

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Catherine Campanella

COLLECTION: 4700.2354

IDENTIFICATION: Lifelong resident of St. Pontchartrain area, author of *Metairie (Images of America: Louisiana)* (2007)

INTERVIEWER: Dalton Cambre

SERIES: Louisiana Sea Grant Coastal Change Oral History Project

INTERVIEW DATE: January 18th, 2013

FOCUS DATES: 1930s, 1970s, 1990s, 1998

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4279

Campanella says her family had a camp off Lake Pontchartrain that survived the hurricane of 1998 [Hurricane George]; one of six camps that survived; in 1998 she and family could see the water was coming higher; camps were built on top of the water on pilings; saw firsthand the lake rise; her camp made it to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but after that all of the camps were gone; Campanella thinks that there has been a lot of political propaganda but now people are starting to do something; in Louisiana we need to restore our coast; the impact of "Save Our Coast [a campaign instituted by Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation]" has been tremendous; she grew up on a lake; sometime on the 1970s the lake was off-limits, polluted; weren't supposed to swim in it but always did; off-limits until they stopped shell-dredging in the 1990s; before that, for years barges and boats would scoop shells out of the lake; stirred up the sediment; within a year after they started doing that they saw the lake clear up a lot; salt content never came as high as it used to be; not sure why; Campanella says "Save Our Lake" did a tremendous job with the shell dredging; Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation is moving on to help restore the coast; went out a few weeks ago to West End Lighthouse which will re-open in a matter of weeks; Campanella doesn't know what she can say to people who won't face facts of climate change; Campanella says from a historic aspect New Orleans would not have been settled if not for Bayou St. John, which connected the city to Lake Pontchartrain; there was an important port at Bayou St. John which was at Lake Pontchartrain and the bayou; the light house years later; the importance of the bayou was the access from the city to the bayou, through the lake and out the Rigolets which allowed for transport and trade; when she was a teenager they used to call Lake Pontchartrain the Old Beach, Pontchartrain Beach, which was a big amusement park out in the University of New Orleans area; originally Pontchartrain Beach was at Spanish Fort and the lake, and so they called that the Old Beach; the place where she would hang out, party, and meet friends; prior to the Robert E. Lee land 'reclamation,' in the 1930s, which was actually building from scratch, they would pump sand out of the lake bottom and pile it up and form land about a half mile from the

shore; prior to that, very swampy and prone to flooding; sea wall helped protect city itself from flooding; Cambre thanks Campanella for her participation in the LSU Sea Grant oral histories project and she thanks him in return; end of interview.

TAPES: 1 (T4279)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 8 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 2 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Video clip of partial interview.

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