

LAWRENCE “CHINE” TERREBONNE WITH THOMAS TURWILLIGER
Chine’s Cajun Net Shop – Golden Meadow, LA

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Location: Chine’s Cajun Net Shop – Golden Meadow, LA

Interviewer: Sara Roahen

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: 52 minutes

Project: Down the Bayou – Louisiana

[Begin Lawrence “Chine” Terrebonne’s Interview]

00:00:01

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It’s Friday, August 26, 2011. I’m at Chine’s Cajun Net Shop in Golden Meadow, Louisiana and I would like to ask the owner if he could introduce himself. Could you please tell me your name and what you do for your occupation, please?

00:00:21

Lawrence Chine Terrebonne: My name is Lawrence Chine Terrebonne and I make and repair shrimp nets.

00:00:27

SR: Thank you. Could you tell me your birth date for the record?

00:00:29

LCT: March 17, 1940.

00:00:32

SR: Thank you. I don’t want to interrupt your work too much, so if you--if you can't look at me, I'll just hold the mic up and you can keep—. Oh, my gosh, you’re trying to count while I’m talking to you. **[Laughs]** Okay, let me know if I need to be quiet for a minute. But if you can't

look up I’ll just hold the microphone up to you. So why don’t we start by you just telling me what you’re doing right now.

00:00:55

LCT: I’m starting all the pieces. I--I cut out all the pieces and start them and then people come in and they just hook them together. I prepare everything before [*Laughs*].

00:01:08

SR: Is that always what you do here, or do you do a little bit of everything?

00:01:12

LCT: No, I do some repair like working—like he’s doing in the old net—do some of that also.

00:01:19

SR: So right now, this is a brand new net?

00:01:20

LCT: Yes, ma'am, it is.

00:01:21

SR: And how big will it be?

00:01:23

LCT: Twelve feet. They call it a tri-net. It’s the best way to test the shrimp.

00:01:31

SR: Yeah, you were--you were explaining to me that—well, can you explain again for the record: Why do they test?

00:01:37

LCT: They test instead of just going and throwing a big net over—overboard. They test to try to find the shrimp before they start dragging there and they continue testing while they’re dragging to be sure they’re still catching a few shrimp.

00:01:53

SR: And why don’t they just test with the big nets?

00:01:55

LCT: Well I mean they--they pull the big nets while they’re testing, but I mean the--they test to see—to be sure that they’re pulling and catching something. They’re testing, they call that, uh-hm.

00:02:09

SR: And is this net for a boat that shrimps in-shore?

00:02:14

LCT: No, these here are used offshore, but I mean the in-shore—in-shore, most of these, they don’t use them no more because they pull the skimmer nets. And they test with--they test with the skimmer nets; yeah. Skimmer, all you got to do is pick up the tail every once in a while and check it to see if you got any shrimp here, yeah, uh-hm.

00:02:35

SR: So for the record, the skimmer nets go on top of the water and these nets go down at the bottom?

00:02:43

LCT: Yeah, right. Yeah, that’s what they do. The skimmer nets cover the whole depth of the water where they’re dragging at, so every few minutes they go and they pick up the tail and they know they’re catching some shrimp, yeah. **[Laughs]** Yeah.

00:02:57

SR: Okay, and so this is a 12-foot net as a test net. How big would the--the bigger nets be, the real ones?

00:03:05

LCT: The bigger nets is depending on--depending on the boat that’s pulling them. Most of them would make it now anywhere from 40-foot to 60-foot. Yeah, and they pull four of them like that. **[Laughs]** Out in the Gulf you know, yeah.

00:03:26

SR: Tell me if you can how you got into this business and when.

00:03:30

LCT: I started at the age of nine years-old working for my father and I started in business in 1966 for myself, yeah.

00:03:39

SR: What was your father’s name?

00:03:41

LCT: Alidore--Alidore Terrebonne.

00:03:45

SR: Could you spell that?

00:03:46

LCT: A-l-i-d-o-r-e.

00:03:49

SR: I don’t know that name. Where--where was he from, around here?

00:03:54

LCT: Yeah, he was born and raised down here. Yeah, and his father was doing that before also.

00:04:01

SR: His father was also making nets?

00:04:03

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:04:04

SR: Did--did they have their own business like you have?

00:04:07

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:04:11

SR: But it wasn’t called Chine’s Net Shop, I guess.

00:04:13

LCT: That, it was Alidore’s Net Shop. And my grandpa was Anotele Terrebonne.

00:04:22

SR: Could you spell that name?

00:04:25

LCT: A-n-o-t-e-l-e--I think it was, something like that—not quite sure. [*Laughs*]

00:04:31

SR: And were their net shops also in Golden Meadow?

00:04:32

LCT: Yes, ma'am. Yeah, they were along the bayou, uh-huh.

00:04:38

SR: Do you know your heritage? Like what—was your grandfather born here or did he come from elsewhere?

00:04:42

LCT: No, he was—far as I know he was born down here, yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:04:48

SR: It sounds like there’s French speaking in your background, and I’ve heard y’all speak French here in the shop.

00:04:54

LCT: Yeah, a lot of--a lot of French down here in this part of the country. Most of the old people all talk French. A lot of kids have to learn how to talk English to go to school because

they were born—born and everybody talking French all the time since they were born. They had to change to--to learn to the English language to go to school.

00:05:18

SR: Did that happen to you?

00:05:19

LCT: No. [*Laughs*]

00:05:20

SR: Did your parents speak French?

00:05:22

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm. Yeah, both of them did, uh-hm. We--we speak mostly French rather than English, uh-hm.

00:05:32

SR: And so do y'all speak French in here all day?

00:05:37

LCT: Most of the time, yeah, uh-hm.

00:05:39

SR: Even with the guy from Wisconsin?

00:05:41

LCT: No, we talk good English with him. **[Laughs]** We--we give him the chance to talk English **[Laughs]** because we couldn't convert him to coonass yet.

00:05:57

SR: I should just say for the record that Mr. Chine is sitting across from a man who is originally from Wisconsin but lives down here and also works on the nets. Could I ask for your full name?

00:06:09

Thomas Turwilliger. Thomas Turwilliger.

00:06:15

SR: Okay, and how long ago did you move to this area?

00:06:15

TT: In 1976.

00:06:19

SR: Do you--? Hmm, do you—. I'm sorry. Have you picked up any of the French at all?

00:06:28

TT: Petit peu. “Petit peu” means a little bit, yeah. I understand quite a bit of it. It’s speaking it that’s hard. Understanding it—if people talk a little slower you can understand it fairly well, but it’s most of the guys get excited over here when they’re talking so **[Laughs]** they talk a little fast to get their point across before someone cuts them off. **[Laughs]**

00:06:56

SR: I’m interested in—is it okay if I call you Mr. Chine, or should I call you Mr. Terrebonne?

00:07:05

LCT: Chine. **[Laughs]** That’s what most of everybody know me by. **[Laughs]**

00:07:09

SR: How did you get that name?

00:07:13

LCT: Because I looked like a little Chinese when I was born. **[Laughs]** And I kept the name.

00:07:20

SR: When you were born you got that name?

00:07:21

LCT: Yeah, I looked like a little Chinese. **[Laughs]** My mother’s brother give me that name.
[Laughs]

00:07:33

SR: Everybody down here has a nickname, I've noticed.

00:07:35

LCT: Right. *[Laughs]* Most of them down here, you ask for somebody by their real name, you're not going to find them. *[Laughs]*

00:07:43

SR: Now, did you work in your father's or your grandfather's net shops?

00:07:50

LCT: I worked there with my father. Now with my grandfather, he was dead by the time I started working. Uh-hm, he had died. He had passed away, uh-hm.

00:08:03

SR: And was your father's business similar to this one, or has the industry changed so much that it was vastly different?

00:08:11

LCT: It was mostly the same thing, uh-hm. Mostly in those days there—they had only one type of net in those--those days there. Now we make several different types of nets.

00:08:27

SR: Can you tell me a little bit about the different types of nets?

00:08:29

LCT: Well we make like a flat net, a two-seam flat net, a super flat net, a mongoose, and a balloon. All different ones and we make them from an inch and a quarter webbing all the way to two-inch, all different sizes for different boats to where they’re fishing at—very small shrimp or the big shrimp you know. It--it--I think somewhere around 75 different kind of webbings—different sizes that we use. Like the seven, the nine, the twelve, fifteen, eighteen; from inch and a quarter all the way to two-inch for different--different kinds--different size boats and different—. So we use the light webbing like if it’s a little--little boat fishing inside, and as they get a bigger boat we use--start using a little bit heavier webbing. Yeah, uh-hm.

00:09:27

SR: Does a boat—does a shrimper sometimes take out more than one kind of net with them?

00:09:35

LCT: Oh yeah. At this time of the year they carry—depending on what they’re--what they’re fishing with, if they’re fishing with the bait catching the big shrimp, they’ll put the nets with the big--the big solid holes in the mesh—this part right here. Yeah, this time of the year they’re using the bigger mesh. And when it comes to around October or around there the shrimps start getting more mixed and more small, so they change to a smaller mesh net.

00:10:08

SR: But sometimes they might not know until they’re out there what size it is, huh?

00:10:13

LCT: They carry a spare one down on the boat, uh-hm. They--they have all the—most of the nets on the boat. But it don’t take them long to take off one and put the other.

00:10:26

SR: Right. Where do you—so you don’t make the actual webbing?

00:10:30

LCT: No, that’s all made overseas. That’s all made overseas, different places overseas, all the different foreign countries make the webbing overseas. [*Laughs*]

00:10:41

SR: Like where overseas? In Asia or—?

00:10:44

LCT: China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and the other places, too.

00:10:55

TT: Mexico.

00:10:57

LCT: Yeah, Mexico makes them also.

00:10:59

TT: Brazil.

00:10:59

LCT: Brazil, yeah, uh-hm.

00:11:01

TT: There’s a bunch.

00:11:03

LCT: But most all of the different countries across there make it, uh-hm.

00:11:07

SR: And where do you get it from?

00:11:10

LCT: I get it from the local distributor in Houma mostly. Most of it comes from Houma.

00:11:16

SR: When you were coming up, did your grandfather and father also order the webbing or did they make that?

00:11:24

LCT: Well when my grandpa started they were all made by hand. Then when my daddy started it was—they was ordering it made from the factory, uh-hm.

00:11:37

SR: Is it higher quality or lower quality now than it--than it was when they were making them here?

00:11:44

LCT: Well when they were making it at that time it was all cotton webbing. Now it's all nylon or polyethylene webbing. It's a much better quality webbing they're using now than what they were using in those days. In those days all they had was cotton webbing. And now, I'd say it started in the '50s about—the nylon, when it came out?

00:12:17

TT: Probably because they didn't have that much cotton left in '76 when I started. I actually started in 1977, and they still barely had any cotton and they dipped that in a black tar versus the plastic net dip we're using today for these nets. The cotton nets was dipped in a black tar like we use on the road. [*Laughs*]

00:12:36

LCT: I would say it would be in the ‘50s that they started using nylon. And then later on, maybe in the late ‘60s or something, they started coming out with that polyethylene, the plastic webbing, uh-hm. And then after that everybody done away with the cotton webbing.

00:12:57

SR: So now, you know the last time I was here you were dipping a net. Do you still have to dip this—?

00:13:04

LCT: Yeah, the nylon nets. This here we dip. Like this one here uses nylon also. Like the nets that we repair is all nylon, so we dip those. When we make it out of—let me see; when we make it out of this green, this plastic, we—all we dip is the rope that it’s hung on. And the net itself, we don’t dip that.

00:13:30

SR: What do you dip in?

00:13:31

LCT: We got a tank outside, a five-by-five that holds 13 barrels that I dip in. That’s what we—those back there. Yeah, the big tank, and we just got a wench and we just drop it in and pull it up.

00:13:49

SR: But what’s in the tank?

00:13:50

LCT: It’s like a plastic coating dip, uh-hm.

00:13:55

SR: Then it makes it even more durable?

00:13:59

TT: Yeah, it’s the bonding agent is what it is—the plastic—

00:14:02

SR: A bonding agent, uh-huh.

00:14:05

LCT: It keeps the webbing better together. When they break it, it don’t all untie and unravel.

Like there, with that dip, it keeps it—it holds it better together, uh-hm.

00:14:19

SR: So you dip, and then how long does it take to dry?

00:14:21

LCT: Hmm, we start with, we dip it in the morning and it’ll be dry by nighttime.

00:14:26

SR: Okay.

00:14:27

LCT: Like a day like today—you know no humidity and the weather is dry, uh-hm.

00:14:33

SR: Okay, so right now right here you’re--you are prepping to make a new net. But you also repair nets here.

00:14:43

LCT: Yeah, we all—he’s repairing and all the—the rest of the men, they’re all repairing.

00:14:48

SR: What could happen out there that would cause a net to need a repair?

00:14:53

LCT: [*Laughs*] They--they got so much things in the bottom of that Gulf that they hang up on and tear up, you know. The oil field, they—in the olden days they threw everything overboard. Now it’s all right; you can’t throw nothing right out, and they watch it pretty close. But in the olden days anything they didn’t want they threw overboard. [*Laughs*] Around the oil wells and all that where they took out some oil wells and all they got so much debris or trash you know that

they threw out over the years—cement, iron, and all kind of stuff. Now they watch it very closely right now.

00:15:32

SR: So a lot of it is manmade?

00:15:35

LCT: Yeah, manmade hooks. [*Laughs*]

00:15:37

TT: Sunken logs and stuff. We live on the Mississippi Delta so they got a lot of sunken logs out there too.

00:15:45

SR: Sunken logs?

00:15:46

TT: Yeah, they’ve been hiding there for centuries and get unburied by the current and they might have had them there yesterday and not hooked on nothing, but the current can shift the sand and so they can go today and all the sudden there’s a big five-ton log that’s been there for two or three centuries just waiting for them to tear their net on it. [*Laughs*] You know, so it’s a lot of different things. The sharks tear up their nets too, and the porpoises, and they have a lot of

competition for what they're trawling for out there. I mean sharks and porpoises and different other marine animals want the same stuff too. *[Laughs]*

00:16:20

LCT: Yeah.

00:16:21

SR: Huh, and--and I'm sure it happens that a net gets so damaged it can't even be repaired?

00:16:28

LCT: Well we—yesterday--yesterday he came across one he had to--he had to throw away.

Yeah, uh-hm, yeah it comes to the point where it's not worth putting in a lot of hours to repair it, when the net is old and it tears and they lose a lot of--most of the webbing in it and all. It's not worth the time and the money that they would have to spend into it. So if it's a fairly new net we're going to put in a little bit more time and--and value into it, but when—after a net has been--been dragged for two or three years and been broken so many times, it's not worth putting a lot of money into repairing it, yeah.

00:17:07

It will--like the one that he had yesterday had more than half of the webbing missing out of it so—. And it was an old net so it wasn't worth saving the little bit they got.

00:17:18

SR: Um, do you know what that got caught on?

00:17:22

LCT: No, uh-uh.

00:17:24

TT: I don't think he does either.

00:17:26

LCT: They have no idea. [*Laughs*]

00:17:30

SR: For a--I mean I'm sure that the prices vary greatly, but can you tell me anything about the prices? How much a shrimper would pay to get a fairly large trawling net?

00:17:44

LCT: Well like I said, like an example of a 50-foot net complete with everything and ready to fish, you're looking around--around \$2,000 ready to go. Uh-hm, yeah.

00:18:01

SR: That's--that's some change.

00:18:05

LCT: Like a set of skimmers, like they pull a 16 by 12 skimmer, most of them—for the both of them it runs around \$2,000--\$2,100, yeah, uh-hm. So it’s a good bit of money involved in it.

Well like a--like a shrimp boat there, like these—the boat that’s pulling like four 50-foot nets—in between the nets and the boat and the cable, everything that they have dragging in the water, they’re looking at about \$15,000 to \$16,000. **[Laughs]** And sometimes they pick up nothing.

[Laughs]

00:18:43

SR: Right, and that doesn’t include the cost of the boat and the fuel and—.

00:18:47

LCT: Yeah, well the fuel is outrageous. It runs around \$3.40 a gallon. It’s very expensive.

00:18:55

SR: You must have some fear that the shrimping industry is just going to go away.

00:19:01

LCT: Well it hurt us when—we slow down our business a little bit when the shrimping industry is bad like it is right now, but we do a lot--a lot of work that—like these nets over there, it’s a guy, he’s got five boats and they pull just to clean the bottom of the Gulf to pick up the debris and all. They tear up a lot of nets so they keep us busy year-round. **[Laughs]**

00:19:26

SR: They must get a damaged net every time they put it in the water.

00:19:32

LCT: Well they—almost every day they did—they tear up something. **[Laughs]** It’s not too many days that go by that they don’t tear any.

00:19:40

SR: Who is paying them to clean up the bottom of the Gulf?

00:19:42

LCT: Wherever they had a location or oil well that they had to remove, the company that had it has to pay them and have to get it removed. If they abandon a well, it has to be—the well has to be pulled out and where it was at they got to go and drag and be sure the bottom is clean.

00:20:02

SR: For how long?

00:20:04

LCT: How long they got to drag?

00:20:05

SR: Until it’s clean?

00:20:07

LCT: Yeah, they--they pull like in different directions and there’s so many square feet you got to pull like they pull like this. [*Gestures*] They go back the other way and then they crisscross and they--they go [in] like all different directions. They got to cover the same territory north and south, east and west and--and they got to pass over it several times before they say it’s clean. And then the company has got to pay whatever they—whatever they break as far as the repair, the company has got to pay for it.

00:20:44

SR: So that’s also a significant source of jobs in this area, I guess, not just for you but for people who operate the boats and—.

00:20:53

LCT: Right, people who work on the boats. I think they are—and they got a five-man crew on these boats who work there, so quite a bit of people, yeah, uh-hm.

00:21:03

SR: And what kind of net do you have to make for them? It must be the most heavy-duty.

00:21:08

LCT: Well we make the regular nets, and then back there they’re repairing what we call a gorilla net, meaning the big heavy webbing like that--that webbing right there. They make that with that heavy stuff, yeah.

00:21:24

SR: Right, that’s really heavy-looking net.

00:21:26

LCT: Uh-hm; they make--they make [inaudible], but sometimes it depends on the company and what the company wants to pay for. They think they got plenty--plenty of trash, well they’re going to make them go with those big nets first and then they got to pass back and go over it with the little net. So they got—they got to do the same thing twice. [*Laughs*]

00:21:49

SR: Are there any other industries that you make nets for outside of shrimping and then the--the trash gatherers?

00:21:56

LCT: Not us. They got other places like on the East Coast and all. They make you know some small nets for like research labs and all that but we never--never got into that.

00:22:11

SR: I was wondering: Could a shrimper order a net from someone who is not local? I don’t know—and save money—or are you and other net shops the only way that they’re going to get that?

00:22:27

LCT: Well they buy most of it in the net shop, and down here years ago there was a lot of them that used to order from Marinovich that used to be in business in Biloxi because they liked his kind of net that he was making, but the man passed away and nobody kept the shop open, so—. Yeah, but mostly all buy it local from wherever they come from. Like people from down here buy it down here. The people like in Dulac or Houma, they all—most of them they do their own work there and make their own nets and all.

00:22:59

SR: Are there a lot of net shops in the area? Do you know how many?

00:23:02

LCT: No, over here, there are only three of them over here. And like I know—like in Houma and Dulac, and Chauvin and all that, it's mostly all the people that work out of their yards you know. Yeah, uh-hm underneath their carport of their house and all that [*Laughs*]. I really don't know of any shop at all over there. You get to all the—mostly people that work out of their--out of their shed or something in there—underneath their carport, and they make--they make their own nets or, uh-hm.

00:23:34

SR: How many people do you employ here?

00:23:36

LCT: Nine. Most of the time we have nine people working, uh-hm.

00:23:41

SR: Is your business seasonal like shrimping is, or do you go all year-round?

00:23:46

LCT: Well we’re more busy during the summer when the shrimp is in. When the shrimp is in he’s working and we keep it more--more occupied—busy. But I mean we stay busy year-round just--just working for him mostly. [*Laughs*]

00:24:02

SR: By “him,” you mean the--the man who does the trash hauling?

00:24:05

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:24:07

SR: Well I’ll say—because I wasn’t recording when this happened—but when I came in we were talking a little bit about how shrimp season started this past Monday and it’s not going very well. But you’re still busy.

00:24:20

LCT: Yeah; because we got those nets that we have to repair. We have about 75, probably 80, nets to repair right now just for him. So anyhow, we don’t have nothing with the shrimpers, we still got enough to keep everybody busy, uh-hm.

00:24:36

SR: I guess it’s good to have that--that side business.

00:24:39

LCT: Yeah, well he has enough nets—. When we have some shrimpers come in, we can put his work aside and repair the shrimpers and get them ready because he--he has over 300 nets, so he’s got a lot of spare nets. **[Laughs]** See what I mean; we don’t refuse any work from other people when they come in for something in a hurry and like that. We always have work for him, all the time. **[Laughs]** Yeah.

00:25:08

SR: It must be kind of—I don’t know, a little bit sad, on weeks like that when your main clientele is realizing that they don’t have an income.

00:25:18

LCT: Uh-hm, well you have a lot of people hurting for a while with the shrimping industry the way it is right now. I really don’t know what’s going to happen with the people that depend just on shrimping. It’s--it’s getting serious.

00:25:34

SR: What is the main problem for them?

00:25:37

LCT: Hmm, I wish I could tell you. [*Laughs*] Nobody knows what’s happening. There’s no shrimp all along the Coast and in the bay and no—all of a sudden they—two or three months ago they were catching shrimp all over. And all of a sudden there’s none. Yet what happened, we just don’t know. We don’t know if it’s because it’s affected from the oil--oil spill we had. Is that related to that or not? Nobody knows yet. They got—it’s just a wait-and-see situation. They got to do some testing and see what they can come up with, you know. But in the meantime you have a lot of people hurting.

00:26:22

SR: And even before that it wasn’t going that well.

00:26:28

LCT: No, because of the price—the price and the expense to go out and catch it, and the price of fuel that they got to pay to go operate that boat. The expense is overriding their quantity of shrimp that they get for the prices—the prices they’re getting for the shrimp. They still—they was still hurting anyhow they had a good bit of shrimp, you know. So we—like I say, we don’t—they’re facing a critical situation.

00:26:59

SR: How did Hurricane Katrina affect your business, if it did?

00:27:04

LCT: Hmm, well I lost the roof of my building. [*Laughs*] That—

00:27:11

TT: Worked in the rain for 20-some days.

00:27:14

LCT: —twenty-some days, yeah. We had to try to find us a little corner when it would rain to get out of the raindrops falling all over the place and all before we was able to put another roof on top. [*Laughs*] We still are roughing it up, but it was bad. [*Laughs*] Yeah, pulled the roof completely off.

00:27:34

SR: But people still needed nets right away.

00:27:36

LCT: Yeah, so that’s why we were working--working in the conditions, and--and hoped it wouldn’t rain too much and find corners that it wouldn’t leak too much. [*Laughs*] We kept going.

00:27:48

SR: So did people start shrimping right away?

00:27:49

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm. Well they took about a month before they could start getting ice and fuel and all. All the ice plants and all was all--all out with electricity and all, but it took—I think it was about a couple months before they got—?

00:28:05

TT: Twenty-eight days before we were—. By the time Leeville and all got their power, it was probably a couple weeks after that before they were fully online. But the hurricanes actually help stir up the shrimp and make it—you know the shrimp come out for some reason when the Gulf is stirred up, and I guess with this hot weather it puts oxygen in the water, and I guess it makes the shrimp move and it does something. It does have its benefits. **[Laughs]** It kicks it up. But the regulations with the TEDs is what really started—the government regulations in an industry where people were regulated by their own local government, Wildlife & Fisheries was—. This industry was always regulated by the Wildlife & Fisheries. Once the Federal government stepped in and started over-regulating this thing with the turtles, that really started putting the crunch on the fishermen to have an extra burden of really—they don’t realize how high of a financial burden these TEDs are for what they’re supposedly doing, and so when you start with one regulation then there’s another regulation and another regulation. And the cost of doing business, well, you know what kind of shape our own Federal government is in because of it, so that tells you the story right there. **[Laughs]**

00:29:37

SR: Can you say for the record what you mean by TED?

00:29:40

LCT: A Turtle Exclusion Device, but before the Federal government stepped in with that the shrimpers on their own initiative made their own devices to exclude unwanted catches because the commercial fisherman cares about where their environment is and the ecology of the area. So if they had an undesired amount of fish, they didn't want to dump all the fish on the deck in the sun and have them die. They made their own fish shoots. And then they had an organism like a jellyfish called a cannonball, which is similar to the Turtle Exclusion Device; it's almost identically the same. That's where they got—the Federal government got the idea to modify what the shrimpers were already using. So it was just a way of the Federal government putting a heavy hand on the fishermen, and I believe that was in retaliation for them blocking the harbors when they were protesting it. **[Laughs]**

00:30:42

SR: I'm sorry if you said, but when did all those regulations start? You said that's when it became—started becoming really tough on the fishermen.

00:30:48

LCT: Yeah, oh, that's 20-something years now that they've been struggling with that. And like I said, if--if the local fishermen can't eat the turtle, he's not going to kill it; he's not going to keep it. He's going to let it go, **[Laughs]** because we only keep what we can eat.

00:31:07

SR: Are the TEDs—is that a net type of device?

00:31:11

LCT: No, it’s a—it’s a grill like that round grill up there. You put that right before your [inaudible], and then you put that with a piece of webbing with an opening in that the turtle can get out, yeah.

00:31:26

SR: Do you make those?

00:31:28

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:31:33

SR: Do you make anything else like that—that’s not just a net?

00:31:37

LCT: No.

00:31:39

TT: The fish--the fish shoots. See, we install fish shoots in the nets. We still install the fish shoots in the nets—in the skimmers and in the trawls.

00:31:49

LCT: Anyhow they have a turtle—they have to have the fish exclusion device too, offshore and on the beach, uh-hm.

00:31:56

SR: What does that look like—similar?

00:31:59

TT: Triangular shaped.

00:32:02

LCT: Do they still have one up front?

00:32:07

SR: I see that; it’s triangular. Hmm. So right now, what are you—what does it entail to prep a net?

00:32:22

LCT: Ma'am?

00:32:24

SR: What does it mean to prep a net? What are you doing exactly?

00:32:27

LCT: I'm starting all the pieces together. Like when they come in, they just continue sewing it down. I just start—I just do a little bit. Yeah, I just start a little bit and— I just start a little bit and then when they come in they--they continue sewing the rest, yeah.

00:32:47

SR: I see. I'll have to get a picture of that. I'll have to get a picture of the fish shoot too. Well that's very interesting. It looks to me like y'all never have a day when your hands aren't busy.

00:32:59

LCT: No, ma'am. **[Laughs]** No, ma'am, every day they come in at 5 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and it's—they only take breaks like they eat breakfast, dinner, and snack in the afternoon at 3 o'clock, and now they're getting ready to take their 3 o'clock break and snack, yeah.

00:33:19

TT: Yeah, it is almost break time.

00:33:20

SR: Y'all come in at 5:00 in the morning?

00:33:21

LCT: Yeah, 5:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday.

00:33:27

SR: And is it always all men?

00:33:29

LCT: How's that?

00:33:30

SR: Are you all men?

00:33:32

TT: Yeah.

00:33:32

LCT: Uh-hm, yeah.

00:33:35

SR: Is it like that in this business everywhere? Is it a man's business, or are there women, too?

00:33:39

TT: Primarily, but they used to have five more net shops than what they got and they were all family-run and all the women used to come and thread needles. His mama used to come and cook and everything, and even when his daddy retired, he filled needles you know. And then you had the grandchildren came in and played with the twine and everybody learned to do it. But in the last 20 years we've lost five major net shops just in this area, since the last 20 years.

00:34:10

SR: Is that because of the problems in the shrimping industry, do you think?

00:34:15

TT: Yeah, oh yeah definitely because of the—the people cut back so much. People repair their own nets, pull nets that you know are in really bad condition, because they can't afford to get nets. And then the fleet of boats that we had down here, they probably had maybe 10 or 15 to every one they got left, so the demand for more shops was there. You had maybe 200 or 300 more boats on the bayou than what they got now easily.

00:34:48

In 1976 I could have walked from Galliano to Leeville just on the boats. [*Laughs*] There were so many tied up in the bayou you could have walked from boat to boat and gone all the way down the bayou. [*Laughs*]

00:35:04

SR: It's a different day.

00:35:05

LCT: You have a lot—

00:35:06

TT: Big difference.

00:35:07

LCT: —a lot less boats right now.

00:35:10

SR: How have you managed to stay in business?

00:35:12

LCT: Because of this: Because of this man with this oil field thing. He started it about 20 years ago doing that, so we started when he started. We started doing his work, so he’s been keeping us for the last 20 years and we’ve been doing a big business with him more and more all the time.

00:35:32

SR: Once again, when--whenever I talk to people there’s this--the sort of intertwining of the oil business and the fishing business. They’re co-dependent.

00:35:42

LCT: Yeah, well this here with the oil fields is here. I mean he started it off with one boat and now he’s got five boats and he’s building another one, so he—like I say, he keeps us more and more busy all the time, more work and all that. We do—we could mostly work just for him all year-round you know.

00:36:05

SR: Do you need me to pause this? Do you need to take a break?

00:36:05

LCT: No, uh-uh.

00:36:09

SR: I just wanted to make sure. You know I’m watching y’all do this and my hands are getting tired.

00:36:15

LCT: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

00:36:23

SR: What are the physical repercussions of this kind of work? Do--do y’all get arthritis?

00:36:31

LCT: How’s that?

00:36:33

SR: Do you have any problems with your hands?

00:36:35

LCT: Never with my hands, no. I had problems years ago and I had ligaments—I had a ligament like that would get in there and it would deaden the hands. I had surgery and then it was all right.

00:36:49

SR: Is that like carpal tunnel?

00:36:51

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm, brought about by doing this work. And--and then after I had surgery about 20 years ago, they're all right now and I never had no more problems. [*Laughs*]

00:37:03

SR: What about your back or your neck?

00:37:05

LCT: I got a bad back. That's why I got to work sitting down all the time. I don't have a good disc in my back. I had four removed and the others ain't very much better. Yeah—

00:37:17

SR: You had four discs removed?

00:37:19

LCT: Yeah, that's why I got--I got to work sitting down. I can't stand--I can't stand up for a long period. [*Laughs*]

00:37:27

SR: Is that from doing this kind of work, that you damaged your back?

00:37:32

LCT: Just over the years and working I guess, uh-hm.

00:37:34

SR: Yeah, it looks very physical to me.

00:37:37

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm, but mostly I'll work sitting down, and it's not as hard on your back you know, uh-hm.

00:37:46

SR: Did you always know that you were going to go in this business when you were coming up?

00:37:50

LCT: Well I was already eight or nine years old. **[Laughs]** So I continued--I continued with my father all the time and then I went into business for myself and—.

00:38:00

SR: Do you have brothers or sisters?

00:38:03

LCT: I have two sisters. One passed away about three months ago.

00:38:08

SR: Oh, I’m sorry.

00:38:10

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:38:10

SR: Were they in the business at all?

00:38:12

LCT: No, uh-uh. Yeah, they just helped Mama around the house. **[Laughs]**

00:38:17

SR: So you were talking earlier about how your mother used to come and cook for you here?

00:38:23

LCT: Yeah, she cooked and she--she'd sew. She--she knew how to sew. Oh yeah, she was—she was pretty good at it.

00:38:31

SR: Who cooks now?

00:38:34

LCT: I got an old man that lives in the back of the street that comes and cooks twice a week, and besides that we got all the stuff at the restaurant. We got an old man that's--that's retired that lives back there. He comes two days a week to cook for us. *[Laughs]*

00:38:48

SR: What kinds of things does he cook?

00:38:50

LCT: Oh all good—all good stuff.

00:38:55

TT: You asked what kind of stuff Maurice cooks?

00:38:59

LCT: All fattening stuff. [*Laughs*]

00:39:02

SR: What did he cook for you this week?

00:39:04

LCT: Well, chicken spaghetti.

00:39:07

SR: Chicken spaghetti.

00:39:08

LCT: It was very good. [*Laughs*]

00:39:11

SR: That’s great. And so [*Phone Rings*]—oh, do you have to get that? I’ll pause this. No?

Okay. Chicken spaghetti. And how long has he been doing that?

00:39:24

LCT: Well he’s been cooking for years. [*Laughs*] He has--he has been retired for over 20 years--20 years, and he cooked for all kinds of organizations. He’s always cooking something. Like

tomorrow he’s going to cook a big gumbo for the—the television station is making it for a fundraiser for cerebral palsy. So he’s going to cook them a big gumbo and all for all the people that’s working there at the station and all that. He--he always donates his time to different organizations for to have something he likes. He loves to cook. *[Laughs]*

00:40:05

SR: But I’m guessing that he doesn’t donate his time to cook for you?

00:40:08

LCT: He’s got an 80-quart--80-quart pot that he cooks in that feeds maybe 300-400 people.

[Laughs]

00:40:17

SR: What does he cook that—what does he put that on?

00:40:21

LCT: He got the regular--regular burners.

00:40:23

TT: Outdoor cooking burners.

00:40:25

SR: Oh outdoor cooking burners, yeah. Wow. What is his name? Can you tell me?

00:40:30

LCT: Maurice Bouzigard.

00:40:32

SR: Oh I’m going to have to get the spelling of that later. Well I like the—

00:40:40

TT: You can't take my cook. [*Laughs*]

00:40:42

SR: I’m sorry, I didn't hear that.

00:40:44

TT: I said you can't take my cook.

00:40:46

SR: Oh, I can't take your cook. Don’t worry. [*Laughs*] Sounds good though.

00:40:52

LCT: Oh yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:40:53

SR: I like the emphasis on having good food at work. It keeps people here, huh?

00:40:57

LCT: Yeah, that’s it. Oh it’s much better than ordering out when he cooks something. *[Laughs]*

00:41:03

SR: What kinds of things would your mother cook?

00:41:05

LCT: Mother liked—most likely gumbo, fricassee, and—yeah.

00:41:12

SR: Do you have a kitchen in here? Can--can he cook in here or does he bring it from his house?

00:41:16

LCT: Right where that little car is at over there, that’s our little kitchen and he cooks in it, yeah.

00:41:22

SR: Great. Is this—was this the original location of the net shop?

00:41:28

LCT: No, this here was a supermarket. It was built back in 1949, a supermarket, and then they went out of business and then we bought the building from them. Uh-hm, we had a net shop on the bayou side and it had burned and all, and got damaged with the hurricanes and all. And we got to a point where we can't—gave up continuing patching it up, and then we bought this building and moved over here.

00:41:56

SR: Oh, which hurricane?

00:41:58

LCT: I think it was Betsy, I think. Yeah, uh-hm.

00:42:04

SR: And when you say “we,” do you mean your father?

00:42:06

LCT: Yeah, well—well, when we had bought the shop on the bayou side it was my father. And it was me and Perez, we were in partnership at the time. And then we broke partnership in 1980, uh-hm.

00:42:17

SR: You and who?

00:42:20

LCT: Henry Perez. We were--we were in business in 1966 together and then we broke the partnership and he retired and I kept on going. *[Laughs]*

00:42:34

SR: And so are you the only owner here now?

00:42:36

LCT: Yeah, I own it.

00:42:37

SR: Do you have any children?

00:42:40

LCT: I got--I have six and my wife had four, so we got ten altogether. *[Laughs]* Yeah.

00:42:48

SR: That's quite a family.

00:42:49

LCT: Oh yeah.

00:42:51

SR: Do any of them work here?

00:42:52

LCT: Yeah, that’s my stepson there sitting over there eating in the green shirt. That’s my wife’s son there. Yeah, uh-hm.

00:42:59

SR: So he works here?

00:43:00

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm. The other--the other two boys, they--they work in the—one is working in Grand Isle Shipyard and the other one is working at Superior Shipyard. And they wanted to just have an office job. [*Laughs*]

00:43:16

SR: Okay.

00:43:18

LCT: Yeah, the son of her—one is a welder and one is a barber, and the one that just left a little while ago, he cleans the sewage system tanks and all that. [*Laughs*] Yeah, they all--they’re all scattered doing different things.

00:43:32

SR: Have you all lived in one house together at one time?

00:43:34

LCT: No. [*Laughs*] No, not really.

00:43:40

SR: That would be pretty intense. I’m looking at this net over here, the sort of—the darker one that has like some gold in it.

00:43:47

LCT: We call that a sapphire webbing.

00:43:49

SR: Sapphire webbing?

00:43:51

LCT: Different kind of plastic webbing.

00:43:53

SR: What is that for?

00:43:55

LCT: To make shrimp nets, yeah.

00:43:57

SR: Yeah, okay. Just it’s very—it’s different looking.

00:44:00

LCT: Yeah, the color. They make them—they also make different colors now. Yeah, uh-hm.

00:44:07

SR: When you were growing up, was that the case or were they all one color?

00:44:09

LCT: They were mostly only one color at that time. Yeah, uh-hm.

00:44:13

SR: Which was what?

00:44:16

LCT: Which was mostly you know white webbing—nylon or the plastic webbing was black.

Now they make it all different colors now, uh-hm, different companies, uh-hm, yeah.

00:44:28

SR: Let me look at my notes here and see what I wanted to ask you about. I guess--I guess you've kind of answered this: How the business has changed since--since you were coming up. I mean it sounds like a lot of people have had to go out of business.

00:44:48

LCT: Well like I said, like he was telling you, down here they had boats all along this bayou. And then most times the guys, they got older, the younger ones didn't get into it and they just sold them and boats were in different places. A lot of them sunk, burned, and whatever. But you had--you had maybe 40--50 just big boats down here, and now you don't hardly have maybe a handful now. It changed a lot, uh-hm.

00:45:17

SR: Do you see room for a next generation to be in this business?

00:45:23

LCT: Well that's what's bad about it. The young ones don't want to do this kind of work. It's not enough money involved into it. It's going to get—it's going to get to a point where they're going—if they can't do it themselves they're going to have a hard time getting somebody to do it because there's not too many young ones that want to work in this. Uh-hm, yeah.

00:45:42

SR: What do you say to that? Do you understand or do you think that they're missing--missing out on something?

00:45:47

LCT: No, they got—they got to take advantage of making the other stuff where they can go make a lot more money. And--and I work hard because this is hard work doing that. You know, and they can go get other work that pays a lot better doing it. Yeah, that's what they get involved in.

00:46:08

SR: What do you like most about this work?

00:46:11

LCT: Well it's all I done all my life. I didn't do too much other--other stuff, so it's all I know what to do. [*Laughs*]

00:46:21

SR: I mean to me it looks like a lot of hard work, but it also looks kind of fun.

00:46:26

LCT: Right.

00:46:26

SR: To hang out here with people all day. *[Laughs]*

00:46:29

LCT: It’s a challenge, and--and we’re always inside, and well if it’s cold we’ll put the heater on and if it’s hot in here—and if it’s hot out there we will put the air-conditioner, so we’re always working in comfort, yeah. *[Laughs]* Sit down and listen to the music and work all day. That’s it.

00:46:46

SR: What is the—what’s the most difficult part? Is it the--the financial, or is it keeping up, or the physical? What’s the most challenging part of this kind of work?

00:46:58

LCT: The physical, I would say, yeah. It’s just a challenge to see what you--you know what you can do and how much work you can put out you know—what you can get repaired and done during the day. That’s it.

00:47:11

SR: One thing I wanted to ask was: How do you know whose net is whose?

00:47:18

LCT: Just by working over the years we know *[Laughs]*. Different customers, different stuff, and when they get there we have plenty different ones that we’re working on and then we’ll put a--a little tag with that name on it. *[Laughs]*

00:47:29

SR: Okay, well that makes sense. But I haven't seen any tags. I mean there are lots of nets outside balled up and I don't see—

00:47:38

LCT: They're all for the same guy so we don't worry. *[Laughs]* Yeah.

00:47:42

SR: But you do sometimes label them?

00:47:43

LCT: Yeah, different people, yeah. We put them in the warehouse and, as I said, they repair, and put a tag on them when they have a bunch for a different person, yeah.

00:47:56

SR: Oh okay, so you have a warehouse?

00:47:57

LCT: Yeah, oh yeah, beyond this wall is the--the big warehouse there.

00:48:00

SR: Oh okay.

00:48:01

LCT: Yeah, it’s 30-feet by 100-feet long on the other side of that [*Laughs*].

00:48:08

TT: It’s full of nets. [*Laughs*]

00:48:09

SR: Pardon me?

00:48:09

TT: It’s full of nets. [*Laughs*]

00:48:13

SR: Wow, that’s interesting. Let me see: Do you have a boat? I think I remember from when I was here last time that that boat [across the street] is yours.

00:48:23

LCT: Yeah, right in front, the Mr. Chine.

00:48:27

SR: Do you use that?

00:48:28

LCT: Well I got another man that runs it. I never--I never been on it. I bought that and never been shrimping on it. **[Laughs]** I never even rode in the bayou on it. Three years I have it, and I'll go on in once in a while right here at the dock, but I never been on it to go anywhere on it.

[Laughs]

00:48:48

SR: Seems like you deserve at least a little tour of the bayou.

00:48:51

LCT: Yeah, but he's been saying he wanted me to go a couple days shrimping with him and I've never been out there yet. **[Laughs]**

00:48:58

SR: Okay, so somebody else runs it and shrimps?

00:49:01

LCT: Yeah, uh-hm. Yeah, he--he came in yesterday and wanted to make the opening [of shrimp season], but he didn't have too much and his father is bad. He's in pretty bad shape right now. He's in the hospital, so that's why he's taking care of his father right now. I told him not to worry about the boat. **[Laughs]** His father has cancer and he--he's just on his last days. He's just suffering; that's it. He called this morning and I told him not--not to worry about the boat and stay with his father.

00:49:35

SR: Well that’s nice. Why--why did you buy a boat, just as extra income or—?

00:49:39

LCT: Yeah, just an investment. I had a smaller one before, a 30-foot, and then I sold that one and then I got that one. [*Laughs*]

00:49:50

SR: Has anyone in your family ever been in the shrimping business?

00:49:55

LCT: No. My father, at one time he had a little boat also and he would do part-time shrimping, and yeah, but nobody else in the family done it.

00:50:06

SR: Did you grow up in Golden Meadow?

00:50:08

LCT: Yes, ma'am, always lived in Golden Meadow, uh-hm.

00:50:14

SR: What is--what’s the most difficult net to make?

00:50:18

LCT: What’s that?

00:50:18

SR: What is the most difficult net to make?

00:50:21

LCT: Those big heavy--those big heavy nets that they’re working on back there. That’s hard—
heavy and hard to handle.

00:50:27

SR: The gorilla nets?

00:50:28

LCT: Yeah.

00:50:33

SR: Oh, I wanted to ask you: So you mentioned balloon nets earlier, and mongoose.

00:50:40

LCT: Mongoose nets, yeah.

00:50:40

SR: What--what’s a balloon net?

00:50:45

LCT: Just made like these here. These are little balloon nets, different—it’s made on different patterns, yeah.

00:50:52

SR: Well I’m not going to keep you very much longer because you’ve had to stop working to talk to me. I guess—

00:51:02

[Men in the background]: He won't work anyway.

00:51:00

SR: *[Laughs]* He won't work anyway? He looks like he’s been working.

00:51:04

LCT: *[Laughs]*

00:51:06

[Men in the background]: The easy jobs.

00:51:07

SR: When--when you get new employees—have you trained employees, or do people know what they’re doing when they walk in the door?

00:51:14

LCT: Mostly it’s about a day, they pick it up. Like him [speaking about Thomas], he picked it up when he was working on the shrimp boats and all, and a lot of them do their own work on their boats and all. They show people and learn from different places. Like him, over there, sitting over there, him and his brother, they--they learned with their father.

00:51:39

SR: The--the younger guys?

00:51:40

LCT: Yeah, they learned with their father, and he—but he didn’t have enough work for them so they came and worked for me over here. Yeah, uh-huh, uh-hm.

00:51:49

SR: All right, well I don’t want to take up too much of your time, so thank you, and I hope you don’t mind if I--I take some photos.

00:51:58

LCT: No, go ahead. You can walk back there and take a picture of the big nets and all right there where we dip and all and walk around.

00:52:06

SR: Thank you for sharing your story.

00:52:08

LCT: All right, baby.

00:52:11

[End Lawrence “Chine” Terrebonne’s Interview]