TERRY DEAN
Employee, Island View Seafood – Eastpoint, FL

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Location: Island View Seafood - Eastpoint, FL
Interviewer: Amy Evans
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Project: Florida's Forgotten Coast

Transcript provided by:
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[Begin Terry Dean]

0:00:00.0

Amy Evans: This is Sunday, December 4th, 2005, and I'm in Eastpoint, Florida, at Island View Seafood with Terry Dean. And Terry, if you wouldn't mind saying your name and your birthday, please ma'am.

0:00:17.7

Terry Dean: Terry Dean—it's February 26th, 1955.

0:00:24.0

AE: And you're a native of Eastpoint, correct?

0:00:25.6

TD: Yes.

0:00:26.5

AE: And you were telling me yesterday that your family goes back about four or five generations, is that right?

0:00:35.0

TD: Well, it's about six now. **[*Laughs*]** Yeah, my—my great-grandmother and great-grandfather moved here and settled here [Lizzy and Charlie Evans]. They're one of the first families here.

0:00:50.1

AE: And your grandparents—great-grandparents, you were saying your great-grandfather was Indian and your—?

0:00:59.3

TD: Uh-hm, he was Indian. We don't know exactly what kind because he wouldn't talk about it because nobody wanted to claim to be Indian back then, you know. And my grandmother was Irish and he was—he was like—he was six-seven in height, and she was like five foot. **[*Laughs*]** So they were—but they moved here when they first got married.

0:01:31.9

AE: And do you know about what year that might have been?

0:01:35.8

TD: Yeah, it was right after the turn of the century. I don't know the exact year.

0:01:53.6

AE: Okay. Okay, well and you started telling some stories about them and those days and how they would work the bay and stay on the shore. Can you talk about that a little bit—those things?

0:02:04.4

TD: Yeah, they—they didn't have motors, so they had to use sails or oars to get where they was going. And so everything was done without machines. They would go out and oyster and they'd bring the oysters into the beach and they had these—it was just poles in the ground with something to give shade, and the women would stand in there and shuck the oysters into big vats, and in the evening then the men would haul the big vats to the one oyster house that was down here and sell them. Of course, Eastpoint is not where it started out. Eastpoint used to be what they called Cat Point now—down there by the St. George Island Bridge—at the bottom of it. In 1929 they had a real bad hurricane that come through, and it wiped everything out down there except one or two houses; o everybody moved up here so that they would be further from the water when another hurricane came; and so they just sort of moved Eastpoint up this way. **[*Laughs*]** But she used to walk from Cat Point down there—my grandmother did; she walked

from Cat Point down there all the way out to Porter's Bar to go to school—her and my grand-daddy did.

0:03:28.2

AE: About how far is that? I don't know where that is.

0:03:31.4

TD: It's a good four or five miles.

0:03:39.3

AE: How many people were here in this area when they got here?

0:03:42.5

TD: There was only a few families. The Browns were here; they had the actual—they had the first Post Office here. And there was another family here. And the Browns and that other family had money. Now a man came from Carrabelle that lived in Carrabelle; he come over here and built an oyster house. And then my great-grandfather ran it for him until he built his own. But they would bring in shuckers from like South Carolina to come down here and teach them how to shuck oysters. That's how they all learned. There was no ice or anything so that's how they get

[the saying] don't eat oysters unless there's an "R" in the month. Because the months that don't have an "R"—the hot months of the year and they had no refrigeration; so and—.

0:04:34.3

AE: So then what about when [Doctor] John Gorrie was over here in Apalachicola and all that refrigeration business happened over there?

0:04:40.8

TD: Well see my grandparents—my great-grandparents were the first family to get electricity; they had moved up here where Eastpoint is now and built them a house. And—and it was like in the 1950s when they got the first electricity and when, you know—they didn't have any electricity so they couldn't run a machine, so—and there was only a few cars here. Everybody kind of used everybody else's cars if they had to go somewhere, but usually it was an emergency if they went anywhere.

0:05:15.6

AE: And then your grandmother, when she was on the beach shucking oysters, what did she use to open them?

0:05:20.7

TD: A hammer and knife. And that's the way I learned. It's—it's only been since—let's see, I was probably in my early twenties when they started using machines, and there's been quite a few people hurt with them machines, too.

0:05:37.8

AE: I saw some next door over here [at Fred's Best Seafood] yesterday; those things look pretty fickle.

0:05:40.0

TD: Uh-hmm, you get your hand in there, or it pulls your hand in there and—and you've hurt your hand.

0:05:46.2

AE: How much faster do you think people go using them? Do you think it makes that big of a difference or—?

0:05:49.8

TD: Well that depends on how ambitious the shucker is. Now I got a cousin, and she can use one of them machines and she can—she can shuck eighteen gallons in a day, if she's got the oysters. But then there's some that don't shuck, you know, no more than they would if they had a hammer and knife because that's all they want to shuck.

0:06:14.7

AE: Are there a lot of people who prefer to use a hammer and knife just because that's the way it's always been?

0:06:20.2

TD: They—they hardly ever use it anymore—hardly ever do they use a hammer and knife anymore. Commercially, the machines has took over with the shucking, so you get people that don't even know how to use a hammer and knife to do it. They don't even know what a striking block is, so **[*Laughs*]** it's just—you know, it's—that's changed a lot.

0:06:46.0

AE: Well then yesterday when I was over there, that machine is so loud.

0:06:48.9

TD: Uh-huh.

0:06:50.0

AE: And I didn't—I don't think the women over there were wearing earplugs or anything.

0:06:52.2

TD: No, no.

0:06:53.4

AE: There's some folks that have just totally lost their hearing over the years using those things?

0:06:57.0

TD: Probably. There's a lot of older people—well people that's been using them that are, you know, a little a hard of hearing but nothing major.

0:07:07.5

AE: That was loud. **[*Laughs*]**

0:07:09.7

TD: Yeah. You get—they kind of get used to it, you know. But my aunt uses one all the time, and she's used them ever since they started using them, which she prefers it. But mostly you hear the women complaining because they've stood on their legs so long that they're getting arthritis in their legs, or they're getting carpal tunnel syndrome from doing the oysters.

0:07:35.1

AE: And is it mostly all women who shuck?

0:07:38.0

TD: Yeah. There's very few—it has always been very few men that shuck. And it's always been the woman's thing to shuck, and the men went out and oystered. Because that's really hard work out there on that oyster bar. They got to where probably in the late [nineteen] seventies, they got to where women started going on the oyster bar and the men would do the tonging and the women would do the culling. But there was a lot of men that didn't want their wives out there [working on the bay] because there's no bathroom or anything, you know. **[*Laughs*]** And—but there are still a few women that goes with their husbands and—and oysters and—but the shucking is major(ly) women and the oystering is mostly men; so.

0:08:20.6

AE: Do you know any women who have tonged?

0:08:22.7

TD: They might have tried it once or twice, you know, to—you know, just to do it, but as far as women going out there and tonging oysters by their selves or something, no. It takes a lot of upper body strength to do that and—and women just don't want to do it; they can do other things, you know. They can do the culling, which they sit down to do that. That's not really—you know, and they don't have to lift anything or any—or they shuck.

0:08:55.9

AE: Well and then back to your family, your—the older generations of your family, let me get their names first.

0:09:01.4

TD: Okay. My great-grandparents were Charlie Evans and his wife's name was Lizzy and then my grandparents—that was Lewis and Monett Hicks and then—which my great-grandparents had three daughters, but my grandmother is the only one that had children. Then there's my momma, Eunice Smith, and then there's me **[*Laughs*],** and then there's my kids and my grandkids; so.

0:09:42.3

AE: And then I was going to ask you if your great-grandfather—was he—when he went out oystering, was he using pretty much the same kind of tools that are used today?

0:09:50.6

TD: Yeah. The—the tongs are the same. They make them a little bit different but not enough to really, you know, matter. And the—the culling iron is just a piece of iron—anything they could use to knock the oysters apart, so they were just singles instead of clusters. We still use croaker sacks—burlap bags—to put the oysters in. The knives that they used to shuck have changed over the years. You used to—it was just a blade stuck in a piece of wood that your husband fixed up for you **[*Laughs*],** but then they said that was unsanitary. **[*Laughs*]** So they went to PVC pipe and put it around the wooden handle, and now they have plastic knives that are actually made by a factory; so.

0:10:55.2

AE: So then when you were coming up you shucked and you—you [picked] crabs and—?

0:11:00.6

TD: Well I—I shucked, and I've never been fast at it, so **[*Laughs*]** I mostly did it just to make a little spending money. I used to—okay, when they oystered, they oystered during the winter. And three months in the summer the oyster season was shut down; nobody oystered. Okay, and everybody done other things; they caught crabs, they shrimped, they caught fish. And so during the winter, us girls could piddle around shucking and make us some spending money, and during the summer we picked crabs; so.

0:11:41.6

AE: And you have gone out crabbing?

0:11:43.6

TD: No. **[*Laughs*]** Women don't tend to do that, either. If their husband is a crabber and he needs help, they'll go but it's—it's a male thing, you know, to go out there and pick up them crab baskets because they're pretty heavy.

0:12:02.8

AE: Uh-hmm. Well can you talk about, too, the kind of geography of the [Apalachicola] bay and how people oyster in different parts of the bay now in different times? Like now they're—you said they're down at Thirteen Mile or the Miles?

0:12:15.0

TD: Yeah, they're in the Miles right now because that is the winter bars, and they're open. Cat Point and Porter's Bar are summer bars, so they'll be open during the summer. Used to, the men here in Eastpoint, like I said, Eastpoint used to be down there at Cat Point, so they oystered there, and they oystered at Porter's Bar. They didn't go to Apalach to oyster or anything. Then they—they shrimped in the bay and they fished around the island and in the bay. They didn't really go to Apalach a lot. This was sort of country over here and that was city, and they stayed out of the city. If you wanted a doctor, you got in your boat and you went across to Apalach, you got the doctor, and you brought him over here; and when he got done, you took him back. My great-grandmother, Lizzy, she was the midwife over here in Eastpoint, so she delivered 95-percent of the babies here in Eastpoint. And she tended to the sick and stuff and the doctor would—she'd talk—she'd go to town once a week or something and tell the doctor, you know, what had happened and all, and that's how he kept up with what was going on over here. That was something women done; men didn't do the nursing and the delivering and the doctoring and all.

[*Phone Rings*]

0:13:57.2

[*Recording paused, while Terry tended to a customer*]

AE: Okay, we're talking about using tongs now.

0:14:00.2

TD: That's a set of tongs, and they're pretty heavy; and you're standing on the edge of the boat, and you're luring those things down there. Okay, oysters grow in—in clusters just—it's like rock down there. Okay, and you got to break them loose with those spike(y) things on the end of the tongs, and then you got to scoop them up in that basket; so you're going like this **[*Gestures*]** trying to break all that hard stuff apart. And then you've got to clamp it together and pull it up and swing around and dump it on the boat. So it is really hard work, but it's really physically hard work.

0:14:43.0

AE: How do the—how do the young boys kind of come up learning to do that? Is—do they you know like apprentice with their fathers or—?

0:14:50.6

TD: When they're old enough, the daddy starts taking them with them and they learn how. A lot of the young boys—mine included, thank you—are not doing it. They know how, but they're not doing it because it's—it's not a reliable means of making a living. You go out there and you might make really good for a week or two, and then it might rain for a week and you don't get to work. There are no benefits; there's no retirement; there's no—so my boys do it for recreation sort of, you know. If we want a bag of oysters, they go out there and catch a bag of oysters. They

got licenses. If they want to fish, they go fish. But as far as making a living for their families, they don't do it on the bay.

0:15:43.4

AE: Uh-hmm. Well then, how does—because like you—the area just kind of got over red tide [which is a bloom of dinoflagellates that causes reddish discoloration of coastal ocean waters, which is often toxic and fatal to fish] that closed the bay for a couple months, is that right?

0:15:49.9

TD: From August 'til November—the last of November.

0:15:56.4

AE: And so back in the old days how did that affect what was going on here and how did people—?

0:16:01.6

TD: We didn't have red tide.

0:16:01.9

AE: You didn't have it?

0:16:03.5

TD: We didn't have bacteria; this is all government stuff. **[*Laughs*]** I don't want to say—that sounds bad; that sounds bad and—. We didn't have, let's see—we didn't have marine patrol and all of that stuff back then. I never—the whole time I grew up—I didn't hear about red tide until just a few years ago, okay? So I mean it's—it's something that the biologists know about, but it's something back then they didn't—you know, they just went ahead and oystered. Now if they seen the oysters were dying on a bar, they'd move to another bar. So if the red tide came in and—and started messing with oysters and they couldn't catch good oysters, they'd just move to a different bar and start catching—one that was good. They do bacterial samples; but then back then you didn't hear about people dying from eating oysters. Now you hear about it, you know. Like I heard—somebody told us that some people hogged [harvested] some oysters out of closed waters, and they got sick. Well they'll broadcast that all over the news but they're not—they're talking about three men that should have known better, opposed to thousands that eat the oysters and they're fine. So it's—it's a government thing. **[*Laughs*]**

0:17:40.6

AE: So what do the old-timers think about that? Do they just—?

0:17:44.6

TD: Well my granddaddy told them, "If you let the government step in it's gone; your way of life and your way of living will be gone because they will regulate you 'til you can't make a living." And—and like I said, a lot of young people aren't doing this for a living now. They've just gave up. It's—it's just like mullet fishing. You—men used to mullet fish all the time, but there's so many regulations and every year they change the nets—specs—until they're saying it's not worth it; we can't make any money, so we'll—we quit, you know—we'll do something else. And that's what they've done.

0:18:25.2

AE: So what do you think is going to happen—and when—to the oyster and on the bay?

0:18:31.6

TD: I think there will always be oystering on the bay, but I think that it's going to dwindle down to where it's just a recreational thing. Or maybe they'll let them go out there and catch so many for the tourists that's going to be here. But this is going to end up just like everywhere else in Florida; it's going to be a tourist thing and not a local thing.

0:18:56.4

AE: Well and I want to ask you about oystering again and kind of how that works when the guys go out—when they go to a particular part of the bay that's open. Do people have spots they always go to, or is there competition for different parts of a bed or—?

0:19:10.5

TD: No, no, no; if they go out there and they find a bed of oysters and they—they just oyster it. The next day they might go out there and somebody is in that spot that they were in the day before—they just move over some and just go ahead and start oystering. Nobody fights about, you know, where to oyster out there or anything. But, of course, if you find a good bar, you keep your mouth shut. **[*Laughs*]** Don't tell nobody.

0:19:36.7

AE: And then when you talked about guys hogging oysters—I've heard "hogging" and "cooning" for oysters. Does that just mean they're going out—?

0:19:42.4

TD: They're going out like on low tide and they're picking them up. Used to, when I was a kid, some of the young boys, they didn't have boats or anything. They'd go out there and they'd hog them up a bag of oysters and take it to one of the oyster houses and sell it. Now people don't do it no more, really. Just—it's just a very few people that does that anymore.

0:20:08.6

AE: Uh-hmm. You've got some customers. *[Recording is paused, while Terry tends to a customer*] All right, we're back. And I was going to ask you about when there was just one oyster house that opened up here in Eastpoint and how the industry grew around that.

0:20:21.7

TD: Well a guy came from Carrabelle [Florida], and he had an oyster house built down there at Cat Point. Like I said, that used to be Eastpoint. And he brought in shuckers from South Carolina and it was—there, it was mostly men, and he built sort of like a bunkhouse for them to live in. And my great-granddaddy and grandma sold their oysters to this man, and that's how they learned how to shuck because they had been farmers up 'til then. And then my great-grand-daddy built another oyster house down there, and he put in a store and one gas pump because one gas pump was all you needed back then and **[*Phone Rings*]**—and they—oh, they put in a cafe and—and my grandmother cooked in it, and they'd run the oyster house and the thing, and they did that until the hurricane come through in [nineteen] twenty-nine. And their house made it down there but the oyster house and stuff didn't. And the beach used to be real, real wide down there and it—it's—it's gone. There's a very narrow beach on it now. And then they moved their house—they come up here where Eastpoint is now and they built them a house and they kept shucking and—and oystering but they did it for somebody else after that. And then a few days before I was born, so in 19—in February of 1955 my great-granddaddy died and my grandma Lizzy lived

on until I was twenty. No, no, I was twenty-four when she died. So she lived to be ninety. And my grandmother started shucking when she was a little girl, you know, with her momma, and she did that up until they quit doing that. And they opened a grocery store here in town, and they ran that for a while **[*Phone Rings*]**—for a few years and they run an oyster house for a few years, and then they had their own oyster house. Then they—they built their own oyster house, and they ran it until they retired in the [nineteen] seventies; they retired and then they just fished and piddled around. And my granddaddy died when he was eighty-six, and my grandmother [Monette Hicks] now is eighty-three. And their son—my uncle—he has shrimped, oystered, a little bit of fishing; he's owned an oyster house; he owns one now. He has a route—he takes up into Georgia and Alabama—that hauls seafood up there, but they're real small; it's a real small place and they just—because he's retiring next year. They—so they're not into any big operation. I don't think any—maybe when my granddaddy was young he crabbed, but most of them—most of them in my family didn't crab.

0:24:32.0

AE: Was there a reason for that?

0:24:33.9

TD: If there was, I don't know it; so I don't—I—well one thing, my grandma and granddad didn't like crabs. She said anything that would eat a dead person, she weren't eating, you know.

[*Laughs*] So they didn't really like crabs. So nobody ever done it, you know, commercially in my family.

0:24:57.8

AE: Do most people around here—would most people shrimp and oyster and fish and everything just depending on what's out there?

0:25:03.1

TD: Yeah, yeah. Well see, back up until the late [nineteen] seventies, I guess—early eighties, like I said, you oystered during the wintertime; and then three months out of the summer the oyster bars were closed, and you went fishing or you went crabbing or—or you went shrimping but you shrimped year-round. And them three months, it's a lot of people—they just didn't—didn't work at all. They took them three months off. Of course, they watched their money; they saved back so they could, you know—but like my uncle, he shrimped for years and years and most of them shrimped by their selves. So if something happens, there's—there's no help, you know. We've had quite a few people that's drowned oystering and shrimping. But they would just—you know—but like during the winter they would not shrimp, you know; during the day they'd oyster and they'd get some sleep, and they'd go back out shrimping, you know. The men in my family have all—my grand-daddy and my uncle built shrimp boats, built oyster boats, freshwater fishing boats, you know; they—they all did that; now days they—hardly anybody does it.

0:26:38.7

AE: All right. What was the name of your great-grandfather's oyster house and cafe? Was it your great-grandfather's?

0:26:45.9

TD: They didn't have a name.

0:26:47.4

AE: They didn't have a name.

0:26:47.0

TD: No. Also there was—there was a big huge [oyster] shell pile. My grandma said it must have been three stories high down there at Cat Point. And when they built [highway] 98 through here, they used all those shells for the road, and so it's gone from down there. But they—that's where they dumped all their oyster shells when they shucked, and it got that high. And then the State come in to build that road, and they used all them shells for that.

0:27:20.6

AE: Hmm. So back in the early days, where were the oysters being sold to that they would harvest?

0:27:26.0

TD: The northeast; they were sending them up there to **[*Laughs*]** I guess the Rockefellers, but they sent them up there; they sent them up north to the—in New York and Baltimore and Boston and all them places—the big cities up there and all.

0:27:47.1

AE: Did you eat a lot of oysters growing up?

0:27:50.2

TD: Yeah, and still do. I love them.

0:27:52.2

AE: How do y'all—how do y'all fix them?

0:27:53.9

TD: You can make a stew; you can fry them; you can bake them, roast them; and you can eat them raw. And eating them raw is the way I like them best; so.

0:28:11.4

AE: Do you put them on a cracker?

0:28:11.7

TD: Yeah, I don't have to, but I do. Hey, Pam. **[*Interruption*]**

0:28:17.5

[*Recording is paused for about fifteen minutes, while Terry visits with a friend who has stopped by.*]

AE: Okay.

0:28:19.6

TD: You wanted to know if—if—what the name of it was, but they didn't name the restaurant or their oyster house or anything like they do now. You didn't have to have a—a seafood license, and you didn't have to have a business license or anything, so they just never named any of it.

0:28:38.0

AE: Who came to the cafe? Were locals coming in or people coming through?

0:28:40.1

TD: Some of the locals but the shuckers that were—that were coming in, the road crew that was building [highway] 98 when they were doing that came in and ate, and then she fed her family out of it, you know. That's where they had their dinners; so.

0:29:00.3

AE: Would she cook anything other than seafood in there?

0:29:02.4

TD: Yeah, fried chicken and roast and, you know, just all different stuff but—and seafood.

0:29:11.9

AE: And now a lot of people don't consider, necessarily, Florida part of the South. What would you have to say about that?

0:29:18.0

TD: **[*Laughs*]** Well I've had people come in here and tell us that we're just—we're Southern Georgia. Our accents don't sound quite like South Florida's accents do. But no, Florida has always been its own state. It like—it was the last state in the Confederacy to join the Confederacy. It was the last one to recruit people to go serve on the—in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, so Florida has always pretty much done their own thing. But yeah, we've got a lot of Yankees here. A lot of them.

0:30:02.2

AE: There's a lot more coming.

0:30:03.9

TD: Yeah. **[*Laughs*]**

0:30:03.5

AE: And you were talking earlier about—it was, maybe—was it like the [nineteen] seventies that people really started coming and—and staying here?

0:30:11.3

TD: Yeah.

0:30:11.8

AE: And changing the community?

0:30:12.7

TD: Yeah, they—they started coming in and some of the families—I'm not saying all of the families but some of the families, they went to work. They were hard-working people, you know, and everything and they—they—they bought houses and—and became part of the community. Some of them never did. Some of them—and to this day there's a lot of people here that don't—they barely work, they rent, they don't own anything, and they—they have oyster licenses, though, and—but they—they make just enough money to drink. So we've got a lot of alcoholics and stuff here that just—they drifted in at one time or another in their lives and—and they could go out and catch a few bags and make it for another week of drinking, so they stayed.

0:31:11.5

AE: Well and tell me how that part of that business works. Like here at Island View [Seafood]—what's [the owner] Mike's last name?

0:31:16.9

TD: Millender.

0:31:18.6

AE: Okay, so he's a wholesaler and a retailer?

0:31:22.6

TD: No.

0:31:22.7

AE: Just retail?

0:31:23.1

TD: Just retail.

0:31:24.3

AE: And so then can you explain how people come in and bring their catch and how that—those relationships work?

0:31:30.4

TD: We can buy from the catcher fish and shrimp; we cannot buy shellfish. Oysters, claims, scallops—we cannot buy them from the catcher. Those things are—are so regulated and so we have to buy them from a wholesale place. Now there are a lot of fish that we can't sell in here—we can't legally have in here and we can't have illegal catches in here where the—the flounder is too small or—or if something is out of season, we can't, you know, have any in here even if—if it's frozen or, you know, whatever. But some of the stuff we can buy from the catcher but, you know, the rest of it we get from wholesalers.

0:32:28.9

AE: And then does Mike go out and get his own stuff to sell?

0:32:32.1

TD: He used to. When he first got started in the business, he did; he went out and caught his own oysters, his own crabs, his own mullet. That's about—basically about what he started with. Over the years, well, it got so busy until he had to quit going and catching and start working here

full-time, and—but over the years it's just gotten to where it was—he couldn't go out and catch enough to bring in here, especially during the summer when we got the biggest season.

0:33:01.9

AE: So you have fishermen and shrimpers and whatnot who you work with regularly and bring their catches here?

0:33:06.9

TD: Uh-hmm.

0:33:07.3

AE: And only here?

0:33:08.5

TD: No. Like the mullet fisherman, he—he might come by here, and we might need ten or twenty pounds. He's got 150 pounds; he's going to go on down the road somewhere and sell the rest of them. Shrimpers, the same way; so.

0:33:30.6

AE: So like those guys that were in here this morning, they were going out and you told them what? That y'all were low and could use some mullet, and they'll bring it back?

0:33:36.1

TD: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. That way we get fresh stuff. We did try buying mullet through Water Street [Seafood] where we get some of our fillets—fish fillets and stuff, but they were selling us old stuff. So—hello Larry. **[*Interruption*]**

0:34:02.7

[*Recording is paused for about eight minutes, while Terry cleans some fish for a customer.*]

AE: And so tell me about mullet—what you were saying over there when you were cleaning that fish.

0:34:06.9

TD: My brother went to Jerusalem. You can—he actually ate mullet over there. But mullet is the only fish in the world that has a gizzard like a chicken does. And it—but it's a strong tasting fish. Unless you've just been raised on it, you're not particularly going to like it because it is real strong, but it's a good fish and it's—it—they ate beaucoups of it during the Depression and all. **[*Interruption*]** [To customer] Yeah, I got a great job—sit on my tail.

0:34:51.3

AE: Okay.

0:34:51.4

TD: When my—when the Second World War come, my grand-daddy went and was going to enlist, and they told him they needed seafood harvesters more than they needed—they was classified as foreigners—more than they did and then—then they tried to draft and he told them, "No, you didn't want me when I wanted to join. You're not getting me now." So they didn't. But—but like Mike's daddy, he served during the Second World War. My aunt, my grandmother's sister, she went to—up North—Pennsylvania and welded on the steel hulled boats, the ships, the war ships, the—during the Second World War. Vietnam come along and three wasn't a lot of people that went from here, because the rules were that, you know, if—if you were married and had a child you were, you know, kind of exempt from it. A lot of guys joined the National Guard to get out of it. But quite a few of them went, and then they quit having the National Guard here. We don't have a National Guard thing anymore. My son had—both of my sons had to go to Panama; they were both in the Guard. The one you met while ago, he was stationed in Baghdad for a year. But they obeyed the laws and—pretty much. My granddaddy run moonshine one time. **[*Laughs*]** But pretty much they've obeyed the laws and, you know, just lived here, and we've just been kind of self-contained. And now everybody is moving in, and they're wanting to change everything. And the people that do come down here

and buy homes and—and love it for a vacation or retirement place, then it's not going to be that in a few years. It's going to be just like South Florida in a few years or Panama City Beach; so.

0:37:07.8

AE: And what about the young people now because your—your son came back and he was—like about how they bought property here and whatnot, and he wanted to come back to Eastpoint?

0:37:16.5

TD: Yeah, this is their home. They wanted to, you know—which I did move them around a lot; they've seen quite a bit of the world. But this was home and yeah, he wanted to come back here. He bought a piece of land and he put a double-wide trailer on it, and he got married. And—but now the taxes are so high; everything has went up but wages; and so he—he can't afford it. He just can't afford it. My youngest son, he—he can't find a job around here, so he moved to Missouri where my sister lived to—and found a job up there. Even if he had found him a job [in this area], he couldn't make enough money to buy him a home because everything is so expensive around here—land and all. But I mean, you—you can't—70,000 dollars and 80,000 dollars for a piece of land with nothing on it, you know. And then you've got to put the septic tank and the—and the well down or hook up to city water, which to hook up—to hook up just to the water is fifteen hundred dollars. **[*Phone Rings*]** And then you've got to put a house on it and everything, so you're really—you can't afford to do it.

0:38:51.6

AE: So a lot of the younger generation is not being able to find work, but then they're not working on the bay as much—?

0:39:02.9

TD: No, a lot of them—well, you think about you've got to get your—you've got to get your oyster license. Okay. That's—the last time I heard it was 100 dollars for an oyster license. Okay, and then you've got to have a boat, you've got to have a motor, you've got to have your tongs, life jackets, all this stuff; and a lot of the—their daddies have quit working on the water. So their daddies aren't, you know—they can't go with their daddies to make the money to do it. A lot of them don't want to do the work because it's really hard work; they want to find something easier to do. And it's—it's unpredictable. See, like we've been closed down from August until November, so that—that was a long time to do without money. A lot of them is doing the prison guard schooling and doing that; the women are taking that; a lot of them went—a lot of the women went for nursing to do nursing and all, but a lot of the older people are telling them, "Don't do—don't count on the water, you know, because it's not going to be here. There's too many regulations; there's too much that you can't do anymore."

0:40:38.0

AE: So do you see a day here in Eastpoint where all the locals—generations of locals—are squeezed out and there are places here that are serving seafood that's not even from the area?

0:40:48.5

TD: Right. I'd say, yeah. It's—it's pretty much already happening. I mean they sold all that land on the east end of Eastpoint, and they're going to make that into a tourist thing with the condos and—and restaurants and shops and a big marina. And that's all well and good, except there's no beachfront for an oyster house down there. We lost three oyster houses when they bought that land, and they're wanting more land; they say that's only like a fourth of what they need for what they want to build. So, you know, it's—it's—the beachfront is being gone. You can—you don't necessarily have to have your oyster house on the beach, you know, according to the law; but you really need it on the water so the boats can get to the—up to the dock and unload their—their catch, whatever they're—you're buying. A lot of the younger kids are—are going to restaurants and getting jobs as short order cooks and waiters and stuff like that, and they're not trying to get on the water. **[*Phone Rings*]** People tend to help people around here that know, you know. If you need something or you need help doing something or—they'll pull their oyster boat out, and they'll clean the bottom. They'll flip it over; they'll paint the bottom of it and everything. Well, all your friends get together and help you flip it over, you know—pull it out and flip it over. They'll come back down there, and they'll flip it back over and help you get it back in the water. I mean, you get these people in here that aren't from here, and they ain't going to help you, you know. They're—they're a different breed, but it used—it used to be a really, really tight close community. I could go anywhere in Eastpoint when I was little; I knew everybody. Everybody

knew who I was. Now you don't want your kids walking to school, and you don't want them out walking after dark. You just—because you don't know everybody anymore. And it's like everywhere else, I guess; it's just gotten more dangerous to, you know—.

0:43:24.0

AE: So back in its heyday, how many oyster houses were here along the bay?

0:43:28.6

TD: Oh gosh, let me think. **[*Laughs*]** We had one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen—about thirteen.

0:43:58.7

AE: And now there are four?

0:43:58.9

TD: Yeah. Bad, bad.

0:44:07.5

AE: Did you witness that change happen kind of slowly, or was it a pretty dramatic change?

0:44:13.9

TD: Well I don't know if it was really slow. Like one would shut down, you know, and then—how to explain this **[*Laughs*]**—it was—well it was like the Flowers. They had a big oyster house; they did a lot; they shipped everywhere—California, New York, everywhere. And they retired, and when they retired the kids tried to run it for a couple of years, and they just couldn't do it, and they just didn't have as much business sense as their mom and dad so they—they closed it down. The kids went and done something else. One oyster house—the—the lady got sick; she run it by herself. She got sick and she just—she closed it down because she couldn't run it no more. A couple would retire, like my parents retired, and they sold their oyster house to somebody else. Well they turned it into a retail market. Well when he died, she just shut it down. They ended up selling that to somebody else and **[*Phone Rings*]**—and they just, you know it—it either got shut down or, you know, they just either closed it up or they sold it to somebody else and it just—they just dwindled on down. But I would say in the last fifteen years—but then we lost four oyster houses with the investors down there all at one time, you know, so that was pretty—.

0:46:18.7

AE: What about people who were the tong-makers and the net-makers and—?

0:46:23.1

TD: Well there's—there's very few people that make them anymore. There used to be—everybody knew how to make their own tongs and build their own nets, and if you didn't, somebody you was kin to knew how and would help you, you know, do it and all. Now days, I think there's one guy in Apalach that still builds nets—shrimp nets and—and stuff but a lot of them are buying them from other places now because of the regulations and all. Tongs, I think there's two or three people that knows how to do it now.

0:47:01.4

AE: What about the Golden's [Net Shop] place that's over there on the highway; is that—it had a *For Sale* sign in front of it?

0:47:05.9

TD: Yeah, they closed down. They closed down.

0:47:13.1

AE: So nobody is going to know how to make handmade nets or tongs after a while here?

0:47:17.3

TD: Well eventually they won't because—like my uncle, he knows how, but he didn't pass it down to nobody because nobody was really interested in learning how to build their own nets, when every year the law changes and you have to build it a different way or something. My son knows how to mend his own cast net, you know. If he gets a hole in it, he can fix it. Mike's son knows how to do that. But as far as actually laying one out and building it from scratch, there's not that many people that knows how anymore. Used to—the men built their wives' knives and hammers and, you know, stuff for shucking, but they don't do that no more because of the—all the regulations and stuff. You've got to buy them already made. There's a few people that works on the oyster machines, but that's something that's just started, you know, since the [nineteen] seventies because they didn't use them before then; so. But it's—the kids, you know—you know used to—you could take a boy out there and put him in a boat and—and leave him in the middle of the night in the pitch black dark, and he could find his way to the beach. He'd know how to get home. Now you put them out there, and they don't know what they're doing. So it's—it's just different. The kids are being raised different—computers and technology and tourism—and think there's an easier way to do it, which oystering and all is hard work. But we're missing out on some of the good stuff—stuff that we might not get back. There's nothing better than being on a shrimp boat out there in the middle of the bay and—and you can't see anything but a few lights in Apalach and Eastpoint and St. George Island, and you feel like you're the only person in the world, and there's dolphin swimming along the side of the boat with you, and you can watch them and—and it's just great. But that's something that a lot of these kids won't never get to see.

0:49:20.7

AE: It's a shame.

0:49:21.9

TD: Yeah.

0:49:24.1

AE: Well tell me—let's talk about mullet again because I want you to get to talking about the roe and stuff that we were talking about before.

0:49:31.2

TD:: During the end of October, the first of November they start roe(ing). Usually when they roe they'll—they'll get close to the beach. The female has the yellow roe—red roe—the male has the white roe. And—and they—the—all mullet has gizzards like the chickens do and everything and—and it's an inexpensive fish. A lot of the other—like Texas, they don't eat them. They use them for bait for fishing. We've always ate them here, you know, and so—so it's a real pretty white meat when you cook it. It's really good but—and we eat the gizzards. **[*Laughs*]** We eat the roe. So it's just—most of them now days just cast net; they just go out there and throw a net and bring in—pull in whatever they're going to catch. They don't use the big gill nets and the—any of

the big nets anymore, except one or two of them still does. And usually you end up getting in trouble when you do it; so.

0:50:44.6

AE: How is the roe prepared when you eat it?

0:50:47.0

TD: You meal it or flour it and throw it in hot grease and deep-fry it. When it floats to the top and it's kind of brown, then it's done. You do the white roe the same way. You do the mullet the same way, the gizzard the same way, but—or you can make fish stew out of it. My granddaddy used to do that. You can bake it, you can smoke it, you can grill it, you can just—**[*Laughs*]** just—they used to salt them; they used to get them and they would cut them open, butterfly them is what we called them, and they would salt them down. And they would last for months like that. Some of the older men used to salt them, and they'd leave them overnight, and then they'd rinse the salt off real good and then they'd smoke them. Now days they don't even salt fish anymore. They just don't do it anymore.

0:51:55.7

AE: So how long have you been working at Island View Seafood?

0:51:58.8

TD: About two years.

0:52:00.6

AE: Yeah? And you said you moved all over. And did you, you know, what—**[*Laughs*]**?

0:52:07.7

TD: My step-dad was in the Air Force, and so he moved us all over the place. And then when my oldest daughter—when I was seventeen—when I was sixteen, we moved back here and at seventeen-and-a-half, I got married and then we eventually—we got a divorce and my daughter was twelve. And a lot of her friends were starting to date at that age and all this, and I thought I need to get my kids out of here mostly so that they can see that there is another life different than this one. So I moved them to Alaska, and we stayed there three years.

0:52:50.6

AE: Wow, Alaska?

0:52:52.3

TD: Well I had lived there during my childhood a lot. My mom and my step-dad lived there, and my sister and her husband was living there at the time and my brother—he still lives there. My brother is the only one left living up there. And then I—I came back to Eastpoint, and my oldest daughter got married. I moved back to Eastpoint, and I stayed here about two years, and then I moved to Missouri, and then we moved to Mississippi, and then we moved back here. So my kids has really had sort of a wide variety of seeing how everybody else lives and kind of broadened their horizons. There's more in the world than just Franklin County **[*Laughs*]**—

0:53:37.0

AE: But you came—

0:53:37.6

TD: —which a lot of them don't get that here; so.

0:53:41.3

AE: But you came back because your roots go back so deep and you—?

0:53:45.2

TD: Yeah. Because this has always felt like home. This has always been home.

0:53:48.5

AE: Are you here for good now?

0:53:48.8

TD: Who knows? **[*Laughs*]** My daughter lives in Cocoa [Beach, Florida], and my son—I got one in Missouri and one that's going to move to Missouri, and then I got a daughter that says she's not leaving here. So I don't know—I don't know. I'm not going to say that I'll be here forever. As far as I can see in the future I will be, so—.

0:54:09.3

AE: Do you like being here in Eastpoint and working here at this place and—?

0:54:13.7

TD: Yeah, because I know everybody and you know—and—and I've got friends. I've got—my girlfriend, her kids and my kids were raised up so much, and so they think they're cousins, and they're not even kin to each other. **[*Laughs*]** And but I've known her since I was seventeen years old, so you know—and we're still friends.

0:54:32.0

AE: Well tell me what all it is that you do here.

0:54:34.1

TD: I clean fish, I head shrimp, I peel de-veined shrimp, I put stuff out in the display cases, I clean, I wait on customers, I answer questions and—and just, you know—just like it is in a clothes store, you know. We put the stuff out to sell and sell it to the people. That's about what I do.

0:55:00.9

AE: Well you've had a lot of customers this morning, but what's it like in summertime when St. George Island—?

0:55:04.7

TD: In the summertime there's three of us working in here, and we don't sit down all day long. **[*Laughs*]** Because it's not just one or two, you know, coming in; it's—it's—they will be—the parking lot will be full out there; there will be ten people in here and you're all—you're trying to wait on everybody as fast as you can and get them out and wait on somebody else. So it gets

pretty hectic in the summertime. But I actually like it better in the summer **[*Laughs*]** than I do these days where it's—it's—you got a lot of free time during the winter.

0:55:41.9

AE: Are there days that it's closed here?

0:55:45.1

TD: **[*Laughs*]** We close Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day and that's it. Those are the only two days in the year that we're closed.

0:55:54.6

AE: And then in the summertime, when it's really high season and you're really busy, do you sell out of fish a lot of those days? Is there enough from the bay to keep them—?

0:56:01.3

TD: We try not to. If we see we're low—running low on something, we're calling somebody. We're trying to get the stuff in here. We—I don't believe—we've—we've run out of something. Like if we run out of amberjack or something, and we can't get any 'til the next day, then they

usually buy something else. They don't never leave here with nothing, you know, during the summer.

0:56:33.5

AE: Is there anything you sell more of than something else or something more during a—a season than—?

0:56:41.0

TD: Well during the wintertime we sell more oysters, a lot of mullet, shrimp; shrimp we sell good all year round. During the summer, they're wanting more because they're tourists. They'll want more grouper and crab meat and scallops and—and shrimp and—and we sell oysters, but not as good as during the winter because most people don't want to eat it unless it's got an *R* in the month, which we're trying to understand that's just—it was—it was true fifty years ago but not today. **[*Laughs*]**

0:57:19.0

AE: Well is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think that I might want or need to know that we haven't talked about?

0:57:26.4

TD: Hmm. There's a lot of history around here. And—but nobody has ever really, you know, dug into it and documented it and everything. Like we just found out a few months ago—we're trying to do our family tree thing. We found out a few months ago that Apalachicola was the main place that you went and signed up to join the Confederate Army. Nobody else knew that. We had—we didn't know that one of our relatives lived on St. Vincent Island during the Civil War. And we didn't know that. **[*Laughs*]** Even though we know a lot since my great-grandparents—we don't know anything before then. We're just finding it out. But there's a lot of stuff around here that—like my granddaddy, he tells a story about when the sailing ships used to come into the channel. They were too heavy because it's shallower in here, so they would take these stones that they had put in the bottoms of their boats to make them weigh and sit further down in the water out in the ocean—they would take those stones and they'd throw them off the boat to lighten the load. So then they'd come in and fill full of cotton and stuff because Apalachicola was actually the biggest seaport, okay. So then they would leave. Well the next time they came, they did the same thing. And he said that those stones out there are big flat stones, and they're all different colors, and they're out there around the island and—but nobody has ever went out there and got any of them or—or messed with them or anything.

0:59:07.9

AE: Just scraping the surface.

0:59:08.4

TD: If I could swim I'd—I'd deep-sea dive and find me some but I can't even swim a stroke. **[*Laughs*]**

0:59:13.0

AE: You can't swim?

0:59:13.7

TD: I can't swim. **[*Laughs*]**

0:59:14.9

AE: You live on the bay, and you can't swim?

0:59:16.2

TD: I can't swim. My grandmother was so terrified that one of us would drown, she wouldn't let any of us be taught. Now my granddaddy would take—he took his kids out on the water fishing, and he let them learn how to swim. When their kids come along, like I said, I lived here part of the time, and then I lived in Alaska and everywhere else, so I didn't really get a chance to learn how to swim. When my kids came along, every one of my kids swam like fish; I made sure of it.

My grandson knows how to swim like a fish. I mean, I think it's something that you need to learn.

0:59:53.2

AE: Do you think that was true of a lot of people in your generation that their mothers didn't want them out there?

0:59:59.4

TD: A lot of them can dog paddle, you know. A lot of them learned how to swim because they were throwed off a boat or knocked off a dock or something, and they learned how to swim to survive. But as far as like—like in Michigan, it used to be you—I don't know if it still is or not, but in Michigan you can't graduate from high school unless you know how to swim, you know. That should have been mandatory for high school kids in Florida to learn how to swim, but it's not. A lot of these—and like my kids, they used to swim in this bay right here in this channel. Now it's so nasty until you can't swim in it. But yeah, the—a lot of the older generation was scared of a lot of things, and they wouldn't let you do a lot of things. So I mean you just—you just didn't do stuff. **[*Laughs*]**

1:00:55.5

AE: Do the old-timers have some superstitions that they held onto that you remember or know about?

1:01:01.1

TD: Oh, yeah. There was—there were superstitions that got carried on down, and I guess I'm carrying some of them around too. But there was like, Ash Wednesday, you couldn't wash any clothes. You can't do anything on New Year's Day that you don't want to do the rest of the year. There was things like—oh, the boat had to be named after a woman or something bad would happen. I don't know. There was just—there was just all kinds of stuff that, you know, they just kept going and—and my grandmother was scared of us drowning out there and she just—the boys got to do more than the girls back then, though, so they ended up knowing more about how to swim and do stuff like that than us girls did. We stayed on land, and we didn't really you know swim that much; so. **[*Laughs*]**

1:01:56.5

AE: What about—was there ever a community clambake or—or get together when the season starts or some kind of big community party?

1:02:07.4

TD: Not really. There was like family reunions, you know, every once in a while. Used to, when my grandmother was young. Now they—every weekend they would have a big party at somebody's house, and the next weekend it would be at somebody else's house, and they'd have music and food and dancing and stuff like that. But that didn't get carried over to the next generation; so.

1:02:35.5

AE: All right. Well I can leave you alone now. **[*Laughs*]**

1:02:38.3

TD: **[*Laughs*]**

1:02:38.6

AE: I've spent a good part of my morning here bugging you. But thank you for talking to me, Terry. I appreciate it.

1:02:44.3

TD: You're welcome. I like talking about history. **[*Laughs*]**

1:02:47.6

[End Terry Dean]