

Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage

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Home of Marvin Carver Cortez, Florida
Oral History Vanishing Culture Project

Funded in part by the Florida Humanities Council

Interviewers: Mr. Mike Jepsen/Mr. Wayne Nield

I 1: Marvin, we try to start these interviews just by asking you to state your full name.

R: Marvin Vinson Carver.

I 1: What was your date of birth?

R: June 10, 1909.

I 1: And where were you born?

R: I was born in North Florida but we moved south from up there. I was still a baby when we moved down to Wauchula.

I 1: In Wauchula?

R: Yes.

I 1: You are married?

R: Oh, yes.

I 1: And your wife's name is?

R: Oprah Theresa Carver.

I 1: And what was her maiden name?

R: Drymond. Oprah Drymond.

I 1: What was your father's name?

R: Vinson Joseph I think it was. He died just shortly after we moved over here.

I 1: And your mother's name?

R: Savannah Neal.

I 1: Was that her maiden name?

R: Maiden name, yeah.

I 1: I see. And do you have any brothers and sisters.

R: Not living.

I 1: But what were their names?

R: I had a brother Irvin and one Albert and a sister Idella.

I 1: Do you have any children?

R: Yeah.

I 1: And what are their names?

R: Let's see, the oldest is Helen. She's married now to Richard Little and one is dead and my youngest one is Tessie. Well, Theresa is her name. We call her Tessie. Her and her husband run the State Farm out here on Cortez Road.

I 1: You said your parents moved here. In what year did they move here?

R: To Cortez?

I 1: First from North Florida?

R: I don't remember.

I 1: When did they move to Cortez?

R: In 1922.

I 1: How old were you then?

R: I was either 12 or 13 at that time.

I 1: What was your father's occupation?

R: Farmer.

I 1: What did he do when he moved to Cortez?

R: Well, he died shortly after. He had a stroke. Well, he had the third stroke at least.

I 1: Do you know why he moved to Cortez?

R: He got disabled and couldn't do any work or anything. His last job was night watchman at the Wauchula Mill. That big Mill they had there. He died shortly after we moved over here.

I 1: So, it was just your mother and you and your brothers and sisters that lived here?

R: Yes.

I 1: Where did you live in Cortez? What was the first house that you lived in?

R: Around there where Paul Taylor's living now. His daddy owned it at that time. We was rentin' it from him.

I 1: What can you tell me about that house? Is it as it is today, or was it any smaller?

R: Well, it's bigger now than it was. It's been turned around completely and everything. At that time it had a porch on the south side and across the front. They don't have any porch at all now. It's all closed in. All of it.

I 1: How many rooms did it have?

R: I think it had four rooms in it then.

I 1: What did your mother do? Did she have any outside employment?

R: Oh, she would take in washing and do whatever she could you know, for a long time.

I 1: That was to support the family?

R: Yeah.

I 1: Did you as children, did you do anything to help add to the family's income?

R: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Let's see when we moved here in '22 I think and in '23 and '24 I worked out at Palma Sola Park. I helped build all that seawall out there and then filled it in. Worked on the dredge fillin' it in.

I 1: Who was it that you worked for?

R: I don't remember the name of the company now.

I 1: Did you fish early on when you came to Cortez?

R: Not really, no.

I 1: When did you start fishing?

R: I don't remember the year. Well, my dad died and mother was sick and my sister was a young baby. I had to quit school and go to work. I think that was '23 or '24 I had to go to work. Somebody had to make the livin'.

I 1: Was that your first job then, working on the seawall?

R: Yeah.

I 1: And it was some time after that that you started fishing?

R: Oh, yeah. Quite awhile after that.

I 1: Can you give me your impressions of Cortez when you first came? What was it like then?

R: Well, it hasn't changed a whole lot. We got a trailer park there that wasn't there when we first moved here. And a few more houses I guess. But other than that, it hasn't changed too much.

I 1: What was the waterfront like in those days?

R: Oh, a lot different then. You'd go down on low tide and the tide was way out low and the fiddler's just by the millions all along. You could walk around and around and they'd come in and pile up in the middle like. One guy got a chance to sell 'em for bait. From up north somewhere and he cleaned the fiddler situation out.

I 1: He did?

R: Very few anymore.

I 1: What fish houses were down there on the waterfront when you first came?

R: None. They'd pick the fish up in a run boat and carry them to St. Petersburg and Sarasota.

I 1: They would?

R: There wasn't any fish houses here.

I 2: Where did the run boat land?

R: Well, let's see. One landed at a dock where the old Albion Inn used to be. One landed there. And I don't remember where the other one landed at.

I 2: Do you remember what the run boat looked like?

R: One named Rebecca Alvin I think it was. That carried to St. Petersburg and I forget the name of the one that carried fish to Sarasota.

I 2: Was the Rebecca steam powered?

R: No. Right after we moved here all of our groceries and everything came by steamer. Only thing we went to town for was the mail. No, the mail was brought out here from town.

I 1: Do you remember the steamers landing here?

R: Yeah. I helped unload 'em sometimes.

I 2: Down at the Albion Inn?

R: Yeah. Of course, that's all been changed since then. I mean, tore down and rebuilt and everything.

I 2: Were those steamers driven by a paddle wheel or a prop?

R: Well, let's see. One named Jessie B. Allen was a prop and there was one called Manatee had a paddle wheel on the side.

I 2: A side wheel?

R: A side wheel, yeah.

I 2: And you remember seeing that thing?

R: Oh, yeah.

I 1: What would you unload? What was the cargo?

R: Groceries and everything to eat. Bananas and groceries and stuff.

I 1: Did they bring supplies for the fishermen, as far as nets,

gear and that type?

R: No. Back then you had to order your nets and stuff and they would mail 'em to ya.

I 1: And there were no fish houses, but there were probably net camps out in the harbor then?

R: Well, all the net camps that was over the water, that '21 storm tore them up.

I 1: Did they rebuild them then?

R: A few, very few of 'em rebuilt on the water.

I 2: Did you work on any of those? I believe you told me one time you used to build nets spreads, didn't you?

R: Oh, yeah. We had net spreads in them times. Because in them times you know, because they was old cotton nets, they were called rotten when you buy 'em almost. We spent more time mendin' the net than we did fishin' back then.

I 2: When you went to build a net spread, could you tell us something about what you needed, what kind of materials and how you'd go about doing it?

R: Well, ya need 2 x 4s and wide planks for walk planks. And we work the piling down. We got in the woods and cut the piling and bring 'em back and work 'em down by hand.

I 1: Was there a particular wood that you liked to use for the piling?

R: Well, nothing in particular no. We'd get pine most of the time.

I 1: And the wood that you'd use for the spreads?

R: 2 x 4s and walk planks about 10 or 12 inches wide, ya know. Cause you had to walk down and spread our nets every day or most every day then. We had to use line, all kinda stuff to keep 'em from rottin' out.

I 2: How far apart would the cross poles be for the spreads?

R: Ya mean length ways?

I 2: Length ways and the distance between ...

R: According to how deep your nets was, see is how wide. And They'd be about 8 feet wide with walks down each side of the net spread. But you don't have any here now at all.

I 1: Would the net spreads then have to be built according to the type of nets each fisherman was using?

R: Oh, no. Not by the type of net, no. According to the depth of it or something like that is all.

I 1: So, they varied some in the way they were built?

R: The piling was stuck down in the ground ya know. We had to carry lime at least two or three times a week. If ya caught a fish load in 'em you'd have to lime that good to kill that fish lime so it wouldn't rot so fast. And we had to dry 'em every day too to mend 'em and everything. We spent more time mendin' net than we did fishin'.

I 2: Did you work on any of the net camps?

R: Oh, yeah. Not the building itself, just the net spreads. They didn't have many camps over the water after I moved here because that '21 storm had tore them all down and they never rebuilt them much.

I 1: When you first started fishing, who did you fish with?

R: I think the first one I fished with was named Julius Moorhead at that time.

I 1: And what type of fishing did you do?

R: Gill nettin'. Mullet fishin'.

I 1: You didn't do any stop netting?

R: Well, yeah. We had some stop netting. They finally outlawed that. Almost had a war over it one time when they outlawed stop-nettin'. Some of the gill netters didn't like stop-netters, almost had a war one time about it.

I 1: Could you tell us a little bit about that? What happened?

R: Well, it was against the law to stop-net, what they used to call stop-nettin'. Real stop-nettin' used a lot of _____ at that time. They'd take a lot of _____ at high tide and then take in just enough deep water that when the tide went out all the fish would have to go in that deep water. Then we'd haul them

out with a haul net or seine. Then pick our nets up at high tide when the tide got in so the water was deep enough.

I 1: But there were fishermen that were against the stop netting.

R: Yeah.

I 1: What did they actually do against the stop-netters?

R: Well, it finally just played out mostly. Bell Fish Company I think has got some stop nets now. But they hardly ever use 'em any more.

I 2: That house where Dutch lives, somebody told me that there had been an incident of dynamite in there.

R: Yeah. That was one of the ones that was trying to cut out the stop-nettin' and stuff. He'd take a warden around and try to catch ya. And one time we started carrying guns in the boat. But the put the beef in him. Must have been a case of dynamite under that house. I wasn't here at the time. But it blowed him right up to the ceiling. He disappeared the next day and nobody's seen him here since.

I 1: So you said that several fishermen started carrying guns on their boats because it was becoming very tense. A very tense issue here.

R: Yep.

I 1: Was it hard for your mother to raise the kids here by herself?

R: Yeah. It was kinda hard on her, yeah.

I 1: And basically she was taking in laundry and that to support the family?

R: Yeah.

I 1: She'd also take in boarders?

R: Some, yeah.

I 1: Where would they stay?

R: If we had room they'd sleep in the house. But she didn't take in many boarders cause they wouldn't pay her most of the time. Some of 'em died owing her.

I 1: Who would the boarders be? Would they be fishermen?

R: Fishermen, yeah.

I 1: Would they eat with you? At the table?

R: Yeah.

I 1: So your mother was preparing meals for them and the family too?

R: Yeah.

I 1: Did you have a garden or did you have any livestock?

R: We used to have a garden most of the time. Every year we'd have a small garden or somethin'.

I 1: Who would tend the garden then?

R: My mother and me.

I 1: What would you raise?

R: Just ya might say collard greens, mustard and turnips and stuff like that. It didn't take much gardening to raise enough to eat with all the fish and all. Of course, then we didn't have these freezers and stuff to keep it in.

I 1: Did you have any livestock around the house?

R: No.

I 1: Chickens or anything like that?

R: Well, my mother would have chickens once in awhile. But not too long.

I 1: In those days you didn't have any indoor plumbing did you?

R: No. It was all outside.

I 1: How would you get your water?

R: Well, when it didn't rain enough everybody had what ya'd call a rainwater tank on the outside of the house on a platform, ya know? It'd hold around 1,000 and some of 'em 2,000 gallons and stuff like that. And that's the way we got out water. Of course, ya can't get no surface water here except real deep wells. At that time we didn't have any floorin' wells at all.

Joe Guthrie, at the Albion Inn, was the first one to have a well dug here. And there was one at the schoolhouse out here too.

I 1: So, did you have an outhouse?

R: Yeah. Everybody had outhouses. No indoor plumbing at all at that time here.

I 1: Where would you take your baths?

R: In the wash tub.

I 1: So, you'd probably heat water on the stove? What kind of a cooking stove did you have at that time?

R: Old kerosene stove. A few people had some wood-burnin' stoves. Not many though. Then when it didn't rain, when it'd quit rainin' long enough, your rain water would run out. There was one couple here had a horse and wagon and they'd go out east of here and they called it a spring but it was just a hole they dug in the ground. They'd bring water up in barrels. So we didn't waste much water at that time. See, you can't use this surface water here now in Cortez. It's no good.

I 1: Would they charge people for water then when they brought it back?

R: Oh, yeah. Charge ya for bringin' it. 50 cents a barrel or somethin' like that. It'd be about half empty when they got here.

I 1: What was the fishing like when you first started?

R: Not a lot of difference than it is now. They had a lot better nets and stuff now than they did then. See the nets they have now ya don't need to lime 'em or anything. You just leave 'em right in your boat. Only thing that bothers 'em is the sun. Keep 'em covered up from the sun and they'll last ya.

I 2: Did anybody here in Cortez make nets or did you buy the netting?

R: You had to buy it.

I 2: Where would they buy it?

R: In Tampa.

I 1: And you said they mailed it down to them.

R: Yeah.

I 1: What type of fish did you fish for?

R: Mullet mostly. Mullet and trout mostly.

I 1: And where would you sell them?

R: Like I say, I wasn't fishin' much when the run boats was runnin' from here. I hadn't started fishin' much then. Cause I worked a long time out there ya know? I hadn't started fishin' till way later.

I 1: About what year was it that you really got into fishing?

R: About 1926 I believe it was. '25 or '26. I had to quit school.

I 1: Were you going to school down here at the old schoolhouse?

R: Yeah. The same one that's there now. Of course, it's a lot bigger now than it was then.

I 1: What was it like then? How big was that building?

R: It's at least twice as big now as it was then. Let's see there was two ends to it and a hallway between 'em. That's about it I think. Yeah.

I 1: How many classrooms did it have then?

R: Had up through the eighth grade.

I 1: And what grade were you in when you quit?

R: Sixth. Of course, I didn't quit learnin'. I studied right on after that all I could, ya know? I'm still learnin'.

I 1: Did you have books at home then and you would read and do things?

R: Yeah.

I 1: Did your mother help you?

R: Oh, she couldn't help me much.

I 1: So it was basically on your own?

R: Yeah.

I 2: I wanted to ask you about what folks did for entertainment around here. I heard you and Pig Guthrie talking one time about square dances.

R: Oh, yeah. We had a lot of dancin' at that time. Square dancin' especially. We'd have it in different houses ya know? Square dancin' and everything.

I 2: What were some of the houses? Which houses?

R: Let's see. Charlie Lewis had a house down there with one big room it and we'd square dance in there. But they had a big house down here at the foot of the bridge and turn down there, it's called the club house. We lived in that for a long time and the livin' room in it was as big as this whole house or bigger. We'd have big square dances in that too.

I 2: Who were the musicians?

R: I don't remember their names.

I 2: Did the Culbreath's play some?

R: Yeah. Oh, yeah. That Culbreath family, they're all loaded with music. All of 'em. They're all dead now but the youngest one. We call him Goose? Well, he's not livin' here. He lives somewhere out east of here. That whole bunch could play music too. They'd furnish the music.

I 1: How would you get the word passed around that you were going to have a square dance?

R: Just by mouth, from one to another.

I 2: Did you have to pay to get in?

R: No, no, no. Just fun. Of course, they had some dance halls over on the beach too. Later on. Had dance halls over there. Then you had to pay to get in to dance.

I 1: That was after they built the bridge?

R: Oh, yeah.

I 1: Was the bridge here when you first came?

R: No. They had just started building one and that '21 storm wrecked what they had built. Then later they got one across, an old wooden bridge.

I 1: Do you remember going to the beach before the bridge was built?

R: Yep. The only way to get their was by boat.

I 1: Would you take your fishing boat over, or were there people that would take others over there?

R: Well, didn't many go over there, just to go swimin'. But a lot of times we'd go down to the dock, dive overboard and swim over there to go swimin' in the gulf.

I 1: You'd swim all the way to the island?

R: Yeah. Of course, didn't have to swim all the way, ya know? Had one channel through there. You could swim across it and wade most of the way.

I 1: So as children growing up here, those are some of the things you would do?

R: Yeah.

I 1: What was the island like then?

R: Over here? Let's see, the north end had a few houses on it. Anna Maria. The old steamer would bring people there in the mornin' and pick 'em up in the afternoon. They'd go out on the beaches pickin' shells and stuff like that. And picnics and stuff. Doris Green's probably got a lot of pictures and stuff of all the net spreads. Or some of 'em at least.

I 2: Yes. I'm sorry we didn't bring those with us today.

R: We had to keep care of the nets real good then. Keep 'em for lasting any time. But now, as long as ya keep the sun from burnin' 'em they last ten years, I'd guess. But nobody mends net anymore hardly. They fish until get too many holes in 'em and then they throw 'em away and get new ones.

I 2: When you were fishing did you go out each day? Or would you stay?

R: Oh, we'd stay sometimes almost a week at a time out.

I 2: Were you on one big boat that pulled some other boats with it?

R: Yeah. Back then they had these ole one-cylinder engines. When I moved here. Before then they used all sailboats fishin'. But after I moved here they started havin' one-cylinder engines in the boats. One of 'em was named Miantis. I forget the name of the other one. But either one of them would run backwards. Forwards or backwards. According to the way ya crank 'em ya know. No reverse on 'em yet.

I 2: When you stayed out there a week, what was that boat like? What size was it and how was it laid out?

R: Well, the power boat. The one that had the engine in it was a lot smaller than they are now. They were about 25, 30 feet long. But back then we didn't have to carry ice fishin' and stuff like they do now. Ya could fish half the afternoon and all night tonight and come in tomorrow afternoon. All ya had to do was keep 'em shaded. Keep the sun off of 'em. But now if you don't get 'em on ice in two hours they'll float like a cork. I believe it's pollution that does it now. It must be.

I 1: So those fish were fine without any ice back then?

R: Oh, yeah.

I 1: And they wouldn't get bad?

R: No. All ya had to do was keep 'em shaded.

I 2: How many men would be on a boat like that for a week?

R: Three to five.

I 2: How far away from Cortez would you go?

R: We fished all around Tampa Bay, way down south as far as Gasparilla. We didn't have these gas-burnin' stoves then. But we'd go to shore and build a fire to cook with.

I 2: Would you sleep on shore or in the boat?

R: On shore. When ya stop-netted. That's the only time they slept on shore, stop-nettin'.

I 1: What did you take to sleep on?

R: Whatever we had. Build a fire and get close to it if it was cold.

I 1: Who would do the cooking?

R: Well, first one and then another. I always got out of that pretty good.

I 1: What would you eat usually? What would they fix to eat?

R: About the same stuff ya use now. Fish and cook some grits and eggs. Not much different than they do now. People think mullet's about caught up? But before I got married I remember we went all the way around Tampa Bay and never seen the first mullet. We said, well they all gone. And three weeks from now there's billions of mullet everywhere just like they are now. They get scarce and after awhile they'll be everywhere. They keep migrating all the time.

I 1: What year was that?

R: I don't remember exactly the years.

I 1: You stop-netted and gill-netted when you first started. What type of boat were you using when you first started fishing?

R: Skiffs mostly and just one that had the engine in it. And we'd tie skiffs on behind it and tow 'em.

I 1: And you'd pole those skiffs most of the time?

R: Oh, yeah. We fished mostly at night.

I 2: Did they drop one man in a skiff at one place and then tow the rest of them and leave them in different places?

R: No. Each one would get in a skiff and we'd start poling. Like if we was gonna fish around Palma Sola Bay, we'd take the power boat and pull the skiffs around to the mouth of the bay and anchor the power boat. We'd all get in the skiffs and pole around. It'd take all night long to pole around Palma Sola Bay if ya made two or three strikes. About daylight ya'd get back.

I remember one mornin' we had caught a few fish way up at the head of Palma Sola Bay there. Wind was blowin' out of the east and the captain said well, we'll tie together and

drift on out to the motor boat ya know. So, one of my brothers, Albert. My oldest brother. He had a drag overboard to keep the net tight. He left his drag overboard and went to sleep and he was still asleep at daylight. Boy, the captain was mad about that. He had us anchored or we would have been back to the power boat by daylight almost if he hadn't had his anchor overboard, or his drag.

I 2: If you stayed out there a week and came back. How long would it be before you'd go out again?

R: As soon as we could get the nets all mended and stuff. We'd go right back.

I 2: If the fishing was good, what kind of money would you make after being out there for a week?

R: Well, let's see. I remember when we got a cent a pound for big mullet. And we had to fish hard to make a livin' at that. But ya know, it all balanced out about the same as it does now, moneywise. But ya had to catch a lot more fish to make the same amount of money then as ya do now. Roe season? I caught them for a cent a pound. Helped catch 'em for a cent a pound.

I 1: Was there a market for the roe then?

R: Not like it is now, no.

I 1: Well, do you remember the first kicker boat you fished in?

R: No, I never fished in a kicker boat. Never did. Back then everybody hated 'em. They just hated 'em because ya couldn't depend on 'em. They'd get ya about as far away from home as you'd want to go. But you'd probably pole back. The commercial fishermen around here, they hated them things. Cause they'd scare the fish off. Now they all use 'em.

I 2: When did they come along?

R: Later on, I don't remember the year. Well, they had 'em then but ya couldn't depend on 'em much.

I 1: What type of engines did they first have in them?

R: The first engines I remember around here. Remember the old Star Car? Four-cylinder engine and the Star they called 'em. They was a good engine. When they had that splash system for bearings and stuff, ya couldn't any that would last in a boat

very long. After they got the forced oil system to 'em then we'd buy an old engine from a junk yard and overhaul 'em and they'd last as long as they did to start with almost. Had one guy here, his name was Julian Taylor. It kept him busy workin' on engines all the time.

I 1: How did you learn to mend net?

R: Well, the guy that first showed me how to mend net. He showed me how to do that so I was sittin' on the boat one day and I tried to mend a hole. I couldn't get it mended. I just kept knittin' ya know? I had a pocket about that long. Boy, he got mad. From then on I knew how to mend net. But like I say, hardly any of 'em mends net now. Some of 'em don't even know how, I think.

I 1: It's as if they've gotten used to just disposable net more or less?

R: Yeah. See, it's cheaper to buy new nets than it is to spend time mendin' and keepin' 'em up, ya know?

I 1: Did you hang net also?

R: Oh, yeah.

I 1: How many nets do you suppose you've hung?

R: Oh, Christ. I don't know. When I quit fishin'. Let's see now, when did I start hangin' net. I charged by the yard ya know. Right out here in the yard, I'd charge by the yard lengthwise. I was gettin' 80 cents a yard to hang then. They'd furnish material and stuff and I'd hang 'em in for them. I did pretty good at that for awhile. But I got down in my back and I couldn't do anything. I just got so I couldn't make a livin' hardly. And I had to make a livin' so I got a job operating this draw bridge out here. And I stayed on that 12 years.

Nobody would operate on my back. They was scared they'd paralyze me. I got on that bridge. About four months after then I got my back operated on. They was all scared they'd paralyze me. But that guy, he sure done me a good job. Ever since then I've done anything I wanted to do with it.

I 2: Did you operate the draw bridge, the one that's out there now?

R: Yep. Yeah, that same one. I'm glad I took that job. I get a pension from that now. At that time when ya got to be

65 years old, if ya had as much as ten years in so you could draw the pension ya know, that was your last day. They automatically laid ya off. Now ya can tend to it as long as ya live. But they don't pay much now. Minimum wage for that job. I went out to get back out there and I asked what are ya payin'. He said \$4.25. I said nothin' doin'. He says why? I says I'm gettin' more now than that for what time I worked out there. And they had a black man in charge of it, so.

I 2: Did that new draw bridge change things around here much?

R: No. Not a lot.

I 1: When you first started working there, how were they in touch with you? Did they have radios?

R: No, they didn't have anything. They had an old bathroom downstairs. Ya had to pump saltwater in to flush it. Now everything's modern out there.

I 1: When boats would come up and they wanted the bridge raised what would they do?

R: They'd have to blow a horn or whistle at ya.

I 1: And so did you raise it for every boat that came up there?

R: If they wanted it open, yeah. Some of 'em wouldn't be over 10 feet high and they had 22 feet clearance on the draw. But still some of 'em wanted it open. And the State said well go ahead and open it. If they don't need it report 'em. But I never did report one. It didn't do any good. Some did, but it didn't do a bit of good.

I 1: Was there a lot of boat traffic when you first started?

R: Not like it is now, no. Very few sailboats. Eventually, I had worked at least a month out there with about a dozen openings. 12 or 15 is the most. Now they have that much in a few hours. Got a lot of sailboats now ya know.

I 1: How about vehicle traffic across the bridge. Was there much when you first started?

R: Not a lot, no. Like I said, there wasn't many roads on the beach over there. There wasn't much car traffic at all.

I 1: Tell me a little bit more about Cortez when they started

building the fish houses and how that changed things. Or what it was like back then. And did you work for one of the fish houses? Did you unload?

R: No. I never did work for one of them, no.

I 1: What were some of the first ones that you remember?

R: That was built here?

I 1: Yes.

R: Let's see. I think A.P. Bell Fish Company was one and then the next one I think was Fulford Fish Company which is still here. And the Bell Fish Company too. He's got the biggest fish house here. You know where they are down there. They got a big freezer there and everything. I'd like to have my income for what that freezer bill costs 'em there to run it. About \$10,000, \$12,000 a month sometimes. They say now. That's a lot of money to me. But it's a big freezer.

I 1: Did you fish with the Fulford's or anyplace like that?

R: No. I never fished with any Fulfords. Most of my fishin' was with Guthries and Mora and did I ever fish with Bell? Yeah, and Williams. There was a guy named Jess Williams here at that time. I fished with him quite a bit. Seine fishin'. That's all he done, along the beach.

I 1: Are there any Williams' still around?

R: Not that I know of. Oh, Orrie Williams. Jess' son, is livin' east of here and one of his daughters, Nellie Mae. I think she's still livin'. And Taylors. Let's see. When I first moved to Cortez there was Taylors, Guthries and Fulfords and that was about it here at that time. Well there was two or three Greens. But Taylors, Guthries and Fulfords were most of the people I knew by name.

I 2: Did you ever know Jose Mora?

R: Jose is a nickname I think. Yeah, I knew him.

I 2: Was he from Cuba?

R: You sure it's Jose you're talkin' about? Mora?

I 2: They might have called him Joe.

R: Joe Mora, yeah.

I 2: Lived in the house where Aunt Ruth lives?

R: Yeah. He's one of the first ones I started fishin' with. Yeah. Julius was his name. Julius Mora. Then I started goin' with his daughter Ruth. She's still livin' around there too now.

I 2: Did you ever hear him talk about Key West or Cuba?

R: No. His daddy was the one that did that. But he never lived anywhere but Cortez that I know of. He was born here. Old Man Joe was Spanish or something. Spaniard. I remember him.

I 1: There's a picture of him with his guitar. Do you ever remember him playing his guitar?

R: Who, Mora? No. Uh uh. There's a picture of some of us down on the dock. We're sittin' there talkin' one day. That's me sittin' there. Earl Guthrie and Man Adams and Hugh Adams and stuff. And I'm the only one livin' out of that bunch that was there then.

I 1: Did you spend a lot of time down on the docks then?

R: Yeah. Quite a bit. This is an old book, story about Bradenton. There's pictures of the old Albion Inn and everything in there.

I 1: When you first came what was the Albion Inn like? It wasn't that huge building they had?

R: Oh, no. They kept addin' on it. They had what they call now the ole Burton's Store. They moved it away. It's still down there, but not where it was. I don't know why they saved it.

I 1: That was all there was to the Albion Inn at that time?

R: Yeah.

I 1: And they had roomers and boarders there?

R: Yeah. From the North. He owned two boats at that time though, Joe did. I worked with him quite a bit. When they dragged the channel through here, way back ya know, they piled a lot of rock up down there on the other side of the channel goin' down. And we hauled rock from down there and built a seawall all the way around that hotel

there. They built a new seawall around it now and filled it in.

I did a lot of dredging too on dredgin' boats. Get tired fishin' and I'd go get me another job. I liked that dredgin' too.

I 1: Did you make better money dredging than you did fishing?

R: Well, it averaged out to about the same I guess. But I liked that work too, that dredgin'. Like I say, I was a water boy when they built that seawall out there and I rode a bicycle from here out there and back, workin'. Back then they had what they called shell roads. Well there wasn't many cars in Cortez either. Very few even in Bradenton when we first moved here.

I 1: Were there shell roads here in town?

R: Yeah. All the roads were shell. The ole Indian Mound down there, that's where they'd get most of the shell.

I 1: You remember that Indian Mound when you were young?

R: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

I 1: Would you go down there and play on that?

R: Sometimes, yeah.

I 2: Do you remember a building back there that some of them called a Spanish Mission?

R: A Spanish Mission?

I 2: It was back around the shell mound somewhere?

R: Well, the old club house was the closest to it.

I 1: This is a picture of the Albion Inn after the storm.

R: Yeah. That's like it was. Ya see everything was tore all up. There's quite a bit about it in that book. I had a couple of them books and started loanin' 'em out and finally lost one. Got that one back and kept it.

I 2: You've done a lot of construction work. You told me you built the house that we're in now, didn't you?

R: Well, we started it the day of Pearl Harbor. Of course,

it's a little bigger now. We've added on it and made it back 14 feet.

I 2: How did you go about building this particular house?

R: My wife was sister to a guy named ... I can't think of his name now. But anyway, her and her husband separated and we stayed over there at Perico Island. Not Perico Island, but Sneads Island for a long time. We practically raised them kids and while we was over there I built me a boat and put an inboard engines in it. One of them air cooled? And we fished up the river then a lot.

I 2: So, when you decided to build this house did you have a plan like another house?

R: Yeah. Another house like the one we was takin' care of over there. He built one at the beach. It was just like this one. At that time it was the same size as this one. But since then we've added 14 feet on the back of this one.

I 2: Where would you get your lumber then and so forth?

R: We'd go up to where they had an old sawmill just this side of 41 at that time. We'd go out there and get it. Before then I forget where we got out lumber at.

I 2: Did you have a couple other men helping you build this?

R: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, the one we was stayin' with on Snead's Island over there. He helped me build it. He had built one on the beach over there at that time. That's the reason he helped us build it. We was raising them kids for him ya know. Cause his wife left him. That's when we built this house when we come back from there.

I 2: Did you have to get a permit in those days to build a house?

R: No.

I 2: Could you put it anywhere you wanted on your lot?

R: Yeah. But now if ya hang a screen door you need to get a permit. You're supposed to. But I never have got a permit. I go ahead.