Freeport's Man-Made Island
The Cover:

Staff photographer G. E. Arnold had a high old time taking pictures of Freeport Sulphur Company's new offshore mine, Caminada. Arnold demonstrated his usual affinity for out-of-the-way places, first by climbing halfway up a drilling-rig derrick, then by romping like a mountain goat around the roof of the power plant, and finally by leaning (suitably seat-belted) out the open door of a helicopter in mid-flight. The pictures on the cover show six views of Caminada; "Freeport's Man-Made Island," beginning on Page 7, has more pictures and many details about this offshore venture.

Sax Appeal:

This jumbo saxophone was originally put in a London music shop's window just as a conversation piece. But lately, almost as much breath has been expended playing it as has been talking about it.

Made especially for the shop, the contrabass sax stands 6'3" and weighs over 50 pounds. It's believed to be the largest sax in England, if not the world. The shop owner says although he bought it for display, he often rents it out to novelty acts.

The sax is worth about $1,000—but it's not for sale.

DIXIE, July 14, 1968
Freeport's Man-Made Island

By Betsy Petersen

Caminada, Freeport's second offshore mine, is 55 miles south of New Orleans.

A sulphur mine is decidedly a man's world—but Caminada, Freeport Sulphur Company's new offshore mine, shows surprising accents of gracious living.

Perhaps the most surprising is a ladies' restroom, put there by an understanding management for the benefit of ladies who visit the mine occasionally. Other gracious touches, however, including curtains at the bedroom windows, stereophonic record player (with a library of Acadian records) in the living room, and fine food in the dining room, exist strictly for the benefit of the 150-old men who live and work on this man-made island.

Caminada, which began production last March, stands six miles off the Louisiana coast, about 55 miles due south of New Orleans. It is one of two offshore sulphur mines in the world—Freeport's Grand Isle mine, seven miles away and eight years older, was the first.

One arrives at Caminada from the air, by helicopter from Freeport's Grand Isle base. (The company maintains two cop ters for transportation between the two mines and the base.) The mine, five platforms joined by wood and steel ramps, stands smack in the middle of nowhere, in a sea dotted with oil rigs as far as the eye can see.

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Once down the steel stairs from the heliport, however, the sense of being nowhere disappears. The wooden street is as wide as one in the city, and leads in either direction toward big, solid-looking buildings. Men in hard hats ride by on a little electric "scooter" on their way to or from the drilling platforms, power plant or maintenance shed.

Down the road a piece are twin buildings which make up the camp: offices, bedrooms, dining room and kitchen, two recreation rooms. In one recreation room, men play pool at two tables while others read or listen to music. The room is air-conditioned, and the only reminder of the activity going on outside is a row of hard hats hung along the wall.

It takes surprisingly few men to operate the mine: no more than 50 or 60 are actually at work at any one time. The men work five days out of 10, commuting by helicopter to Grand Isle base and from there by car to homes as far away as Baytown, Tex., near Houston.

Says Morgan Mickleberry Jr., general superintendent in charge of both Caminada and Grand Isle mines, "When you are off five days, you can pretty comfortably choose where you want to live."

During their five days on, the men work 12-hour shifts, changing at six in the morning and six in the evening. Mining, maintenance and power production go on continuously, with giant lights—the kind you find on football fields—illuminating the platforms at night. Foghorns keep ships away in gloomy weather.

Working offshore offers, in addition to other fringe benefits, some of the best fishing around. "The nice thing about it," says Mickleberry, "is we can look down and see if the fish are there. (The whole mine stands on steel stilts about 80 feet above the water.) "If we don't see them, we don't go fishing."

Caminada was built in the twinkling of an eye, by offshore construction standards—only 10 months, half the time it took to erect Grand Isle mine in 1958-60. Prefabricated components were barged to the site and assembled with two floating derrick barges; one barge converted to a stiff-legged derrick to raise the two drilling platforms, maintenance shed and power plant deck into position on their high-rise pilings. The buildings which house the miners' home away from home were raised into place complete with furniture (and each weighed 182 tons, quite a bit more than the cyclone-borne house that carried Dorothy from Kansas to Oz).

The 7,000-ton steel island was built to endure the assault of the elements. Its legs, sunk 200 feet into the floor of the Gulf, have cathodic protection underwater and a tough hide of inorganic silicate and epoxy above.

Drilling rig derricks on the production platforms can be telescoped, then laid flat in case of a hurricane, and the entire mine was designed to withstand
winds of more than 180 mph and waves of over 38 feet.

"If you want to see a scramble, you ought to see us when a hurricane's coming," says Mickleberry, who supervised shutdown procedures at Grand Isle mine when Hurricane Betsy was on the way. "A hurricane, in fact, is about the only thing that stops the show at either offshore mine. Equipment is made fast and all personnel are taken ashore while the going is good.

Otherwise, in fair weather or foul, it's business as usual. On the two production platforms, drilling and maintenance crews go about their business. Down on the lower deck of one platform, in an air-conditioned shack, oilmen await the welcome mats in front of each door. Machines pick up where the drilling crews leave off, and work at it around the clock. This is the relay station, where two men supervise controls for monitoring and operating all wells on both platforms. Dials and graphs indicate air and water pressure, and a system of lights and alarms signals changes in the status quo. "The wells don't all act the same way," Mickleberry explains. "They require constant monitoring."

This little shack represents a tremendous advance in sulphur mining. Says a Freeport executive: "I remember when you had to go out with a wrench and turn a valve to make adjustments." Now it's all done by remote control from the relay station.

Sulphur wells are drilled in much the same way as oil wells, even to the use of drilling mud manufactured for the petroleum industry to lubricate and cool the drills. The Frasch process is used to extract the brimstone: Water heated under pressure to 325 degrees is pumped down the well into the sulphur-bearing limestone deposit; the hot water melts the sulphur, which is then shot full of air so that it rises to the surface of the well.

Most of the sulphur thus mined never again reaches a solid state. A nine-mile insulated pipeline carries the molten sulphur from Caminada to Grand Isle base, where it is combined with sulphur from Grand Isle mine (also piped to the base) and loaded, still molten, into insulated barges to be towed to Freeport's Port Sulphur depot. Almost all of it is stored, shipped and used—mostly in fertilizer manufacture—as a liquid.

The Frasch process is most efficient way of mining sulphur underground; it is the only way of mining it from swampy ground (as at Freeport's Grande Ecaille, Garden Island Bay and Lake Peelo mines) and from deposits underwater. Offshore mining was also made possible by an additional process, developed and patented by Freeport, which allows the use of salt water in the Frasch process. The heart of any sulphur mine is its power plant, where water is heated for use in mining, and power is generated to operate the mining machinery. Caminada's power plant, like its relay station, represents the covert last word in sulphur mining. Two boilers capable of heating five million gallons of water a day (enough to serve a city the size of Lafayette) are operated by four men stationed at the control panel of a computer. Like the relay station, the power plant console has been enclosed, soundproofed and air-conditioned, and, for lagniappe, equipped with a hot plate for making coffee.

Natural gas used as fuel in the power plant is piped in from nearby wells. One big burner in each of the boilers, seen through a glass window, looks like a colossal whirling eye, an apocalyptic vision at 3,500 degrees.

The courageous can take an elevator to the roof of the three-story power plant, and there look around at the mine. Look around and let the mind boggle: If you weren't seeing it with your own eyes, you'd be tempted to say, "There's no such thing as Caminada."
Glee Club Director Henri W. Wehrmann, his wife (center of photo) pose with Tulane, Guatemalan gridders.

Ambassadors Of Song

By Ida D. Jeffries

In June, 1924, Tulane University's Glee Club—36 strong—spent two weeks in Guatemala City, experiencing what might well have been the university's first official cultural exchange with another country.

Harry S. Kaufman Jr., one of the Orleanians on that trip, "I believe that it was the very first time such a large group of Tulane students represented their school in a foreign country."

Accompanied by Director Henri W. Wehrmann and his wife, the glee club visited the tiny Central American republic at the invitation of the Guatemalan government which viewed the visit as a means of fostering better relations between the people of New Orleans and Guatemala.

From the moment the troupe disembarked from the United Fruit Company's steamer Coppenrath at Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, on June 18, the hospitality was royal. "If the Prince of Wales visited Guatemala, he could not have been more warmly welcomed," was Henri Wehrmann's description of his group's reception.

"After landing on the Guatemalan coast, we took an all-day train ride to Guatemala City," relates Rene Gelpi, a local architect who harbors fond memories of the trip. After a reception at the railroad station by Guatemalan officials, the students hied to the Palace Hotel, their quarters during the memorable fortnight.

"We ate most of our meals at the hotel, which had a splendid dining room," continues Gelpi, who, at the time of this trip, had just completed his freshman year at Tulane's School of Architecture.

The choirs dined elegantly, and were entertained nightly at balls and parties given in their honor. They also had their fill of the inevitable sight-seeing. In return, the choirs gave concerts, visted Guatemalan institutions of learning and even staged sports exhibitions.

These exhibition sports became vivid memories of Kaufman, for example, who recalls "getting spiked during a baseball game."

"We played basketball, football and some tennis too," relates Gerald L. Andrus, another Orleanian on the trip. Elias Henican, one of Tulane's best all-round athletes, was with the group. Despite his presence, the Tulanians lost all but one encounter—a tennis match.

"We played that 16-0 football game with the Latin Americans using towels for padding or using no shoulder pads at all!" relates Andrus, now president of a utilities holding company.

For their pluck and as balm for their many bruises, the singers were awarded two huge silver loving cups. Although the Tulanians weren't able to show the Guatemalans athletic prowess, they exhibited an overwhelming amount of college spirit, during an audience with Gen. Ingeniero Jose Orellana, President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Before leaving the presidential palace, the students made the building's walls resound with the strains of the Tulane college song and Tulane cheers. Orellana was deeply impressed by this show of spirit, which he hoped could be introduced into his country's schools.

The Greenie singers also impressed the Guatemalan head of state by singing his republic's national hymn in Spanish. "The song was such a success," says Kaufman, "we played and sang it at our concerts." He adds, "We all learned it phrase by phrase, phonetically."

Wehrmann revitalized the glee club in 1923 and gave it added style by including an orchestra; says Kaufman, who's vice-president of an insurance brokers' firm. Actually, the musical director solicited talent within the glee club.

"Fortunately, we had enough members who played an instrument to work up a sizable band," says Gelpi. One of its specialties was a medley of jazz selections. Says Kaufman, "These were a big hit to Guatemalan audiences. A few persons there had heard one or two poor jazz recordings—most had only heard about jazz."

When this trip took place, Henri Wehrmann had only been at the helm of the Tulane Glee Club for three years. He remained at the university until 1934, then taught violin and chamber music at Louisiana State University. Years before his death in 1956, at the age of 65, his reputation had already been sealed as one of New Orleans' best loved musicians, composers, arrangers and musical researchers.

It was under Wehrmann's direction that the Tulane Glee Club blossomed as one of the university's best entertainers.