

Interviewee: Judy Montgomery-Gauthia
Interviewer: Jamie Digilormo
Transcriber: Anne Wheeler
Auditor: Laura Spikerman
Editor: Teresa Bergen

4700.2575 Tape 4518
Session I
September 24, 2015

[Begin Tape 4518. Begin Session I.]

JAMIE DIGILORMO: Alright. Thank you very much. And I just got this one other form.

JUDY MONTGOMERY-GAUTHIA: Oh, one more you said.

DIGILORMO: **[00:21]** Basically, it gives you the study title. So Mossville Community Oral History Project. This is our information at LSU [Louisiana State University] where you can reach our boss Jennifer, you met. Just kind of gives you a little information about the Williams Center for Oral History, how it documents political, social, and economic, and cultural history of Louisiana. So they house many different projects there in these special collection archives on different parts of the state. And so now there will be one on Mossville.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DIGILORMO: All interviews begin with a series of background questions about your family history, childhood years, educational background, etcetera. If the interview . . . The interview will be conducted in sessions lasting a length of time to be determined by you. So you know if you're tired or whatever. You're like, "I'm done talking." Then interview's over. This release form allows the Williams Center to deposit the tape and transcript into the Louisiana and

Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, that's the special collections at LSU in Hill Memorial Library. So again, this information will be available to the public. Whether it's somebody who's studying the history of Mossville, or maybe family members further down generations want to go and read about their family here they could do that. Again, you may place restrictions on the tape. We'll get you a copy of it.

GAUTHIA: [01:51] No that's it. That's . . .

DIGILORMO: Okay. Well it just . . .

GAUTHIA: Nothing bothers me.

DIGILORMO: Right. I got you. But some people start talking and they realize, "Oh, I didn't want that on tape." And so they can go back and erase it, basically. So the benefits of this is to help document the history and culture of Louisiana, be a useful resource tool for scholars in the future, and preserve your memories and experiences for future generations of your family. For . . . Yeah, of your family. So if you would like a copy of the tape, of the interview, for your family to have so they don't have to go up to the LSU archives to get it we can provide all of that.

GAUTHIA: [02:29] Okay.

DIGILORMO: The only risk to this is that there may be an inadvertent release of sensitive information. However, again, if you realize that happened you may restrict it. And again you

have the right to end the interview at any time. You can say, "I want this to be off the record."
We'll stop the tape. So . . . Yeah, it's basically just letting you know that you're the boss here as far as letting us know . . .

GAUTHIA: Have to ask you for one of these pens. I love that purple.

DIGILORMO: Take it. We got a hundred and fifty of them in that other room so that's yours.

GAUTHIA: Okay. Thank you.

DIGILORMO: [03:03] Of course.

GAUTHIA: I'm going to give it to my granddaughter.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: I like it too, but I'm going to give it to her. Okay, so my signature right now?

DIGILORMO: Yes, ma'am. Right there.

GAUTHIA: [03:18] I don't normally sign Montgomery but . . .

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: People from Mossville . . . That's how they'll know me.

DIGILORMO: Right.

GAUTHIA: A lot of them don't know my last name. You're going to date it and stuff?

DIGILORMO: [03:33] Yes, ma'am. I'll take care of all of that.

GAUTHIA: I got this . . .

DIGILORMO: Can you let me know when it's . . .?

CHARLOTTE WILLCOX: Yes.

DIGILORMO: Near ten minutes? Okay. Alright. So we'll go ahead . . .

GAUTHIA: So that's it?

DIGILORMO: Yes ma'am. We're done with the paperwork part.

WILLCOX: And you can just hand that to me.

DIGILORMO: Okay. Thank you very much. So let me know when we're recording.

JENNIFER CRAMER: And once you're done with this initial preliminary thing, y'all make an appointment so that you can come back and like . . . Would you be available the next week sometime?

GAUTHIA: I guess so.

CRAMER: [04:03] Even if we just do this in fifteen minute increments.

GAUTHIA: Okay. Okay.

CRAMER: And you know if you're willing to let us do it that would be great.

GAUTHIA: Yeah.

CRAMER: So maybe get that on the calendar.

DIGILORMO: Absolutely.

CRAMER: Thank y'all.

DIGILORMO: Absolutely.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

WILLCOX: Okay we are recording. So you can introduce yourself.

DIGILORMO: [04:16] Alright. Great. So today is September twenty-fourth, 2015. I'm Jamie Digilormo 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 to document the history of Mossville [Louisiana], and today we're at the [Jacob] Rigmaiden Center here on the Old Spanish Trail. So right now I'm talking with . . .

GAUTHIA: Judy Montgomery-Gauthia.

DIGILORMO: Judy Montgomery-Gauthia. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today with us.

GAUTHIA: Yes.

DIGILORMO: This will be a short interview about ten minutes.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DIGILORMO: [04:51] And hopefully we'll be in touch so that we can . . .

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DIGILORMO: Maybe do follow ups after that.

GAUTHIA: That sounds good.

DIGILORMO: So if . . . I know you just said it for me, but if you could state your full name.

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DIGILORMO: For me.

GAUTHIA: Judy Ann Montgomery-Gauthia.

DIGILORMO: [05:07] Gauthia. Okay. Got you. And you were born in Lafayette, [Louisiana] correct?

GAUTHIA: Yes.

DIGILORMO: And what year were you born?

GAUTHIA: 1950. June the fourteenth.

DIGILORMO: [05:16] Okay. June fourteenth, 1950. Are your parents from the Lafayette area?

GAUTHIA: Yes. Both of them.

DIGILORMO: Okay. And what were their last name . . . Or, what were their names?

GAUTHIA: Okay, my father is Valery Peter Montgomery. And my mother was Yola Bernard Montgomery.

DIGILORMO: Bernard you said? Okay. And what about your grandparents? Were they from there as well?

GAUTHIA: [05:40] Yes.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: Both sets of grandparents.

DIGILORMO: Wow. So you had a long lineage in the Lafayette area?

GAUTHIA: Yes.

DIGILORMO: So your parents moved here when you were how old?

GAUTHIA: I was a baby. Give or take maybe about six months I'm saying.

DIGILORMO: [05:58] Wow.

GAUTHIA: But I know they said was a baby.

DIGILORMO: So you don't really remember the move?

GAUTHIA: No. They moved here in you know, 1950, so. And I was born in June. So I'm just saying give or take it must have been . . . I was about maybe six months or so. Less than that, could be.

DIGILORMO: Wow, and did they move . . . ?

GAUTHIA: That's my niece. But she might come to this if she's off from work.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: [06:18] So I'm going to try to get her here.

DIGILORMO: You want to try and catch her. Okay. You can pause that.

UNKNOWN: Auntie!

GAUTHIA: Yes? [Talks on phone] She want me to wait on her. I just said yes but when I get through I'm getting out of here.

DIGILORMO: That's your niece? Oh okay.

GAUTHIA: And she's from Mossville too.

DIGILORMO: [06:31] Oh, excellent.

GAUTHIA: Yeah.

DIGILORMO: Awesome. So yeah, just let us know.

GAUTHIA: Start back up.

DIGILORMO: We're ready?

GAUTHIA: Sorry about that.

DIGILORMO: Okay. No.

GAUTHIA: But I was . . . I thought about it, I said, "Let me get her here."

DIGILORMO: Yeah. I'm glad you answered. She might come by.

GAUTHIA: Yes.

DIGILORMO: [06:41] So what . . . What was your, say like your earliest memory of Mossville? Since you were so young.

GAUTHIA: Yeah. I went to school in Mossville and graduated in Mossville. We was the last class to graduate in 1969.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: Then after that they went to Westlake High [in Westlake, Louisiana] and Sulphur High [Sulphur, Louisiana].

DIGILORMO: Right. So when you were growing up, how many siblings did you have?

GAUTHIA: [07:15] I have one sister and three brothers.

DIGILORMO: Okay. So there was five of you?

GAUTHIA: Yes, five.

DIGILORMO: Are they close in age or are y'all spread out?

GAUTHIA: Most of them is close in age. My oldest one just had a birthday the twenty-second of this month. So he turned seventy-two I think. Forty-four . . . fifty . . . Seventy-one. He just turned seventy-one.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: [07:43] And that's Allen LeBlanc. And then Nelson, he's deceased. Nelson Montgomery. He . . . Let me see. I'm sixty-five, so I have to count back. Sally's sixty-six, so he was seventy-seven.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: We like a year apart.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: It was maybe give or take a little over . . .

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: [08:06] But you know that's how you can almost say it. Like Sally going to be sixty-seven in December.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: And he's in December so sixty-seven . . . So he would be going on sixty-eight.

DIGILORMO: Got you.

GAUTHIA: And my youngest brother, Alvin he is . . . He was born in fifty-three. So I think that would make him sixty. Sixty-one. No, sixty-two. Sixty-two this year.

DIGILORMO: Okay yeah. Right.

GAUTHIA: So Alvin Montgomery is sixty-two.

DIGILORMO: So were there a lot of kids here whenever you moved? Like when you were real young? Maybe even before you started school do you remember playing with a lot of kids?

GAUTHIA: [08:47] Well, Mama didn't like for us to go too far out of the house, like.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: But you they had a lot . . . Quite a few kids on our street. Say like they was the ones I kind of knew.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: And had a neighbor . . . He was like a brother to us. We was either in his house, or he was at our house. He was the only child so he was always looking for someone to talk to and play with.

DIGILORMO: Yeah. Right.

GAUTHIA: [09:15] His name was Eugene Fontenot. So he just recently moved since Sasol [energy and chemical company] bought him out, so.

DIGILORMO: Yeah. Did you . . .

GAUTHIA: Moved to Lake Charles [Louisiana].

DIGILORMO: Did y'all live on Prater?

GAUTHIA: Yes. We was on Prater Road.

DIGILORMO: [09:25] Okay. Alright. Yeah it seems like that was one of the first streets

that kind of got built up.

GAUTHIA: Yeah, the main drag they called it.

DIGILORMO: Right. Right, exactly.

GAUTHIA: Yes.

DIGILORMO: Exactly. And how long did y'all . . . Did your family live there?

GAUTHIA: They still there.

DIGILORMO: They still there?

GAUTHIA: Yes.

DIGILORMO: Wow.

GAUTHIA: They just moved from one area to the other, but on the same street.

DIGILORMO: [09:49] Yeah.

GAUTHIA: They love Prater Road.

DIGILORMO: They love Prater Road. It's been good to them.

GAUTHIA: Yes. Yes, through the years. Yeah.

DIGILORMO: [09:55] That's great. Well what was your house like? What was the . . .

GAUTHIA: Oh, an open house.

DIGILORMO: Okay.

GAUTHIA: My parents loved everybody and took in people. Ran a night club business. Just . . . I guess a loving family.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: And everybody looked upon my parents as, you know, respectable family from the community.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: [10:21] And they looked at the community as a good family relationship, too. So . . .

DIGILORMO: Right.

GAUTHIA: Everybody just love everybody, I would say.

DIGILORMO: Yeah. Yeah I've heard a lot of great things about your father from other people.

GAUTHIA: [10:37] Yeah. I had good parents. Very good parents.

DIGILORMO: Yeah, sounds like it. And you ran a club right up the road from your house?

GAUTHIA: Yes. Yes. In the same yard.

DIGILORMO: That must have been exciting.

GAUTHIA: Yes. I tell people I was born and raised in a club. Not that I was a fast person but

...

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: That's how life was.

DIGILORMO: [10:58] Well so what was the . . . What was it like? I'm curious.

GAUTHIA: When I was young we'd help my parents. They would sell liquor out of the house. They would come sit in the house instead of go in the club, because they was comfortable and there was nobody else there. They'd just come sit in the house and they say, "Hey, go get me a can of beer. Hey, go get me a half a pint. Hey . . ." We would just run their little errands and stuff like that.

DIGILORMO: Yeah, right.

GAUTHIA: Whoever was the handiest one there . . . come and . . . Through in the living room part of the house and stuff.

DIGILORMO: Yeah

GAUTHIA: [11:33] So yeah it was . . . It was nice.

DIGILORMO: Sounds exciting, too.

GAUTHIA: Yeah.

DIGILORMO: Excellent. Well let's see. I know we're probably getting close to?

WILLCOX: We have eight minutes . . . Or it's been eight minutes.

DIGILORMO: [11:47] Okay. So where does your family go to church? Do they go in Mossville?

GAUTHIA: [Agrees] They went to Saint John Bosco in Westlake.

DIGILORMO: Okay so . . .

GAUTHIA: They was Catholic.

DIGILORMO: Catholic family. Yeah I've noticed that there are a lot of Catholics in Mossville, yet there isn't a Catholic Church.

GAUTHIA: [12:05] Yeah. So in . . . We never did have, I guess, a Catholic Church in Mossville. Because . . .

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: Because Catholic . . . I guess church was bigger . . . The other church that was a smaller church compared to the Catholic Church.

DIGILORMO: Yeah. Right. Right. Do you still go to that church?

GAUTHIA: [12:23] No. I haven't been in a while. I sort of like feel like I still do. It's just taking care of my dad I don't go to church often.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: But I did just went to church Sunday just past, thank God. And my daughter had been inviting me to the church. She just recently had moved to Lake Charles and Iowa [Louisiana] and her neighbor invited her to this church and she went and her two kids. Her son and daughter goes there.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: And so I finally made it Sunday just past and I enjoyed it. It was nice.

DIGILORMO: It was good?

GAUTHIA: [12:58] And I'm still . . . I still wants to be a Catholic, but I go see anybody's church because I figure God is everywhere. Is at all the churches.

DIGILORMO: Yeah.

GAUTHIA: So, and I love the Lord.

DIGILORMO: Yeah, and that's a beautiful thing. So just to kind of conclude this round, if you could put into words what home means to you. So you've described this beautiful home on Prater Road that you grew up in . . .

GAUTHIA: Okay. Home was . . . Anybody can come. And not too many girls came, but I think it was more boys because there was three boys in the family.

DIGILORMO: Yeah. Right. Had more friends.

GAUTHIA: And so they had more guys coming than girlfriends. But it was just . . . And kin folks, Lord have mercy. It was always somebody there. Never a dull moment in our house. I mean I don't care how many it was in the house, they never say we was too many. You know they just say, "Come on. I'll put somebody on the floor. We'll put somebody . . ." Squeeze almost four or five people in one bed.

DIGILORMO: [14:06] Right. Yeah.

GAUTHIA: You know, stuff like that. So . . .

DIGILORMO: So just togetherness and a loving environment is what it sounds like.

GAUTHIA: Yes. It was. It was.

DIGILORMO: That's beautiful.

GAUTHIA: It was good. I, you know, glad I come from this small community and I'm glad it's what it's coming to be. And can't wait to finish selling my property. I'm close to it, but not close enough.

DIGILORMO: Right. Yeah.

GAUTHIA: [14:33] And waiting to sell my parents' place too when the time comes.

DIGILORMO: Yeah. Well I love to talk to you more about . . .

GAUTHIA: Okay.

DIGILORMO: About your experiences and hear some stories. I'm sure you've got some good ones of growing up here. So I thank you for sitting down with me again.

GAUTHIA: Oh yes, I enjoyed you.

DIGILORMO: [14:51] We'll conclude this interview right now.

GAUTHIA: Okay, and we'll talk again.

DIGILORMO: Alright sounds good.

GAUTHIA: Okay thank y'all.

DIGILORMO: Thank you so much, Ms. Judy.

[15:00]

[End Tape 4518. End Session I.]