

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Reynold "Ray" Adams

COLLECTION: 4700.2351

IDENTIFICATION: Native and resident of Golden Meadow, Louisiana [b. 1944]; retired police chief; former ice plant employee; Catholic; father and grandfather

INTERVIEWER: Kai Duffy

SERIES: Bayou Lafourche Oral History

INTERVIEW DATE: October 9, 2010

FOCUS DATES: 1950s [childhood]; 1960s-1970s [ice plant and beginning of law enforcement career]; 2010

ABSTRACT:

Tape 3950

[Note interviewer misidentifies interviewee in introduction. Interview is with Reynold "Ray" Adams, not Harold]

Interview conducted in Golden Meadow, Louisiana; Adams is sixty-six years old, born and raised in Golden Meadow; street had two families: Adams on one side, Collins on the other; father's whole family lived on Bobs Lane; Theodore Collins's family lived on north side of street; families grew up and played together; as a child Adams played in trees at back of lane; did a lot of hunting, running around looking for rabbits, birds; everyone was together, kids had a little area in front of his grandma's house to play football, baseball, not indoors people [no video games]; nowhere was off limits but everyone understood that when momma hollered you better be within listening distance; no farther than five hundred yards; Adams one of four [two brothers, sister]; daddy had garden, would hunt duck in winter; never had a job that made a lot of money so had to fend for himself; father was refrigeration engineer at an ice plant; made ice for boats that shrimp and fish; fishing and oil is about all you have here [in Bayou Lafourche]; as kid in school, there were shrimp sheds along street, packing plant at end of the street and two other less than a block away; siren would go off when sheds needed ladies to come in to "break heads" on shrimp; "everyone would come with aprons and gloves and get to work"; interviewer asks about Golden Meadow changes; Adams spent a lot of time with the neighbors growing up; now people don't know neighbors; growing up spent many Sundays on front porch, where neighbors and family would come by to visit; there were three small grocery stores within walking distance; interviewer asks about transportation; Adams tells that daddy had car, took it to work; mom didn't have license; sometimes on Sundays the family would go visit a family member farther away; otherwise Adams walked; driving in car was "something different," guesses it's like kids nowadays going to Disney World [doing something that you didn't get to do a lot]; there was a

movie theater within walking distance; another in middle of town [which he occasionally went to]; “other than that, you stayed home”; daddy used to listen to fights [boxing on radio] on Friday nights; then we got television and started watching that at night; Adams never got into habit of watching TV all day long [preferred hunting or fishing]; Adams spent a lot of time with father, gardening; followed him around “tied at the shirttails”; the two even went to work at same place; Adams’s first job, at seventeen years old, was his father’s ice plant, stayed thirteen years; interviewer asks if he learned any life lessons at the ice plant; Adams says he should have followed his brother’s [Harold Adams] footsteps and went to college; Harold was always inside while Ray was working outside, in all kinds of weather; Adams was a police officer for [twenty-nine] years; was chief of police for thirteen year [retired from that position]; in time he was a police officer, changed ninety percent; 1976 when he started there two other deputies, Adams, and chief; paperwork has changed “a heck of a lot”; Adams gives the example of if you picked up someone for disturbing the peace, drunk, disorderly conduct it used to take an hour to get him behind bars or bonded out; now paperwork to arrest someone takes at least two hours; if you charge a DWI paperwork [like it’s supposed to be done, no shortcuts] takes four or five hours; that’s how “bad it changed”; 1980s a lot of transient workers [Adams believes it was worse than now]; people didn’t have jobs in rest of country so people would come down, get a job, call friend or neighbor to come down, so many new faces arrived; “you didn’t know who was down here anymore”; when he was a kid his family knew every family in town; when Adams started as police officer didn’t know 3/4 of people in town; that’s difference between a community that was started by a certain group of people and one that’s grown up; community was resilient; Cajun people were ousted at one point; a few people resent that but Adams never had a problem with it; Adams worked at the ice plant, then four years in shrimp packing plant, working on refrigeration; never got certification but knew everything about it; only reason Adams left was because the town had a retirement and they were looking for a deputy; Adams wanted a retirement account; “it worked out”; working harder than ever in retirement because he has four grandkids and is remodeling two houses; retirement, and sense of making a difference, inspired his career in law enforcement; could see where kids were going; Adams tries to instill how he was brought up [with better manners, respect for elders]; Adams gives example of how mother would make coffee every afternoon at 3 pm and the kids couldn’t go into kitchen with the ladies there; today he sees kids interrupt adult conversation and he “never would have thought of doing that”; his daddy wasn’t that strict but momma was, “thank god for that”; Adams had a good childhood; they did the best they could [family was poor]; fishing and trapping to supplement income; Adams discusses “kids today”; believes it’s partly parents, who show by example; if parents are into drugs [marijuana], “right wrong indifferent it’s still against the law”; kids pick up on what the parents do [cursing]; you teach them religion, right and wrong, respect for themselves and authority; Adams family is Catholic; he and siblings all made communion, confirmation; Adams goes to Mass on Saturday afternoon; if he’s shrimping [has boat] on Saturday will go Sunday morning; tries not to miss Mass; every Sunday Daddy would go to church [and take kids]; church was halfway through town; maybe mile and a half; think they had wooden church when he was small but now it’s brick; can’t recall rebuilding date; Adams didn’t mind going to church; brother and he went to public schools; remembers when grandpa died: visitation in front room [of old house]; he can still see casket today; like a party, but there isn’t any talking, just praying in room [men went out to porch to talk]; service he will never forget; interviewer asks if Adams was close with his grandfather; grandfather taught Adams to shoot a shotgun in the back of house [do that

today and they'd put you in jail]; shot at big tree behind the house, redwing blackbirds; showed Adams how to shoot fourteen gauge; would make gumbo with blackbirds; grandma was a good cook; boyee [? Pudding of cream, milk, eggs, sugar and flour] [phone ringing]; made in the morning; Harold and Ray would fight over pot with leftovers, wipe pot clean with homemade bread; grandmother had diabetes, died a few years after grandfather; but Adams got to see them [growing up]; Adams has a strong sense of Cajun heritage, still has his father's round-bottom pirogue [dug out cypress log] [phone call interruption]; doesn't use it, hanging up in workshop; was offered a bunch of money for it [boat is probably seventy years old]; dad bought it from a boat maker who made pirogues across bayou from here; what they used to trap muskrat in wintertime; dad would move across Lake [Pontchartrain] to Chef Menteur [near Slidell] for two or three months trapping season; used it to get through marsh; father also shrimped a lot; when father came out of service [US Army?] he worked for Texaco on a river [in Arkansas?]; didn't like it so went to the job at the ice plant; Adams family didn't eat meat on Fridays; during Lent didn't eat meat on Wednesday and Friday; Adams ate peas in roux, stew with eggs and potatoes, eggs in spaghetti ["it's good, you'd be surprised"]; even after Pope declared you could eat meat on Fridays Adams's dad wouldn't; elderly in Golden Meadow follow religion closely; Adams can't speak of [beliefs of] Baptists in area but they are present; a few Protestants in area, at one point there were Jehovah's Witnesses; having new people never bothered Adams; he is tolerant of other groups and no one ever tried to change his religion; [but don't try to convert him, he doesn't agree with that]; Adams believes religion is very important in life of average person; to Adams, every day in school should open with prayer and pledge of allegiance; if you're not Catholic, Baptist, [doesn't know how other denominations feel, but] there's only one god, you're still going to that one person; if you don't want to pray, don't listen or participate; one thing that always irked him: people complaining but not changing; if you don't like this country go find another country; most of people here are pretty well satisfied with what they have; moved from basic labor to technology, have some major ship building [workboats and icebreakers], Edison Chouest Offshore is one of the bigger companies; Adams knew owner, had been shrimper with two 65-foot wooden boats; community has changed a lot, Adams wants to think it's for the better; growing up his house had gas heaters along wall, never left it on at night [dad was afraid of fire, gas leaks]; he would like to go back to when he was about five years old "but you gotta move along with the times"; used to hunt ducks about 200 yards in front of new highway; it was a freshwater marsh; dad and him would go on canal to go back there; could drink water in marsh; used cistern for rainwater [no city water]; treat to have a soda when he was a kid; Bayou Lafourche didn't have McDonalds, no Pizza Hut or KFC; make do with things they had; never went hungry; you'd eat what you got [most of the time it was very good]; fishing industry changed a lot; summer's gill [?] work; kid did a lot of fish-fishing; shrimping in those days wasn't very efficient; pulling nets of cotton twine; probably too big for the power of vessel; Adams works at net shop when he has time; sews, etc; right now they're making nets out of plastic webbing, and rather than 1.25" mesh it's 2.5 inches [it's so big!]; push it faster, more efficient; boats before were wood, now it's fiberglass and steel; find very few wooden boats now; it has improved "a helluva lot"; interviewer asks about the role of bayou and working on the water; Adams says it plays a big role: kept us out of trouble, gave us something to do; if you didn't like to go fishing there was something else to do on water [duck hunting, trapping]; always something water-related; it was fun growing up; fifteen-year-old grandson sits in front of the TV and plays computer games, "These kids don't know what they're missing"; Adams wants to

make the kids go outside, they need to diversify what they do; interviewer asks about Golden Meadow and Bayou Lafourche as home; Adams says it “means the world to me, wouldn’t go anywhere else”; getting ready to go to Arkansas, every year for last twenty-two years, has cousin with six hundred acres, spend two weeks; ten or fifteen years the cousin has tried to get them to build a cabin, but Adams says he wouldn’t do it; won’t live anywhere else in this country; no way he’d move away from bayou; “I got saltwater in my blood”.

TAPES: 1 (T3950)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 44 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 5 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Interviewer index; Interviewee information

RESTRICTIONS: None

NOTE: See collections 4700.2103 and 4700.2352 for additional materials and related content