send a telegram to Hillsborough. They thought I was hanging onto a board and floating out in the Gulf of Mexico they were so frightened. Because I couldn't phone, couldn't send a telegram. But they did bring things in by plane.

SS: They had to fly 'em in? Is that what you said?

DR: That's the way I remember it.

RR: Yeah.

DR: That they put us in.

RR: Brought food in that way.

SS: And brought food that way.

RR: Yeah.

DR: And the groceries, see Cleo, was giving orders for her groceries at the doors. I did – in fact, I married the next year and had the same to buy groceries. The commissary that was on the grounds of the refinery, and it was very close to the back gate, now, of the refinery.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: It was just about a block over.

RR: You remember where the purchasing department used to be, don't you?

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Down in the housing addition, there?

SS: Um-hmm. ...[Inaudible]

RR: Remember? That's where it was. That was the commissary.

DR: The commissary was there. And, uh, at that time, the Seidel family running it; there was two Seidel brothers and a sister who worked there.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: And one of 'em would come to the door with his pencil and pad, and he'd ask what you wanted that day. And he'd come to your house to the back door.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: And you have him your order, and then it was brought to you. And he not only would do that, but if he wanted – if you wanted something from the hardware store or anywhere else in our part of town, he would buy that. I remember him going to the hardware store and bringing me things.

SS: But the commissary actually was operated by the Humble Company for their employees? Is that right?

DR: At that time I'm not sure the Seidel's owned it.

RR: Seidel's ran it. I'm not sure the setup.

DR: I'm not ... think that ... I don't know if it was company owned, or not.

RR: Well, let's see.

SS: Well, did other people buy from ...

RR: They built it, I'm sure.

DR: I think so.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: I think so.

RR: Um-hmm.

DR: It was called a commissary, so perhaps in the beginning they couldn't.

RR: It was built on the company property down there in that housing addition.

DR: ...[Inaudible], walk in there and get ...

SS: Now, that's – that wasn't too far from where the San Jacinto Gate is now?

RR: Oh, no.

DR: Very close to that. Very close.

RR: No, you remember it.

SS: I'm just trying to get motivated a little.

RR: It's where the purchasing department was for years.

SS: Ok, well, uh - then pretty soon after this you were married, right? This was ...

DR: The next year.

SS: Well, I believe that clipping that you showed me about the incident when they blasted the bridge and Tri-Cities were isolated was June 2, 1929?

DR: I believe so. We married June 8 of the next year.

SS: Ok. So a year later, then, you were married.

RR: Um-hmm.

SS: And, uh, where did you live when you first ...

DR: Kentucky Street.

RR: We lived on, uh ... Kentucky Street.

SS: You rented an apartment?

RR: Yeah. We rented a – it was a four apartments in one of those old two-story buildings the church bought over there.

DR: In the same block as that ...

RR: It's torn down, now.

DR: And it would have been in the same block as the Baptist church.

SS: I think I remember where those were.

DR: ...[Inaudible]

RR: There were two of 'em there side-by-side.

SS: Now, you're talking about the First Baptist Church?

RR: Yeah.

SS: So it was separate from the Baptist church?

RR: Right. Um-hmm. It's on Kentucky.

DR: First Baptist there. It was part of the school, yes, part of the school.

RR: We had an upstairs apartment, and uh, there was a man from Hillsborough that had come down here – he lived, came up here – named Herring. Weldon, wasn't it? Married, uh, his wife was named Ida. She's now married to a Cleisel, isn't it? Do you know her?

SS: Don't think so.

DR: She plays the organ at St. ...

RR: She plays the organ.

DR: ... St. Joseph's?

RR: She's a very attractive person. She was a Kadulka before she ...

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: ... came down here. Ida Kadulka. We get a Christmas card from her.

DR: They moved across the hall from us, and that was such a joy.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Never had met him.

DR: They didn't know us, but they were from our part of the world, so it was something to ...

SS: You had a contact there?

DR: Oh, yes.

RR: That's the reason I thought it was kinda ironical. He kept hearing that there was a Roger Read down here, but he never had met me. So we get married and move in this apartment; they get married and move in this apartment right across the hall from us.

SS: Well, now, you mentioned to me that, uh – well, first of all, now this is all happening in east, east Baytown?

RR: Yeah, that's right. That's east Baytown.

SS: What was known as east Baytown, and it was far along the north by Market Street? And ...

RR: Yeah.

SS: ... over to Utah? The one ...

RR: Ledger.

SS: ... Utah Street?

DR: Um-hmm.

RR: Well, no. You – it ...

DR: That's right. Because Utah's the first street of the Craven's.

RR: Yeah.

DR: That's right.

RR: That was Ledger. Called Ledger Addition.

SS: It was the Ledger Addition.

RR: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

SS: Ok. And then, uh, on the bay, I guess, on the south. Ledger Addition was Carolina and Maryland?

DR: Um-hmm.

SS: Ok, so this is all in east Baytown?

RR: Yeah.

SS: Now, in this area, you said that the Humble Company owned a lot of property there?

RR: Yeah, they owned all that property that was known as east Baytown.

SS: And there were houses on part of it, and part of it, uh ...

RR: There weren't many houses over there. The Sun Oil Company – you remember – had some off of Oklahoma Street there.

SS: Well, I thought those were with houses?

DR: All of those – Michigan – all those were there. Iowa on down to the water.

RR: Well, but uh...

DR: Their just weren't houses on ...

SS: Not completely built up?

RR: Not com- ... No.

DR: There weren't many houses beyond Georgia, beyond Louisiana.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: See? But all that other part, they were kind of there.

[Cough]

...[Inaudible]

SS: Back in there near where the church was on ... Kentucky? Virginia Street?

RR: Virginia Street back in there. There weren't any houses – all that was just open land.

SS: Now is that where their ... the ...

RR: That's where we had the gardens during the Depression days. The company, uh, told the employees they could go over there and have little plots. And we – I guess that's where we had our social gatherings.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: You know ...

SS: While working the garden?

RR: That's right. It was real enjoyable.

SS: Uh-huh. And ...

RR: Everybody ...

SS: No charge? The company just ...

RR: Naw, they didn't charge us anything.

SS: ... allowed people to use this land to ...

RR: That's right. The Humble Company.

SS: ... grow food on? Did this help you get – get through the Depression? Did you ...

RR: Yeah, but if it hadn't been for Humble otherwise I wouldn't have gotten through either because I – Humble had the mortgage on my home.

SS: Oh.

RR: I'd bought my – I had bought my lot from Humble, and I had also built my house, and Humble had financed it.

SS: They did this ... during the ...

RR: And they kept cutting my payments. You know, each time I'd go to 'em and tell 'em I couldn't make it, that I just had to have some help, well they graciously cut – which they didn't have to, but ... that was a very generous thing for them to do. They just – they were hard-up, too. Everybody was hard-up.

SS: Well, they were doing this with a lot of other people, I guess, whose ...

RR: Oh, sure.

SS: ... whose mortgages they held.

RR: Right. Right.

SS: They just had to – in order to help out their employees.

RR: Right.

SS: They were willing to take a smaller payment and ...

RR: I guess this is one reason I – I do not have the same feeling toward a large company that a lot of other people do, because I realized had it been a real small company, they would have had folded just like a lot of other companies, and I'd been left without anything. So I say I don't have anything against large companies because large companies are not money-making things. They plow back their money into business.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: The money is distributed immediately. It isn't five or 10 men getting to be multibillionaires. It's not four or five people sitting around an old table in New York getting rich, it – it's everybody is involved in it.

SS: And as a result, the whole community benefits.

RR: Well, this whole community grew as a result of Humble when you put it down to the nitty-gritty.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: If you want to just put it down to brass tacks and get to the basics. There wouldn't be any Baytown at all, if it – had it not been for Humble, probably.

SS: Well, what were some of the services that you can remember that the company – you mentioned that they did help.

RR: Well, they gave, uh – I know they gave the churches lots to build on, and I know they gave the schools lots to build on over there in east Baytown. In that part of town.

SS: Which churches specifically? Uh ...

RR: Oh, Baptist – First Baptist Church benefitted greatly, and I know the other churches did, too. Cause they didn't try to – they wanted ...

DR: There was a Methodist Church over there, uh, by that Baptist church.

RR: Right.

DR: Was – did they get that land? Did the company give 'em that?

RR: Oh, I'm sure they did.

SS: Hmm. I bet so.

DR: Everything.

RR: I couldn't say, but I would be willing to – you know I wouldn't. I'd have to check. You could check, but I'm pretty sure that – my understanding back in those days were that if a church needed some land, they would give it to 'em.

DR: That St. Mark's Methodist Church used to be at the corner of Georgia and Louisiana.

SS: Yes, I remember.

RR: Yeah.

DR: Before it moved to Oklahoma.

SS: We attended services there when we first came.

DR: That's where I joined when I came to Baytown, and I'm pretty sure they gave that lot.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: I – I remember one incident where we were, when Mr. Powell was superintendent out there. We were paying on a lot. And – I don't know how they found out; maybe they were down there having a meeting or something or talking and Mr. Powell found out we were paying on that lot.

DR: First Baptist.

RR: First Baptist. The church.

DR: ...[Inaudible]

RR: He told Mr. Jones and them, said, "Go get the papers on that lot," and everything, "no – no more payments." That's it.

DR: It was the property.

RR: Said it ...

SS: Oh, for the property of the church?

RR: Yeah. Said, "That's right." Said, "No more payments."

DR: We wouldn't have afforded some of the hospital, per say, if the company hadn't given us so much property.

RR: Well, the company, yeah. (Laughs) The company – if I remember it correctly – I wouldn't say for sure, but I think it was about 750,000, wasn't it?

DR: A large amount to start San Jacinto Hospital.

RR: They've been a very generous ...

RR: In fact, large companies can do a lot for people in the – first place, you have to remember their benefits are so much better.

SS: Yeah, that's true.

RR: Yeah.

SS: Well, um – another thing you mentioned in our talking the other day was at one time there was a strike threatened.

RR: Yeah, I think. I wouldn't be for sure, but I think that local was local 333 or something like that that threatened to strike. Which evidently was called off. Didn't materialize. But it was threatened, and the company was beginning to move things in to set up shop. And I'd already contacted all the people in the crude evaluations see how many would ... work. I had one question: if they strike, do you want to work? And will you work?

DR: Will you stay in? I packed his suitcase so he could stay in?

SS: Oh, so he would stay inside the refinery?

RR: Yeah, we were going to stay inside the refinery.

(Inaudible chatter in background.)

RR: I'm real glad it didn't, because ...

SS: Well, the people got a little bit excited about this in the community? What ...

DR: Well, they brought in cots ...

RR: Brought in these ...

DR: ... and supplied them for the people – these hoods to live in who were going to ...

RR: Yeah. We were gonna stay on the job. They were, had – we had cots down there. We were gonna have cots, and we had places we could sleep, and they were gonna feed us. And, uh, we were just gonna go ahead and operate. Now...

SS: About when was this? Uh ...

RR: Well, it seemed to me like it was in the '30's, wasn't it?

DR: It wasn't much afterwards.

RR: It wasn't much later than that. Sometime in the 30's, I just ...

DR: We were still living over there on Virginia street

RR: ... I know the news – I know the Baytown Sun papers would have a big write-ups about it.

RR: There were always big people in to drive over.

RR: I live next door to Bill Melican, who was the President of the Federation. It wasn't anything unusual for me to see these goons that they had imported here from, uh ... into Houston or somewhere. People I didn't know.

DR: Out of town people and anybody.

RR: Out of town people. And they'd be pointing, you know.

DR: To his house.

RR: Bill's house – to his house.

SS: Cause they would have seen to the picket lines.

RR: Made you feel a little bit uneasy.

SS: Hmm.

RR: Afraid that something might happen. But I was glad they didn't because I don't – I think strikes in general really create a lot of hard feelings.

SS: In the community?

RR: Yeah. You got two friends. Joe Blow goes out. Jim Jones doesn't have to; he goes ahead and works. I don't know if they ever have that same intimate feeling again.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And I think the ...

DR: It's bad.

RR: Huh?

DR: It's just bad for community relations.

RR: Yeah, I think you get along better without 'em. If you can. But I think – I like a peaceful situation a lot better.

SS: Yeah. When we talked the other day, um – you were telling me about the mosquitoes in Baytown. How bad the mosquitoes were back when you first came here.

RR: Well, when I first came here, they didn't know anything about mosquito control evidently. And they had a lot of these, what I call, old swamp mosquitoes. Saltwater mosquitoes. And they would just come in here by the droves, and you know the sky sometimes it'd just be dark, so many mosquitoes. And sometime they'd just be piled up on the streets when people – I don't know how they killed 'em, or why they died. Evidently they sprayed 'em or something, then the mosquitoes came there, and they just piled up on the streets. And when you'd work at night, it – you know summertime down here it gets real humid and sticky. And we didn't have any air conditioning then. And I'd go to get oil samples; I'd be working on the job at night. Go out and get me some oil samples off of the rack, and, uh, when I'd get back in I'd just wipe the mosquitoes off my arms. You know, I'd just wipe 'em off. And they got to where they didn't whelp me or even bother me. I didn't even feel 'em. They'd chewed me so much. I guess it was down to the bone. (Laughs)

SS: But didn't you say you finally came down with malaria?

RR: I did. Yeah, I ...

SS: And you were really sick?

RR: Oh, yeah I nearly died.

DR: 1936.

SS: 1936?

RR: Yeah. I nearly died in 1936 with malaria.

DR: There were several cases. I remember that Mrs. Royder had it at that time.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: Mrs. Royder, but ...

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: ... I forgot who else.

RR: In fact, I quit work on a Friday – on a Friday, and I caught a game of baseball that afternoon, but I knew that I just didn't – I didn't get anything out of the game; I didn't feel good.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: I felt so bad. And the next day was Saturday, and we walked to town to get groceries. And started back home, and I couldn't make it; they had to carry me. Somebody ...

DR: He stopped at some home, and got somebody to take him home.

RR: Yeah, somebody had to take me home. But I nearly died.

SS: Now, how did they take care of you during this time? You didn't stay at your house like ...

RR: Yeah, I did. I stayed to the – stayed at the house, and Mrs. Sands, Velma and Elma Lee's mother, came over and sat up with me. She didn't sit. I guess she had to sit most of the time, though.

DR: Stayed two nights.

RR: We didn't have a bed for her.

DR: First night she slept on the floor and watched him.

RR: Slept – she'd sleep on the floor.

DR: He acted like he was so sick he couldn't lie down, then we put him in Dr. – Dr. Herbert Duke's little ... clinic that was on the corner.

RR: Two-room ... two-room clinic.

DR: Where Matherne's is now. Little white – they converted a little white house into a clinic. He had two rooms he took patients.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: And he had his own waiting room.

RR: I think the main thing they were doing was pouring quinine down me. Wasn't it?

DR: I don't know.

RR: They'd give – I'd take as much ...

DR: They had a nurse or someone there around the clock to look after him ...

RR: Well, they did.

DR: ... at the clinic.

RR: Ms. May Spencer, who is – lives out here around Cedar Bayou, doesn't she?

DR: She's Claudia Spencer, now. She used ...

RR: Claudia?

DR: Claudia.

RR: Oh.

DR: She was a nurse for Dr. Duke.

RR: She waited – she was there. I remember her. Anyway, that's when a Louise Platt got brought into the hospital one night, and I kept ringing that bell, you know, but I was just – that quinine makes you kind of out of your head, too, and it – I'd just keep looking up and hear somebody that I knew from First

Baptist Church. Louise went there, and Odessa Platt came in, James Johnson's wife came in. And I said, "I'm dead, I know."

SS: (Laughs) Now, the nurses were busy...

RR: They were busy.

SS: ... taking care of emergencies.

RR: Oh, yeah. They had emergencies. She was – she was bad shape.

SS: And so, volunteers from your church would come in to look after you, then? Is that right?

RR: Yeah. Every time I rang bells, one of 'em come in, and I didn't even know why they were over there. I never thought to ask 'em.

DR: And they were there for Ms. Platts who had come on account of her.

SS: Oh, I see.

DR: Inaudible chatter

RR: They were over there to – because of Louis. Everybody – they were, Louise's sister-in-law, and James Johnson's wife were real close to the Platts. And they were just – they were kind of a close family, anyway. A close group, anyway. So they were all in there. Every time I'd ring the bell, here they'd come. I couldn't figure it out. It had me.

SS: How long did it take you to recover so that you could go back to work?

RR: No ... I don't know. A long time.

DR: It could've been weeks.

SS: Two, three months, maybe?

RR: Oh, yeah.

DR: He was awful sick.

RR: I was ... I looked like a skeleton.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: I was ...

SS: Well, they didn't really have much in the way of drugs to treat nothing like this, and ...

DR: And no antibiotics. No antibiotics.

RR: No, it's ...

SS: Just quinine, probably, and...

RR: I know Fred ...

SS: ... rest.

RR: ... Fred Hartman had an article in the paper about it that time. And, uh ... I don't know what all he said, but he was kind of glad that I was making it through there. Something about he – he used his baseball lingo to relate to my sickness.

SS: Well, you could understand that, too ...

RR: Yeah, I could understand it.

SS: ... being a baseball man.

RR: Yeah.

SS: What about the interurban? Now, you mentioned that you caught the interurban to come out here. Um ...

RR: Yeah, the interurban ran from Houston to Goose Creek.

DR: And Union Depot.

RR: Union – went into Union Depot.

SS: Union Depot?

RR: When we wanted to go to Houston, that's where we'd go. Go down there and catch the interurban, and – course they had a depot down in what we called old Baytown.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: On Harbor Street.

RR: And we'd go down there and catch the ...

SS: Was it on Harbor Street?

RR: Yeah. Go down there and catch that interurban out to – remember the guy that was down there, old Cotton Powers, was Depot Agent down there.

SS: Hmm.

RR: Get us a ticket, and coming back we'd go to sleep until this conductor'd wake us up.

SS: Well, now, this interurban: was this the only depot they had in this area, then? There wasn't one over in Goose Creek also? If anyone over there wanted to catch the interurban...

DR: That's getting to the river.

SS: ... over there? Well ...

RR: Yeah, there was another – you remember just across the street, there's – see, there's a – was a big depot over there, but there's another depot was back that way a little bit where the interurban went in. That interurban used to go to ... all over the ...

DR: It made several stops, then.

RR: Yeah, that's right.

SS: And did it go to Highlands?

RR: Yeah, went right through Highlands.

DR: I don't know whether they had a depot or not, but it stopped.

SS: It stopped in Highlands?

RR: It would stop – stop and let you on, yeah.

DR: It would stop anywhere.

SS: Oh, I see.

DR: Kind of like a bus did.

RR: It'd stop just kind of like a bus.

DR: And people would get on and off.

SS: So it really served everybody...

DR: Yeah.

SS: ...on this side of town.

RR: Yeah, and these people coming to and from work, they'd filled that thing up every day.

DR: Yeah. It'd pick people up.

RR: Oh, yeah, it was – they had a good business when I came here. There wasn't many cars.

SS: Well, you said that you didn't have a car for a while, didn't you?

RR: We didn't have a car for 15 years.

SS: That's when you came to Baytown. I guess you managed to do just fine.

RR: Yeah, for 15 years.

SS: Uh-huh. Ok, um ... let's talk a little bit about the social activities. What did you all do for entertainment?

DR: I think our entertainment was mostly centered around the church.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: We'd meet people at the church, and we'd do things at homes, but I think the church was the center of our social life.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Hardly – I thought our social life was I enjoyed what I did, and...

DR: We both taught. We had...

RR: Parties, had a lot of parties. I'd take kids on picnics or outing and things like that, and eat the hot dogs with 'em as full of sand Get a lot of san...

SS: Now, where'd you go – where'd you go for your picnics?

RR: Down at Red Hill.

SS: Red Hill?

RR: Yeah.

SS: Now, where is Red Hill?

RR: That's down there now where you got that big – coming out of the tunnel up through there toward Pelly.

DR: On that right. That little ...

RR: On the right. That little hill, there?

SS: Oh, ok.

RR: Used to not be anything down in there.

DR: By these apartments.

SS: Ok. Ok. Now this is just near the Baytown/La Porte tunnel?

RR: Yeah. That's right.

SS: And where Spur 201 and ...

RR: Yeah.

SS: And 146 come in there ...

RR: Yeah.

SS: And it makes a little Y. That land right in there?

RR: Well, you know where that Church of Christ is?

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: Well, that was part of it.

RR: That's right over across it. That was part of it.

SS: That was Red Hill?

DR: Yeah.

RR: Yeah, Red Hill.

DR: Came in off of Missouri.

RR: We used to walk down there, which was just a sandy road. Wasn't any paved streets, wasn't anything over – wasn't any houses over in that part of town at that time. I took a bunch of kids down there one night – never had been there before. They took me down there, and... Gee, I didn't know where I was going. Just a bunch of intermediate boys. And they – we cooked hotdogs. They pulled their shirts off and everything, started throwing that sand around there, and we started eating those hotdogs. I'm telling you, I never chewed so much sand in my life.

(Laughter)

RR: But I just went on with it.

SS: And there were a lot of people now that went over there for picnics?

DR: Um-hmm.

RR: Oh, yeah.

DR: There were a lot.

RR: You could – and went to battleground a lot, we went to Cedar Bayou, go swimming out there at Cedar Bayou. Take watermelons out there, and chomp watermelons.

SS: Behind the Methodist Church?

RR: Yeah, behind that Methodist Church. Then we'd go down to Evergreen, we'd go down to Hog Island.

SS: Now, I ... I'm trying to guess where Evergreen is. Uh ...

RR: Down there in the oilfield.

SS: ...[Inaudible] Evergreen today. What area ...[Inaudible]

RR: Well, I just go down there to that oilfield, and turn on that old road that used to go down to that causeway.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And at the road turn left.

SS: You're going down into Pelly, now, from where the oilfields were.

RR: Yeah.

DR: It's be right on ... right and down.

RR: Turn toward the causeway, and then you'd go down that piece – little piece, and there's a road that goes left, and you'd turn left, and you can locate Evergreen pretty well. I can locate it either from on that Tri-City Beach Road.

DR: And you can turn off Tri-City Beach Road.

RR: Come back down through there.

DR: They closed it – the Tri-City Beach part – later, but you could come the Tri-City Beach way.

RR: Yeah, I could come from Tri-City Beach.

DR: To Evergreen.

SS: There was actually some buildings there, and a dock? Right there?

RR: Oh, yeah. The – an oil company had some buildings.

SS: Docks.

RR: Some oil company had some homes in there. And they had a pier, a nice pier built out there. And the water was good.

SS: And people would go ...[Inaudible].

RR: We'd go down there and crab, and catch a lot of crabs. Course the first time her folks came down here, some of her relatives to visit us – not the first time they came, but some of her relatives they'd come down here, and we'd fix crabs for 'em. Nobody ate 'em. We didn't know why till we found out you're supposed to clean 'em before you cook 'em.

SS: (Laughs)

DR: We didn't know we had to take that

(Laughter)

DR: We didn't – we just cooked 'em. We cooked 'em lock, stock and barrel.

(Laughter)

DR: Yeah, we boiled 'em; we boiled 'em from our table.

RR: Nobody wanted any. Couldn't figure it out. It was funny. But we used to get down there fishing. We did a lot of ...

SS: This is not really a public park or anything. It's just an area where a lot of people ...

RR: Yeah, that's right.

SS: ... were allowed to swim.

RR: Yeah.

SS: Whoever owned the property didn't ...

RR: Well, I think it must have ... oiler.

DR: Well they had this building where I think they had cokes and food or something.

RR: Did they?

DR: They had these big old house.

SS: Kind of ... concession stand?

RR: No, I don't remember that one. Evergreen used to be about one of the big attractions when I first came down here. Then Hog Island, we'd go swimming down there. And, uh ...

DR: Well, it could have had draperies I mean, where you could dress for swimming, you know, like a pool.

SS: Oh, it was a main house that they ... uh-huh.

DR: Something of that type of thing.

RR: I – I used to fish right about where the tunnel is right now. Back in that way. I caught a five-pound red in there one day.

SS: Oh, really?

RR: Yeah.

SS: How about that?

RR: There was a lot of good fishing back in those days. And, uh ... We did a lot of things. We were young, and had a lot of vim and vitality.

SS: Of all the areas in Baytown, or I guess, where there're houses, now, were actually just like being in the country?

RR: Yeah, that's right.

SS: You know, just open prairie and maybe wooded ...

RR: Well, that's what I say. Like, when I used to pick those boys up at Bush pier.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Man, I thought I was going a long way out. You know, they didn't pave roads down there or anything. When I went out there and went from house to house and picked up the boys. Man, that was pretty good piece to go out and pick the boys up.

SS: It'd be Earhart Drive. Right there from old Baytown.

RR: Yeah, that's right. Out there, hard to drive. Wasn't any paved roads. Just an old dirt road. And it seemed like a long way. And that fence to the refinery didn't go up to there, either.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: It's like going to Shiloh out there inside of I-10.

SS: Um-hmm. Did you go out there?

RR: Yeah, I used to go out there every Sunday afternoon.

SS: Oh, really? For ...

RR: Services.

SS: Oh, church services.

RR: They just got their little ol' country church. We'd go out there and – we got a Sunday school in ours, and that afternoon we'd go out there and have Sunday school for them. Church service and everything.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Cause they were so small, and they had a little ol' wooden building out there. The wood building is still there. It's behind that brick building.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And it – I remember I was telling you about it but then your mike died then. [31:33]

(End of tape)

(Tape 3 of 4)

SS: Friday, February 15, 1980. My name is Sarah Swofford. This is volume two of an oral history conversation with Mr. and Mrs. J. Roger Read, in their home at 425 Willow Lane, Baytown, Texas.

SS: Well, Roger, when we finished with volume two the other day, we ran out of tape, and you were telling me about going with some friends out to Shiloh Baptist Church. And some comments they had made.

RR: Yeah, this was Virginia Anne White sons and Mary Larkins. And they talking about how far it seemed from how it used to seem from Shiloh to Baytown.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And there wasn't any good roads, and we had to make a lot of turns, and U-turns, and 90-degree turns and everything else to get out there. We just kind of went meandering out to the pastures, I think. And we were just laughing about how far it seemed out there and back.

SS: Was it like nowhere?

RR: Years ago. Yeah, it was ...

SS: Like going across the county almost. And ...

RR: Yeah, it was just like being lost somewhere (laughs) nearby. We – seemed like it was a long piece out there. Now it doesn't seem long at all. Just seems like it's ...

SS: Probably.

RR: ... a stone's throw.

SS: You probably drive out there in 10 minutes, now.

RR: I can drive out there – I can get to Shiloh now quicker from my house than I can get over to the original Baytown.

SS: Go out to I-10?

RR: Go out to I-10, go out I-10, I can get out there in ... a lot quicker.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Faster.

SS: Well, I guess that's progress. (Laughs)

RR: Yeah, it is.

SS: Um...

RR: But you have to ...

SS: You – the other day when we talked you had mentioned about the water district in Baytown. That it was the only governing body that east Baytown, or that Baytown had that ... community?

RR: Yeah, there's east Baytown – what they called east Baytown that – east Baytown was across Market Street. What was below Market Street or north – seems below, but it was north. What was north of Market Street was considered old Baytown. Then there were a couple of streets: Caroline Street, and Maryland Street were behind east Baytown. That was called Ledger Addition, L-E-D-G-E-R, Ledger Addition.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: They had their own water district there.

SS: Just those?

RR: But they just had a fresh water district. Ed Smith was on that.

SS: And what was that called? Do you remember which water district that was?

RR: It was number two.

SS: Water district two.

RR: Yeah. It was number two.

SS: Well, let's talk about the water district in Baytown, in east Baytown.

RR: Well ... Humble ...

SS: Just when it started, and how?

RR: The Humble Company developed what was originally east Baytown, which included the streets down to New Jersey Street. And they furnished the water, and they furnished the sewage plant. East Baytown, when I got on the board in 1946, did not have a water well, they did not have a sewage treating plant. And ... I guess that progress, and the fact that Humble Company was furnishing their water and furnishing them all their facilities, just – they just kind of eased along, and let things go along without any real progress. In my books. I think they did build a fire station during that time. And I think

this started back there in the '20's, even before I came to Baytown in 1929. At least this is what Grover Edge remembers. It ...

SS: Ok.

RR: And he says that he thinks it was about '25 or '26 that they formed the WC&ID number seven. WC&ID stands for Water Control Improvement District. And the only authority they had was to enforce sanitation conditions. They had no other authority.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And east Baytown was an unincorporated town. So we had no zoning ordinances. And we had police protection. And our streets were really maintained by the county. I don't know if you knew that or not.

SS: No, I guess I didn't.

RR: Yeah, they were maintained by the county. And we were always pushing 'em to fix a street here, and fix a street there.

SS: Well, what about those paved alley ways? I always heard that the Humble Company ...

RR: Humble Company put those paved alleys in there when they developed that addition. In fact I ...

SS: Did the county maintain those? Or was that ...

RR: No, nobody maintained those particularly. They – I don't know if you can get up and down those alleys now or not. I haven't tried in a good many years. There's some of 'em that are still there in pretty good shape. Most of 'em I think have broken up and caved in, and just about disappeared. So I don't think they're any good. But in 1946 – I guess I came here in '29 – I didn't pay too much attention. We were – I had plenty of water to drink. Heh.

SS: That's what ...[Inaudible].

RR: Everything else seemed pretty well. Fact of the matter is, sometime we had too much water in the streets.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: If you'll recall, we had a lot of flooding in that part of town. We had – sometime we'd have – I'd wade water up to my hips in the streets. We had no very good – the drainage wasn't too good. The storm sewers, or – we had quick sand in spots. And when I got on the water board, we began to have a lot of trouble with quick sand. Mr. Fortney and I – W.H. Fortney and I – were elected to the water board about 19 ... the latter part of '45, or the early part of '46. That's the best I can calculate. I didn't keep dates back then.

SS: But you were elected? That's what you chose....

RR: We were elected on a write-in campaign. In fact a man came to me and asked me would I serve if they could get me elected? And I said, "Yeah, although I don't have any quarrel with the guys that are on there."

RR: They suit me alright, I don't, I'm not fussing about it, and I'm not gonna enter into any personalities with 'em. Cause one of 'em was my neighbor.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And I thought ...

SS: That made it a little awkward.

RR: Yeah, I thought a lot of him. He lived right across the street from me. And I thought a lot of the man. Thought a lot of the other man. And ... so I said, "I'll just leave it up to y'all, but I won't do any campaigning myself."

RR: And we were lucky.

SS: How many members did they have on that board?

RR: Well, they had president, and vice president, and secretary – five.

SS: Five.

RR: Two directors, two other members that were directors. Course we were all directors.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And then when we had our first meeting, I guess in '46 there, Fortney was elected President, and I was elected secretary. We'd just been, just gotten on the board.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And I don't claim any credit for all progress that we made during those times. Mr. Fortney was the man that ... looked around, we saw the situation, and we didn't have any water supply. Humble Company had written us a letter asking us to – and also reminding us that they had stipulated when they leased, when they started supplying east Baytown with water, that when they became able financially, they would drill their own well, and relieve Humble of the responsibility of furnishing water to that part of town. But ... seems that (laughs) you know, it just went along and when it seemed real convenient not to do anything about it, and I guess that's the way they – things stood until we got on the board. And when we looked around, we began to get these letters, and realized we didn't have anything, well, we began to initiate programs to update all the facilities, and to do something about it. And one of the first things we did was to call this group of people together and ask 'em to advise us what they wanted to do. We want to lay the cards on the table here, and tell you what the situation is. Now, if you want to sit here and not do anything, that's fine. But you tell the board what you want us to do, and we'll do it; we're your servants.

SS: This was a group of citizens that you ...

RR: Yeah, they came.

SS: To a meeting?

RR: The minutes reflect this, which the minutes you will have available to you. Some of the people that came, and some of the conversations and discussions that we had.

SS: Now these are the minutes that you're gonna give to (Sterling Library)?

RR: Yeah, I'm gonna give these minutes. I don't need 'em anymore.

SS: Oh, that's great!

RR: And they reflect a lot of discussions and a lot of meetings that tell some of the things we did, and some of the problems we had. In fact, some of 'em are confidential, but I think now I can turn 'em over to the ...

SS: Took enough time ...

RR: ... group because – yes, where we got in, fired a manager.

SS: Oh.

RR: For not doing his job.

SS: Well, so let's go back to the citizen's meeting. You were starting to tell me about the citizens? Uh ...

RR: Yeah. Yeah, we ...

SS: The citizens that you put out the problems to, and.

RR: Yeah, we laid it on the table to 'em, and they decided to call their Baytown Civic Forum. And ...

SS: That was what they were called as a group?

RR: Yeah. Citizen's group. And ... they started to have meetings themselves, then they would meet with us. We'd just put it out there that we're sitting here doing nothing, and we can't go on this way forever. You either have – you've got to make some kind of decision what you want to do. And the board is your means of getting this done. We will get it done for you, but you tell us what you want to do. And we laid out the options, and they began to – we began to get action. They began to meet with us, and tell us what they thought we ought to move out on.

SS: Well, now right at this time – up until this time, did the people, they paid for their water even though they got it from Humble? Did they pay? [11:50]

RR: Yeah, but they were paying just a minimum rate. A dollar or two a month, something like that. Flat rate. They didn't have meters, they just paid flat rates.

SS: And did they pay a sewage fee for this ...[Inaudible].

RR: Yeah, but the whole things wasn't – the whole thing involved was very small.

SS: Oh, I see.

RR: The ... they didn't – they paid for garbage, too, they just played a – the bonds they had voted to take care of a lot of things were strictly revenue bonds. That's the only kind – only income they had was revenue bonds; money from revenue bonds.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And ... the bonds were paid for by the revenue that they collected. And we also found out that a lot of people were way behind in their payments. Hadn't paid in five, six, seven months. We initiated a program to – wrote letters to everybody and that were behind, and told them we were gonna cut their water off if they didn't pay up. And we did cut some off. One business district, we cut their water off. We told 'em we was gonna cut it off if they didn't pay up, and the man wrote us a hot check. So we went over and cut his water off. He paid up pretty quick, then.

SS: I guess he did!

RR: Yeah. Anyway, we had a lot of problems, but ... no more problems than you normally have in operating city government. And – but we needed to do a lot of things: we needed to lay a lot of lines, and we needed to build a sewage plant, we needed to drill us a well. And we did subsequently drill a well over in back of the MBA there.

SS: And how did you finance this? After you told the people about the problems? Um ...

RR: Well, they – we told 'em what we needed, and they told us what we ought to be doing, and we just got with it.

SS: Did you have to have a bond election to do this? Or ...

RR: No, we could just raise rates because it was strictly being paid for by revenue bonds – I mean, revenue from the services.

SS: So that gave you enough income to make some of those improvements?

RR: Yeah, we could ... and ... not only that, but I think at that particular time we got some kind of government grant, too.

SS: Um-hmm. Now, when was this? Did this start happening pretty soon after you got on the board in '46?

RR: Yeah, all this did. All this did. Not only that, we went through the annexation by Pelly.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: We went through the de-annexation. We went through the consolidation of the three towns.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And shortened the time of the ...

SS: Well, I want to talk about that, but before we got to the consolidation, I wanted to ask you about, um ... what kind of governing? Did you have any kind of governing powers, this water district? Or ...

RR: No, only – the only authority that WC&ID had was to enforce sanitation conditions.

SS: That stayed the same throughout?

RR: That's right. That remained the same because not having a city council or anything, we could not set any ordinances, vote any ordinances, we could not have police protection. We were probably policed by the county officers, sheriff's department.

SS: And how often did you have elections for this water district? For board members?

RR: Well, it was a kind of a rotating system. I forget – I guess you had an election about every year where you put somebody on or off.

SS: Um-hmm. So you had some people going off?

RR: Yeah, some going off, some staying on, yeah.

SS: Some staying on so you have the continuation.

RR: Right. Um-hmm. Right.

SS: (Policies and things.)

RR: You didn't ... you didn't ...

SS: Ok, now what about this annexation by Pelly? This is something I had never heard about. I guess I just didn't remember that.

RR: Well, this happened I guess in '46. It – Pelly annexed us. Annexed the, what is now known as – some people refer to it as old Baytown, but it's the newest part of the Tri-Cities, really. Outside of some subdivisions that they've incorporated. And, uh ... they ... course we were an unincorporated town, and what they did, they just whammed away and annexed us.

SS: (Laughs) Before you knew what ...

RR: Annexed us to Pelly. Yeah.

SS: Before you knew what had happened.

RR: Yeah. Course they had the readings and everything, and ... when they did, well the water board filed a suit to get an injunction against, to stop the annexation proceedings. Give – make 'em de-annex us. And ...

SS: Now, why did you not want to be annexed? What objection was there to being annexed by Pelly?

RR: Well, there were a lot of objections. I guess geographically, it wasn't feasible. You had the creek between us at that time. And I guess some legal aspects of it, especially the revenue bond situation. We were informed by our lawyer that we retained – a man from Houston – that you could not, they could not take on these bonds, but since they were revenue bonds, that they had to be paid off without altering 'em. And another thing, there was a question that – could they furnish us services? You know, if – and I don't think they could. And then we got into this thing that maybe then, why, the board would just be stay as-is; the water district would stay as-is over there. But we'd be a part of Pelly, which would be a, I think, probably a disorderly arrangement.

SS: So Pelly really wasn't proposing to furnish water for Baytown.

RR: Well, they couldn't ... out of nothing ...

SS: They didn't really have the facilities, I guess, did they?

RR: Yeah. At that particular time, you know, that – I don't think we'd even drilled a well at that particular time.

SS: Really all they would be doing was – would have been collecting taxes.

RR: Well, I don't think – you know, if the Humble Company's gonna be furnishing that part of town water, I think if Pelly had annexed us, and stayed with it, I think they would really been in a bad situation. I think they'd cut the water off.

SS: Well, so, uh ... did you – were you successful in your lawsuit? That you did not want?

RR: No, we weren't successful. But I think that ... I think Pelly finally just – I think they began to talk. As you go through the minutes, if you ever take the time if you want to and sit down and read through there, and try to get the background, maybe go get it out of the newspapers, too, you'll find out that ... Pelly didn't really want us too bad, either.

SS: (Laughs) When they thought about it.

RR: Well, we had a lot of problems.

SS: Uh-huh.

RR: I mean, had – we had some sewers, storm sewers that were stopped up with quicksand. We had to build – we just built bypasses on 'em. You know, right in the middle of the street we'd go out there and build a bypass around where the thing was stopped up at. It was still the cheaper: we didn't have the money to go the other way.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: So we just put a bypass on it. And I remember we did that on Texas Avenue one time – well, it was ... later became Huggins.

SS: Oh, yeah. Um-hmm.

RR: You know.

SS: I remember.

RR: Huggins.

SS: I know where that is, yeah.

RR: And remember we had a ...

SS: It's off of Market Street there.

RR: ... had one of those storm sewers stopped up, and water coming up. And we went in there, and put a bypass in it. And, uh ...

SS: Now, when did this annexation take place? What year?

RR: Oh, I think this was – it was either the, I'd say in '46.

SS: And how long did you stay annexed? Or when did they decide to change it?

RR: We didn't stay annexed very long.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: Heh. It was only a matter of months.

SS: Just a few months?

RR: Yeah. Until they started talking consolidation. We set up a committee to start meeting with the other groups, and they began to talk ...

SS: With the other cities?

RR: Yeah, they began to talk about consolidating three towns, and put 'em all together, and call it Baytown. I guess the reason we stuck with Baytown is because Humble Oil and Refinery Company didn't want to get away from the B's.

SS: Oh!

RR: You know, they had – they had a refinery at Baltimore, Bayon, Bayway, and Baytown.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: I guess they didn't want to get away from that B. I don't know, I ...

SS: Did they really come out with the position of wanting you to keep the name of Baytown? Or was that just something that was sort of known?

RR: I think that's something that's pretty well-known.

(Laughter)

RR: But I – I don't think it made the people in the original, in east Baytown mad to keep. And a lot of people in the other places, too.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Because I think when you lived away from here, and people said, "Goose Creek," you thought about some kind of a creek with a bunch of geese running around on it, or something like that. I ...

SS: Kind of back-woods. (Laughs)

RR: Well, I had a misconception when I first came down here as to what I was coming to. I couldn't imagine what I was coming to. Goose Creek.

SS: Well, I had the same feeling. (Laughs)

RR: You know, I was coming to... But I, course I roomed with my brother in east Baytown, there, so I always lived in that part of town before I moved here to Lakewood.

SS: Well, when this talk of consolidation started, how did you personally feel? And how did the water board feel about consolidation? The water district?

RR: Well, the best thing to remember the – most of the members on the WC&ID were in favor of it. And... But we didn't endorse it as a board. But personally, I – it was well-known that I was endorsing it.

And fact of the matter is, I had people calling me, chewing me out about gonna get their taxes raised. And I had people wanting to know what I was doing to 'em, and some people even called me a traitor.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: But I never did – I always felt like I was right. I believed in it. And I didn't believe you could exist as little old small entities. I believe you have to look down the road. And I knew I wasn't after anything personal. So I had a very firm conviction that we were moving in the right direction.

SS: Uh ... well, what advantages did you see? Just that Baytown was gonna stay just like it was when you came?

RR: Well, I felt like it... To have three towns there with three little mayors, and three city councils, and all the people involved in collecting taxes and everything, it would be an awfully expensive thing to carry it along like that. I thought you ought to consolidate, put it together, have one mayor, one city council, and have the rates and everything set.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And that's more economical to the people.

SS: Really, that's the best way to provide better service for everybody is ...

RR: Well, you can look now we have a nice ...

SS: ... combine your efforts.

RR: ... we have a nice centrally-located City Hall. We have nice city facilities over there that we can – recreational center. You can just do more together than you can separately. And I thought – another thing, too – I thought if we remained as small entities, we'd always be fighting.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And all. That getting this, or that getting that, or I'm not going to do this, or I'm not going to do that.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: I just felt like that we were moving in the right direction. That – another thing I didn't feel like the people in east Baytown would've ever incorporated. That seemed to be like waving a red flag at a bull, you know, if you said anything about incorporating.

SS: They didn't like that?

RR: No, they wanted to stay like they were because our taxes were practically no city taxes, Humble Company was furnishing us water. Course they weren't particular after we consolidated, because we went ahead and – I mean, we had drilled a well prior to that, but... I think that it looked advantageous to 'em financially to remain as they were.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: But the whole thing is that during the long-haul, it would've eventually caught up with you. It's just like anything you do in life. If you – you can say, let your streets go to pot and we'll save money this

year. And don't do anything next year, and we'll save money. But eventually, you're gonna have to spend some money to fix 'em up. I mean, it's gonna catch up with you.

SS: Sure. Well, then consolidation came along in '47 and '48, really.

RR: Yeah, '47. '47.

SS: And it seems like we've been on the upgrade ever since. It's been better since.

RR: Oh, we have grown enormously since then. We weren't ... at that time, we weren't growing like we are now.

SS: Well, let's see, Roger, after ...

RR: (Coughing)

SS: ... you were on the water district board ...

RR: Yeah.

SS: ... you continued to be active in politics: local politics, county politics. How did you ...

RR: Yeah, I was active before I got on the board, though.

SS: Oh, is that right?

RR: Yeah. I was real active.

SS: How did you get involved in this?

RR: Well, I just grew up in a home – my father was Harris, was executive committee man in Hill County for 17 years. Guess I came along about that time. And when I was 21 years old, that was the earliest you could vote then. And when I became 21, I started helping my father hold elections. First year I was 21, I voted and started holding elections. I was taught to participate in politics, and I – I know there's some scandalous things happen in politics, but there's some scandalous things happening in everything.

SS: (Laughs) That's true.

RR: The more good people that participate, the less scandals we're gonna have. And I have never been involved in a scandal. And I don't intend to ever be. There gonna have to hunt pretty hard to find anything, I think. Cause I have never taken any money. In fact ... I guess I run campaigns out here for the executive committeeman in Lakewood, in Precinct 165, where I didn't probably get over five or 10 dollars. And when my bills came in, I went over and paid 'em myself.

SS: (Laughs) Oh, really?

RR: (Laughs) That's right. I've gone over and paid Matherne's. At the end of the campaign, I'd get a bill say this bill has not been paid, and my treasurers had no money, and so I'd just go over and write him a check, and pay it personally out of my own pocket. Then when I came to Baytown, I helped hold elections. And over in 149, I lived on New Jersey street, which was in precinct – well, I was in 102 to start with.

SS: Um-hmm. Now where is 102? What area does that include?

RR: Well, 102 used to be held in the old Mexican community house down there. Old Nat Hall. Most – a lot of people know Nat Hall.

SS: I remember him.

RR: Not Nat Hall, but Nat Pace.

SS: Um-hmm. I remember him.

RR: You remember Nat Pace? He was ...

SS: When we first came to Baytown.

RR: Yeah. Well, he was election judge; S.P. Larkins helped. And they held their elections down there in the old – if I remember correctly – in the Mexican community house. A lot of people don't remember it, but it was down there close toward San Jacinto Gate.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And 102 encompassed all of east Baytown. Of course there wasn't too much back that way; just a few people. And... Then when it was Baytown, that part of east Baytown increased in population, we finally created another precinct, which was 149. And it took in everything, uh ... the other side of Huggins Avenue. Huggins was the line there.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: It ran straight down through there, and took in part of the old Baytown area down there.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And ... I helped hold elections in there until Bill Melican, who was Election Judge, died. Suddenly...

(End of tape)

(Tape 4 of 4)

RR: The way I took it over is that the law says if the election judge doesn't show up for an election, that they people present at the polls on the morning of the election shall elect a judge and the election officials. And before I did that, we got into a real battle with the chairman of the Harris County democratic executive committee. It was Bob Tucker at that time. And ... they tried to appoint a judge, which I wouldn't let 'em have the election boxes, and challenged 'em. And they – it stood up. We elected the judge on the morning of an election. And had about 80 people present.

SS: Now, the judge was not there. Is that right?

RR: There wasn't any judge cause we ...

SS: Oh, there wasn't? Oh.

RR: No. There would have been if we'd of given these things to the man that Bob Tucker wanted to appoint, but ...

SS: Oh.

RR: Wouldn't let him have the boxes. This created quite a stir in the Baytown, and a lot of publicity in the Baytown Sun if you look back through those you can find it. Front page news.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And ... so I held that election. And then at the very next meeting of the Harris County Democratic Executive Committee, I was appointed as the Executive Committee Man. Now, election judge and the executive committee man does not necessarily have to be the same person. The election judge is appointed by each municipal entity, or election entity like a water authority or court commission or something like that. Whoever's holding an election can appoint whoever they want to, but by precedent and historically they normally appoint the man that is the executive committee man as the judge of election.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Or, that's something that's not quite clear in people's mind. They go down to the polls to vote, and they think they're voting for the election judge, which could – they could or could not be voting for the election judge. But they think they are, anyway. And if you're a jolly good fellow and everything, well that's about the extent of what some people think they're voting for. But you aren't.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And I found that out by talking to a political science class a couple years ago over here at Lee College.

SS: On what?

RR: I asked 'em ...

SS: They didn't know?

RR: I asked 'em what they called that person. You had all kinds of names for you.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: But I just got into politics, and it's not always easy, but I think every person should be involved in politics. And the more good people are involved, the better your politics are gonna be.

SS: Well, can you recall any particularly – I'm sure you can – particularly bitterly fought campaigns, or that stand out as ...

RR: Yeah. Oh, yeah I can remember. I could go back and talk for weeks on cou-, when we used to have the old county convention before we divided up into districts. I could go back and talk for hours upon some of the battles we had. Fist fights and everything else.

SS: Really? Fist fights? Actually? (Laughs)

RR: Yeah. They threatened to throw me out of the county convention one time. Uh ...

SS: Now, where was this held? In Houston?

RR: Houston. At the Coliseum.

SS: When was this? About when? Approximately?

RR: Oh, this was years ago. I just don't even remember dates.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Just way back when we had the county con- ...

SS: The thirties probably?

RR: Yeah. Thirties. Another fella and I were in there, and a man came up and said he wanted to pin a ... banner on me supporting a man. I said, "You needn't to, because I'm not supporting him."

RR: And he said, "We ought to," there's two or three of these men, they said, "We ought to throw you out of this convention."

RR: And our only comment was, I said, "Let's get started."

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And everybody got real quiet. Nobody made a move. And we stood there for a long time and finally everybody walked off. Everything was ...

SS: Everything was alright.

RR: ... alright. Yeah. It was pretty good. I knew they could throw me out if they wanted to, because they had the men, manpower to do it. But ... I always felt like I didn't mind battling. You know, I believe in standing up for what you believe, and being truthful about what you say. And, uh ... so ... we had other conventions where we were hassled all the morning. I remember one convention where we didn't do a darn thing all the morning, because we were hassling about seating some of the delegations. And the chairman grabbed the mic, and held onto it, and wouldn't recognize anybody, and was just battling wrangled around there all the morning and got real monotonous there.

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And we've seen walkouts, you know. You see walkouts and they go out and have a romp convention, you know.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And ... wasn't anything unusual when we'd have the test vote. The test vote could be anything; it was normally the election of the chairman. Soon as that test vote came, why, then you knew who was in the majority. Everything ran like clockwork from then on if you had the majority.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: If you didn't have the majority, well, you just – usually most people went on home or something pretty soon, because didn't, no need staying much. They was gonna pass whatever they wanted to anyway, and you wasn't gonna do anything about it. You might stop it a little bit.

SS: I've heard you say that a lot of people don't realize how important the precinct convention is ...

RR: No.

SS: ... to our system.

RR: Oh, yeah, the precinct convention – I'm right now molding the fact of having some classes prior to the convention. Precinct convention is the very starting point of government. A lot of people think that they go down and vote on a machine, they've done everything they need to do. But that isn't true. Fact of the matter is, if you don't go to your precinct convention this year, you won't have a darned thing to say about who's the nominee of the Democratic Party. You'll vote for whoever's on the machine if you vote Democratic, but you won't have anything to say about who the nominee is.

SS: You're really not in the nominating process unless you do that.

RR: That's right. This year ... this year the presidential candidates are gonna be nominated in precinct conventions. That's the starting point. Just like Maine has had their primary caucuses, and that's about all we have in the precinct convention now is the caucus. Since the quota system came into effect, why, all you have to do is ... go in and support one candidate with a group, or the other candidate with another group, or the uncommitted, or ... whatever you rally around, you can form a group, and if you have at least 15 percent of the people present in the convention, well you can get part of the votes, delegate votes. Those, in turn, in each precinct gets one vote for every 25 votes cast in the last gubernatorial election. And, that ...

SS: So it's important that you have a big turnout for your precinct then ...[Inaudible].

RR: Yeah, it's also important that if you want to get any delegate votes to be able to win when you go to the district, you better try to have more votes than anybody else in your caucus. Fact of the matter is, say you had three candidates, and you have three caucuses, and they're all split up just about evenly, well it could be very possible that everybody'd get the same number of delegate votes. Say you had nine delegate votes from your precinct. If you divide 'em up percentage wise, and you say everybody had about the same number of people in their thing. Say everybody had 10.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Had 30 people there. Each group could get three delegate votes. It – there'd be a little maneuvering when you got to the district convention. If you could try to win somebody to come over to your side and, say, un- some uncommitted delegate to come over to your side, you'd do a lot of politicking there. What they call politicking. You're asking – you're trying to get the guy to come over to your side.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Or you're also maneuvering around to make sure none of your votes are lost when you get to the district. When you get to the district, you get one delegate vote to the state convention for each 300 votes that were cast in the last gubernatorial election. For example, last year we did not have – the last district convention that we had – we did not have from precinct 165, we did not have quite 300 votes cast for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate. And when we got to the district convention, we had to be paired with another precinct to make up this 300.

SS: The 13-member cabinet?

RR: So we were paired with 28. So we get with the 28 group, and we said, "Y'all have somebody? Who do y'all want to support for a delegate?"

RR: And this particular case, they wanted me to go. Said, "You know the ropes."

RR: Well, there are other people that ought to be learning the ropes.

SS: ...[Inaudible]

RR: And I'm sure there are people that know the ropes better than I do. I'm sure of that. But I said, "Well, I hadn't anticipated going, but if that's what you want, I will go."

RR: So I will – so they all supported me. The group. Their group. And then it was a question of getting an alternate delegate. Well, Frank McChesney, who is from Precinct 28 wanted to go as – no, he had a fella that wanted to go, so we got him elected as ... as an alternate delegate. Then that fella couldn't go, and Frank finally went as an alternate.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: I mean, as a delegate, because Frank was an alternate. Got to be an alternate. Then you go to the district. When you go to the state, the state gets about 100 and ... this year I think you get 150 delegates to the national convention. And if you don't participate – and this is one reason why the machinery of a party can get into the hands of a very, very few people.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: And can be used for their advantage. And this is one reason it's so important that everybody goes to the precinct convention. If every good person went to the precinct convention, the other group would never win.

SS: Um-hmm. And it's hard for people to understand that; they don't realize that, I think.

RR: Well ...

SS: A lot of people don't.

RR: ... a lot of people, a lot of precinct conventions are poorly attended. Fact of the matter is, when you look at the percentage of the people out here that attend a precinct convention, you've got 1,700 voters out here in Precinct 165 – 1,7092, I believe it is. And about 20, or 30, or 40 percent of those people will vote on the machine, and when we get to the precinct convention, we only have 30 or 40 people there. Something like that – 40. That's such a small percentage.

SS: Representing, say how many people in this – or all the voters in this area?

RR: Well, there's 1,7092 eligible voters out here.

SS: That's a very ...[Inaudible] percentage.

RR: But they're also representing all the people out here, really. They ought to be – they're representing the people that live here that do not even qualify to vote.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: No, not even interest enough to get a registration paper. Now, our precinct's better than the average.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: But, uh ...

SS: Is there a better turnout?

RR: Yeah, that's right.

SS: At the precinct convention?

RR: Yeah.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Some precinct conventions don't try to turn many out, because they just – everybody stays away, and let's 'em have it. And it grieves me to see a person walk in there and say they had 15 there, we got all the delegate votes, so we're just here representing 'em, we're gonna cast all of our votes for Joe Blow, which is over here. And who is Joe Blow? He may not be the man that you want at all. But they're casting all the votes. I can give a lot of illustrations where a precinct conventions have been won by just... Well, we knew – I talked to one man one time about organizing, getting people to go to a precinct convention where a man was well-entrenched. The precinct committeeman was. He was well-entrenched. There wasn't need of trying to beating him on the, beat him on the machine. But I told this guy, I said, "You can beat this man in the precinct convention." I said, "Have a coffee right before the convention that night, and all of you go down in mass." And I said, "Keep it completely quiet. Don't say a word. But go by word of mouth, and coffee to coffee."

SS: (Laughs)

RR: And they went down there that night, they lacked one vote beating the ... winning. That was right here. This ...

SS: In this precinct?

RR: No, not in this precinct.

SS: Oh.

RR: But it was in another precinct in ...

SS: This area?

RR: Yeah. In this area. He just lacked one vote.

SS: Whoa.

RR: If he'd just gotten one more, one or two more people he'd a had it.

SS: Yeah.

RR: Scared the tar out of the op.

SS: I guess so.

RR: But a lot of precincts are – like I was up in Waco one time, I read the Waco News Tribune after all the precinct conventions, seven people attended this one; there were five present here. There's no battle.

SS: Really? That's sad.

RR: You can get your relatives and go down and win a convention. Really.

(Tape cuts off)

SS: Well, Roger, in your years of being involved in politics in Baytown, I – you've seen some interesting elections and some hard-fought ones, and I guess you've had some bitter experiences. But ... do you look back on this overall as a good experience in your life? How do you feel about it [16:09]?

RR: Yeah, I sure do. I've made a lot of friends; I've learned to work with people; I've learned to ... a lot of people by name that I otherwise would never have known; I've made friends with people. And I don't think you ever really lose true friends if you stand by your convictions. And I think if you don't have any – some convictions on things, you'll fall for anything. If you just believe everything that comes along. And a person ought to weigh, I think, every issue carefully before he makes up his mind. And don't be too swayed by campaign rhetoric.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: Try to separate campaign rhetoric from facts.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: See there are some facts over here. Campaign rhetoric sounds pretty good. This is used by a lot of people: they go into this group, and they don't ever mention anything that relates to anybody else. They only talk about the things that tickle the ears of the people in that particular vicinity or locality or city ... county or district. And – but those aren't always the facts. Really, I go to conventions, I listen to very few speeches, really. I have other things more important I could be doing than sit there and listen to some of the speeches that are going on. In fact, right now I don't sit and listen to men make a speech over TV. I listen to the president's press conferences and things, cause I think that's real important for me to hear that.

SS: Um-hmm. ...[Inaudible]

RR: But some other man campaigning in somewhere he can – what he does is kind of say a thing so he really doesn't say anything. When you analyze what he's really said, he hasn't said anything much.

SS: Um-hmm.

RR: He's just kind of maybe criticized the other man for what he'd done, but he doesn't have any answers either. If he did have the answers, he would've probably come forth with 'em long before now.

SS: One thing that we didn't mention, and I'd like to ask you about: who were some of the other leaders in politics in Baytown? Say during the '30's and '40's. Uh ... just anyone that comes to your mind that were particularly, uh ...

RR: Well, Mr. Roticade was pretty active, I remember. He and I had a lot of association together. And Nat Pace.

SS: You said he was an election judge ...

RR: Yeah.

SS: ... in one of the ...

RR: Nat Pace was Election Judge at that particular time. In fact, he was one of the – he was the first election judge, I guess, that they had over at 102, which was east, all of Baytown over there. East – the company addition, plus old Baytown across Market Street, and all the way up to Market Street. Plus what houses were over in east Baytown. And Bill Melican was the first Election Judge in 149. He was also the executive committeeman. You know, the committeeman is elected by the people, and election judge is appointed by the governing entity – whatever it happens to be: school board, or city, or council, or port authority, or water commission, or whatever you have. Doesn't make any difference. They appoint their own election judge.

SS: How about the people in Pelley or in Goose Creek who were active in politics. Do any names come to your mind right now?

RR: Well, Doc Satterwhite used to be real active; I guess he still is fairly active. Course there were mayors and people – those people were active, I guess, in their way. But sometimes they weren't as active in county or state politics as they are in local. Sometime they feel like it's to their advantage to not be too politically motivated. But they have their own just local problems.

SS: Well, while a lot of this was going on, there were other organizations. I'd like to talk to Doxi a little bit about one of the women's organizations that she belonged to: the Minerva Club.

(Tape cuts off)

SS: Alright, Doxi, you – tell me a little bit about the Minerva Club, and when you – how soon you joined it after you came to Baytown.

DR: The Minerva Club was organized as a women's club, which is still very active in Baytown, and I imagine, the oldest women's club in Baytown. They organized the Minerva Club for ... young women.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: Most of them were very young, early married. And Elva Kada was the first President of the Minerva Study Club. Lucille Pewterball, who was then Lucille Hunt ...

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: ... was a charter member. And she is the only charter member who is still in Minerva. But she has been out during the time that she had the book store; she was not an active member for a good while. I'm the only continuous member who was in Minerva the first year.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: Of Minerva.

SS: Now, what year was that that you ...

DR: 1930.

SS: 1930.

DR: It's possible I didn't – I know I didn't attend until '31, but I think I was voted in before the year was out. So I was in late '30, or very early in '31. And of the people that I can remember who were in real early but not charter members: Mrs. Herbert Duke, the doctor.

SS: Dr. Duke's wife.

DR: Yes. Dr. H. H. Duke. And ... well, I remember Mrs. Flowers was in during those first few years, whose husband was a lawyer here, you know? Erwin Flowers.

SS: Erwin Flowers? Uh-huh.

DR: Uh-huh. And ... oh, there's quite a few more, but I can't think right now who they are.

SS: What did the Minerva Club – what were, are its purposes? Or what was it organized to do?

DR: Well, it was organized as a study group.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: And most of the time people are either given topics, or they select topics and then work up a program. Now, we have gotten members in who didn't give programs. And, in my way of thinking, that's unfortunate. Because it develops you to give the program, rather than to get somebody to come.

SS: You usually learn more than anyone else when you ...

DR: You do. You do.

SS: ... work up a program.

DR: Um-hmm.

SS: That's true.

DR: And we have a motto, but without my book I don't remember what it is. I don't ...

SS: Well, what type of programs? Just any, any ...

DR: Varied. They've usually been varied. They've usually been varied.

SS: Do you usually have a theme of the year, maybe? Or ...

DR: No, not usually.

SS: Not particularly?

DR: Sometimes we've had a roll call for the year. You know, a definite roll call where you would give a verse or something. But not usually. It's ... I suppose the feeling in Minerva is more like sororities and fraternities. There's a warmth and there's a love. When ... Holly Curtis ... is that right? When she came in a few years ago – she's now living in Austin, so she's not a member anymore – but she said she had

never been in a club where she had heard as little criticism or back-biting or anything like that. We just have a real warm fellowship, and it's meant so much to me.

SS: How often do you meet?

DR: Twice a month; second and fourth Friday.

SS: In the morning?

DR: Um-hmm. We started in the morning. At first we met at two o'clock; when I joined they were meeting at two o'clock. But when I joined, the majority of them didn't have children. And then pretty soon the children began to come, and it became real hard to ...

SS: At that time of day, that ...[Inaudible]

DR: ... to be home when the children would come home from school, see? So we changed it to 10 o'clock in the morning. And now, most of us are grandmothers.

SS: (Laughs)

DR: Nobody has children coming in.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: I don't think. Except Anne Como, and she has most of her family about. But we still meet at 10; I guess we liked it.

SS: How many members do you have?

DR: We have 20. We started having 18 in the beginning, but we added two after some of us had larger homes.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: But at first, we – so many were in apartments and very small homes that it pushed them to take care of 18.

SS: Now, do you still take in new members?

DR: Yes, yes.

SS: People that ...

DR: We still do.

SS: Can you think of any outstanding programs, or outstanding activities that you participated in?

DR: When we had had 40 years – see, this year is our 50th year.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: And in March, March 14, we're going to have a big tea on our 50th anniversary. But when we had 40 years, we had a lovely tea at Grace Methodist. And then back when we were 25 years, the old Humble Recreation Building – what was it called?

SS: Community House.

DR: Community Building. Yes. We had a lovely affair, and we always invite all that we can think of, and all that we can reach of the former members. This year it's a pretty large list of former members.

SS: Well, it sounds like this has been a pretty important part of your life.

DR: It has.

SS: It's enriched your life.

DR: It has.

SS: And many other people like yours.

DR: Other than in church – course I've made lots of friend in church – but other than church, and the knowledge of people in Minerva has been varied.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: So many people who belong to different denominations that I would not have met them. And I've been very close friends with. It's meant so much to me.

SS: Well, you mentioned church. Now, you and Mr. Read – or Roger – were members of First Baptist, correct?

DR: No, he was always Baptist, and I was always Methodist until 1940. And then in 1940, I decided if you can't win 'em, join 'em.

SS: (Laughs)

DR: Because by that time, we had the two boys.

SS: Uh-huh.

DR: And so I didn't go back to Sunday school after Raymond was born in the Methodist Church. I just made my transition then.

SS: So your whole family would be ...

DR: Yes.

SS: I don't think we got the names of your children in here. You have two children?

DR: Two children: Gene was born in 1932, Roger Eugene.

SS: Um-hmm.

DR: I named him for the two best men I ever knew: my father and my husband. And Raymond Lee Read was born in 1940.

SS: And now, where are the boys now?

DR: Raymond teaches in Baylor. He teaches in the School of Business in Baylor; he's a section head. And Gene works for Charter Financial Group in Houston; lives in Nassau Bay, but will soon live in Taylor Crest. They're building a home in Taylor Crest now on Taylor Lake.

SS: Well, I want to thank both of you for participating in this endeavor. I think you just contributed enormously to our attempt here to kind of collect the history of Baytown. You've both made several contributions, and I want to thank ...

DR: Well, it's been a pleasure.

SS: Thank you so much.

DR: Surely has.

(End of tape)

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