

(Tape 1 of 3)

An Oral History Tape Transcription

Of

Interviewer: Martha Mayo

Interviewee: Jimmy Carroll

February 25, 1986

MM: Martha Mayo, Sterling Municipal Library. I'm having an oral history conversation with Mr. Jimmy Carroll. Test, test.

MM: When you moved to Baytown?

JC: Well I came to Baytown on the thirtieth of June, in 1919. And I came from Houston down this Highway 90.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: From Highway 90 when we got to Barrett Station, we went out across the prairie, and came in Bob Smith Road, and came up ...

MM: That's a long way around.

JC: No, it's ... well, uh ... uh, Main Street.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And I got out of the car at the railroad station. And there was a man standing there, and I asked him where the refinery was. And he told me. "Out there two miles."

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Then about that time, a man came by in a railroad velocipede, which is a motorcar, a little motorcar with two wheels on one side, and one wheel on the other side.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And they had a box of lunches on that thing. And he stopped and picked me up, and he took me out to the refinery on that velocipede.

MM: Oh. Did it run on tracks?

JC: Yes, ma'am.

MM: Oh.

JC: Called 'em motorcars, was what – but it was a little, it was a tri-, tri-wheel job.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: This little rope, this little wheel over here kept it on the track. You see what I mean? That little he- ...

MM: Yes! I see, uh-huh.

JC: And when I got out there, I got there about 11 o'clock and I was supposed to have gone to work that morning so the man wouldn't pay me. So he told me that he wasn't going to pay me that day, but he'd pay me the next. So, my, my tenure with Humble Company started on the first of July, 1919.

MM: Oh. Well now where did, did you find housing right away?

JC: No. I ... I was working with, there was a man working with me, and when we got off work that evening, we came back to Baytown on the train, which ran – the work train that took us back and forth to work.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: We came over here and the Humble Company had some bunk houses on – I believe they was on Sterling Street. And I got a cot there on one of those, in one of those ... in one of those bunk houses.

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

JC: And I think I stayed, I think it was about three weeks that I lived in that bunkhouse.

MM: Oh.

JC: And then, uh ... we found a place over on Humble Street to live. Rented a house from a lady over there. I mean at a – not a house, but a room. One room. And, uh, I stayed there then until about July – maybe September. Then I moved to Pelly. And lived down there with an old lady, in uh, one of those oilfield houses. And I stayed there until October of 1919. Then I moved back to Baytown – uh, to Goose Creek up here – and lived in one of those houses. But in the interim period, they divided those houses up. Partitioned 'em. Each one of those houses was a little five-room bungalow.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And there were two families living in there. And I lived on half, and I – my friend lived on the other half.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And I stayed in that house from October till May of 1920. Then I moved out to Baytown. And I moved in a four-room house out there on Market Street.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Company had 13 houses out there. Built. And there, and I moved in one of 'em there that had... But on the backside, over on, around San Jacinto Street, they had a, they had, that was where their, the big houses were. They – company had a group of three, four, five and six-room houses over there. Six-room houses were there for the officials.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And the rest of the people had the five and four and three's. There weren't but – I think there were about two or three, three-room houses. The rest of 'em were four and five.

MM: Now there's nothing there, now? Those were [inaudible].

JC: No, they've all – all that's been tore down and the tanks had moved in. In 1936, about 1935, the company decided to go out of the housing business. And those, those first little houses, they got rid of them way early. They gave them to the people who had, who were living in 'em. If they had a lot and they wanted to move that house to that lot, they just gave 'em those houses.

MM: Oh.

JC: And they moved it out, and but – that house that I lived in, was a prefabbed, stucco house. And they tore it down and I moved out of the country in '36.

M

M: Uh-huh. And that, that's Wooster?

JC: Yes, ma'am. And I've been there since '36 in the same place.

MM: Oh. Well, tell about working at the refinery. When you went.

JC: Working ...

MM: What, what did the refinery look like back then?

JC: There was nothing out there, uh, the – it had been rice field. And, uh, the engineers came in April. To survey the land for the, how much was here, how much was ... And I came in July.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: So you can see there wasn't much there. It was just a, just a great big, open field with no roads in it. No streets. Just trails out there where they...

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And they had materials around, different parts, spotted at different locations. Some of the foundations were built, but there wasn't anything near completed when I came here. And, uh, then the company bought, then they, they ... they went on to build. But out there at Baytown, when I first came here, there were three tent colonies out there. It was up on the north end of the refinery; there were two. The Latins and the colored people lived up there. And then down on the – back of the post office out there.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Cause they had a huge mess hall out there. Long mess hall. It must have been 100 feet long. And then the middle was the kitchen. And on either end, there were two dining – there was a dining room on either end. One of the dining rooms was for the workers – the (laughs) Indians, the other one was for the chiefs.

MM: Yeah. (Laughs)

JC: Well the dining room that the chiefs ate in, there were, there were tables: four to a table. With tablecloths on them. But where we ate, was just army benches, just army tables where you get to crawl over the benches.

MM: Yeah, uh-huh.

JC: That kind. And the meals were 40 cents apiece. Couldn't, couldn't buy 'em with money. You had to have ...

MM: Oh.

JC: You had to have meal tickets. You get up, you go up and buy a five dollar meal ticket. And then when you went to the – or 10 dollar meal ticket. When you went to dinner, you just tore off a ticket and handed it to the man at the door. And that's the way you got, that's the way you – there was no, there was no money exchanged hands at all. Supposedly.

MM: Yeah. (Laughs) Was it good food?

JC: Very good. Excellent food. The best that money could buy. And more than you could eat. Always more than you could eat.

MM: Now that was just – I mean, could you bring your family to this?

JC: No, no. No, no.

MM: So this was just for the men when they worked. Uh-huh.

JC: That was just for the men. They had no place for the families out here, other than those little houses that I spoke to you about. Those little ol' houses down there. They built those first evidently.

MM: Well who lived in them?

JC: Then, there was also some more houses here. They were down below the Baytown Junior High School, which is not ...

MM: Yeah, I know where that is.

JC: You know where that is?

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Well down – there was a street that was right in front of that school, and that was extension of Market Street. That went on down nearly to the docks, and came around under that hill down there and back up on the street about where they, about where, uh ... let me see if there's anything there now. Down where they, they, uh ... barge ... the tugboat docks are. You know they got a ...

MM: Oh, I know where that is.

JC: Well, down that street – when you got just about there from that other street there, that was the latter – they, they ran that Market Street went on in up there to, to Lynchburg Road.

MM: Yes.

JC: Then you could come down that road after a while.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Then when you'd come down there, you'd go down there and about where that barge dock is, and you'd go under that hill, and go around and come up in front of the high school. There wasn't no high school there, but there were some houses. And down at the end of that street, on the right hand street, there were five little houses down there. Texas Company had 'em down there. They, Texas Company had ...

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: ... had some houses down there. But, the company had bought those houses from Texas Company, cause they'd ceased to operate. And they put some people in those houses, and then put some in these houses that I lived in up there. And, uh, then, uh ... then when those stucco houses became completed and they got all those streets paved and everything, well then, a lot of those people that lived in these little houses over there where I lived moved over in stucco houses because there were a lot of those people that were in the supervision.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Or supervisors, and they've all moved over there. And I stayed over there in that little house, until ... about '24 I think. Then I got one of those stucco houses, and then I moved over there. And then I moved from that house that I was living in – it was a four-room house – then I moved into a six-room stucco house. And I stayed there till '36 when I moved out yonder.

MM: Oh. Well, how many people were employed by Humble at that time? [Inaudible]

JC: I imagine there were, I imagine there were pretty close to 4,000 people working in that thing when they first started.

MM: Oh. I didn't know it would be that many. Well, but they didn't have much housing. Where, where did the people ...

JC: Tents. In those tents.

MM: They lived in those tents?

JC: Yes, ma'am. Yes.

MM: Just the men; no families in the tents?

JC: No families. Up there where the Latins and the, and the blacks lived there, uh, their fifteen families were in those tents.

MM: Oh.

JC: They were 14-by-16 tents. They were army tents.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And they were floored – they were floored. They had floors in 'em. And they were boarded up to about four feet.

MM: Oh.

JC: And then the, their tent flaps extended down to the ground.

MM: Hmm.

JC: And there was no windows in 'em.

MM: Whew! Pretty hot in the summer.

JC: So, in the summertime you had to raise those flaps up to where you could get some wind in there.

MM: Ooo, yes.

JC: And, uh ... and they had a stove in there. Each one of those things had a stove in it. And when they brought these Latin people here, there was a man used to leave here every Monday morning, and he went down to Eagle Pass.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And he'd come back here the following Saturday, and he'd bring two or three coaches of Latins up here. And they'd have everything that they owned with 'em. The old lady'd have a two or three children dragging around.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And the old man'd have a lantern and a two or three frying pans, and a bed roller of old clothes hanging on it. And they'd get off of that train up there where the railroad came in where I was working. And they'd, those men all had tags on 'em. Couldn't speak English.

MM: Oh.

JC: So they'd just take 'em out there, and they'd march 'em up to those chiefs – was about three quarters of a mile up the road up there. And they'd just give each one of those families one of those tents.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And that's what they lived in.

MM: And that's how they got the labor, huh?

JC: And they had ... yeah, that's how they got started. Now they were getting 35 cents an hour. And when they moved up there to that house, the company gave them a, a coupon book. They didn't have any money, so they gave 'em a coupon book, which was good at the commissary.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: So they – the first day they worked, they already had a coupon taken out of their wages, which was more than they were getting probably.

MM: Yes.

JC: Cause they were getting, they were making 35 cents an hour for eight hours a day, which wasn't much.

MM: No.

JC: And the colored people were getting 35, and the white laborer were getting 40. And, uh, I was clerk, and I got to 50 cents. And there were, and the highest paid man was 87 and a half cents, working people.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: That, that was before you got to management. And I don't, course I don't know what they were getting. Not too much more.

MM: Yeah.

JC: And then, they started, they started building that thing. And the whole refinery was built east of San Jacinto Street. There was no, nothing west of San Jacinto Street.

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

JC: And they built, uh ... the, the construction consisted of a filter house, a compound building, a warehouse, a storehouse, and a warehouse - same thing, and then a carpenter's shop, barber shop, and the tin shop. On - and that was on, that was on, uh - that was east of Baytown Avenue.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Then on Baytown Avenue, they built two ... two batteries of stills: one had 10, one had three. Then above that was a barber house, power house. Not the power, not the power house, but the barber house. Then beyond that was the power house. Now that's all that was built over there on that street.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Then on the next street over, or two streets over on San Jacinto Street, they built the cracking coils, and then they had a little - some stills on 'em they called steam stills. And, I ... I got that as all. And then up in the top, they had some things up there they called treaters, and then had some agitators. Well, the agitators and the treaters - well what, the treaters is what they treated the light oil with. The kerosene and gasoline. And the agitators is what they treat the lube oil with. And then they had an acid plant because they had to use acid to treat that oil. So this acid plant was a recovery system for that acid.

MM: I see.

JC: And that's all there was to the refinery.

MM: Oh.

JC: When, and, then - when they first started.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And then in about 1924, I believe, they built some more, they built uh, some, some, uh - course during the interim period they'd extended these batteries. They b-, then they went over, way over on the other side, and they built some three little 'ol stills over there. And, and, uh ... they built three stills over there, and they called those filter wash stills. And what they did, they washed the - they, they took a light hydrocarbon, and washed the filters with 'em. And they, they had some great big drums and they were full of clay. And you put the lube oil down in the top and let it percolate through those.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And then it would come out pretty white.

MM: Oh.

JC: And then when those filters got dirty, well they'd pump these light hydrocarbons in there to wash the dirt out of these filters.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: They'd take that stuff back over to those little units over there and recover it. See what - they'd re-distill that there.

MM: Yes, ok. Yeah.

JC: Then they'd send it back over there, and then they'd send it back over there.

MM: Uh-huh. Just keep going.

JC: And that, and that was what they called the filter wash stills. They washed the filters. They washed the oil out of those – when they washed the filters, they took the oil over there and recovered the lube oil out of it.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And sent the light oils back over there. Then – oh, and another little place where they had three stills, they called those steam stills. And that's where they, that's where they made the kerosene.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Well we made, we made nothing where I worked. We made nothing that was finished. Everything we made had to go somewhere else.

MM: Now what, where did you work?

JC: Worked at the crude stills. Now we got oil from the pipeline.

MM: The very first thing.

JC: And we, and pipeline got it from production department. We got it from pipeline. We distilled it. We got kerosene and we got gasoline and kerosene and some more byproducts. And then, depending on what kind of oil you were using, well what you were gonna get out of the bottom. Some of it was lube oil, and some of it was fuel, or ... Some of those crudes didn't produce any lube oil.

MM: Oh.

JC: As per say, and some of 'em didn't produce any gasoline.

MM: Were they – the crude came in by train? Or ...

JC: No. It came in pipeline. And train.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And ship.

MM: Ok, so same ways they get it today.

JC: Yes. Yes, ma'am.

MM: Ok. And went out the same way, too?

JC: Most of it came in here by pipeline. They, they were building tanks out there in the tank farm. They – that was a big project out there on, uh, on, uh Park Street.

MM: Now in when?

JC: Well, on either side of Park Street, they had a big tank farm out there, they – and they still have it out there. Well they just built tanks over there. Those people that go to work at four o'clock in the morning in the summertime when the, before it was hot.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And they'd work till about two, and get so hot on, in those tanks that they couldn't work so they'd go home.

MM: That's right.

JC: They, what they did: each one of those crews would have so many feet of rivy to drive. And when they had driven those, the number of feet that required for a day's work, well they quit.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And they worked like the dickens to get their work done and then leave.

MM: I bet they did.

JC: Then, that date went on, uh, that part of the refinery went on, and then, then, uh ... let me see. Now, what came next? And then they went on, and then they, they ... now I'm going to die we'll stop the process, and I ...

MM: [Inaudible]

JC: All of these tanks, when they'd make that gasoline, they'd put it in those tanks.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Well tanks would evaporate in the daytime when the sun was hot. A lot of those tanks had wooden roofs on 'em. Some of 'em had metal rooms on 'em. And they'd get awful hot in the summertime. Evaporation was very high.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Well, the first thing they did was to, uh, put a water spray on top of those tanks. Keep the, keep the cool.

MM: To let, yeah. Uh-huh.

JC: Well, that didn't do so well. Then the next thing they did was they went to the army and got some surplus balloons, captive balloons, it – and the army, the single core had a bunch of balloons that they had on a, on a cable, and they let those things go up 1,000 feet with a basket under 'em.

MM: Uh-huh?

JC: And the observation post is what they were.

MM: You're talking about a big balloon.

JC: I'm talking about a big one.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: It was about – I imagine it was about 50, 60-feet long, and it was probably ...

MM: Really?

JC: ... seventy-five feet in diameter.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Well they built some houses out there. Some big, big tin houses. And they put those balloons in there. And they attached them those gasoline tanks. Well in the daytime, when it was hot, the gas would go into those balloons. And at night when it was cool, well they had a lot of metal on top, they had a lot, great big pieces of iron on top of those balloons, and in the evening when it'd get cool, why that weight of that metal on there would blow that gas back out. (Laughs)

MM: Oh! My! And that, well that worked? That solved their problem?

JC: Yes! That, that was ... that was a ...

MM: Isn't that interesting.

JC: And then, then, uh ... they did that for a while, and then they sent a – a man came down here from MIT.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: A man by the name of Carlson. A very brilliant man. And he came down here, and he and another man by the name of O'Shea designed a gas recovery system. And they hooked up some, they connected these, these gasoline tanks to compressors. And they'd draw that gasoline off of those, off of those tanks. But they were very careful not to draw too much cause they didn't want to pull a vacuum on those tanks, you see what.

MM: Yes.

JC: Cause it might suck 'em in, see?

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: So they just held those tanks at zero pressure. And they had what they called scrubbers. And they'd put that gas in the bottom of that scrubber. Just let it go in the bottom, and then they'd put what they called lean oil, which was comparable to this fish, uh, filter washer – put it on the top, and let it go down, and the gas would come up. And the oil would absorb the gas.

MM: Oh.

JC: And then they'd take that oil out of there and distill it. So then they'd get, get the gas and ...

MM: And didn't lose anything.

JC: That – yeah, there was a lot of that gas that they couldn't recover if they hadn't, if they hadn't distilled – well, but then they could distill it and recover a lot of that gas. See? And, you see what I'm talking about?

MM: Yes, yes I do.

JC: They could condense it.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: But had it – it was so hot that the way it was, it was just going out to the air. You could see it just waving around everywhere out there.

MM: Oh.

JC: Very dangerous.

MM: Oh, oh I guess it was.

JC: Yes, ma'am. And then, then, and then, uh ... uh, they, they, uh ... and advanced steadily then they had that, then they built some, then the next, I think the next – if I can remember correctly – the next thing that, the next advance they built was some, what they call, uh ... cracking coils. Now these things were ... They had a big furnace out there, and they ... uh, uh, had a big, just a big box, and it was, had some coils running through it. And they had a furnace in that thing, and they had tremendous temperatures, and very high pressure. And that was destructive distillation. They destroyed those, they'd, they'd get that stuff so hot and under so much pressure that the molecules would change around on it, see.

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

JC: And, uh, then they, that was a cracking coil. And then, they then went to, went to pipe still. Now these old stills that we had first were just big vessels. Just 14-by-40 longitude of vessels. And we'd put about 10 feet of oil in 'em. And we'd just set a fire under 'em. And, uh, cook 'em. And when we got it up to about 200 degrees, well we'd have to quit because there was some, there was a certain amount oil, water in that oil. They couldn't get all the water out of it. So when we got that stuff up to about 200 degrees, well we'd cut the fire out of from under there. And let 'em sit for about an hour.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And then they, that water would be, would settle on the bottom. And then we'd draw the water off. And then we'd start to cooking again. Heh. And it was, uh, it was all cooked, uh, by percentages: you'd take so much when you got, went in with a certain gravity, and when you start out, the gasoline – you would cook it down till you got to a certain gravity, and then you'd change it. Then when you got down to a certain gravity, changing it. Cut it in to about 10 percent cuts. Cut all the way down. Then when you got to the bottom, well you just pump that out to fuel.

MM: Oh. And you were just drawing off until you got to the ...

JC: Yes, ma'am. Drawing off. We had ... drawing off, cutting, changing the, the ... changing the ...

MM: So you were constantly dealing with ...

JC: Ch-, always ... yes ma'am.

MM: Dials or ...

JC: Then in 1923, I believe ... In 1923, now prior to that time, the stills were very primitive. They tried some different things on 'em, but in 1923, they built a new battery of stills over there, called it – they had these batteries were all lettered.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: A and B, and P and R.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And H and I. Then they've filter wash stills and battery P and R. They were, but they only, that was all, that filter wash stills were only, was the only stills that wasn't lettered. They - that was what they were. The rest of 'em were numbered. They all built 'em in pairs. And, uh, I was working on a battery of stills and, uh, that was the first continuous ... operated ... lube stills in the United States, or in the world. Right out there.

MM: Oh! My goodness.

JC: And prior to that time, uh, when they'd, when they were distilling the oil, you never could get the oil, you never could get the oil that you recovered that was free of moisture. So when you ran a test on it, you had to, you had to heat it up and let it sit so the water would drop out of it. So what they did on that battery of stills, they put three towers up behind there. And in those, in two of those towers, they ran cold crude through those towers ...

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: ... to condense the hot vapors. And on the other one, use steam on that one. And, uh, they - uh, water. We used water on ...

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: ... on one, on one, on the light tower, and we used crude oil on the heavy and then the intermediate and heavy.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And those, when those - now this light tower, this light stream that came out, it was all the water was in that stream. It came out in that, because that was the steam you had to use to make it distilled, you know.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: You had to have steam and heat to distill this oil.

MM: Oh.

JC: Because if you didn't have steam in there, that oil would sit on the bottom, and the solid would sit on the bottom of those stills, and you'd burn 'em, and they'd turn the heat - and you know, you'd get a crust down there.

MM: Yeah.

JC: And then that, it'd get hot, and he'd have to take 'em off. But anyway, those immediate - the intermediate and the heavy streams on that battery still came out perfectly dry. And they were, the, the, the colors on those things were perfect. But, uh ... but they wouldn't stay. They'd oxidize. You'd put 'em in the tank there, turn, they'd all turn black again. So that was - then they sent those up to the treaters.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: The agitators. And when they went up to the agitators, well they'd put, uh ... The first thing you do, they'd put acid in 'em. Let's see, is that right? Yeah. You put acid. Let's see. No, wait a minute. We'd hit 'em with acid. Uh, they, and they heat 'em with caustic. And then they'd heat 'em with acid. Heat 'em,

but they'd put that acid in it. And then they'd take that, eliminate that acid with caustic. And then they'd wash the caustic out with water. And the, and they had to do a lot of blowing – they blow that stuff with air to get the water out of it.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And then all this, uh, all this stuff, this ... these acids that they'd recover, this acid they recover, use it over again. And over again, and over again.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And, they, the caustic, you use that over again. And they had this foul water that you had to turn loose.

MM: Where, what'd they do with that?

JC: Let it go in the – that was before they got through ...

MM: Yeah, I was wondering about that.

JC: When we went to work out there, uh, they had no gas masks. They had, uh, no – there wasn't no, they didn't know, they didn't use gas masks.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Then we started to running very, very toxic crude. It was just loaded with hydrogen sulfide.

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

JC: And, uh, that stuff: you couldn't breathe that.

MM: Yeah.

JC: One – you just couldn't breathe, I wouldn't breathe it.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: If you got a good s-, a lung full of it, well you just drowned; you couldn't breathe. Very dangerous.

MM: Hmm.

JC: Well, we, uh, we'd – when they first started to running, our instructions were to hold your breath, and get out of the way.

MM: (Laughs)

JC: Well sometimes you couldn't hold your breath.

MM: Yeah, for that long time.

JC: And, uh ... Then, they company – I hope I'm, I hope this is alright the way I'm doing this.

MM: Sure, sure.

JC: The company conceived the idea of having to do something because it was very toxic. So they sent to the Bureau of Mines and got a, a Bureau of Mines man to come down here – safety expert from the Bureau of Mines – to come here and give us a thorough course in first aid.

MM: Hmm.

JC: And I was fortunate enough to be on that team. And he gave us about 100 hours of first aid, I guess.

MM: Oh.

JC: And we got off work every afternoon about, I believe around three – were supposed to work till four. We got off every day about 2:30 or three, and we went down to the Community House where they had there, that the company had, and he, we stayed there till five o'clock every day. We had about two hours of training every day.

MM: Oh.

JC: That was, that inc-, that, that included the whole ... first aid business.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Injuries, bleeding, gassing ...

MM: Just, uh-huh.

JC: Any of that: overheating, uh, sun stroke or anything. Anything that was in the manual of, safety manual of the Bureau of Mines, we got it. Well, after we ... after we completed that course of training, they had a disaster out there.

MM: Well, let me, let me ...

(End of tape)

(Tape 2 of 3)

MM: Well, and you had a disaster?

JC: Yessum. Right there on these cracking coils that I was telling you about. Now they ran this very toxic crude. And, uh, one day a man climbed up a ladder to open a valve up there. And the top blew off of it. And it killed him up on the ladder right there – he never did get off the ladder. Well then another fella went up to get him off the ladder, it killed him. Well ... and there were about five or six men on the ground over there at one time over there who had gotten asphyxiated over there.

MM: Hmm.

JC: And out of those, all those men, I think we lost two.

MM: Oh my goodness.

JC: And, uh, we went over there, I was over there – I went over there, and this first aid team, uh ... we had a whistle out there. Everything was whistle: if you had one whistle was somebody, and two was somebody. And I think – I don't remember what ours was – I think it was four.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And, uh, when we got, uh, called on four whistles, why, we'd call the operator, and she'd tell us where to go. Well we went over there, and uh, they were s-, they revived all the men but two. And, uh, then, that's when they were gonna have gas masks.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And then they wore, everybody wore gas masks. And they had gas masks every, all – everywhere then. They'd have, uh, fresh air masks and everybody had a mask that he could ... everybody had one, you know. It was part of your equipment.

MM: But, now you didn't wear it all the time?

JC: Not all the time. Only in case you got a, you contacted that gas, see?

MM: Oh.

JC: If you had that, if you contacted that gas for – you had one available, you just put it on.

MM: Well were there any other disasters?

JC: Oh, not many. I don't, I – that was the worst one I think they ever had out there. Oh, I ...

MM: That's a pretty good record.

JC: I had, I – well, they had some, they had some fatalities. Our first fatality they ever had out there: a man, his son-in-law killed him. (Laughs) They were unloading ...

MM: Oh my goodness.

JC: They were unloading a car. A gondola.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And they were throwing some steel plates out of that gondola; they were about 14 inches square. And the old, the daddy-in-law was down on the ground, and this guy threw one of those things out on top of him and hit him on the head and killed him.

MM: Oh!

JC: That was the first one.

MM: Goodness! Terrible.

JC: That was the first one they had out there. And then another one they had out there: there was a man operating a railroad crane. That's a – that was a crane that was, uh, that ran on the railroad.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And he was trying to unload a car one time, and it had a vessel in it.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And, uh, it was in a gondola. And it was just stuck in there. And he tried to get it out of there and it wouldn't come; he couldn't lift it out of there. Wouldn't lift. So he told his man that was working with him to get out of there, and that he'd, he'd, he'd get it out of there. So he – and the railroad, the railroads at, that they had out there then, were just, they just throw up a mud bank and put a railroad on 'em; they didn't have any foundation.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Well he was up there in this big ol' crane, and he – he, uh, got to pulling on this thing and kind of pulling it to one side so it'd come lose. And it came lose. And when it did, that crane turned over.

MM: Fell over.

JC: It fell over on the ground.

MM: Oh!

JC: And that fella got his foot caught in the, in the, uh, the ... machinery part of it. Not the moving machinery, but the levers in it. He got his foot caught in it. Well, there was a two-inch steam line right over his head that had come loose. And it was blowing that steam right over his head. Wasn't blowing it on him.

MM: Oooh.

JC: But it was dripping on him, see? The water was. And that man pulled his foot out of a laced-up shoe to get out of there.

MM: Oh!

JC: And I, (Laughs) and I know that's the truth cause I saw when – I was the man that got the shoe out of the machinery.

MM: Is that right?

JC: Yes, ma'am.

MM: Goodness.

JC: Now you know he was getting out of that!

(Laughter)

MM: Yes! Oh!

JC: And he (laughs) he didn't get anything but a few little blisters on his back where that hot water was dripping on it there.

MM: Where the hot water ... Oh! I bet he was scared.

JC: He was.

MM: Oh.

JC: In his abdomen, there were knots in his abdomen as big as your fist where his muscles had balled up in there from pulling so hard.

MM: Oh. Goodness. [Inaudible]

JC: Well, that's about – I, I think that's about all I can tell you, but ...

MM: Well you were gonna tell – you, you told me the other day about there only being not many things in the way of equipment or dials, or, uh, or ... indicators.

JC: Oh! Well, when we went out there, there wasn't anything out there but – the only, the only recorders they had out there were steam gauges. Pressure gauges is what I'm saying.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Pressure gauges: if you had any kind of pressure, you screw that thing in there, and they just ... went around. And, uh, everything we did we had to do it by hand. And, uh, they had, uh ... no, no liquid controls or no anything. You had gauge glass and you could see a liquid in the glass, or you could – if you had a vessel that you had pressure on, well you could see the pressure on it. But, you had a temperature recorder, which was a glass thermometer.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And you, they had what they called thermometer welds. They'd weld a hole in the pipe, then they'd stick another pipe down in and weld it.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And then you'd stick your thermometer down in that pipe, and the heat from the vessel, it would register on your – but by the time you got the thermometer out of there, it was about 10 degrees off. And that's the way we first got our recorders. That's the way we first operated.

MM: Oh.

JC: Then they got a ... And over where, over there where I tell you about where we made those, that first unit.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: They brought in a, an instrument there, and we could get the temperatures on that unit from 80 points. They, it was a controller, you know ...

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: That had these, you could, uh, turn the dial and would show what the temperature was and what – we just thought we were really doing good then.

MM: Yeah. (Laughs) Really having electrical.

JC: Yeah. And then, uh, and then they just begun to get these instruments and all kinds of instruments.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And, uh, well I had a man working with me one time that, he was a man from Rice, this cute little fellow, and he – I was telling him what a great thing this, this temperature control this what we had. And he told me, he said, "Well, a day will come when they'll be running this whole refinery with buttons. You just press a button and this will do that."

JC: And I said, "Well, you must be a little crazy."

(Laughter)

JC: But, that's the way they do it.

MM: Yeah. You don't see any people.

JC: No. And when we went out there, we couldn't smoke and ...

MM: Oh, I guess not.

JC: They just – and now, they, all their control units out their now, uh, like you're in this room. Well, they're pressurized.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: So you can sit in there and smoke all you want to because there's nothing gonna come in there that ... (laughs). Everything's going out.

MM: That's quite a change.

JC: Yes, ma'am. And, heh, and we went out, then when everyone used to go to work, you didn't have any relief. If you went out there and worked eight hours, if somebody didn't come to relieve you, well you just stayed out there.

MM: Ooo.

JC: And, uh, course they wouldn't let you work but 16 hours.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: But if you didn't get a relief the first eight, well you just stayed out there. And if you didn't bring a lunch, well you just didn't have anything to eat while you were out there unless somebody gave you something. Because if you didn't know that you were gonna – now if you knew you were gonna be stuck, uh, from hav- ...

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Well you make provisions. But if you didn't know when some fella didn't, got sick, or imbibed too heavily, and you – you (laughs) got stuck out there, if somebody didn't give you part of his lunch, you just sucked your thumb! (Laughs)

MM: Ohh. I guess. (Laughs)

JC: And, uh ... And, uh, they, uh ... we didn't have any, we didn't have any way of anything. You just brought a sack out there and had a cold sandwich in it and ate it and thought you were doing good. And if you, if you wanted to heat it, well you could put it on a hot brick in front of one of those furnaces and get it hot.

MM: (Laughs) And heat it that way.

JC: And we made, had coffee pots out there. We made coffee out there.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: But they've got better kitchens out there now in each one of those units than the average home in Baytown there.

MM: Now that's what I understand. (Laughs)

JC: You know, the first one of those things that they had out there was a man came over here from California from the Braun Company. And, uh, he told me this himself. He said, "I got a drawing of a vessel, and I never could figure out what that thing was." He said, "I have been in the refinery business all my life since I was a grown man, and I never had seen an instrument like that, a vessel like that. And I couldn't figure out what that thing was."

JC: Well, he came over here, uh, in latter times – they built another unit, or he came over here. And he said, "There was that thing, and that was a cooker that I had built over there, and I didn't know what it was."

MM: Oh! It was for the kitchen.

JC: Yeah! (Laughs)

MM: Not for the refinery.

JC: And what it was, what it was: it was just a vessel, an enclosed vessel, with a concaved head in it.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And, uh, then on one side it had a little opening in there, and a little valve on that where you could put the grease down in this concave part of it, and you could fry, you could do anything you want to do. If you didn't want to fry, well you could toast your bread on it, do anything you want. And, and, in the, uh, bottom of this head, in there, there was a steam line going up in there, and you were shooting live steam up against this head up here, and that steam was about 500 degrees. And then just head that thing up ...

MM: I bet it did.

JC: And you could cook anything you wanted to on that thing. And then there from that, well they've just got everything. Now they got, and now they got all kinds of modern conveniences there.

MM: Yes.

JC: Now they got, got a, uh ... dinette set in each one of 'em just like this. Dishwasher, sterilizer ...

MM: A big change, yeah.

JC: Ice box, deep freeze. (Laughs)

MM: Well, when was it you ate in the tent?

JC: Ma'am?

MM: When was it you ate at the mess hall?

JC: Oh, that was in 19 – that was in 1920. 19...

MM: Ok, but ... they didn't keep, they didn't keep on with that.

JC: No, ma'am. They did away with that. Just as soon as they got – well, all the time they were doing that, Goose Creek was building. Everybody come here, bought a lot, and they were just building and building and building.

MM: Right.

JC: And the company was building over there. And they just, finally just did away with all those tents.

MM: Oh.

JC: And, uh, they just finally did away with 'em.

MM: Well wasn't there a hospital on the ... refinery grounds?

JC: Yes, ma'am, there was a hospital, uh – well, I don't know whether you'd call it a hospital. The one I saw, the man, the one that that fella went in that that thing turned over on him wasn't much of a hospital. And I went in there one time, too, with my finger cut nearly off.

MM: Eww.

JC: It was just a little ol' building. Just a little ol' building about – maybe it had two rows of cots, and one on either side.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Then the alley way down the middle, and then the little dispensary in the front.

MM: Oh.

JC: Little wooden building. They had an old doctor from the army there, and he was just rough as he could be. You know, he just ...

MM: (Laughs)

JC: And that was the first hospital. Then they had a little drugstore there adjacent to that.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: They had a big commissary there, also. When they first started they had a big commissary there. And that's where all these people bought their groceries in there.

MM: Everybody could ...

JC: Everybody could go there and buy groceries. And, uh, you had to meal – you had to buy those coupon books in there to buy groceries. And that – when these people built these houses around, well, everywhere – over here in town and down in Pelly, and ...

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Everywhere else, they just, they didn't need that stuff, so they got rid of all those things.

MM: Oh.

JC: And, uh, then, uh, the company went out of the housing business in '36, and they just went in there with a, with one of those wrecking balls, and just tore all those houses down. And they – and that

Community House that they had over there, that was a magnificent building. It was great big building, had a beautiful dance floor in it, and had ...

MM: I've hear that ...

JC: ...and had a big stage on there, and had dressing rooms on either side of the stage, and upstairs it had a director's room and a big library downstairs. And a, on the right-hand going in, well that was a ladies room where they had the lady's clubs in there. And, uh, it was just an ideal place. And they had picture shows in there, too.

MM: Oh.

JC: They had a picture show booth in the back. And they used to show first-run pictures out there on that thing.

MM: Well, for goodness sakes.

JC: Yes, ma'am. [Inaudible]

MM: But they had to pay ... to get in.

JC: Oh, I think it cost a dime or something like that to go in there.

MM: Yeah.

JC: I forget now what it was.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Just, nothing almost.

MM: Yeah. Bet everybody who worked ...

JC: Yeah, everybody went there.

MM: Was excited to go.

JC: And then they had – then they had the band. They had the band ...

MM: You mean, the ...

JC: The company had a band.

MM: The company had a band.

JC: They had a – they had a big br-, big brass band. I ima-, there must have been 75 fellas in that band.

MM: Oh!

JC: And, uh, they had a band master and that's all he did. He didn't do anything else but just run that band. And the ...

MM: And that was his full time job?

JC: Yeah!

MM: Oh! (Laughs)

JC: And if he – if he needed a trumpet player, he'd just go to the superintendent, say I need a, I need a trumpet player, and I know where I can get one. Get him. And that guy come here for – he might be a trumpet player, and they might have him doing most nothing.

MM: Oh. Well now they did the same thing for baseball and ...

JC: Baseball. Yes ma'am.

MM: Teams.

JC: But I never get out, I played baseball on the first team they had out there.

MM: Oh, you did? Well, oh.

JC: Yes ma'am. But (laughs) I was – I wasn't fortunate enough to gotten hired to play baseball; that was just an extra-curricular activity of mine.

MM: oh yeah?

JC: But I, but uh, we played baseball. First team we had was in 1920. We had a baseball team. Well, back then, practically all the industries had baseball teams.

MM: Oh.

JC: Southern Pacific had one, Admiration Coffee had one, which was, uh ... um, Maryland Club, now.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: They had 'em one, American Legion had one. And, uh ... uh, Gulf Company had one. Humble had a ball team. They had one over at Barbers Hill. And they had 'em everywhere. Well, there were a lot of fellas, there were a lot of ... ball players who had gotten out of the professional business, either because they weren't good enough, or gotten too old, one or the other. Well, they were playing around in these places, you know. Well as soon as they found out we had a baseball team here, they all flocked down here to play us, and they ran us out. We, (laughs) we weren't good enough to play. So ... well, I played long enough, I figure.

MM: Well, where did you play your games?

JC: Ma'am?

MM: Where were the games played?

JC: Uh, they had a – they had a big baseball park out there. They had two of 'em: they had one over here right where Lee College is, and we had one out there in Baytown. Had a big grandstand out there.

MM: Oh. Well, where in Baytown was it?

JC: Where was it?

MM: Yes, uh-huh.

JC: Well, I'll tell you where it was. It was on ... it was on, uh ... Seventh Street and Baytown Avenue.

MM: Ok. [Inaudible]

JC: You know where that rail- ... you know where the railroad runs to the docks?

MM: Yes.

JC: Well, it was right east of that railroad. At one time, there was a team from Omaha came in, did their summer training here one time.

MM: Oh. Gosh. What a hot place to ... (laughs)

JC: Well, they needed to, you know, they came here, they needed to place to train. Like, used to go to Kissimmee, Florida.

MM: Yeah, uh-huh.

JC: These, they had to come early, you know, so they could get in. Omaha, Nebraska, they ...

MM: They can't play ball until they ...

JC: They – you can't play ball up, until May, you know.

MM: Yeah.

JC: So they came down here, yeah.

MM: Oh.

JC: They had – our baseball park had a fence all the way around it. It was a excellent park. Yeah they did.

MM: Well who played for Lee College's? What – did, did Exxon possess it?

JC: That was, uh – that was, uh ... that was – I don't know who – I think the Gulf Company ...

MM: Oh they had a team.

JC: uh, they, they ... paid for that. We'd play Gulf one Sunday, and they'd play us and [inaudible]. And they'd play Barbers Hill, we'd play Barbers Hill. And then, they were just – we'd play teams out of Houston, and uh ... Well, you know that was the only, that was about the only amusement there was here in the summertime.

MM: Yes.

JC: We'd have high as 25 – 3,000 people out there at one of those baseball games.

MM: Oh! Ooo.

JC: Yes, ma'am.

MM: That's very impressive.

JC: Yeah! (Laughs) I think they charged 25 cents to get in there.

MM: Oh.

JC: Something like that.

MM: More than a movie.

(Laughter)

JC: Oh, it was, it was, uh, it was a ... you know, you – there was no place to go; nobody had an automobile. And, uh, there was no road, there were no roads here to get out of here.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Uh, I shipped my furniture down here by boat.

MM: Oh, you did?

JC: (Laughs)

MM: Oh. Well, what – uh, what other things like that do you remember about celebrations or entertainment, or ...

JC: Uh, they, the Humble Company had a, had a – they celebrated a hol-, they had a picnic every year they called Humble Day.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: That was in May.

MM: Yeah.

JC: I think it was in May. And that first started, they had it out in the refinery. And I don't know why they quit. But then they had it La Porte for a while. I think for two or three years they had it at La Porte. And then they brought it back over here. Then they moved it up yonder. Up to, way up yonder at East Gate.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Someplace up there. But they had – that was, that was a big thing. When I first came here, that Humble Day was a big thing. Boy it was something else – everybody went. And, uh ... they always had a big, uh, they'd have a big barbeque, you know, and everybody'd come. Then that afternoon they'd have a ballgame, and that night they'd have a dance, and ...

MM: Oh!

JC: It was a ...

MM: It was an all-day ...

JC: Yeah, it sure was. They'd have a big ballpark, down at there at the ballpark, after – maybe have two ballgames: maybe have one in the morning, and one in the afternoon.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And then they'd go over there and eat, and then they'd all go to the ballgame in the afternoon, and then that night they'd all go to the dance. And a good time was had by all. (Laughs)

MM: Oh!

(Laughter)

MM: Well, what about other things like Fourth of July, or ... things like that?

JC: Well, I, I don't, I don't, I don't remember – I, I ...

MM: That wasn't a big ...

JC: That, that wasn't then. Of course they always had Fourth of July, but that was – Humble Day was the big thing.

MM: That was the big thing.

JC: That was the big day, yes ma'am.

MM: Oh.

JC: That was always a big day.

MM: What about San Jacinto Day?

JC: Well, they had, uh – that, they used to have a, we didn't have anything here, but they always had something up there at the park. Up there at San Jacinto battleground.

MM: Uh-huh. Did you ever go to that?

JC: I don't believe I ever did.

MM: No?

JC: I had no automobile.

MM: Oh. Well that would, that would limit, uh ...

JC: Yeah, you get limited. And when you went to Houston, they had a – there was a man down here had a bunch of old touring cars. Big ol' touring cars. Hold six people.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Some of 'em hold more than that. They had these jump seats in 'em, you know.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Well, they had a place over there on Texas Avenue somewhere around over there by the railroad. On that side of – on Commerce Street. Well, if you want to go to Houston, well you just go over there and, and, uh ... tell him you want to go to Houston. Well, he – that car would be sitting there, and you'd go get it in, and you might sit there an hour before he'd get enough ...

MM: Just waiting, waiting for a crowd to come.

JC: Yeah, he wouldn't take, wouldn't – he wouldn't go less than five. And same way in Houston. You'd go up at the courthouse over there on, uh ... Preston Street I think they had a place.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Right at the courthouse. Well he'd go there, and you'd go sit in the car and say, "How long before you're going?"

JC: "Need two more." When they'd come, why, he'd ... (laughs)

(Laughter)

JC: Yeah. Oh, it was – transportation was bad.

MM: Oh, yeah. It sounds like it.

JC: And it'd take you forever. They go, they go – we used to go up Highway 90. Go way up yonder into the fifth ward

MM: Oh. Uh-huh.

JC: ... and go into Houston, you know.

MM: Oh.

JC: And out on the Ford Road over there, by the time you went up that thing, by the time you went to Houston and back with that, well you'd have a floating kidney that road was so rough.

(Laughter)

JC: That was a old shell road that's loud and old. There you just (thumping sound).

MM: Just bump along, huh? (Laughs)

JC: Yeah.

MM: Oh. Well, you mentioned the other day about the Ku Klux Klan. Tell me about that.

JC: Oh, well that was about ... I believe that must have been in about '21.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Uh, there was a ... Right in back of my house there was a street. I forget now what the street – Philly Street, I believe it is. It's that street there right by Barbra Brunson's store.

MM: Ok. Uh-huh.

JC: That street that goes back up there. Well there was a – there were two neighbors, families, that lived back there about, uh, maybe a half a block off that road right on the side of that street, and they had two tents there. First time I ever knew anything about it, well I went to work one morning and I saw those ... there was tele-, they had a light pole out there so they could get electricity.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And the sign on that light pole telling 'em to ... (laughs)

MM: Get out?

JC: And, uh ... they had, had then that, that told us who they were. Well, I – I never thought anything about it, and they had just got, gradually got worse and worse. And they, they, uh ... The theory behind those people in those days were the black and the Catholics, see? And they were after the Catholics and the blacks.

MM: Oh.

JC: And then up in the east, they were after their farmers. You know, they were after the people that were immigrants.

MM: Yes.

JC: Over on the west, they were after the Japanese.

MM: Yeah. Well, didn't you say you went to a Catholic high school? Are you a Catholic?

JC: Yes, ma'am. Oh, yes ma'am!

MM: Well, how did you feel about that?

JC: Well, it didn't bother me. I didn't care anything about it. Just made me mad. Told me I wasn't a good citizen.

MM: Well, sure. That would make me plenty mad. [22:39]

JC: And I said, uh, I said, "Where do you think I'm not a good citizen?"

JC: "Well, you owe allegiance to the Pope."

JC: I said, "Hell, I don't owe allegiance to the Pope," I said, "All he's supposed to do is get me to heaven." I said, "Man, I came out of the army with a honorable discharge and an excellent character record. You tell me I'm not a good American? What are you talking about?"

MM: Well, did you know any of the people who were at the refinery ?

JC: Oh, yeah! Oh lived – that was all around me. And I used to see 'em come down here on Friday. From Houston. And they'd come down here on Friday about five o'clock in the evening. And had great big ol' Cadillac touring cars with the top down. And there'd be about four or five of 'em in there. And they'd come down here and pick out some ...

MM: With their robes and everything?

JC: Oh they wouldn't – no, they wouldn't have their robes on 'em.

MM: Oh.

JC: They wouldn't put those on till they went to work.

MM: Oh. And then what'd they – what would they do when they got here?

JC: Just got down here and they'd probably go somewhere and get dressed, and then when it got dark, well they'd go out and pick up some fella they were wanting to whip for somebody or some ...

MM: Did you ever know anybody who was whipped?

JC: You dang right, I did. I know a – I knew one fella that whip, called him out of the refinery and whipped him.

MM: What had he done?

JC: Well, he hadn't done anything that they hadn't done.

MM: Oh.

JC: There was a man out in the refinery – these two fellas worked at the same unit. And they were good friends. And, uh ... this guy used to go invite this man to his house and eat dinner with him, and they – we'd say one of 'em was working one shift, and one was working another. Well, and this guy, this guy that owned the house, he'd go on four to 12, and this guy would be there eating dinner, well he wouldn't leave, see where I'm ...

MM: Oh now I see.

JC: Well, now you know, uh ... you know who and I to judge? Well anyway, they decided they'd whip that fella. Well they caught him one night coming out of the refine- ...

MM: For doing what, though?

JC: Well, they claimed that he broke up this fella's home.

MM: Oh, oh, I see.

JC: Well anyway, they whipped him one night coming out the refinery. Caught him – he was working four to 12. When he came out of the refinery, they picked him up at the gate, and they took him out on the, out there on the road about where Bay Villa is now.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And they gave him a good whipping. And they brought him back, put feathers on him and – tarred him, feathered him, brought him back to the refinery and dumped him out. And the next day, he went back out to the refinery. And he recognized one of those fellas. And he said something to him about it, and the fella took off. Left. He was... So he left here. This fella left here. And the reason he left, he said, "I know who those fellas were. And I'll have to kill some of 'em. And I don't want to do that."

JC: So he and this lady that, uh, they'd whipped him about, they left here. He married that lady and they left here.

MM: Oh my goodness.

JC: And the last time I heard of that fella, he was the superintendent of a refinery up in Arkansas.

MM: Is that right?

JC: Yes, ma'am. And then there was a man here one time. There was a man here one time, there was a lady here – lived over there in Goose Creek somewhere, I don't know where she lived. But her husband was a driller. And he'd gone to South America.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And then they left her here with two children. And, uh ... they, she had a ... friend. I ... and, and I don't know – you know, I'm not, I'm not the judge.

MM: Yes. I understand.

JC: But back in those days, these houses were all shotgun houses practically.

MM: Yeah.

JC: Well you could go in a shotgun house, and the first house, first room in there was a big room, and they had a bed in there. And that was always the living, uh, bedroom in the living room.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Well this woman was sick. And this fella went over there to see her. And she was sitting in there in the room with these two children, and the man came in. And they came in there and got that guy out of there, and nearly killed him. And they took that woman off, cut her hair off.

MM: Oh!

JC: Stripped her, and whipped her good.

MM: Oh.

JC: Well, and, uh ... so. There was an old judge up in Houston, he's – he sent, (laughs) he sent, he sent a man down here to investigate it. (Laughs) There was an old boy he had in town that was about – had something wrong with him. I don't know what really, but he's kind of... He wasn't demented, but he was deformed, so he kind of walked sideways a little bit.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And there was another fella here in town that was a damn rascal. (Laughs) And he, he was in that thing. Well, when they came down here to arrest him, they arrested this old boy that was, this old guy – and they never did do anything to that other fella.

MM: Oh!

JC: But, it, uh ... It got to – you know they're back in business around here, now. They're pretty heavy.

MM: I've seen 'em on the highway. Yeah.

JC: Yeah, yeah. And, and, uh, then, there was a fella here one time that was postmaster. And he was man about town, and he, he, I, I – you know, as I say again, you know, I don't I had my own business I can't deal with that. But I wasn't bothered by anybody. But anyway, he went out – he was, uh, he went out, started out for that Masonic Lodge out there at Cedar Bayou, which is that old one out there.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: Well he had a man with him – a deputy sheriff with him. And why that deputy sheriff was with him, I don't know. Cause when they got to the railroad out there on that Cedar Bayou Road there, they kind of slowed down to go over that railroad, they jumped out and got after him. And this guy run out, this deputy sheriff run out there and pulled his gun. And when he did, well they all broke and ran. And one of 'em got hung up in the fence out there, and they caught him. And (Laughs) ...

MM: Oh!

JC: Then there was an old judge in Houston that, that, uh, was very anti-Kan. And he came down here, they told – he came down here and he was gonna talk against 'em. And they told him if he came down here, they'd go whip him. Well he said, "I'll be there."

JC: Well, right over there where we used to play baseball, well they, course they had a grandstand over there. And he was gonna make a speech over there. So, uh ... They told him not come. He said, "I'll be there."

JC: So I went over there to see what he was gonna do, and he made his speech. And everybody raised their hand. And I think they just finally petered out around here or something. I don't know why.

MM: Bout how – About two or three years?

JC: Yes, ma'am.

MM: Of that kind of activity?

JC: There was a priest in Houston who was a very patriotic man. A fella by the name of Kervin. And, uh ... Ku Klux gave the City of Houston an American flag. And it was on the corner of Main and McKinney. They had a memorial flagpole there.

MM: Oh.

JC: And he told 'em that he wouldn't salute any flag that was donated by a man with a sheet on his head. And, uh ... one of the papers up there in Houston got kind of, reprimanded him for that real gad-, bad. And they said some unkind things about him. So he sued 'em for a dollar.

MM: Oh! (Laughs)

JC: And won the judgement.

MM: He did?

JC: Yes, he did.

MM: For goodness sake.

JC: And, uh, I went out to Cedar Bayou one time on a Memorial Day. And, uh ... I was with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and ...

MM: Uh-huh. I knew you were in that.

JC: We were out there in the, in the military uniform and had our rifles ...

(End of tape)

(Tape 3 of 3)

JC: ... out there for Robert R. Tuck, who is a, a boy here in Goose Creek that was killed in the first war, and this, this Veterans of Foreign War post named after him. Well, we were all right there in the military formation one day, and I – I forget now what that old Lieutenant was; I was in the army with him. Well, we were all out there, and here come these guys marching in.

MM: With their robes on?

JC: Oh! They were just all tipped out, you know. So this guy, he, he just, he just broke up the military formation to let these guys through there. I thought to myself, Lord have mercy. That's terrible.

MM: That really is. Well what'd the community think about all that?

JC: Well, I ... I'll tell yeah. I'm gonna tell you something. Take this off.

(Tape cuts off.)

MM: How were black people treated? How – what was the ...

JC: Well, they were ... they were, uh, it was segregation. Everything was segregated. In the refinery, there were three drinking fountains: there were the white one, a brown one, and a black one. The bathrooms: colored, Mexican, white.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And, uh ... no Mexican, and no black ever had anything but labor jobs. There wasn't no – they never, they never progressed past a labor job. Until way up yonder.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And, uh, till they started this equal rights opportunity, whatever it was.

MM: Yeah.

JC: And, uh, we had, we had, uh ... we had Latin people out there who were – so it turned out – were very good mechanics. And we had dark, dark ones out there – black ones – that were good mechanics. As a matter of fact, I talked to a man the other day that was dark as he could be, and he is a mechanical supervisor out there.

MM: Oh.

JC: And, uh, I have a friend that was a, that's a plumber here who's a Latin man, and he was a – he finally got to be a pipefitter out there, see. But that happened way late.

MM: Yes.

JC: That happened a – just about the time I got ready to leave. I had a, I saw an incident of that happen one time. Uh, I was working on a unit, and there was a bath house adjacent to where I worked, and they had a sign up there: Mexican. With a toilet and a bathroom.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: And I saw two Latin people standing down there. And I told the man that I was talking to, I said, "You see those fellas down there talking?"

JC: He said, "Yeah."

JC: I said, "You watch that sign on that door." I said, "It'll be gone in about a month." Well, in about a month, that sign was gone. LULAC came in here.

MM: Oh.

JC: And they got after 'em, made 'em tear it down. Now those fellas, uh, they have black engineers ...

MM: Yeah.

JC: They have Mexican engineers. They – I don't know. I don't know what, I don't know what the progress is. But I have a friend out there who is a machinist, who is a supervisor in the machinist department, and he's just as smart as there is anybody is out there. See?

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: So they were not given a chance. And not – and they, they ... When I first came here, a colored child couldn't go, just went to grade school. And they had to go – there were no Negro high schools here.

MM: Oh!

JC: They had to go to Galveston or go to Houston to high school. And, uh, Mexican children all went to a Mexican school until they got to junior high school. And then they went to, uh, American school.

MM: Well where was the Mexican school? What, was that ...

JC: It was down there in old Baytown. Right off of, right behind – right behind ... let me tell you, let me see if I can tell you where it was. You know where that tabernacle is out there in Baytown? That big old, where the old picture show was?

MM: Yes.

JC: Non-denominational? Well it was right down that street – right, pretty far down there they had a Mexican ...

MM: Is that where De Zavala School, is that, is that De Zavala School?

JC: I think that was the name. No, no. That was, that was the Pumphrey School. De Zavala School is down here in Pelly. That old lady that, that I – we had an old lady, an old white teacher here. She taught those children down there.

MM: Oh.

JC: And they called that the Pumphrey School. And got her set up where she taught.

MM: Oh.

JC: And those little fellas ... Then, there was a man came here by the name of Bano Elis. He was a Latin. An accomplished musician. And he went down there in Mexican town, and he organized a Latin band down there. He got every kid there was down there. And some of 'em – and he got their daddies and told 'em, said, "I want to teach your kids to music."

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: That was before they had music in the schools I imagine. I don't know – might have had, I don't know whether, well, these kids were all – they didn't have music until they got up here.

MM: Um-hmm.

JC: The high school or someplace. I don't remember what it was. But anyway, he had a band down there. And he organized the band.

MM: Oh.

JC: And they were all, nothing but Mexican children.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: And he was rough on 'em. He'd hit 'em over the head, you know. He was a – and he'd make 'em play. And, uh, all those Mexicans went for that. They were just, they were – that were in favor of that. Well, those kids got up to that high school, and they were good – but the thing about it was, these kids could play in the, they could play in the band at the lower school, but when they got to high school ...

MM: They weren't allowed in the band?

JC: Uh, you know there was, there was a lot of segregation. I have a Latin man here that was born in Victoria. And, uh, where he came from, there was no discrimination; Victor whether; And uh, he's, he's, he's very bitter right now. He's very bitter. Because he wasn't allowed to ... He finally wound up out there when the segregation broke down, he finally did alright. But, uh, he was segregated a long time.

MM: Oh.

JC: Negroes were segregated and, uh, they started out paying 'em five cents less an hour than they did the Anglos, see.

MM: Yeah. Uh-huh.

JC: But they, in – there's no, there's no, uh ... And, now the schools are – the schools, when the schools integrated here, they had no trouble.

MM: I, I'm aware of that, yes. I was a student ...

JC: Uh, when they integrated Lee High School, my daughter was over there: my daughter who's princi-, uh, counselor at Robert E. Lee. And you know her.

MM: Uh-huh.

JC: Uh, they all – the photographers were right there waiting to see the big confrontation, you know. And finally, they just told 'em, "Now the picture taking is over, and we're going to school." And into school they went. And that's all there was to that.

MM: That's what I understand. It was just a smoothly ... just as smoothly as possible.

JC: Yeah, just as smooth as could be. This is a very unique place.

MM: I think it is, too.

JC: Very unique. I, uh ... I have ... I have a vast host of friends. I have people who, are ... and all between.

MM: Uh-huh. Well, I can believe that. That looked ...

JC: And I, I have – and I, I don't know of a man that ever worked under my supervision that doesn't ... when he sees me, he acts like he's glad to see me.

MM: I imagine he is.

JC: And now most of 'em say, "Do you remember the first day I ever worked for you?"

(Laughter)

JC: Well, what happened? Well, you did this, and you did that (laughs). I had a lot of fun, you know, I just had a lot of fun. I, I – I just got along with everybody.

MM: Well, it certainly sounds like it. I'll turn this ...

(End of tape)

Transcribed by: Amanda Smoke 2/27/18