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[Begin Tape 4401. Begin Session I.]

KAT DONNER: Can you . . . ? It's like on my neck. It's a weird shirt. It's not working for me. Okay. Alright so this interview's probably going to take about ten to fifteen minutes.

JUDY MONTGOMERY GAUTHIA: [00:26] Okay.

DONNER: Maybe a little longer, a little less.

GAUTHIA: Oh, no. I'm in a . . . I'm pushed for time.

DONNER: Okay. Okay we'll try to make it as brief as possible. We just want to get some basic background information.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DONNER: And then we'll probably be in touch with you to get another interview.

GAUTHIA: Okay. Yeah because I didn't come prepared.

DONNER: That is totally fine. You can count me down whenever you're ready.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We're recording.

DONNER: Okay. So today is January twenty-fourth, 2015 and I'm Kat Donner representing the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History with LSU [Louisiana State University] Libraries. We're working in conjunction with the Imperial Calcasieu Museum and Bill Shearman to document the history of Mossville, Louisiana. And to kick that off, we're holding Mossville Oral History Day here at the Rigmaiden Recreation Center on Old Spanish Trail. I'm here today with Ms. Judy . . . How do you pronounce your last name? Can you . . .?

GAUTHIA: [00:16] Gauthia [Go-shay].

DONNER: Gauthia?

GAUTHIA: Judy Montgomery Gauthia.

DONNER: Okay. And is that just your full name?

GAUTHIA: Well Montgomery is my maiden name.

DONNER: Okay. Alright. So like I said we're just going to do a really brief fifteen minute interview.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DONNER: [01:29] We'll probably get in touch with you for a follow up in the future.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DONNER: But just to start off, when and where were you born?

GAUTHIA: Lafayette, Louisiana.

DONNER: Okay. And when?

GAUTHIA: 1950 June the . . . fourteenth.

DONNER: Okay. And what were your parents' names?

GAUTHIA: Eola and Valery Montgomery.

DONNER: Okay. And your grandparents?

GAUTHIA: [01:54] Abraham Montgomery and Mary Montgomery. And [Aidas?]

Bernard and Jermaine Bernard.

DONNER: Okay. And what did you parents do?

GAUTHIA: Well, my daddy did a lot of things. Let's see. He worked at the plant at Conoco. He retired there a janitor. And he had a business, Paradise Club and dance hall, so . . . And then he was in a vacuum truck business and hydro-blasting cleaning service. So he was a busy body.

DONNER: Okay. And your mother?

GAUTHIA: And my mother just worked hard right along with him. She just wasn't in the front. She was the pusher. She'd push him, "Come on Valery. Let's go. Come on. Got to get this done."

DONNER: Back bone there?

GAUTHIA: [01:49] Yeah she was the hard background worker. She worked hard right along with him. But she worked in the club and everything morning and night.

DONNER: And where was the club located?

GAUTHIA: On Prater Road.

DONNER: Okay.

GAUTHIA: 41 Prater Road.

DONNER: Okay.

GAUTHIA: It was a route back then, but it's on Prater Road.

DONNER: So what brought your family to Mossville?

GAUTHIA: I'm assuming they wanted to get out the country because they was from around Lafayette, Duson, Scott [Louisiana]. And I done forgot how the story went, but seemed like to me they borrowed . . . forty dollars from his brother-in-law? And they came here. I done forgot exactly how it went, but they came here with forty dollars, a horse, and a mule it seemed like to me.

DONNER: [03:41] Wow.

GAUTHIA: Back then.

DONNER: And do you remember what the property was like whenever you were growing up? Just the . . . Your house or the land around it? Could you just describe it for me?

GAUTHIA: Well, it was a wooden house. And we had good neighbors. Rose and Sam Bernard was one of our neighbors, and the son was Eugene Fontenot. And we had the Mayos.

[Pushem?] Henry Mayo and Louise Mayo and their family. And [Emelle?] and Margie Peters and the Cotlong. Thelma Cotlong and Mr. Alvin Cotlong. I think that was his name. And my. . . A lot of people lived with my parents. My parents had always an open house. So they had a lot of people always stayed there. His brother lived with my dad a long time. Wes Montgomery. But he had a lot of brothers to live with us, so we always had a houseful and stuff like that.

DONNER: Okay. Well . . . Let's see. Where were some of the places that you liked to frequent around town?

GAUTHIA: [04:57] I liked to go to the swimming pool. Half the time Momma didn't care for us to go there because she always thought everybody was going to drown I guess. And then they had the baseball games right out here in the field. And sometime we'd come there. I ain't going to tell you I played baseball because I was a benchwarmer [laughs].

DONNER: And what schools did you go to?

GAUTHIA: Mossville was the only school I ever went to.

DONNER: Okay.

GAUTHIA: I was the last class to graduate in 1969.

DONNER: Okay. And can you just describe your experience there for me?

GAUTHIA: I guess it was fun going to school, playing, looking forward to getting out of school. And once you got out of school, everything was a drag after that. I didn't realize that was the best days. Being with a lot of people at school every day. But . . .

DONNER: And what about church? Where'd you go to church?

GAUTHIA: [05:53] Westlake. Saint John Bosco Church, Westlake. Catholic.

DONNER: Okay. And who were some of the, if you can recall, the community leaders?

GAUTHIA: I would say my dad was one of them, Valery Montgomery. Wes Montgomery. Butch Lemelle. Edward Julia Lemelle. Oh, there's a lot of them, but I can't remember them all. Dave Prince, he was with the team . . . With mean green. And Dorothy Felix. And his wife kind of promoted him, Diane Prince. She had cancer and died. And she was kind of following the team with them. Giving him her side of living near the plant because she was on Seven Avenue and stuff. So that's how that was.

DONNER: And let's see . . . Okay so what does the community mean to you?

GAUTHIA: Well I guess it's home and I've never really left home. I live in Bigwoods in . . . near Edgerly on Highway 90, but to me Mossville was always home. I always stuck with my parents and I don't know I just thought that was what I was supposed to do I guess, an old fashioned type of person. And . . .

DONNER: [07:41] So I guess just to take that a step further, what does home mean to you?

GAUTHIA: It's quiet. You can leave your door open and pretty much nobody going to mess with you. They might come in and help they self to some food or whatever because there's always an open door. Half the time, ninety percent of the times it's open. So my parents always took people in and I guess I'm going . . . A little follower and stuff. My dad's still here. My momma been gone four years, but Daddy is eighty-nine right now. He's not walking and stuff, but . . .

DONNER: And does he still own that same property here?

GAUTHIA: Yes, he still have his place.

DONNER: Wow.

GAUTHIA: Yeah.

DONNER: That's great.

GAUTHIA: [08:29] Yeah. Can't wait to sell it. We in the process of wanting to sell it, and excited to be able to sell, so. Keep the plant going and I think that's good they taking this over. And I'm glad to see they doing this history for Mossville, you see.

DONNER: [Agrees]. It's very important to get your stories written down. But what sort of changes have you seen growing up in Mossville?

GAUTHIA: We . . . Like my dad, he helped them do the sewage and water I guess. He tried to help do a lot of things. I can remember he was working at the plant, at Conoco, and I think him and his brother Wes Montgomery, if I remember right, they had went to the TV and they had told them how they was going to pass the water and the sewage and stuff like that.

DONNER: That's really interesting.

GAUTHIA: So I guess he was a little help to the community. A big help.

DONNER: That's awesome.

GAUTHIA: And stuff. So that's why I'm happy to be able to sell my property to Sasol and everything. And happy that everybody else can go ahead and sell. I haven't sold yet, but I am ready. Just waiting for a clearance with Road Home and once I get that done, I'll be ready to sign.

DONNER: And where do you live now?

GAUTHIA: I'm staying with my dad; taking care of my dad.

DONNER: [10:05] Okay.

GAUTHIA: Staying with him.

DONNER: And just a few questions just to sort of wrap things up, what is the most important thing for you that you feel people need to remember about Mossville that is not recorded in the history books?

GAUTHIA: Just . . . my dad he would have loved to be able to give y'all his history, and he's not able to because he has Alzheimer's right now, so he can remember real good back then. And he loved politics. He loved that. I can remember him telling Momma how he'd rather see about that than to eat. She'd tell him, "You didn't take time to eat yet, Valery. Come on and eat." She loves to feed everybody. She likes for people to eat. And he'd say, "Not now. Not now let me get this done. I don't want to forget to do . . ." whatever he was trying to do. So he liked to see about everything that was going on in the community and around the areas. Lake Charles and everywhere.

DONNER: That's great. That's very kind. Well is there anything that you would want to add in closing?

GAUTHIA: [11:30] No. not right now.

DONNER: Did you have a chance to scan any documents?

GAUTHIA: No I didn't bring nothing today. I didn't come prepared to . . .

DONNER: That's fine. If you . . . I was just going to let you know that if you just go through your . . .

GAUTHIA: Pictures and stuff, yeah.

DONNER: And your father's things and you want to scan some of them for the record, we could do that.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DONNER: Just since we can't actually get in touch with him.

GAUTHIA: [11:54] Okay. And I can give you my cousin's name and number for . . .

DONNER: Please.

GAUTHIA: Well, especially Danine. [Vanita?] I don't know if she . . . I know Danine would be a . . . one that would be interested in giving they history.

DONNER: Okay great. Well if you don't have anything to add we're going to go ahead and stop the recording.

GAUTHIA: Okay. Yes you can go ahead. I thought we had already stopped it.

DONNER: I'm sorry.

GAUTHIA: That's okay.

DONNER: And we're just going to burn that CD for you.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DONNER: [12:24] But let me just get that information from you.

GAUTHIA: Alright. I'm looking.

[12:27]

[End Tape 4401. End Session I.]