

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

**ABSTRACT**

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** Dr. Kenneth Klaus

**COLLECTION:** 4700.2371

**IDENTIFICATION:** Nicholls State University music professor, author of musical reference book, *Chamber Music for Soul and Voice Instruments*

**INTERVIEWER:** Jessie LeBouef

**SERIES:** Louisiana Sea Grant Coastal Change Oral Histories Project

**INTERVIEW DATE:** December 21, 2012

**FOCUS DATES:** 1865, 1992, 2001, 2012

**ABSTRACT:**

**Tape 4296**

Full name is Kenneth Shelton Klaus, born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952; currently lives in Thibodaux and moved there in 1984; Baton Rouge is probably double or triple the size it was when Klaus was a little boy; Baton Rouge has always been a lovely city; lots of trees, lots of friendly people, but it has truly become a melting pot because of LSU; Southern University also attracts people from all over the world, plus all the industry also brings in engineers from all parts of the Earth; in Baton Rouge there are accents from everywhere; Klaus says the winters in Baton Rouge don't get as cold as they used to; in 1962 it got down to eight degrees; people were ice skating on the University and City Park lakes; it's warmer in the summer too; Klaus' father has a boat and they would go fishing on Grand Isle; that is when Klaus first began to notice coastal erosion; people's camps that were at one time on dry land actually had surf coming up around them; those are completely gone now, and that would have been during the 1960's; so the beaches have receded greatly since even then; There's a lot more water around Golden Meadow and Leeville than there was when he was a kid; it's called a Golden Meadow because that's what it used looked like; now it's way more open water than it used to be; alligators were really rare when Klaus was growing up, now they are one of the greatest success stories on the endangered species list; more alligators than people; the bald eagle and other birds of prey have also done a great job of bouncing back from being almost eradicated; On the erosion of the hurricanes, it's probably a slower effect than a quick effect, but the hurricanes disrupt life; describes his experience in Hurricane Andrew in 1992; he feels sorry for people whose houses are flood in hurricanes because flood can absolutely ruin your house; a lot of the houses in New Orleans had to strip everything except the bare frame or tear the whole thing down, to make sure they eradicated all the mold that quickly set in because of the humidity; the water just stays; maybe now that there was a big hurricane on the Eastern Coast those people will have a better understanding of what happens in Louisiana; whatever Mother Nature's going to do, it's going to win; we have just, over time, made it easier for mother nature to keep chopping off chunks of Louisiana, but Louisiana's not the only place in the country that's

suffering from coastal erosion; the delta of the Atchafalaya River is one of the few places in the country that land is actually being built, and if we didn't have what's called "the old river" and control structure under Baton Rouge, the Mississippi would be going down the Atchafalaya River and there would not be any more Morgan city; Baton Rouge and New Orleans would be basically dry; the estuaries are the most important parts of Louisiana to preserve as far as habitat of crustaceans and baby fish; this is where these species spend their adolescence so once the estuaries disappear, so will the seafood; Louisiana shellfish is really important to the whole country; talks about how music evolves and how events shape it; Klaus discusses where he was at the time of 9/11; Klaus' father was a music professor at Louisiana State University, so the music was always in his home; his mom taught him piano, his dad taught him violin; he did high school and youth group choir; the idea that education should be run as a business is crock; Nicholls University has been able to maintain a great quality of learning despite budget cuts; some teachers have left because they can't stand teaching in a state with so little support for education; Klaus has written a musical reference book called *Chamber Music for Soul and Voice and Instruments* that was published in 1994; has sung professionally in many different places such as the New Orleans Opera, Mississippi Opera, Baton Rouge Symphony, Jefferson Performing Arts Society in Metairie; his students have performed at Carnegie Hall in 2005, 2007, and 2009; to Klaus, home is where his family is; lived in Mississippi for five years; spends several minutes discussing the differences between Mississippi and Louisiana; south Louisiana and north Louisiana are very different culturally, and Mississippi is like north Louisiana; talks about racism where he taught school in Mississippi; one head master of a school wanted the African American children in Klaus' choir to stay on the bus while the rest of the choir sang; Music sits down in the soul of everyone; music reflects the time of the composer or writer; Louisiana probably has the strongest culture and music in the country; jazz music started in New Orleans because after the Civil War there were a lot of band instruments left over from the marching and drumming on the battlefield; that's one of the roots of jazz; music has been a part of every human culture on the planet for millennia in all different aspects of society and human rituals; Klaus talks about changes in New Orleans due to desegregation and racism; many young people moving in and fixing up old buildings now; public school situation in New Orleans improved tremendously after Hurricane Katrina as well; Klaus' three words to sum up Louisiana are: historic, friendly, and diverse; Klaus loves Louisiana, but sometimes gets disappointed in the things that go on there, especially involving politicians that do not have others' best interests in mind; it's all about money: whoever spends the most gets their way.

**TAPES:** 1 (T4296)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 56 minutes

**# PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 27 pages

**OTHER MATERIALS:** Original music composition by interviewer; Interviewer essay

**RESTRICTIONS:** None