

Albert "Junie" Mora - Oral History "Vanishing Culture Project"
Funded in part by the Florida Humanities Council

Interviewers: Mike Jepson/Wayne Nield

I 1: Junie, the way we start these interviews is to ask you to state your full name and your date of birth.

R: My name is Albert Mora. I was born March 3, 1930.

I 1: And what were your parents' names?

R: Albert and Estella Mora.

I 1: What was your mother's maiden name?

R: Stella's all I've ever heard her called.

I 1: Did you have any children?

R: I have three boys.

I 1: And what are their names?

R: Scotty, Mark and Tracy.

I 1: Scot, Mark and Tracy. And what is your wife's name?

R: Judy Mora.

I 1: What was her maiden name?

R: Perry.

I 1: Is she from Cortez?

R: She was from West Virginia. We've been married about 38, 39 years.

I 1: Let's talk a little bit about your parents. Where was the first home that you lived in that you remember in Cortez?

R: Right here. See, we had one more house before this one. I just barely remember when they tore it down and built this one. That's been approximately 55 to 60 years ago.

I 1: So most of your memories are in this house then?

R: Right here.

I 1: What was your father's occupation?

R: He was a commercial fisherman.

I 1: What type of fishing did he do?

R: Gill-nettin' mostly. Seine-fishin'. Some stop-nettin' back in them days.

I 1: How would you describe your father? What type of a person was he?

R: He was a very good person. Gentle. He thought about other people a lot. He cared for other people. He was just a gentle person, most everybody will tell ya.

I 1: When he was fishing, who did he fish for most of the time? What fish houses?

R: He fished for Fulford, Tink Fulford, at that time. Tink fished himself and his son. And I think Daddy put more years in there than he did with anyone else.

I 1: Do you remember fishing with him?

R: Yeah. Yeah, I do.

I 1: Did he teach you how to fish?

R: That's where I learned how. Now, mendin' nets I learned myself.

I 1: Oh, you did?

R: Yeah, when I was 8 years old.

I 1: You just taught yourself?

R: Right. I've been fishin' since I could walk. I guess around 52 years now.

I 1: What about your mother? What kind of a person was she?

R: Well, she was a very good person. She believed in helpin' other people and she would. And if she cooked a meal and

anybody came down, well they stayed and ate. They were both real good people.

I 1: Was she a good cook?

R: She was a very good cook.

I 1: Was she ever employed outside of the home?

R: I think at one time she may have put in a little while up at Tropicana. But I think it was just a short while. Not long. And that's about all. She had five kids to take care of and that's just about a full time job.

I 1: Did I ask you your brothers' and sisters' names?

R: No. I have a brother Joseph who disappeared. And then Virgil is the oldest and I have a sister Beatrice and Nola.

I 1: So, the five of you and your parents lived in this house growing up.

R: Right.

I 1: Was is crowded?

R: Well, not really. We have four bedrooms and it seemed like we had plenty of room. One would get married and then the other and so forth. But we had plenty of room. We never noticed being crowded. I know when we was comin' up there was no such thing as air conditioning or nothin' like that. But we never noticed the hot then. I don't know why.

I 1: Did anybody in Cortez have air conditioning?

R: No. There was no TV, no air conditioning, no nothin'. Might be a radio once in awhile.

I 1: When you would have meals, did you sit down as a family to eat.

R: Yes, we always have.

I 1: So your meals were shared together.

R: We did. And we had regular meals. Some of 'em was a little late sometimes when we got in from fishin', but we had 'em.

I 1: So, your brother Virgil, was he a fisherman too?

R: Yeah.

I 1: And your brother Joseph?

R: He was a fisherman.

I 1: And your two sisters, did they marry fishermen or did they ...

R: No. They didn't marry fishermen. Nola married a mechanic and at the time Beatrice had married a service man, Army. That was about it. But all the boys fished. Our sons have all fished and of course my father fished.

I 1: Do you remember any stories about your grandfather?

R: Very few. All I know is there's an Island just north of the Skyway called Joe's Island. That was his name, Joe Mora. And he lived on that Island. That's where it got it's name from and I don't know a whole lot about him. I haven't got into it.

I 1: His ancestry is Spanish, is that correct?

R: Yeah.

I 1: His father was called Jose Mora, or was he Jose and they just called him Joe.

R: I think he was Jose.

I 1: He played guitar, is that correct?

R: Now, you know I've never heard that. But it's very possible.

I 1: I was wondering because I think I've seen some photos of him. Did you ever meet him?

R: No, I don't remember a thing about him and I've only seen one picture of him.

I 1: Did he have a beard in that picture?

R: Yes, he did.

I 1: So he was on Joe's Island, then he came to Cortez?

R: Right.

I 1: I think I do remember seeing some photographs of him with a guitar. What do you remember about your father talking about the old days of fishing? Did he ever have any stories about fishing that you remember?

R: Well, it was similar to the same thing that we went through when we first started. Of course, when his father fished they all had sailboats with no engines. And then Daddy got started in the first Palmer Engines. I remember him tellin' me about that. They had it rough. Where we used to have boats to pull our net, they did it by hand. We had waders, boots that we had on board to stay dry and they didn't have none at all. So they weathered it out. They had it rough.

I 1: Did he ever talk about the sailboats when they were fishing here? Did he remember any of that?

R: I think he remembered it. I heard him talkin' about how he could remember the first of his fishin' and the last of the sailboats was there. The run boats that used to come in and pick up fish and this and that. And he could remember a lot of that.

I 1: When you said that you started mending nets when you were 8 years old, how old were you when you started going out on boats fishing?

R: When I first started to school I was 6 years old and I started messin' around with boats and nets and then I'd go onto school. When I'd come home from school I started again and it just started from there and went on.

I 1: Was your father one of the first fishermen you worked with then?

R: When I was 9 years old I bought my first boat and net myself. I had saved up \$300. Just a little pole boat and I'd go out around these Islands and net had rocks and jugs or anything I could get to hold it. I'd go out there and just run it off of an Island and I would go back that evenin' after school and I'd pick it up and maybe I'd caught four or five flounders or some mango snappers and stuff like that. Then I'd run it back down that evenin' and the next evenin' I'd go back down again. Once in awhile when there wasn't no school, I'd get out there early. I wouldn't catch a lot, but a few. But I saved my money till I got enough to buy a 21 foot boat with a little Briggs and Stratton Motor in it. That was my first one. When I was 16 I had a larger boat and a full crew. I had

five grown men fishin' with me. I was 16 years old.

I 1: What was the name of your boat at that time?

R: I don't know what the name of it was when I bought it, but I named it Scotty after my oldest Son. But back in them days we never had no names on boats, when I first got it. My oldest Son is 38 so I named it after him, my first bigger boat.

I 1: What type of fishing were you doing at that time?

R: We were doing mostly gill-nettin' and beach-seinin', mackerel fishin'.

I 1: Can you explain a little bit about that type of fishing in those days, when you said you had a crew working with you?

R: Well, we had five good men. Four good men besides myself. And we had pole boats at that time. Just that one motor-boat's what we had and each one of us had 250 to 300 yards of net apiece on each one of those skiffs. Then we'd get out there at night and form off and we would find a bunch of mullet and we'd all catch 'em and take 'em in.

I 1: You'd haul those boats out there with the larger boat?

R: Right. We'd get to where we wanted to fish and we'd anchor that and then go to polin' and may go 8 to 10 miles a night.

I 1: That's a lot of polin'.

R: And believe it or not, we would start fishin' at dark and we'd get back to that boat sometimes 8:00 or 9:00 in the mornin' and bring those fish to the dock without one drop of ice of 'em.

I 1: You wouldn't ice them down.

R: Didn't have no ice. No boxes. We didn't know what boxes was back then. And them fish was just as hard and good as they ever been.

I 1: That's amazing. Tell us a little bit about how you found the fish.

R: Well, mullet you'd hear 'em jumpin' at night. You could hear 'em jumpin' and when you fool with 'em so much, you

know just about how many is there and what size they are and all. Sometimes you'd see a big black ripple at night. And we'd find what we wanted and we'd go in and catch 'em.

I 1: So, you'd listen for them to jump. Would you go to a certain place in the Bay or the Gulf?

R: Yeah, we would. We knew about where the fish was gonna be at. Back in them days you only had a few fishermen and you didn't have to worry about somebody gettin' there before you did 'cause everybody had their spots they could go to without interruptin' anybody else.

I 1: So competition wasn't quite as bad as today?

R: It wasn't near as bad as it is today. Back then if we found just a few fish on a place we didn't fool with 'em. We'd wait until they got more. But now if you find any at all you gotta catch 'em or somebody else will.

I 1: Tell me something else about fishing. You kinda know the fish are gonna be there. How do you know the fish are going to be in certain places at a certain time?

R: Well, they've got places they use more than others. Say like on a rock pile or a white lump or around a bridge or somethin' like that. You always see mullet around a spot like that. Of course, back in them days you would. Now you can't tell where they're gonna be at. There's so much traffic, so many boats runnin' around. You don't know. You just find 'em where you find 'em. You just keep lookin' till you find 'em. But back in them days that's where they bunched up at, on rocks or white sand or maybe a deep point or somethin' or other that may have a few rocks on the bottom. They'd bunch up there.

I 1: But you couldn't go out there and set a net around them any time of the day.

R: Well, in spots you couldn't. In some spots you could. But there were a lot of spots, around bridges or somethin' like that, you'd be in a lot of tide or somethin'. You'd have to wait for a particular time to do that. You couldn't just do it because you seen the fish, no.

I 1: You'd have to wait for the tide to be right.

R: You'd have to wait till the tide slacks up and in a lot of places in the daytime you wouldn't catch 'em no way. I've done 90% of my fishin' at night anyway. I like to fish at

night.

I 1: Why is that?

R: I can catch 'em better and it's cooler.

I 1: So you aren't out in that hot sun.

R: Nope. Not out in the hot sun.

I 1: Did you ever do any stop-netting?

R: Yes, I've done quite a bit of stop-netting.

I 1: That's different though from gill-netting.

R: Stop-netting you run two, three, four thousand yards of net down and you haul it off the next mornin'. When the tide drops out you may have some deep water somewhere along the line. You can go ahead and put a little haul net in there and haul fish into the bank. But, yeah, I've done quite a bit of stop-nettin'.

I 1: Is it harder than gill-netting?

R: Well, yeah. You're workin' probably 18, 19 hours a day doin' that. You leave at night, run your nets overboard and you gotta wait 6 hours for the tide to fall and then when it falls you've gotta go ahead and catch your fish, and then wait for the tide to come back in before you can get your net. But a lot of times while you were doin' that, they'd bring the fish to the dock and throw 'em out. Now they ice up the boats and have 'em ready for the next night.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about Cortez when you were a kid growing up here. What was it like here?

R: Oh, man. You know sometimes I get to thinkin' and I wonder myself what it was like. But all along where Bell Fish Company is there was a fish house. Most of the fish houses at that time set out in the water probably 100 yards or 100 or 200 foot. The shoreline had little net camps along there once in awhile but up for almost a block from the water there was sawgrass where the saltwater could rise and fall. And there was sawgrass and mango bushes and oyster rocks all along the shore. Where it's all seawall now. There was so much difference, it's pitiful.

The roads was small and a lot of 'em hadn't been paved and

it was just like a little country town that's all.

I 1: Not much traffic.

R: No traffic. A lot of times on a Saturday a bunch of kids would start to a movie and we walked all the way to Bradenton and we'd walk all the way back. The only traffic would be if maybe somebody in Cortez ... there was only two or three little Model T's at that time ... and if someone was goin' to town to get groceries, well we'd get us a ride. If they didn't, we walked.

I 1: What would you do when you got into Bradenton?

R: We'd go to the movie. Man, that was our favorite thing. Goin' to the movie. I'd go the movie with a quarter and come back home with 9 cents. I'd go to the movie, get an RC Cola and a bag of popcorn and come back home I'd have 9 cents for the next week. Sounds impossible, but that's what we done. You'd walk to Bradenton and man ... at night comin' home it didn't take long to get home because you'd come down through those swamps and old roads in Palma Sola and them Panthers went to hollerin' and you got home in a hurry.

Back in them days you saw 'em runnin', Wild Cats and Panthers, across the road ahead of you. They'd be hollerin' and carryin' on. Boy we didn't like to stay for those late movies.

I 1: Who were some of the other kids that you grew up with?

R: Well, everybody's got so old now. Popeye Lewis ... Robert Lewis. Wally Lewis, Junie Guthrie, Richard Roberts, Jill Capo. Of course, Wyman Coursey, Walter Bell, Buster Bell, Calvin Bell, Jap Adams. There was quite a few. Just all the guys now, you go lookin' back at the kids and there's no kids. They're all old timers now. When we were growin' up we'd say, well, man they're old. They must have been 50 years old at the time. And I kept hearin' the old timers talkin' about their hard fishin' and the mosquitos and stuff. Finally we got to be the old timers. When you look back to see who you was playin' with and all, you look around and you're lookin' at older men and it's hard to picture 'em all.

But there was so many mosquitos around here. I'd walk to the dock to go fishin' and you could wipe your hand down your arm and there'd be just solid blood on it. I don't know how we took it but we did.

I 1: I was going to say, how could you withstand all that?

R: A lot of times at night it would be hot. We'd have to put our slicker pants and hat and all on. And sometimes we had a little bucket and we'd build a fire out of burlap bags and stuff like that and build a smoke. Because at that time there was no mosquito dope at all. Finally, in Mr. Pines' store they got some 6/12 in. The first that ever come out and boy that was wonder medicine. We didn't have to build so many smokes.

I 1: Made it a lot more tolerable.

R: Yeah, it was rough. Rough livin'.

I 1: What did you do around Cortez for entertainment when you were kids?

R: The only thing I can remember, we used to build little tin boats. We'd build little tin boats and get a little piece of net and put on it and go along and haul these little minnows and turn 'em loose and catch some more. Or at night we play hide and go seek or somethin' fun. A lot of cat tails around these ditches back then and we'd take and dip 'em in kerosene and light 'em, throw 'em in there and watch 'em fall. Played a lot of ball. Sometimes if we didn't have a football, we played with a coconut. We were some tough fellas then. Different things like that.

I 1: Did the girls play the games too? Were they included in the ball games and things like that?

R: No. They didn't. Once in awhile maybe baseball or somethin' like that. But most of the girls had chores to do at home and you didn't see 'em around with a bunch of boys most of the time. They had their homework to do and they stayed around pretty close to the house unless they were visitin' each other. All I can remember is just a bunch of boys down there playin' and maybe there'd be four or five girls at some girl's house if they had the time.

I 1: So they weren't down there with the nets and boats.

R: No.

I 1: Do you remember, were they allowed to come down?

R: I don't believe they was actually, because you never seen

'em down there unless she was with her daddy or somethin'. I think they was a little more strict back in them days. The girls played and the boys played. Every once in awhile you'd have some party at school or somethin' or other and you'd get together and talk and play and all.

I 1: Did you go to school here in Cortez?

R: Yeah. I went to the 7th grade and graduated. Back then it was kind of hard so I quit. Of course, Daddy didn't want me to quit. He said well, you ain't got to quit. He says you go to school as long as you can walk. He encouraged me to go because I couldn't because I had to go fishin'. What I've learned I've learned fishin'.

I 1: What was it about fishing that lured you so?

R: I don't know. I was just born and raised into somethin' that you wanted to do. Most every kid here has tried it and there were some of 'em that didn't enjoy it and they left and they've bettered themselves. The ones of us that stayed here, well we're here and we've made a livin' but it's been a rough one.

I 1: You think it's been rough.

R: It's been rough.

I 1: Do you think it was hard living in Cortez in your younger days, growing up here?

R: It wasn't that hard, no. Because what we ate a lot of times we raised and what we didn't raise we'd take fish and go out in the country and trade with farmers. We had plenty to eat at all times. We were never hungry. We never asked nobody for no help, not here in Cortez. Of course, you could always go out and get clams, scallops, oysters, crabs, fish, whatever you wanted. It was there. A lot of 'em raised chickens around here and some of 'em hogs and all like that. What we didn't have we'd go out in the country, we knew people out there. They would come down and visit with us.

When I first got married we built a home on 35th Street in West Bradenton, 13th Avenue. There was three homes. They just started buildin' that subdivision from there to Cortez Road. There was mine they built and the man had a couple more and a buildin' and I don't remember another building from 15th Avenue to Cortez Road. And now there's thousands of 'em. We were in it a year or two after we got married but that's been I guess 35 years ago. And that's how it's

been built up.

I 1: Does it seem like it's changed quickly? Or do you think it's just steadily growing? Have you noticed it?

R: Well, for awhile you never noticed and then all of a sudden you see it now and it changes overnight it seems like. Real quick.

I 1: So you think it's much quicker than it used to be.

R: Oh, yeah.

I 1: I want to get back to the little tin boats you used to build. Tell us how you used to build those.

R: Well, what we'd do is take a sheet of tin. Some of 'em we'd build with a whole sheet. And we'd take a 2 by 4 and sharpen it and put it in for the bow and then we'd make a wider piece for the stern and round it off and we'd take and put tar around them boards and seal it up. You'd take the tin and flatten it first. Then we'd put that board in there and that tar and then we'd nail that all the way around it and seal it so it wouldn't leak. Then we'd have our bow and we'd have a little paddle. Of course the edges, some of 'em we wouldn't bend 'em but most of us bent 'em over to keep from cuttin' your arm. Then we'd build smaller ones out of it and all sizes.

But we'd ride them things. Man, we'd go from here to the beach. A lot of times we'd want to go swimmin' and we'd swim over to the beach and go swimmin' and swim back home. But we had our little tin boats and there was no traffic at all. You wouldn't get run over. So there'd be a gang of us take off. It looked like the porpoises goin' across the Bay. There used to be a little Island right across from the bridge there and that was our halfway mark. We'd stop and rest and then go on. Then the traffic started and it got so bad it just washed that Island right out of the ground.

I 1: You can still see it at low tide.

R: Yeah, there's a lump there. There used to be some people from Panama City come down and fish every year and they had big spools or rollers rigged and they would roll their net out on 'em. They had a couple of those built out there and they just stayed there for years and years and like I say as the boats got thicker and thicker ...

But that Island sat right on the side of the channel and it just washed the roots right out of the ground.

I 1: So, you guys would build those boats and in some ways you'd be imitating your fathers.

R: Yeah, they would have the shape of whatever shape we wanted it to look like. We'd pick out the boat we wanted it to look like and that would be it.

I 1: Did you ever go down to the boatworks and watch them?

R: Oh, yeah. I watched Mr. Taylor down there build many a one of 'em. And man, they really took pride in buildin' their boats back in them days. And they done it all by hand too. They didn't have all this electric equipment.

I 1: No power drills or anything like that?

R: No. They had hand drills. And that's the way they done it. And when he built a boat ... heavens, you could get one of them things cheap. But you couldn't buy a boat built like they did, not today. They wouldn't build one like that. They couldn't, I don't believe. Them old timers, buddy they could build a boat. I've watched 'em. They'd put the bottom on and take a saw and clean the boards and that's just how far apart they left the boards. Just the width of that saw. When they got it altogether, got in the water and swelled up ... if you had it too tight the bottom would buckle up. But they would come together just perfect. I guess Mr. Taylor was just about as good a boat builder as I ever seen for that kind of a boat.

I 1: What were some of the fish houses that were on the waterfront then, in those early days?

R: Well, we had Fulford and Star.

I 1: Who was running Star then?

R: Judge Millis. And Willis Adams who was born and raised in Cortez. Then Jim Guthrie had a fish house and I think it was Bayshore Seafood at that time. There is another Bayshore but this was a different one. Then Mr. Joe Guthrie had a fish house out there and I don't remember the name of that. Mr. Bell, Aaron Bell, run that fish house several years before he ever built this one. And he used to have a net camp he worked out of for awhile then when that one got available he took Mr. Guthrie's fish house. I think it was Green/Bell Fish Company at that

time until he could get this other one built.

I 1: Did Jess Williams have one?

R: Jess Williams did have a fish house, yes. I don't know the name of that either. I can barely remember that. I remember playin' in it and I remember the fish house but I don't remember the name of it.

I 1: Did you have sort of free reign as children? When you were young boys could you run into about any fish house or net camp and do what you wanted?

R: As long as we didn't hurt nothin'. You know, tear up anything. Of course, back in them days you didn't steal nothin'. Cause you stole one time, that would be your last time. You didn't do it. If they didn't get ahold of ya, your daddy would. But yeah, we went into 'em. A lot of times at night we'd go down and gut mackerel when the fish boats come in. And a lot of times they'd call the school and the school would let us come out to come down and gut 'em. We'd come down and gut fish. We'd get 5 cents a hundred pound at that time. But that was a lot of money when we was kids. We made our movie money.

I 1: Do you remember much about the Albion Inn?

R: Yeah, you know I can remember and I can see guests in it. I know there was a post office in it. Had our first post office there. And that is about all. I do remember seein' people sittin' around on the porch and all. Gosh it's so long ago. You try to piece everything together.

I 1: You said most of the people were self-sufficient. They raised some chickens and ducks and geese. Did your parents have a garden?

R: Daddy raised hogs. He had a few hogs and I think one time they had a few chickens.

I 1: Where would they keep them?

R: We had that lot right there before that house was built. He had some hogs in there. Used to be solid, big old mango trees there. They were about two, three foot thick. From what I can understand, the '21 storm come through and killed all that. I can remember the fence around it where he kept his hogs and all. And I remember the tree stumps. But '21 was a little before my time.

I 1: When you started fishing then, who did you fish for? Did you fish for Tink?

R: Yes I did. Me and Ralph went with his daddy a lot. Both of us would fish one boat. We got whatever they wanted to give us. A quarter or 50 cents a week or whatever. It wasn't too much I know. But we enjoyed it. We'd get polin' and we'd think we was somethin' else. Just to get the fish whether you made anything or not.

I 1: So you fished for Fulford practically your entire life?

R: Just about, yeah. I put most of my time in there. I have worked for Bell some. Right now I'm at Sigma. I fished at Naples for a few months and here and there, but I always wound up at Fulford's. I've got a lot of years in there.

I 1: Tell me some of the fish that you fished for?

R: I fished, I guess for red fish, mullet, pompano, mackerel, king fish, jacks, spots, trout. I fished for just about anything that's available that comes out of the salt water. Even shrimp.

I 1: Is that bait shrimp?

R: I'd bait-shrimp and I've shrimped out in the Gulf. I've made a few trips to Mexico and several to Texas and around like that.

I 1: What do you think about taking those long trips?

R: I don't like it. That's why I quit. Sometimes though, the fishin' got bad back in them days too. They got bad where you couldn't even afford nothin'.

I 1: Let me ask you, how did you meet your wife?

R: She had come down with a friend of hers which I had met the previous year. And she introduced us and so we seen each other quite a bit for three or four months. I don't know, we probably went together for six or eight months and then got married. She never went back. Just went back to visit.

I 1: Did she like it down here?

R: Yeah, she didn't want to go back.

I 1: How did she like being a fisherman's wife?

R: That she didn't like to start with. It was rough. I wasn't never home. She didn't know when to cook the meals and when not to cook the meals. She didn't know how much money was comin' in, if any, when or where. So she had it rough for a few years until she adapted to what she had to do.

I 1: Do you think that is something that if you're born in a fishing family that you become used to and those things make it easier for you?

R: It'll make it easier later. I know it did for her because she finally got to realize that she didn't know when I was gonna come in. So if she wants to cook the meal for her and me both she will and she'll eat and let it go at that. But she don't look for me in till I get in. She don't know when that's gonna be.

I 1: After you were married and you were having your children, was Cortez always a close-knit community?

R: It was. Always has been.

I 1: And you think it still is?

R: Not as close as it was because you've got so many people here now. But at that time everyone here fished. There was no one in this Village that didn't fish. So you knew where every person lived. And you knew what they done and that was it. But now since a lot of the kids have the places. Their daddys and mothers are gone so they have it, if they haven't already sold it. Then you don't know their husband, you don't know their kids. So there's a lot of people I don't even know. Back in them days I knew everyone. I knew all the kids. I knew all the grandparents. I knew everybody. I mean, it was like one big family.

I 1: What did you do for entertainment in this community later, as you grew older and were having kids yourself?

R: Well, I had a home built in Bradenton. But my entertainment was fishin'. That's all I done. Me and my wife, she loves to fresh-water fish and we got us a little camper and we'd take the boys. We'd pack 'em up and all and we'd go fresh-water fishin', camp out through the weekend. And then my brother-in-law got one so when we got vacations ... of course, we wasn't tied down like a lot of people ... but if fishin' wasn't good I could go on vacation if I had enough money. But back then it didn't take much money either. So

we'd get together and we'd travel around to different parts and all. We'd fish and we had a good time.

I 1: You said you got married in the early '50s and you also said you spent time in Korea. Was that before you were married?

R: Yeah, that was before I was married. I went to Korea April 17, 1950. Then I got married shortly after I come home. I was in there for two years. So it's somewhere between '52 and '55.

I 1: Did you enlist in the Army?

R: No, I was drafted. That's why I was in the Army.

I 1: What were your experiences in Korea like?

R: Well, I wouldn't give nothin' in the world for what I've learned about the way people lived over there at that time. They just existed, they didn't live. To see different countries and all and the way they farmed and the way they lived and everything. It's amazing that they even pulled through with what they went through over there. You take when I went through Japan, well Tokyo ... this house here was big compared to what some of 'em is over there. They had just started buildin' the skyscrapers back up.

I 1: After World War II?

R: Yeah. After World War II. It was just flattened. Now I guess it's in pretty good shape. But they had just started rebuildin' back when we went through there. We'd stop there a couple weeks and went on over to Korea. But it was ... to live over there was rough at that time. I thought it was real bad. But when I think back, I'm glad I got the opportunity to go to Japan and Korea.

I 1: Were you glad to get back to Cortez?

R: Yes, I was. I was helpin' to guard ten square miles of ammunition several feet high. That's what we were doin'. We would send it to the front as they needed it. Then we'd send it out.

I 1: Did you ever come under fire?

R: Only guerilla fire. They'd come in and try to get small weapons, ammunition and stuff to carry off. That was just

about every night. Our Company would be maybe 250 strong and the next day it may be 230 or 200 and then it would dribble down and then we'd build her back up. Seemed like to me, what was so bad about the whole mess ... it seemed like that within a few days of when someone was comin' home they would get it. But when I found out I was comin' home I watched it awful close. When I first went there I wanted to be a lifeguard. They had a little strip of beach there. A Lieutenant said, this will be right up your alley. I said, alright we'll try it. Then I got tired of draggin' them old people out of the water. I thought they were old at that time. Then I said this ain't for me. So I said, I'll take the Service Club. I liked that. They had a large Service Club there. It had a skatin' rink, a ping pong room, they had a movie, they had libraries. They had anything in that one buildin'. A laundry. Everything. So they put me in there and I done a lot of leather work, makin' pocketbooks and stuff like that. I learned from a guy that was in there. Worked on the stoves and everything. I didn't like that either. So he said, I've got a job for ya. So they put me in the field and that's where I stayed till I came home.

But, I like to get out and work. I wouldn't do for a lifeguard or carpenter or somethin' like that. I was happy.

I 1: You like being out in the open.

R: Yeah.

I 1: What is it about fishing that you like the most?

R: Well, I used to love to catch fish. I love the challenge of it. To see if I could. To see what I had to do to do it. It's just somethin' that gets in your blood that if you like to do, that's what you want to do. You want to try different things in doin' it. Different ways. See what works and what don't work. But right now there's no enjoyment. I could be just as happy if I never went again, the way the rules and restrictions and all.

I 1: Is it just the regulations?

R: A lot of it. But it's not just the regulations. No, it's the population too. There's just so many boats out there, so many people out there. There's so many commercial fishermen, and then you've got three times that many tourists on top of the commercial fishermen with boats. So it's just a mess. It's no fun no more, not like it used to be.

I 1: When I was talking about your boats, do you have a kicker boat?

R: I do now. But the motor is shot in it and I don't think I'm gonna replace it. I have an inboard.

I 1: The inboard is the one I've been on most of the time. I wanted to ask you about kicker boats and when they first came into Cortez because that was quite a change.

R: Yeah, and you know what was amazin' to me was that they stayed here like that. I mean, it's a wonder that the older men at that time let 'em stay. They'd tell ya right then, when they seen the kicker boat comin', that's gonna be the end of your fishin'. I remember Tink Fulford said it. There's a guy from Fort Myers. That's where they originated from, a lot of 'em. And one of 'em was up here one day and he said, I'm gonna tell you this is one of the few spots there's no kicker boats. He said, don't let 'em come in here because if they do, they're gonna run you out of business. They really make it bad. Finally, a guy come in here with one and nobody said nothin' about it and then there's another one and another one, and now everybody around here has got 'em. But everybody that's got 'em will tell ya, it's the worst thing on fish that's ever been. But we've got several like that. You take these little ski boats they've got. Them's worse on fishin' than anything. I mean, they're just like an air boat, it just runs 'em to death. But to get back to the kicker boat. Anybody, whether you ever fished or not, could use a kicker boat in the winter time. Cause all you have to do is start it up and go. And I mean, anybody can run one and they do. And that's what's made a lot of fishermen is them kicker boats.

Used to we had the pole skiffs and one launch. And we poled around.

I 1: You had to fish as a crew. You couldn't fish alone then.

R: No. There was one guy, Syd Guthrie, used to fish right by himself with a scooter and a skiff. And that's when they first started diggin' all these fingers and stuff. They were just diggin', makin' property. And he caught a lot of fish. But yeah, otherwise even in the daytime we'd have two to four men to the boat. Everybody would have his own skiff and net and they'd tow around in the daytime. The ones that fished in the daytime did that and the ones that fished at night. Those little ole motors,

they weren't as bad on the fish as these kicker boats. Man, they just run 'em to death. That's all there is to it.

I 1: What is it exactly about kickers that make them so disastrous to fish.

R: Well, what is it you see, they get up there and they run along 20, 25 mile an hour. And if they see a mullet jump they'll run in there. If they don't see none on the bottom, they'll mess around there a little bit and if they don't see none they'll go on. Where with an inboard motor you run along and see one jump you stop. And you look. And if there's any of 'em, there'll be another one or two a jumpin'. Then you can tell what there is to 'em. With the kicker boat you can't tell till you run into 'em. And man, when you run into 'em with one of them things their gone. Most of the time, and it's a proven fact, they can hear you within a mile away.

I 1: The mullet can.

R: Yeah, if you're comin' with a kicker boat. And then you don't even see 'em when you get there. They're gone. They know that sound. They've been run so much and that hurts. We used to take that little ole motorboat we had that had the stern exhaust on it and you could go right around the area with a bunch of fish and they'd never move. But you can't do that now. Man, you gotta be goin' to get 'em.

I 1: So the fish have sort of changed their behavior.

R: They have changed, yes.

I 1: With changes in technology.

R: Absolutely.

I 1: I forget who I was talking to recently, but we were talking about the fact that kicker boats came in and nylon nets came in and fiberglass. And it really revolutionized fishing.

R: The monofilament killed us. I wish they would take it away.

I 1: But it's a good net.

R: It's one of the best-catchin' nets there is. But we used to have nylon and we had flax and we had cotton. And with

those nets we would get out there just like I was tellin' ya. There'd be 3 or 4 skiffs, but we'd take in a bunch of mullet. They wouldn't hit them nets too good, but we'd get overboard and pull them nets around a little bit and the fish would hit. And we'd catch 'em and come home. But now all they do is take 600, 700, 800 yards of monofilament net and they go strike 'em and get it right up and go again.

They don't have to do that because the monofilament will catch 'em. And I suppose that's why Louisiana has made a different law. You can use monofilament, but it's got to be the twisted with a lot of strands.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about the maintenance that was involved versus the maintenance that you had to do on your boats and your nets. In the old days you had to do quite a bit.

R: Oh, yeah. In the old days we fished all night and then we'd have to go out where the water was real clear. Well, it was clear everywhere, but we'd get a white lump and we'd have to pull that net off of that skiff and wash it. We'd pull it back in and then go to the docks. They had these 50 pound bags of lime and we'd have to lime that net every mornin', pull it out and then we'd come down before the net dried and overhaul it to keep it from stickin' together. And while we overhauled it we mended it. You didn't get your money Saturday until that net was mended.

I 1: So you had to know how to mend nets.

R: You had to learn how to mend if you was gonna get a share. If you had to mend Saturday and Sunday to get it ready for Sunday night, that's what you done. Cause most of the time at noon Sunday we'd be goin' fishin. Sunday evenin', after we eat dinner, man we was off.

I 1: Were Sundays a day of rest and did you usually have a big meal?

R: Yeah, that was the day. Sunday was.

I 1: What type of food did you have on Sunday?

R: Oh, man. A lot of times you had fried chicken. You'd have rice and gravy or maybe some vegetables, two or three kinds. And biscuits. You name it, it was there. Iced tea. Just as good a meal as you ever seen.

I 1: We were talking about the nets and the maintenance, what about maintenance on the boats themselves?

R: Well, when I first started off it was bad. But it wasn't bad either when you consider what you're payin' today. But back then we had those little 6 cylinder Studebaker's. Later on we got really modernized. Started using the Studebaker or the Alston or somethin' like that. And they were just 4 to 6 cylinder engines and you could get a valve job for \$60 to \$80. That would have been about the extent of that, cause everything else we done. We painted ...

I 1: So painting and hauling out the boats you did. Did you have to haul them out a lot more?

R: The skiffs we turned over about every 6 to 8 weeks. I mean, we kept them just as clean as the floor in your house. We kept 'em up, we kept 'em painted because that wood you know, if you don't keep it ... there's some boats around here right now probably 60 or 70 years old. Wood boats. We painted them all the time and that was our biggest expense. Just buying a gallon of paint for \$3.00 or \$4.00. And maybe a valve job once in awhile on the boat.

I 1: Were there mechanics living in Cortez?

R: Yeah. We had one lived right here in Cortez. Julian Taylor lived right here on the corner. And he done most of the mechanic work.

I 1: Where would he do it?

R: He'd go down on the boat or he'd do it right there in that garage he's got there on the side. He had him a little machine shop put in there and he could do most anything you needed done. He was good. At that time everybody thought he was high, but they found out he wasn't. Another mechanic would come in and take a part to town to get it fixed.

I 1: He was worth it then?

R: Oh, he was worth it. Then a lot of the guys done their own work. Daddy was a good mechanic. I've seen him take ... he was a big man. He wore a size 13 shoe and one of his hands was as big as both of mine. I've seen him reach in a Buick. We had one of them big 6 cylinder Buicks and he'd have two vegetable crates and he'd reach in and get that motor after he unbuckled it and set it out right by himself. He didn't want no help. He'd overhaul it and then he'd put it back in there.

I 1: He must have been strong.

R: He'd reach down with one hand and pick that car right up and put a block under it to change tires. He didn't need no jack.

I 1: How tall was he?

R: He was around 6' 1", 260 pounds. He was a fun fella. If you was walkin' down the dock and you pulled your boots off you'd better check 'em before you put 'em back on. He'd take a 20 penny nail and nail 'em right to the dock. Or if he seen somebody kick somethin', the next time they kicked it, it wouldn't move cause he'd nail it down. He did things like that.

I 1: He was always pulling pranks on people.

R: I think most of 'em did on each other. But he was good for that. And then he'd go off laughin'. Didn't nobody fool with him. But he was quite a man.

I 1: How old was he when he died?

R: I believe he had just turned 62. No, he was 59.

I 1: Were you living in Bradenton at the time?

R: No, right here.

I 1: Were you fishing?

R: Yeah.

I 1: Was he still fishing then?

R: Yeah, he fished with me then. The last several years of his life he fished with me.

I 1: How old was your mother when she passed away?

R: Mama was 79 or 82. 82, yeah.

I 1: That's her picture? What color was your father's hair?

R: Well, it finally turned a blackish-gray I think. And he had a pile of hair. I'm tellin' you, he had some hair right up till he died. And everyone of us boys' hair is all fallin' out.

I 1: Your mother was pretty too. He was pretty stout wasn't he?

R: There was a man.

I 1: It doesn't look like he'd be that heavy.

R: About 260.

I 1: Was that photograph taken here?

R 2: Yes. Not long before he died.

R 1: I never give him the chance to lay a hand on me. He never whipped me in all his life. He put it on them other ones but he never did me. Cause when he told me to do somethin' I done it and I know I better do it.

I 1: Tell me what happened to your brother Joseph? You said he disappeared.

R: I don't know what happened. They tell me a couple fellas come pick him up one time. I don't know where they were goin' or nothin'.

I 1: When was that?

R: Oh, mercy. I don't know. I always had a feelin' it might have had somethin' to do with dope or somethin' or other. But I couldn't say it did. But never have heard nothin'. I think they looked for him some, but never knew exactly what happened to him.

I 1: Who were some of the better fishermen in Cortez when you were coming up?

R: When I was coming up we had Tink Fulford who I guess was the best that I've ever seen. Charlie Guthrie, John Fulford, Farmer Capo, Joe Capo. Now that was your main fishermen at that time. That was the captains. That was THE captains. Mr. Aaron Bell, Guy Fulford. Of course, Guy Fulford seine-fished and pompanoed. Aaron Bell, he stop-netted some and seine-fished. The rest of these fellas, Farmer, Joe ... which was brothers ... then John Fulford and Charlie Guthrie and Tink Fulford, they stop-netted and gill-netted. They were good fishermen. All of 'em was good fishermen at that time. And they all fished with men. There was no kicker boats. Everybody fished with them or they didn't fish. They fished with them because that was it. And that was about 5 to 6 men to the boat.

And that took care of everybody. But if you wanted to fish with somebody else, you had to sign the book. And when it come your turn you got the job.

I 1: Oh, really? So you just couldn't go and hop on a boat and fish with anybody.

R: No. Not unless he needed you. Not unless somebody quit him at the same time because some of 'em had books and they would sign it and when someone would quit they'd let you know.

I 1: I'll be darned. Would the fishermen in Cortez switch and try to get on a good crew if they knew one?

R: Well, all of those crews was good.

I 1: So it didn't matter.

R: No, it didn't matter. In later years some of 'em started droppin' out and then they would try to get on with the best crew there was. Tink Fulford fished the longest of any of 'em and he was the best, and everybody tried to get to stay with him because they knew that they were gonna work from Sunday night at 12:00 until Saturday at Noon. And that was it. Your time was off till 12:00 the next Sunday night. And they knew he was gonna make you a livin' because he drank fishin', he eat fishin' and stayed fishin'. Saturday night while you was home with your wife, he was in his boat lookin' for fish.

I 1: He never took a break from it.

R: No. Never took a break. But Sunday, that was his day off.

I 1: I've heard he liked to drink coffee.

R: He'd drink coffee right out of the pot. He wanted it strong. He didn't want weak coffee. But then we had a water kettle. And finally we got one of these big gallon coffee pots and we'd make that full of coffee every mornin' before we'd get to work. He'd put it under the bow of his boat and he'd pour that coffee in the lid of that pot and he'd drink it. When it got down to the grounds you'd see him just spittin' 'em out. But he'd drink that gallon of coffee while we was workin' that day.

I 1: Do you have any memorable stories about fish catches with Tink?

R: We've caught a lot of fish. I know one time ... he laughed about it ... when he come in his son cut him off. Told him he didn't want no more fish. Well, me and him was workin' together at that time and he says, did Pig cut you off? I said no, he didn't cut me off. He said, go down there to Longboat Beach, he says there's about 40,000 mullet out there. I says, alright. He says, wait till dark now and call the crew before you go because Pig will cut you off if you come down to the dock. I says, alright. And he owned the fish house!

He says, I've never been cut off in my life. But he cut me off. And he says, I know he can sell the fish. So he had been out and found 'em and he told me where to go. So that mornin' about 3:00 I called everybody and we went down. We caught 45,000 and come in. And Pig turned red in the face and blue in the face and everything else. He says, I cut you off. I said, you didn't cut me off. He says, I cut daddy off. I said, daddy stayed home. Tink went to laughin'. Pig got two buyers for them mullet. He could have sold that many more. And Tink said, I knew he could have sold 'em. He said, he was just scared to handle 'em. So that one time he stayed home, but he knew I was gonna go catch 'em anyway.

Then a lot of times back in them days I fished with him and if he found fish on Saturday he'd tell me, take that rig this evenin' and go so and so and somebody else will be there to catch 'em if you ain't. And he said, you go down there and take them fish in and he'd tell me where to stop. I'd say alright. And most of the time when he'd tell me to go he'd say he'll be there after 12:00. He wouldn't come before 12:00, but I'd leave that evenin' and go take 'em in and he'd come at 12:00 and we'd catch the fish. He was pretty smart about that cause he knew just what them other fellas was gonna do. And most of the time I'd leave a little earlier and I'd have 'em in by the time them other boats got there. They all kept a track on what was goin' on a lot more than they do now.

I 1: That's what I wondered, if fishermen talked to each other as to where fish were showing up.

R: There wasn't much talk back in them days because when they found fish they kept to themselves. They didn't tell ya nothin'.

I 1: There was a lot of secrecy then.

R: Between the captains.

I 1: Someone said they used to like to race boats.

R: Oh, they all raced boats. Yeah, Man. They'd put them things up and dry 'em out and paint 'em and get their motor overhauled and I mean they'd just get it perfect. And they'd get out and race on a Saturday. I think one time they had an old cup and whoever won the race got the old cup. It wasn't no good, it was just a cup. They raced for that cup.

I 1: It would be nice if we could find that old cup.

R: Guy Fulford would beat 'em every time. Cause that boat he had was named after his son, J.G., and it was the fastest boat I ever seen around here at that time. It was fast.

I 1: Was it the type of motor he had?

R: No, I think it was just the build of the boat. The bottom and all, and he kept that thing dried out all the time. And at one time his deck was varnished and he fished it. He kept that thing up till it was spotless. Instead of bailin' a boat out he'd take a rag and mop all the water out. They didn't leak back in them days. It was an open boat, about 28 foot.

I 1: Do you think fishermen are different today than they used to be?

R: Yup. They used to be men. Real men. It's dribbled away. These fellas today can't work a tenth as hard as we used to work. Cause we worked day and night and we hauled net by hand day and night. I'd say 60 - 70% of 'em right now wouldn't think of gettin' overboard and haulin' the net. If they had to get wet they ain't gonna fool with it. Yeah, it's changed. The men's gone and it's changed.

I 1: Did you see a change in the community of Cortez also?

R: Oh, yes. I think Cortez at one time was the prettiest little town, about as pretty as you've ever seen. Everybody kept their house painted. Everybody kept their lawns mowed and flowers and everything. It was just a nice little community. But it's changed.

I 1: Well, you've traveled around and you always come back to Cortez. What is it about Cortez that made it special?

R: I don't know. I think it's where you was born. Because I've been to so many different fishing villages and you couldn't move them people out of that village. They may go somewhere for a week but they would go right back because that's where they was born, that's where they started. When you go into another man's territory you've got to fish like he does. You've got to learn to fish like they fish or you won't catch nothin'. Everybody learns. Every community fishes different. They've got different boats. They may be the same gill nets but they may be fixed different. But it's just everybody fishes different. Different flats or instead of havin' flats you may have all rocks or somethin'. And you've got to learn to fish like they do or you'll get wrecked. I think that's what it is. They like to fish their way, we like to fish our way and we like our little community because we know what it is. We know where we're goin'. If we go to town or somethin' or other.

I 1: So it's not only the familiarity within the community and knowing the people around you, but you know the bay bottom, you know the places where the fish will show up.

R: I know that Bay out there as well as I know my yard. I can take you out there at night, anywhere you want to go and I'll show you where there's water and where there isn't water. Whether it's the channel or whatever it is. I can show it to you at night. Well, it's just a picture that's in your mind and it's been there ... you've fished for 50 or 55 years, you've got it stamped in there pretty well. Yep.

I 1: Today you see a lot of changes in fishing, in the technology that's used. You've seen a lot of changes in Cortez, a lot of the build-up and development around this community. But I think one of the biggest changes that's been most recent is this push to ban nets. Tell me how you feel about that.

R: Well, I don't think it's gonna do 'em no good to ban the nets. It isn't the nets. If you will look at the statistics you'll find out that the hook and line are catchin' anywhere from a third or better than what the

commercial fishermen are catchin'. So I hate to see 'em ban the nets. I hate to see 'em ban the hooks. But I don't know if they're gonna put a limit on what you catch or what. The trout, they catch many more trout than we do. And I've got the actual figures of what they catch. It would do no good whatsoever to ban the nets. As far as you take like in California or somethin', they're talkin' about killin' the porpoise and the turtles. We don't do that. We don't kill no porpoise and we don't kill no turtles. You very seldom see one that the commercial fishermen have killed. They don't do it.

I 1: You belong to an organization, the Organized Fishermen of Florida. Do you think that organization is going to be effective in stopping this?

R: They're gonna give it a try. I think that they will be, yeah. I'll tell ya, the director, Mark Taylor, is doin' a good job in this. I feel like he is. And he's workin' awful hard to convince people that it isn't the nets altogether that's doin' this. I'll agree that we need rules to go by. But we don't need to ban the nets. You've got a lot of people that's livin' off of these nets and their kids. You take the retail fish companies and all the fishermen and their families. Well, that's a lot of people up and down the State of Florida. Well, the whole Coast you might say, on both Coasts. And I don't know what would happen if they did ban 'em. It would be bad. It would put a lot of people out of work.

I 1: It's been a big part of your life, fishing. And I just wondered how you felt about that.

R: I don't feel like it would do one bit of good to ban the nets. Not if you're gonna let 'em go out with a hook and line and catch the fish that they want. Because they're still producin'. The only thing that you would see is more mullet. Maybe if no one was chasin' them at all ... but they cast-net as well ... but your trout, your red fish and all of that. You wouldn't see no difference in it because they're not producin' none of them no way. They're catchin' more on the hook and line than we ever thought about catchin'. It's amazin', but that's the way it is.

I 1: Some of the changes you're seeing in Cortez, for one, Fulford Fish closed in this past month or in February. What do you see as the future for commercial fishing in Florida if they don't even pass the net bans.

R: If they don't pass the net ban I think in time that it's gonna go out anyway. Slower. There's gonna be so many restrictions on it that we won't be able to do it. You take now, we've got a lot of restrictions on places we caught fish where we can't do it now. And that's gonna run us out. Just like the stop-nettin'. They never stopped us from stop-nettin'. It stopped itself. You can't catch red fish. You're on a limit with trout. If you go out there and catch 50,000 or 60,000 pounds of red fish and some of 'em are dead, you'd really have a stink. So you can't do that. That stopped it right there.

And they'll figure out a way to stop the rest of it in a few years. I feel like it's goin' fast unless we can get some help from the public.

I 1: If you were a young man today, would you stay in fishing?

R: No. I certainly wouldn't. I try to encourage all my kids to get out as quick as they can. I've got one that's in Kentucky. He's been up there a couple years doin' concrete and I hope he stays up there. There's no future in fishin' now. If you catch fish it's good money. But the way it's goin' now, you go all summer and you don't do nothin'. Maybe a little bit in the winter time and that's it.

I 1: Are you going to continue fishing?

R: I will because I'm already on Social Security and I can make a little bit to make it, regardless of the restrictions. But I'll do it until I just get disgusted myself and quit. I intend on goin'. I know there's a lot of people that does and I think they'll have the opportunity if that's what they want to do.

I 1: What do you see as a future for Cortez?

R: I can see in the future. There's a bunch of condominiums built down on the side of the water and maybe a lot of your local people's gonna be edged out or sell out to get out. Marinas and stuff like that. That's what I see.

I 1: How does that make you feel?

R: Not good at all. I don't like that at all. I'd like to see it stay just the way it's always been. And it's gonna take a lot of hard work to keep it goin'.

I 1: Yes it is. I think that a lot of people who come to Cortez today recognize that it is a special community. But when they talk with some of the older folks and some of the not-so-older folks who have been here for awhile, they find that it was even more special in the past. Like you said, it was a much more close-knit community and today you find it hard to find ... a lot of people you don't recognize.

R: Yeah. People now livin' in houses, you used to know the family that lived in that house. But you don't know that family no more.

I 1: You probably still identify it by the family who used to live there.

R: That's right. You go down and you say well, Charlie Culbreath lived in this house or Charlie Guthrie. They ain't no more. Cause they're gone and their family's gone. So you don't know who's there. But that's the way it was. You knew everybody and yes it was close. One thing about Cortez, if one family got sick, they knew that family didn't have no money back then and they'd take up a collection. Everybody in Cortez would give somethin' and they would take it to that family to help them along. They done that. Every time anyone got sick. You go try to take a collection up for anything anymore and it's like pullin' teeth. The generation has changed somethin' terrible.

I 1: Do you think that's because you lose that sort of close-knit feeling because people are so mobile, they move around so much. You have people who live in Cortez from the North, Northeast and the Midwest now.

R: You've got a lot of people like that. And a lot of people who come out of the North have never lived like we did at that time. They had it hard too, believe me. But they had it harder than we did and we knew what it was to get along together, where maybe they never talked to that next door neighbor. Where if we had problems, we talked to ours. But in a big city it's hard to do somethin' like that and it's hard to imagine for the older people from the North to accept this when they get down. If they're accepted, they're alright. But it may take awhile for them to get accepted. If they're against fishin' when they come to Cortez they didn't stay here. I don't guess they were welcome or somethin'. But if they was for the people ...

I 1: There were a lot of people who came down to the trailer

park.

R: Yes, sir. And they were all just the nicest people you'd want to meet, most of 'em.

I 1: Do you think that's changed?

R: It's changed a lot, yeah. Most of 'em now that come down if they've got any money they want to build 'em a \$700,000 or \$800,000 house right on the water and they want a big seawall. They want a big channel where they can put a boat in. And they get it because they've got the money to back 'em up. I think in them days there wasn't as much money floatin' around. It didn't take as much, but I don't believe there was as much. There's money today that would shock us to know how much is around. When you go to the beach and you look at just one solid condominium and wonder how people pay \$80,000 to \$90,000 plus \$600 or \$700 a month to keep 'em up, you wonder where all the money comes from.

I 1: Especially if it's a second home.

R: Right. For just a little summer home. So it's changed. I can remember when I fished hard when I was a kid. We could go out Longboat Pass and from Longboat Pass to New Pass you would see one light at Whitney's Beach. There was one light, a little lantern, at the trailer park. And they weren't lights, they were lanterns. That's all the lights there was on that beach. Then durin' the Second World War about a third of that beach was a target range. They used it to machine-gun and bomb and all that to practice. There was no houses there. You see how it's built up now, it's all condominiums. And that effects the fish too. All them bright fluorescent lights down that beach. They won't come in there. They just won't come in.

I 1: It also effects your fishing because you used to fish by fire.

R: Yeah, by the phosphorous in the water. And that kills phosphorous, the light will. And you couldn't see 'em. Now you have to get so far off that you'll pass the fish. So, yes it has effected us terribly. But I don't suppose we'll ever see that change.

I 1: I don't think they're gonna tear down those condominiums.

R: The onliest way they're gonna get tore down is a storm.

I 1: What's your favorite fish to eat?

R: Mullet. That's him. I love mullet. I'll take a snook. We're not allowed to keep them, but I would take him.

I 1: You've probably eaten a lot of mullet in your life.

R: I've eaten a lot of 'em. Love 'em. You can smoke 'em, fry 'em, whatever you want to do with 'em you can do it.

Bake 'em. But I prefer mullet and I think most fishermen do. Overall, they'd rather have a mess of mullet than anything. We used to have a fella that fished here who ate 'em three times a day. For as long as I can remember he ate fish three times a day.

I would say that 95% of the last 30 years that he lived he ate mullet three times a day. And that's a fact. You'd see him cleanin' 'em. He liked 'em too. He wasn't a poor man, but he wasn't rich. But he could have anything he wanted. But he did, he loved mullet. And you take, like I say, most fishermen would rather have a mullet than any fish there is. Of course, they'll eat different ones different ways.

I'll eat a pompano and I'll like it. But I won't like it the way I do a mullet.

I 1: How do you like your mullet prepared?

R: I like 'em smoked or fried, one or the other. I don't care for a broiled fish at all really. A lot of people love a broiled fish, but I don't care for 'em that much. Now they're good to put on a barbeque.

I 1: How would you fix pompano?

R: We would fry 'em or stew 'em. And a lot of people have eat 'em baked. They have a taste of their own. I like about a three quarter pound pompano and just slice one side off and cornmeal-'em and fry 'em. That's how I like 'em. I don't like no big fish. I'll eat a bigger snook than I will anything else because you can steak-'em. But I don't like a big mullet. A pound, pound and a quarter is about as big as I want. That's just like any other fish. I'd rather have a smaller fish. They don't seem like they're as strong.

I 1: I only know of one woman who used to fish in Cortez and that

was Mada Culbreath. Why is it that women didn't fish?

R: I don't know. They didn't here but they did in other places. Down around Pine Island and Bogue Key they had women workin' in fish houses, runnin' a fish house, and I've seen women in boats fishin' down there. Now here in the last few years, Carol fished some. I've seen one or two other women who tried to go into it but they didn't last long for some reason. I don't know whether it was tryin' to learn it all. But I'm surprised that more of the fishermen's wives didn't go in for that. But I guess back in them days they had all they could do at home without goin' fishin'.

I 1: Were there any superstitions about women being on boats?

R: I don't remember none of that. They were superstitious about goin', if a black cat went across the road, my Uncle would go back home and go to bed. He wouldn't go fishin' that night if he couldn't go around the cat.

I 1: Were there any superstitions about things on the boat?

R: Yeah, they could take a conk or a gopher or something like that and some of 'em would throw you off if you brought one on the boat. These old timers were really bad about superstitions. It' never bothered me.

I 1: Someone said one fisherman had a fear of having anything black on his boat.

R: Some of 'em don't want nothin' black. The old timers, every one of 'em, had somethin' or other they didn't like and they didn't want it on their boat. They sure did. All of 'em was like that too just about. Now Daddy, he didn't like them land gophers on the boat.

I 1: Tortoise you mean.

R: Yeah, he didn't like that. Or a conk. You put one of them on a boat and he'd go crazy. But every one of 'em had a little somethin' or other they didn't like.

I 1: Well, we're getting low on tape. Is there anything that you'd like to say, Junie, about living in Cortez or fishing that we haven't really covered here?

R: I don't know. I think livin' in Cortez has been about as healthy for me as livin' anywhere. I'd rather live here than in town. As far as gettin' plenty to eat, I say we've

always had that, and I guess we always will as long as we work here and fish here. But the fishin', I would like to see it get together. I'd like to see the anglers and the commercial fishermen workin' together. There's been many a one I've told where they could catch some trout. I'd tell 'em about different holes where they could catch 'em. I think if most of the commercial fishermen and maybe a lot of the anglers would get together and talk it over and work together, everything might be alright. There's no use in fightin' each other. I mean, we're all here to short. I would like to see us all get together. I think most of the fishermen now, especially my age and maybe a little younger, would like to see that.

The commercial fishermen could do the hook and liners a lot of good by givin' 'em pointers on where to go and about the Bay. I believe that could be done. I believe we could work together better instead of arguin' with each other.