

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

Peter S. Floyd

Interviewers: Barbara Hester and Louis Kyriakoudes

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*An Oral History with Peter S. Floyd, Volume 1043*

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## Table of Contents

Mother.....	1, 27
Learning to shrimp on father’s boat.....	2
Father worked for NOAA, deep-ocean research.....	3
Shrimping, equipment, changes.....	3
Beach seining.....	3
Multigenerational fishing family.....	4, 12
Personal history.....	4
Primitive Honduras of childhood.....	4
Shrimping.....	5
Working for University of Georgia’s Marine Extension.....	5
Interest in herpetology.....	5, 7
Setting up aquarium for Skidaway Island, Georgia.....	5
Full-time commercial fishing in Mississippi, 1973.....	6
Regulations.....	6, 14, 25
Sea birds, dolphins.....	7
Unique characteristics of Mississippi Sound, Gulf of Mexico.....	8
Abundant marine life in Gulf of Mexico.....	8
Number of fishermen in Gulf in decline.....	8, 16
Finfish targeted, Spanish mackerel, catfish.....	8
Marketing catch.....	9
Fish house.....	9
Typical day fishing.....	10
Finding fish, smelling fish.....	10
Typical day researching marine life.....	10
Alabama Red-Belly Turtle.....	10
Building nets.....	11
Bonnet Carré Spillway.....	12
Hurricane Katrina, 2005.....	13
Cast net.....	14
Sons who fish.....	15
Species of fish caught with cast net.....	15
Hardhead catfish.....	15
Casinos’ effects on commercial fishing.....	15
Aquaculturists.....	16
Foreign aquaculture’s effects worse than effects of commercial fishing.....	16
False information in the media.....	17
BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster.....	18
False perception of oil-tainted seafood, misrepresented by media.....	18
Vessels of Opportunity, corruption.....	19
Fish in the Gulf of Mexico in oil.....	20
Bait.....	22
Effect of dredging on fishing.....	23
Cyclical nature of fishing.....	24
Speckled trout.....	25

## AN ORAL HISTORY

with

PETER S. FLOYD

*This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Peter S. Floyd and is taking place on October 6, 2011. The interviewer is Barbara Hester. Also present is Louis Kyriakoudes.*

**Hester:** Would you state your name, please?

**Floyd:** Peter S. Floyd.

**Hester:** And—

**Kyriakoudes:** That's perfect, perfect.

**Hester:** OK. I'll ask you again to do that once we get started.

**Kyriakoudes:** Is it recording now?

**Hester:** It appears to be. I'm just wondering whether the lines are coming across as far as they should.

**Floyd:** My sister's going to bring you the books I told you about.

**Hester:** Oh, great, great.

**Floyd:** She should be here before long.

**Hester:** OK, great. His mother's written some books.

**Floyd:** My mother did this. She was one of the top historians in Florida. (0:02:01.0)

**Kyriakoudes:** Oh.

**Floyd:** And really, I could go on and on about her, but exactly what y'all are doing, in the fishing community in Florida.

**Kyriakoudes:** What's her first name?

**Floyd:** Helen Cooper Floyd.

**Kyriakoudes:** OK. Well, we probably have—I'm certain we have her stuff in the library, and I'll make a beeline for that.

**Floyd:** Probably not. You may, though. She documented tons of history.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah.

**Hester:** All right, so shall we, shall we do it?

**Kyriakoudes:** Yes.

**Hester:** OK. I am Barbara Hester with the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage with The University of Southern Mississippi. And today we're here with Pete Floyd of Pascagoula, Mississippi. And we're at his home (the address of the interviewee has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy). It's about 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 6, 2011. Mr. Floyd, thank you for having us today, and thank you for inviting us into your home to do this interview.

**Floyd:** You're quite welcome.

**Hester:** Thank you. Would you start by giving us your name and address?

**Floyd:** My name is Peter S. Floyd, and I live (the address of the interviewee has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy).

**Hester:** Great. Mr. Floyd, what is your occupation?

**Floyd:** Well, currently, I'm a commercial fisherman/turtle researcher, among other things.

**Hester:** Great, great. And is this a profession that you've had all—when did you learn to fish?

**Floyd:** I started commercial fishing with my father when I was literally three years old on shrimp boats, on his shrimp boats and have pretty much been on boats my whole life, have been on boats my whole life. (0:03:51.1)

**Hester:** Wow. So your father was a shrimper, and you followed in his footsteps.

**Floyd:** Yes, my father; both my grandfathers, virtually every uncle and every uncle by marriage, and every cousin. I mean, that sounds wild, but I've got a big family and all, all seafarers.

**Kyriakoudes:** What was your father's name?

**Hester:** Hilton M. Floyd.

**Kyriakoudes:** And also here in the Pascagoula area?

**Hester:** No. I'm originally from Mayport, Florida. My father (0:04:20.0) was a shrimper in Mayport and a beach-seiner and, you know, cast-netter and crabber, as we all are. And when I was about eight years old in Mayport, NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration], which was then National Marine Fisheries Service, had heard of my father. He was something of a legend, a fearless seafarer. And the director of this lab here in Pascagoula came and hired him to run their research boats, which was very fortunate for me because I grew up on the research boats and the commercial fishing boats, so I got to see both sides of the story.

**Kyriakoudes:** Well, we need to ask some more questions about his dad.

**Hester:** Could you tell us the type of fishing that your dad did, and maybe take us from how it evolved to your experiences?

**Floyd:** How would he—excuse me?

**Hester:** How would he fish? What type of equipment would he use?

**Floyd:** Well, of course we shrimped, you know. He had, back then, I think it was about a thirty-five-foot, the pre-Desco boat, a wooden boat, beautiful hand-hewn boats. And he shrimped, and when the shrimping was bad, we'd go beach-seine, pulling long nets out through the surf. (0:05:50.7) And I was so little then; I can remember holding onto his pocket, reaching up and holding onto his pocket in the surf as we pulled the nets, and crabbing, of course. (0:06:02.3) Back in the old days, they used long lines, you know, with the bait tied on a string and scooped them, and then they moved into crab traps. And of course, my father's exploratory fishing experience, as captain of several research boats: he was a groundbreaker for deep-ocean research. And when he was captain of these boats, they discovered hundreds of new species of deepwater sea life, aside from the plankton, the nekton, and the smaller stuff. It was really a wonderful time.

**Hester:** Where did he conduct his fishing and his research, in what areas, in what waters?

**Floyd:** The Caribbean, the Gulf [of Mexico], and the Atlantic. Like one of the cruises I went on, we were doing a survey of the ocean floor from a hundred to five hundred fathoms off Georgia and Carolina, and virtually everything you pulled up was new to science. It was just absolutely unbelievable. And the only thing I recognized was Coke cans, (laughter) in five hundred fathoms. You know a fathom is six foot. That's some deep water, but the fish were just, looked like space monsters and stuff, and it was just like Christmas morning to me, getting to see all that stuff. And one of the things we did, we pulled shell dredges, which is kind of like an oyster dredge, in the

deep ocean, and when we'd dredge it, the whole ocean floor was solid fossils, giant sharks' teeth. And it was just absolutely amazing what we caught out there. I may be getting off track here.

**Hester:** No, no, no. It's very interesting. So you fished with your dad, and then at what age did you see the direction of your future?

**Floyd:** Well, I was named Peter. That should tell you something. (laughter) It was sort of a given that anybody born in Mayport was going to be a fisherman. It's a small fishing village at the mouth of the St. John's River near Jacksonville. And my family started fishing there in 1790, and virtually all of my ancestors were fishermen. It was really a dictionary of a fishing village. There was one store. There was no gas station. I mean, the only fuel in town was on the box for the boats. And I started then, and I kind of dabbled and went with my father and my uncles and my cousins for until I was about nine when we moved to Georgia, following my father's trade on his change to the government boats. And my best memory of Brunswick, Georgia, was when I caught my first sea turtle (0:09:01.4) when I was nine years old. I used to fish with a hand line off the side of the boat while the men were working. I was a little boy, and I caught about a two-hundred-and-fifty-pound loggerhead sea turtle. And I can remember pulling him in on the hand line with my chest hitting the rail of the boat, screaming, "Papa, Papa, I got him. Papa, I got him." And we got him up to the boat, and Papa and the deckhands tied a lasso, and they tied it around my rope and pulled him up on the boat, and gave him to a local guy that needed him to eat, back then, but can you imagine today catching a sea turtle off a NOAA boat and eating it?

**Hester:** Right. (laughter)

**Kyriakoudes:** I think there would be an arrest warrant.

**Floyd:** There would be a problem. (laughter)

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah.

**Floyd:** But things have changed so much. But to go on, if you would like my history, I was there; we lived in Brunswick, then St. Simon's Island. That was two years, a year in Brunswick, a year on St. Simon's Island. Then my father was transferred to this office, to the NOAA office here in Pascagoula. And of course throughout this whole time we fished. I made my side-money, fishing from the time I was a small boy. After we moved over here, at age thirteen, I hopped my first big, seagoing shrimp boat. (0:10:25.4) I caught a bus to Fort Myers, Florida, from Pascagoula, and we left for Honduras, and I spent—while I wasn't in school. We went to Honduras for a couple of months, Honduras and Nicaragua, and shrimped every day and sometimes day and night. And I got to live with the Hondurans; now, they're called Hondurans. But it was kind of cool back then because they were living in grass huts and dugout logs, and I look at the pictures in the dive magazines, now, of Binaca and some of the places, Roatan, some of the places we went, and they were absolutely

primitive. And now they're giant dive resorts. It's really, really interesting the way things have changed.

**Hester:** And so then you?

**Floyd:** Now, during the winter I would gillnet here in Mississippi. I would shrimp my little rig. I would crab, always fishing. I didn't play sports. I fished or hunted, trapped. Pretty much we've always made our living off the land or the water. So each summer, within a week of me getting out of school, I'd hop on a shrimp boat. And I got to shrimp Texas. I got to shrimp the East Coast, got to spend a lot of time in Mississippi. And back then, I'll never forget the first time—generally we would go chasing bigger shrimp than you have here in Mississippi waters, in large numbers. But the first year I remember shrimping inside of Horn Island, we filled a six—me, the captain, and another deckhand filled a sixty-seven-[foot] shrimp boat. I don't know if you've ever looked in a hold of a seventy-foot shrimp boat. They carry a lot of shrimp. We filled that shrimp boat completely full in three days. I mean, we were making two-hour tows and catching thirty-five hundred pounds of clean shrimp. And it still happens today, if you get in those pockets. And then, like I say, I fished. I frogged; I sold frogs. I sold turtles and sharks to biological supply companies, sold frogs to the restaurants, sold fish of course to the fish markets. And then I decided, with a little prodding, to go to college. So I got married to my wife Jeanie(?), who's upstairs, and we moved back to Brunswick. My father had been transferred back over there, and so we moved over there, and got us a little, bitty house. And I got a job with the University of Georgia's Marine Extension as a research technician, (0:13:27.8) which basically was doing fisheries research, making new gear, just kind of exploratory fishing, which was a wonderful job. I spent two years doing that. We reviewed rock shrimp fisheries. We made new types of long-line gear. I personally developed new fish traps that made *National Fisherman* [magazine], that I was real proud of, that worked real good. What I did; I used different color wire and different types of funnel. I would just play with it because I had a lot of time, and they wanted me to do it. They were paying me to do it. And I worked there half a day while I went to college in Brunswick.

**Hester:** And you studied?

**Floyd:** My intention at the time was to study herpetology, which I had studied since I was a small boy. I always liked catching turtles and snakes, and my mother bought me field guides. (0:14:30.0) Literally, when I was five or six years old, you wouldn't see me without my field guide in my back pocket when I was catching turtles in the ditch and snakes and stuff. And so I worked in Brunswick for two years, and then the University of Georgia set up a seaquarium on Skidaway Island, Georgia, and they hired me (0:14:52.6) to—me and a couple of guys. We built the filters. We set the tanks, and we stocked the tanks. As a fisherman, we caught virtually every fish we put in there, and did very little research. It was mainly maintaining the seaquarium and stocking it and such. And after a year and a half, I got tired of college. I got tired of Skidaway. The ocean was calling me. I wanted to go back to fishing. I just was not



cut out for that kind of work. I can't sit in an office. I can't sit; that's why I want to do this out here. I like open air much better than walls. So my wife and I decided to move back to Mississippi. (0:15:42.5) This was 1973. So when I moved to Mississippi, I went back to full-time fishing, mainly gillnetting, some shrimping and some crabbing, too. And I did that till about 1980. Things were getting kind of tough in the fishing industry. A lot of politics got involved, a lot of unpleasant things. I'm quite sure y'all have seen the misinformation about fishermen on the media, and that's when it really started, in the mid-[19]70s. Some of these pseudoconservation groups started portraying us as villains that didn't like the environment, that we were just out there for money, which is so far from reality that—but anyway, due to these overregulations and basically greedy individuals that were financed by foreign aquaculture and domestic aquaculture, they pretty much started pushing the American fishermen out of business. And so I was getting in bad shape. They shut the islands down, illegally. (0:17:04.0) In the original charter of the national seashore, it was written that commercial fishing could never be stopped. Well, once the big billionaires from Texas started their campaign of misinformation on commercial fishermen, the laws could be bought, and the laws could be changed, and science flew out the window. It was strictly politics. I'm kind of getting carried away here, but I—my father told—I didn't have insurance, and my father told me that he used to make nets for the firemen in Jacksonville, and he had seen in the paper that the Pascagoula Fire Department was hiring firemen. And Papa told me, he said, "You can go to work there." He said, "I used to sell those firemen nets and stuff. You can patch your nets. You can build your nets." It's only nine days a month, so I could fish the rest of the month. And so I went to work at the fire station, (0:18:06.3) and every day when I was off, I fished. And that was a wonderful time. I saw a lot of horrible things, as all firemen do, but it was very good for me because I could build my nets, clean my fish, whatever. A lot of those firemen would sit and watch television. When I went, I had a truck full of stuff to go to work with, building nets or whatever.

**Kyriakouides:** And you were still fishing commercially?

**Floyd:** Oh, yeah. Fireman was strictly a little, part-time job. I was fishing wide open the whole time.

**Kyriakouides:** We were talking to a fisherman named Billy Stewart. Do you know him?

**Floyd:** Yeah, I know Billy. His father was *the* judge that wrote—are you familiar with the law on that?

**Kyriakouides:** I am.

**Floyd:** His father wrote that.

**Kyriakouides:** And I promised Billy that I would go in the William Colmer papers, Bill Colmer. We should have the original 1962—

**Floyd:** Boy, I'd love to see that.

**Kyriakoudes:** Well, I promised Billy that I'll get that for him. Our archive is getting a new fire-suppression system.

**Floyd:** If you get it, that's one favor I'll ask of you. I'd sure love a copy.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah. It's no problem to hit two on the photocopier instead of one. (laughter) And I'll send that to you in the mail.

**Floyd:** But anyway, at that time, I hate to—fishing is the most wonderful blessing a human being can have (0:19:31.5) because I mean, you come to know things that the average Joe never gets to see. I mean, you know the terns. You know the pelicans. You know the dolphins, intimately. They help you fish. They tell you what kind of fish are under them. They tell you what kind of fish they're pushing to the top. And when the political takeover of the seafood industry started, it really caused a lot of stress to all the fishermen. I mean, here we were being portrayed as villains on television and everywhere else. We were killing dolphins. We were killing sea turtles, which was pure bull. (0:20:12.8) In forty years of fishing, I killed one dolphin, and this dolphin was an old man. His teeth were completely gone. And I took him out the net three times, and he was beaching himself. That's the only reason he went. A dolphin has sonar that pings off that net. I mean, most of the stuff you see on television is pure bull, other than the tuna purse-seiners. And sea turtle, never. The only sea turtle I ever killed in my life was the one I referred to earlier because the type gillnets we used in Mississippi generally were—well, by law it couldn't be any smaller than three-inch mesh, and we fished up to six-inch mesh. Well, to catch sea turtles, you need about a ten- or twelve-inch mesh, and you need to put a lot of slack in the net when you build it, which our nets were real tight. So anyway, I did twenty-five years in the fire department, all the while fishing, and the laws kept coming down on us, coming down on us. They almost completely eliminated us, as you can see. And as I got older, people started contacting me from NOAA, the Nature Conservancy, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science; I guess my name got around because my hobby has always been catching turtles and snakes, and I'm sort of a self-taught herpetologist. It was my goal to catch every snake and turtle in the southeastern United States, and skinks and frogs and lizards and everything else. And anyway they contacted me, different organizations, to do these research surveys. (0:22:04.1) So with my fishing, like I would get a contract to target a specific species of turtle, but it would be over a year, so I still get to fish. The last couple of months I haven't been able to. I've really been involved with the research, but I haven't been able to, much. I'm going to fish. (laughter) I *have* to fish. I mean, if I don't fish, I get crazier.

**Hester:** How would you characterize fishing and doing the research in this area, having done it in Georgia, as well? I mean, what makes it unique here?

**Floyd:** What makes the Mississippi Sound, and the Gulf [of Mexico], south of Mississippi, unique is the abundance. (0:22:54.9) I mean, it's just a giant nursery ground, and we just have so many fish compared to other places I've been. I mean even compared to the Caribbean when it was primitive. This place is just—the term we always say, “You can walk on them.” The fish are just really—and contrary to what the media portrays, I would honestly say that all of the fish that I know in these waters are at levels above anything I've seen in my lifetime. And not to say that it's that many more fish, but they're just—maybe it's because I'm a better fisherman after so many years, and I've learned better how to see them, but Mississippi is really—I hate to get on a negative thing again, but I can't help it. By pushing the fishermen out of work, unjustly, Mississippi is suffering greatly because it's losing millions and millions of dollars (0:24:12.9) because by eliminating commercial fishermen—there used to be eight or ten fish houses on the Pascagoula River. Now there's one. And there are about four fishermen that fish there. My two sons are two of them. And then you figure the trickle-down effect to the boatyards and the hardware stores and the restaurants, and it's all gone to China now. It's got to be changed. It really does. I'm sorry I'm getting off.

**Hester:** No. This is great.

**Kyriakoudes:** That's an important part of the story.

**Hester:** It *is* the story. It is.

**Kyriakoudes:** And like I said, we talked to Billy Stewart about kind of the same thing. I mean, his perspectives I think are similar to yours, and I think y'all would probably agree on a lot of issues.

**Floyd:** Oh, yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** When you were fishing, when you were working the fire department and keeping up your career as a commercial fisherman, what were the principal species you were, in terms of finfish, that you were—

**Floyd:** Well, when I went, for many years I targeted mainly Spanish mackerel. (0:25:15.1) Now a gillnet—you may know—is probably one of the most selective types of fishing gear that is used (0:25:21.4) in the world because the mesh size determines the size of the fish you catch. And so I mainly fished mackerel. If I was trying to catch a pound-and-a-half- to two-pound mackerel, I would fish three-and-a-quarter stretch. If I wanted to catch three- to five-pound mackerel, I'd fish a four-inch stretch. And I fished the islands, and I fished mackerel for many years seasonally. Now, the mackerel come in generally towards the end of March, and they're out of here by the end of October. And so I'd fish the mackerel pretty—for several years, I just targeted mackerel in the warmer months, and in the colder months I would target speckled trout, redfish, sheephead. Sometimes freshwater catfish move down, when the river floods, into legal waters. I would fish those. And we could sell spots, white

trout, just about anything we caught. And the bycatch I would generally sell to the crabbers, (0:26:32.0) like the pogies. And even when I fileted the mackerel, I would save the carcasses and sell them for ten cents a pound to the crabbers.

**Kyriakoudes:** For bait?

**Floyd:** For bait and they loved it. It was the best bait you could get.

**Kyriakoudes:** How did you sell? When you'd go out and you'd bring it in a haul, how did you market it? (0:26:54.3)

**Floyd:** Straight off the boat at the fish house.

**Kyriakoudes:** And they'd pretty much buy all you—

**Floyd:** They bought—now, not the crab bait. I would take that separately and sell it to crabbers I knew around town.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah. But your catch, they'd buy pretty much what you brought in?

**Floyd:** Oh, yeah, the marketable fish, and I sold to a few restaurants and stuff through the years. It's generally the rule that when you're selling to one fish house, you're loyal to that fish house, as we are today. And if, like today, if we want to sell fish somewhere else, we make sure that it's cool with the owner of the fish house here. For instance, in November and December I'll probably be fishing mullet. And Philip, the owner of the fish house where I sell my fish, generally doesn't like to fool with mullet a whole lot, and so I'll take them to Bayou La Batre, but that's all agreed upon.

**Kyriakoudes:** Why is that? What's the importance of that?

**Floyd:** Well, the importance of that is the fish house has his buyers, and they depend on him supplying these fish. And that's competition. You got another fish house that jacks the price up and down a pound on a certain species of fish. Well, some fishermen run over there and make that dime a pound, and then they come back to the fish house they been at, and here he's left holding the bag. He's got these orders; he can't sell those fish. And it's a two-way street because we've got access, run of the fish house, forklifts; got keys to all the coolers, all the free ice. It's a good, working relationship.

**Kyriakoudes:** There's a lot of trust between you and—

**Floyd:** Oh, definitely, you have to have trust, and if you're not honest, you're not going to be there.

**Hester:** Would you take us through a day as a commercial fisherman, and maybe also a day as a researcher, since you wear two hats. How do you begin at the wee hours of

the morning? (0:29:05.5)

**Floyd:** It's all depending on what the fish are doing. We work with the tides a lot, and of course you've got to factor in the seasons because of the seasonal migrations and the dynamics of the fish. They just jump around all the time. But through the years, as y'all were saying earlier, you have to really have an intimate knowledge of the whole scene to make it as a fisherman. But what I would do if I were fishing this morning, the tide's about, I think, nine o'clock this morning. If I was full-time fishing, I would've been out there by two o'clock and fished. But like my sons are out. They left at daylight this morning. They keep their boat over here, and we may see them. But generally you get up. You usually gas up and ice up the boat the day before you go fishing. You get up; you head out, and you start looking for fish. Generally what you look for is pelicans, dolphins; very important that you look at the water itself to see if it's shaking, if it's swirling. If the mullet are long-jumping, they're scattered out. If they're just jumping up and flipping, there are fish under them. There are many things like that you have to know. And you can even smell fish. You may have heard that. Like speckled trout, they say smell like watermelons. I can't say they smell like watermelon, but you can smell them. And what I would do, I'd just go looking in all the areas that I *think* they might be. My father always said, "Fish have fins and a tail. (laughter) And so you go chasing them, looking for them." And some days you hit; some days you don't.

**Hester:** And as a researcher; is it pretty much the same? You just not—

**Floyd:** Well, as a researcher, I'm basically a commercial fisherman when I'm a researcher, other than having to pretend I'm a scientist when I'm writing the reports. But what I do, I put my traps out. Currently I'm putting traps out on Monday, and I leave them out for five days. And each day I go check the traps and see how many turtles I've got. I document all the captures. I photograph the rare stuff, document all the fish. It's very involved because what we've run into this year is a lot of really new discoveries. What I'm studying now is an endangered, quote, unquote, "endangered species" that very little was known about when I started studying it. It's called a Alabama Red-belly Turtle, (0:31:57.0) and there were just a handful documented in Mississippi when they hired me to study them. And I'm in the end of a—well, this is actually about my third or fourth study on these turtles. But since, we have discovered that they're ubiquitous. They're all the way across the Coast in all these locations where the scientific community thought they weren't. They initially had thought that they were brackish-water turtles. Well, through my experience in Florida catching the same genus, I knew they were wrong. And so I started branching out, and I'm going to recommend they downlist them, take them off the endangered species list. And I believe they will because they're certainly not endangered. But what I do, I go check the traps. I bring the turtles home, the endangered ones. I measure every—take all these measurements, photograph the distinguishing characteristics on them, and basically get paid for what I love to do because I'm being paid to do my hobby. Now, it's not all peaches and cream because when the—like I just finished my annual report, and I'm—most fishermen are like me. They're driven to be successful. It's a

competitive thing. And I want this project to be like a big day fishing. I want to come in with a thousand pounds of pompano. And so it can be trying at times. But mostly it's very rewarding, like fishing, because I'm working from the Jourdan River, Bay St. Louis—where you're from.

**Kyriakoudes:** That's where I live.

**Floyd:** I work the Jourdan, the Wolf, the Tchoutacabouffa, Biloxi, Escatawpa, Pascagoula West, Bluff Creek, Old Fort Bayou. I've currently got traps in Bernard Bayou. And you get to see everything that's there, and you get to see all the wildlife, the birds and all the neat stuff that's there. It's like fishing. It's a wonderful, peaceful existence until you get a eight-foot, well, or eleven-foot gator in your turtle trap, or two of them, (laughter) which we've done a bunch of times. You have to get those miserable things out. Then of course you can't hurt them because—

**Hester:** Would you have to cut your nets?

**Floyd:** That's what I usually do; I cut them. I'm a net builder, too.

**Hester:** I saw the film at the Coastal Strategies Conference—

**Floyd:** Yeah, yeah.

**Hester:** —on your net. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Floyd:** About net building?

**Hester:** Um-hm.

**Floyd:** I really started building nets, (0:34:44.4) or I guess piddling with it, at my father's prodding when I was about fifteen. Of course my first job I ever had in my life was what you saw in the film. I was filling net needles for fifty cents a day in a net shop and sweeping up the twine and stuff. But I really wasn't much of a net builder until my father *really* pressured me when I was about eighteen years old. He set up a schedule, and every afternoon he taught me about nets. And that's what got me started, and it turned out great because through the years here in Mississippi, I was one of the main net men in Pascagoula. When I wasn't fishing, the shrimpers would bring me their nets, and I'd patch their nets and build their nets, and I still do it. I still have people filtering in occasionally with torn-up cast nets, mainly. And I build cast nets.

**Hester:** Do you market your nets mostly in this area?

**Floyd:** Oh, yeah, all local.

**Hester:** All local.

**Floyd:** All local. And I'm not in it in a big way. I mainly do it for friends and stuff.

**Hester:** I'm curious. You said that you grew up following in your dad's footsteps, and then you have two sons that are doing the same, obviously.

**Floyd:** Full-time commercial fishermen.

**Hester:** How did it change, or do you see a change from when you were apprenticing with your dad and your sons apprenticing with you? (0:36:18.4)

**Floyd:** I would say it's basically identical, has been basically identical. They started fishing with me when they were three years old, literally, and there were nights, they'd spend the night with me. I can remember them sleeping on my gillnets on the way in when they were little, bitty fellows. And they started taking my rig out when Scott, my oldest son Scott was twelve years old, and my youngest son was ten years old. I'll never forget the first day they took my boat out. Now they, a ten-year-old and a twelve-year-old, took my boat with twelve hundred feet of gillnet and went gillnetting in the Mississippi Sound, when they were ten and twelve years old. And it's one of my fondest memories when they were going out the channel, and I was watching them. But it was time. Of course now it'd be illegal.

**Kyriakoudes:** One of the things we're asking people about—and for the record, this is Louis Kyriakoudes; I didn't introduce myself in the beginning—because you never know who's going to hear this.

**Floyd:** Are you grading him?

**Hester:** Yeah. I need to do that. (laughter)

**Kyriakoudes:** We're asking people about, I mean, the disasters that have happened, and how they've coped with it. And of course there's [Hurricane] Katrina and then the oil spill, and then, at least on my side of the [Mississippi] Sound, has been the Bonnet Carré Spillway. (0:37:37.1)

**Floyd:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** The freshwater which has just—

**Floyd:** More than once, it happens every few years. Doesn't it?

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah, right, but it's really—

**Floyd:** Oh, with this huge flood they had *this* year, yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah, the Square Handkerchief Shoals are, they're just in a bad state



right now for the oystermen.

**Floyd:** Silted up.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah, and just the freshwater killed a lot of the—

**Floyd:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** —a lot of the spats. They were getting ready to seed the beds like they do every spring about the time that they opened up the spillway. But let's start with Katrina. (0:38:09.2) We talked a little bit before the interview. You lost your home to the storm surge and the wind. Tell us how that affected you, particularly in terms of fishing. How did it affect your boats?

**Floyd:** Well, the worst loss in the way of fishing, I had a boat that I bought in 1973, my old Bosarge skiff that I gillnetted out of, and it was like my right arm. And at the time that Katrina hit, it was upside-down in the yard, and every few years I'd just redo the whole thing, paint it up real pretty, fix everything that was broke; had it upside-down. I had just fibreglassed and sanded the fiberglass and was just getting ready to paint it, and it got crushed between two trees. What a loss. I mean, I had that boat for over thirty years. And now my daughter—I was throwing the boat away. I was kind of overwhelmed with the house gone and everything, and I was going to—and was no repairing it. It was absolutely ruined, and my daughter came over, and I told her I was going to get the cleanup people to put it in the dumpster, and she threw a fit. Of course she was raised on this boat. And this is the one my sons took out. And she said, "Dad, you cannot throw that boat away." I said, "Well, Tracy, I don't know what I'm going to do with it." And she said, "Cut the bow off. I'm going to put it in my yard for an ornament." And it's in her yard now.

**Hester:** Oh, wow.

**Floyd:** You know Tracy.

**Hester:** I've spoken with her on the phone.

**Floyd:** Yeah. She's the director of the shrimp and crab bureau for the state of Mississippi.

**Kyriakoudes:** Oh, yeah. Oh, that's impressive.

**Floyd:** So she's following in the Floyd, keeping up the heritage.

**Hester:** So you have three children.

**Floyd:** Three children, two grandchildren.



**Kyriakoudes:** How did you get back on your feet in terms of fishing after the storm? What were the steps that you went through? How'd you get a new boat, or did you (inaudible)?

**Floyd:** Well, I had two boats, and so—I generally try to keep a backup boat. You kind of need to because with motor problems and stuff like that. So I had my other boat. But I actually, for two months, I spent right here in this yard digging up my arrowheads, digging up my coins, just trying to salvage anything I could, and salvaging lumber. And all these bricks came from my neighbor's house. I cleaned every one of them up by hand, all of these. So I was pretty busy here, but as far as fishing, well, of course, all the fish houses were closed. So nobody was buying fish. And of course our enemies were, were loving it, saying that all the pollutants had washed out there, and nobody should eat the fish. And there's been a major drive to eliminate the commercial fishermen by some really evil people. But we got right back on our feet and went back to fishing. The worst storm we've been through was the net ban and this over-regulation. (0:41:17.4) I mean, it was worse than Katrina. It was worse than, worse, *way* worse than Katrina and the oil spill. I mean, it was the biggest storm. I've been in some storms. I've been in ninety-mile-an-hour winds twice; over seventy once, right here in the Mississippi Sound, right here in front of this house between here and Horn Island, and lightning popping, unbelievably, right beside you, waves coming in the boat. I'd take a *million* of those before I'd go through another net ban. But anyway, kind of took it in stride. It's sort of like—I'm going to make an analogy to the net ban. When they banned the gillnets, my son said, "Dad, we're"—and a lot of the fishermen said, "We're ruined. We'll never make it." And I said, "No. We're not going to let these people beat us. We're fishermen. There are more ways to catch fish than with a gillnet." I said, "We're going to do this, and we're going to do this, and we're going to do this." And my boys make more money and catch more fish than I ever caught because we used our knowledge obtained from our ancestors, (0:42:31.4) our net-building strategies and our knowledge of the fish and decided that we were not going to be beat, which is basically what we did with the oil spill and Katrina. They were minor, comparatively speaking.

**Kyriakoudes:** What do your boys use now? What's their technique?

**Floyd:** Mainly cast net and hook and line. (0:42:52.1) But see, being the cast net builders, we've built cast nets, and ours are the best. Everybody wants our nets, the commercial guys. And I'm not patting myself on the back. I'm patting my father and my uncles on the back because they came up with the patterns and stuff.

**Kyriakoudes:** Now, when you say cast net, I mean, I think of like my cast net—

**Floyd:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** —which we use to catch shrimp, which is about six and a half—

**Floyd:** Same, basically the same thing.

**Kyriakoudes:** I hold one end in my mouth.

**Floyd:** Um-hm.

**Kyriakoudes:** And I throw it out and I—

**Floyd:** Um-hm, same net, but see we throw twelve-footers, and we build them with the right amount of web and then again, with the right mesh and the right amount of weight for whatever fish we're targeting. And my two boys, I wish they would come by. They're like a machine. One steers the boat. The other throws the net, but it is like a geared machine. I mean, they don't talk. They both see the fish at the same time, and when it comes time to—oh, you'd have to see it. I mean, and that's part of the change we had to make, from gillnetting to cast netting. Of course my father built them all cast nets when they were born, as a birth gift, so.

**Kyriakoudes:** And what species, I mean, same kind, mix of species that they're going for today?

**Floyd:** Yeah. Speckled trout are very hard to catch in a cast net (0:44:22.7) because they're sharp. I don't know what it is about them, but you can watch them. You can throw a cast net over them, and they'll run up to the land line, and they'll stop, and they'll stare at the land line, almost like they're thinking about it, and then they nose under it. Sharp! So we don't catch many speckled trout. We catch a few redfish, but the problem with that is you have to really know what you're doing. I mean, you're not going to go out there in a year and learn how to cast net. Through the years we learned where the fish hang out because you can't see fish. You can see the wakes and the birds and stuff, but when we could fish the islands, you could see the fish. So you knew what you were catching before you—you would always want to—you don't put the nets out blind. You have to know what you're looking for, or you're going to wind up with three thousand pounds of hardhead catfish, (0:45:14.3) and that's no fun.

**Kyriakoudes:** I've been stung by that more than once. They hurt.

**Floyd:** I got it five times in one day.

**Hester:** Have the casinos affected fishing?

**Floyd:** Yeah. Yeah, they sure have because—(whispering) now, I'm not allowed to be completely honest.

**Kyriakoudes:** You can say whatever you want. We're here to hear your story.

**Floyd:** Yeah, but you know I—the casinos have been devastating to the commercial fishermen because they took our docks. (0:45:43.0)

**Kyriakoudes:** Billy made a big point about that, and he was particularly angry over how the Gulfport yacht-dock area has been basically squeezed out for the commercial fishermen, and they've given them some space over in Pass Christian, which is fine for me, personally, because I live over there, but that's not where the people are. That's not where the predominant market is. How has that—is there something similar, in your experience, happening on your side of the Coast?

**Floyd:** No. There are no casinos here in Jackson County.

**Kyriakoudes:** Oh, I know, but in terms of just access to the markets? (0:46:18.7)

**Floyd:** Well, I'm going to have to tell it because this is honest, and this for history because the very individuals that put the Mississippi commercial fishermen out of business, the aquaculturists, (0:46:37.0) that were basically, to a large part at least, financing the net ban and the assault on commercial fishermen, pushed us out. They're selling their pond-raised garbage to the casinos. And of course then you have the sport-fishing industry (0:46:57.9). Some, not a lot, of the sport fishermen are wonderful people. Some of my closest friends are sport fishermen. I'm a sport fisherman, at times. But they work with the casinos, and they don't want commercial fishermen there. They want *their* boats there. And they don't want the commercial fishermen selling *their* fish to the casinos. The aquaculturists want the casinos to buy them from them. And then you've got the illegal fishermen that are selling the fish to the casinos, the very individuals that put us out of business. I could take you tomorrow and catch them selling illegal fish. (0:47:41.3) The very individuals that said we were raping the Gulf and all this. So in that respect, the casinos have really hurt us because they have some—I'm not saying all the casinos, certainly not all the casinos. Some have allied with the individuals and organizations that have basically put thousands of commercial fishermen out of business through misinformation and outright lies.

**Kyriakoudes:** You mentioned thousands of fishermen having to leave the business. In your opinion, what does that do, not just to the economy here on the Coast, but the culture and—(0:48:31.7)

**Floyd:** It's absolutely destroying it. It's absolutely destroying it. My boys, as I told you, and I and my fathers and grandfathers, all were *in* the boats, learning how to fish from the time we could walk. You know what all these kids are doing now? They're sitting at the computer, playing computer games because the fathers were pushed out of their jobs through greed and jealousy. And it's just horrible, sort of analogous to what's happening in the country today. I'm the type that I'm optimistic. I think it's turning around; it's going to turn around. It's just up to us to turn it around. We've got to. I've always told my family that I *hope* it happens in my lifetime, but America's going to realize that we need commercial fishermen. We have to have commercial fishermen to exist. And as far as detriments to the environment, the foreign aquaculture industry (0:49:36.9) is much more detrimental than we could—over three-fourths of the world's mangrove swamps are gone due to aquaculture to supply

America, when we could hop in my boat right now, and if I were allowed to fish like I could for most of my life, I could sink my boat with fish. There are jillions of fish, but you've got this mindset and this false belief that all fish stocks worldwide are declining. There go my boys right there.

**Hester:** Oh, yeah.

**Floyd:** And they're coming back from Bayou Casotte. I was hoping they'd spot some mullet here, but evidently they didn't see any when they were heading that way.

**Kyriakoudes:** That boat right there, right in front of us?

**Floyd:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** Oh, OK, great.

**Hester:** This is a great view out here.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah, it sure is, and what a beautiful day today.

**Floyd:** But stop me when I get off on this. As you can tell—

**Hester:** Oh, no, everything—

**Floyd:** —it's very, very—

**Hester:** —is very, very interesting.

**Kyriakoudes:** It's part of the story.

**Floyd:** It has to be told. It has to be told.

**Kyriakoudes:** And I mean, I'll tell you, when we talked to Billy, he told his view which is similar to yours. I think you-all would agree.

**Floyd:** He went through the same thing that I did.

**Kyriakoudes:** But it was one that I was completely unaware of, so I think it's—this is part of what we're documenting.

**Floyd:** Well, the reason you're unaware of it, these powerful people from Texas that started this movement that are up to their neck in aquaculture, and they're billionaires, they control thirteen of the top twenty news outlets in America. And when you put something on the news, you've got control. And they were taking pieces of gillnet and wrapping up dead dolphins on the beach because I caught red-handed—they came over here and put gillnets out and left them in the marsh, and we caught them red-

handed, I mean. But these people were so powerful that they're pulling strings. They're pulling the strings, and unfortunately, a lot of people put money over principle. And that's basically what's happened to us and what's happening in America, the dollar bill. People are worshipping the dollar bill, and that's basically the problem with the whole thing, greed. And until we get a grip on it and people start realizing that money isn't what you should look for in life—of course you should look for security, but you should do what's right, what's right in your heart. And if you do that, everything's fine.

**Kyriakoudes:** Pete, let's talk a little bit about the last eighteen, twenty-four months and the oil spill, just how you learned of the spill, what you thought the spill might be before it really led to the closing of the fishing waters, and how you coped, and maybe any work you did with BP [British Petroleum]. (0:52:45.0)

**Floyd:** OK. When the oil spill hit, I really wasn't that concerned. I was concerned that they wouldn't stop it, and I *was* concerned for the reason that we couldn't sell our fish. But I'd been through one pretty big oil spill right here in the Mississippi Sound in the [19]70s, right here, and my nets were full of oil; my boat was full of oil; the fish I caught had oil on them. I was rescuing them. I had a pet pelican for—well, he lived to be seventeen years after I caught him—that was covered in oil. But I had fished through that oil spill, and I was positive about it because one thing that most people don't realize is oil is biodegradable. There are microbes that eat oil. And I knew all of this, and I knew what I'd seen happen out here, and I knew the environment could take care of itself. Like on CNN they were saying, "The marshes will never come back." And they were showing all the marsh, and it was horrible, the birds dying in the marsh and stuff. Fish swam away from it, just like they swim away from heavy plankton. It didn't affect the fish, and that's obvious because even the scientific community was baffled by the fact that there were more juvenile fish than there'd been since they've been doing their research here, and we certainly saw it with the adult fish. But I was confident that we were going to come through it. (0:54:20.2) Fishermen are the, are the ultimate optimists. When I leave the dock in the morning, I don't get in the boat, thinking, "I'm not going to catch any fish." I get in the boat thinking, "Man, I'm fixing to get the biggest catch I ever had in my life. I'm fixing to load the boat with pompano and trout." And it's just basic outlook. You have to be positive. And I thought the oil spill—I really got—worse than the oil spill—and I'm honest when I say this—was the media coverage. (0:54:52.9) The media was saying, "You'll never be able to"—people in Pascagoula right now won't eat the seafood, and it is the most tested seafood that I've ever seen in my life. And as I said I've been involved in science and my father, and I've been in labs, and I have never—I would jump to say that there has never been any seafood in the world tested as much as this seafood, yet the media still, with their hatred of oil companies, still say that it's not safe; the oil companies ruined the Gulf. And they can't let it go. These people get this stuff in their head, and it's almost like a religion to them. Don't get me wrong. I'm not necessarily endorsing what these people did. I really don't know what happened. I know for sure it was an accident. I can't imagine anybody doing that on purpose. And to watch some of the media, you would think they did it on purpose. And as far as

why all these things weren't in place, well, guess what? It was because they were stuffing money in the politicians' pockets and getting them to deregulate. (0:56:05.3) It wasn't about this one BP man. It was the whole thing. And long story, short, I worked for the—they hired me to, as they did—they hired the commercial fishermen, supposedly, to do the cleanup, which I did for months.

**Kyriakoudes:** When you say supposedly, tell us about that. Who, from your experience and what you saw—

**Floyd:** It was—

**Kyriakoudes:** —who was hired [for Vessels of Opportunity]? (0:56:37.1)

**Floyd:** It was the worst corruption I've ever witnessed, firsthand, in my life. The oil companies came into town, BP. I talked to guys from England. I mean, I talked to the big shots because I was fighting for the commercial fishermen because [of] what was happening. And you can look at the documentation. It's right there at DMR [Department of Marine Resources]. Hundreds of people took off. Soon as they found out they were hiring commercial fishermen, they, all these liars went and bought commercial licenses and came back and started saying they were commercial fishermen. And they took jobs from commercial fishermen. I know [three] commercial fishermen right now that didn't make a—whose boats were never hired for the oil cleanup because these people that were going, getting the—you may have heard of that, but it happened in a big way. And then you had the subcontractors. BP was sincere, and anybody that thinks they weren't, is wrong. They have put billions; I guess billions, has to be billions, into this cleanup. But where you had a problem with the cleanup was they hired subcontractors. There's no way BP could do all this themselves. Well, they hired these subcontractors. Well, here comes the greed; here comes the greed. "We're going to hire our buddies. We're not going to hire the commercial fishermen. We're going to hire this guy." And even worse than that, they were selling the contracts for 25 percent of what the people made. Of course BP had no idea. We saw it. We knew what was going on. We knew the people that were doing it.

**Kyriakoudes:** There was a big—a big portion of the cleanup was based here in Pascagoula.

**Floyd:** Yeah, every town, it was just all across the Coast. Yeah. I worked all the way through it.

**Kyriakoudes:** I know, and I know a lot of Louisiana people were over here, working—

**Floyd:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** —in the cleanup operations.

**Floyd:** Yeah, yeah, the airboats.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah.

**Floyd:** A lot of airboats from Louisiana.

**Kyriakoudes:** And Couvillion Construction was one of the big subcontractors.

**Floyd:** But you can imagine how we felt when—a deal's a deal. BP said they were going to hire the commercial fishermen to help them, like my sons, full-time commercial fishermen; only money they have for their families. And on a number of occasions, they were kicked out of the cleanup while these liars were taking their job, and I tried to stop it. But when you get into that, anything that big, I mean, we got a lot of things turned around, but I, personally, would like to see every individual that bought a commercial license and went and lied and said he was a commercial fisherman, I would like to see every one of them put in jail. That's what needs to be done. Of course BP can't do it. They're overwhelmed. But if I had any kind of power with the law, I would be hounding those slime-balls to the woods.

**Kyriakoudes:** How did your boys cope?

**Floyd:** Stressful, horribly stressful. But it turned out good, and the end result was they paid us more than we would've ever made fishing during that period. Of course I'm not saying all commercial fishermen were saints. You still got them saying that there's no fish because of the BP oil spill, wanting more money from BP. But for the most part, the commercial fishermen weren't involved in it that much. Just a little handful got the greedy syndrome and tried to rip BP off.

**Kyriakoudes:** How are things now? What's your take on the—

**Floyd:** On the oil now?

**Kyriakoudes:** Well, the oil, the health of the waters, Horn Island, Petit Bois, what (inaudible).

**Floyd:** It's hard to say. I'm not an oceanographer.

**Kyriakoudes:** But just your—

**Floyd:** But from what I've seen, the fish, when the oil was *here*, (1:00:54.3) we were seeing more, for instance, skipjack and ladyfish than we'd seen in years. When we were scooping the oil, I saw more baby tripletail than I've ever seen in my life. When we'd scoop the oil balls up, we'd have to pick the baby tripletail out and throw them overboard, and they'd be just as fat and happy because what the oil did, the tar balls, as it balled up, it created habitat, like sargassum weed. Are you familiar with



sargassum weed? Well, all the baby fish go—we don't have a lot of sargassum weed here. Well, the oil tar balls, I mean, all these little fish that were hatching, they had a place to hide under the tar balls, so it really helped the fish in a lot of ways.

**Kyriakoudes:** When I fish and I catch a ladyfish, I throw it back.

**Floyd:** We get sixty cents a pound for them.

**Kyriakoudes:** Who buys that?

**Floyd:** They go to New York.

**Kyriakoudes:** And for food?

**Floyd:** Mainly foreigners. That's like hardtails, blue runners. We get eighty for those sometimes.

**Kyriakoudes:** Maybe I ought not to throw them back. I catch enough of them.

**Floyd:** Yeah?

**Kyriakoudes:** Just figure out how—

**Floyd:** Fun to catch.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah, well, yeah, they are fun to catch. They jump and they—

**Hester:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** I mean, I get them when I wade-fish, but I'll think about eating them, I mean I—

**Floyd:** I've eaten them, but I really didn't care much for them. It's sort of like a gar. You have to know how to cook it.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah, OK.

**Floyd:** And if you don't know how to cook it, it turns to mush. But I like gar; I've eaten gar cooked the right way, and I like it. I can't think of a fish that I really didn't like. I've eaten just about everything just for the heck of it, including toad fish, oyster fish.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah.

**Floyd:** And they're delicious. They taste like grouper.



**Kyriakoudes:** Oh, OK. I didn't know about that.

**Floyd:** And sheepshead, when we moved here from Florida, we used to see people throwing them overboard, and we're thinking—

**Kyriakoudes:** Sheepshead's a good fish.

**Floyd:** Yeah. "What are they doing? Why are they throwing those sheepshead overboard?" Because you couldn't give them away at the fish house here, and now they're a big fish.

**Hester:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** And they're fun to catch, too, and they're pretty big.

**Floyd:** You fish with fiddlers?

**Kyriakoudes:** No.

**Floyd:** Or shrimp's good, too.

**Kyriakoudes:** Shrimp. I tell you what I do. When we get up early and we have the wherewithal, we'll go; there's a spot by the Bay/Waveland Yacht Club, and we'll just throw a cast net and get a lot of shrimp. But I don't know if I'm not—just my experience, if I just don't feel like getting the shrimp or we just want to go out, we use something like gulps(?).

**Floyd:** And they work for the sheepshead?

**Kyriakoudes:** They work for the specs.

**Floyd:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** Gulps work for the—not for the sheepshead, but the shrimp, the shrimp work for the sheepshead. I mean, there's nothing like live shrimp.

**Floyd:** No, that's general, all around, anybody that wants it.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah.

**Hester:** I just thought of a question. I'm just curious. I read in the newspaper that they're doing dredging out there to help replenish Ship Island. (1:03:42.8)

**Floyd:** Ship Island. I saw that.

**Hester:** That's in a lot of trouble. How does that affect the fishing in the area when

they're dredging?

**Floyd:** It's really bad. It's really bad because it silts up the water and the fish—like I said earlier, the way the fish eluded the oil? They get away from that mud. And sometimes like when they dredge in the Pascagoula Channel, it would just cover huge areas, and they used to always, the dredging coincided with the fall mullet run, fall/winter mullet run. It used to aggravate us so bad. But the ocean's so big, and the Sound's so big, the fish can get away from it. It just makes it hard on us.

**Kyriakoudes:** Any final thoughts you want to share before we wrap this up?

**Floyd:** I appreciate y'all doing it because I believe that the true story needs to come out.

**Hester:** Your mother published a number of books.

**Floyd:** I need to call my sister right now.

**Hester:** Yeah. Shall we shut it down?

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah. But I just want to thank you, Mr. Floyd, for your time and sharing these stories with us, and helping educate, not just us, but the people that will listen to these interviews about these issues related to where you can fish and what you can fish with.

**Floyd:** Yeah.

**Kyriakoudes:** I appreciate that.

**Hester:** Thank you very much.

**Floyd:** You're quite welcome. I really like doing this because it's close to my heart. And I want my grandson to be a fisherman, and the way things are going, it doesn't look good unless this over-regulation gets turned around. But it's going to turn around. I mean, we've got this huge food source out here that's basically untapped because there are no fishermen catching them anymore. You've still got shrimpers, but finfishermen in Mississippi, they're gone, basically gone.

**Kyriakoudes:** I'll just make one observation, which I think you might—I think this fits in with what you're saying, which is, I have a freezer full of fish, speckled trout mostly, flounder. I catch this—

**Floyd:** Subsistence fisherman.

**Kyriakoudes:** I wade-fish. I go out with my son in a small boat, and my friend has a bigger boat. We'll go out to the Louisiana marshes, Oyster Bay, that area.

**Floyd:** Where there are a lot of fish.

**Kyriakoudes:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. Though I will say, last fall after they opened up everything, I mean it was unbelievable. That's the best fishing I've ever had in my life. I mean—

**Floyd:** Wasn't that weird, after the oil spill?

**Kyriakoudes:** After, yeah. Well, no one fished for a year.

**Floyd:** Um-hm.

**Kyriakoudes:** So the specs—we were down in Lake Borgne out of Shell Beach, Ycloskey, that part of Louisiana. A friend of mine keeps a boat down there. Well, we head just right out into the river. We see the birds. We see the bait jump. And we have a bucket of live shrimp.

**Floyd:** See. What blew my mind, not to disagree with you, but it was confusing me how everybody thought, “Well, nobody fished, so there's so many more fish.”

**Kyriakoudes:** That's my perception, but I—

**Floyd:** I disagree. I disagree because look at the, you got to look at the age of the fish.

**Kyriakoudes:** Right.

**Floyd:** You see what I'm saying? Because if you're catching a fifteen-year-old red snapper, I mean that wasn't because nobody was fishing, *I* don't think. And the scientists say there were tons of juveniles. I think that it was a peak year, and I used to keep records of my fishing. Fish move on a graph like this.

**Kyriakoudes:** Oh, OK, a cycle, then.

**Floyd:** A cycle, and you have good cycles, and you have bad cycles. Like drum, the drum, one year, I saw them peak here. I've never seen them peak again, the four- or five-year-old drum. Of course there's always been jillions of the big bulls, but all the fish. It's just like when you got a lot of acorns, you got a lot of squirrels. And it all works in graphs.

**Kyriakoudes:** Oh, yeah. That's an interesting point.

**Floyd:** And I just think that BP was lucky that the oil spill happened during a peak, (1:07:54.4) a good year.

**Kyriakoudes:** Well, to get one—but the one issue I was wondering if you had a thought on, which is I have this fish in my freezer, which I get, and we swap stuff, friends and things like that, but to go out and buy a bunch of speckled trout, there's not that many fish.

**Floyd:** You can't buy them right now legally.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah, I mean, there's—

**Floyd:** Because their quota's been met.

**Kyriakoudes:** OK. So that's it.

**Floyd:** Yeah. You cannot buy speckled trout right now. And get this. Basically the billionaires from Texas, and they did it. And believe me; I've studied this. It was their—they started it. In Mississippi you can catch—(loud noise of boat motor)—do you need that? Oh, I thought y'all were still taping.

**Kyriakoudes:** OK, now that the Coast Guard's gone.

**Floyd:** In Mississippi, the commercial fishermen, all the commercial fishermen combined, every commercial fisherman across the Mississippi Coast is allocated thirty-five thousand pounds of speckled trout per year. (1:09:05.6) That's all of us combined.

**Kyriakoudes:** That's all? Oh.

**Floyd:** That's it, and of course it gets shut down because you've got the people selling fish illegally. You got the part-time fishermen that, like you—I don't know if you sell your fish, but—

**Kyriakoudes:** No, I don't.

**Floyd:** But you have these people that go buy a commercial license even though they may be the president of Ingalls [Shipbuilding] or something, they go buy a commercial license, and they can sell their fish. But my point is we're only allowed to catch thirty-five thousand pounds a year, where recreational fishermen can catch fifteen a day?

**Kyriakoudes:** Fifteen in Mississippi.

**Floyd:** Per day.

**Kyriakoudes:** Per day, yeah, twenty-five in Louisiana.

**Floyd:** OK. Think of it like this. There are roughly a hundred thousand recreational

fishermen in Mississippi. If every recreational saltwater commercial fisherman catches one day's limit in a year, he only catches fifteen trout the whole year, how many pounds is that? A hundred thousand times—I'm going to say—thirty pounds.

**Kyriakoudes:** Yeah.

**Floyd:** A hundred thousand times thirty pounds.

**Kyriakoudes:** A lot more than the thirty-five thousand.

**Floyd:** That's the allocation to the recreational fishermen.

**Hester:** Wow.

**Floyd:** And the discrimination in it is that the consumers, the seafood consumers in Mississippi, in my view, have just as much right to these fish as a recreational fisherman. And there are plenty of fish. I mean, that's not the issue. Well, the Mississippi seafood consumers in Pascagoula, in Biloxi are eating pond-raised fish from China because the commercial fishermen can only sell thirty-five thousand pounds a year, across the board. That's not individual fishermen now; that's all of them combined.

**Kyriakoudes:** On the entire Coast.

**Hester:** I mentioned your mother.

**Floyd:** Let me call right now.

**Hester:** But I don't know that we—we talked about her before we started. And so would you like to maybe just say something about your mother's writing of history, fishing histories?

**Floyd:** Yeah. I would.

**Hester:** Before we shut it down.

**Floyd:** I'd like to. Is it off right now?

**Kyriakoudes:** No. I was just checking it. (brief interruption; unrelated portion of the recording has not been transcribed)

**Floyd:** They're on the pool table. You must have saw my sister come. Was it a dark-haired girl?

**Hester:** Somebody walked in, yeah, and waved. Yeah. Would you just maybe—we talked about your father, but we didn't, not when the equipment was on anyway, we

didn't say anything about your mother.

**Floyd:** Give me a hint (laughter) where to start.

**Hester:** OK. Tell us about the histories that she's written. (1:11:55.9)

**Floyd:** My mother graduated from Florida State University, I think, third in her class, English major, and was always passionate about history and passionate about fishermen. And so she spent many, many, many years; I would say probably forty or fifty years, documenting the folk history of commercial fishermen in my hometown in Florida. And of course she was always on the beach when the mullet were running and everything, so. But she has a state park named after her in Mayport, Florida, and it just happens that the state park that's named after her is where we used to all sit on the beach when I was a little kid, waiting on the mullet to come down the river in the fall, headed for sea. Mullet go offshore to lay their eggs. And she has another monument to her. She wasn't just restricted to commercial fishing history. She delved into the Indians and everything else in that area. And she has a nice plaque in an old, ancient Indian cemetery.

**Hester:** Oh, wow.

**Floyd:** Not a mound but it's in sand, and it's wonderful what all she did. And I'm so fortunate, and my family's so fortunate because we know our ancestors, thanks to her.

**Hester:** That's great.

**Kyriakoudes:** Philip, who owns the fish house, what's his last name?

**Floyd:** Horn.

**Kyriakoudes:** Philip Horn, OK. I think I'd like to talk with him, too.

**Floyd:** Good luck. (laughter)

**Kyriakoudes:** OK, right.

**Floyd:** He's a busy man.

**Kyriakoudes:** Busy man.

**Floyd:** But he may do it. He may do it. He's pretty passionate about fishermen, too. He comes from a long line of fishermen.

**Kyriakoudes:** Well, if you see him, just tell him you talked to the people from Southern, and they might give you a call.

**Floyd:** Well, just tell him you interviewed me and tell him what you're doing. I think he'd go for it if he has time. He's kind of a busy man.

**Kyriakoudes:** He might have an hour or two to give us. Well, great. All right. Thank you so much.

**Hester:** Thank you so much.

**Floyd:** Oh, you're welcome. Glad to do it.

(end of interview)