

Statement of Clarence R. Duplessis

Commercial Fisherman

Davant, Louisiana

United States House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

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Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on Energy and Commerce for allowing me to tell you how this tragic oil spill has affected me and my family. The worst part of this tragedy for me is the unknown.

A brief note about myself. I was born in a small fishing community named Davant, just north of Pointe-a-la-Hache, La, in 1945. My family settled in Plaquemines Parish six generations before me. After high school I joined the United States Marine Corps and served a tour of duty in Vietnam. While in the military I met my wife who was in the Navy. After the military I worked here in Chalmette for Kaiser Aluminum. I was laid off in 1989 after the plant was closed. After that I went in to full time commercial fishing.

In 2005 my wife and I lost everything we owned in Hurricane Katrina. Then, just a few weeks ago we were faced with the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. This one was the worst of all these stressful and economic tragedies.

Now, before the critics hang their heads and whisper, "NO WAY." I will explain. During my tour in Vietnam I was faced with an enemy that wanted to kill me. This was a problem with a solution. Kill them first, survive for 13 months and the problem was solved.

When Kaiser Aluminum shut down I had a young family to feed, clothe, and educate. This also was a problem with a solution. I was still young and had experience with shrimping and oystering. I had salt water in my veins at birth. I went fishing and my children paid their college tuition by working as deckhands.

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit us with a crippling blow. WOW! A major problem! Even then, though the entire region was wiped out and the insurance companies packed their bags and left us; there was still a solution. And just in case there is anyone who has not yet noticed, the fishing communities and people of South Louisiana are some of the hardest working, defiant yet kindest people on God's earth. After the storm we faced the difficult task of rebuilding, but that *was* the solution.

Now, five years later we are facing the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. This is the worst of our problems because we have no answers, no solutions, only questions.

As we watch our livelihood and even an entire culture being washed away by crude oil and chemicals that no one knows the long term effects of we ask; will we have the mortgage payment next month? Will we be able to go to bed tonight instead of falling asleep in front of the TV hoping for some good news? What if they don't stop the leak? How long will this last? Will I be able to go oystering next year or ever again? How long will it take the fisheries to recover? Will BP ever come around with the much needed money they promised. Will BP do what is right or will they pack their bags and leave us like the insurance companies did? What can I do to survive? What if we get a tropical storm or hurricane in the Gulf? How can I get a loan when the SBA still holds the mortgage on my property from Katrina? I have a thousand questions and no answers.

Now, I hope you can understand why this problem is the worst of my life!

I thank you for your time. May God Bless You all.