

The University of Southern Mississippi
Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage

Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster–Gulf Coast Fisheries
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Lloyd “Wimpy” Serigne

Interviewers: Barbara Hester and Stephanie Scull-DeArmey

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An Oral History with Lloyd "Wimpy" Serigne, Volume 1043

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Biography

Lloyd “Wimpy” Serigne was born on March 3, 1940, to John Serigne (born on Delacroix Island, Louisiana, in 1893) and Emily Perez Serigne (born on Delacroix Island, Louisiana, about 1900). His father was a commercial fisherman. In his family of origin, Spanish was spoken, which Serigne remembers and speaks. Serigne began fishing as a child with his father, and he fished commercially on a part-time basis, in the Louisiana wetlands, throughout his life. He also worked as a professional truck driver. He earned a GED after quitting school. He enjoys photography, art, and watching documentaries. He is a docent at the Los Islenos Museum in St. Bernard, Louisiana, and he also serves as an interpreter there. He is a descendant of the Canary Islanders who settled in the Delacroix Island area of Louisiana. At the time of this interview, he was retired, and he was president of the Los Islenos Heritage and Cultural Society.

In June of 1959, he married Doris Gutierrez in Violet, Louisiana. They have two children, Kirk Emile Serigne (born on January 13, 1961) and Julie Serigne Gunther (born on August 30, 1964).

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AN ORAL HISTORY
with
LLOYD “WIMPY” SERIGNE

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Lloyd “Wimpy” Serigne and is taking place on April 3, 2012. The interviewers are Stephanie Scull-DeArmey and Barbara Hester.

Scull-DeArmey: This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Project of The University of Southern Mississippi done in conjunction with the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Voices from the Fisheries/BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster project. The interview is with Mr. Lloyd Serigne?

Serigne: Serigne.

Scull-DeArmey: Serigne.

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: Serigne, Lloyd Serigne and it is taking place on April 3, 2012, at 11:30 a.m. in St. Bernard, Louisiana. The interviewers are Stephanie Scull- [DeArmey] and—

Hester: Barbara Hester.

Scull-DeArmey: And first I’d like to thank you, Mr.—

Serigne: Serigne.

Scull-DeArmey: The accent is on the first syllable, Serigne, Serigne. Is that right?

Serigne: Right. Well, think of serenade in a song.

Scull-DeArmey: Ah.

Serigne: Take the D off.

Scull-DeArmey: Oh, OK. (laughter) I’d like to thank you, Mr. Serigne, for taking time to talk with us today. I’m going to ask you for a little background information. I’m going to ask you for the record, could you state your name, please?

Serigne: Lloyd Serigne.

Scull-DeArmey: And for the record, how do you spell your name?

Serigne: L-L-O-Y-D, Serigne, S-E-R-I-G-N-E.

Scull-DeArmey: And you said there was an acute accent over that final E?

Serigne: On the E, yes.

Scull-DeArmey: Right. And when were you born? (0:01:29.2)

Serigne: On March 3, 1940.

Scull-DeArmey: And where were you born?

Serigne: Well, in New Orleans.

Scull-DeArmey: Where did you grow up?

Serigne: Delacroix Island, which is in St. Bernard.

Scull-DeArmey: Terrific. Well, we're going to just go right into our questions. These are questions that NOAA has asked us to concentrate on, and since they're funding the grant, we decided we would comply. When and where did you learn to fish? (0:02:01.6)

Serigne: Well, at Delacroix Island, at my hometown. My dad was a fisherman, you know, and I learned how to fish then. And when I was a child, I worked with him.

Hester: What was your dad's name?

Serigne: John Serigne.

Scull-DeArmey: What are your some of your first memories of being around the fishermen?

Serigne: First memories, wow, since I was a child.

Scull-DeArmey: Can you just paint us a picture of what that was like?

Serigne: It was a wonderful place for a child to grow up in. We were pretty free. We had the bayou to swim in. We had a lot of woods to play in and yards. There was no fences. You knew everybody [and] just played everywhere in the whole village. And as far as fishing, well, like I said, my dad was a fisherman all his life. He was a shrimper, a trapper, also. He used to trap in the winter, and he was a shrimper in the summer, and also a crab fisherman. He did all of these things in order to make a living, you know. And that's how I was introduced to it. I mean, I just grew up in it. But later years, I left it. (laughter) And after I got older and became a man, my dad kept telling me, "Try and do something else besides this because I see this ending." And so I did, and when I was nineteen years old or twenty years old, anyway, I sought jobs in the city and wound up being a truck driver for forty-something years.

Hester: How old—

Serigne: But I still [stayed] in contact with the fishing. In other words, I drove trucks for a living, but I've always went back, and I had a little, small shrimp boat, and I always did that part-time. But most of, a lot of my friends that I grew up with [stayed] fishing until today. I was just one of them [who] sort of took my dad's advice and left the industry. And I was the youngest one out of nine. So my oldest brother left the industry, also, and he went to work for the oil companies at the time. Then the next brother from him, he [stayed] a fisherman all his life until the day he died. And then the brother that was closer to me, he left the fishing industry, also, and became a construction worker and a pipefitter, things like that. And in the [19]50s, I would say, there was a drastic change in the culture and also the industry. (0:05:04.7) A lot of fellows left the fishing industry and went into different jobs, different places. But there were still quite a few of them that [stayed] fishing.

Scull-DeArme: Why did they decide to leave like that? What were the changes?

Serigne: The changes in the [19]50s, the culture, we got more exposed to, more communication with the city and the culture there; so therefore we began to change. In other words, the [19]50s was my teenage years, and we were introduced to rhythm and blues, and rock and roll. And before that, when I was a child, we never had good roads. It was just shell roads down to Delacroix when I was a child. And in 1954, I think it was, they asphalted the highway. That's another thing my dad told me, he said, "They're putting asphalt on this highway. There's going to be a lot of traffic. Be careful," and what have you. And it came about. Before the [19]50s, very few people had automobiles. There was no indoor plumbing, nothing like that. So they started traveling and communicating. They wasn't as isolated as they were before the [19]50s, but the [19]50s took a drastic, drastic change in many, many ways, culturally. The oil companies came in and started digging canals and drilling for oil. In those days there was no restrictions. (0:06:52.0) If they were seismographing and thought that was oil in one place, they just dug a canal straight there. And it wound up being, if you fly over the southern part of Louisiana, you can still see the remnants of the—wherever you'd see a straight canal, there was an oil company, and they just—this is my own opinion, and I think they devastated the marshland, introduced saltwater into it long before the MR GO [Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet].

Hester: Why was it that your father recommended that you look into some occupation?

Serigne: Well, he was under the belief that, by the time I came along, that we should get a education, which I was kind of hardheaded, and I didn't finish high school, but anyway, get an education and get away from the fishing industry because he thought that it wasn't going to last too much longer. So he figured by me having a future in a different way of making a living, that I would do better.

Hester: Can you talk about maybe what he was seeing in the industry that made him think that it was coming to an end?

Serigne: I really can't pinpoint one thing, but he saw where—I don't know. At that time the crabbing industry wasn't too much; there was mostly shrimp, oysters. Of course where I grew up in Delacroix, there wasn't too many oyster fishermen. (0:08:29.8) There was a few. My brother-in-law was a oyster fisherman in the winter only. It was mainly shrimpers and crabbers and trappers. Trapping muskrat was one of their biggest incomes in the winter. And we would—I won't say "we." When I was a little child, I remember going to the camps out in the marsh and staying out there all winter. The trapping season started in December, but they would go out in the latter part of October and November and burn the marsh, (0:09:05.1) and the reason for burning the marsh was to—the fresh, green grass would come up, and the muskrat would like that. And not only that, they could walk the marsh much easier and set their traps. And they sold fur, the muskrat, the otter, mink, raccoons, all these different animals. They would use the fur and sell the fur off of them, and in the winter. And then in the [19]50s, (0:09:38.4) like I said, the boats had bigger motors. They were faster, so there wasn't no use for the camps anymore. They would go to the marshland by boat and come back every day, where in the old days, the boats were very slow, and they had to go out in the marsh, and they'd build a cabin out there, and they would just stay out there all winter.

Scull-DeArmey: So what's a camp, for the record? Is [it] a cabin for the fishermen to live while they're fishing?

Serigne: Well, for the trappers. Well, you were fishermen and trappers. In those days back in the—before I was born, [19]20s, '30s and '40s was one of their main incomes. (0:10:27.4) They made more with the fur than what they did with the fishing or shrimping, things like that. But then like I said, in the late [19]40s and the '50s, all this started reversing. You had the mink farms, and it sort of lowered the price on the fur, and people quit using fur coats. And then the animal activists came in. Well, that more or less finished it altogether. And that all happened in—these changes happened in the [19]50s. There were some trappers later on in the [19]60s and that, but it was really fading out. The price on the fur wasn't there, so therefore they turned to shrimping, crabbing and fishing for fish. We used to fish with, we called it, in Spanish we called it chincharba(?), but the name of it is a seine. (0:11:25.7) It's not a purse seine, but it's the old-type seine where you would—and you did this mostly in the winter after the trapping industry went out. Of course they did it before that, too. Some people wasn't trapping; they would stay fishing. And it's a big, long seine that you go along the bank. We have no beaches in Louisiana. So we'd go on the bank and set this seine out about twenty-four hundred feet, and they had like a bag on the bottom, and you took a crew of at least six to eight men to handle it because you had to get in the water, and you had a gadget like with a roller on it, and one of them would work the lead line. A couple of them would work the lead line. A couple of them worked the cork line. And once the seine is closed in, well, you had this big sack, and you would scoop the fish out of that and put it in smaller boats and take it to the bigger boat, and then the bigger boat would take it into the dealers that I was talking about, where they bought the fish and things like that. I worked a seine one winter. I had worked truck driving for twenty years, and the company I worked for folded up in the [19]80s, early '80s, and I had some friends down there, were still

fishing. They were still working this type of seine. And we did it one winter and the following winter. No. I think it was the same winter, right at the end of the winter, they outlawed it. (0:13:03.6) We got arrested. (laughter) And so therefore you couldn't use a seine anymore. It was finished. That was finished.

Hester: That particular type of seine?

Serigne: That particular type of seine, and then later on, we had gillnets that they outlawed those.

Hester: Why did they ban the seine that (inaudible)?

Serigne: Well, the sports fishermen thought that we were catching all the fish, killing all the fish, which we weren't. (0:13:35.9) What the sports fishermen didn't understand was that a fishermen, a commercial fishermen only takes the marketable fish. And this seine kept the fish alive until you took it out, and the smaller fish were let go. That was your future. (0:13:55.8) That's the way we looked at it. It was our future, and so we just took out the marketable big fish and let the little ones go, and later on they became the egg-layers, and you had a future, where the sports fishermen didn't understand that. They thought we were just killing fish, and they couldn't catch them with a rod and reel.

Hester: So were you able to continue using another kind of seine?

Serigne: Well, from the seine, no. The seine was just outlawed altogether, couldn't use a seine. So this was in the [19]80s, now. I was still a fisherman. I went back for seven years when my job folded up. So anyway, we were using gillnets, (0:14:43.2) and we would put the gillnets out. I had about ten or fifteen gillnets. And then it was the sports fishermen again. They were against the gillnets. They used all kind of different things to fight the gillnets, so they outlawed them. They picked up my nets. Never did retrieve them because if I'd have went to retrieve them, I'd have got a big fine, so forth and so on. In the industry, that was finished. So why go pick them up? So I had to leave that. I couldn't do that. And these things were—like the gillnet fishing, we only did it just in the winter because in the winter there's no shrimp, very few crabs, so you turned to that. So you caught the marketable fish. The gillnets, they was quite large, and you only caught the marketable fish. And if I would go out and catch, let's say four or five redbfish and different other fish, garfish, sheepshead, different fish like that, they was marketable size because the small ones'll go through. It wouldn't hurt them. I would make a day's work. So it's always something between the commercial fishermen and the sports fishermen, and they seem to feel that we hurt the fishing industry. They still don't understand, even till today.

Hester: Why do you think they have so much influence that it seems to (inaudible)?

Serigne: Because there's so many of them and not too many fishermen, commercial fishermen. They outnumber them. So whenever they want a law passed, they go to the state and the lawmakers and everything else, and lobbyists, and they get things done, where the fishermen don't have enough money to hire a lobbyist, and their numbers are smaller in the commercial fishing. And I think this happens all through

the coast, not only in Louisiana. I think it happens all over. And the changes were being made lately, like I said, [19]70s and '80s, these changes were taking place. Now, I have a gap when I left Delacroix and wasn't a fisherman, like I said, twenty years. And I did it part-time, and the only thing I did was go out with what we call night rigs and fished till about ten o'clock because it's just in your blood. (laughter) You just want to do it. And—

Scull-DeArmey: Night racing?

Serigne: Night rigging, (0:17:19.8) we call night rigging is butterfly nets, and they catch the shrimp at night. But this is a later way of doing it because in the old days my dad would tell me that there was no such things as trawlers. There were no motor boats in his time. He told me a lot of things that went on when he was a young man because they never had motor boats or anything at all, by oars and paddling a pirogue.

Scull-DeArmey: Did they ever sail?

Serigne: Yes. My daddy sailed. He knew how to sail. And the reason why I really knew, found out that he could sail, he wasn't mechanically inclined at all, and he wouldn't let us touch a engine. And my brother and I were fishing with him, (0:18:06.1) and we're the two youngest ones. This was later on when they had boats that would do about twenty miles an hour. They thought they were flying. But anyway, one time the motor quit running. We used to pick up the trawl by hand and everything; we picked up the trawl and all. And we had all these boats, and back in the [19]50s and late '40s, all had a little cabin on it, and they had a little canopy in the front. And in those days there were very few boats around. You was lucky if you seen another boat in one day. So he decided he didn't want to—my brother wanted to work on the engine, and he forbade him, "No, no. You can't do it." So we listened to him. He took the canopy, and we had a little mast (inaudible) on the front. Took the canopy loose on this end, lowered it down, and made a sail from the mast, and (laughter) he maneuvered that boat through the bayous and the little lakes and everything with a sail. And then he would tell us, how he used to sail when he was a kid. They used to sail all over with little smaller boats and everything and row with them rowboats.

Scull-DeArmey: A lot of the fishermen we've interviewed on the Mississippi Gulf Coast were fishing in inshore waters of the Mississippi Sound. But it sounds like what you were doing was a little different in the bayous.

Serigne: Well, that's inland waters.

Scull-DeArmey: For the record, for people who years from now won't know what this area's like, can you kind of paint a picture of what that was like?

Serigne: The bayous?

Scull-DeArmey: The wetlands, the marshes, the bayous, what do they look like? (0:19:58.2)

Serigne: There was a lot of bayous. Matter of fact, my dad, once he got a motorboat when I was a young one, he used to just trawl the bayous. They had so many bayous, all over the marsh until the oil industry came in. (laughter) But anyway, it was natural waterways is what they were. Like this bayou out front here, there were branches off of the river. That's where the river flowed at one time thousands and thousands of years ago, and when they harnessed the Mississippi River, well, they became bayous, and they never had the current that they had before. And then it was just, in the marsh, there were just a lot of bayous all over and small lakes. See, it was not open water until you got about, I'd say, I'd venture to say about thirty miles or so from the fishing village. You had to go at least thirty miles before you got to more or less open waters, maybe more than that because the bayou from the end of Delacroix Island Village to the, what we call Black Bay today, was twenty-two miles long. And then you had so many islands in this area that you had to go another, at least, ten miles before you got into the Gulf, really, in open waters. And so my dad always fished in the inland waters. There was a lot of them that did have bigger boats, and they went out in the Gulf.

Scull-DeArme y: When you were a child, what were the nets made from? (0:21:43.8)

Serigne: They were made of webbing, mesh.

Scull-DeArme y: Not monofilament?

Serigne: No, no, no, no. It was all cotton, cotton string.

Scull-DeArme y: When did you see that change over your career, over your lifetime of being—

Serigne: Over my lifetime of going from cotton webbing to monofilament and plastic, that happened in the [19]80s, when I went totally commercial fishing for seven years during the [19]80s.

Scull-DeArme y: And now monofilament is outlawed in Mississippi. I don't know if it's outlawed in Louisiana.

Serigne: I don't know. You would have to speak to fishermen that's fishing today. And I left the industry a long time ago. But it went from—well, they call it plastic, plastic webbing, and then they had the knotless plastic webbing. I never did fool with it because I left the industry, but today they do. And it was totally different. Like I said there's such a change in a such a short period of time.

Hester: Did you, at some point, buy your own boat?

Serigne: Yeah.

Hester: What type of boat did you get, and when did you get it? (0:23:01.1)

Serigne: Well, I just, like I said, I left the fishing industry, and I bought me a little sports boat, at first. When I first got married, and I could afford to get a boat, I bought one of those with a outboard motor on it. Then later on my brother and I built about

five or six, what they call, Lafitte skiffs. That's another thing; before the Lafitte skiff—the skiff was originated in Lafitte, I assume, because they called it a Lafitte skiff. The first one at Delacroix Island, I remember, was a fellow by the name of—I didn't know his real name. They called him Dutch Shield(?) and—

Hester: Can you say that again, Dutch?

Serigne: Dutch Shield.

Hester: Shield.

Serigne: His last name was Shield. He was German, but he married a Canarian at Delacroix Island. And the one that I can remember was in the [19]50s, also. You see, so many different things took place. He was the one that had the first Lafitte skiff at Delacroix Island, and it was so fast. People were astounded by it. The old boats they would have the bottom turn up and have a shaft log under there, and then they would put, to make it run faster, they would put a squat board on it.

Scull-DeArmeY: They would put a what?

Serigne: We'd call it a squat board.

Scull-DeArmeY: Squat board.

Serigne: Right. In other words on the back, so like that it would make the boat get up and run faster, and without the squat board, it would just stay running slow. But the Lafitte skiff, I assume it was created in Lafitte because they called it a Lafitte skiff. It was strictly flat bottom all the way, and it naturally just got up and ran faster. They didn't need squat boards. They didn't need all these things to make it run faster. And like the rest of the world, progression makes you move faster, I guess, (laughter) so that the world moves faster. And I think the world was better when it was slow. This is my opinion only because when I was a child, seven, eight years old, 1947, 1948, I remember a lot of that, how slow things were. My dad had a routine. (0:25:28.2) He'd get up at two o'clock in the morning and go out trawling. And by 11:30, twelve o'clock in the day, his day was finished. That was a routine. Went in and washed the boat, cleaned the boat, went inside, ate, took a bath, took a nap. Four or five o'clock in the evening, he'd get out there and mend the trawl because you're dragging the trawl, and you make little holes in it, so he would mend the trawl. Then I guess about seven o'clock or so, he'd go to the bar. He wasn't a drinking man. Of course, there were, but he would go there every evening, and just talk with the fellows, and they'd talk about what they'd done that day, where he caught, where this one caught shrimp, and where that one was at, just a whole lot of fun things to talk about. And at nine o'clock, he would leave and come home. And then same routine.

Hester: I'm curious as to—listening to your dad's daily routine, what was your daily routine? I'm interested in how it changed.

Serigne: You mean, when I was a—

Hester: Yes, when you were fishing.

Serigne: Going to school, I guess, the routine of getting up and going to school.

Hester: When you were commercially, when you were fishing commercially.

Serigne: Oh, when I was.

Hester: Yes. What would be your routine, daily routine? (0:26:48.6)

Serigne: Well, I built a boat, myself; that was the thirty-five-foot. So I would stay in it, and I would go out and make a trip for two, three days, and then come in, unload, take a day's rest, stay home, and go back out again. That would be my routine.

Hester: Whereas your dad would come in every night.

Serigne: Every night, right, because he had a smaller boat. Now, before I was of age to remember, he had one boat where he wouldn't make trips, but he was getting older by the time he had me. (laughter) He was already older, where he would stay out on trips because they had to, the boats were so slow. And matter of fact, they would go out to, like I said, Black Bay and trawl. And they had what they called a freight boat, (0:27:43.7) one big, big boat, and the dealers would have this boat, and all the smaller boats would stay there, and they would trawl during the day, and things like that, and they would bring their shrimp to the freight boat, the big boat. And once that big boat got loaded, that big boat would come in and sell the shrimp at the market, but the little ones would stay out there. And then, like I said, when the boats got faster, they didn't need that freight boat anymore. They would go out and come in every day. Like I said, my dad would go out at two o'clock in the morning; this was in the [19]50s. You see, it's a tremendous change, tremendous. And they didn't need the freight boat anymore. They didn't have to stay out too much because my daddy had gotten older already, so he didn't want to be staying out in a boat that long, and so he would go and come every day because the boats were faster.

Scull-DeArmeY: I have a couple of follow-up questions for you. You said on the old boats there was a shaft log. Can you explain what that was? (0:28:55.2)

Serigne: I could draw a picture more than what I could explain it, but I'll try to explain it. The bottom of the boat, the old—the big boats today still have them, the big, what we call Florida rigs, the double riggers, the big, big boats. In other words, the bottom of the boat is turned up in the back, and the engine is inside, and a shaft log is where the shaft from the rear of the engine goes to the prop. So they made that out of wood and out of logs, so they called it a shaft log.

Scull-DeArmeY: In terms of marketing your catch, it sounds like the freight boat was where your dad marketed his catch. Is that correct? (0:29:40.9)

Serigne: Right. The shrimp dealers would have this big boat, and it would go out and anchor, and the smaller boats would catch the shrimp until that big boat was filled up with shrimp. And then they iced them down. They brought a lot of ice and iced them

down, and that's how they would keep them fresh and then bring them in. And then this same boat would unload into trucks and bring them to market, French Market in the city.

Scull-DeArmey: In New Orleans.

Serigne: In New Orleans, right.

Scull-DeArmey: How did that change for you? How did you market your catch?

Serigne: Well, I just brought it to the dealers because you couldn't really have time to peddle your shrimp. When I was fishing at night with the butterfly nets, you fished all night, and when you came in during the day, and you had, let's say, a thousand pounds, fifteen hundred pounds, you didn't have time to go out and peddle these. So the dealers, the fellows that were buying, they would buy everything that you caught. You'd just unload the boat, and they would take to market, to factories, and also markets in the city, and all over.

Scull-DeArmey: Where were those dealers?

Serigne: They're at Delacroix Island, itself. There's several wharfs; they'll sell, people that deal in buying and selling.

Scull-DeArmey: But that's different than the seafood processing plant?

Serigne: Yes. In other words, the dealers would buy off the fishermen, and they would truck them to the processing plants, and they'd sell them to the processing plants. And then after the processing plants, then the consumer would buy them.

Hester: And the dealers—

Serigne: Or the markets would buy off of the processing plant, and then it gets to the consumer. So let's say a fishermen would get maybe a dollar and a half a pound for shrimp, a certain size. They have different sizes. They went by count. Anyway, let's say a dollar and a half. By the time it got to the consumer, it was double or more the price.

Scull-DeArmey: All those markups every time it changed hands.

Serigne: Right Well, we call them middlemen, all the middle people. And that sort of changed, also. I remember when I was a child, when my dad would bring in to the, we'd say, dealers, he would unload his boat. And I'll never forget this fellow. He worked for—well, never worked for, but he was a dealer for him. They had trucks, big trucks. All right? They would take the shrimp out of the boats. He had several fishermen that would fish for him. So once they all came in, he would ice up the shrimp in the big trucks, and at that time, they would bring them to the French Market, mostly, and sold it in the city. And he would give them whatever price. He would just charge them for freight in those days. OK? They just charged for freight. OK. So I have a truck. I want to become a dealer. I'll buy the shrimp off of you. I don't buy them off of you. I'll haul them to market for you. OK? And I'll take so much a

pound for my freight, in other words. And that's the way they did it. And I'll never forget this fellow was named—I didn't know his real name, but they called him Baker Perez. He was a relative of ours because my mother was a Perez, and a very honest man. He told him a price. I forgot what it was, but in those days it was like twenty dollars or thirty dollars a barrel, which was two hundred and ten pounds per barrel, and he got about twenty, twenty-five dollars, thirty dollars a barrel, which was a pretty good price. So he brought it to market, and he came back, and he gave my daddy more than, let's say, twenty-five dollars a pound. He might've gave him thirty. And my daddy would tell him, "Look, you're giving me too much money." He said, "Oh, no, no." He said, "The reason why I'm giving you more, I got more money for it at the market."

Scull-DeArmey: That's very unusual today. Isn't it?

Sergine: Very unusual today, it just doesn't happen. I don't want to speak ill of the dealers today, but you know it's quite different. (laughter)

Hester: The dealers had the freight boats, and the freight boats went directly to the trucks. There wasn't a—

Sergine: Right.

Hester: —facility or anything there that—

Sergine: So they just charged the fishermen for the freight, in other words to haul so much a pound, to haul it to market. And it was pretty well a honor system. I won't comment too much more on that. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: One of the next questions NOAA would like answered is what does the seafood industry mean to you, personally? (0:34:52.9)

Sergine: Personally, I'm so used to getting seafood off the boats and catching it myself and everything else, today. It's a good revenue for not only the state, but a way of making a living, and it's so damaged, so much, today. From fishing, trapping, crabbing, all these things, the only thing that I see that the fishermen can do now is shrimp, crab, or oysters. (0:35:32.9) The rest is just about gone, now. You have more modernized fellows, that, today, I've never done it, but I know that there's some fellow, young, a fisherman out there, they're fishing long line, what they call long line. And some of them, when they can't do anything with the crabs or the shrimp, they have today—I never did do it myself, but there's some of them, a few of them that trawl for fish. (0:36:06.4) They have a big-mesh net, and it's just like a trawl, same thing as a trawl, but it's big mesh, and they catch the fish to sell. And the only marketable fish right now is sheepshead and drum. I don't know if they can sell the drum. They outlawed that, too. (0:36:27.6) They outlawed redfish to be sold. They outlawed speckled trout to be sold. I think sheepshead can still be sold. I don't know about the drum. You'd have to ask a fisherman that's fishing today. Like I said, I left the industry a long time ago. But they outlawed so many things, in my own opinion it seems like they want to just do away with commercial fishing, and I think it's so wrong because Louisiana provides the United States with about, I would say, almost a

third of the seafood, and yet you have all these laws against this and against that and against this and against that. And it's all turning out just like Delacroix Island is not Delacroix Island any more. It's gone. It's gone altogether, now. (0:37:22.0)

Scull-DeArmev: What happened?

Serigne: Well, they started getting jobs and hurricanes. Far as I can remember, the first hurricane that I really remember was 1947; I was seven years old. It came and kind of devastated a little bit of the lower eastern part of the parish. But people just went back, cleaned their houses, or either built, and just went back. Then in 19—of course, my dad told me about the big storm in 1915. That was a big storm, and it killed a lot of people at Delacroix Island. He told me the stories about they never used to evacuate. They knew the storms were coming because of the birds, certain type of birds and the way the weather was reacting and everything, they knew the storm was coming. They just didn't know how bad it was. And he told me a story about that storm. In those days the kitchen was separated from the houses, and they was sitting in the house, him and his brother, and the wind was blowing so hard, the kitchen blew away. (laughter) So he told his brother, "Look." Said, "It's time for us to leave." So he got on his horse, and he started coming from—I think he was living in Woodlake at the time, and he was coming up to Laragio(?). And this was when the tidal wave hit him and the horse, and it just took the horse away. He happened to grab onto a tree and held on, and it washed his horse away. He lost his horse, and once the current more or less subsided a little bit or either stopped rolling, he swam from tree to tree until he got to higher ground, which was a few miles up. And then they—I have so many stories that the old people would tell us about families, whole families that got drowned because the wave came in and just knocked the house down and drowned whole families, and a lot of people drowned in 1915. Now, in 1947 there were warnings; radio was here. So they would come and pick us up. I remember they came and picked us up with buses. I was a little kid, and the water was already in our yard, and the bus would come, and I'd say, "Oh, boy, we're going to ride this nice [bus]." And we'd get in the bus, and there was big seats in it and everything. (laughter) And when you're a kid, you just think about all these things. And they brought us—we used to evacuate to the courthouse right here in Chalmette; well, it's in Chalmette now. And as a kid, I was enjoying it. They used to feed us milk and food and doughnuts and everything. And then in 1947, I remember whenever the eye passed over us, and I remember people going outside, "Oh, man, look at this. And this has got to be the eye." And people was talking about it. And that's all I can remember of [19]47. And then we had other storms that I remember. It could've been [19]47; I don't know, but they had to take us from the courthouse because the water had come in all the way up in Chalmette. And Kaiser [Aluminum] wasn't there yet. I don't know what year that was; I don't know if it was [19]47 or not, but I just vaguely remember these things as a child. They had to put us in the—we called them Army trucks, the big, high, elevated trucks, and brought us to the port in New Orleans, and we called it the port of embarkation at the time. Now, it's a naval facility. Anyway, it was quite-a-few-story building. Well, they trucked us in the back of these trucks going up, and this is one little thing that I remember of it, is that the water was just about to the bottom of the truck. And they had this fellow walking down the road with a

pirogue, and he was walking in about, you know, almost shoulder-deep water and pushing that pirogue, and this is the only thing. And then I remember when we was in the other building, it was big, big halls, and all of us kids was running and sliding and playing. We enjoyed it, but we didn't realize. I mean, we were kids. And then when they returned, the houses was all made out of cypress and that, and they would just clean them out, wash them up, and start living in them.

Scull-DeArmeY: For the record, can you describe what a pirogue is? (0:42:01.2)

Serigne: Pirogue is a, it's a two-pointed, small, you would say, boat with a flat bottom made out of—in the old days they made them out of cypress boards. And the pirogues were good for trapping muskrat because they were good to go in the shallow water in the soft mud, and they slide over the soft mud because they had a flat bottom. You use a push pole, or when you got in deeper water, you paddled it. And we, in our language, we just spoke Spanish, and we called it kayuko(?), like a kayak. And that's the name we had for it. We didn't call it pirogues. Of course later on the English called it pirogues. But that's what they used the pirogue for. It was just a little paddle boat.

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you remember Betsy, Hurricane Betsy? (0:43:04.2)

Serigne: Oh, yes, very, well, I remember Betsy. I was married by then. And every year I remember when they would evacuate us, and my dad would—and we'd always go to my brother's house, which he had a house up in Arabi, and we'd evacuate there. And he was always saying, "I wonder if I have anything left," and all that. This is another reason why he encouraged me to do something else for a living because every year we had to evacuate and everything else, and it got worse all the time. Betsy came along. I had my own house. By then I was married. But my parents and my brothers, my brother, Allen(?), was still down there fishing, most of the family. Well, they evacuated. They came to my house. I had a nice, brick house and everything, strong. So they evacuated from Delacroix and came and [stayed] home, and we spent the night there. It was pretty rough. Not in the house, we never felt it that much, but I could hear a lot of noise out there, like trees breaking, never realized how much damage it was until the next day, when daylight came, and we went out. My brother and I went out and started to go down this way with his car, with his truck, anyway. We never got two blocks from house. And it was right close to this pecan grove, and they had a tunnel with oak trees on both sides. They had so many trees across the highway, we couldn't get through. So finally, a few hours later, really, the parish came, and they dug through it. So then we came down to my other brother's house, which is in Poydras right close by here, and we could see the wind was still blowing pretty good. And we went and visited with him to see how he was making out and all that, and he said he was doing all right. And that morning we went to visit him, and everything was just fine, so we left and went back to my house. And about two hours later we came back, and my brother was sweeping out his house. We said, "What you doing, man?" And he said, "Man, I had water in it." (laughter) He said, "About three"—the water came down the street and went in, and because his house was on a slab, and it went about three inches in the house, and it went right back out, just like *shwerrrrt*, came in like a wave and went back. So he was sweeping it. My brother was

a fellow that nothing too much bothered him. Everybody loved him. He was the type of guy had a personality (inaudible) anyway. And he, when I left with him, he was sweeping, and he was singing this song that [Roger] Miller sang. I don't know how in the heck it goes. "No rooms to let, two bits, fifty cents," and he was sweeping (laughter) his house out. And this was the way we looked at things. And then three days later, we wanted to go down to Delacroix, where my dad and my brother's house. Well, I had a small boat. We launched it in a place called Caernarvon where we can go through, across Lake Lery and get to Delacroix by boat. So we did. And when we got there it was just totally destroyed, houses all over the marsh and everything. It was just gone.

Scull-DeArmey: Was that 1965?

Serigne: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Betsy.

Serigne: September 9, 1965.

Scull-DeArmey: August and September are bad.

Serigne: Was the worst time for hurricanes, right. So that one was one of the real bad hurricanes. So therefore after that, a lot of people didn't return back to Delacroix Island. My brother bought a house where I live at right now in Poydras. My sister built there. But my dad went back. You know?

Scull-DeArmey: What happened in [19]69 in Delacroix with Hurricane Camille?
(0:47:26.1)

Serigne: Never had too much damage.

Scull-DeArmey: Good.

Serigne: Camille was a very tight storm but very strong. It passed close to Delacroix, some damage, but not a whole lot of damage. And it all depends on how a hurricane comes in. The way Camille came in, it passed close to Delacroix, passed over parts of St. Bernard Parish out in the marsh, but it did all the devastation in Mississippi. It just tore them up, and it was still small. I'm saying small, but still it didn't affect Louisiana that much because of the way it came and the way the wind blew. You see, the eye went far enough to the east to where the wind was blowing from inland rather than from the sea.

Scull-DeArmey: So not pushing water up toward Delacroix.

Serigne: Right, right. It pushed some, sure of course, but not to where it did the damage that Betsy done.

Scull-DeArmey: After hurricanes, was there a change in successful fishing?
(0:48:34.9)

Serigne: Some. After a hurricane, sometimes you catch more shrimp than what you do before. It brings it in, fish, everything after a hurricane passes.

Scull-DeArmey: What about debris in the water?

Serigne: The what?

Scull-DeArmey: Debris in the water.

Serigne: They had debris in the water, sure, but it didn't bother the fish and the shrimp or anything or the crabs.

Scull-DeArmey: The nets?

Serigne: Oh, well, there were some places you couldn't drag a net, yeah, because of the debris. But what happens most of the time when these hurricanes hit, like, Delacroix Island, it brings the debris more to the north, and we do most of our fishing towards the southern part. So it affected some, yes, but not—and not only that, in the bayou itself where Delacroix Island is, right after the storm the—I don't know if it was the government or the parish, but they came there with the drag lines and cleaned it out right away.

Scull-DeArmey: What did fishermen do with their boats during—(0:49:42.6)

Serigne: Oh, they brought it to safe harbor. They knew the hurricanes were coming, and they would bring it, like in Caernarvon or up in Chalmette somewhere where they have safe harbor, and tie them up. And they would always tie them to big trees with long ropes. That way when the surge comes up, the boat goes up and it goes down.

Hester: Did anybody ever stay on the boat—

Serigne: Yes.

Hester: —during the storm?

Serigne: Yeah.

Hester: Is that a—

Serigne: Quite a few people did.

Hester: —common practice to make sure the boats—

Serigne: With some people, yes, it was a common practice to stay on a boat. Same thing happened for [Hurricane] Katrina. (0:50:18.5) Katrina was just something. It was really terrible.

Scull-DeArmey: We've got a whole section on Katrina, and we're almost there, but before we move on, I wanted to ask you if you have seen a change in wetlands over your lifetime? (0:50:37.7)

Serigne: Whoo, yes.

Scull-DeArmeY: Can you tell us about that?

Serigne: Like I said, back in the [19]50s there was that digging of the canals, waterways, where you went through natural bayous, took you hours and hours to get to. Once they started digging the canals, the oil companies dug the canals, well, then the fishermen would just run straight back and forth. They didn't realize it, but it was introducing all this saltwater. And in Black Bay when I was a kid, when you came out of what they called in Spanish, Bayou Lamar(?), which is bayou of the sea because it took you to the sea. They call it Bayou Terre aux Boeufs. That's the real name for it. But anyway, when you got out to the mound of Bayou Terre aux Boeufs, there were islands with, you would say just almost like, trees on them, great, big islands just spotted all over, and you can trawl between islands and everything. Today there's none; they're gone. They're just not there anymore. But that was disappearing before Katrina. Before Betsy, it was just disappearing. More land was just disappearing constantly.

Scull-DeArmeY: What caused it?

Serigne: Our barrier islands, more or less got, more or less washed out, and all the islands that protect the mainland just kind of washed away, and so it started eating the mainland. And every time we had a hurricane, more land would wash away. And with Katrina, in my opinion, it washed it 90 percent. In other words, Katrina took—the land would normally, without a hurricane—I'd say Katrina did fifty years of devastation to the land, all eroded.

Scull-DeArmeY: In one day.

Serigne: In one day. There's lakes. I would say, there's one Lake Lery that used to be nine miles long and about a mile wide. Today it's, gee whiz, about ten miles wide or more, and it runs from one village—I couldn't put it in miles because it just, it's about over doubled its size in one day. And in Delacroix Island, like I said when I was a child, there was a lot of woods. When my dad was young, when he was a young man, he told me about forests. They had all kind of animals like black bears and panthers and all these animals that needed a big forest. And he used to tell me about him and his dad used to have a trapping line, and they would row the boat and put traps so far, and then they would build a palmetto cabin and stay there overnight, and then finish their line, what they called a line, trapping line. That was before they started with the muskrat and all that. And I can imagine what it would've been like because he told me the forest was so great and the lakes, where they have lakes today, it was little, small lakes, and they could only rowboat through them. And the forest was so great and the animals that they had in them. And today there's none; it's gone. When I was a kid, like I was saying, in the late [19]40s and '50s, behind the house—we had the houses facing the bayou and the road and the bayou. Behind the houses they had about—I would venture to say behind my house it was almost an eighth of a mile before you got to the marsh. And they had a little trail in the woods where people had their cattle, and they had they own milk. It was pretty well self-sufficient. And

they had their own milk; they used to make cheese out of it and everything and grow their own food and produce and stuff like that. And they had the little trail. I used to get in the woods and run the little trail. And they had so many things in the summer. And in the spring, then I would go in the woods and just stay there all day because we had wild persimmons. We'd eat that and may-pops. We used to eat that and blackberries, mulberries, and just had things to eat all the time if you knew what to eat. And I would stay playing in the woods, and then my mother when she wanted me, she'd call. She couldn't whistle, but she would holler, "Hey!" And so I would hear her and come home. And our neighbors, kids my age, we all did the same thing. Like I said, it was a wonderful place for a child to grow up. There was nothing to what it is today. You never thought about crime or anything because you had so many things to do. When I woke up when I was a kid, in the morning, I was just excited, "What I'm going to do next?" It was just free to everything, so it was really a beautiful place.

Hester: Have you seen any authorities, state authorities or national authorities, come down and monitor the wetlands and the wetland loss and so forth? Have you seen people doing that?

Sergine: I myself hadn't seen them, but I see on TV reports where they have people go out there and survey and calculate how much is being washed away. They had a number—I don't remember what it is—how much of the land washes away for a day or for a year.

Hester: So I was just wondering if maybe there was some communication between the residents and some of the people that are coming down to evaluate the marshlands.

Sergine: Not too much. Another thing, too, the government officials, it seems they don't want to take advice from the local people who live here. I guess they feel that way. I don't know, but they give me that impression that we're undereducated, and we don't know any better. But we live here, and we know what land does. We know what everything does. But for an example, and this is my own opinion again; I think it's an opinion of a lot of people, like the corps of engineers after Katrina, they built this big wall. And all that's fine and good, but until you repair those barrier islands (0:57:52.5) out there, that wall is not going to do us any good, to a certain extent, maybe in the next few years, but once the land washes away, which it's almost washed away already up to that wall, what's going to happen to the wall if you don't have any land to hold it up? And every time we have a corps of engineers' meeting, I always bring up about the barrier islands; they don't want to listen to it. They say, one excuse is it's too costly, but I don't see how. It probably would cost less than what the wall that they built because at the mouth of the river, the federal government has dredges out there to keep that channel deep enough for the ships to come through. All right? And in my own opinion, I think it's a very foolish thing what they're doing. They've been doing it long before I was born, since they harnessed the Mississippi River with the levees. They have these dredges out here, and they have to dig the sand out because the sand builds up, stops up the channel, and the ships can't come in, so they have to have these dredges. What they do what the sand? They take it, put it on barges, throw it away off the continental shelf. Why couldn't the same barges bring it

and build up your barrier islands with the same material that the Mississippi River is already producing for you?

Scull-DeArme y: They're doing it in Mississippi.

Serigne: In Louisiana they're not doing it. What they're doing in Louisiana, and this is my own opinion again, they have these water diversions, (0:59:25.4) which is not doing any good. It's not producing any silt. It's not building any land. Matter of fact, I feel that these water diversions that they have, would help the land wash away during Katrina because this freshwater comes in. They open it, and this freshwater comes in, they say is building silt. It's been there for twenty years, and I go out there, and I see some silt, yeah, a little bit. Different vegetation that grows, grass that grows in the lakes, the bottom of the lake comes up, and if you fly over it with a plane, "Oh, man, it looks like land." But it's *not*. What happens, and my own opinion, all this freshwater that flows in from the Mississippi River, the silt's not coming with it, so it floats the marsh, gets under the marsh and floats it. And when a hurricane comes, it just rolls it away that much easier. But they say, "No. It's not floating. The marsh is building up." Difference of opinion. Now they're talking about building more. If I could, I'd protest it like all these protesters are doing it, but you have differences of opinions. Just like if you get ten fishermen together, you're going to have ten different opinions. (laughter)

Hester: I met somebody who agrees with you on the floating marshes. I heard that, myself.

Serigne: That's the way I feel about it, and then you talk to a lot of local fishermen, they'll tell you the same, probably feel the same way. Now, the freshwater has helped some type of shrimp and hurt the others. In other words, the brown shrimp, (1:01:15.1) the freshwater is too cold that's coming out this river, so our brown shrimp season is not good at all. But the white shrimp seem to like it, so it improved the white shrimp. So if you look at it that way, the brown shrimp season is very short, and the white shrimp is a very long season, so you can make money with it a little longer. If you want to see a good part of it, that would be one of the things that I see, but I'm not a commercial fisherman, but I see it. I have family and friends that are still commercial fishermen, and they feel the same way, that it helped it out. But in the old days, going back again to the [19]40s, the white shrimp were here, too. They wasn't even fishing the brown season. My dad wouldn't fish in the brown season. They would only fish in the white season. The brown shrimp they didn't consider marketable or anything.

Scull-DeArme y: People just didn't eat them then.

Serigne: Didn't worry about them, didn't eat them, and it was a short season then. My dad was one of the first trawlers or fishermen that went out in brown season. And what he did, these businesses that would rent boats and launch boats for sports fishermen, they would use them for bait. So my daddy would go out and catch a few of them and sell them to the people that had these businesses, for bait. And then later on for a while, they became the big season because the white shrimp kind of faded

away, and the brown shrimp was the big season. It's only, you only got fifty days to catch them.

Hester: With all the hurricanes that you've mentioned, could you talk a little bit about the impact on the fishermen, and how they came back into the trade? How did they—

Scull-DeArmey: Can we get into Katrina and Rita with that?

Hester: Sure, yeah.

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: And I also wanted to ask you if you need to take a break. It's 12:30.

Serigne: I'm all right.

Scull-DeArmey: Are you good to go?

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Would you tell us how Hurricane Katrina affected you?
(1:03:42.7)

Serigne: Tremendously. I evacuated to West Monroe; I wound up staying in a shelter there. And I wasn't going to leave. We had three neighbors that we were going to get together and stay in the house, but then it was a Saturday evening; I believe it was. We went to bed. We had it all planned out. The storm wasn't—Katrina wasn't going to come till Sunday night or Monday morning. So anyway, so we went to bed Saturday night, and Sunday morning about seven o'clock, my neighbor, one of the neighbors called me up. I was sleeping. I watched television till I got tired, watching progression of the storm. And he called me up and said, "Look, we decided we're not going to stay. We're going to leave." He said, "Did you watch television this morning?" I said, "No. I was sleeping." And he said, "Well," he said "they had a report that this storm, the wind went up to a-hundred-and-seventy-five-mile-an-hour, sustained winds." And when you got a-hundred-and-seventy-five-mile-an-hour, sustained wind, you've got gusts of over two hundred and something miles an hour. I said, "Whoo! Well, I'm going, too." So my son was living around there, so I talked to him and my grandson and that, and decided we were going to leave. So we left, and we wind up looking for hotel rooms from, I'd say from Jackson, Mississippi, [and] we was going to Shreveport. The reason why I took the route up [Highway] 59 through Mississippi because the other storm, the evacuations, if you went directly away from the storm, you ran into a lot of traffic. So I said; I told my son, "We're going to go east to get to the west." "What you mean?" I said, "Well, we're going to go this way because everybody's going to be going this way, to the west, so we're going to go to the east and then turn. And when we get farther enough north, we'll turn to the west and go to Shreveport."

Scull-DeArmey: Mr. Serigne, where did you start? Where were you living at that time?

Serigne: Oh, I was living right here about three minutes away from here, five minutes away from here in Poydras.

Scull-DeArmey: We're in St. [Bernard]. Is that correct?

Hester: St. Bernard.

Serigne: St. Bernard.

Scull-DeArmey: We're in St. Bernard. Just for the record, I wanted to get that on here.

Serigne: All right. Yeah, so anyway, we left, and we went through Jackson, and we took, got on [Highway] 20; I think it is. And we were going to Shreveport. And I told them I said, "Man," I told my son, I said, "It's time we start looking for a place," before we got there, got to West Monroe. So we started looking for a motel, and there was none, none available, no rooms, no nothing. So we stopped at this truck stop, and they had, the Red Cross had a little office, a little further in the back, and they had signs on the highway "Evacuees Welcome" and all this kind. So we talked to them, and they told us, "Oh, there's a place in West Monroe, beautiful place. We got it all fixed up and ready for evacuees." So I said, "OK." So we started going, and when we got there, I told him, I said, "Well, let's check it out, and see how it is." We pulled in there, and there's a beautiful building. I mean tremendous. They even had a place in the back to keep your pets. I don't care what kind of pet you had, if you had a horse, a dog, whatever. They had a big, big place. I mean a tremendous complex, and they had food. As soon as we walked in there, they asked where we were from, and right away, we're going to have beds; we're going to have food and everything. And it was really nice. I said, "Wow." I looked at him. I say, "Why look for another room? We only going to be here for a couple of days." (laughter) So we decided to stay, and of course the next day we were watching TV in the place. They had television, computers, everything for us, treated us great. And we started watching and saw on television what was happening. Then we were looking for St. Bernard, of course. There was no news on St. Bernard. Only thing they had on St. Bernard—it was no scenery or nothing—is that St. Bernard was 100 percent devastated. I still couldn't believe that I had water at *my* house because the reason why I moved there because it's the highest elevation in St. Bernard. It's close to the highest, anyway. That's the one big reason why I moved where I'm at. And I told him, I said, "Well," I said "I hope the wind didn't blow that carport on the house." (laughter) I was afraid of that, the wind. I never thought of no water at all, till finally, I guess it was about a day or so afterward, they started showing scenes of St. Bernard and how much water there was, people running around in boats. And I said, "Man, I still don't think I have water at *my* house." And sure enough, then we got the satellite. My son knew how to fool with the computer. I didn't know nothing about computers. And he zoomed in on our house, and it was water. I said, "Whew, man!" I said "This—

Scull-DeArmey: How high?

Sergine: At my house, from the ground level up, I would say there was about six to eight feet. My house was about a foot and a half off the ground. I had about three foot in the house; on the road I'd say it was close to six feet. But it never stood there long. It came in and went out, the way I see it because we couldn't come back. I couldn't come back to see my house till eight weeks after the storm, and I couldn't see anything. They would leave, like, people that had businesses come in and take a look at their business, but regular residents they wouldn't let us in. But I had a niece that was on the police force, and I was in touch with her with the phone, not in—but text messaging because the phone was out. I couldn't get any communication. And well, anyway, finally when I got to talk to her, she said, "Yeah, uncle," she said, "I went around your house." She said, "Looks all right." She said, "It just had water in it, but the water's gone." That's why I knew it came in and went out because it was a few days after the storm, and it was already went down. So when I got there, seen the house, it was all devastated and all, and it was heartbreaking. What could I say?

Scull-DeArmey: All your furniture ruined?

Sergine: Oh, yeah, and the whole house, all the furniture and everything. The floor, the floor buckled up and just kind of blew up, and I was going to repair it. I had it cleaned out. Well, the Samaritans Purse some good people came along, and my wife and I was there, trying to clean up and very little. Then they came and volunteered, Samaritans Purse, and they cleaned it all out for me and gutted it. And so I started looking at it and didn't realize how much damage there was until a contractor came. I asked this guy if he would rebuild my house, and we started looking at it. And he's looking at this; he said, "Your house shifted about three inches." He said, "And look up at your rafters." He said, "They're about six inches off the rafters, the roof." I said, "Wow." The floor was all buckled up and busted and everything else. He said, "I hate to tell you this." He said, "I don't want the job." He said, "It'll cost you more to repair this house than if you build a brand-new one." So I had several opinions, and they told me the same thing, so. And all said and done, I had it torn down and bought a double-wide, and I'm very satisfied with it. But that's things that happen, and I always had the attitude, there's a reason for everything, no matter what. I thought about my dad. When he was seventy-three years old he, he lost everything, devastated him. And here I was almost, not seventy quite then, but close to the same age, and the same thing happened to me. And I moved here because I thought I'd be safe.

Scull-DeArmey: How did your dad make a comeback in [19]73?

Sergine: He moved back to Delacroix, and the Red Cross gave him a little trailer, but a few months later he died.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you think that loss hastened his death?

Sergine: (crying)

Scull-DeArmey: Do you want to take a break? Let's turn it off. (brief interruption)
All right. That's not problem. So are we starting again?

Hester: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Let me just ask you about how Hurricane *Rita* then came about a month after Katrina. (1:13:17.7)

Serigne: Two weeks.

Scull-DeArmey: Two weeks after Katrina—

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: —we had Hurricane Rita, which some people call the forgotten hurricane.

Serigne: It is forgotten because Rita did so much damage, but then, in other words, Katrina just wiped everything out, and Rita came along and just stirred it up a little bit. I had some people that went down to Delacroix between Rita and Katrina and said the roads were clear because there was no houses. All the houses were gone. But then when Rita passed, the water came in again, and it looks like the water came up, and it floated a lot of this marsh and debris, and came back out and just went all over the highways and everything.

Scull-DeArmey: What about here at your house?

Serigne: No. Rita, we never got any water for Rita, not in my house. But like I said, we couldn't come back until after Rita.

Scull-DeArmey: About how long after Rita?

Serigne: Well, it was eight weeks after Katrina, so Rita was two weeks after Katrina.

Scull-DeArmey: How long did you have to stay out when you evacuated for Rita?

Serigne: No. It was all together. I never did come back. I couldn't come back.

Scull-DeArmey: Oh, you were still gone. Oh, right, right, right. That's right.

Serigne: I couldn't come back in between, but there were some people that snuck in.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Serigne: And went down to Delacroix.

Scull-DeArmey: Uh-huh.

Serigne: I couldn't come back.

Scull-DeArmey: Now it's getting through my head. So those people were—

Serigne: We was up, way up in Monroe.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Those people who went to Delacroix came in under the radar.

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: Weren't supposed to be down there because of all the damage from Katrina.

Serigne: Right. And they said it was pretty clean, and after Katrina it was all full of debris and everything.

Scull-DeArmey: Had you retired by then?

Serigne: Yes.

Scull-DeArmey: Were you doing any fishing for yourself?

Serigne: No, just sports fishing. I didn't do any fishing to make any money or anything. I gave it all up when I retired. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: From people you know who fish, can you give us an idea about how their boats and their businesses were affected by Katrina? (1:15:43.9)

Serigne: Well, most of them lost their boats; yet, some of them saved their boats and everything, but most of them lost their boats. Some of them were able to drag them out the marsh and repair them, but this was weeks and months later. But some of them were destroyed to a point where they couldn't repair them. We had big boats that was all up in the subdivisions on top of houses and everything.

Scull-DeArmey: Would you think that, say, the precautions that you would've taken to move your boat in 1965 for Betsy, would that have worked for Katrina?

Serigne: It didn't work for Katrina. It did the same thing.

Scull-DeArmey: So where a boat would've been safe tied to trees for Betsy, that—

Serigne: That wasn't safe for Katrina.

Scull-DeArmey: Katrina just tossed them all over the neighborhood.

Serigne: Right. It just tossed them all over the place.

Scull-DeArmey: What did it do to the fishermen's business?

Serigne: Well, it, for a good while, it just devastated them. They couldn't fish now. Some of them that could go down there, they started catching a lot of shrimp, (laughter) without boats. (1:16:59.9) They had hung their butterfly nets off the wharves, and just they were loading eighteen-wheelers full of shrimp, behind the other, there was so much.

Scull-DeArmey: They had hung their nets from the wharves?

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArme y: Was the current pushing the—

Serigne: Right, the current. The way you catch shrimp with butterflies is— (1:17:26.3) They call them butterfly nets. You normally catch them at night, and there's certain sections where they come up to the top, and it starts from the quarter moon to the full moon, is when you catching the shrimp with the currents. And the current is always when the current is a falling tide, and the more tide you got, the more you catch. And they come up in certain sections of the bayou, and so you find that section, and this is where you catch the shrimp. And in Bayou Terre aux Boeufs, itself, at Delacroix Island, where I'm talking about, the whole bayou, they were telling me, was just full of shrimp. They were just coming out. What I pictured was that this storm brought all these shrimp from the Gulf and everything in, in the inland waters. And when the tide started going back out, they were just going back out, and they was right there scooping them up. They caught a tremendous amount of shrimp right after the storm. It kind of helped them a little bit. But then the price of the shrimp faded off; that happened, oh, a few years ago.

Scull-DeArme y: The shrimp prices started falling? (1:18:43.1)

Serigne: Right. In the [19]80s when I was shrimping for a living, we were getting more money for the shrimp than what they're getting today.

Scull-DeArme y: And how does fuel compare, fuel costs?

Serigne: Then your fuel is about four times as high than what it was in them days. Back in the [19]80s, I think fuel was something—it wasn't even a dollar a gallon, fifty cents, something like that. And today, well, today it's what? Almost four dollars a gallon. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: Well, and if they were using diesel, it is practically four dollars a gallon, now.

Serigne: It is over four dollars now.

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah.

Serigne: It's over four dollars. Most of them do use diesel. And they're not getting—what we used to get three dollars a pound for, they might be getting a dollar and a half or two dollars today.

Scull-DeArme y: Your father was a wise man.

Serigne: Yes, he was. (laughter)

Hester: Can I ask you a question about catching shrimp after the storm and catching so many of them. Where did you market these shrimp since New Orleans was— (1:19:49.6)

Serigne: They brought it to factories that were still in operation.

Hester: Where were they?

Serigne: They had some in, not in the city of New Orleans, but they brought them—I really don't know. They had brought them somewhere, but they were selling them. They wasn't getting top dollar for them, but they caught so much that they did pretty good.

Scull-DeArmey: Some fishermen have told us they had to go all the way to Texas.

Serigne: Right, right.

Scull-DeArmey: Or Alabama.

Serigne: In Alabama, I think, is where they—in Bayou La Batre they still had the factories and everything, so they would ship them over there for a while. As I said, I wasn't fishing at the time, so I didn't—but I knew the fellows that were, and they were doing pretty good.

Scull-DeArmey: We have a whole set of questions about the BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster. I don't know if you want to try to go through those and speak from a perspective of fishermen you know because you—

Serigne: Well, that's what I can do is the fishermen that I know because I'm not a fisherman anymore. I quit fishing a long time ago.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, let me just ask you.

Serigne: But I did work for BP.

Scull-DeArmey: You did?

Serigne: With the cleanup, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Well, let me just go through these, and we will get to the cleanup.

Serigne: OK.

Scull-DeArmey: What thoughts did you have when you heard about the oil spill?
(1:21:19.0)

Serigne: Well, I knew it was going to have an effect. I thought it would have an effect on the seafood. At first, "Oil spill, hey, look, they going to stop it. It's going to be nothing." But then went so many days and weeks, and all this oil was just pumping into the Gulf; something had to happen. And so I thought that nobody—I figured it this way: nobody's going to know right offhand what's going to happen. It's going to take years, several years. Now, we how many years, about, from it happening? About two, three years.

Scull-DeArmey: Going—

Serigne: Two years.

Scull-DeArmey: It's two, two-ish.

Serigne: You're still not going to know the effect until, I would say, three to four years. You starting to see some now, but you won't really know until quite a few years.

Scull-DeArmey: I just realized that I don't know if we addressed your question that you had about coping.

Hester: Oh.

Scull-DeArmey: About how the fishermen coped after the hurricanes.

Hester: Yeah. You had mentioned that you had some good Samaritan groups come and help you with the house since then.

Serigne: Yeah.

Hester: And then the fishermen that had boats that were brought up on the marshes, and they had to restore the boats and then get them back in the water. Who helped them with that? (1:22:51.9)

Serigne: Well, what happened, like I said God works in mysterious ways, but during that time where they would—plenty of them that lost their boats and all that, they went to work for FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], putting up steps and ramps and trailers. So they made a living doing that, working with the trailers. They got so much money for putting up a set of steps, so much money for setting a trailer up. And some of them worked with that, and some of them, like I said, went out and caught some shrimp, the ones that could.

Hester: And if their boats were beached, did they have to dig channels to float them back out, or did they have help with that?

Serigne: Some of them couldn't take them out. They still out in the marsh. Some of them, they—I know of one fellow; he had other big boats, and they wasn't that far into the marsh. They just tied ropes on them and towed them, pulled it back out to the bayou.

Hester: So did the fishermen just all work together and get everybody's boats? (1:24:03.3)

Serigne: Fishermen are like that. In other words, they might argue with one another and this and that, but when the chips are down, they all get together and help one another. It's the same way as building boats. They build their own boats, and they'll all get together and help this guy build a boat, and when they finish with that, they help somebody else. Houses the same way. Like I said, they might argue with each

other about different things, but when the chips are down, they all get together and help each other.

Hester: Are they the same way in the water? When somebody spots a good fishing spot, do they keep it to themselves, or do they share it?

Serigne: Well, in the old days you more or less—well, going back to my dad, when I was a kid, they didn't hide it. They'd, like I said, they would go to the bar that evening and have a couple of drinks, and they'd talk about, "Man, I caught the shrimp here today." Because there was no radios, no nothing, and "Man, I caught the shrimp over here today," and this and that. And they'd talk about what happened, and how they caught them and all, so. But then later when you got more fishermen and things like that, no, if they caught shrimp, they kept it to themselves. Or if they caught it here, they'll tell you they caught it there, (laughter) something like that. My daddy used to call—this one fellow, I'm not going to mention his name, but he used to call him—in Spanish it sounds different, but anyway, he called this guy here "the man of the different signal." He was one of them that wouldn't tell you; if he caught them here, he'd tell you he caught them over there. And he would ask him just for the kicks, he'd say, "Where you caught your shrimp?" "Oh, I caught them over there." And he said, "Well, then I knew to go over here because this is where he said.." (laughter) "Tia de la contra senya(?)". That's what he said. That's, "The man of opposite saying." (laughter)

Hester: Are you fluent in Spanish, Mr. Serigne? (1:26:00.8)

Serigne: I can't say that I'm fluent, but I do pretty good with it. I interpret for the groups that come here for the festival, and I've made a lot of friends in the Canary Islands, and I do all right. In other words, I can hold a conversation. I'm limited, but I can more or less communicate pretty good.

Scull-DeArmey: Did your parents speak the old Spanish dialect?

Serigne: Yes, they did. Yes. There's a lot of words that I use in the language, in the Spanish that I speak that they don't use in Spain anymore. And when I go and visit—I've visited the Canary Islands five times now, and I have a lot of friends there, and when I'm speaking to other people, my friends understand. But when I'm speaking to other people, and I use these words, they'll say, "Oh, we know what you're saying, but my great-grandfather used to use them words, or the people out in the country will use that word. We don't use it anymore." I said, "Well, that's what I grew up." But what's happening to me, I'm getting used to speaking with the modern day Spanish, and my Spanish is sort of changing a little bit. It's a shame to say, but it's true because I'm communicating. They call me at least once a month, how I speak to them, and to understand each other, I'm getting to pick up a lot of their words, modern-day words, and it improved my vocabulary.

Scull-DeArmey: And your mother was French?

Serigne: Spanish.

Scull-DeArmey: But your father—

Serigne: My father was the only one that was French.

Scull-DeArmey: Your father was French. Did you tell us that you spoke both as a child?

Serigne: I spoke English and Spanish.

Scull-DeArmey: But not French.

Serigne: No.

Scull-DeArmey: You didn't learn French?

Serigne: No, never did learn French, no.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Serigne: Because we never—my dad spoke it in his home where he grew up. His family spoke it, but they also grew up in the Spanish community, and my mother was Spanish. My grandmother and my grandfather, all of them was all Spanish on my mother's side. Matter of fact, my grandmother on my father's side was Spanish. So you know I have a French last name, but I have more Spanish than French in me.

Hester: Are the people that have the Spanish, sharing that with their children? Are they passing the language down to them?

Serigne: No. It's a shame to say, but they not. My kids don't speak it, and most of them that still speak the Spanish, they never taught it to their kids. Well, what happened there, too, not myself or the ones that still speak it, in the school system, under the educational system more or less—I'm going to just come out with it—they robbed us from it. It was forbidden for us to speak Spanish in the schools. And before my time, the generation that's older than me, they got punished for speaking Spanish in school. Now, in my generation they didn't punish us, but they kept saying, "Don't speak it; don't speak it; don't speak it." And what happened, the younger ones than I am, my generation that did know how to speak it, they wouldn't because by them telling them so many years not to do it, they thought it was something to be ashamed of. And also when we went to the city, we're having our accents; we're having our accents. They knew we were Spanish by the expressions that we used, and they would make fun of us. They would, "Stupid people from down the road," things like that. (laughter) And they wouldn't tell us to our face, but we could see it, and we just—

Scull-DeArmey: Of course now, it would be greatly valued.

Serigne: Yeah, now it is. Well, we have this organization to try and keep it going, but it's very, very hard.

Scull-DeArmey: Even in school, though, even—

Serigne: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: —even in the public schools—

Serigne: It's hard for us to get it going in the public school. They'll teach Spanish, like, in the high schools. It's too late. You have to learn when they're little kids, and teach them.

Scull-DeArmey: It's easy then.

Serigne: Yeah, it is, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: That's when it's easy.

Serigne: Very easy.

Scull-DeArmey: But there is a trend to do that now, to start teaching them earlier.

Serigne: Right. My grandson, he can kind of hold a conversation with me because he learned it, and then he had some Latin friends. It's a little different dialect, the Latin, than what we speak, but it's still Spanish.

Hester: Do you hear any of the, I'll call it, old flavors that did, at one time, only speak Spanish, communicating amongst themselves in Spanish?

Serigne: Did I know some?

Hester: Now.

Serigne: Now?

Hester: Do you ever hear—I've gone up to Lafayette and Church Point in that area, and you hear French—

Serigne: French.

Hester: —just being talked in a casual setting. Everybody's speaking in French. Do you have any of that?

Serigne: We do have it, but it's rare. There's one family that automatically when I speak to them and when they speak amongst the brothers, we speak Spanish. Why, I don't know. But it's just automatically when I meet these people, these brothers and that, the Alfonso(?) Brothers, it's just naturally Spanish; it just comes out. And this other friend of mine, he's a Martinez. He lives right next door. I was going to bring him here today, but he wasn't home. And when him and I get together, it's—I don't know; it just naturally comes out. We just speak Spanish. And then what happens, also, if we by ourselves, alone, we'll stay speaking Spanish. But then you have other people that come, and we don't want to speak Spanish in front of them because they don't understand what we're saying, so I feel like it's disrespectful to another person that don't understand our language to keep speaking it. And this is another reason why it fades away, also, because of that.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you have anything else? Did you participate in the Vessels of Opportunity program? (1:32:18.0)

Sergine: Yes. I started off as a deckhand. I didn't think I was going to go to work because it was for the commercial fishermen, and I had quit fishing already, but they had enough work for the—I said, “Well, I'm not doing anything. I'm retired, and I might pick up some extra money.” So I went and did all the testing, the hazmat [hazardous material] tests and all that, and came out all right. And I got me a card. I went down there, and I knew so many fishermen that, “You need a deckhand?” “Yeah, yeah. Come on.” So I started working deckhand; never hardly missed a day because I knew so many people. And they would take me on as a deckhand, and then later I had a fishermen friend of mine that happened to have a job at the time, and he wasn't fishing. And he put his boat on, and I became captain of his boat. And I worked with them all the way up till close to the end, all the way till October, from, I think it was April to October, something like that.

Scull-DeArmey: April to October?

Sergine: I think so, something like that.

Scull-DeArmey: What do you do as a deckhand? What are the duties?

Sergine: Well, we went out, and as a deckhand, I just helped pick up booms and put out booms. We was putting out—at first we were putting out booms. That's the buoys to keep the oil away, and we surrounded quite a few little islands out there and that, where the bird sanctuaries were, and other main shorelines. And we were putting them out.

Scull-DeArmey: Did it work? Did the booms keep it out? (1:34:05.8)

Sergine: Not really. It helped a little, but I couldn't see where it stopped anything because we had some buoys, some boom around some islands, and when we went out later on, when the oil really came towards us—now, in the southeastern part of Louisiana, from the Mississippi River to Mississippi, never had as much oil as what they did on the west side. The west side really got it. But here got some but nowhere near what they got. For some reason or another, the Gulf currents protected us because the oil spill was here, and the Gulf currents ran to the east and then to the west, and then the southeastern part of Louisiana was here, and it went this way and this way. And it never bypassed it altogether because we had some, some oil, but not as much as what they had in other places.

Hester: It could've been worse.

Sergine: There were some islands that they had boom around, and the tide came up. We had a east wind; tide came up, and some of the oil came in, and we went out there after that, and they had sections on some of them islands that was around three hundred foot square where it went over the boom and went on the land, like that.

Scull-DeArmey: I think I saw some photographs of that.

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: It's heartbreaking.

Serigne: Yeah. We took photographs. That's another thing I did, too, is take photographs of people out with cameras and all that, take pictures and stuff like that. And I just worked as a deckhand.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you think the implementation of that program was fair?
(1:35:55.5)

Serigne: In a sense, yes. Moneywise I think BP put out—I mean, look at the billions of dollars. Was it distributed right? Hm, that left something to be desired. Some of it was good, some of it. But some of the fishermen made, made pretty good money with it.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you know—

Serigne: Not everybody, but still they couldn't fish. They couldn't do what they wanted to do.

Hester: How do you think the program could've been improved?

Serigne: How could it be improved? Well, like I said, whoever was in charge of it, like I said, BP, I feel, gave the money to—and what happened, the local officials, let's say, (laughter) politicians in St. Bernard—I can't speak for other parishes—with the powers-to-be-in, at that time, favored some people. And I can't prove anything (inaudible). But anyway, favored some people, and they say they did pretty good. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: There were, in Mississippi, there was a little bit of rancor and bad feeling between the recreational fishermen and commercial fishermen. The commercial fishermen, some of them didn't get hired. And so they're sitting at home with no fishing that can be done, and then the recreational fishermen who have another job where they're getting paid, also have a big recreational charter boat, and they hire someone to go out on their boat, and they're kind of double-dipping with their job, that they have forty hours a week and—

Serigne: Well, some of that happened here, also. I know some commercial fishermen that they finally hired them, but I saw where, I seen some hundred-thousand-dollar yachts working, where some of the small commercial fishermen weren't—and that's why I said (inaudible). Not BP, itself, but these people that were handling it. I feel BP, they did put the money out, but the way it was distributed, it was unfair to some people.

Scull-DeArmey: How do things stand for family and friends of yours who are in the seafood industry now?

Serigne: How do they stand?

Scull-DeArmey: How do things stand? What is their future? What's happening for them now? (1:39:19.0)

Serigne: The future doesn't look very good. It's even worse than when I was in it. The only thing they could do now is shrimp and crab; the rest is outlawed. (1:39:30.3)
Oh, oysters, the spill ruined most of the oyster beds. (1:39:39.4)

Scull-DeArmey: The freshwater—

Serigne: The freshwater diversion also hurt the oysters. I have a friend of mine that I see just about every morning and talk to him. He's in the oyster business and said it doesn't look good at all because all of his leases, his bedding grounds, they all died, more or less. They got to wait to build them back up, *if* they can build them up. I mean, if they keep opening these diversions like they did, I think it was last week or so; they just opened it, wide open, and it's going to kill it. In other words, he's already devastated. And then they opening them up again. I'm against the diversions because of that. It ruined the brown [shrimp] season. You can't catch speckled trout anymore close by. You have to go way out and catch them. Now, when they close the diversion, the speckled trout'll come in.

Scull-DeArmey: But of course oysters—

Serigne: You can't sell them.

Scull-DeArmey: —can't move.

Serigne: No, oysters—

Scull-DeArmey: So they're stuck.

Serigne: Right. They're stuck, so they die; they can't move. Now, speckled trout'll move out. You can still catch some redfish, but the speckled trout'll move away from that freshwater. They can't survive it. Of course, speckled trout is not marketable any more; you can't sell it. (1:40:59.8)

Scull-DeArmey: Can you catch it to eat?

Serigne: Yes. You have to have a license, and all that to catch it. With a rod and reel you're allowed twenty-five, which is enough, if you're fishing just to eat, but you go out, fishing just to enjoy being out there, so if you go buy—if you *could* buy it in the market, (laughter) OK? It would be cheaper to go buy it than to go out, but you have the pleasure of going out there and fishing and that. There is some, but very few that they can get a license for commercial fishing with a rod and reel, but I know very, very few that—I know one fellow that does that, and I think he's allowed to sell a few heads or sell the fish. I'm not sure about that, but I think he does. He's commercial, so, yeah, he should be able to sell it.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you know what species he fishes for?

Serigne: Speckled trout.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Interesting. But the only way apparently—

Sergine: Yeah, because you couldn't sell them even if you have that license, you can't sell redfish. You can't sell them. Most of the fish you can't sell. What we used to call trash fish, you could sell. (laughter) Sheepshead and things like that; that's what we used to call trash. We threw them away. If we caught them on a pole, you just, "Oh, I don't want that. It's junk." (laughter) Now, it's the only thing you can sell. (laughter)

Hester: Do you see a lot of young people going into commercial fishing down here?

Sergine: There's a few, quite a few young ones that are crabbing. (1:42:51.8) Like I said, things progress so much. When I fished crabs, I used to fish with two hundred traps. And look, when I got to that two-hundredth trap, I was ready to quit. (laughter) Boy, I was tired. Today, they have a crew on a boat, and they'll fish with two thousand traps, some; some do. I don't know how they do it. Most of them fish with three, four hundred traps.

Scull-DeArmey: For the record, can you just tell us how crab pots are set out? Are they—you don't drag the pot behind a boat, huh? How does that work?

Sergine: Oh, no, no, unh-uh. You put bait in the pot, and you set it up, and the next day you'd—you leave them overnight, leave them in the water. You bait them. The next day you come, and you run, dump the crabs out, put fresh bait in, and throw it back. That's the way.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you know where you left your crab pot?

Sergine: Because you have the corks on the water, and you know the waters, and you know where you put them out. And you have your corks marked. Everybody has a little different color or a little different number or something. They also have tags. Now, they tell me they have—when I fished they never had to have tags. Of course when I fished crabs, also, they never had plastic traps either. We used to make them with the, what they call that? Chicken mesh, galvanized. I think that would be better because what's happening with the plastic is they lose a lot of traps with the (inaudible) being cut, and then traps stay on the bottom. Plastic doesn't deteriorate, where the old, galvanized trap, in three weeks that saltwater done ate it up. It was gone, once it [stayed] down there. Now, the plastic, no, it stays down.

Scull-DeArmey: And it traps forever.

Sergine: Right, traps forever, and it's still catching, and it's killing because there's some fish that get in the traps, also. So you're killing crabs and fish constantly, twenty-four hours a day. Now, they have a program where they're cleaning the lakes of the old traps and that. They have a program going on right now, where they trying to clean the lakes of the old traps and that, but as long as you have that many crab fishermen out there and traps out there, you're going to lose traps. There's no way out of it. And they're still going to be on the bottom. They might clean it up *now*, but a few years later, they're going to have them down there again.

Scull-DeArmey: Anything that wanders into it, probably won't get out.

Serigne: No. They can't; they can't get out. They just don't know how. My way of thinking, I don't see how they got a crab left in the water. (1:45:40.3) They must, (laughter) they must really breed a lot because the fishermen that they have now and that many traps per fishermen, wow. And anywhere you go, you see a little water, you see a crab trap.

Hester: Is there any restriction on the male or female? I mean, can you catch both? (1:46:00.7)

Serigne: Yeah, you can catch both. Well, you get a different price for females and the number one males. I don't know what the price is because I'm not fishing now. But when I did fish back in 1974, yeah, 1974, I was working on a job, and the market on crabs got real good. And what I'm saying good; they paid ten dollars a basket for number ones, which was the big males. The females and the trash crabs they wouldn't buy them, maybe twice a week. That's all you could sell. And I was working at the time. I had a five-week vacation, and I took a three-month leave to go do this. It's in your blood. (laughter) So I wanted to take off, away from the trucking industry and go to—my wife and I got together, and we made two hundred traps. And I had made a little skiff, a little boat, and I went out and put the traps out, and in four months—in them days, they only were selling number ones at ten dollars a basket. And I just about bought my house with that money. But houses was only eleven thousand, too. (laughter) It wasn't what they are today. Your automobile costs you thirty thousand. But anyway, that's what I paid for my house. But I had saved some money and also what I made with the crabs; I bought the house that I was in for Katrina. And I think it was sold for eleven thousand.

Scull-DeArmey: That's fabulous, really amazing.

Serigne: But now, they sell everything now. There's a limit, of the size. It has to be so many inches, point to point, and things like that, restrictions on them.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you feel about those kind of restrictions and limits?

Serigne: I think it's justified. If you don't leave go your small crabs, it's the same thing as a fish. (1:48:18.6) If you don't leave them grow, you're not going to have a future. And now they have—before when I was fishing, you caught everything, but you threw the little ones back, something like that small. You had a little measuring stick, and I had to separate them and throw the other ones back, and they were still alive, so they survived. But now they have, you going to have to put a hole in the trap to let the small ones out. (1:48:45.6) The little ones are the ones that come soft and growing. That's the way they grow. They get soft. I know y'all must've heard of soft crabs already, so.

Scull-DeArmey: Softshell? (1:48:56.0)

Serigne: Softshell, right. That's how they grow. In other words, if a crab is this big, then when he sheds and becomes soft, he comes out of that shell bigger. Then every time, he just grows every time like that.

Scull-DeArmey: I interviewed a couple who, the woman was a Yankee, who married a Biloxi man. And on their first date, he ordered a softshell-crab sandwich, and she said when she saw the legs hanging out of the sandwich—(laughter)

Serigne: That's the best part, them crispy legs. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: She was a little worried. (laughter)

Serigne: Talking about that, my sister, one of my sisters married a Yankee from New York, and when he first came down here, we were hitting bars, "Man, I wouldn't eat none of them spiders," he said, this and that. But once he got the taste of them, he, man, (laughter) he ate them up.

Hester: Nothing better.

Scull-DeArmey: (inaudible) crabs.

Serigne: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, when you think about, back over your life as a fisherman, what do the waters look like post-oil-spill? Is there a difference?

Serigne: In, what you mean, the water?

Scull-DeArmey: Just the appearance of the waters where you fished for all of your life.

Serigne: Well, I never fished all my life; I did it till I was twenty.

Scull-DeArmey: Off and on.

Serigne: Yeah, off and on. But anyway, I guess you can say I fished all my life. Some of it was part-time; some of it wasn't. What I find the difference now, (1:50:38.2) the big difference is the currents. My dad, when we would go out and fish and trawl in the bayous, he would wait until the current would stop. That's when you caught the shrimp the most. That was before butterfly nets. This was bottom trawling. And the tide would stay stopped for about maybe three to four hours before it would start falling again. The tide would raise, and then stop, and it would stay stopped for about three or four hours before it would fall, and that's when you caught your shrimp. Today the tide really doesn't stop. It might be raising, and then it'll start falling on the top, and it's still raising on the bottom. So it just comes right in, and *spfftt*, turns around and goes right back out. So you have no stopped tide whatsoever, and the reason for it is the Gulf is so much closer. Just like right on the Gulf in Mississippi, when you have a tide, it comes in, and then it goes right back out; where here we had all these islands, these barrier islands. That's why I keep saying the barrier islands would stop this tide, this surge, coming in so much. So the tide would

take a long time, and it wasn't as strong as what it is today. Today it's just a whole lot of difference. It's just strong, and that also helps wash the marsh away. Now you take like Mississippi; you have the beaches, so it kind of protects the erosion. But right on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, that's not natural beaches.

Scull-DeArmey: It's dredged up.

Serigne: It was dredged up, right. And the casinos rebuilt them. (laughter) That's what I see with the casinos. I think they did good for the State of Mississippi, in like the beaches. The only bad part about it is I can't afford to go there anymore. We used to go out there on the weekend, after we was married, and we could afford a hotel and rent a little sailboat and enjoy the beaches because we have no beaches here. And now they doubled the rates, would double the rates on the weekends. And of course I'm retired, but still you have—you oriented; your weekends is when you go out, and you can't do it anymore. Also, the casinos when they first opened up, you could go with twenty bucks and play all night. Now, twenty bucks lasts you five minutes. (laughter) And another thing, also, what they changed after Katrina; before we'd go to the Grand, and you'd see all kind of good entertainers, free. You sitting down there; you playing, gambling, but man, you had some great entertainers. I've seen great entertainers for hardly nothing, and they'd have them playing all the time, during the day and at night. *Now*, to go see an entertainer, it costs you a fortune, fifty bucks, sixty bucks a person to go see somebody. I was watching Lee Green with, they had another entertainer. Of course I was sort of a Elvis fan after he became, the second go round, and this fellow, Cabella(?) they called him, but I'm Spanish oriented, so you would call it Cabayo in Spanish, but it's Cabella. I forgot his first name. Terrific entertainer and he had a fellow with him that used to do—he did Elvis, and he did other people. He did Dean Martin. And he had another fellow used to do Sammy Davis Jr. Great entertainers. Boxing, all of this. Now you go down there, and it costs you a fortune to see anything.

Scull-DeArmey: It's all extra.

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you still see oil in the water?

Serigne: No, I don't. I don't ever see any.

Scull-DeArmey: What do you think the health of the fishery is? You've spoken to that some already, that some of the species are disappearing.

Serigne: Right. Some of them are disappearing, and I think it affected it, somewhat. If you talk to some of the fishermen—I think y'all talked to Thomas.

Hester: Yeah.

Serigne: And I'm being told—like I said I'm not down there all the time—I'm being told that there's a certain little worm that gets on a crab, and it affects the crab—never had that before. Whether that has to do anything with the oil spill, I don't know. It's not been proven.

Hester: But it's something new?

Sergine: Something new. They have a lot of new things. Another thing, when I was a kid, we could go swimming in that bayou, and it wouldn't affect you at all. Today if you have a cut—I don't even—I wouldn't wash my—if you happen to stick something, a hook in your hand, you're bleeding—

Scull-DeArmey: A paper cut, even a little thing—

Sergine: Anything.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Sergine: I wouldn't wash it in the bayou anymore because they got what they call a marine infection, (1:55:50.5) and it's terrible. If you get a little scratch, and some of that marine infection will get in it, they have to cut you down to the bone, to scrape the bone and everything, to get it out. I know a fellow, almost lost his hand with that. And that's something new; never had that.

Scull-DeArmey: After Katrina, we interviewed some nurses. (frogs making noise)
That's a frog.

Sergine: That's a frog, yeah. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: That'll be great on the tape. We interviewed some nurses, and what they found after Katrina: there's this bacteria that lives deep at sea, very deep, which apparently was pulled up in Katrina, and anybody who got cut, had it. It was flesh-eating, a flesh-eating bacteria, which sounds like what you're talking about. It would just—

Sergine: Yeah, it'd—

Scull-DeArmey: —eat away—

Sergine: —eat away.

Scull-DeArmey: —everything, yeah.

Sergine: After Katrina we have new ducks here. (1:56:52.8)

Scull-DeArmey: Wow.

Sergine: (laughter) Birds. They call it a Mexican Tree Duck. It looks like a female French duck. They only come here in the summer; they're not here in the winter. And there's a pair that come around my house, and I saw them arrive the other day. I was sitting in my breezeway, and they flew by, and I said, "Oh, there's the couple. They came back." Look like they come here, to a certain tree around my house that they're staying. And I was talking to a friend of mine yesterday that lives in Plaquemine, and he says that his grandson feeds them. He said, "Man," he said, "they got about thirty of them back there." (laughter) He's got all these tree ducks, they call them here.

And that's a new bird. Bugs, insects, all kind of new ones since Katrina. Of course, the frog has always been there. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: We saw one out on the lawn, a little tree frog.

Serigne: Yeah, a little, bitty one, yeah.

Scull-DeArme y: What do you see for the future of the seafood industry? (1:57:56.1)

Serigne: Unless there's some kind of change, I don't see much future in it. See, they're all limited to crabbing and shrimping and oysters. And the price on the shrimp is beginning to get a little better, but until the imports—imports, (1:58:18.9) we blame it a lot on the imports, but its more than just the imports. The imports has an effect, but I think it's, like I say. They get a dollar and a half. By the time you buy it, it's almost four dollars, five dollars a pound. Somebody's making money somewhere, and not the fishermen. So when the fishermen, the people who harvest, don't make any money, they start quitting. After Katrina, we have about, I'd venture to say maybe 80 [percent], 75 percent less fishermen than what you had before. Most of them are crabbing. They've, more or less, left the shrimping industry because of the price. Some of them are still in it, but let's face it; you're paying four dollars and something a gallon for fuel, and you're getting a dollar, dollar and a half for your shrimp. And you have to—the ones that are fishing are catching more shrimp, but the reason being, you don't have as many fishermen; that's with the shrimp. Now in the crabs, you have way more fishermen than what you had before crabbing because they do better with that.

Scull-DeArme y: Do you have to spend less fuel to get the crabs than the shrimp?

Serigne: Yes, um-hm, yeah, because the shrimp, you're working your engine constantly, where the crabs: you go out and run your traps, and it's not a forcible—you burn more fuel when you're pulling something, or you're pushing something. Same thing with an automobile, if you pulling a trailer, you're going to burn more gas, more fuel than what you are when you're not. And where fishing, shrimping is that sort of—your oysters, too, because they have to drag the dredge. And of course the oyster fishermen have to go up on their product because they're not catching as much. And so what you got? You got shrimp, crabs and oysters; that's it. So it doesn't look good.

Scull-DeArme y: No. It doesn't look good. Are there any other questions that—

Serigne: I can stay here all day long. (laughter)

Hester: I can't think of anything. I think you've done a great job.

Scull-DeArme y: Well, will you tell us what your favorite seafood dish is? (2:00:47.5)

Serigne: Shrimp.

Scull-DeArme y: And how do you like them prepared?

Serigne: Any kind of way, except raw. (laughter) I tried it. I tried them raw; I just don't care for them. I like them boiled, panéed, fried, sautéed. I love them over grits; wow, they're delicious.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you make shrimp and grits?

Serigne: Well, you sauté your shrimp with garlic and a little salt and pepper and garlic. Not too much pepper because, well, I don't eat too much pepper. I have a low tolerance for pepper. I use salt and garlic and onions and—

Scull-DeArmey: What kind of oil?

Serigne: —a little parsley and you—olive oil.

Scull-DeArmey: Olive oil.

Serigne: Very little olive oil. And I like to—because shrimp hold water, moisture, what I do with mine, I'll take, put them on paper towels if I'm sautéing them and dry them as much as I can. And I'll mix the garlic and the onions and a little parsley, and sauté them. You don't have to—they don't take long to cook. And they make their own little gravy, like, with the olive oil. And you take grits, and you just pour them over grits. *Whew!* That's good! (laughter)

Hester: You're making me hungry.

Serigne: That's my favorite.

Scull-DeArmey: Are they peeled or unpeeled?

Serigne: Oh, yeah, peeled.

Scull-DeArmey: They're already peeled. And do you chop them up?

Serigne: No. I leave them whole.

Scull-DeArmey: How big are they?

Serigne: Oh, some of them are sixteen/twenty; some of them are thirty/forties.

Scull-DeArmey: So what is that ratio?

Serigne: That's to a count. In other words, to the pound. There's sixteen to twenty to the pound, or thirty to thirty-five, forty to the pound.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, is there anything that we have not asked you that you would like to put on the record?

Serigne: After all this conversation, I can't think of anything right now. Probably when I go home, I'll probably think of something, but right now, offhand I just—I'd like to paint the picture that I have in my head the way Delacroix Island was, and what it is. I give tours now and then, and if there's friends of mine that come out, I'll take

them on, besides doing the tour here, I'll take them down to Delacroix in the fishing villages, and they see what's there, but I can't explain what was. And it's gone. It's not there anymore. (2:03:32.6) We don't have any woods anymore or nothing. It's marsh all the way to the houses. Then if they wouldn't have put the little levee behind the houses at Delacroix Island, the marsh would be right where the houses are. And also, after Katrina you only have about ten local families that moved back, and they're all grown-ups. The rest, you could see a lot of houses, but the land value has gone up so much, the local people sold their land, had enough to retire and build a house over here. And sports fishermen, I never mentioned that. We call them cheros(?).

Scull-DeArmey: What did you call them?

Serigne: Cheros.

Scull-DeArmey: (laughter) What is that?

Serigne: In Spanish it's a word for mountain goat. And in the old days before the city people would hardly go down there, it was all commercial fishermen. Some, few of them would go down there. In off-seasons the commercial fishermen, like my dad and that, would take them out, like a charter boat today, and they would fish. And for some reason or another, people from the city would want to get on the highest part of the boat, for some reason, because all the boats in the old days had little cabins on them, a canopy, and a mast pole, we called it, in the front to hold the canopy. And they would climb up on top the cabin. And not only that, they couldn't hardly walk on the deck. They would fall down, fall overboard, and we had to pick them up out the water, and they would hit each other with the pole. And they used to fish with big leads, heavy leads on the line, and they would hit each other with the lead. So if you take a mountain goat, and you put him on a boat, he can't walk; he's going to fall. So we called them cheros. That's how they got that name, "The cheros are coming." Some of them called them matadors—matador in Spanish means killing—because they used to hit each other with the poles and would half-kill each other. (laughter) So some of them would call them that. But the big, the big name was chero. Another thing, you see I keep thinking of things. I'll be all day. I'll be boring y'all to death.

Scull-DeArmey: No. It's good.

Serigne: The people from down there, the Islenos at Delacroix, they love to have a good time. Every Saturday night there was a dance, so they had about four big dance halls when I was coming up. And like I said, the [19]50s changed everything. This was in the late [19]40s. I was seven, eight, nine, ten years old. And every Saturday night, they had a dance somewhere down in that small village, and all the families, the whole families would go and dance all night. And they had little sections for the kids, so I kind of grew up on the dance floor. And they would just dance all night. They would cook. They had a kitchen and everything. They would cook gumbo and whatever, and eat. And they used to drink quite a bit, too. And, well, by the time I came along, they had already, they had adapted to the American music. And in the [19]40s it was big bands, or jazz bands, or also, well, we called it hillbilly at the time, country music. Who was that used to go down there? A very popular country singer

at the time—I can't think of his name. I always forget his name. It wasn't Eddie Arnold. It was the other guy.

Hester: Willie Nelson?

Serigne: No. That was before Willie Nelson. Hank—not Hank Williams, himself, I'm talking about the old Hank Williams, not Hank Williams Jr. There was another one, boy; he would go down there often, and he'd come out from Nashville, and he would play a lot. They had another popular jazz band that was very big in New Orleans, Papa Celestine, Louis Armstrong Jr., Fats Domino, in the early [19]50s, late [19]40s. Fats Domino played down here for them, sometimes. But they used to like more country music and that, but they liked jazz, too. They had Papa Celestine was playing. I was a little—like I say, I was a child, but I was on the dance floor. And I was at one of the dance halls one night, and this one fellow, a old fellow, he liked the song “Little Liza Jane.” I know y'all heard—what was his name that made a revise of it? Vince Gill, he sang “Little Liza,” but this song's been around since the [19]40s. Anyway, I think it was Louis Armstrong, wrote that song; I'm not sure. But anyway, this fellow liked that song, “Little Liza Jane.” He went to the band leader, which was Papa Celestine, black man, and he gave him a certain amount of money. I don't know what it was. He said, “But I want you to play that for an hour and a half.” (laughter) So he played it for an hour and a half, but he would make up—he would see things that was happening on the dance floor, and he would sing about that and “Little Liza Jane.” He'd say, “Oh, this lady's dropped a safety pin on the floor, Little Liza Jane” and all, and all kind of things that was happening on the dance floor because he didn't know what else to, once he got finished with it, but I remember that a lot. They forced him. And another thing, too, they would hire the band for, let's say, four or five hours, but they paid them, but they wouldn't let them leave till the next day. They [stayed] till the next morning, daylight, having a good time, but they wouldn't let them leave. (laughter) The band knew they couldn't leave. (laughter) They just held them there.

Scull-DeArme: They knew it was going to be an all-nighter.

Serigne: Oh, yeah. Well, they got accustomed to it, so then they knew they was going to be there all night. And then later one, like I said, as time went by, the [19]50s, then that sort of faded away. Now, by the time I was twelve years old, it kind of—[19]52, '53, '54, it's another change, and you had rhythm and blues. And then later Elvis came along, and Fats Domino and all that rock and roll music. Tremendous changes. And the [19]50s to me, that was my teenage years, that's when I was coming (inaudible). And it was such a tremendous change. It just looked like it happened overnight. Like in the [19]40s, I remember my mother had varicose veins. They might've had two automobiles in the whole town, the gravel road, and I'll never forget she was in the kitchen, and one of her veins popped. There was blood just—she put her finger on it. (laughter) So my dad had to run about a quarter mile down the road to talk to the fellow that had a automobile to come pick her up and take her to Charity Hospital in the city. There was no hospital down here. And she just held her finger on it. Boy, she had blood all over. I'll never forget that. I'm looking at her, “Gee whiz, Mom.” And it looked like it didn't bother her. She just put her finger on it and (laughter) held it there till they got her to the hospital. Later on she, I remember she

went in the hospital, and they operated on her for it and got rid of it. But she had bumps all over her legs because of them. And when she had me, poor thing, she was old. I was—

Scull-DeArmey: How old was she?

Serigne: I don't know. They had to be in their late forties or something along there.

Scull-DeArmey: Wow, yeah.

Serigne: I never did remember my mother with natural brown hair. Her hair was always white.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Well, in first aid—

Serigne: I always said, "I must've been a mistake or something." (laughter) I was the youngest one out of nine, so.

Scull-DeArmey: What was the difference in the next sibling? How much older were they than you?

Serigne: Well, my dad and my mother, they had five, and then they went a nine-year span and had four more, so he really raised two families.

Scull-DeArmey: I'll say.

Serigne: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Serigne: Matter of fact, one of my nephews is almost the same age as me, from my older sister. The oldest one was my sister, and there was quite a few years difference between us. They're almost all gone. I got two sisters left, and I got one, eighty-five, and the other one's seventy-six. She was here for the festival, the one seventy-six. The one, eighty-five, she's doing all right. She's got to have that oxygen with her, though, but she's doing pretty good. I get a kick out of her. She can't hear too good. She's the only person I know that can't hear at all and speaks real low. (laughter) Like myself, I have a hard of hearing, but I speak kind of loud. And I get a kick out of it. But there's a lot—I'm probably going to think of quite a few things that happened when I was a child.

Scull-DeArmey: You'll get a chance to edit your transcript.

Serigne: OK.

Scull-DeArmey: And you can add if you want to.

Serigne: Sure. Another thing about down there—you see, I'm thinking about something else—is nicknames. Everybody has a nickname. Mine, he introduced me as Wimpy. That's not my name. But when I was a kid, my older siblings used to read the newspaper to me, and all I wanted to do was eat hamburgers. (laughter) So they

would read the Wimpy, Popeye, and Olive Oil and all of that, to me, and I told them—this is what I’m told. This happened before I can even remember. And they told me that I told them, “I want y’all to call me Wimpy from here on. Don’t call me by my name.” So I’d go out in the yard and play, and my mother would call me by my name, and I wouldn’t answer. When she would call me Wimpy, I would answer. So I just [stayed] Wimpy all my life. Now there’s a lot of people that I grew up with don’t know my real name. If you ask him, “You know Lloyd Serigne?” “No. I don’t know him.” (laughter) “You know Wimpy?” “Oh, yeah, yeah, I know who Wimpy is. Sure.” (laughter) But today’s world, when I tell them Wimpy, “Oh, I’m not going to call you that. You’re not a wimp.” But it’s a whole different meaning.

Scull-DeArme y: Right, yeah.

Serigne: But that’s a lot of the good things. The dances were something real—they had their little rumbles; we might call and all that, but they would fight with each other, and after they finished, they would treat each other to a drink. (laughter) But I believe that happens all over.

Scull-DeArme y: Sure.

Serigne: It’s not only there. But it was, to me it was a good time. And of course when my brother went in World War II—now my oldest brother was drafted, but he had—they used to cast; they’d have cast nets. They’d throw a cast net to find shrimp. (2:15:08.7) And in them days they had a lasso, a rope here, that would tighten up. He was throwing a cast net, and that cast net got caught in the prop [propeller], and it drug him down there, and it cut his leg up, lost a bone in his leg. Matter of fact, he had two little scars right here where the blade was already hitting him by the time my father found out. He just took the boat out. But anyway, he was drafted for World War II, but he couldn’t do the boot training because of his leg. The other one, he went to the South Pacific, fought Japanese in Japan and all the South Pacific.

Scull-DeArme y: Was he in the Navy?

Serigne: No. He was in the Army, but since he was a fisherman, they would always put him running a—I don’t know what kind of boat he ran, but he ran some kind of boat that, when they had the invasions, like Iwo Jima and the Philippines, he was all in the Philippines. And when they landed, he was running—I don’t think he was running the landing boats (inaudible), but I think he was running some other kind of boat. because he wouldn’t talk about the bad times. He would always talk about the good things that happened and laugh about them. He told me one story where they went out on maneuvers or something, and they got hung up on a reef, and they was there for three days and never had anything to eat. Finally, the tide came up, and they made their way back to the base. And he said when they got there, him and his buddy, they saw some beans, so they sat down there and started to gobbling beans, and everybody was laughing at them. And he tells him, he said, “I don’t know why they laughing, man.” They just couldn’t even taste them they were so hungry. They was eating the beans until finally his buddy put the spoon down. He says, “I know why they’re

laughing.” And he said, “Why is that?” He said, “Because I just tasted the beans; they’re rotten.” (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: Wow.

Serigne: And things like that he would talk about and when he was in New Guinea. He’d always talk about the natives in New Guinea because he kind of related to them because they make their living off the water, and he said the ship was anchored out there, and they would come out to the ship, and all that, and they were living on stilts, these high houses, I guess made out of thatched huts or whatever on stilts. And they was fishing with lines, and they would come to the boat, and they’d give them stuff. So he went out, and I think he had one of them energy things or something, and he would drop the wires in there, and he would throw that charge down there, and the fish would come up. (2:17:45.2) Boy, them natives, they got so they would just go out there and pick—every time the ship would come in, they wanted him to shock the fish to catch them. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: Wow.

Serigne: Things like that he told me about, a few other things, but he never talked about the rough times. I don’t blame him. I know what happened, so. But most people or men that’s in the war like that, they don’t talk about the bad times. You can’t blame them.

Scull-DeArme y: We’ve managed to get a few people to give us interviews on some of the wars, World War II, Korea, Vietnam. And it is rare. They’ll mention that they haven’t talked about it until—

Serigne: Until recently.

Scull-DeArme y: —we interviewed them. Yeah.

Serigne: There’s a fellow; he doesn’t stay at Delacroix Island. He’s got a good age on him. He’s got to be ninety-something. He’s a World War II veteran. He was in Germany in the Battle of the—

Scull-DeArme y: Bulge?

Serigne: I think it was the Battle of the Bulge, or was it? Oh, I can’t think of the name of it. But anyway, where they were surrounded by the Germans, and matter of fact, they made a movie of it. Now, I can’t think of the name of it, the town. And Ricardo Montalban played him, Rodriguez. And he told me about it, and he talked about it a little bit, not a whole lot, but I think now he might talk about it, if he can remember, but he’s getting to where he don’t remember too much.

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah. We’re losing those veterans.

Serigne: Oh, yeah.

Scull-DeArme y: There aren’t many of them left.

Serigne: Yeah. Well, time goes on.

Scull-DeArmey: Um-hm.

Serigne: I've never gone and visited the World War II Memorial yet. I want to go see it.

Scull-DeArmey: In DC?

Serigne: No, right here in New Orleans.

Scull-DeArmey: Oh, in New Orleans.

Serigne: Yeah. Yeah they have a big, big what-do-you-call-it? World War II, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: There's a museum.

Serigne: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Serigne: Museum, right.

Scull-DeArmey: It's very, very nice, very good, well known.

Serigne: Boy, and I love the music they had in them—those guys could dance. Wow! Could they dance. (laughter) And where I'm from down there, they used to dance a lot. The guys used to like to dance because when I would go to other places, and they found out I was from Delacroix, a lot of girls would like to dance with me because I could dance. And I'd get a kick out of like the big band music, when they do the jitterbug and that. Man, them guys.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you jitterbug?

Serigne: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Serigne: Yeah, my wife and I did.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Serigne: Well, we kind of, as time progressed, we used to do the jitterbug and all that, and the [19]50s dances, we did. We still do because I love the bands, the big band music, so it gets me going. Of course now if I do a jitterbug, I'm going to need an oxygen tank. (laughter) But it was—I really enjoyed it. And then different dances came out, and during the [19]50s you had—well, in New Orleans anyway, the New Orleans' area you had different type of dancing than what they had in others. And we had what they called a cat dance in the early or mid-[19]50s. And then they went to what they called a Jamaica; that was another dance we did in the New Orleans area. I don't know if you're familiar with that one.

Hester: (inaudible) and Jamaica.

Serigne: Yeah.

Hester: I'm not a dancer, (inaudible) would've been a complicated one.

Serigne: Yeah, we used to do that. And then my wife and I started dancing to Latin music, so we learned how to do the merengue, salsa, and all of that, dance to Latin music. But I enjoyed it. So now we just dance a little waltz now and then. (laughter) Take the slow ones.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Absolutely.

Serigne: But what I see with the Cajuns; they kept their culture because there's so many of them, and their music and their dance, it's pretty unique.

Hester: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: The zydeco music.

Serigne: Right, oh, I love that music. I like to do—I like the dance; I dance the zydeco, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you try to get out to the jazz festival?

Serigne: No. I've gotten to a point where I don't like to be around a whole lot of people. It's just too much. Not only that, it costs you a fortune.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Serigne: The city, I just don't even care to go to the city, and everything you do, they just—now, I do like the French Quarter Festival. It's coming up pretty soon. I like to go there. But to park, they're going to rip you off to park, and anything you buy, it's just overpriced.

Scull-DeArmey: With gasoline prices going up, I don't think many people are—

Serigne: No.

Scull-DeArmey: —going to be able to go anywhere.

Serigne: It's not going to happen. But our festival, we have people from around the world come here.

Scull-DeArmey: That's great.

Serigne: Our festival, we starting to get known because we have groups that come from the Canary Islands every year, and they perform their folklore and music and dance. It's a shame we took up so much time I couldn't show you the museum.

Hester: Well, I would like to do that for sure one day.

Serigne: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you want me to turn off the recorder?

Hester: Sure, yeah.

(end of interview)