

**THE CENTER FOR ORAL HISTORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**  
**of**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

**Recording Log**

**Interviewee:** Al Sunseri, Sal Sunseri, Blake Sunseri, co-owners of P&J Oyster Company

**Interviewers:** Stephanie Scull-DeArmey, Linda VanZandt

**Date of recording:** November 1, 2011 and November 8, 2011

**Recording format/notes:** Recorded digitally in 9 digital tracks at P&J Oyster Company in New Orleans, Louisiana

**Recording length:** 2 hours, 54 minutes

**Location:** P&J Oyster Company in New Orleans, Louisiana

**Subjects/Topics:** P&J Oyster Company, New Orleans, harvesting oysters, processing oysters, oyster rakes/tongs, oyster spawning, storage of oysters, shucking of oysters, discarded oyster shells, oyster spat, *Crassostrea virginica*, Louisiana's public oyster grounds, sustainability of oyster farming, seeding oyster reefs, late-nineteenth century oyster studies/records, leasing of water bottoms, coastal restoration/preservation, Mississippi River, wetlands, Mississippi Sound, Native American Indians, oyster reefs, New Orleans' chefs/restaurants, BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster, coastal erosion, closing of oyster reefs, Hurricane Katrina, National Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), Oil Pollution Act, Louisiana State Oyster Hatchery, sediment diversions/placement, freshwater diversion into Mississippi Sound to keep oil out of marsh, P&J's Old New Orleans Seafood House in San Diego, California, colonial Americans discovery of oysters, shortage of harvestable oysters/seed oysters in oyster season 2011, testing Gulf seafood, cultch plants, private oyster farms, regulations, Hurricane Rita, loss of oyster crop in Golden Meadow, Louisiana after BP oil disaster, Gulf Coast Claims Facility, Louisiana's estuaries, marketing oysters, New Orleans Oyster Festival, Lake Ponchartrain Basin Foundation, building marshland

**Transcriber's note:** This interview was conducted in P&J Oyster Company in the French Quarter of New Orleans, Louisiana. From time to time throughout the interview the noise from the city's streets can be heard in the background, including sirens and traffic.

<b>Time/ Counter</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>Track 1 of 3, dated 11-1-11 (20 minutes)</b>	
0:01:49.7	Learning to harvest oysters
0:02:18.5	Opening day of oyster season in Louisiana
0:03:40.3	P&J Oyster Company processing facility

0:04:32.6	Noise of siren in street
0:04:59.9	Oyster rake, tongs, gathering oysters
0:07:27.1	Oyster spawning
0:08:38.4	Refrigeration of oysters
0:09:39.8 0:11:21.9	Shucking oysters
0:12:56.6	Discarded oyster shells
0:16:27.4	Oyster spat
0:16:46.7	Oyster <i>Crassostrea virginica</i> , oyster spawning
0:17:53.3	Public oyster grounds of Louisiana
0:19:40.6	Sustainability of oyster farming in Louisiana
<b>Track 2 of 3, dated 11- 1-11 (1 hr, 16 minutes)</b>	
0:00:42.5	Parishes leased water bottoms for seeding oysters, oyster reefs, starting in 1870s
0:01:43.6	Study of oysters completed in 1898
0:02:22.8	Legacy of valued sustainability made Louisiana number one oyster fishery in US
0:02:58.4	Study of oysters completed in 1898
0:03:58.4	Louisiana oystermen first coastal restoration preservationists
0:04:31.1	Manual work required of first oyster harvesters
0:06:07.3	Louisiana's oyster culture
0:07:12.5	Mississippi River, wetlands, bounty of marine life in marshes and Mississippi Sound
0:08:32.3	Native American Indians, oysters and oyster shells

0:09:32.7	Depths of water of oyster reefs
0:11:07.0	Ideal oyster salinity
0:11:52.7	Regional flavors of oysters
0:13:53.4	New Orleans Chef's Collaborative meetings, restaurants, chefs
0:15:32.3	Raw oysters
0:18:10.3	Effect of BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster on P&J Oyster Company
0:18:25.8	Growing up at P&J Oyster Company, typical day
0:23:09.6	Processing oysters in packing room
0:26:33.2	Oyster show-and-tell at children's schools
0:27:57.0	Employees of P&J Oyster Company, Vietnamese ladies
0:29:43.1	Oyster hammers
0:30:28.8	Siren on city street
0:31:02.0	Camaraderie of staff
0:32:17.0	Oyster shucking, rough on hands
0:33:11.8	Immigrant's business
0:35:05.9	Meaning of seafood-processing business to family
0:35:56.3	BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
0:36:42.2	Siren
0:39:34.2	Meaning of seafood-processing business to Blake Sunseri
0:40:30.1	BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster, thoughts on learning of spill
0:41:22.8	Dealings with oil and gas business, coastal erosion
0:43:40.1	Closing of Louisiana's oyster reefs

0:43:57.5	Environmental disaster with long-term effects
0:44:12.3	Negative impact on Louisiana oysters' life cycles
0:45:46.5	Oysters fail to set after BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
0:46:32.9	Hurricane Katrina, 2005
0:47:12.6	Future of the Gulf oyster business
0:47:53.7	National Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), Oil Pollution Act
0:49:00.5	Plans to develop Louisiana State Oyster Hatchery
0:51:40.2	Federal government's obligation to Louisiana coastal restoration, sustainable coastal environment
0:54:37.4	Sediment diversions, sediment placement
0:57:04.3	Oil-and-gas and navigation political will
0:58:20.6	Oystermen are environmentalists
1:01:03.9	Oil-and-gas interests should be good to the environment
1:02:45.76	Importance of Louisiana Gulf Coast
1:03:22.0	Hurricane Katrina
1:05:32.2	Using freshwater to keep oil out of marsh
1:06:25.7	BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
1:08:18.5	Hurricane Katrina
1:12:32.6	P&J shucks their last oyster, 6-10-10, after oil disaster; media blitz
1:14:24.4	Coping after the BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
1:15:25.7	Hurricane Katrina
1:16:25.6	Decrease in oyster population forces cutback in staff

<b>Track 3 of 3, dated 11-1-11 (18 minutes)</b>	
0:00:14.3	Sal Sunseri's first experience with oysters
0:01:27.7	Sal delivers oyster to Lafayette restaurants to help with college costs
0:03:54.8	P&J's Old New Orleans Seafood House, San Diego
0:10:08.8	P&J's educational outreach to schoolchildren
0:13:43.6	Changes in prices of oysters
0:14:02.6	Colonials discover oysters
0:15:35.9	Hurricane Katrina
0:16:09.8	Rising fuel costs
0:16:54.9	Shrimp prices, imported shrimp
0:18:03.1	Steam canneries for oysters
<b>Track 1 of 6, dated 1-8-11 (2 minutes)</b>	
0:00:36.2	One week into 2012 oyster season following BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster, shortage of harvestable oysters and seed oysters
<b>Track 2 of 6, dated 1-8-11 (49 minutes)</b>	
0:00:58.7	Borgne, new seafood restaurant of John Besh and Brian Landry
0:01:27.1	Testing the safety of Gulf seafood
0:02:05.7	Cultch plant
0:03:42.2	Oyster spat

0:04:49.9	Public oyster beds, private oyster farms
0:06:30.9	Sustainability of oyster harvesting
0:06:53.2	Regulations
0:08:01.2	History of P&J Oyster Company, Mr. John Popich, Mr. Joe Jurisich, Mr. Alfred Sunseri
0:13:52.9	P&J Oyster Company's relationships with local New Orleans restaurants, other vendors
0:15:26.2	Father becomes sole owner of P&J Oyster Company
0:19:31.3	P&J Oyster Company's relationships with other oyster farmers
0:22:20.5	Al Sunseri's thoughts about P&J Oyster Company
0:23:44.6	Hurricane Katrina
0:33:33.4	Mold in dwellings after Hurricane Katrina
0:35:15.6	P&J Oyster Company following Hurricane Katrina
0:37:18.5	Insurance issues
0:38:07.0	Oystermen lost homes but some had boats after Katrina
0:38:51.7	October 23, 2005, New Orleans' water cleared for safety, oyster season reopened
0:40:03.5	New Orleans' restaurants after Hurricane Katrina
0:45:15.1	Prices for oysters after Hurricane Katrina
0:46:37.0	Hurricanes' effects on oyster reefs
0:47:36.3	Louisiana's oyster areas affected by Hurricane Katrina and BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
<b>Track 3 of 6, dated 11-8-11 (6 minutes)</b>	
0:00:45.2	Hurricane Rita, 2005

0:01:35.5	Federal monies to help restore oyster reefs
0:02:53.4	Crop of oysters in Golden Meadow, Louisiana, devastated by BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
0:06:25.9	BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
<b>Track 4 of 6, dated 11-8-11 (18 minutes)</b>	
0:00:40.7	Gulf Coast Claims Facility, BP, claims process
0:03:02.3	Scarcity of young oysters setting on oyster reefs after spawning, circa 2011
0:03:39.5	Freshwater diversion from spillway good for oysters, other fisheries
0:04:59.9	Health of Louisiana's estuaries
0:06:05.2	Sustainability issues
0:07:21.1	Oil Pollution Act fines, NRDA
0:09:19.3	Oysters as canary-in-coal-mine for fisheries
0:11:51.5	P&J Oyster Company built by hardworking families
0:14:31.6	Effects of hurricane season on customers, clients of P&J Oyster Company
0:15:36.4	Prices of oysters after BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster
<b>Track 5 of 6, dated 1-8-11 (26 minutes)</b>	
0:00:31.5	Marketing oysters from P&J Oyster Company
0:04:56.2	New Orleans Oyster Festival
0:08:31.1	Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, coastal restoration, building marshland
0:11:06.8	Oil and gas industry can work with the seafood industry
0:11:39.2	Regulations

0:15:33.9	Family
0:18:28.5	Father, grandfather
<b>Track 6 of 6, dated 1-8-11 (4 minutes)</b>	
0:00:23.0	Changes in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina