

**T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection**

**ABSTRACT**

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** Allen "Al" Danos, Jr.

**COLLECTION:** 4700.2088

**IDENTIFICATION:** Cut Off, Louisiana Native [b. 1947]; Holy Cross High School [New Orleans] graduate; owner of oil field contracting company [Danos and Curole Marine Contractors]; Catholic; board member of Nicholls State University Foundation; board member of Houma-Thibodaux Diocese;

**INTERVIEWER:** Erin Donovan and Christina Shelby

**SERIES:** Bayou Lafourche Oral History

**INTERVIEW DATE:** October 24, 2010

**FOCUS DATES:** 1970s [early career]; 1980-1990s [professional career]; 2001-present [retirement]

**ABSTRACT:**

**Tape 3934**

Danos speaks about his former company [Danos and Curole Marine Contractors], involved for thirty years; Danos's father and father's brother-in-law started company [1949] buying boats and then expanded into contract labor [working for the oil fields, providing welders and pumpers]; when dad died [cancer, c. 1971] Danos and brother [Hank] took over [French greetings in background] business; was very young [Al was 24 and Hank 21, recent LSU grad] and took a while to learn; Danos worked with father for a year before he died, "showed me the ropes"; first year running company solo "I was pretending he was still alive and I was doing what he wanted me to do"; a lot of responsibility for a young person; brothers expanded business, went further offshore; added offices [original in Larose], branch in Venice, LA [?], Intracoastal City, LA, Morgan City, LA; one time had 4-5 offices, each different levels of success; type of boats: small crew boats to transport to rigs; luggers for equipment; Danos expanded into lift boat business [service vessel]; overseas projects in Venezuela, Nigeria, and Angola; eventually sold off lift boats, Danos got out of business, brother and brother's sons still in labor part of business; sequence of events leading to Danos's retirement: decided to slow active management in 2000 but stayed on board of directors for several years; passion was boat side of business; sold boats in 2005; got out completely in 2006; Danos is now active in community; on board of Nicholls State University Foundation; involved in Catholic charities, on board of Houma-Thibodaux Diocese; working on beachfront development district in charge of promoting tourism on Fourchon Beach [South Lafourche Beachfront Development District, estab. 2007]; wife and Danos travel; four kids and five grandchildren to spend time with; owns hunting camp in St. Francisville, LA; Danos was raised Catholic; as far back as he can recall, both sides were Catholic; only a few non-

Catholics “around here”; baptized, confirmation; growing up he went to church every Sunday, active in church activities; went to Holy Cross High School [Catholic school in New Orleans]; married a Catholic, wife was “raised the same way I was”; Danos built his home thirty-three years ago; when he first got married he wanted to live on a farm like in childhood; brother and Danos were looking for a piece of property; bought 100 acres and built “like everyone else do” along the highway, closer to the bayou; he and brother individually got titles to homes, share farm behind homes; interviewer asks Danos about uniqueness of Bayou Lafourche; Danos cites Cajun heritage; French-speaking people, *joie de vivre*; play hard and work hard mentality; importance of families; people like to have a good time and get excited sometime; enjoy life and live to the fullest; Danos prays at weekly mass, though doesn’t recall specific professionally-oriented prayers [e.g. praying for business]; as an adult he has prayed for welfare of family and humanity; Danos enjoys inviting people over; is active in local politics, strategizing and encouraging people to run for office; has people over for lunch in big dining room; still has an office in Gray, LA [near Thibodaux]; once a week people come to office for lunch, meal prepared by cook; Danos prefers small group [6-8 people] for lunch; they talk about “whatever we want to talk about”; group of friends interested in history; meet every Monday [at McDonalds?] to “solve the world’s problems in French and that is fun”; visited Venezuela 4-5 times to start work, 2-3 times for follow up; very difficult to get project started; learned a lot about culture of Venezuela; meet with people, could never quite close the deal; start negotiations early and do lunch, supper; Venezuelans more interested in social part; Danos tried to follow up from home, could never reach them; very frustrating; learned patience; ended up sending some vessels and crews there; difficult environment to make money; Danos’s work in Nigeria was “some of the toughest” work he’d ever experienced; had to team up with Nigerian partners; so much different than the way [Americans] work and take care of business; difficult time with partners, never did get along; split up with them and got agents; lawsuits and problems for years; lesson learned: if you’re going to work in foreign country you can’t change them, you’ve got to understand that you’ll work their way instead; difficult because of ethics; Danos is real strong believer in ethical behavior; Nigerians wanted some things he couldn’t and wouldn’t do; time factor and four-to-one rule: it takes four days in Nigeria to do the same work as one day in US; Nigerians never in a rush; example: had a vessel that had a problem; Danos at office on radio, on telephone, trying to solve problem and Nigerian partners, who were supposed to take care of these problems were never around; problems would develop on Friday before a four-day holiday; Danos suggested they call the boats once a day, but in Nigeria, “when we’re off, we’re off”; Danos’s father worked seven days on vessel, when he was off he was taking care of other things many times Danos and brother were the first ones in the office in the morning, the last ones in the office at night; also salesman; Nigerians were not focused; tells story about calling office in Lagos to talk to office manager, who said everything was fine even though a vessel had hit something and was sinking [things were only fine in office, not in the field]; Danos asked the wrong question and had to learn Nigerian mindset; Nigerian workers were excellent; entry-level laborers worked up to crane operators, mates; can’t be captains because American flag on our vessels meant American captain was required; Danos’s trouble was with partners, not laborers; Danos went to Nigeria 12-13 times; began working in 1992, last trip was 1999, 2-4 times a year; Danos’s father was gone a lot; kids tell Danos that he was gone, too; had mind on business, Nigeria; reason he retired early [10 years ago, early 50s]: wore himself out; company was tremendous experience, learned a lot, “crown jewel of work experience”; brothers were

successful, made good money and “earned every dollar of it”; sold vessels but the boats are still working in Nigeria; captains and mates are still working there for the company that bought boats; new company is try to use practices of Danos; GM is former Danos employee; “so that worked out”; Danos available for further interviews; he and friends enjoyed the experience of being interviewed.

**TAPES:** 1 (T3934)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 21 minutes

**# PAGES INDEX:** 3 pages

**OTHER MATERIALS:** Interviewer notes

**RESTRICTIONS:** None