

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Garrett "Hank" Danos

COLLECTION: 4700.2095

IDENTIFICATION: Born in Larose, Louisiana [c. 1950]; Cut Off, Louisiana Native; grandson of sugarcane farmer; Louisiana State University Alumnus; owner of oil field contracting company [Danos and Curole Marine Contractors, now Danos]; Catholic

INTERVIEWER: Olivia Eusea; Ashley Dixon

SERIES: Bayou Lafourche Oral History

INTERVIEW DATE: October 14, 2010

FOCUS DATES: 1950s, 1960s [childhood]; 1970s [early career]; 2010 [contemporary culture in Bayou Lafourche]

ABSTRACT:

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Danos first lived in Larose, Louisiana, in Lafourche Parish, in his grandfather's house; grandfather was a sugarcane farmer; neighborhood was rural, similar to a sugar cane farm; uncle and great-uncle lived nearby; there were no other children in neighborhood; when Danos was nine his family moved south [Cut Off, LA] to a house that his mother and father built; still rural and along bayou but now there were kids in neighborhood; Interviewer questions Danos about who he played with and what they played; Danos had an older brother [Al]; cousins that lived not too far; played marbles; at the farm they boys chased chickens, played in barn, hide-and-seek, climbed trees, shot BB guns; in second neighborhood there were more boys his age; Danos went exploring in woods and swamp around house; fished and crawfished; Danos lived in Lafourche Parish his entire life save for university years at Louisiana State in Baton Rouge [BS in Business Administration '71]; family always had an automobile; Danos rode school bus; recalls converted school bus/rolling grocery store that travelled bayou; had boat for recreational purposes in the bayou; had pirogue [flat-bottomed boat] and later a motorized pirogue; swam in bayou; construction of community has changed from a very rural community centered on Bayou Lafourche to somewhat different, now with subdivisions, streets and multi-home dwellings; families not living in just one neighborhood; growing up, it was mostly fisherman, oil field workers, some farmers; pretty rural, extended families lived in clusters; Danos did not observe any subdivisions until he came back from university; Interviewer asks Danos what it means to live in Bayou Lafourche; Danos has a lot of pride in culture, independence, and self-sufficiency; rural community has not a lot of amenities but keeps a "can do" attitude; many men are shrimpers or oil field workers and were gone for long periods; the women and young boys kept

things going; heritage, Danos's parents' first language was French and Danos learned French as a youngster; community has accomplished a lot; Bayou Lafourche has become focal point of energy exploration and development in gulf and country; now has an important economic impact on nation's energy; interviewer asks about the geography of Lafourche: how has it changed?; when Danos was young homes were close to the bayou because that was highest point and land dropped off and became undevelopable because it was swampy; drainage has improved; the community built a hurricane protection levee [Golden Meadow Floodgate/ Leon Theriot Floodgate, completed 1985] which made a lot more land available for residential and farming purposes; physical community has changed as building expands away from bayou ridge; interviewer asks Danos what are the most important things to people living in Bayou Lafourche; he cites culture, spirit of hard work and fun living; people coming together for holidays and festivals; importance of having family, fun and celebration; freedom to come and go as they please; enjoying life and the culture of good food, dancing, music and fun; what's important second to that is pride in marine background and how it has contributed to development of the oil industry and, marine industry worldwide; Danos has great memories of doing "pretend" work in grandfather's sugarcane fields; would ride in sugar wagons, pick sugarcane, ride horses; father was in oil field development; from early age Danos visited oil field sites; got to ride on crew boat to rigs; interviewer asks Danos about the differences between living above or below Golden Meadow [hurricane protection levee]; Danos notes the big difference in the last few years; community has been able to build a levee with help, including government assistance; people, including coworkers, who live below the levee have been flooded on several occasions; those fortunate to live inside the levee have been protected from Katrina [2005], Rita [2005], Gustav [2008], and several storms that could have flooded the community; a few people still live south of the levee but they are very vulnerable to flooding; Danos has experienced many hurricanes since he was a child; the first he recalls he was living in his grandfather's farmhouse; remembers others at his parents' house and current home; unique experience; scary at times because of the intensity of wind and rain, things flying around; "glad to say I've experienced it but not looking forward to experiencing any more storms" in Lafourche Parish; more recently he's evacuated; when he was kid he stayed in Lafourche Parish for several storms, some were severe; now that he's responsible for his own family he will continue to heed advice of authorities; "when they tell us to leave we'll leave"; Interviewer asks Danos about cultural divisions in parish; when Danos was younger there were groups of farmers, fisherman [some fisherman were also trappers], oil field people; distinct career differences but because of small, rural population people found common interest in churches, schools, socially, a lot of connectiveness in social fabric of community; now there are less farmers and less fisherman, still a few farmers in lower Lafourche [where Danos lives]; most people have migrated to the "better" jobs in the oil industry; now there are more people that aren't from "our area,"; Danos notices distinction between people who are from the area and those who have recently moved in; still thinks there's a lot of interaction socially, economically in churches and civic and social events; first few years of Danos's life the family attended Catholic church in Larose; when they moved to Cut Off, which is next community south, attended different Catholic church but they were similar in structure and programs; both essentially neighborhood churches; Danos attended public school; elementary school offered religion classes; high school had voluntary religion classes after hours; Danos would come back; Danos worked summers during school in the family oil field service business; worked on boats, some sandblasting and painting; during school year Danos seldom worked and

was not expected to; participated in extracurricular programs at school so he was busy; Danos played football in junior high and high school; was on track team; student council class officer “pretty much every year”; senior year district consolidated two high schools to have same classification as larger schools across state; Danos had 220 people in HS graduating class [school name?]; pretty large at that time; brand new school with a lot of new students; works for family company; second generation in company called Danos and Curole [now Danos]; named after family’s name; father’s brother-in-law started the company in 1949 as an oil field service company; in 1970 Danos and his brother Al became principles in company; recently a third generation has retained some ownership and management in the company; company provides a variety of services to the oil industry; provide people who operate platforms offshore; construction and fabrication people, welders and fabricators; logistic work, shipping and receiving supplies going off shore; a group of consultants that work on some international clients; all related to extraction of oil; interviewer asks Danos for list of major industries in Bayou Lafourche; Danos replies there is still a fishing industry, which includes crabbing, shrimping, oysters; farming industry, primarily sugarcane; majority of jobs are connected to development, exploration, or production of oil and gas; can’t remember thinking he’d do anything other than come back and join the family business; encouraged and invited to return; father’s business was growing when Danos was a kid; “never thought about doing much else”; Danos describes houses: maternal grandfather’s house was wooden, built in 30s, when mother was young; shortly after maternal grandmother died grandfather invited Danos’s mother to come back; tall ceilings, typical house built before air conditioning: lots of windows; fireplace but it wasn’t operational when he was a kid; long hallway down the middle; late 1950s parents built a modern-style raised brick home with central air and heat; Interviewer asks Danos what home means to him; Danos lived in just two homes growing up, and came back home after college, so home is very special; great memories of home and want to cherish, remember, build, home for his own family; home means family, fun, good memories, good food, celebrations, holidays; safety, security; grandfather’s house has been moved, and Danos sees it every once in a while; mother and father’s houses is near Danos’s current residence, where he sees it often; mother lived at home until she died [c. 2008]; house is still in family; still looks the same as over 50 years ago in regards to furniture; the trees are bigger; both houses faced the bayou; no houses between theirs and the water; Danos had a boat tied up in bayou; Danos never used boat as real transportation; picked up friends on occasion but would just as often be on bicycle or horse; boats used as transportation for shrimpers, oil field, sugarcane farmers; bayou looks pretty similar; in some places it’s a little wider; when water encroached on highway, highway department had to reinforce the road side; less shrimp boats tied along the bayou, Danos misses that; still a lot of oil field and shrimp boat traffic and a lot of bridges that cross; still an inconvenience when traffic has to wait for boats going by; Danos wouldn’t trade heritage and culture for ease; it’s unique to be able to park on the side of the road and watch boat traffic; Danos travels to Houston quite a bit as it is epicenter of oil activity; international work travel to Venezuela, Nigeria; company still works in West Africa; Bayou Lafourche back then: not a lot of restaurants or fast food; sufficient amount of grocery stores but not a lot of shopping centers; now bayou has a couple of Walmarts, then no Walmart, McDonald’s; town [Cut Off?] didn’t have any stoplights when he was a kid; no places to eat except home; Dairy Queen was open occasionally for ice cream and a hamburger; momma was in the kitchen a lot more than moms are now; Danos recalls it was an adventure to drive to New Orleans for Schwegmann’s [large grocery

store]; load car with things Danos family couldn't get at the local store; clothes shopping in New Orleans as local stores had very limited inventory; big difference; never locked cars or houses; much safer place, felt freedom to swim and waterski in bayou, reluctant to do that now; Danos's group of LSU friends, who were primarily from New Orleans, with a few "Baton Rouge boys," loved to come to Bayou Lafourche; it was easier to gain access to a city than have a city person experience Bayou Lafourche; if they didn't know anyone it was difficult to connect to the local way of life; friends' enthusiasm made Danos realize Lafourche was something special; Danos mentions Vin Bruce, well known singer in Cajun culture.

TAPES: 1 (T3941)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 35 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 5 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Interviewer notes; Interviewer index; Biography from LSU College of Business

RESTRICTIONS: None