

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

Hilton Floyd

Interviewer: Barbara Hester

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An Oral History with Hilton Floyd, Volume 1043

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Biography

Mr. Hilton Floyd was born on September 15, 1956, in Jacksonville, Florida, to Mr. Hilton Floyd Sr. (born in Mayport, Florida) and Mrs. Helen Cooper Floyd (born in Mayport, Florida). His siblings are two older brothers, three older sisters, and one younger sister. Floyd's mother was a schoolteacher, and his paternal grandfather was a dredge boat operator. His mother's family were shrimpers. He is married to Rhonda Olier Floyd (born November 7, 1956, in South Korea). They have three grown sons, Frank, Daniel and Dale, and one grown daughter, Wendi. At the time of this interview, they had six grandchildren.

Throughout Floyd's life he has fished US coastal waters, off of Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama. He has fished commercially for a living, and also to obtain fresh seafood for his family to eat. He has served as captain of a research vessel with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and as a fisheries advisor to them. He served as president of Save America's Seafood Industry until the organization dissolved. Floyd enjoys woodworking as a hobby. After living in Pascagoula for thirty years, he calls it home.

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AN ORAL HISTORY

With

HILTON FLOYD

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Norman Yandell and is taking place on November 4, 2011. The interviewer is Barbara Hester.

Hester: All right. I'm Barbara Hester. I'm with the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage with The University of Southern Mississippi, and I'm here today with Mr. Hilton Floyd at his home. (The address of the interviewee has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy.) Today is Friday, November 4, 2011, and it's about ten minutes after one. Good afternoon, Mr. Floyd.

Floyd: Good afternoon.

Hester: Would you state your name for the record, please?

Floyd: Hilton Floyd. (The address of the interviewee has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy.)

Hester: OK. What is your occupation, Mr. Floyd?

Floyd: Commercial fisherman.

Hester: And how long have you been pursuing this occupation?

Floyd: Off and on since I was a kid.

Hester: Could you tell us about when you started? Did you learn from your father or another family member?

Floyd: From my father, yeah. We just, we grew up doing it and learned to build and repair nets and look for fish and run boats and all that kind of stuff. (0:01:15.6)

Hester: I understand. We took your brother's interview about two or three weeks ago, and he said that there are multiple generations of fishermen in the Floyd family.

Floyd: That's correct. My mother was an educated person, and she did some genealogical research. And according to her, she had documented seven generations.

Hester: He gave us some books that she had written on the genealogical work that she had done. Seems like a really impressive woman. She [was] very accomplished. Did you live in Florida, grow up in Florida, was it?

Floyd: I didn't really grow up in Florida. We left the state of Florida when I was about six years old. But we've always lived on the coast. We lived on the Georgia Coast and here on the Mississippi Coast. We've always had boats, been involved in some kind of fishing or shrimping or crabbing.

Hester: So you've done a little bit of all of it?

Floyd: Yes, ma'am.

Hester: Could you tell me what it was like fishing with your dad and maybe talk about how the equipment and the species of fish and everything, where you started, and how it's changed over time?

Floyd: Well, we used to, when I was just a young adult, we could go fishing for two weeks and never see another boat. (laughter) Now you can't go anywhere without—you'll see the law *every* day, at least once. And there's boats. I mean, you find a spot of fish and get ready to try to catch them, and some recreational guy runs over them. (0:03:05.0) I mean, this is a common area. It belongs to everybody. Nobody's trying to do you any harm. That's just the way it's going out there now.

Hester: Yeah. Well, what type of equipment did you start out using? Is it similar to what you're using now?

Floyd: I can remember when I was very young, we used seines. (0:03:26.5) We called them beach seines, on the East Coast. And one man would take one end of the seine and wade out into the surf with it, and somebody else would be on the inshore end, and you'd pull it down the beach a ways and then drag it up to the beach and put your fish in a tub and go home. (laughter)

Hester: Yeah. Yeah. And what type of fish would you catch with a seine?

Floyd: Just the basic stuff, most anything. Well, over there, there was a lot of whiting and of course mullet. We used to catch flounders and maybe a pompano, just different stuff.

Hester: Any shrimp? Or I guess no oysters. But would you catch shrimp that way, as well?

Floyd: Yeah. With a small mesh, you could catch some shrimp, but I don't remember catching any like that.

Hester: So where did you go from a seine?

Floyd: Personally, it was cast nets. And then from that, as far as actually working to try to make a dollar, it was gillnets or shrimp trawls. (0:04:38.2) But the gillnetting has been so vilified. For what reason, I don't know, but that's about over for us here.

Hester: I've heard a lot of negative comments about gillnetting restrictions and so forth. (0:04:57.3)

Floyd: Yeah. And I mean, if you're, obviously, interested in my opinion on this, the gillnetting is probably the most friendly to the environment fishery that there is because it's selective. I mean, you could put a gillnet around a school of fish and not catch one of them because they're too small or too big. But other fisheries, that are unchecked here, use purse seines and catch everything they put the net around. I don't know. I think it's all politically-motivated regulation. Oh, I'm sure it is.

Hester: Yeah. When did the gillnetting restrictions come into play?

Floyd: I can't recall what year it was. It's been an incremental thing. You know? To begin with, they closed one area. And then the next thing you know, that area's bigger, and then it expands, and it's bigger. And then it's more coastline, and then it's further out, and then it's whole areas and statewide. And when that wasn't good enough, then they regulated the type of gear to a point where you have to use either cotton or linen. And they made sure that you could only do that in areas where you're not going to catch any fish, so (laughter) I did buy some linen, and I built a net with it. (0:06:45.5) And that net lasted exactly thirty days, and it fell apart. So I mean, we try. We stuck it out to the bitter end. (laughter)

Hester: How has it affected your catch? I mean, is it like you're not catching—you're catching half as much?

Floyd: (laughter) Not even a tenth. (laughter)

Hester: Really?

Floyd: Really. She can tell you. I used to come home with thousands of pounds of fish, and now, if I'm lucky, hundreds. (laughter)

Hester: Yeah. Mr. Floyd, you referred to your wife who is sitting in the room with us. Maybe we should put her name, introduce her. Your name is?

Mrs. Floyd: I'm Rhonda Floyd.

Hester: Rhonda Floyd. OK. Thanks. Can you talk about the species of fish? I mean, I know you said when you started out, it was the, I guess, finfish and some shrimp, when you were seining on the Atlantic Coast.

Floyd: That was on the East Coast, on the Atlantic side, the seine—

Hester: And then when you went to the cast nets, is that the time where you put part of it—?

Floyd: Yeah. That's like the one that's laying out there. The cast-netting is primarily for mullet fishing. (0:08:12.7) But we do catch sheepshead, spade fish. You do catch other species, but it's primarily, that's a mullet net.

Hester: Um-hm. Do you use that net and other—is that what you use now is a casting net?

Floyd: I use that, and I use, I do hook-and-line fishing.

Hester: Um-hm. And what do you go for?

Floyd: The hook and line?

Hester: Yeah.

Floyd: Black drum and redfish. (0:08:46.7)

Hester: And how do you market your fish when you catch it? Do you go to retailers?

Floyd: We have a wholesaler here that we go to. (0:08:56.9)

Hester: I was just, I had another interview this morning, Mr. Earl Ross in Biloxi. And he was saying that the number of wholesalers has diminished.

Floyd: Oh, yeah! (laughter) We have one fish buyer in Pascagoula now. Pascagoula, at one time the Port of Pascagoula had the highest seafood [finfish] landings in the country. (0:09:23.4) Now, we have one fish dealer.

Hester: Who is it?

Floyd: That would be Clark Seafood. They had a fleet of snapper boats down there.

Hester: Clark Seafood.

Floyd: Yeah. They had a fleet of snapper boats down there. This was where it's at for seafood, but not anymore. I have to clarify that. I was referring to finfish, not seafood in general. I don't know, but for finfish, Pascagoula was, I think we had the highest landings in the country at one time.

Hester: And the shrimping (0:10:01.3) you do with the cast net as well, or is that (inaudible)?

Floyd: Yeah, you can. But I have a trawl that I can pull.

Hester: What time of year do you use your trawl? Just curious. What time of year do you use the trawl and shrimp?

Floyd: For shrimping, if I go shrimping, it's in the early summer.

Hester: Um-hm. Yeah. When did you begin commercial fishing? You started with your dad and following in his footsteps at a very young age. And when did you decide, "This is what I want to do for the rest of my life"?

Floyd: Oh. (laughter) Well, I've had regular jobs in between. In fact, I had—but I've always supplemented my income, when I wasn't just commercial fishing. I mean, I've always fished, but I've held regular jobs and fished, also, at the same time, so.

Hester: What kind of jobs would you do? Related to fishing, or just a different industry altogether?

Floyd: I've worked on fishing boats for other people. I worked at a paper mill. I've been an engineer for the pogy plant up there on their boats. I worked overseas as a generator mechanic, military contracts on military bases in Afghanistan.

Hester: This probably I could answer, but why did you enter the business? What brought you to making a decision that, "OK. It's going to be fishing"?

Floyd: I guess it's (laughter) in our blood. It just kind of comes natural. This is what we do. This is what we've always done. And I guess the most attractive part of it is your independence. (0:12:02.3) Nobody tells you when to go to work, when to come home. You put on your own hat and be your own boss.

Hester: Yeah. Could you take us through a day? Suppose today you were going to go cover the waters and do some commercial fishing. How would your day run? You would start off with?

Floyd: To start off I'd hook the boat up to the truck. (laughter) OK. Today, a typical day. (0:12:31.9) I got up this morning about 3:30, four o'clock; got my coffee; got woke up; hooked up the boat; got it ready to go. And I went and launched the boat; went riding around, looking; didn't find any fish. So I came in to rest a little while, and right now I'm waiting for the tide to change. And I'm going to go back this afternoon.

Hester: Where do you put in?

Floyd: I put in right down the road here at what we call the Point, at the mouth of the Pascagoula River.

Hester: What does the fishing business mean to you and your family?

Floyd: It's our sustenance. (0:13:20.3) (laughter) I mean, right now you can't just go get a job anywhere. I guess we're lucky to have it, what's left of it. You can still make a little money and get by.

Hester: Does Rhonda fish with you much?

Floyd: Oh, no. She never goes fishing. She just commands me to go catch fish. (laughter)

Hester: Oh, goodness. (laughter)

Mrs. Floyd: I fry them, too. (laughter)

Hester: You fry them. So you-all actually, you'll take some home. What's your favorite type of fish? Just curious.

Mrs. Floyd: Fried. (0:14:11.8) (laughter)

Hester: Fried. Doesn't make a difference whether it's redfish or—

Mrs. Floyd: We have mullet, any of it.

Hester: You told us about the seining and the cast net, and you still use the cast net to this day. And you do some, you said some trawling.

Floyd: Very little.

Hester: Very little trawling. So the evolution has been—I'm looking at how the industry changed from when you started to today as far as maybe the types of fish, how it's changed, how the equipment's change. Can you tell me any more about that?

Floyd: The regulations have all but squeezed it out of existence (0:15:05.0) for this near-shore, commercial fishing.

Hester: How so?

Floyd: Closing areas and restricting gear. There was a time I could get in my boat with my gillnet and go and be assured that I'm going to make a payday, some kind of payday. Those days are over.

Hester: If a young man or woman from Pascagoula came to you and said, "Mr. Floyd, I'm thinking about going into commercial fishing," what would you answer? What would be your recommendation?

Floyd: Good luck! (laughter) I would highly recommend that nobody go into it.

Hester: What are you seeing with the other commercial fishermen in your area? Are they sticking to it, or are they leaving the field? (0:16:06.9)

Floyd: The only ones that I know that are really having any success, anything remotely lucrative, income, are those that are lucky enough to have offshore, refish permits, or snapper permits, and those are hard to come by. You have to—usually some dealer or somebody will actually own the permit and will let you fish on it. Of course you have to sell to him. Those guys that can do that, they're making a decent living. There aren't many of them, and they have to have probably a minimum hundred-thousand-dollar investment. Well, just like my two nephews that fish together, they spent thirty thousand dollars on gasoline last year, so I mean, these guys, that tells you there they have to go a lot, and they have to spend a lot to make that money.

Hester: I've heard a number of commercial fishermen talking about how they're hurt by the rising fuel prices.

Floyd: Oh, I'm sure.

Hester: How does it determine where you go with your boat and so forth?

Floyd: Well, see, for my little operation is a shoestring deal. I can't run offshore with that boat I have. And I intentionally got a boat that's light and small horsepower; doesn't cost much to operate, but I'm getting old. (laughter) I'm not going to run out fifty miles offshore like those young fellows are doing. So fuel prices don't hurt me too bad.

Hester: What about insurance and all? I've heard that the insurance gets to be pretty expensive, too.

Floyd: I don't insure any of my gear, just the truck.

Hester: Let's see here. Can you tell me something about the ecology? How have the wetlands changed, or how has the ecology in the area changed as you've seen it over the years? (0:18:34.2)

Floyd: Well, it's just development. There's been so much development. In this immediate area, there's been a lot of marshland that's been developed. There's been a lot of oyster reef that's been disturbed or dredged up, (0:18:58.9) stuff like that. As far as abundance of the resource, I'm not seeing any dramatic decline. I'm not seeing any decline. We do see patterns of fluctuation from year to year, but I can't attribute any kind of a decline in the resource to any kind of human activity. I'm just not seeing it. I think Nature is just resilient enough that we're really, we're not doing any harm.

Hester: Is there a cyclical pattern in fishing? You'll have so many good years and so many bad years? Do you see that?

Floyd: It just changes from year to year.

Hester: Um-hm. There's no pattern to it.

Floyd: What research I've done on it, climate is the biggest factor as far as catch variations. (0:20:05.1) The fish do act different from year to year. Just like these mullet, we follow mullet every year, and we watch how they do. Of course we try to keep tabs on them, big schools of fish because they're kind of like salmon. They go up the river, and they come back down the river and all that. And some years they'll stay up in the river more, like they're doing this year. Last year they were out here on the beachfront every day. I could just run right out there and catch them. This year they're keeping their heads down for some reason. I think climate, salinity, water temperature, all these things, come into play.

Hester: Can you say what would be the most favorable climate?

Floyd: For the mullet?

Hester: Um-hm.

Floyd: I don't know. For catching them, on a cold front. When a front comes through, and the weather gets really crappy, that's when you can catch them. That pushes them down the river, so that's when you catch them.

Hester: Does it depend upon what species of fish as to what would be the most favorable climate? In other words, while the mullet might like the cold weather, other fish might like the warm weather?

Floyd: There's certain fish like mackerel or pompano, things like that, they have to have water of a certain temperature, but that doesn't affect mullet. Things like that, that's like mackerel's more of a summer fishery.

Hester: Do you stay pretty much in Mississippi waters, or do you—

Floyd: Um-hm.

Hester: You do.

Floyd: I've fished of course in Florida when I was a kid, and I've fished from here to—I've fished all the Louisiana Coast, but for now, it's just right here out of Pascagoula.

Hester: When did you stop doing Louisiana?

Floyd: Well, I was fishing down there on the pogy boats. I only did that for like five years.

Hester: And what made you decide that, “That’s enough. I’m going to stay in Mississippi”?

Floyd: I finally decided I wasn’t going to make any money doing it after five years. (laughter)

Hester: Yeah. I’d imagine that’s hard work.

Floyd: Well, the thing about it is you’re away from home, that, and you’re working for somebody else. (0:22:21.9) My wife didn’t like me being away from home like that and wasn’t really making enough money to make it, to justify it. So after five years I just got out of it.

Hester: Yeah. I understand. OK. Can you tell us maybe something about what you perceive the seafood industry to mean to the people and the culture of the Gulf Coast? How important is fishing to the Mississippi Gulf Coast? What does it mean to—

Floyd: Well, it’s a significant part of this Coast economy (0:23:00.7) or the state economy, I’m sure, not to the extent that it has been.

Hester: Why?

Floyd: Regulations. (laughter) That and I’m no expert, but I believe the shrimp catch has gone down (0:23:28.1) a lot over the years. What I said earlier about stock depletions and fluctuations, I’m talking about finfish. Oysters, crab, shrimp, that kind of thing, it might be a completely different story. When I was a kid or a young man, when the shrimp season opened in the Mississippi Sound, there were hundreds, if not thousands, of boats here from all over the country to catch those shrimp. Now, on opening day of shrimp season, you might see two or three boats out here off the beach in Pascagoula, whereas you used to see hundreds.

Hester: You think it was overfished?

Floyd: I don’t know. It seem like if it was overfished that it’s had time to come back because I’m talking years ago. I don’t know. One thing that I do know that is not good for the shrimp is the way they let the bait boats work because they work in the rivers (0:24:40.4) where the shrimp are kind of bottlenecked in a small area. And they’re catching small shrimp, but I couldn’t say that that’s wiping out the shrimp or anything, but it just can’t be good for them because they can go in and shrimp in the rivers where the commercial shrimper or somebody shrimping for food or for a living can’t go.

Hester: So they're catching the young?

Floyd: They're catching the baby shrimp.

Hester: The babies, yeah.

Floyd: For live bait.

Hester: I know that Pete said that he's doing some work with turtles, some research. And do you know of any other research projects that are going on that are addressing issues like the depletion of the shrimp or the—

Floyd: Not that I know of. I do work with Pete on the turtle studies. (0:25:42.0)

Hester: Oh, you do?

Floyd: Yeah.

Hester: Yeah. How's that going?

Floyd: It's over for this year. It went real well. We broke some new ground as far as finding a range extension on the species that we were studying, plus it's fun. (laughter)

Hester: Yeah. That's neat. How long was the project altogether?

Floyd: Oh, it lasted from the spring right through the summer.

Hester: Um-hm. That's interesting. Do you belong to any professional organizations, any seafood—

Floyd: Do I?

Hester: Yeah. No? Can we talk about [Hurricane] Katrina some? How did Katrina affect your business? (0:26:23.6)

Floyd: I was working overseas when Katrina was here. It affected me because I had to come home and tear my house down and rebuild it, but (laughter) as far as my job, there's no affect at all. I was doing generator work in Afghanistan.

Hester: Um-hm. And after you finished rebuilding, you went back to Afghanistan?

Floyd: I went back, again, yeah.

Hester: Yeah. So you didn't lose any boats or anything like that in Katrina?

Floyd: Well, I had fishing gear here. I had a boat on a trailer, and everything was pretty much wrecked, and I just, I told my wife just do whatever. I did have an old friend that was an old fisherman. I told her to just let him have it all cheap, if he wanted it or whatever. And that's what happened.

Hester: What was your observation as to how the fishing industry—what others were doing, how that was affected by Katrina?

Floyd: Well, it's just going to be hearsay because I was away, but just hearing what the guys say, they had banner fishing seasons afterward, especially the crabbers, everybody. They said it was good afterwards.

Hester: Yeah. How long afterwards. Do you know?

Floyd: I don't know.

Hester: How about the BP [Deepwater Horizon] oil spill? (0:27:49.6) Were you here for that? Did you—

Floyd: Yeah. I was here for that, and—

Hester: How did it affect your business?

Floyd: I couldn't work. I couldn't go at all because they shut down the commercial fishing and the whole Gulf out there pretty much.

Hester: How was it before the spill? Were you having a good year?

Floyd: See, I came home from Afghanistan, like early January and had fished some, and it was going pretty good, and then we had that oil spill, and that just shut us down. But BP, they wouldn't compensate me because I had been overseas working, and I couldn't document that I had been here fishing. And so I found some work just running other boats for other people and that Vessel of Opportunity program (0:28:49.3) they had. They registered my boat, and they assigned me a number. They told me to send a crew to school and get ready. "Your boat's going to work." And it just never happened.

Hester: Why do you think it never happened?

Floyd: Politics. The people in charge of that program here, the community support team, they had all their friends who weren't even commercial fishermen. They had all them involved in it, and the program was for commercial fishermen. But—

Hester: I've heard a number of people say that.

Floyd: Yeah. It was just cronyism was the rule of the day on that deal.

Hester: Um-hm. Did you have a chance to go out after it was closed and reopened? You went out and harvested the fish again. How was the industry once they reopened the waters?

Floyd: I didn't see any effect at all right here.

Hester: How did you find out about the Vessels of Opportunity program?

Floyd: Just word of mouth. Everybody I know is a fisherman. (laughter) Everybody knew about it.

Hester: OK. On whole, how would you say it worked out? And obviously by your answer, I assume that it didn't work out quite the way it was—

Floyd: (laughter) The Vessels of Opportunity program?

Hester: Yeah.

Floyd: It worked out good if you were connected around here. (laughter) Some people did get well compensated, people who deserved it, commercial fishermen who were out of work. Some of them did get it. I'm just not one of them. (laughter) I've heard of others; there were others that didn't get anything at all, for some reason, but just the way it is, I guess.

Hester: How did you make it when the waters were closed? How did you survive that summer? And how do you—

Floyd: I ran boats for other people. See, like if their boat was in the program, and they were getting sixteen hundred dollars a day for their boat, they'd pay me two hundred to go run their boat, so.

Hester: Got you. I understand.

Floyd: So it wasn't a total failure. I was happy to make the two hundred a day. At least that was something.

Hester: Did you do any other work for BP?

Floyd: No.

Hester: That was it. You're not having any luck as far as your claim because they said you were—you tried to make a claim, and they said you were in Afghanistan so you didn't qualify.

Floyd: Yeah. They said I didn't have enough documentation even though I showed them fishing licenses going back like four years, and I even showed them pictures of me in the fishing industry (laughter) from years ago, (0:31:53.5) but just didn't help me.

Hester: How would you assess the condition of the waters now? Do you see any oil?

Floyd: No. I don't see anything, any problem out there.

Hester: Have you experienced a change at any level of the water? I heard somebody say that they, in trawling, were pulling up some tar balls from the bottom. Do you have any experience with anything like that?

Floyd: I've been on the beach all my life, and I've seen tar balls all my life on the beach, and I don't see anything changed, *here*. (0:32:33.4) It may be different down in Louisiana or somewhere, but I'm not seeing it here.

Hester: Yeah. Well, that's good. How do you envision the seafood industry for the future of the Mississippi Gulf Coast?

Floyd: Well, if you can import Chinese seafood, you're going to do all right. (laughter)

Hester: What about for the locals?

Floyd: As far as job opportunities or some kind of small business development, it's not going to happen (0:33:06.8) until the regulatory state backs down, and they're not going to do that because they're owned by special interests, so it's just not going to happen. It's going to have to get really bad before it gets better. You hear a lot about small business is the driving engine of the economy. Every little boat like mine is a small business. I'd love to be able to have a deckhand and go fish every day with a gillnet. That would contribute to the local economy, and it would make things better (laughter) for me. But it's not going to happen. I can remember when there were dozens of little boats, skiffs down here at this time of year, mullet fishing. Now there're none, maybe three on a good day.

Hester: What choices have the fishermen made when they found that they needed to shift direction occupationwise? What would they do? What direction did they have to (inaudible)?

Floyd: Whatever they could find. I've heard of them going, taking laborer jobs at the shipyard, just different things.

Hester: This is a record that's going to last a long time in archives, your oral interview, and there may be questions out there that I'm not thinking of right now.

Would you like to say something for the record? Would you like something preserved? Is there something I didn't ask that you would like to comment on?

Floyd: I don't know. I think it's almost disgraceful what they've done to the fishermen in this country. The country's hurting right now because of it, and not just with the fishing industries. Regulation is killing business. It's killing work opportunities for people. It's hurting the economy, and I believe to some degree corruption is at the root of it. (0:35:23.0) And commercial fishing is probably the best example we have of how the regulatory state can just kill industry.

Hester: What benefit do you see that they've gained by doing that?

Floyd: OK. The benefits of shutting down production here is enjoyed by seafood importers and fish farmers, recreational fishing interests. To them it's an allocation issue. The resource is allocated to their use exclusively. Got to be good for business. For instance, certain fishing tackle manufacturers will contribute a dollar to a lobbying group for every fishing rod they sell, that sort of thing. I mean, it's all out there. Fish farmers being wined and dined by antifishing groups, it's just too obvious. They're all in bed. It was documented that Vietnamese shrimp farmers contributed one million dollars to the Florida net ban, so it's all business. But they got these groups, primarily Coast Conservation Association, shilling for corporate interests. And anybody that can read and comprehend and see what's going on around them can figure that out. So all the regulators know it, all the politicians, the commissioners, whatever. They all know it, and they're just going along to get along, I guess. But the sad part about it is they don't really mind hurting somebody to do these things. I've seen some poor people that really couldn't diversify, that couldn't do anything else but fish, simple people, but good people, hardworking people. And I've seen them hurt bad by this, and it's just a shame. Myself, I'm lucky. I can go do something else. I'm not afraid to try anything. I'm surviving.

Hester: Do you-all have any children that may be following in your footsteps? Pete's son—

Floyd: We have three sons. None of them are involved in fishing. Pete's two sons are doing it, and they're good at it. But really the only reason they can do it is because they're fishing on somebody else's permit, a refish permit. If it weren't for that, they couldn't do it. They'd have to go get a job somewhere. For me personally, I don't require a lot of income. I'm settled in here. I'm getting old. Everything I have is paid for. I'm not raising babies or nothing anymore, so I don't have to make a lot of money. I just have to make enough to get by, so I can do it.

Hester: I understand. Drawing from what you're saying, how would you describe the impact on the Mississippi Gulf Coast from these experiences that the commercial fishermen are experiencing? I mean, commercial fishing is part of the culture of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. How is it impacted?

Floyd: Seems to be going away, just gradually going away. It's just slowly dying on the vine, I guess, as far as the finfish business, it's (laughter) nothing compared to what it has been.

Hester: Two things that I was going to ask you about, and one was, did the casinos have an effect on your business at all?

Floyd: Mm-mm.

Hester: And how about the [spillway]? We mentioned it before we actually turned the tape recorder on, not the spill, but the spillway, the opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway. The freshwater, as I understand it, didn't come this far.

Floyd: It didn't bother us over here. I do know some people over that way, over at Lakeshore, and they said it hurt them bad over there, the crabbers. (0:40:43.8) The water got too fresh or muddy or whatever. I don't know.

Hester: Yeah. I heard the same thing. Well, Mr. Floyd, it's been a great interview. I thank you very much. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Floyd: (laughter) Support your local fishermen. (laughter)

Hester: There you go. Rhonda, would you like to say anything?

Mrs. Floyd: No. I just, I think it's great that y'all are documenting it.

Hester: Thank you very much. We've certainly enjoyed talking to the commercial fishermen over here. It's been great. Well, thank you. I'll go ahead and turn this off.

(end of interview)