

Interviewee: Huber “Mickey” Smith Senior
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4700.2586 Tape 4534
Session I
October 31, 2015

[Begin Tape 4534. Begin Session I.]

CHELSEA ARSENEAULT: Today is October thirty-first, 2015. I'm Chelsea Arseneault with the [LSU Libraries] T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, and I'm here today with Mr. Mickey . . . Is it Hubert?

HUBER SMITH: [00:09] Huber.

ARSENEAULT: Huber. Mr. Mikey Huber.

HUBER: No T.

ARSENEAULT: No T. At the Rigmaiden Recreation Center on the Old Spanish Trail to talk about his memories of Mossville, Louisiana, as part of a project conducted in conjunction with the Imperial Calcasieu Museum to document the history of Mossville. Mr. Mikey, we want to thank you for taking your time to share your story with us today. So for the record, for the recording, can you state your full name?

SMITH: Huber “Mickey” Smith Senior.

ARSENEAULT: [00:38] Okay. And is Mickey a nickname?

SMITH: Yes it is.

ARSENEAULT: How'd you get that nickname?

SMITH: I really don't know. Mickey from as long as I can remember. My grandparents started out raising me in the early days. It was really hard. Most of the family had to work. So anyway, it was just a big family. All the children stayed at the grandparents' house. We had land and everything, but we didn't have sufficient housing because the children at that time stayed . . . So we stayed as a family with my mother's parents.

ARSENEAULT: When?

SMITH: Until during the war, '41 or '42.

ARSENEAULT: So when were you born?

SMITH: [01:54] Born March fourth, 1934.

ARSENEAULT: And where was that?

SMITH: In Mossville. Sometimes they call it Mossville, sometimes Westlake [Louisiana].

Didn't have a really detailed place as to where you are. If you was in Mossville you is part of what is going on in Mossville and you went the extent . . . I went to school in Westlake. So kind of hard to say. I just said whatever. Westlake, Mossville. Mossville though during that period of time. And during the war about '45.

ARSENEAULT: Was that World War II?

SMITH: [02:51] World War II. Family began to move about. My parents went to California to work during that period of time, and so I stayed here with my grandparents while my parents went to work out in California. That went on for quite a period of time after the war, and then everybody finally came back home, what they call home, in Mossville, Westlake. Began life there again. That's pretty much what it was. Didn't have a whole lot to offer for us because we had nothing. Really wasn't looking for anything but a stable life of being here as a Mossville person or Westlake person. And this is where we stayed until I grew up to fend for myself. And that's my history from birth to . . . All of my teen years were right here in Westlake, Mossville.

And I say Westlake, Mossville simply because . . . You say, "Well why that is?" When you went to the track for whatever reason, that was Mossville. The K.C.S. [Kansas City Southern] railroad track. And then there was nothing there but the families we'll talk about later right along that way. Kind of near a company or refinery. And so all that we did in that school in that address, and what have you, Westlake. But we were Mossville people. I guess family divided themselves up into little squatting places or whatever you want to call it, but we always addressed Westlake. And I think most of Mossville did too. I'm really not sure about that. But

anyway we was still whatever went on here it took place in Mossville like this change in this situation we were Mossville also.

[05:26] I guess what we are at this point is just who we really are. That was not much education and stuff. We were who your parents say you was and where you lived. This is what we were told we was until we grew up to fend for ourselves. This was still home and most of the people my age we left here and went different places to work. We always come back home. It's maybe a little premature, but I stayed away from here a long time and finally I come back home to live. One reason that I did in the '50s come back to live is because to help with Mother. She had got kind of [over the fence?] and help ourselves and that's one reason that I came back and I stayed here. Then after a long period of time I'm still here. Not because of that, it's because I choose to be home, and this is home. I see all the changes and the growth and what and down treading as I would say with Mossville leaving. Kind of a hard thing itself. I don't think I'll ever accept that Mossville's gone. This is really a conditional thing. It's helpful to the community and the people and this work. It's what it takes to do what we doing now. But I really could never picture this as getting rid of Mossville.

[07:28] As I come through here sometimes, some days, and I look and see what was what, where with these houses and the people that's not there anymore, it's kind of hard to bring it all together to accept it. But it's here. Sasol [South African energy and chemical company], the work that they brought. The way that they're changing the roads and things. It's kind of hard to accept that this is real because you see it riding through looking for Mossville. You still riding through here going to Sulphur [Louisiana]. You're still coming back going to Westlake and on. I don't know how it will fit in and what it'll do mentally to you. It's our home that's home no more. Belongs to the companies that's taking over and building and doing what they doing to improve

our work and living. It belongs to them and not to us anymore.

For me there'll always be memories of who used to live here, who used to live there. The going and coming of people that you know is no more. No longer. It's going to take its toll on you because it won't grow back. It's rolling forward and we can see it. But during the war, World War II, people left here in the same way. They left here and the ones that didn't go to the war, didn't fight in the war, they left here and went to where they could find work because there was no work here. The saw mills before my time is really what it was. Then finally after they cut out all the sawmilling and left went back to what it used to be.

ARSENEAULT: Why did people stop working at the saw mill?

SMITH: [09:46] Well they used up all the timber there was just like flat land. It . . .

Sawmill here . . . People that went to the armed services, say fifty percent of them never came back here to live. Live somewhere else and made their home there. They passed on most of them since the war. That changed a lot. Just people we saw and knew and raised up with. After the war and whatever we didn't see them no more. Just heard of them. They lived in other places of the world. They never came back. Mossville and Westlake was still the same as to what it stood for and our children and the grandchildren. They knew.

I made one and I can relate back to people that haven't been seen since I went to school with them in that period of time and where we are. Even in doing this I can think of names of people that I don't know where they went. Wasn't that close to keep up with this person being in a certain location. But once in a while someone will come home. I live here and I never quit coming home. Always come home to see my family. Of course, it was larger but now it's my

children and grandchildren. Them others, they passed on. Wouldn't be nobody to come and see. After your parents pass on and leave you, what we got here and what we know and look at. But if you could visualize it like I can walking from Sulphur to Westlake. Quite a task, but thought nothing of it. Walked from here to Sulphur. That was the way of life.

ARSENEAULT: What did it look like when . . . at that time?

SMITH: [12:26] Just people who I would have to show you live here and there. Just at one time this road was a single road. If two vehicles going east and west was in motion one would have to give the other one half the road until he passed and get back up. I didn't witness the move of that. I wasn't here at that time. I wasn't here. But finally over the years as I was gone I came back. But if I just . . . A two-lane road then. Two cars could travel east and west without having to get over to one side. Get over close to the ditch to stop and let the other one by. I never did understand that. Engineers and people who built bridges and roads and things that they seemed awful ignorant to me. Seemed awful unnecessary to do something like that.

[13:39] For example, Lake Charles [Louisiana] streets were so small and they're like that now. Until most of the old building that are there are sitting on the edge of what would be another double-lane street that you could use. You never could do much with downtown because they didn't have the room. They didn't want to get rid of their older buildings to make room for traffic so they began to move out south of here and what have you. Like the mall and all that to make things convenient where traffic was a problem then. Didn't have a problem with traffic problems in the '40s. With traffic. There's not many people owned a car. Now everybody owns three and four. Your children owns cars. Something had to be done.

It amazes me how the pioneers built Lake Charles and surround it like that and built it under those conditions with no growth for tomorrow. Lake Charles was built so it would always be like that. In older pictures that I've seen of tomorrow, it was just built for horse and buggy. Didn't take pride. No [hope?] for tomorrow. Then we got into a war that caused lots of difference and caused people to . . . People had cars who you thought would never have a car. We always thought it would have been . . . It was always said to be livestock and you had it . . . That's what you worked . . . It went from that after World War II. It began to grow. We've always had the land.

ARSENEAULT: Why was it growing after World War II?

SMITH: [15:48] People . . . Migration.

ARSENEAULT: What were they . . . Why were they . . . ?

SMITH: From people . . . Come from different places. Mostly when they start building these plants and people . . . after they started building the plants and doing the . . . People that were not from here wanted to stay here, so they bought land. They began to do some development on that and kind of help out with what we had. People who engineered a great part . . . like they didn't . . . They just didn't have it. I don't think they wanted it. I don't think they wanted it because we never had a supermarket. All we had was . . .

ARSENEAULT: They didn't want the development? It that what you mean?

SMITH: [16:49] No, no . . . Yes. I mean as far as new stores coming, because every individual that had a local grocery store on here and there and Westlake, he had a . . . he had kind of a hook in you. You had these people where they was doing a lot of their business was credit. Get groceries and pay next week or next month. They didn't want Market Basket [grocery store chain]. I don't want to say Market Basket then, but just look at it. They didn't want these people coming in here and starting something that would deprive them of what they already had and looked at for years.

You didn't have no say in it. If you went to the store and bought a bill of groceries just put down what he said [you had to prove?]. You didn't have no bill. Just . . . It was a book. When he balanced that book when he went along with it he said that was it. Well I can imagine how he felt, but that didn't make it right because I'm not sure that he was right. When I say right I mean I'm not sure that he was totally honest. That would do for a person that is totally honest. Christian-hearted person that wouldn't take advantage, but in business you have some of those things where people take advantage of you. In that type of business. I'm not saying everybody did. This is the way it was at that time. I don't remember . . .

ARSENEAULT: What grocery stores were in Mossville?

SMITH: [18:46] They didn't have one in Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: Where'd you get groceries?

SMITH: Westlake and Sulphur. W.T. Burton, he was a [millionaire?]. He had grocery

stores in Sulphur. He had the banks. The [. . .?] Marine Banks. National bank in Lake Charles and Sulphur. He was a tycoon in the way that he did business back then. There wasn't nothing wrong with the way he did business back then because nobody knew anything any better . . . any different. Where would you go?

ARSENEAULT: What was his name?

SMITH: William T. Burton.

ARSENEAULT: Burton?

SMITH: [19:31] W.T. Burton. He owned Calcasieu Marine National Bank and . . . I can't think of what it is now. It's been sold. They were well-off people and they did good business and they did business. What if you'd been a poor person and think that was right because you didn't know anything else? Didn't know where else to go, and that was it. But . . .

ARSENEAULT: Where was your physical home in . . .like where . . . Like when you grew up what road was it on?

SMITH: On this road up here like you going towards Continental.

ARSENEAULT: It's on Old Spanish Trail?

SMITH: Old Spanish Trail.

ARSENEAULT: [20:28] Towards . . . Is it Continental now? Or is it something else?

SMITH: Conoco Philips I believe.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. So it's over the railroad tracks?

SMITH: Yes, over the railroad tracks. Almost up there to the main gate that you go in.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about your house?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about the house you grew up in?

SMITH: [20:50] I remember it very well. There was nothing fancy about it. It was just three bedrooms. Just a three-bedroom home. It sat off the road there and this is . . . We raised mostly what we had except going to the store for stuff like rice and sugar. Beans and stuff like that. Everything else we . . . because most of the time we would take from our garden and take it down to the . . . what we use for well and wash it, basket it, and then my parents would take it to the store on Saturday evening and get what was needed for the house. As to what we didn't raise. Soap, stuff, what we didn't raise. And that was calculated to see what it would come from. Then

this broker would go outside and see what you had on your wagon. He would count this and put a price on it and then what you owed him he subtracted from it and see where it left you.

ARSENEAULT: So you took it to a broker?

SMITH: Well no, no. The guy who runs the store.

ARSENEAULT: Just the man who ran the grocery store?

SMITH: [22:27] Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: So he was buying the produce?

SMITH: He would buy what we brought and we would buy what we needed to function from the store. Like we didn't make no toothpaste.

ARSENEAULT: [22:44] So it wasn't barter. He actually gave you money and then you . . .
Or did he trade you?

SMITH: Just trade.

ARSENEAULT: You just traded goods.

SMITH: [22:50] Just trade. I don't think it was . . . I don't remember if any money changed hands because sometimes it would be up and down. Sometimes if we didn't have enough to what we had already taken up, well it just rolled over. I don't remember anytime that there was any money changed hands that I can remember. Because you had to get a thing that you didn't raise or make then you had to get feed for your animals, horses, hogs. They had to be fed. That's the reason I said it pretty well balanced itself out. If it had any legitimacy about it. Knowing what you were doing. You were just doing business. Whatever he said, that's what it was. Nobody looked for anyway to correct it. We were up on this hill here, what they call Trousdale Road up here after you get over the railroad track. We were mostly up on that hill. It was . . . How many families? Seven [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: So it was like a neighborhood?

SMITH: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Did it have a name?

SMITH: [24:20] No, not even a street name.

ARSENEAULT: Really?

SMITH: No, just only street had a name, but it's Old Spanish Trail. That was the only thing that we knew was a street. Didn't have nobody lived on no street. You just pull up if you was a total stranger and ask, "Where does Smith live?" "He live right up there so far." No, they didn't have anything. No trespassing law. That was his property. If you needed to go across it you used it. Cross it. Not like it is today. That was no modern machine like a washing machine or dryer. You were the washing machine and dryer. Sometimes during droughts or when the water was low . . . when the well was very low, sometimes we'd haul water either with an animal on a wagon, or we'd tote it because that gully is down there [. . .?]. You tote water back and forth. Sometimes they had to do it a lot of times because of the washing.

ARSENEAULT: [25:46] Was there a name for the river where y'all got the water?

SMITH: No, no. It was just a gully. Go down to the gully. Didn't have no name to it. Like I said when you have to cross people's property, it didn't make any difference. Nobody had a fear of these laws like we have today that you can't come through here. The other side . . . Give me a paper.

ARSENEAULT: You want to use the back of . . .

SMITH: Yeah, that'd be good.

ARSENEAULT: [26:22] . . . your release form here. Oh you're going to draw.

SMITH: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: Want to explain for the recording what you're drawing?

SMITH: I'm going to draw OST.

ARSENEAULT: [26:31] Okay.

SMITH: I'm going to draw OST.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. The Old Spanish Trail?

SMITH: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Alright.

SMITH: I'm going to start right here with the railroad tracks.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: [26:41] Okay. This railroad track is going on in to DeQuincy [Louisiana] and

where else I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: But it come from south of here. There was this gully that come along here. Okay, and right on this south corner we had a . . . I want to call it a [joint?]. That's all you could say it was. Just a [beer joint?].

ARSENEAULT: [27:30] A joint?

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Like a pub?

SMITH: Yes. Well you call it a club now, but it's just a place where they drink beer.

ARSENEAULT: Like a bar.

SMITH: A bar, yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: A [pub?].

ARSENEAULT: Does it have a name?

SMITH: [27:43] Joy Hill. Next to it, the man that runs it, his mother had an old homestead [Williams?]. Next to it, almost the same property, and next to it on the south side his sister had a home. Then where we are, Sullivan's. That's my people. We had a place here now. To my knowing any abstract, any deed, no. When the child got grown he wanted to build him a house go on out there and build him one. That's it. That's it. Wasn't nobody deeds and everything. We had one family and every family had one. All of us lived here. This was the Sullivan's. That's my mother's people. Okay, and then on this side of the street . . . On this side of the street there was a church and there was several homes here.

ARSENEAULT: What church was that?

SMITH: Church of God and Christ.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: Okay, and on this side here going back south toward the . . . toward nothing, toward the swamp back there. These people here were [Egan's?]. It was . . . They had about three squatters here. Before coming to Conoco where they had built . . . That was just a pilot plant when they built it. They didn't know that it would get this big.

ARSENEAULT: What kind of plant was it?

SMITH: [30:21] Conoco Phillips.

ARSENEAULT: Oil?

SMITH: Beginning. But it was Continental Oil Company.

ARSENEAULT: So it started off as Continental?

SMITH: Continental Oil Company and was that for many years. I don't know when they became connected with Phillips. It grew from that. It went all the way . . . Might be able to draw it. It went all the way to Houston River Road. That's where the road turns and goes in to Westlake. Okay, so if I was identifying anything it would be from Houston River Road back there to the railroad tracks. That's where I'm trying to get. These are . . . these people who were here that . . . Those people kin folks. They were cousins. I don't know about . . . They were cousins, uncles, and nephews. That was just the way it was on that side. And everything else after we come to this curve that goes on in to Westlake and then finally to Lake Charles, that was different, except one thing. I had to go to school in Westlake.

ARSENEAULT: What year was this?

SMITH: [31:55] Well I was born in '34 so . . . seven . . . thirty-four . . . What year was that? All my life . . . That's what we had for a school.

ARSENEAULT: There was no school in Mossville.

SMITH: Yes, they had a school in Mossville. It was on this side of the tracks. Sitting on a portion of this park that we're in here now. I can't just mark it off because there's so much missing there. But it sit right along here. The school here. Then I don't know why we had a school in Westlake and one in Mossville, but that's the way it was. That's where we went. So growing out of all this [. . .?] growing out of this. Come to where we begin living. Maybe like people from the '50s on to where we are now. No inside toilets. No help drinking water.

ARSENEAULT: Where did people go to the bathroom?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: Where did people go to the bathroom?

SMITH: [33:32] They dug a little hole out there in the ground. Put a little building over it and call it the toilet. That's what it was. Wasn't no running water. No inside toilets when I was raised. Nothing like that. Just make do with what you had, and that's what they had.

ARSENEAULT: Where'd you get the water?

SMITH: Dug a hole in the ground and they had some [. . .?] pipes they put up there down so far. Dig until you hit water. That's what you had water for. Put the bucket on it and draw it

like you look on the western pictures. Put a bucket on the end of it that'll fit in that and enjoy some water.

ARSENEAULT: How'd you make it drinkable?

SMITH: [34:31] We don't know if it was drinkable or not. We just drank it because we didn't have nothing else to drink. Nobody came out to see whether this would meet standards for drinking water. Just dug you a hole. I guess like it did when you needed a toilet. Dig you a hole and build you a little building and sit on it. Nobody come out to inspect it to see where you should put it or where it should be sitting. That's what you used. Now from where I told you about us coming up to this [. . .?] that they have there on this side Conoco gate, Conoco Phillips gate. We had people lived there but [names?]. There was a police sitting here on the west [gate?]. There was a . . . That was the Eglin's. It was an old place where the mother and father used to live, I guess before they died. They were [Eglin's?] and these people had . . .

ARSENEAULT: How do you spell that?

SMITH: E-G-L-I-N. These people had property, and they gave enough property to build a church.

ARSENEAULT: The Eglin's gave the property?

SMITH: The Eglin's, yes. This property to build a church. Then you go on down a little

further. Our family, my family, there was a house there with my aunt lived in.

ARSENEAULT: [36:32] What was her name?

SMITH: [Scott?]. Then next to her was the old home place. The old home place. My grandmother and grandfather who raised us. It was . . . This is the place. The big house they called it.

ARSENEAULT: What were your grandparents' names?

SMITH: Sullivan.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember their first names?

SMITH: William and Loney.

ARSENEAULT: L-O-N-E-Y?

SMITH: Yes. That was her name. Out of this came ten children. [. . .?]

ARSENEAULT: William and Loney had ten children?

SMITH: Ten children.

ARSENEAULT: [37:27] And your dad was one of them or your mom?

SMITH: My mom.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. What were your dad's people?

SMITH: Easton, but they were further up in Westlake. Easton.

ARSENEAULT: E-A-S- Okay.

SMITH: -T-O-N. Eastons, and that . . .

ARSENEAULT: What number was your mom of their children?

SMITH: [37:48] How many children she had?

ARSENEAULT: Well what number was she in the ten?

SMITH: Oh let's see. She was number four. And this come on back down to where I was here to this old club. I forgot where it was . . . called Hill Joy. Yes, this comes on down to where his sister and mama and this old club sitting right on . . . which one of the boys . . . Williams was their name. Edgar Williams.

ARSENEAULT: Edgar Williams had a club?

SMITH: [38:33] Yes, he had the club. That stopped it right . . . That's where I stopped it, Trousdale Road.

ARSENEAULT: Trousdale?

SMITH: Trousdale.

ARSENEAULT: T-R-O-U-S?

SMITH: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: D-A-L-E?

SMITH: D-A-L-E. Then there was just a stretch of woods and another family of people that lived past that road, Richardson's. It went on back down until it took on other side of . . . What's that name . . . Would be Johnson.

ARSENEAULT: Was this before World War II?

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: [39:32] It was . . . I'm just going west on OST [Old Spanish Trail].

ARSENEAULT: Okay. Through Mount Zion [Baptist Church].

SMITH: Which is family lane. We was a good ways from Mount Zion. I guess the only way to do this thing is we taking in individuals here. I would have to . . .

ARSENEAULT: Do you need another page?

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Okay, this can be the west. We can mark east on that side I guess.

SMITH: [40:13] Okay. Right here . . . here now . . . South side of the river.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: I'm going back to the south side. Okay. Edwards, Williams. These are just family names. People who lived closest to the highway right here.

ARSENEAULT: And these . . . Were these the original families?

SMITH: Original families far as I know. Williams and Hadnots.

ARSENEAULT: H-A-D-N-E . . . ?

SMITH: H-A-D-N-O-T-S.

ARSENEAULT: N-O-T-S. Rigmaiden.

SMITH: [41:44] Rigmaiden. I'm going to stop here because we come to another church.

ARSENEAULT: What church was that?

SMITH: I'm not coming up with a name.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember the denomination?

SMITH: Yes, it was . . .

ARSENEAULT: Christ Sanctified Holy Church?

SMITH: Yes, and that . . . this here . . . I should have turned this thing. This here after that church is right here across the road on another side would be Rigmaiden Avenue and I . . .

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: That's here on that and you come the . . . Then when you pass Rigmaiden Avenue, there was a rice field.

ARSENEAULT: In front of the church?

SMITH: [43:09] In front of the church going west.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: To the railroad tracks.

ARSENEAULT: Who owned the rice field?

SMITH: Business man.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: Manigin.

ARSENEAULT: [43:38] Was it a white man?

SMITH: Yes. M-A-N-A-G-I-N. The Managin's, right there. It goes from right along this west goes all the way back to north. Houston River was a big field but I'm only on the front line of it. Managin run that. The finally we come to this KCS track here. We come on down to where we're sitting here now.

ARSENEAULT: The Rigmaiden Center?

SMITH: Rigmaiden Center.

ARSENEAULT: What was here before it was built?

SMITH: [44:29] That old school I was telling you sit right here sometimes. It went on up to Prater Road. Next road [. . . ?] here would be Prater Road. Now to do further name by name I need a . . . I need something and I would need to write so I could name what houses I know. What people I know. But you come into this and I think that's pretty much where Sasol is going at that Prater Road. Which is on the south side of the road, but we on the north side. I don't know if they going to go any further than that or not from what I heard, and I didn't talk to anybody really other than street talks saying that know what's going on. Talk to somebody who say, "No, we going to do that." You'd have to find that out. How far they go down the other way because Old Spanish Trail goes all the way to Sulphur and then before you get to pass the city of Sulphur and going on out that way there was a sulfur mine there. But that's a little bit too much for me personally to say.

ARSENEAULT: [46:36] Where did . . . When you were growing up living in the old home place, where did the people work? Your grandparents, your parents.

SMITH: They had a few sawmills around.

ARSENEAULT: Sawmill?

SMITH: Yes. The saw mill was big in here at one time. That's . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was it close to the old home place?

SMITH: Yes. One of them was and the other one was here where you enter.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember the name of it?

SMITH: [47:15] Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Conoco Phillips there?

SMITH: Right across the road there. A man by the name of Ross Reeves. He was the [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: He owned it?

SMITH: He didn't own the property, now. That's where he set his mill up at over there. And I'm sure at that time that's where he got some of his timber from. Timber was big here when I was a youngin'.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about that?

SMITH: [48:09] Well if you worked in the summer you had a job. You doing what it was somebody at the sawmill. It was basically what was . . . Basically lumber and then they'd finish it and what have you. You had a good job if you worked for the saw mill but what happened during the years, they sawmilled it out. You can keep cutting and extracting here until you don't have no more of what you looking for. And this . . . There was a bigger sawmill in here. It was over here on [Highway] 90. It worked a lot of people, and it was called [Lock Morin?] Company. They cleared out in here to what . . . I guess the law was that you could do without destroying, cutting all . . . Then they left and went to Redwood, California.

This was before my time. Not really before my time, but as a child I was told this. Some people from here went with it, and others they just played out. Then the saw mill just played out. Well the war was over and Conoco was beginning to hire men that came back here from the war. And Westlake and Mossville, Cities Service, all that grew right in that span of time.

ARSENEAULT: Did anyone from your family serve in the war?

SMITH: Yes, I had an uncle.

ARSENEAULT: Did he ever talk about it?

SMITH: [50:23] The war? No, not really.

ARSENEAULT: Did anyone . . .

SMITH: Oh, not really about the war, but there's other things that happened during the war they talked about.

ARSENEAULT: Like what?

SMITH: Like who they were and what they did, what they got into and . . .

ARSENEAULT: Did you serve?

SMITH: [50:48] No, I didn't go. To get this thing really with something to write about you'd really have to stay on Old Spanish Trail because there were those houses, people all in these places. Sometimes you look at these westerns and you think of stuff like that. I can relate to some of it because simply it seemed then just an old [shoe?] the people we lived back there. The only thing that we didn't live with the animals like they did and so forth. Wasn't a whole lot different because wasn't a whole lot here. People was not trying to get rich making a lot of money. I remember working the service station that's over here . . . That used to be over here on I-10 Bridge.

ARSENEAULT: Was that your first job?

SMITH: Oh no. My first job was in the rice fields, working in fields. First thing. That was most young people, their first thing was in the field. I was a pretty [. . .?] I started working the rice fields.

ARSENEAULT: What were your responsibilities?

SMITH: [52:24] Pulling weeds and just farm work. Whatever [. . .?], didn't have no tractors. Know how to drive a horse. How to rack hay with a hay rack. Basically you couldn't see us like youngins today because they don't . . . They wouldn't know what you was talking about. You hook up a team and they raking up because they have all this automatic stuff. They go and they bail hay with the way they do and so forth. Wouldn't even dream about it. Wasn't even a dream. You just did whatever you was told to do, whether it was in the field or around the boss' house or go down and drive a herd up because of whatever reason they wanted them. Did that. That was just the work of the day. That's what you did. Wasn't much of nothing else. Wasn't anything else out of farm work other until these plants start coming in here. Putting these potted plants in here.

ARSENEAULT: [53:46] How old were you when you started working?

SMITH: Oh, about twelve or thirteen. I was about twelve or thirteen and I was working for this millionaire that I tell you about, W.T. Burton. He had a [shell?] dock on the river, just south

of here. There was always lots to do. I think at fifty cents a day.

ARSENEAULT: Fifty cents a day?

SMITH: Don't sound like much. Pretty good money then. Take fifty cents and go to the dime movie and to the store, and in fact you still had some money left.

ARSENEAULT: You went to the movie theater with the money?

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Was it segregated at the time?

SMITH: [54:48] Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Where was the movie theater the black people could go to?

SMITH: [54:54] They went to the same one the white ones went to. You sat upstairs and they sat downstairs. There was a stair that led you up and then the white people they come in they sit downstairs.

ARSENEAULT: Was it in Westlake?

SMITH: [Agrees] In Westlake. Not where what we call Westlake now. It was in the old part of Westlake. Had nothing going on there no more. Come right along by the railroad tracks. And other than that there wasn't much else for you to do.

ARSENEAULT: So you were thirteen and you started working in the rice fields? How old were you when you worked at the service station?

SMITH: About sixteen, seventeen.

ARSENEAULT: [55:57] Were you in school at the time?

SMITH: If you had a job like that you get your work they'd let you out of school and let you go work. But it wasn't a whole lot to want for or to do because there was nothing there. Nothing there. Bicycle was a high priority. You were getting on your feet then. Bicycle money. Had a bicycle, you had a pretty good way to get around. This place grew after the war people that move here and came here and things began to change on how you worked and looked at life and what you expected out of it and what you got out of it. It made a big difference. A lot of people who went in the war here from staying here some of them, a lot of them, not some of them. A lot of them left here and went to the war after they come out they never did come back here. Never did come back here.

ARSENEAULT: [57:28] Where'd they go?

SMITH: Different places where they lived. California and New York. Where did they go?

All of them that come out of the army. Some of them never came back here to live. They had got a taste of life at its best and they was never coming back here to live or to work the fields. Some families even . . . There are families from here . . . I was talking to a lady in Berkeley, California. She's from here. She's ninety. And we were talking about the places her grandchildren have never seen Westlake, Mossville. All of their roots are here. They never came here to live like a second class citizen. They never came. I don't know if they ever come to visit any of the people. Some of them did, but the ones I know they never did come back. Come here. Now, some of them in this first buyout that Condea Vista did some of them come back here because they were heirs to property and got that money and stuff. But they never did come back no more and stay here.

ARSENEAULT: When did the first buyout start?

SMITH: [59:15] Let's see, '71 . . . About '70 . . . This is not accurate. About '77, '78. First buyout started. First they had a . . . Had this thing about the drinking water that brought in the problem, and I been drinking it all my life.

ARSENEAULT: What happened?

SMITH: Well they found out it wasn't decent to drink. Other people had had . . . I didn't have any that I know of. Other people had medical problems about the drinking water. This water distribution place is right behind this building here. It was good for years, but now all of a sudden it wasn't. I'm glad I didn't get any contamination or anything. I don't remember. But they

had to stop it. Run the water from somewhere else. I don't remember, but that was the start of this whole buyout situation.

ARSENEAULT: How'd it get contaminated?

SMITH: [1:00:50] They were pumping excess waste.

ARSENEAULT: Who was?

SMITH: Conoco and Vista. Into the ground and it was still using this . . . This is as much as I know about it. I don't know a whole lot about it, how it start, but I think that's how it started. And somebody got sick and it started this thing and find out that the water you're drinking . . . And that's where all this started from buying out. Never would have been. I don't think we'd ever come to this selling place had not been for that situation. And then they began to have other problems. This releasing of stuff . . . this releasing of stuff in the air. People claim sickness from it. And I say claim, might have been. I don't know. I don't know one . . . I didn't have it. I didn't have the problem with it. It was enough to come to where we are here now with this thing as to make the decision of closing this down. This living quarters for Mossville people. It must have been strong evidence of what they were doing. They wouldn't just went out spent that kind of money for nothing just to . . . That's about it for what we're looking for here as the people living and moving, where they going and who was . . . What was Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: Why did your family move here?

SMITH: [1:03:01] As far as I know this is where they've always been. Like my grandparents and my mother. These people that [. . .?]. That's . . . I don't know anywhere else they come from.

ARSENEAULT: Both sides?

SMITH: I don't know that much about my daddy's people. I know they were Westlake, Mossville people. Other than that I don't . . . My daddy wasn't a close part of my family to really know him. Where he come from other than he's from here. That's what I know about. But now my mother's folks I follow them. They came from like . . . Can't think of the name right now. Sometimes when you get this age you don't think. Don't write it down. They were like from Lake Charles . . . out and about. Lake Charles and I think from what I was told this man started. My grandfather think all you had to do was homestead it and worked here so much don't starve and that was your property if you paid the tax on it. That's what I know about it. So we migrated right here in Mossville. All the family here in Mossville, Westlake.

ARSENEAULT: How many children in your family did your mom have?

SMITH: [1:05:02] Just me.

ARSENEAULT: You're the only one?

SMITH: Yes. Just me. I don't know, if you think of anything else you can call me. You

have my number. See if I remember.

ARSENEAULT: We've got a couple more questions if you don't mind me asking. So you already told me who lived nearby. So when you were growing up who were the community leaders?

SMITH: Rigmaidens.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. Jacob Rigmaiden?

SMITH: [1:05:45] Yes. Jacob, Josh, and that was basically it. They did what was needed for the community.

ARSENEAULT: Like what?

SMITH: [1:06:01] Like really nothing because that's why they were the leaders. They didn't know nothing and all they wanted to be doing is, "Who is this coming in the court house?" "Oh that's Jake [. . .?]." "What did he do?" "Nothing. Look at the place. Nothing. Not a thing." It's got his name on these signs around here. Jacob Rigmaiden and not nothing. There's nothing that nobody can tell you that they did worth anything. For the school, anything. It was just that if there was a minor problem or something who they come? They come find Jake and Josh Rigmaiden. And I'm not putting it down. You can't something when you don't have something to do something with. If you don't know nothing, can't do nothing. You don't know nothing. It's not

a shameful thing, but it's just like you driving a vehicle without a license. It's against the law. You never come to nothing. That's simply it. They were just here because they were who they were in the community at the time. His daddy was a preacher and his mama was . . . Stuff like that kind of stuff. That don't get you nowhere in the world. You don't [. . .?] behind nothing like that. Got to know something to go before somebody and then they . . . Back then Reed was here he was the sheriff as long as I can remember coming up.

ARSENEAULT: He was the sheriff of Mossville?

SMITH: Calcasieu Parish.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

SMITH: [1:07:44] Ham Reed. His daddy was the sheriff. Now I go that far back [to remember?]. But it was who you were. This thing get out of hand. When your child breaks the law and didn't do nothing about it and his child breaks the law and they do something about it, that's bad. That's bad. It's leading to something down the road that's going to come to . . .

ARSENEAULT: [1:08:14] Do you mean favoritism? They were showing favoritism?

SMITH: Well like that. But if your child was . . . got into something out there and they locked him up my child was right there with him they didn't lock him up. It makes a bad situation on that individual as to who you'll be in coming because he's looking for somebody to

always walk before him. "Oh my dad will get me out of this. He knows the high sheriff." That was all they was doing out there. They'd run out there these cars and things during election time after the voting time come get these black folks to vote for him. That was all . . . It was nothing. A lot of them didn't even deserve to be in there. But that's what it was. That's why, because whatever I need Mr. Reed will give it to me if I ask for it and that kind of stuff like that.

ARSENEAULT: So the politicians were using the local leaders to get the votes.

SMITH: Oh yes. Politician used that. They used to come out there and their cars and pick you up and take you to the polls.

ARSENEAULT: Who did?

SMITH: [1:09:25] Politicians before they start the . . .

ARSENEAULT: Remember anybody in particular?

SMITH: No. I know some elections like these that I'm telling you about. Sheriff. Just whoever. It was a thing. They'd get . . . They'd come out here in the community and they'd give these black guys money and fill their car with gas, and all you had to do was ride around and see who wanted to go to the polls. Take them to the polls. I don't know if there's a law against that or not but that's really what happened. And a lot of these guys, they wasn't worth it. They were just using people, using them for that. I can see a politician now wanting to get elected as far as doing

some things like that if the person calls you up and asks you and you're able to furnish transportation for them. But just to go around . . . And half of them couldn't read and write no way. They didn't know who they was voting for. Voting for who they told to vote for.

ARSENEAULT: Who told them?

SMITH: [1:10:36] The politicians. The politicians. Who they were supposed to be backing. Make no difference who it was. They all did it. It was all wrong. I mean the High Sheriff, senator, legislator, whoever was on . . . whoever was on there. That goes way, way deep. People didn't know how to vote. A lot of them couldn't hardly read or write. They didn't know how to vote. They didn't know nothing about diplomatic situations other than what they were told. "Now you vote here because . . ." They didn't know a thing about politics. Where'd they learn it? They didn't know any. Learn from who told them that. Who did the most for them when they was in need or when their job was in trouble. When trouble come in any situation where they need some help and know where to go. That was always important. It's that way now just a little more educated. It's not all that different. It's just some people are a little more educated as to what they want. They want a little more than someone else. So this thing from where I stand come a long ways. I walked from here to school.

ARSENEAULT: To Westlake?

SMITH: [1:12:21] To Westlake. When a bunch of little white children pass right by us and threw eggs at us. Couldn't get on that bus.

ARSENEAULT: You had to walk?

SMITH: Well sure. It wasn't for us. You wasn't getting on that bus with them white children. Wouldn't stand it. So this like many thing . . . See in matters like this subject matter, who would be able to stand up and talk you couldn't get many black people who'd say anything, simply because of subject matter, what's subject to happen. Who's running and how much money is put into this thing. Putting into somebody else's pocket. It's a lot better, but it ain't a whole lot different.

ARSENEAULT: How far did you have to walk for school?

SMITH: [1:13:29] Okay. This is Rigmaiden. There is [New Field?]. Just past the Trousdale Road.

ARSENEAULT: How many miles was it?

SMITH: About four or five miles. To [Gillary?] Street where it come to that. They got a . . . I believe that little school now is a church. Somebody bought and made a church out of it.

ARSENEAULT: [1:14:06] All black?

SMITH: All black.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember any teachers?

SMITH: Oh yes. Ms. Hayes, [Luanna?] Hayes was the principal at one time. Scott was the principal at one time. Maybe Ben Art. Ms. Green, oh yes. I still remember the teachers.

ARSENEAULT: Do you have any favorite teachers?

SMITH: Did I? No. I didn't get along well with the teachers. I was too smart. I was always getting sent home for something I didn't . . . thought that I could say or didn't say. I didn't get very far with that. Then finally in '50 I got a chance to get away from here so I wasn't worried with that no more.

ARSENEAULT: You had a chance to get away?

SMITH: [1:15:18] Yes, I left here and went out West out to California.

ARSENEAULT: How old were you?

SMITH: Seventeen.

ARSENEAULT: How long did you live in California?

SMITH: Between California and Houston [Texas] the rest of my life, and still now. I

finally . . . My daddy died come back here, and then after mother died I just stayed in Houston. I was doing all right in Houston.

ARSENEAULT: [1:16:13] What was your . . . When you think back to Mossville what's the earliest memory that you have?

SMITH: About Mossville? It wasn't a person . . . wasn't a place that was decent enough to bring up and the way they did it. Any person that you try to educate or bring up in life had nothing to show you. Nothing to tell you. No future for you. No vision. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing look like here. Look like if you had focused on something then maybe. Look like they do everything they could to hide that. You couldn't do that. No way. There was no help here for school children. There was no encouragement here for school children. No encouragement here for school children. No help if you looked at one thing, "Boy, when I get out of here I'm leaving." That's the only thing that was up here. Get away from here when you get out of here. Get away from here.

ARSENEAULT: You knew there was something better?

SMITH: [1:17:42] Oh yes. Better things. I knew that this wasn't life the way it's supposed to be. Not according to things I saw and read and people that living way better. There's nothing to do, I know that. There's always something better if you apply yourself and look for it. But as long as somebody else is directing your path, telling you what to do look and see what they're doing. What are you telling me this for? What have you got? And that's basically all you got

there. Somebody can tell you there's always something better. Didn't even go to school. Tell you how to do things. That's really the funny part of this thing. Where did you go to school at? Nowhere. And people that had something for me, they always kept it hid from me. These people use that educate us to educate us, them people not more educated than somebody walking the street. Them people . . . They say common knowledge and knew how to do things like white folks wanted it done. And that worked. That worked back then. Don't worry about that just do like I tell you. That was it.

ARSENEAULT: [1:19:30] What do you remember about the protests during civil rights?

SMITH: I wasn't into that. I wasn't into that.

ARSENEAULT: Where were you?

SMITH: [1:19:41] Would I think about it? No. I was partly in Texas and partly in California. I wasn't into that. I wasn't into . . . There's a bunch of leaders that we had that was leading you down the wrong way. They looking for strength in their own what they wanted and on somebody's payroll doing like what they said do it and telling you . . . You didn't know if you was right or wrong. How'd you know? You ain't educated enough to know what he's bringing you that's the truth. Some things you pick up in the paper. You don't know [him?]. See slavery, slavery didn't start with the [edging?] of white folks. Negros brought slavery on. They sold their own slaves. The white people, how you think they got that? They didn't just come out and take you and stick you in a boat and send you to Mississippi to pick cotton. That was originated from

somewhere. That's homegrown. Inside. Inside. When you get the fact that you know what they doing inside you can get somewhere. Get away from here and that's the main thing I want to do. Not just here. California some places no different than nowhere else. Sometimes worse. But it's who you know that's doing what they should be doing. That fellow's daddy was a senator here.

ARSENEAULT: Whose dad was a senator?

SMITH: [1:21:26] No, I'm just talking about . . . So his son's going to take his seat. For what? What'd your daddy do? Nothing. Not even to help you. Couldn't see you're a prisoner in your own home. Such thing as being a prisoner in your own home. That's the way some of them was. They daddy was able to help them in situations but when you sellout to slavery. That's the bad part. You never get no money. Always be trying to climb a tree with no limbs on it. That's a hard thing to do. I tried it. I know.

So I don't know. I have some personal things about slavery that I don't hold white folks [fault?] slavery it is. Some of the people put your own self in slavery. What'd you do to try and do anything about it? That's the whole situation of this thing. That's the situation here. People that's working around here, they don't even qualify to run a recreation center, but they in it. That's the most education they got. Where did you . . . Where did you get your movement from? Where did you get what you supposed to do here? No. Only thing they doing is treating one or two people right like they call right because Rigmaiden was a . . . Rigmaiden was a name in Mossville. For what? What did he do? They tell me that never one of them . . . What'd he do? He done [. . .?]. Went up there and they put the building up here to keep them from going to school with white folks. He did nothing for me. Wouldn't have cost near as much to educate a room full

of people if they'd have done the right thing. What'd you need this for? You find one of these just about on every corner. You go to Westlake you'll find one.

[1:23:46] What are they doing? I sat there and look at them. Not one thing they do. They cut the grass. Man they run that mower every day all day long. I sit there at that park and look at them. That's what they do. What did they do? Gave two or three people a pretty good job. They don't know nothing and don't have to do nothing because they don't know nothing to do. But what'd he come back and bring to them, say, "We going to change this." Okay [. . .?]. Hurting your own self. That's it. Well you got anything else? That's about it.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember any crime in Mossville?

SMITH: [1:24:25] Crime? No, not personally. Not talked about. Somebody told me. I don't really know. They wasn't doing crime when I was here. They . . . Nothing but dope. I see that and read it and hear about it. You hear about that everywhere, but nothing that I can really point out that would make sense of anything.

ARSENEAULT: They mentioned a murder in like 1950s, an unsolved . . . Was it an unsolved murder or something like that in the 1950s?

SMITH: [1:25:07] I don't think I . . . I wasn't here in the 1950s. Of course I know there's crime. I'm not . . . There's crime everywhere. But it has nothing to do with you not having what it takes to educate a mind. See there's some children you can't educate because he don't want it. He wants to be like street people. What do they do? He wants to be like the criminals. Doesn't want

it. They wants to be like somebody that's walking around doing nothing and claim to be somebody—and what have you done? What have you done? Nothing. I don't know any crime here is important enough for me to remember what the outcome was. Didn't benefit anything. I don't know. I didn't grow up in dope and alcohol. I didn't grow up in that.

ARSENEAULT: Well I have a lot of questions.

SMITH: Go ahead.

ARSENEAULT: Are you . . . because we're at an hour and a half I don't know if you're tired or not.

SMITH: [1:26:48] No, I'm alright.

ARSENEAULT: Alright. I'm curious about when you grew up did you grow up on the old home place with your grandparents? Is that where you spent most of your time?

SMITH: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: What kind of things did they grow?

SMITH: They grew greens, tomatoes, okra, potatoes, onions. They grow lots of stuff. That's one of my [objectives?] right there. They grow lots of stuff but they didn't have sense

enough to market it and get the revenue when it could benefit somebody else.

ARSENEAULT: There was no truck farming?

SMITH: [1:27:40] No, you missed me. I'm talking about what they grow they take down to the general store to trade for what I can get out of you what you can get out of me and see who's ahead. Say it's good enough for them if they do that. Didn't have truck pastures. Had enough to when they go to the store and make a trade and do this and feed . . . As long as everything was fed. As long as the hogs was fed, and the cattle had something to eat, chickens had some scratch and we have what to cook for. That's all that mattered. That's not life. That's not life for human beings. Life got to be more than that. That could quit anytime. That's not life. Did you ever sit down and plan a vacation for your family? What we going to do this summer? That's not life. That's existing. I guess it's good to exist. You ain't got nothing else you can do I guess. You exist. Stayed there all my life never had a vacation with my family. Never. Say, "Well we going to go to . . ." Where? Where do you go on vacation? Never heard nothing like that.

ARSENEAULT: [1:29:12] What would they do for fun?

SMITH: Huh?

ARSENEAULT: What did they do for fun?

SMITH: Give you a shovel and a hole. Some other kind of work to do. That's their fun. Wasn't nothing.

ARSENEAULT: Were there any musicians in the area?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: Musicians in the area?

SMITH: [1:29:37] You live here? My son's a musician. That's the reason I ask you did you live . . . No, I don't believe. They had some guys what they called musicians. I don't know nobody here that . . . My type of musicians know [cutting?] a type of album or anything. There always sitting, got somebody come in and play for them. Entertain them in that situation. Not just to say some guy . . . Now they got [Edward?]. One fellow here I know [Burdon?] I think his name was. He was . . . But he didn't stay here long.

ARSENEAULT: What did he play?

SMITH: [1:30:30] He played pretty well anything. Played an organ most of the time because . . . His daddy called himself a musician sitting there on a box playing something. Picking guitar. He never . . . Nothing ever came out of it financially. No kind of fame or nothing like that came out of it. That kind. Actually a known musician that could bring some . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was there any zydeco music in Mossville?

SMITH: Yes. Now I'm not up on . . . Yes they had . . . I'm not a zydeco person.

ARSENEAULT: But they had it?

SMITH: [1:31:13] Yes, they had it.

ARSENEAULT: Where did you . . . Where could someone go to listen to it?

SMITH: Right here on Prater Road. Right down the street there about a quarter of a mile.

Valery Montgomery had a club there and he . . .

ARSENEAULT: What was it called?

SMITH: [1:31:29] Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: What was the club? Did it have a name?

SMITH: I don't . . . I never did know the name of it. It had them zydecos on Saturday nights right there. I wasn't living here I'd just come here and I been there because it carried a crowd. I wanted to see what they're doing.

ARSENEAULT: What was it like there?

SMITH: Nothing but a . . . Just a bunch of . . . Too many people on the floor at one time.

ARSENEAULT: Doing what?

SMITH: Doing what they called zydeco I guess. I never did. I'm not zydeco.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, it was a dance?

SMITH: Yes, that's a dance. When you hear somebody down here talk about going to the zydeco . . . They played the longest music. They played one piece of music thirty minutes. Man, I get tired on that floor.

ARSENEAULT: [1:32:24] How big was the place? Like what did it look like?

SMITH: Oh it'd hold a couple hundred people. Pretty big. That many people on the floor at one time quite a square. Takes up quite a bit of room.

ARSENEAULT: Was there a bar?

SMITH: Yes, there was a bar.

ARSENEAULT: What kind of things could you get there?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: What kind of drinks could you get?

SMITH: [1:32:56] It was just whatever you drink. It wasn't a professional . . . a place where a professional bartender would work. You want Jack Daniel's [whiskey] and coke let me have it. That's basically all I can say about it. Didn't have that type of fancy name. In fact, nowhere in here. That's what you did. You went to a bar here and you wanted a bottle or liquor you wanted to drink whatever you wanted to drink they give it to you a bottle and glass. Some ice, coke, whatever you want to drink it with. Nothing professional like what I think you're talking about. Go to a bar and get a . . .

ARSENEAULT: I'm just curious.

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: So like beer, hard liquor?

SMITH: Oh yes. Beer. Yes, beer and hard liquor. That was every Friday night and every Saturday night on the town. Then ready to go back to work as far as I know.

ARSENEAULT: Did you know Valery Montgomery?

SMITH: [1:34:20] Yes, I knew him.

ARSENEAULT: What was he like?

SMITH: I mean at first. Well he called himself [coughs] a businessman and I guess for where he was in this community and people he serving I guess he was. In a black community that type of businessman. He was always getting up something going on. He wanted to be a politician and maybe he was a Mossville politician. I don't know. He always wanting to gather with something that's politically motivated. And I don't think the man could read and write. I'm just . . . I'm not sure. I don't know. I been told but I don't know. I just knew him as the individual who stayed in Mossville. I'd come from Houston here down here sometimes they'd have something going on over at his club. I'd go in there looking for somebody I knew or seeing what they was doing or what have you. Other than that I don't know a whole lot about it. I don't even know where Valery Montgomery come from. He migrated in here from somewhere down east.

ARSENEAULT: What about his brother?

SMITH: [1:35:49] Wes? Called himself a businessman too. I don't know what or what. Don't know for what.

ARSENEAULT: Did he have a club too?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: Did Wes have a club too?

SMITH: A what?

ARSENEAULT: A club or a bar?

SMITH: [1:36:11] Oh I don't know. Not that I know of. Not that I know of. Now he may have. That don't mean he didn't. A lot of these clubs I come down here I didn't go to them. Depends on how rough they look or who's doing what in there. I didn't . . . I don't remember anybody telling me he had a club. I don't want to say he didn't because . . .

ARSENEAULT: I was just curious. I didn't know what kind of business he did or . . .

SMITH: Yes, he was always doing something. I say at the end of where he's out there now he begin to do construction. What he doing before then I really don't know. It couldn't have been too much. They all died broke. Business is that. Got no money.

ARSENEAULT: Anything else you remember about the club?

SMITH: [1:37:32] No. I know a couple of times I passed a crowd, so he must have been doing something right. Somebody liked it in the crowd.

ARSENEAULT: You remember any musicians who played there?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: Any musicians who played there?

SMITH: No, I didn't know any of them. It's . . . They had them musicians play that zydeco stuff there.

ARSENEAULT: [1:38:01] But nobody in particular?

SMITH: No, I didn't know them.

ARSENEAULT: Well we're almost at two hours so I'm going to ask you one more question.

SMITH: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: And then we can wrap up and you can . . . We'll schedule a follow up with you because there's a lot of questions on here. Something about a post office. Was there ever a post office in Mossville? That's not the question. I'm just curious.

SMITH: [1:38:30] Not in my time.

ARSENEAULT: Did you ever hear . . .

SMITH: But the . . . Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: You heard about one?

SMITH: Yes. Not in my time, but there was a post office there.

ARSENEAULT: Do you know where it was?

SMITH: It was over here by this railroad track. On the west side of the railroad tracks so I'm told. James Moss was the post master. We call him Jim. Jim Moss.

ARSENEAULT: [1:38:52] You knew him?

SMITH: Oh yes, I knew him. I don't know if he knows me though. But yes, I knew him. James Moss.

ARSENEAULT: Where did he live?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: Where did he live?

SMITH: [1:39:04] He lived back up here on the other side of Prater Road. There's a

Baptist church up there on the right side of the road. He lived on the south side of the road there. All that property around there now that you go from the gully near the south side of the road, that was his. Jim Moss. He had a son named Pete Moss. He was just there. He wasn't worth nothing. [laughs] What I . . . What my mother told me about this post office was that when he died nobody come to take over the business so to speak . . . run it. I don't know the details in the mail distribution. It stayed there.

[1:40:20] Mossville had a potential. Like I said, so many people running the business with no education. I have . . . I look at that . . . I frown on that quite a bit. You running a business . . . You need to tell me something. You educated? You need to be able to help me with something here. You got a bunch of uneducated people running something, that's a dangerous thing to me. I don't know about other people. You won't find me attending nothing like that too often because it's nothing good can come out of it. Nobody knows who you are or what you're about. That's not good.

I was going to tell you about what my mother told me about the potential. Mossville should have a police department. Just like the city of Westlake. They should be run by people here. What happened? Everybody wants to be the chief nobody want to be the Indian. That's bottom line. Bottom line. Don't care what these people in Mossville start out and it might be a good thing. And this, I'm watching this. And this . . . If the head honcho can't have his ways you . . . Rigmaiden, Williams, whatever he is. It's not going to come to nothing good in Mossville.

That might not be what you're looking for, but that's the truth. Not going to come to nothing good. Sooner or later you'll see it just fizzle out to just nothing. You'll wonder where that fellow went. "Oh he went on up there with somebody else. Done some other business." No. You have to have a leader in business to accomplish anything that's worth anything. But if I don't

want to follow you and you don't know what you're . . . "Which way to Lake Charles?" "Oh this way." I ain't follow you, and you don't know how to get to Lake Charles. You in bad shape.

That's the way Mossville is. And when one finds one that's intelligent enough to get some help to work on the situation they pull him down. They don't want that because they want nothing but what they got. Nothing. That's what they want.

[1:42:55] I bet you half of Mossville done worked as a public worker here. I just looked. I passed look and I stopped sat on the tree there and look at them and see who. Where'd he come from? Oh he working for parish. Well how'd he get that job? Fellow I've been here for I don't know how long. I don't approve of that. I don't hold with that. I don't do it. You need to come together and elect who you want to do things on their qualifications. If you don't, you're going to get messed up, especially if you got money involved in it. You going nowhere because as soon as those few dollars play out you got nothing. Where this fellow going? Soon as your money is gone he's gone. Can't do nothing for you. You can't do nothing for him. Can't do nothing for him.

You need . . . Most of them looking for help they need help themselves. They need to be educated to what you're doing. Sit down and come up with something that you never sat down and studied to see how it goes. What's ifs and ands in it?. Ain't going to get nowhere there because you going to come to a hard place in the road where you make a decision that's going to cost you everything you doing if you make that decision. Just don't work. So I don't know. I was talking about Jim Moss here. Talking about Mossville here for what they had. Mossville could have been something, but if it ain't who they want in Mossville it's not going to work. Do everything you can but . . .

ARSENEAULT: What did your mom tell you about the post office?

SMITH: [1:44:40] Oh, she said it just went down. Just did nothing about it after James Moss died. They didn't have another postmaster general. And my conclusion is what she was saying nobody have sense enough to come down here and run the post office and distribute the mail and pick it up. I don't believe you need to be educated to do that. That's rules and things you need to know according to the postal rules, but I believe anybody can dispatch a mail truck. It's so easy because it's Mossville. Because we know everybody in Mossville. Ain't even got to study who lives where. "Who this here? What's his address?" You know everybody in Mossville. Should be just that easy, but that's not what it is.

They all like a bunch of crabs. They all against one another. When it comes to something ninety-five percent of the time Mossville's too late because they didn't get the information because they didn't tell but ten of them. Yeah that's the clique. You ain't in it you gets none of it. That's really been my experience with Mossville. You said what? I'm not Mossville. Never have never will. I'll be a citizen of the city, but I won't be a Mossville person. I've never been into nothing that they put on that's worth anything. Most of the time what they trying to put over you the last one going to get it. You don't know how to study it or what it is and anything like that because that clique or that group. Don't put it out there where you can study it or you can look at it and give your opinion. My opinion don't mean nothing then what am I in here for? Mossville has been this way for eighty-one years to me.

ARSENEAULT: You mean cliquish?

SMITH: [1:47:08] Yes. I don't believe it'll ever be anything different. That's the wrong attitude, but I got a reason for feeling like that. I think everything going to do better sooner or

later. Most of the time. They sit in the situation. They're satisfied with this bunch and who they are. That's good enough. Kind of like a little club. You don't ever take any new members, you going to wind up with a bunch of people that can't help you out that don't know what's going on. Got to have new blood, new life to a situation to get something of it. Mossville ain't really nothing. Mossville ain't really into extend themselves. They're full. I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: I was going to ask you if you had any fond memories of Mossville.

SMITH: [1:48:16] Any what?

ARSENEAULT: Fond memories.

SMITH: Not really, because eighteen and on, that extent, I've . . . My life I was gone from here and up. I know better memories of some things that I could ponder my mind on than think of what Mossville would have had, had I stayed here I don't . . . It's strange that they would ask me to come up here and talk. I talk to [T. Porter?] and that's the reason I'm here because I told him I don't know what you want but I told him whenever he talked to me, "I'm going to answer what they ask me."

ARSENEAULT: We just want to get the full . . .

SMITH: I said, I'm going to build something that ain't there and paint Mossville up to be what it ain't. I ain't going to do that.

ARSENEAULT: [1:49:25] We want to get everybody's story.

SMITH: Yes. I ain't going to do that. It's either right or it's wrong. Wrong. These children see you coming what you think they going to do? The same thing. "Well this is what coach so-and-so did. This is what . . ." Nothing out of that. Not going to do that. I wouldn't do it to Mossville. It may never be nothing, but it won't be because of me. You from here? Where?

ARSENEAULT: No, I'm from Baton Rouge [Louisiana].

SMITH: You ought to hear my son play.

ARSENEAULT: He's good?

SMITH: He's good.

ARSENEAULT: When did he learn?

SMITH: Pardon?

ARSENEAULT: When did he learn? Or how did he learn?

SMITH: Oh he went to McNeese [State University].

ARSENEAULT: [1:50:19] Oh, okay. What does he play?

SMITH: Plays saxophone.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. Saxophone. What's his name?

SMITH: Mickey, just like mine. Same thing.

ARSENEAULT: He's your . . . How many children do you have?

SMITH: Two.

ARSENEAULT: Two.

SMITH: She's waiting for you out there.

ARSENEAULT: Yes. Well thank you for your time today.

SMITH: Alright.

ARSENEAULT: Would you be interested in doing a follow up?

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: [1:50:46] Okay, because I have a couple more questions we didn't really get to.

SMITH: I would. Somebody said I could get it if I wanted to. After . . .

ARSENEAULT: Oh my . . .

SMITH: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Our contact info? Yes, I'll give you my card and you can contact us.

SMITH: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: Well thank you so much and we'll be in touch.

SMITH: Alright. What's your name?

ARSENEAULT: I'm Chelsea.

[1:51:07]

[End Tape 4534. End Session I.]