

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

**ABSTRACT**

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** Harold Adams and Louise Adams      **COLLECTION:** 4700.2352

**IDENTIFICATION:** Golden Meadow, Louisiana, native and resident [b. 1946?]; alumnus of Golden Meadow School; Alumnus of Nicholls University; retired educator [teacher, assistant principal, principal]; practicing Catholic

**INTERVIEWER:** Melissa Smith

**SERIES:** Bayou Lafourche Oral History

**INTERVIEW DATE:** October 9, 2010

**FOCUS DATES:** 1950s [childhood] 1960s [education and courtship]; 1968-2001 [career]

**ABSTRACT:**

**Tape 3951**

Interview conducted for the Coastal Sustainability Studio at LSU; Harold had no vacations when he was younger; Louise jokes that he had to marry to her to afford vacations; she worked one year [after college], saving money, before getting married; she was paid \$333/month [as a teacher], lived at home, saved about \$1500 in the year; Harold says that when Louise was pregnant with Celeste [oldest child], she had to take a year off [required maternity leave]; when Louise went back to work family had \$42 in bank; they were not living extravagantly but had to pay for a baby and notes on a [small] house; Harold and Louise dated for four years, “off and on,” got married in 1969; Louise was living in dorms at Nicholls, while Harold, who commuted on a bus, “wasn’t there to keep an eye on her”; Harold recalls that when he gave Louise an engagement ring her mother cried because she thought Louise was too young to get married [he was twenty-three, she twenty-two]; it’s been a good life, married forty-one years, have been through “good, bad, and ugly”; Harold discusses his career as a principal; he started out attending Golden Meadow School [then the elementary and high on one campus] when he was six and went for twelve years, left for four [Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana], came back and stayed; spent twenty-four years away from that place in sixty-four years [spent forty years at school, as student, teacher, assistant principal or principal]; was principal 16.5 years, fortune, enjoyed it thoroughly; saw a lot of changes in education, “some good, some bad, some just for the sake of change”; when Harold finished at Nicholls, his main goal was to teach at Golden Meadow, always wanted to come back [was offered, but didn’t accept, job in Grand Isle]; school became a junior high in 1966; took opportunity to get a master’s degree in guidance and psychology at Nicholls but had no intention of being a principal [didn’t want to get into administration at all]; started getting hours in administration to get certification “just in case”; principal at time was Harold’s science teacher; when he left the assistant principal asked Harold

to be new assistant principal; a year later the new principal got promotion to superintendent's staff and Harold took over as principal; spent 6.5 years as supervisor with federal programs; thoroughly enjoyed 33 years he had in education but it was time to get out; not that didn't enjoy job, but [things were] changing so drastically; wasn't ready and didn't want to go through rigor of having to implement [policy] changes; he and wife did math of [retirement] budget; Harold is enjoying retirement very much; Harold discusses changes in education over time; every time Louisiana gets a new governor or superintendent of education [elected position until 1987, now appointed] a different philosophy would arrive, and [leader] would make changes; he believes education has a difficult time doing something for a long period of time; for instance, during Clinton administration there were education policies and philosophy, then Bush II came in with No Child Left Behind [Act, 2001], which included a lot of teacher and student accountability; LEAP [Louisiana Education Assessment Program, 1986] came in, now the state is getting away from LEAP, coming up with another form of accountability; Harold believes the lack of consistency hurts the system; as principal he hated to leave school; things going to middle school concept [from junior high model]; Harold believes it was not bad but a big, "drastic" change and he didn't want to do it [lead transition]; Harold applied for a position with federal programs and got it; Harold discusses change in attitude of parents [never had a problem with a kid but "boy have I had problems with parents"]; Harold could handle and talk to kids, "get on their level and work things out"; but Harold doesn't have control of home life and philosophy of parents; when he was growing up he was taught to respect authority [teachers, police officers, clergy]; generation when he left [education] and [current generation] have been reared to question authority; suspicious that administrators used influence, cheated, took kickbacks, etc.; the [cynicism] "was getting best of me"; Harold still loves the kids, intention is to help kids; he has to discipline poor choices on kids' part; discusses relationship with parents of students and concept of "it takes a village"; Harold observes parents find ways to defend their child; he hates painting people with a broad brush, but he's observed that parents want their kids to grow up too fast; want them to be young adults in athletics, beauty pageants; parents will treat kids like "next coming of Michael Jordan" at young age; "drives me nuts," so Harold doesn't go to things [sporting events] anymore; Harold is very protective of grandkids, but when you're wrong, you're wrong; gives example of disciplining his son after he and friend mooned the cheerleaders; growing up in Golden Meadow; trust in neighborhood ["because we knew them"]; today similar neighborhoods don't have trust because you don't know neighbors; growing up, if Harold came home and said "I made a new friend" parents knew that's such-and-such's son; "that's [more trust because they knew each other] the biggest difference"; Harold would get up in morning, go to friend's house and start doing something at eight AM; take a break for lunch, nap, and then take off to play again [until dark]; Harold thinks it's because of communication now; his family didn't have TV until he was ten; all the negatives probably happened back then but they weren't publicized "so we didn't know about it"; [interviewer talks about her experience a generation later, having to check in all the time with her mom]; Harold stayed within eight to ten blocks of home; just let [mom] know where he was, no cell phones; Harold believes that's a problem too: computers in [kids'] pockets "can be very bad"; today we have better methods but communicate less, especially family; Harold believes texting is "crazy"; son says he needs to text; Harold has no use for texting, he prefers talking; kids didn't get cell phones until they were one their own, but granddaughter might have different experience because he spoils her ["poppa's not here to tell her no"]; Harold raised his children Catholic; today daughter is strong in her faith; son

attends church on a regular basis but isn't as knowledgeable; family policy was to go to Mass together; Harold tells story about son Andre telling priest his favorite part of Mass is the last line in service, "go in peace" [laughs]; son [always] spoke his mind and saw nothing wrong with it; Celeste would sit and listen, never a problem at Mass; Andre was more trouble, several times Harold had to walk out of church to discipline him; "child-like" [not childish]; Harold doesn't think son will ever grow up, just loves life; "the kind of person that will give you an ulcer but will never get one, he's very laid back"; son can get your blood pressure "sky high"; never on time [now he blames his kids]; Harold wouldn't have it any other way; now son is assistant principal at school; Harold and Louise's kids went to public school; didn't feel need for private [can get as good an education in public school in the area]; Harold is thankful to wife that kids' religious upbringing was strong enough [that they didn't need parochial school]; Harold says "Louise did a great job" [Louise replies "the verdict is still out"]; [interviewer has 3.5 year old]; Harold says, "Only fruits and vegetables can be spoiled. All you can do with kids is love them"; that's his grandkid [not children] philosophy; mostly Cajun people living here; minority population is Houma Indians; when he grew up there were no Hispanics, no African Americans, no Vietnamese, "totally different"; [Louise reminds Harold of Humble (Oil) camps]; Harold explains that when oil was first discovered, outsiders [mostly from Oklahoma and Texas] came in because Louisianans knew nothing about oil; newcomers were very much disliked, "Cajun people did not like the foreigners"; in Grand Isle, Humble Oil had a housing ["Humble Camps"]; kids came to Golden Meadow High School a couple of busloads]; influx [of immigrants] came after airlift in South Vietnam, Catholic organizations helped [with relocations] and fishing industry meant a lot of [Vietnamese] showed up; Hispanics came recently with "labor problems we've had"; Harold saw none of that growing up; Harold lived 500 feet away [from bayou]; had one car in family [Louise and Harold now have three cars between the two of them]; father won family's first bicycle in a raffle; either you went with daddy or you walked; in half a mile had five neighborhood groceries [mom and pop stores, owners worked]; walked to store to run errands for mom; where he lived only two hundred feet away was family-owned grocery; Louise points out that none of them were open on Sunday [If you didn't get it on Saturday, "too bad, too sad"]; Harold explains Golden Meadow's name; when first individuals came to area it was fields of goldenrods; on way to Lafayette you'll see fields covered in goldenrod; [interview comments on proximity to bayou]; Harold notes they don't have as many boats [on bayou as before], now there is office space or restaurants on water side; there were mom-and-pop grocery stores, service stations, clothing stores but Walmart, CVS, and chain stores put small places out of business; remembers Two Sisters' Clothing Store and it being mobbed before school started ["you couldn't get within two hundred feet because everyone and his brother was there to get school clothes"]; once they opened Walmart everyone went there [better prices]; community lost part of our hominess [it's a nationwide issue]; a few still prosperous [local] service stations; one dealership [down from three]; interviewer observed relics to Virgin Mary, homes close together, on drive down; Harold explains a lot of that is family-owned property, people would build on open space in family's plot; now it's harder [spots have been filled], Golden Meadow has an older population because there's not a lot of property available; more available in north part of parish so young people build there; for example Harold's lot isn't big enough for another house; his house is on father's cousin's property; Hurricane Juan [1985, category I] Adams had thirteen inches of water; broke old levee [new levee is "outstanding"]; storm just kept going up and down coastline; breached weak spot on levee; Harold mowed lawn, hour later had two inches of water

in lawn, kept rising; October 29 flood, October 30 is Louisa's birthday; Adamses went to her parent's house in Larose; Harold says new levee system is much better, but *Lafourche Gazette* is reporting levee has been decertified by Army Corps of Engineers [but Golden Meadow levees survived Katrina while Army Corps levees didn't]; local levees didn't follow all the Corps rules [they made improvements without waiting for Corps approval]; in long term will cost more for insurance; FEMA five-year reprieve/ waiver for now, but when waiver expires, his house would have had to be built five feet off the ground; [interviewer talks about damage to her family's house]; trusting levees will eventually come back to bite us; thirteen to fifteen foot levees; some storm surges are twenty, twenty-five feet high; used to have barrier islands but they are all gone; marshes are disappearing; levees are breaking up storms rather than barrier islands; Louise says that below Golden Meadow corporation limits houses are built up and high tide would get water in the yards; Harold describes levee system to Larose, ring levee that goes eighteen miles [around] both sides, along intracoastal canal; "we're in a bowl"; Louise mentions house is just outside Golden Meadow corporate limits and that it would be good to visit the [Golden Meadow?] Historical Society [attached to library] because they have great photos; Golden Meadow has lots of barrooms; couldn't get through town [three miles in length] if you stopped at each bar for a beer [because you'd be drunk]; Harold recalls that during childhood doctors made house calls; Harold's family didn't have phone but went to neighbor's house to call doctor [there were three doctors in town]; with thirty minutes doctor would be at house with little black bag; gave shots or medication, collect fee and leave; \$5 was a lot; no such thing as insurance, medical costs was not the same as today; in 1971 Harold went to hospital with cerebral aneurysm; intensive care was \$100/day; [prices] have skyrocketed; interviewer asks what does home mean to Harold; he replies "everything"; Louise says husband would not move; if ever there was a hurricane; she has family property in Cottonport, Louisiana in [near Marksville and Alexandria]; he never would go; Louise grew up in Larose, family had grocery there; Louise says she feels an allegiance to church in Larose, but not to Larose itself; Harold feels tied to school, church, and town; Harold treats structural concerns at school as if it was his house; secretary lives on next street [similar ties to school]; [shows interviewer picture of the two brothers; Harold was the bigger one then, water cistern and grandparent's house in background]; houses face toward bayou; Louise points out that highway ran parallel to bayou; people came by car or boat; boats could dock; across bayou is not incorporated but they still call it Golden Meadow; Harold says it was not unusual to go to grandmother's house, five miles further south, a few times a week; Sunday mornings after church men went to uncle's house, sat on porch and talked; kids played in yard until dinner; today people don't see families except for holiday; would have chicken or roast on Sunday; red beans and rice on Monday [wash day], lots of water so it wouldn't burn while you do washing; remembers [mom?] washing with washboard; Louise remembers that after Betsy there was no electricity for several weeks, so grandma sent her mom a washboard; Harold says [paternal grandfather] was commercial fisherman, father was commercial fisherman, and dad and uncle owned boat, which they sold and dad started working at Summerscale [?]; father stayed almost forty years; pay was "maybe" fifty cents/hour; Louise went to school in Larose; remembers when 308 bridge was broken janitor would push/pull [manually operated barge] kids across bayou [where a bus on the other side] would pick them up; Harold thinks people take bridges for granted; when only one is operational it "becomes nightmare" to drive; motor parts break [in bridge] and it might be three months to repair; [Louise takes interviewer to other room to show school memorabilia, she likes old things]; Louise collects antiques, perfume bottles,

cookie jars; shows root beer picture; Harold's confirmation card; pictures of the couple when they first started dating; Louise shows photo of them as a young couple [her senior year, as the Future Homemakers of America Rose, Adams was a freshman in college]; Louise tells story about getting gown for Christmas; shows preserved dresses; pictures of son and daughter, town, different family members; Harold looking at picture of momma, "she was tough like that...the whole time that she disciplined us we knew she loved us. Boy did she love me a lot."

**TAPES:** 1 (T3951)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour, 5 minutes

**# PAGES INDEX:** 6 pages

**OTHER MATERIALS:** Interviewer questionnaire

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

**NOTE:** See collections 4700.2103 and 4700.2351 for additional materials and related content