

The University of Southern Mississippi
Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage

Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster–Gulf Coast Fisheries
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Clyde Leslie Brown

Interviewer: Barbara Hester

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An Oral History with Clyde Leslie Brown, Volume 1043

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Biography

Mr. Clyde Leslie Brown was born July 1, 1932, in Pecan, Mississippi, to Nathaniel Richard Brown (born November 22, 1901, in Canoe, Alabama) and Mary Edna Stork Brown (born February 28, 1906, in Pecan, Mississippi). His father was a farmer who ran a general store in Canoe, Alabama, and his mother was a housewife. His mother's father was a commercial fisherman in Jackson County, Mississippi, who ran a general store in Pecan, Mississippi.

On September 4, 1955, he married Annie Marie Jones. They have two daughters, Debra Ann Brown Seab (born June 24, 1956) and Rita Gail Brown Bryant (born September 15, 1959).

Brown was a commercial fisherman of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He also worked for International Paper Company in Moss Point, Mississippi, and from 1953 through 1955, he served in the US Army, achieving the rank of corporal. He is a member of Jackson County Farm Bureau, Jackson County Soil and Water District, and the Gulf of Mexico Program. In 1998 he was awarded the Golden Leaf Award by the Nature Conservancy of Alabama. He was appointed by former Mississippi Governor Kirk Fordice to the Gulf of Mexico Program's Citizen's Advisory Committee. Brown was a significant driving force in the creation of Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Pecan, Mississippi.

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AN ORAL HISTORY

with

CLYDE LESLIE BROWN

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Clyde Leslie Brown and is taking place on January 18, 2012. The interviewer is Barbara Hester. Also present are Jennifer Buchanan and Mrs. Anne Brown.

Hester: My name is Barbara Hester. I'm with The University of Southern Mississippi, the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, and I'm here today in the home of Clyde and Annie Brown. (The address of the interviewee has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy). Jennifer Buchanan is joining us, and her interview was last week. We talked a little bit about the Pecan area and so forth. So she's joining us today. I believe she's taken your interview or has interviewed you in the past. So this is great. If you would, Mr. Brown, would you state your name and address for the record?

Brown: Clyde L. Brown. (The interviewee's address has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy.)

Hester: OK, Mr. Brown. Could you tell me your occupation?

Brown: I am retired from International Paper Company, forty years service, and prior to that I did some commercial fishing when I was younger.

Hester: OK. And could you tell me when you started with your career? Was that the first occupation you had, was commercial fishing? (0:01:29.0)

Brown: Yes, it was. I dropped out of school when I was about maybe sixteen years old and started commercial fishing with trammel nets, mostly in the summer, summertime to make a few dollars, back in 1949.

Hester: And are you from a family of fishermen?

Brown: Yes, I am. I'm with the Stork Seafood group and the Clark Seafood family. I'm one of the offsprings from that group. My daddy was a commercial fisherman for a long time, and then he, when left there, he went to the International Paper Company, and that's where he retired, from International Paper Company. But he fished several years, and he fished for Clark Seafood and Stork Seafood. They ran the businesses. And that's how he fed the family.

Hester: OK. Great. You know, I should have mentioned the time when we started. It's about 10:30 in the morning. And that should have been at the beginning, and I forgot, so I'll mention it now. What was your father's name?

Brown: Nathaniel Richard Brown, and my mother was Mary Edna Stork Brown.

Hester: OK. And your father fished commercially for how long, would you say? (0:02:57.4)

Brown: He started doing just prior to the Depression, and when he came out of Alabama, and he and Mama were married in 1924, and he started fishing with Stork Seafood and worked at a sawmill in that area, too, for a while. But the main occupation was commercial fishing. And he fished for several years until they needed someone to go work a job at the paper mill, and he hired in over there.

Hester: Did he have other fishermen in his family, like brothers?

Brown: Not on his side of the family. The Brown family didn't have any. They were in the farming business, but when he moved to the Pecan/Bayou Heron area, he got into commercial fishing, and he enjoyed it. But when the paper mill—just before the Depression hit, he went to the paper mill, and they shut down a while. And he commercial fished a good while. Then after that he went back to the paper mill, and that's where he retired.

Hester: Do you have any idea what it was about the paper mill and commercial fishing that brought him to the decision to change?

Brown: Well, it was just the family, I guess, when they would need someone to go fishing with them. See, they were four-net fishermen, and they didn't have but three hands, and they needed another hand. Well, Daddy would go with them. And that's how he kind of got into it, make that fourth net, because you make four-net hauls, (0:04:44.7) and you just do better in larger areas.

Hester: What type of fishing was—predominantly what type of fishing did they do? (0:04:51.4)

Brown: They were mostly after trout, speckled trout and red drum and mullet, some flounder. That was the main fish at the time.

Hester: Did they ever do any shrimping?

Brown: He did not do any shrimping at all. Back then we didn't know anything about shrimping too much. It didn't come out till later years, shrimping in the area.

Hester: Oh, just as a general practice, it didn't come about.

Brown: Right.

Hester: It wasn't just your family that didn't start—

Brown: Well, from my knowledge of it, it came about after the oil drilling started. (0:05:29.5) You know. You might have seen the movie where they started catching the brown shrimp at night out around the oil rigs.

Hester: I heard about it, but I didn't see the movie.

Brown: Stuff like that. But in our area, they didn't get into shrimping. They were all commercial fishing.

Hester: Um-hm. What about oystering? (0:05:43.1)

Brown: Well, they did a little oystering, too, in that area. It was really a popular place; Bayou Heron was a very popular place for oysters. The Rigolets, Isles les Chats, Grand Bay Bottoms.

Hester: What was the one before? Isle?

Brown: Isle les Chats.

Hester: Do you know how to spell it?

Brown: The Rigolets, over here.

Buchanan: It looks like isle, Isle of Chats.

Brown: That's the way; it's Isle les Chats.

Hester: Isle of Chats. OK.

Brown: Isle of Chats, usually call it, yeah. But that was the area they oystered out here, and they also fished that area. The Grande Batture Islands we call them, the small islands on the inside of the main, big island, Cat Islands and Ship Island, closer in. And that's where they just, they fished a lot, you know, and rowed in and out. (0:06:32.9) They didn't have motors, so they rowed, rowed the boats out and fished and rowed back in. And Uncle Benny and Papa, my grandpa Henry Stork, would have, they'd have their camps on the bayou, and that's where they'd offload (0:06:48.1) the fish, down there on Bayou Heron.

Hester: And how would they market it? What's that process?

Brown: Well, H.W. Stork was my grandpa. Now, most of his fish stuff, he shipped them from the train station right there in Pecan, (0:07:04.4) shipped them north to

Birmingham and up North to New York, different big cities up North, where they shipped the fish to in barrels. They put them in salt barrels and shipped them back then. That was just so they'd preserve the fish. But Uncle Benny, Papa's brother, he also ran a business, Benny Harrison Stork. And he did a lot of his sales in like Mobile. He did a lot of his selling.

Hester: And it was for finfish that he mostly—

Brown: Finfish, right, mostly.

Hester: And maybe some oysters.

Brown: Right, a few oysters, mostly fish. In later years, you know, when Clark Seafood (0:07:51.4) expanded from Bayou LaBatre, they went out in Texas, to Brownsville, Texas, and they set up shop out there at Clark Seafood. That's when they really got into big business. They fished the edge of Mexico, and then got into snapper fishing, and it's now fed off to Clark Seafood in Pascagoula. And Doug, Doug was running it for a long time after Ralph passed away, and Philip(?) is running it now.

Hester: Could you tell me who these people are? How they're—

Brown: The Horns married into the Stark family. Mama's cousin Udie(?) was married to Ralph Horn, and they are the ones running Clark Seafood in Pascagoula. So they're kinfolks. Doug, I don't think Doug's working with it, now, but he's more with the golf deal, but Philip is running the shop now.

Hester: I see. OK. About what year was it that Clark expanded to include Brownsville?

Brown: I don't know whether I could even answer that one. I believe it was back in, it had to be in the [19]40s or [19]50s because we were just big boys when they started going to Texas because one of grandma's brothers, he'd work for Clark's Seafood in Bayou LaBatre for a while; then he'd come to Pascagoula, stay with Grandma and them a while. Then he'd go back to Bayou LaBatre and work with them. And eventually when they went to Texas, now, I don't know whether Uncle Ellis was still living, and that was in the [19]50s when he passed away. So I don't—it might have been early [19]50s when they went to [Brownsville].

Hester: Well, can you describe the type of boat? You said they rowed. What type of boat was it? (0:10:10.6)

Brown: Well, back when I was small, Uncle Benny had one named *The Pearl D*. It was probably thirty-eight foot, in that range. Uncle John had one, *The Gertrude H*, was fifty foot. I remember going out on it to Horn Island, went seine-boat fishing with it. Grimm(?) was the captain, Grimm Starr(?) my cousin, was the captain of the boat,

and we went out seine-fishing for a few days and nights. And we was on *The Gertrude H.* I remember that. And it was fifty foot. And later on, I made a trip with Marion(?) and Wesley and Uncle Gussy(?) on that same boat, finfishing on Horn Island and the Ship Island area. But we were mostly after mullet and trout. See, and like I say, I was thinking about going back to school, and that was just more or less filling in for about a couple of years. You know? And I went back to school.

Hester: And you were about sixteen years old then?

Brown: I started when I was about, the end of my sixteenth year. And I fished with them probably about, it was probably less than two years that I commercial fished with them, and I went back to school.

Hester: What made you decide that you were going to change from commercial fishing to—

Brown: For me personally?

Hester: Yes.

Brown: Like I said, better life for me, going back to school, getting my education, advancing that, and getting a different type job because the fishing industry was, it was, to me, wasn't my lifestyle. I could see that it wasn't really, it wasn't a good life for me and the family. It was struggle. (0:12:11.7) It's a lot of regulations (0:12:14.1) and stuff like that. It was beginning to regulate it back then. Different type webbings were coming in, different type nets, and you had to have bigger boats. I remember talking to Ralph one time about me even building a boat for myself to shrimp. And I mentioned like a forty-foot boat, and he said, "You'll never make it." So he'd been in the business for years, and he was up in the big boats then, up. They were getting eighty, ninety footers, hundred-foot boats. And this was in the late [19]70s when I talked to him about that, and I was, of course I was thinking about my retirement from the paper mill, and I was going to build me a shrimp boat, and it'd never pay for itself. So I backed off of that and built me a thirty-six-foot boat for a hobby. (0:13:11.6) And I got my thrills out of going out on weekends and from working the boat, shrimping, until somebody came by and wanted to buy it, and I let them have it.

Hester: Did you do any marketing of the catch, or did you do it for just personal consumption?

Brown: Well, I always had somebody wanting fresh fish. (0:13:30.3) They wanted fresh fish. They wanted fresh oysters, flounders, whatever. So we as a family, we'd get together and go floundering at night. We sold the catch, and we kept what we wanted to eat. Same way with oystering, and fish, too. You could sell them. Back then you could sell your catch. Of course now it's regulated where you can't do all these things. You have to have a certified shop, (0:13:57.7) and later on I did build a

small oyster shop and had it fully certified so I could go out and catch oysters or buy oysters, whatever I wanted to do, and open them and sell them. That was my hobby, but it got to be a lot of work, and age, and I backed off of that. And after the floods got to messing me up where I was located at that time, and I just got tired of fooling with it, so I just closed it down and moved up on the hill to Hurley.

Hester: And that was in the Pecan Community?

Brown: Right. Prior to all that I started working on preserving all that area down there in the marsh area (0:14:43.3) for the seafood industry and the wildlife. And today I'm still working on projects like that.

Hester: That's a great effort. What year did you retire?

Brown: February the first, 1994, from International Paper Company, North Point Mill.

Hester: And so I would be interested if you could maybe go into a little more detail in the evolution of regulations up to starting your own shop, and the regulations involved with that. This is the first time that I'll really hear any progression of that, if you could share it.

Brown: Well, I poured me a slab for my small, one-man oyster shop in 1987, (0:15:26.3) and I just took it—when I had the money, I'd build on the shop. In [19]92 I hired a guy to build it for me, put the shop up. And I think it was [19]93 when I got approved through the planning department, Jackson County Planning Department. They approved it for me, and then I got the permits from the DMR [Department of Marine Resources], all the necessary permits to operate a oyster shop and the inspections and went through everything, flying colors, no problem.

Hester: What is it that they're looking for? Is it like health, cleanliness?

Brown: Well, they inspect regularly, unannounced on health, and they need to. It needs to be inspected (0:16:26.5) because you do have people that don't want to abide by the rules, and it really hurts the shops that abide by the rules and spend all that money to put in these shops, and other people don't. They don't spend extra money. They want all the cash in their pocket.

Hester: I understand.

Brown: And they do check for them regularly, and if they catch them, they fine them.

Hester: Right. Stepping back in time a bit to the change you made from commercial fishing in your youth to going to work with the IP, you mentioned some net restrictions then. So regulations had played at least some part in that decision. Could you give us some details on that?

Brown: Back when we fished, we had trammel nets. (0:17:25.9) We had—

Hester: Could you describe that?

Brown: We had cotton nets. They would be nine hundred feet to a thousand feet long for each skiff. They would probably be, most of them would be in the inch-and-a-quarter- or inch-and-a-half type stretch, and the fish would get bagged with like a six-inch yoker. We called them six-inch yokers, but you'd pull it, and you talking stretched out, it'd be about thirteen inches, close to it. And the mullet would get, or trout would get bagged in that trammel net. Well, later years they went to the monofilament-type webbing, nylon webbing. This is regulations on it, and gillnets would be mono. The mullet or trout would gill itself in it, and then regulations (0:18:26.5) came into play with this. Now, I don't know all the details on that, but I know the regulations forced people to go to this type webbing, biodegradable webbing. We had to have some of that, and it cost; you have a cost ratio in there, too. This drives up the costs of commercial fishing. (0:18:47.4) Then like I say, your boats got bigger and bigger and bigger and more expensive, liabilities involved, more insurance for the boats and people on them. It's a lot involved for a guy to go in commercial fishing. And today, today's market, I don't believe a young couple could get in the seafood industry because of the costs unless it's passed down from several generations back. They couldn't go into the business. It would be as bad or worse than going into farming. My grandsons would not even think about going into commercial fishing.

Hester: I heard that fuel costs even drive it up more these days. It's so expensive for fuel.

Brown: Um-hm.

Hester: What did you do with International Paper? (0:19:39.9)

Brown: I started off on extra board. That means you go out there and you meet every shift, seven o'clock shift, three o'clock or eleven at night, and if there's somebody needs a hand that night, they'll call the gate, say, "Send Mr. Brown back to the pulp mill or number three machine or plug or wherever." That was extra board. But when I hired in I told Mr. Harris, I said, "If I can get in that gate, I'll get my eight hours a day and forty hours a week," because I was local. We had worked before; I had, while I was out of school. I went to the paper mill when I got eighteen. I quit that net-fishing. I went to the paper mill and hired in regular. And Mr. Harris would ask Daddy, "Do you have any more boys you can send me," because we did a good job. And it was several of us worked out there. But you need to have a work attitude when you go to a place like that, and you won't have any trouble keeping a job, things like that.

Hester: That's right.

Brown: I don't believe we have the work attitude now, the younger generation. They've got different type jobs. They're high tech, computer work. It's not with your hands like we worked. We got our exercise, too, when we were working at the paper mill, and we enjoyed it. I put in my forty years there.

Hester: And you enjoyed working there?

Brown: Oh, yeah, enjoyed going to work.

Hester: Yeah. But still came back to—

Brown: But I still enjoyed the commercial—

Hester: And retired commercial fisherman.

Brown: Yeah, retirement. I'd go floundering, hook-and-lining, and oystering. And occasionally I'd get with somebody had a gillnet and go out, just take a day and go out gillnet fishing. Enjoyed it just being out on water.

Hester: Can you tell me anything about the prices as they were when you were sixteen and working with your dad, vis-à-vis the prices after retirement, how the market changed? What was different between those two periods of your fishing experience?

Brown: I don't recall ever making a big pile of money commercial fishing when I was fishing. I do remember one Saturday night that me and my partner, we partnered up with a couple of other guys to drive by Heron to catch trout. That's one that it's not a fish tale. It's a true story. Uncle Henry and I were fishing together, just two nets. It was daytime we caught them, but we'd go out at night occasionally. That week, up to that Saturday night, we had \$10 apiece made, and Uncle Benny talked us into running the bayou that night, and we set those linen nets in the bayou. (0:22:58.7) We started a certain place driving the trout to the head, up to the bridge, and we put that linen net—I had a linen net. We put it—I think it was an eighteen, three or sixteen, three, webbing. We'd put it right there in the hole at that big bridge up there in Bayou Heron, and we'd go back to the camp, make coffee, and just at the crack of daylight, we'd go up there and pick those nets up. Before the sports fishermen come from Mobile to fish in that bayou, (laughter) and we made \$40 that one night, apiece. So we made a \$50 week that week, and that was big money. And that was probably in 1949 or [19]50, probably the winter of [19]49. (0:23:54.2) That was one of my big catches.

Hester: Wow. (laughter) I understand that over the course of your two careers, commercial fishing and IP that you've stayed in touch with the fishing industry. Could you explain your role and how you've stayed in touch with the fishermen?

Brown: Well, I got appointed to the Gulf of Mexico Program, and that really put me in touch with a lot of people from five states from Texas to Florida. (0:24:28.7) And we'd talk to a lot of commercial fishermen, their needs. What could we do for the environment to improve the areas? Pollution runoff, talked to farmers about runoff, the dead zone off of Louisiana. That was a big topic, and if you get there, in among the people that's doing this type work, you can learn more than you can reading a book. I can tell you.

Hester: Makes sense.

Brown: Really. You need to get out there with the people that's doing it. You learn what kind of rigging they need and what you can do to help those people improve their catch and improve their equipment. Just like a few years ago they started with the TED [turtle excluder device], the turtle excluder. (0:25:26.2) Want to put them on the nets. Oh, they had a fit about that, but now, later on, after they started improving these TEDs, it would show that they wasn't losing any shrimp. It was improving them. They let all the turtles out, a lot of the bycatch out. The boat wasn't overloaded, pulling the net. It could pull freer. Less fuel was used. It helped them, and it come through NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration]. That project did several years ago. That's just one thing, and another project we worked on was improving the pollution for the oyster reefs. (0:26:12.7) We put in the rock refilter systems along the Bayou Cumbest area. That was one of the projects we had in Jackson County. I think we put in thirty-eight. Went through the homes. I was on the team that selected the houses that were closer to the water. And people, most of them, were thrilled to death. It didn't cost them anything. The government paid the bill. And we put brand-new septic systems in for them and hooked them up, and they planted the plants to take care of the pollution, and it did help improve the water quality in those areas.

Hester: Well, if you would, the Gulf of Mexico Program, (0:27:00.8) what's the official title, or is that the official title?

Brown: Yeah.

Hester: It is Gulf of Mexico?

Brown: That is the title.

Hester: Who sponsored it? Was it a—

Brown: The EPA [Environmental Protection Agency].

Hester: EPA.

Brown: And their office is over here at Stennis Space Center.

Hester: Oh, OK. And how did your involvement start with it? Did they call you on the phone?

Brown: Well, I'm a member of the Jackson County Farm Bureau, and each year we have conventions, through statewide. And this particular year, Mr. Waller, Don Waller, was our president of the Farm Bureau Federation, and he knew that I lived in Jackson County. And he would come down to visit our board, and we'd talk seafood. And I'd lobby him a little bit for our seafood industry if we needed something down here through Farm Bureau because Farm Bureau is a big lobbying entity for Mississippi. And one day I got a call when I was at work at the paper mill. He said, "We've got an opening on the Gulf of Mexico Program for fisheries. Would you be interested?" And I told him, "Yes, I'd be interested in it," because I was really involved in it with the oyster relay project (0:28:26.7) at that time, that we started in like [19]87. We started the relay project to plant oysters in Jackson County. We'd move from one location—we called it a polluted area—move it over to a cleaner area so they could purge themselves and be clean enough to catch and eat.

Buchanan: I think you were appointed by the governor. Weren't you?

Brown: Right. And at that time we had our governor; Kirk Fordice was our governor. So Don Waller got with him, and the governor made the appointment. And that was October 30, of 1992, and that was for four years for me. And they move those appointments around, so I was on for four years. And I really enjoyed it and learned a lot, too, traveling the whole five states with that program.

Hester: Were you affiliated with any local groups at the time that you got this call?

Brown: Yeah. I went in for a meeting one morning at Stennis, and the guy with the [Mississippi] State Soil and Water Conservation Commission was there, and he told me, said, "You need to be on the soil and water, Jackson County, the Soil and Water District." So he called Libby Pittman who was one of the commissioners for the Jackson County Soil and Water District here, and she called me. And so that was in, I think that was in 1994; I got on the Soil and Water District for Jackson County, and I stayed on it for close to fourteen years. When I started retiring from different organizations, I retired from that one, but I spent fourteen years, right at, on soil and water, deputy commissioner. And that's how we got those folks to help put in those rock refilterers, a cosponsor. And the Gulf of Mexico Program was cosponsored in Jackson County. So we got the money and coordinated it. I coordinated a lot of these programs through our local people and with the supervisors and different groups, and we'd get the money and install them. They'd bid it out and install them. It's kind of the same way I did with—we needed to get our boats in and out of Bayou Heron. (0:31:03.7) It was so shallow you couldn't get a boat more than a skiff out. So I go to the corps of engineers and the county supervisors and DMR. And I have a permit so I can have it dug out, minus seven feet. And we got it dredged out in, I think it was 1981, [19]82 we did that job and opened it up where we could get boats in and out of Bayou Heron so they could continue to commercial fish in and out of there. We used

to have a channel there years ago, and over the years it would fill in with so much dredging different places. Silt would come in and fill them in, so we opened it back up. But it's filled back in now, but we got it open for a long time.

Hester: One of the themes of our oral histories that we're taking is resiliency, and I think that this is just really on the nose on that issue. And during the course of your involvement with the Gulf of Mexico Program and these other groups, what I'm hearing is that the commercial fishermen would have a voice in you to say, "I'm challenged by this particular," like for example, the silting of Bayou Heron. And so, "We're having a problem with this." And then you bring it to the proper people and try and get that problem solved, which brings them back, makes them resilient where they can continue with their fishing. So my question is pretty open-ended. With that in mind, if you could talk about your involvement with the program and these other groups, the soil and water conservation group and so forth, talk about some of the challenges that the commercial fishermen were facing, how they brought that challenge to your attention, and how you brought it to the attention of the authorities that could make it better for the commercial fishermen, some instances of that.

Brown: I don't know where to start on that one at. You're talking about different projects now?

Hester: Yeah. For example, well, I guess the Bayou Heron situation brings it to mind. What made Bayou Heron special to commercial fishermen? And when it silted, how did it impact them? And how did the work that you do in opening it make them, bring them back, make them resilient, make them more productive, their occupation more productive?

Brown: Well, by all the silt coming in, filling in the mouth, in the channel, the fishermen got where they couldn't get in and out. So something had to be done there so they could go out to the fishing grounds.

Hester: Right. How big was the fishing grounds there? What type of environment was it that made it special to them?

Brown: Well, the Grand Bay Bottom is more, we call it duck grass [duckweed i.e. Lemnoideae]. We got a biological name to that. Jennifer could tell you what type grass it is, but we call it duck grass. We have the duck hunters come in as far away as Mobile County, Baldwin County. Some of them come to Bayou Heron. They have for years and years, fish out of Bayou Heron because it was a popular place.

Buchanan: Rupier witchin(?) grass, that's what you're talking about.

Brown: OK. She's my biologist. (laughter)

Hester: Yeah. I'll be calling her to find out to spell that, too. (laughter)

Brown: I wish I could find my book that—(laughter) Weeden(?) that came by, he was rowing out there in the bayou, and I was oystering one day. I could see him going across in that little john boat. (laughter)

Hester: So you were talking about the duck grass.

Brown: We used to have a lot of duck hunters (0:35:34.3) coming through Bayou Heron, going out to the Grande Batture Islands, and they set the duck blinds up. And it was a regular thing for those guys, those people, to come to duck hunt out there. Plus all us natives from Jackson County, we went out in Bayou Heron to go out duck hunting and oystering and fishing. You just about have to have this opening, or they can't maneuver.

Hester: My mind was going to opening a fishing habitat, but really it was opening access to—

Brown: To the fishing, right, yeah. Years ago when they had the camps there, they didn't have—the channel was open enough for these thirty-six-, thirty-eight-foot boats back then, but when they quit running in and out, those people, when they died off, the younger group didn't fish out of here. They left, most of them, and went to Louisiana. The Stork family, they fished out of Louisiana in Port Sulphur, down in that way, and I can't think of the rest of those places in Louisiana they fished out of. But anyway, it just filled in because when everybody went out here, then would be outboard motors or something like that, small, trolling motors that didn't keep it opened up. So they had to do something to get it back open for the people, [to] bring it back, the fishing.

Hester: About what year was it that it was reopened?

Brown: Reopened? In 1983 I got the permit back over there, and we were trying to fix it where we could have places where you could tie up some of the bigger boats and fix the dock. I worked seven years to get a launch down on Bayou Heron. (0:37:32.2) Finally got it done, and Jennifer, I know she had a lot to do with that. But we got these organizations to cosponsor, to put in that nice double launch on Bayou Heron and a fishing dock, and it's really nice. And local people can come down there and crab off the dock, and a handicap accessible. And the fishermen that come in there to launch their small skiffs, most go out, they're hook-and-liners. They really love it. And it played a part in the Grand Bay NERR [National Estuarine Research Reserve], also, too, this facility.

Hester: How's that?

Brown: It had a little thing to do with that, too, the Grand Bay NERR.

Hester: Can you tell us about it?

Brown: Where do I start at? (laughter)

Hester: It's up to you. (laughter) Let's start from the beginning. (laughter)

Brown: In 1979, we had four Brown brothers. We built boats. (0:38:36.9) And down on Bayou Heron we had a guy that was opening up a channel out there where you put docks and piers and stuff like this. And so I had a guy come in and drive piling to build a dock facility, where they could tie their boats up or launch their skiffs. Put my own private launch in, and we got another guy that's got a bait shop down there where the fishermen come in and buy bait.

Hester: Is that the bait shop that I heard is still there?

Brown: Yeah. Yeah, it's still on the bayou. And my brother has recently put in him a bait shop on Bayou Heron, on his property. But I started in 1979 to really try to get some way of getting the government involved, and the state to preserve that marsh area down there (0:39:46.2) and went through the process, befriending people from the governor on down and the United States Senator, both of them, and all the supervisors in Jackson County on the Coast to get that Grand Bay NERR down in Jackson County. And Governor Kirk Fordice, it went through his office and was approved in [19]99. We cut—

Buchanan: Dedicated it.

Brown: Dedicated it in 1999, in June. I think it was June the twenty-second of [19]99. And then we had the ribbon-cutting. We had the dedication of it on Bayou Cumbest on December the seventh of [19]99. And then we had the ribbon-cutting December the seventh of 2009 on the Grand Bay NERR, which that's the acronym. It's the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Jackson County, Mississippi, but it is a Mississippi NERR. It's Bayou Heron, Pecan, or Jackson County. It's for everybody. (0:41:10.1)

Hester: You said 2009 was the ribbon-cutting?

Brown: December the seventh, that's Pearl Harbor Day. And we had both of those dedications at the same date. Senator Cochran was our guest speaker December the seventh, [19]99 on Bayou Cumbest.

Hester: Ninety-nine, OK.

Brown: Um-hm. And then we had the ribbon-cutting down here on Bayou Heron on December the seventh of 2009. That's when it was officially opened to the public.

Hester: OK. Was there a building that was there before [Hurricane] Katrina that was open to the public?

Buchanan: We had temporary trailers that we worked out of.

Brown: Temporary trailers.

Hester: OK. Well, I just—interesting—

Brown: You can stop anytime you want to. I need a break. (laughter)

Hester: I don't want to stop you, Mr. Brown. (laughter) This is great. I have a newspaper clipping here that's framed, and it's something to be very proud of. I can see. It says, "Mississippian receives National Environmental Hero Award," and it shows you as being the recipient. Congratulations. This is quite an honor.

Brown: Thank you.

Hester: Could you tell us about this?

Brown: Well, that (0:42:23.8) goes back to when I got involved with this group of people, Natalie Peter from NOAA. She's out of Silver Spring, Maryland. And one cold, windy day, Dave Ruple, he's our NERR manager now. He was with the DMR at that time; environmental studies he was doing. And we had a meeting with this lady to tour this area in Bayou Heron, area for the Grand Bay NERR. And we went on a boat ride on Bayou Cumbest, and we come over to Bayou Heron and went for a boat ride. And when we got back on land that day, she walks up and says, "Mr. Brown, you don't have to build that building right here at this dock. You can build it on the hill if you want to." Well, I already had the site picked out. It was the old Ledlow site, where the facility is now. And a few years later, well, Ruple, he was trying to get me some other kind of an award for the work I'd been doing for the environment, and I believe it was the J.P. Jones Award.

Buchanan: I don't know about that one.

Brown: Anyway, well, I didn't get that one for some reason, Jennifer. What happened? (laughter)

Buchanan: We tried, Clyde. (laughter) Got you a better one. (laughter)

Brown: So I didn't know about this; it was all a secret about the Environmental Hero Award. I didn't know a thing about that. I was going down there that day to cut the ribbon with my boat for the double launch we had installed down in Bayou Heron. And Mr. Holt, Elton Holt from NOAA was there, and I didn't know him. He was on Bayou Heron that day, but I knew Natalie. And my daughter flew in from Little Rock. I didn't know why she was coming special. She told me some story. But Mama knew about it, too, for two weeks; kept it a secret. And that's what came about was the Environmental Hero Award for the work I'd been doing for probably thirty years for the environment in this area, in Mississippi.

Hester: That's wonderful, Mr. Brown.

Buchanan: That's a NOAA award, straight from NOAA.

Hester: Well, that's great.

Brown: Um-hm. And they presented me that award that day on Bayou Heron.

Hester: And that was June 4, 2003. Well, I'd like to get a copy of this. I might take a photograph of this if it will work. I'd like to read it.

Brown: It was May the twenty-second, 2003, is when it was presented.

Hester: OK. May 22, 2003, it was presented.

Brown: Yeah. This is an article that was sent.

Hester: The article date, yeah, that's right. That's right. I'm curious—

Brown: Go get her the picture of it and show her, the award. It's on the wall right there.

Buchanan: It doesn't have a date on it. I just looked at it. Yeah.

Hester: That's amazing.

Brown: But I've got the date up here.

Hester: Mr. Brown just asked his wife to go get a—

Brown: I want to tell you one thing, too. While I was being interviewed, I think it was the afternoon before this occasion, a guy from the *Sun-Herald* came over, and the names are slipping away from me, but Rita my daughter was here in Pecan, and we were talking. I told him I wanted him to put one sentence in that article, that Ann's pecan pie was what got the Grand Bay NERR. (laughter) That was the day that we took Natalie on this tour for the Grand Bay NERR, and she told me, "The buck stops here," with her. And I said, "Oh, we're going to get that Grand Bay NERR." (laughter) You were probably on that tour, Jennifer.

Buchanan: I actually don't think that I was on the tour.

Brown: Anyway—

Buchanan: I've got pictures of it (inaudible).

Brown: Dave Ruple came up to me, said, “Now, Clyde, we need about a forty-five minute layover somewhere. We got to meet Senator Cochran at Chevron at a certain time.” I said, “Well, I’ve got just the place. We’ll just come to my place, and we’ll have coffee and pecan pie.” (0:47:11.9) Ann called Debbie, my daughter, and she came down. They made two pecan pies and had plenty coffee, and it was about ten or eleven of us, and we all met at my house in Pecan and had pecan pie. And that’s how that story came about. The pecan pie got the Grand Bay NERR with Natalie. (laughter)

Hester: So is there another place on the wall for another award? (laughter)

Brown: It also made the *Sun-Herald*, too. (laughter)

Hester: Wow. That’s amazing. That’s an amazing story, an amazing accomplishment.

Brown: But it’s been a good ride, and it’s been about—like I say, I started these projects in 1979. I got a call from a guy from Jackson, and he wanted to come talk to me. And I forgot which one it was. It might have been—it’s been so long ago, I forgot the guy’s name. They move around so much with the Heritage Program. Chris—

Hester: Do you know how to spell his last name, Fital?

Brown: F-I-T-A-L, I believe, F-I-T-A-L. But he worked out of Jackson, the office up there, the Heritage Program. It used to be on Jefferson Street, but it might be out at LeFleur’s Bluff now. It’s where they have the office. But anyway, I think it was him that called me, and he wanted to come down and talk to me. And my brother Sidney had just launched his steel-hull, and he was down on the bayou, working on the winch, getting it ready. I remember it was about May or June of that year. And I told him, I said, “Let’s get on the boat and look around.” So we got up there, and I told him, I said, “I want you to look south, and I want you to look north.” And he didn’t know what I was talking about. And I said, “This program that you’re involved with, we want to preserve this whole area for the seafood industry and the wildlife.” (0:49:16.9) And from then on we got it done.

Hester: Wow. That’s amazing. And it’s such a beautiful area there and such an important area, the wetlands and the marshes, and it’s a noble effort and so much done there. I’m curious, with the Bayou Heron project and the launch and opening that access for the commercial fishermen, who I assume is still using it for—

Brown: They use it now for, more or less, the hook and line. There’s no big boats going and coming. In fact, looking now, I hope it stays that way. The commercial fishing is fading out, slowly, but it’s going out. (0:50:18.5) Plus technology’s taking over. They’re going out to deeper waters. They’ve gotten into the red snapper business. (0:50:26.9) They’re not into the mulleting anymore. (0:50:28.1) And the

roe mullet deal, they've shut that down, taking the roe from the mullet and destroying the fish. That's all been taken care of through regulations and laws. (0:50:38.5) And they use cast nets to catch mullet. Now, some states may have a little short net. I think Alabama's got like a three-hundred-foot net that they can go out, recreational, and catch mullet. But they have to be so far from the bank or whatever. It's still regulations, but they can still catch a mess of mullet to have fish fries with. Or they use the cast nets to catch them. In fact, when I talk to our fishermen at church, their offspring, they catch them by Brill nets or cast nets because Uncle Wesley Stork, he tells me all the time his grandson brings him mullet all the time for him to fry and invite them up to help him eat them. (laughter)

Hester: I think I asked him what his favorite meal, seafood meal was, I think he said mullet, fried mullet. (laughter)

Brown: Right. We had blackened mullet before the blackened redfish thing hit New Orleans and spread across the Coast; we were having blackened mullet way back then. (laughter)

Hester: Yeah. Sorry Paul Prudhomme, but (laughter) you were beat on that one. (laughter)

Brown: That was hard times.

Hester: Yeah. I'm going to go back a little bit to a question I asked earlier regarding the Gulf of Mexico Program. (0:52:08.4) OK. We talked about Bayou Heron and the project there. For example you were going to multiple states. What were some of the issues that were called to your attention, say, in Louisiana, by Louisiana fishermen?

Brown: I think the biggest issue in Louisiana was loss of wetlands, (0:52:30.7) and I believe they would occasionally bring up about the dead zone because Mr. Waller(?) was president of the Farm Bureau, and the EPA was—I don't want to be too negative, but I think they were more blaming the farmer for that runoff, the dead zone. And if memory serves me right, we had a group of Congressmen from Washington to come down a few years ago, and they went on a tour of Louisiana strictly looking for the dead zone, and they couldn't find it when they were doing this research. Really couldn't find it, but they probably didn't know where to look or what they were looking for. They were from Washington, DC. (laughter) They weren't from the marsh area. They were probably from some desert somewhere and really didn't know what they were looking for, or either they didn't want to find it because that runoff comes from thirty-one states in the Mississippi River. When it flows South and goes through New Orleans down to the Gulf, it's a lot of miles between New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico.

Hester: Right. So it's got to be more than just farm runoff.

Brown: Yeah. It's not just the farmer's fault, but they getting blamed for it. These golf courses, these drainages from the cities goes out with oil in it where they change the oil in their backyard; it gets in that storm drain. (0:54:15.9) It's a lot more—

Hester: When they would come to you with the loss of wetlands and the dead zone, and express their concern about these things, what would you do with that concern, with the information?

Brown: Well, they would meet with the different states. We'd always have them on that committee. Usually it would be the president of the Farm Bureau from each state. I know Florida and Alabama and Mississippi and Louisiana. All five states had a Farm Bureau representative, top level, and of course I was a member of Farm Bureau, too, but Mr. Waller was president of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation. He was our spokesman for that, but when it come to the fishing end of it, he would consult with me ahead of time, and I would give that report on the fishing end of it, wetlands here, and help him decide what we're going to talk about on Mississippi's report pertaining to the dead zone or whatever or pollution of the waters, trying to correct it. And the best management practices came out of it, for the farmers. (0:55:45.2) And it's still in effect today. They have buffer zones, all states now. They have buffer zones that they have to move their cattle back from the streams, like fifty feet some of them, maybe a hundred feet, fence it off. Then the conservation people, they have programs that help defray costs to do that for the farmers. So it's things that we talked about. The Gulf of Mexico Program started in 1988, and I got on it in [19]92. A lot of those things we talked about, they're practiced today, and it's helping clean the water up. And it will help the seafood industry as it cleans it up. (0:56:40.8) I know it's helping the oyster business. You take right now; when I talk to these fishermen down there about the type of fishing they do, hook-and-lining, they're catching bigger trout now. Getting to that [BP Deepwater Horizon] oil spill (0:57:01.3) thing, that just happened last year. They're catching bigger fish now than they have in several years, and my thinking on it, analyzing it, sounds to me like that I think they had a little down time in there after the spill, and it gave these speckled trout a little freedom to grow and multiply. Now I don't know how they're looking at it, but that's the way I'm looking at it, analyzing what happened. How come the fish bigger now than they were two years ago? (0:57:35.6) It wasn't because more fish came in. It was because they had a chance to grow because of the regulations, Louisiana's regulations (0:57:46.5) for speckled trout, for the rod-and-reel fishing, I think it's twelve inches. It's twelve inches in Louisiana. It's fourteen inches—

Buchanan: It's fourteen in Mississippi.

Brown: It's fourteen in Mississippi, but it's twelve inches in Louisiana. Several years ago I was in Jackson, and I drove from Jackson, coming home, we went to Biloxi to a meeting, stopped by there for that meeting, and they was really discussing this speckled trout, the length of the fish. And they'd kept it at twelve because of spawning, so when the trout got twelve inches, more of them would be available to spawn. They'd have more fish. This is a tourist (0:58:37.3) attraction to bring them

into Louisiana. You go on a boat over there, a charter boat, you're going to catch fish. You come to Mississippi, you can't keep them. You got to throw them back unless he's fourteen inches. Redfish at one time was twenty-two inches; couldn't catch but three fish. I think it's still three fish with the redfish, but one of them can be over thirty inches. But they reduced that twenty-two inch back down to, I think it's sixteen inches on the redfish now, but you can't catch but three. Red snapper, they can catch two. And I don't know what the length is. It's small, but when I'm talking on this mic, here now, I don't get to fish as often as I used to, so some of these numbers are kind of getting away from me.

Hester: Sure, sure. Talking about BP, I'd like to talk some more about the oil spill, but I'd also like to talk about [Hurricane] Katrina. (0:59:41.0) And you have spoken with fishermen in the course of your work with the Gulf of Mexico Program and Soil and Water Conservation and so forth. You've been in touch with the fishermen. Could you talk a bit about how they were impacted by Katrina?

Brown: Devastating. They was just about all wiped out. They lost their homes, their boats, their livelihood, and what I could hear and read, a lot of them, they haven't been paid properly. Some of them got a little check up front, but they haven't gotten any money since then, and it's still in litigation about it.

Hester: In regards to Katrina?

Brown: No, the oil spill. Katrina, a lot of people left the Coast, moved inland. It was too expensive to build back on the Coast. The insurance (1:00:51.4) is a big problem, and it's still a problem. The price of it has gone up so much, you can't hardly afford it. The price of building a house now is outrageous, and a commercial fishermen, unless he's really the big guy that owns all the boats and got all the captains, running six or eight boats, he might could afford a new house, but these fishermen won't be able to build these big houses nowadays, not on a fisherman's salary. And Katrina, it's just like over in Biloxi, most of the shops [seafood processors] closed down, the processors, (1:01:45.1) and they sold out to casinos. They moved on Back Bay, and it's not but four or five of them left now, where they used to be just lined up years ago, all kind of shops, big shops, processing plants.

Hester: How does that impact commercial fishermen who are working in Mississippi waters?

Brown: Well, they just don't have a market to sell their product right there.

Hester: Do they have to go to another state or another area?

Brown: Well, they go into Louisiana or Alabama. Bayou LaBatre's still pretty good, but it was hit hard, too, with Katrina, so they go to Louisiana, and that's a long way from Jackson County [Mississippi].

Hester: And a lot of fuel costs that they'll have to incur to get it there.

Brown: Right. A lot of expense. And too, in the Louisiana area, I think it was [Hurricane] Rita (1:02:39.1) was the storm that hit after Katrina and messed up Louisiana and parts of Texas. So it just about wiped the commercial fisherman out. It's a few of them—now, Clark is back in operation, but not nearly as big as it used to be.

Hester: How many locations do they have now?

Brown: Far as I know, Clark's just in Pascagoula.

Hester: Just here.

Brown: Other than Doug was at the golf course. (laughter)

Hester: How many of the commercial fishermen that you know actually left the area, and how many stayed? I'm just trying to get a sense of how much of a loss.

Brown: Oh, I don't have any idea.

Hester: You think it would be like 50 percent of the commercial fishermen just left the business after Katrina?

Brown: I don't have an answer on that.

Hester: Hard to, yeah, hard to answer that. Well, the ones that stayed, how did they manage to make it through? How did they cope with Katrina and the aftermath of Katrina and then get back on their feet and start working and pursuing their occupation, again?

Brown: Jennifer, you're going to have to help me.

Hester: Feel free to.

Brown: Well, I mean, I just know it took a long time for the recovery (1:04:05.5) because most of the people were working on their homes, and they had to get their families safe before they could get back into fixing their boats, so I don't know. I know you could go to the DMR and could look at the number of fishing licenses that were issued before and after and do some comparisons like that, but all I know is that, living on the Coast and what I saw, was that people were really just trying—so many people lost their homes, that it was just really a matter of finding a place to live. A lot of fishermen rode the storm out on the boats because their boats were so valuable to them. So some of them were able to save the boats, and it wound up that some of, boats became the homes. (1:04:55.0) So I know for a while, you had a lot of the

commercial fishermen literally living on boats until they could restore their homes. But numbers, I have no idea what the numbers are.

Brown: DMR would be your best bet. You can get the number of licenses that were sold, say, five, six years ago, and go back several years from that prior to the storm, and they'll have the number, the licenses that were sold from the DMR. And it'd be in-state, each county and also Mobile County. A lot of Alabama fishermen come over here and buy license to fish this area, too, reciprocal agreements. (1:05:33.6)

Hester: That's a good idea.

Brown: You check with them, DMR, and they can give you that information and the numbers.

Buchanan: And a lot of people really couldn't fish, like shrimp or anything because there was so much debris (1:05:46.1) in the water for quite a long time that they couldn't risk tearing up their nets, between the contamination and the debris in the water. It was amazing.

Brown: Refrigerators out there. You couldn't pull a net.

Buchanan: Everything.

Hester: How long was that contamination period? And were the waters restricted where fishing was shut down after Katrina?

Buchanan: How many years did it take to clean all that debris up? I don't remember. I mean, I remember watching them, going by and watching them, but how long that process took, I don't remember. DMR would know. Irving Jackson is the one to talk with because he's the one that coordinated that process after the storm, at the DMR. It was, I think it went on for a couple of years.

Brown: Yeah, at least a couple of years.

Hester: Were the waters closed due to contamination?

Brown: Especially oyster reefs (1:06:47.1) were closed, and as far as fishing, there were certain areas that were closed until they could figure out what had happened. The hook-and-line fishermen (1:07:01.1) didn't suffer so much because they didn't have to depend on their trawls. It's the trawls that would get hung up on debris that would rip, so they just couldn't do it.

Brown: If they had a boat.

Buchanan: If they had a boat left. Yeah.

Brown: If they had a boat left.

Hester: Yeah, true. When would you say—OK, Katrina was August, 2005. When would you say commercial fishing was back on its feet after Katrina? Kind of business as usual.

Buchanan: Is it?

Brown: I don't know whether it's even back on its feet today or not, really.

Buchanan: Well, I think it started getting back on its feet just about the time the oil spill hit.

Brown: Yeah, right.

Buchanan: And so you went from one disaster to another one.

Brown: And then the oil spill [BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster] came in, and that shut them down completely. (1:07:49.7)

Hester: Can you talk a little bit about that, the oil spill, and how it impacted the commercial fishing industry?

Brown: Well, they shut the waters down. They couldn't even go out to fish, and they were afraid of the contaminations. The USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] came in then and said, "No. You can't fish." So—

Hester: What was the expectation for the fishing season before the waters were closed due to the oil spill? Do you have any idea?

Brown: Between Katrina and the oil spill?

Hester: Well, prior to the oil spill, just the season prior to the oil spill, or well, maybe it was in the midst of a fishing season when it happened. But what was the expectation for that season? Was it a good year?

Brown: Yeah. I think that was the one they was supposed to have bumper crop, and then the oil spill came in and just shut them completely down, and they just lost their livelihood altogether, again. So the commercial fisherman has really been hit hard in the last few years.

Hester: It's taken a double whammy.

Brown: Yeah, right.

Buchanan: Especially the oystermen.

Brown: Then in, it was last year, 2011, when they had the floods; the Mississippi River was flooding, again, and they opened up the Bonnet Carre Spillway (1:09:15.1), and it killed at least 90 to 95 percent of the oysters (1:09:20.0) of our Mississippi reefs over here in Harrison and Hancock County. So the oyster season, it's out.

Hester: A triple whammy.

Brown: Yeah. And then the other one, the Morganza—

Hester: Morganza Pass.

Brown: —Spillway (1:09:36.3) is Baton Rouge, north of Baton Rouge, they opened it up, too, and it went on down towards New Iberia, through that way. Bayou Teche dumps out into the Gulf [of Mexico], and it almost devastated that area with fresh water. So those two spillways really puts a lot of freshwater in those areas, and it hurt Mississippi more than it did Louisiana because it spread out wide, and it wasn't as bad within that spillway as ours was over here at the Bonnet Carre Spillway. But Mississippi really caught it.

Hester: What was the sense that you got from the commercial fishermen when they were dealing with the news of the oil spill and watching, waiting to see the effects of the oil spill on the waters of the Gulf of Mexico? What were they expressing to you? (1:10:51.0)

Brown: They thought the fishing business was just gone because the oil was going to come in and kill all the marsh grasses. And the nursery areas and everything would be just devastated. And the news people was showing these spots on TV on NBC and CBS and ABC was showing the Louisiana marsh was just devastated. And of course they didn't give us much report over here, and I don't think Mississippi, as far as the oil spill, Mississippi and Alabama didn't have as much oil as Louisiana had because of the currents was taking it more that way. (1:11:36.5) Now, this is my opinion of it. And I did drive down to Bayou Heron to check the Grand Bay NERR one day, (1:11:49.9) and talked to some federal people that was going and doing the testing and looking and keeping a watch on the Grand Bay NERR. And the guy that had the badge on, and I don't know who he was, but I asked him what effect was it having on the Grand Bay Marsh here, and he said it hadn't had any effect on it. That's what he told me.

Hester: And that would have been about how long after the spill?

Brown: That was several weeks after the spill. I think the spill was in April. Wasn't it?

Buchanan: It was April, and it didn't get to the Reserve until like June 12.

Brown: OK. They were watching it from Bayou Casotte Channel over to Bayou LaBatre, this group that was going out of Bayou Heron. And it made me feel good that the Grand Bay NERR was not going to be completely devastated. And I still don't think it hurt it very much.

Hester: So there wasn't a major impact? It was just maybe some tar balls?

Buchanan: We had some marsh that got covered in oil. (1:12:59.2) A lot of the oil, a lot of the damage was done by the booms that were put out to collect the oil. And then a lot of oil product itself got back up—the thing is, you don't know the long-term impacts. You don't know how it hurt the food web. The marsh seems to visually have recovered fairly quickly, but you don't know about the sediments, or you don't know about the grass beds, especially. That's what's really, that we're worried about are the grass beds and—

Hester: How long does it take to really get a sense of the damage that was done to the grasses and so forth?

Buchanan: Well, the recovery, the studies will be going on for years and decades. It's going to take a long time.

Brown: It's going to be an ongoing project to find out the results on that.

Buchanan: It's a large, standardized project that'll be across the whole impacted area. So you have some areas that are representative of different things. Our Reserve was chose to determine the impacts, especially on the marsh birds, like the rails and those secretive marsh birds that you don't often see because we have a lot of data preexisting to spill. Different wetland sites along the Gulf of Mexico are being used to study impacts, and so it's going to be for at least the next ten years, at least.

Hester: And the NERR facility is instrumental in all of that.

Brown: Really. Really, we are blessed to have this Grand Bay NERR here for the studies for this area of the Gulf Coast, I think.

Hester: That's the truth.

Buchanan: Yeah. The reserves—and there are several of them within the impacted area that [are] sort of sentinel sites, basically, that they were able to come in—they had preexisting data (1:14:53.9) so that we will be able to document changes in the habitats based on whether or not, presence or absence of oil. So, “Was there any? Is there any? And how long's it going to last?”

Hester: And at some point, probably what type of mitigation efforts can we—

Buchanan: There's a lot of mitigation proposed along the Mississippi Gulf Coast now. (1:15:22.2) From what I can see a lot of it's going into artificial reefs for both fin fishing and for oysters. I haven't seen the entire plan, so I don't know. But our Reserve will be involved in that as well.

Brown: Well, maybe we'll get some of this C-AP(?) to help some of those projects.

Hester: You were saying that the size of the fish increased after the oil spill probably because there wasn't a lot of fishing done and so forth. Could you give me a sense of what the fishermen were saying when they—I've heard that from other fishermen as well.

Brown: Oh, really?

Hester: Yeah. So then maybe it had a good effect in that regard, at least. Could you maybe talk about some of the things that the fishermen were telling you about then?

Brown: Yeah. They were very excited about it. They catching larger fish and more of them, and they having a good time when they go fishing, just bringing more people in. Word gets out by mouth that, "We catching fish, and they getting longer and longer." And I'm glad for them, and I hope it continues. As long as they manage it, we'll have fish, and if they take care of the marsh, we'll have the nurseries. They'll have plenty fish to catch.

Hester: I'm going to shift the conversation in a bit because I'd like to talk to you about the Pecan area, Bayou Heron, and all this information that you've got here, maybe tell us a little bit about the history. But before I do that, I want to ask you, what do you see as the future of commercial fishing in this area? (1:17:22.0)

Brown: It looks mighty bleak. The younger people are not going to be going into commercial fishing. They're looking for other avenues for employment. The old-timers'll tell you, "It's a lot of hard work, lot of responsibility, long hours." And the younger people now, they're looking for shorter hours, shorter work weeks, higher pay. They're not going to be going into commercial fishing, so I'm going to just say that it's not going to happen. It's going down, especially in this area, here. In Jackson County, Mississippi, it's more of an industrial county, and the fathers are not going to let us open up areas over here for commercial fishing because it's not a big, productive area. They'd rather have an addition to Chevron or some other plant to come in to use—the land use comes into play. It's just a small area here, and for me, too, I prefer to have the Reserve down here to protect that area, the marsh area and let the people move up on the hill and get away from the Coast for their own good and protection from the storms and the floods. (1:19:01.1) We can speak from experience from the floods. And storms didn't run me out of Pecan; it was the floodwaters. And I won't mention the name of the place that was flooding me, for the record, but they make the paper quite often. But they have improved it in the last few years for flood control. But I think we need to relocate the people, away from that marsh area in Jackson

County, move further on the hill. They'll have a better life because they're not going to be fishing, anyway. And they could pull their skiff down to Bayou Heron and launch and go catch speckled trout, or they can take their brill net and catch them a mess of mullet.

Hester: Great. So let's talk about Pecan Swartwout. I'm sure I'm not saying that correctly.

Buchanan: Swartwout.

Hester: Swartwout. Let me pause this for just a minute. (End of track one of two. The interview continues on track two of two.) OK. So we're back on. Let's see. Put this back on, as well. First of all, we were talking a bit while eating some wonderful pecan pie that Mrs. Brown has fixed for us and drinking some coffee, we were talking about the turtle excluder devices and the turtles (0:00:23.2) that maybe your dad was catching prior to the use of the device. If you could, tell us a little about that.

Brown: Yeah. During the Depression years, (0:00:34.2) when the folks were trying to make a few extra dollars, my grandpa, H.W. Stork—Mama told me one story that on Christmas Day, it was a beautiful day. Sun was shining good, and he pulled out to the Grand Bay Bottoms, and he'd use these little nippers; they called them terrapin nippers. And he would look for these diamondback turtles, and he would catch as many as he could. They'd bed up in the sand like a flounder would, and he could see them on a sunny day. And he'd catch these little diamondback turtles, and he built him a pen, on up by his house, there and fenced them in. He'd catch a few like today, and next time, he'd go again. But this particular Christmas he went out, and he caught several of the counts(?), which is the female, which is a bigger terrapin, and they were worth more. So he would put them in a barrel and ship them to New York, say, to Fulton Fish Market in New York for this turtle soup; it was a delicacy. And he would be getting five dollars apiece for those counts, but he would fish like Grand Bay Bottoms and go over to Bangs Lake, row the boat there and back. And that was one of his better days. He really mopped up that day on these diamondback turtles, but now, the regulations (0:02:25.1) now would not allow that. It'd be off limits. He would be—that's a no-no. But he had to make a few dollars, and that's how he was doing it, catching these turtles.

Hester: That's amazing. Mr. Wesley Stork had told a little bit about the diamondback terrapin, and if you would, could you explain for the record the [family] relationship between you and Mr. Stork.

Brown: Uncle Wesley is Mama's brother. He's the son of H.W. Stork. My mother was the oldest child of that family. There was twelve of them, six boys and six girls. And Mama passed away December the twenty-seventh of 2005. She lacked two months being one hundred.

Hester: Changing the subject a bit, also while we were off the record, we were talking about the opening of a stream that delivered freshwater to help the oyster (0:03:42.4) industry. Could you explain, talk about that a bit?

Brown: We have a stream over in Alabama; it's called the Big Creek Dams where there is water they store for the city of Mobile, for their drinking water. And occasionally if we have a lot of rain, they have to reroute that water some way to protect the dam. So they would open the gates and release some of that water, and it would come flowing down toward West Alabama, over into Jackson County, Mississippi. And it would come through Franklin Creek to the Pecan area. And it would flood us out. (0:04:34.5) And by all these flooding periods over the years, my wife Anne and I, we lived in Pecan for forty-two years, and we built our house up enough, we thought would take care of this flooding over the years. When I came out of the service in 1955, they had one of the—we called it the worst flood we ever had there, other than the 1927 Flood, and I wasn't here at that time. But I was told about it. But this was one of the worst floods we'd ever had in Pecan. And when I got ready to build my house in Pecan, Daddy told me, looking at the house next door, how high the water got over there, and I went above that to be sure I was out of the elevation of it. But in 1964—we moved there in [19]61. In 1964 we had our first—we called it—first flood. It was on the ground, but it wasn't in the house. Then over the years it got worse and worse. Now, when I analyze these things, I'm saying that all the growth in Mobile County and Jackson County and all the blacktop highways and canals and everything, the streams, when the water comes down, it's reduced to just a smaller area, and that's what's causing more flooding. So it just kept getting worse and worse. So I decided the best thing for me and Anne to do was just get ready to move out, but we stayed there several years before we decided to move on the hill because we wanted to stay in that area because it was so pristine, and it was the fishing and the hunting and all this that kept us there, and close to our jobs, close to the schools, close to church. Everything was a positive, but after so long, you just can't take but so much water. It'll flood you out. So we moved out.

Hester: What year did you move up here?

Brown: We moved here April the twenty-third of 2004.

Hester: OK. We talked about two instances and water and flooding and so forth when we took our little break. So let's talk about the second instance, and that has to do with the Nine Mile Lake Stream (0:07:12.6) that was dug in 1934. And can you tell us a little bit about this project and why it was so important?

Brown: Well, back then they were, the fathers got together and decided they needed to increase production of the seafood industry, oysters (0:07:30.0) in particular. And to do that you need freshwater. So during the Depression years they came up with this idea, "Well, we'll cut a canal from the Dog River"—which is the Escatawpa River—"to Bayou Cumbest. And my dad worked on that project. Mr. Ed Sorrow(?) and Mr. Frank Saxon worked on that project to dig that canal all the way to Bayou Cumbest, to

put that freshwater in Bayou Cumbest over the oyster beds, to increase production. And by doing that, you keep the conchs (0:08:10.7) from coming in, too, by having more freshwater out there, from eating the oysters. If salinity gets high, the conchs will move in. They'll eat a whole reef of oysters up. So that freshwater keeps the conchs moved further out in the Gulf, and it saves the oyster reefs. So that's a way of protecting them.

Hester: And this project has cut a waterway that's still beneficial to the oyster reefs today?

Brown: Yeah, right. It's still working today. Yeah. And since that one, after we had the 1964 flood in Pecan, I got with the county supervisors, and they decided to dig a little canal east, a drainage canal east of Pecan, to catch some of this overflow from the Big Creek Dam when they would turn it loose, and guide it through the L and N Railroad to Bayou Heron, and it served for freshwater, too. We had a double dipping right there. We helped the flooding for the homeowners and also helped the seafood industry by putting freshwater on the oyster beds. We finished that in 1968.

Hester: So how has the oyster fishing evolved over its history from the period maybe prior to the building of this waterway, up until today? How has it evolved? (0:09:44.4)

Brown: Back long about this time here, the oyster business was big time over here for what few fishermen we had. The population was more sparse then than it is now, but back then, that was a big thing. And it really helped the people to defray their costs of going and coming, time. Fuel wasn't a big deal like it is now, but the time from going to it, because they had to walk most of the time to the bay and pull out to where the oyster beds were. And when you get in it with that oyster bed, from that oyster bed you would load oysters; you got to get them home, too. So we used to hook up Old Nellie to the wagon; go down there; pick them up and bring them back. But the oyster business was doing good. The 1947 storm [Hurricane of 1947], the silt covered those oyster beds up, especially in the Bayou Heron area, Bang Lake, Bayou Heron, and it kind of depleted it for several years, and I think that's what kind of motivated me to get this oyster relay project going in the [19]80s. (0:11:07.8) It got so bad, we just didn't—it was dying out, and we needed the oysters, so we started this relay project, just with small skiffs. And then we got in with the DMR so they could use the conservationists to dredge on this reef in Pascagoula, which was a polluted reef, and relocate them over to the Bayou Heron/Bayou Cumbest area, and we used our small skiffs to offload. And another thing I wanted to mention to you [that] we also got was the sheriff's department, and used inmates to help to offload the oysters and relay the oysters off of the small skiffs in the water. So we were using inmates' labor to help in each skiff. So that helped with the cost, too. That was a good program.

Hester: That is a good program. So can you take us past the relay? How did it improve? Where is it today, the oyster industry?

Brown: Well, right now, (0:12:14.9) we got the oysters planted, and they were doing really good. Everybody were happy. They were all catching good catches, but then the pollution problem (0:12:24.9) came in, the bacteria. So we had to shut it down because of water pollution.

Hester: About what year?

Brown: It's been down now, what? Two or three years?

Buchanan: Totally closed.

Brown: And it's totally closed, now. Probably the last two to three years.

Buchanan: There were portions that were closed and portions that were open for many years, and then I can't remember before or after Katrina. It had to be after Katrina that it was shut down.

Brown: They have to have conditionally approved areas through the Food and Drug Administration.

Buchanan: Conditionally approved means that it's managed on maybe a rainfall event, so it's conditionally open unless you get a quarter inch of rain or something, and then it's closed. And then you have prohibited waters, which are closed at all times, and basically that's where they stand today is that they're all prohibited.

Hester: So it was completely open when you did the reefs, when you built the reefs and everything—

Brown: Everything was open.

Hester: Everything was completely open. Then the pollution, where'd the pollution come from?

Brown: Well, at that time, they was talking about open pipes, septic systems, the bird population, but now, they set the standards. Jackson County, Mississippi, our standards were more stringent than Alabama at that time and probably still are because the USDA was watching this closely. I know when Alabama would be open right at the state line, we'd be closed. So the regulations (0:14:13.4) from one state to the other were a little bit different at that time. They may be different now. I don't know. I haven't checked it lately, but we need to have reciprocal agreements (0:14:25.4) on these things, and the standards should be set pretty well across the boards, that close, between the states. We don't have one rule in one state and one rule in the other one.

Hester: Right. It seems like the more lenient state would get maybe more use and more [inaudible].

Brown: Well, the federal government, when they send in monies—just like after this [BP Deepwater Horizon] oil spill, the monies could be coming in for restoration projects. Mississippi will probably get several million dollars to replant, but they're not going to plant in Jackson County because these dredging reefs are all in Harrison, Hancock County. The tongers (0:15:05.9) are going to be completely left out, so really it's not fair to them. I'm talking about the Harrison, Hancock. George Storrs is the guy I see on TV once in a while. He's a oysterman; he's a tonger. I haven't talked to him in a long time, but I'll guarantee you he's going to be not happy because he's more into tonging, or he used to be. The dredgers, they going to be happy because all the shell planting will be offshore where they can get to them. So George is going to have to spend some money building a big dredging boat if he wants to stay in the oystering, and I know he wants to oyster.

Buchanan: Did they ever dredge in the Reserve, or was it always just tonging?

Brown: Tonging, over here it's—

Buchanan: It's just so shallow.

Brown: It's sight. We sight them with nippers, small nippers.

Hester: That's a tong instrument? It's a nipper?

Brown: It's a tong that you tong the oysters, but we call them nippers because they're small, like twelve, thirteen inch, something like that, the heads are, whereas the rakes, if a tonger over in Harrison County will use a set of tongs, they'll have like a thirty-two-tooth set of rakes with sixteen- to eighteen-foot handles on them where they can really get out there and rake them. We do it differently over here because the water's shallow. We just go out and sight them and mostly mud oysters, (0:16:42.9) what we have over here. That's why they're better. (laughter)

Buchanan: There you go.

Hester: I didn't realize there was a difference. I thought they were all the same. Well, going back to building the reef, and it was open, and then the pollution came in. And how did the procedure of closing parts of the oyster reefs, how did it evolve after that?

Brown: The testing that was done, it dictates whether they're going to be open or closed. And when they tested this area, it showed this is a polluted area, (0:17:37.4) so that's why they close it over here, and really we don't have the runoff over here in Jackson County in our oyster reef areas that they have over in Harrison County (0:17:44.6) and Hancock because like Pearl River's got a lot of water coming in, and the oyster reefs are there. And Bay St. Louis, all that bay is a big, freshwater bay, and it would have more runoff, freshwater going through there, and it would keep it cleaner. It would dilute the pollution, so to speak, and their tests would show better

than ours would because the water was not flowing as often or as much. That's why the two canals was helping this area over here, but now we don't get that flow as much as we used to because the silt has filled them in somewhat. And the Big Creek Reservoir, they don't let as much water—they're more controlled—put it that a way—now, than they used to be because I don't think we've had a flood in Jackson County from that creek since [20]04. It was April the first of [20]04 last time we had a flood in Pecan that I remember.

Buchanan: Been pretty dry.

Brown: Yeah. So I'm thinking either change the system up, up there; put in some more gates or whatever they've done, or rerouted the water towards the east more to Mobile Bay, but it is still their drinking water system.

Hester: How long a period of time between the building of the reef and the onset of the pollution problem? Was there a good period in there of oyster fishing?

Brown: After we did the relay project, we had several years of good catches, yeah.

Hester: About five years?

Brown: At least, yeah. And then it started going downhill, again, but it wasn't because of lack of oysters. It was the pollution problem.

Hester: We've talked a lot about the Pecan Community down there, and I was wondering if you could give us a little historical—I don't want to say overview because I would like for you to give as much detail as you'd like about the Pecan Community and your family's involvement in the establishment of the community and where it is today. I see all these documents on the table here.

Brown: Yeah. We've got so many documents, we don't know where to start. (laughter)

Hester: And Jennifer, help if you—you've done an interview—

Buchanan: He knows the stories; let me tell you.

Brown: That's the trouble. I don't know which one we need to tell.

Hester: Tell them all.

Buchanan: I think you should start about how you used to stand on the railroad track and look down, and you could see the water.

Brown: Well, Jennifer's telling me I need to start *way* back. (0:21:09.4) (laughter) When we had a stock law, the railroad, L and N Railroad was fenced in to keep the

cattle off the railroad track. Now, I'm talking about when I was just a young, young boy. We used to open these railroad gates for the sports fishermen to go fishing on Bayou Heron, and I'm talking about they'd come out of Mobile pretty regular. That was our big (inaudible). We had some guys over there that ran laundries, and when they had a Saturday afternoon off and Sunday, they would come to Bayou Heron, fishing. And the north end of Pecan Road was a dirt road back then, and we could see the dust coming, so we'd run open the gates. And we might get a nickel or a dime or two or three bananas for opening that gate for that fishermen. (0:22:04.7) That was one of the big things we used to do in Pecan, and we made spending money to buy BBs for our BB guns. We could buy ourself a bicycle, a old, used one, occasionally, with that spending money. We came up in a time when it was just a good time for kids to come up in a small community, and we had plenty fish to eat. We had plenty vegetables to eat in Pecan. We had the church right down the street was founded in 1899; the Marthalers, they were from up around the Chicago area. They came and settled, which before then, Scranton was the name of the town. And they called it Swartout. And then they planted these pecan groves and orange groves, so they named Pecan [pronounced pee-can], Pecan [pronounced pee-can], which we call it pecan [pronounced puh-k-ahn]. That's how Pecan [pronounced pee-can] got its name, from these Yankees from up North (laughter) that wanted to come down and develop that area. And like I say the church was built in 1899. It was also the school, and my mother went to school there. All the kids in that area went to school in the Pecan school and church combination. And we finally got it in the buyout, too, because of floodwater. And it's all torn down and reclaimed, the land. All of Pecan has been reclaimed except one resident still out there, my oldest brother. He'll be eighty-five. Robert Brown will be eighty-five April 28, 2012.

Hester: Is that right? (laughter)

Brown: And he still lives there and will not move.

Hester: What was the population of Pecan when you were young?

Brown: I think what we called the Pecan Community was, we had about twenty-six homes right in that little area, right there. That went down toward Bayou Heron because there were just a few houses south of the railroad, and then you got between the railroad and Highway 90, now, the new 90 we built, opened in [19]54. Then you come on over to the old 90, you got three or four homes still over there that haven't been moved out yet because they're not in the boundary of the Grand Bay Savannah, but they will be under this new expansion because the Grand Bay is going to expand eight thousand acres (0:25:17.0), supposed to be this month or next month; we should know about that. But give me another question, a little further.

Hester: OK. I had one in mind, and now it's slipped. But what would you say would be the proportion of commercial fishermen that lived in Pecan, or were they more into cultivation and agriculture?

Brown: Back when the fishing was big time in that area, most of the people were commercial fishermen. I know Daddy was and my Uncle Frank Saxon, the Storks, the Clarks, and the Pools(?). All those families that lived in the area were all commercial fishermen. And the Surrows(?), he was in the dairy business, Ed Surrow. (0:26:15.9) And they was one of the families that came in there with the original, with the Swartouts from Illinois and Michigan. But they were in the dairy business, and they had a pecan orchard. And of course he worked; I think he worked at the shipyard, Ingalls, at that time, too, when he first started.

Hester: And did the commercial fishing, as well?

Brown: Well, I don't recall Mr. Surrow doing any commercial fishing. They ran the post office for the area. They ran the post office out of their home at one time. Yeah.

Hester: I think I read something about that this morning when I looked at the review.

Brown: When they closed down, we went to a route one and Grand Bay. A fellow named Mr. Smits(?) was our postman, and I think it lasted until about 1939 or somewhere like in that. We changed to the Pascagoula route.

Hester: Um-hm. Can you tell me about the commercial fishing that the Pecan Community did? What was the main type of fishing? Was it finfishing?

Brown: Finfishing.

Hester: Finfishing?

Brown: Um-hm, right. And the other thing, H.W. Stork, my grandpa, and Hattie Belle Clark Stork, when they got older, they would hang the nets for the fishermen, the trammel nets. (0:28:01.1) People from Bayou LaBatre and Biloxi would come out there and hire them to hang nets for them.

Hester: I don't understand what that—I'm not sure I understand what that means. Could you explain what hanging a net is?

Brown: You see, you got the rope, the corks, and the leads, the cork line, and the lead line, and in between you're going to have the yokers. And in between that, you would have the webbing. And when a fish hits that net, he's going to hit that, go through the yoker because the yoker's big. And the webbing is going to be smaller mesh and everything, smaller webbing. And he thinks it's just a big hole, and he'll hit it. Well, he'll go out and get bagged in there, twisted around, and he can't get out. It's a lot of flexibility. A bigger fish, it'll hold a bigger fish compared to the gillnet. Gillnet, he goes in there and hits his head; he gets gilled, and he could pop it if it's not real strong. You can catch a lot of big fish with the old trammel net, but—

Hester: So what does "hang a net" mean?

Brown: They would build the nets. See. You just buy the webbing on a roll. The corks and everything would be boxed up, and you put the leads on the rope, and you put the corks on the rope, and you go so far, you make a hang, so far apart.

Hester: So this was done in Pecan.

Brown: They did it right on their porch, front porch and the side porch. You'd hang it from one end of the porch to the other and build for days. Sometimes they'd get out and pull them between a tree or whatever, between two posts and fixed up. That was their livelihood. And also prior to that, they ran a store plus the fish business. And I can remember Smith Bakery, when they started winding down in the early to midforties, closed the store down, they had the bakery and bread. That was about it, maybe some bacon, and they were getting out of business and getting old, too, so they were just getting out.

Hester: Can you tell us some stories that came out of Pecan, some that stick out in your mind?

Buchanan: There's your bear story.

Brown: Well, yeah, they had a bear hunt one time. (0:30:22.0) Daddy and Uncle Frank were walking through the woods. This was before the woods got really thick. Back years ago, we didn't have much. It was just grazed over to the bayou, where you could almost see the bay from the house in Pecan. It was so clear across there. They were walking through, going to Bayou Heron to go fishing that morning, and they heard this yearling low, or holler, bellow, and it was a bear that had caught that yearling out there close to the Goldman Swamp, which is right on the Mississippi/Alabama line. And then word got out in Pascagoula, and a bunch of those folks wanted to have a bear hunt. So Doc Clark was a young guy about sixteen or seventeen, and he got on the hunt with them. And of course, they had some lawyers and whatever. Well, one of the lawyers shot the bear, but he didn't kill it. And the bear got in the swamp, Goldman Swamp. And Doc went in and shot and killed the bear. So the big shots in town didn't want the boy getting credit for killing the bear; the lawyer wanted the credit. (laughter) So they go to court. And of course Doc killed the bear. (laughter) He got the credit for the bear, and we've got a picture of him somewhere here; he's hanging up, the black bear that they shot and killed that day.

Hester: I'd like to see that picture.

Buchanan: It's in the center. It's one of the pictures in the center.

Hester: Oh, is it?

Buchanan: Yeah. It came from Clyde's. It came from his collection.

Brown: We've got it.

Hester: So I'm ready for another story.

Brown: Well, I don't know which one I need to get off on. This is a picture of Daddy and me and Sidney with the boats down there.

Hester: Oh, yeah.

Brown: The three of us. That's when Daddy was getting up in age. We went down the bayou. He wanted to look at all the boats down there on the bayou. And we went down and took this picture here.

Buchanan: Where did you build your boats, Clyde?

Brown: Built them in the backyard. (0:32:49.1) Yeah.

Hester: Down in Pecan?

Brown: Now, those three, they were built in their backyard. Now, my boat, I built the *Annie M.* over in Coden, [Alabama]. Floyd Bosarge, he's a boat-builder, and Harley Dean Bates was working with him. He's a commercial fisherman, boat-builder, so I hired—couldn't get Floyd. He was busy. So I got Harley Dean to build my *Annie M.*, but we had Floyd's expertise right there. We built it at Floyd's house, next to that big shed he's got. And I was still working at the paper mill, and I would swap shifts and work three to eleven every day, five days a week, and drive to Coden that morning by seven o'clock to go to work on this boat for six weeks; we built the *Annie M.* I lost twenty-eight pounds, working on that boat. And working, too. But it was built out of cypress and juniper, stainless steel nails. Put a 453 GM [General Motors] in it. It was a good hobby shrimp boat. Pull up to a forty-foot, white trawl net for white shrimp and pulled a thirty-five-foot for brownies, and it pull a forty for the white shrimp. But we kept it three years, and a cousin of mine came to the house one day. He'd always come by and drink coffee with me. He owned a big boat, the *Mary Jo*, a big boat, and he wanted to downsize. And he came by one day, and he said, "Is the *Annie M.* for sale?" And Anne was somewhere in the house, but she heard him, said, "Yes. It is." (laughter) And this was January, and it was tied up in Bayou Casotte. She said, "Yes. It is for sale." So we made another pot of coffee and drank it, and we sold the *Annie M.* that day. But now we had a lot of fun for three years.

Hester: Yeah. I'll bet. So there was net-making and boat-building and commercial fishing and cultivation in pecan, and I'm sure there were more.

Brown: We built our own boats. And my brother Lonny(?), he was an expert at hanging the nets, the shrimp trawls. And then I was a helper, but I could hang the

small nets, but the big nets, I bought them from—[Lonny] hung the thirty-five, but I bought the forty-foot net for the white shrimp from Mr. Snodgrass. He was really good at making shrimp trawls. But there's a picture of my *Annie M.* right there.

Hester: Oh, my goodness. Wow. Oh, this one. I'm looking at this one. I'm thinking—right here. Yeah. That was a beautiful boat. Wow. That's something to be really proud of, to build something like that. That's great. I'd like to take a picture of that after we're finished.

Brown: This picture right here is when we were dredging out the mouth of Bayou Heron to deepen it down to minus seven feet below low tide.

Buchanan: Where'd you put that dredge material? Where'd you guys put that dredge material when you did that?

Brown: I bought a lot on Bayou Heron from Mr. Harold Creel(?) and we used it for a spoil site. It was approved through the DMR and the corps of engineers.

Buchanan: By the canal?

Brown: Yeah.

Buchanan: OK. I was wondering how all that stuff got there.

Brown: Smoothed it out, really fixed it up, nice.

Hester: With the documents and pictures and articles that you have on the table here, I even see some CD discs down there. You're quite the historian. If you were to pick something out, what would be the first thing that you would pick out to talk about if somebody were to walk in? Where would you—something that really strikes you, what would you pull out of the (inaudible)?

Brown: Well, on the fishing end of it would be the shrimp trawls for commercial fishermen. When they came up with the turtle excluders and then they come up with the fish excluder, (0:37:45.6) the Atlantic Coast and the Gulf area are two different bodies of water. They had to go to a larger TED to let this leatherback turtle (0:38:05.1) out on the Atlantic Coast. They're a lot larger turtle than we've got here. The Kemp Ridley, which is endangered and event he diamondback turtles are closer in, but the Kemp Ridley is the only endangered species list. That was a big thing—I thought—when NOAA and them came up with that for fisheries. And also with the fish excluder they're saving all these bait fish that the snapper, they feed on, the food chain, and the speckled trout. So really it's a big plus, all the way around. So that's a good one. And I've got one here about the Chesapeake Bay and how they were dredging oysters, and it was so polluted over there in Maryland, and the blue crab, everything was dying out. The oysters was just about gone, so they got a big program over there, and they're trying to bring it back. (0:39:19.5) So it's very interesting.

And of course, I worked at IP [International Paper], so I've got a lot of documentation about International Paper. And when I got on the Gulf of Mexico Program, they would really support us, too, with our programs, go off to different areas for different programs and conferences. Well, IP was very supportive of that.

Hester: I had asked Jennifer a question last week in the interview, and I asked about the balance between commercial exploitation and good stewardship. And how do you bring the two together and make the two work? I mean, you really need to bring the two together to have success on both sides. Can you speak to that at all?

Brown: What I did with the Gulf of Mexico Program and IP (0:40:25.3) when they found out I was on that program, they wanted to support the programs. And I would talk to different people about it and bring it to them, and they would discuss it with them. And then we'd be on the same page together, and that's the way they was funded, a lot of the programs, donating properties through the Conservation Fund in Atlanta, Georgia. They would donate like two thousand acres of land right out here in the Pecan area to the Grand Bay Savannah, and then they would even contribute funds to support it. Up here at the welcome center, behind that, on down to the river, they've got trails and stuff, where they supported that and helped build it. So they work together with these programs, as an industry. They wanted to clean it up. And I also would get to do some of the PSAs [public service announcements] for them to put on channel thirteen.

Hester: Public service announcements?

Brown: Yeah. And one time we went out, and IP was having its sixty-fifth anniversary. And they talked me into going out on Bangs Lake early one morning, take some video, showing them how to catch the oysters and talk about the pollution. We got back to the landing. We were having a interview with a guy; he was really from Illinois, but he was working out of New Orleans. And when they were coming in the bayou that morning, coming back into the landing, it was two pelicans sitting there, right there in the bend. And just about the time he said, "Now, I need to talk to you a minute." And about the time we started talking, these two pelicans came by, and I said, "And even the brown pelicans are coming back." Channel thirteen ran that thing for two or three years. (laughter) (0:42:54.4) And the good part about it, it was advertising about the pelicans. They were on the endangered species list at that time, and they're off of it now. They didn't know about the farm business. They didn't know about the DDT was killing, causing the lack of hatching out and all that stuff, but I did. And the local folks was learning through my connections with IP and the commercials and all that. So I was advertising, being a good ambassador for Mississippi and the United States, really, for the pelicans. It was helping the pelicans to come back by cutting down on the DDT, which went in effect, I think it was in [19]73; they stopped it, spraying the fields, the farmers, because it was really hurting these animals way down here. And I'm talking about farms in Iowa and all these thirty-one states that drain down in that Mississippi River. It was affecting the whole country. So when they cut out the DDT, that helped the wildlife and the fisheries.

Hester: What year was it that the pelicans came off the endangered list?

Buchanan: Two years ago?

Brown: It's just recently. About two years ago.

Buchanan: It's just been real recent.

Brown: Um-hm.

Hester: So it took a long time for them to bring their numbers back up.

Brown: And I've been doing a lot of thinking about, too, since this oil spill, with this, we're talking big money that might be coming into the Coast, the four states, I believe it is. And they talk about building new mud lumps. And I think about the island they got over there in Mobile, and the pelicans. It's a nesting area for them, and they're offshore, so to speak. If Mississippi's going to come up with a barrier offshore and fix the islands back up, (0:45:11.4) it might be some way that they can build another mud lump south. I'm not talking about Greenwood Island, now. I'm talking about south where the big birds can nest offshore, way offshore, and it will get them away from the marsh most of the time, and we'll have less pollution from the birds, and maybe the oyster reefs will open back up, seafood. It'll help improve that area right there. They use the spoils to build mud lumps, and they've got to put it somewhere, so this might be a big opportunity for our DMR people that's going to be regulating this area, to look at that.

Hester: Sounds like it would be something to explore, for sure.

Brown: Because they're losing areas to pump the spoils, and at one time when they was digging out—I say digging out—when they was dredging the Bayou Casotte channel, I was at a meeting in [19]84 or [19]85 at the college over there, and they were debating on which plan they wanted, A, B, C, or D. And I think at the time I wanted D so they could build up the Grande Batture with that spoil, but they didn't pick that. They put the mud lump somewhere else. But now I think they would love to have that to use it out there. And it would also help, when it's a storm brewing—I'm talking about the smaller storms; not a Katrina—to fill that mud lump out that way, and it would protect the industry along the shoreline, too. Chevron's built a seventeen-foot wall out there for their protection. But if they had that big mud lump out there—we don't want to call it a mud lump on your tape, but that's what it'll be. (laughter) And then they can put trees on it and grass and tie the chain of islands back together. That's been a lot of talk about that, too.

Hester: Good idea. Well, I think I'm running out of questions here, but I'm going to do something that I always do at the end and just open it up to you. Again, there is so much to explore, and I have, I'm sure, overlooked quite a few things. What would

you like to put on the record? This is going to be archived up at USM with the Center for Oral History, and it's going to be there a long time, long past my lifetime for sure. So what would you like to put on the record?

Brown: I don't know.

Buchanan: How about how commercial fishermen couldn't have made it without their wives? (laughter)

Hester: That sounds like a good place to start.

Brown: Jennifer, you going to get me in trouble. (laughter) Anne's not a commercial fisherman. She's a hillbilly from way back.

Buchanan: I put my two cents in for you.

Anne Brown: Thank you. I appreciate it, Jennifer. (laughter)

Brown: When I got old enough to start looking for a wife, I didn't select one from the Gulf Coast. I selected one from the hill, about two hundred miles inland because down here on the Coast all we knew how to do was cook, fish, and oyster, and stuff like that, and very few vegetables. And I picked me a very good cook; I'm telling you. She is the best. And she makes a wonderful pecan pie.

Hester: I can attest to that.

Brown: And for Dave Ruple's information, it's a pecan [pronounced pee-can] pie. (laughter) One thing I like about it for the Coast with the Grand Bay NERR and the Savannah, the protection of this area, it brings in a lot of these institutions like Mississippi State [University]. We've got Alcorn—

Buchanan: For partners. (0:49:27.4)

Brown: Partners.

Buchanan: Jackson State.

Brown: Jackson State. We got Mississippi Southern.

Buchanan: South Alabama.

Brown: South Alabama.

Buchanan: Georgia State, yeah.

Brown: You spread that a lot further than I know about. I knew about these others in Mississippi.

Buchanan: Florida A and M. We can keep going. It's a huge amount.

Brown: The opportunity is out there for students to come from these universities down here and study at the Refuge, the biology majors, to do their graduate work. Mississippi Southern is right here in Hattiesburg, and it is really growing, one of our popular schools. And I'm proud they're part of it. Dr. Grimes is a familiar name for me. He was at Gulf Coast Research Lab, and Dr. Tom McIlwain. I think about those guys. I've sat on committees with them and talked, like C-AP(?) Committee with Dr. Grimes and very talented professor. And Tom, I think, has just retired from the Gulf Coast Research Lab. But we've got a good future here on the Coast by having these universities come in with the students. It'll help the state with their graduate work. They don't have to go too far from home to do their studies, and maybe we can keep them in Mississippi on our workforce as our teachers and professors. It'll help Mississippi grow and especially Jackson County with the industrial.

Hester: That's it? Jennifer, do you have anything that—

Buchanan: I'm done.

Hester: Do you have anything, Mrs. Brown, you'd like to—

Anne Brown: No. I don't think so.

Hester: OK. I'm going to go ahead and turn the tape recorder off, then. Thank you so much, Mr. Brown.

(end of interview)