

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Alvin Lee Bertrand

COLLECTION: 4700.0524

IDENTIFICATION: LSU graduate, 1940 B.S. and 1948 Ph.D.; Boyd Professor of Sociology / Rural Sociology

INTERVIEWER: Everett Besch

SERIES: University History – Distinguished Faculty & Administrators

INTERVIEW DATES: March 22, 1995; November 1, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1918 - 1995

ABSTRACT:

Tape 758

Bertrand named for Alvin York and Robert E. Lee; Acadian history of Bertrand family; Bertrand born in Elton, Louisiana; Claude Pepper; New Llano Colony; Lafayette; family lived in Cajun cabin; mosquitoes; summer weather; water pump; Bertrand's parents; rice fields; DeQuincy; schools in Elton; Codofil; discipline in schools; French language; Spanish ancestry; cattle; parents' education; Roosevelt's social programs; pine stumps, digging up; Calcasieu Parish; barns built of pine; Bertrand graduated from high school in DeQuincy; Cajun culture; Louisiana Purchase; Devil's Pocket; food; World War II; oil industry; offshore workers; origin of term "coon-ass"; Oklahoma; Southwestern Louisiana Institute; Townsend program; W.P.A.; Howard Hanchey; horse and buggy; whooping cough; Cajun folk tales; boucherie; Mardi Gras; Catholic background; family wound up Baptist; Jewish neighbors; revival meetings; singing conventions; songs; high school athletics; community movie houses; advent of television; coffee.

Tape 804

Life in DeQuincy; coffee; Elton; boucherie; rancherie; Piney woods; cattle; lumber companies; brands; sheep; folkways; Mardi Gras; bousiller; Seaman Knapp of Iowa; Knapp Hall; prairie French; Opelousas Atakapas; study: "The Many Louisianas"; Cajun bilingualism; caricatures of Cajun speech; Codofil; Southwestern; Calcasieu Parish; agriculture; Kinder; Bertrand worked to get rid of Cajun accent; graduates college at LSU in 1940, majoring in agricultural economics; earns Masters in rural sociology at Kentucky in 1941; Bertrand returns to LSU; Tony Mumphrey; Bertrand enlists in Air Force in 1942; Harling Field; flight school; Midland, Texas; radar; atomic bomb; Okinawa; Fort Dix; returns to LSU after service; decisions about graduate school; Thomas Lynn Smith; Fred Frey; Jesse Bankston; LSU makes a deal with Bertrand in order to keep him; works on Ph.D. at LSU; health research; experiment station publications; works for USDA in Washington; stays on

LSU faculty after finishing Ph.D.; Boyd professorship; Nate Caffey; Grover Murray; Doyle Chambers; Bertrand named Boyd professor in early 1970s; almost left for Tulane; difference between sociology and rural sociology; land grant; Chancellor Taylor; American Sociological Association; Bertrand's pride in his students' successes; elder hostel; fishing with Fred Frey; teaching.

Tape 981

Bertrand's age; types of French, Prairie, Gumbo and patois; the loss of the sociological aspect of the small farm culture; agricultural mores, Bertrand's female graduate students, US Department of Agriculture levels of living studies; recollections regarding the beginnings of LSU, layout of LSU in 1936; how Bertrand came to be at LSU; father losing the family farm due to rain destroyed rice crop; moving to the Piney Woods area of Louisiana; Federal program to eradicate ticks that caused Texas Fever from open range animals; the far reaching impact of the loss of rural lifeways; folkways, codes and mores; study of deliberate fires set in the timberlands in the sixties for the Federal government; Tom Hansbrough's [his graduate student] dissertation on forest fires in Louisiana; studying farm accidents involving toxic chemicals for the National Safety Council; impact of mechanization on rural life in Louisiana; lists great mentors that he knew at LSU; T. Lynn Smith [past head of LSU Sociology department national leader in rural sociology]; views of Sociology department during his time at LSU.

Tape 982

The general layout of the campus in 1936 including streets and location of popular places such as the Cotton Club; strategies Bertrand used to survive on low income; the layout and creation of the LSU lakes; making a donation to buy the first LSU mascot, the French House; the power and influence of college deans during Bertrand's time at LSU; the building of roads in the thirties; the founding of the Campus Federal Credit Union by Dr. Roscoe Seville former head of the Agricultural Economics department; the College of Agriculture during the thirties and forties; Bertrand's relationship with J. Norman Efferson former professor in the LSU Agricultural Economics department and later dean of the College of Agriculture; available recreation for students during the late thirties; fraternity dances; building the stadium.

Tape 983

Major F. C. Frey and his involvement with sociology at LSU; the development of rural sociology at LSU; T. Lynn Smith and F. C. Frey starting the first journal of rural sociology in the United States; Bertrand working for both the College of Arts and Sciences and the experimental research station; Bertrand's international work as a rural sociologist; working for the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations; organizing and planning the International Sociological Society's 1975 meeting held at LSU; Bertrand's dissertation research on why people did not immediately see a dentist for dental problems; research on the role of practical nurses which led to licensing procedures; study on unmet health care needs; study of health components including food habits in Louisiana and midwifery; changes that Bertrand saw in his long association with LSU; memories of Fred Fry; impressions of Max Goodrich former professor of physics and dean of the graduate school.

TAPES: 5 (T758, T804, T981, T982, T983)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 7 hours, 30 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 242 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None