

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

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Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Larry and Sara Ryan

Interviewer: Stephanie Scull-DeArmey

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An Oral History with Larry and Sara Ryan, Volume 1043

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AN ORAL HISTORY

with

LARRY and SARA RYAN

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Sara and Larry Ryan and is taking place on March 7, 2012. The interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArmey. Also present are their daughter Samantha Ryan and young granddaughter, Aaliyah. Their son Joshua Ryan joins the group in the last few minutes of the interview.

Scull-DeArmey: This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Project of The University of Southern Mississippi, done in conjunction with the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Voices from the Fisheries/BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster Project. The interview is with Larry Ryan [and his wife Sara], and it is taking place on March 7, 2012, at 2:30 p.m. Are we in Moss Point?

L. Ryan: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: In Moss Point, Mississippi. The interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArmey. And first I'd like to thank you, Mr. Ryan, for taking time to talk to me today.

L. Ryan: My pleasure.

Scull-DeArmey: And I'm going to ask you for a little bit of background information. For the record, could you state your name, please?

L. Ryan: Larry Ryan Sr.

Scull-DeArmey: And for the record, could you spell your name?

L. Ryan: L-A-R-R-Y, R-Y-A-N, and then senior, S-R.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. And when were you born? (0:01:01.7)

L. Ryan: March the sixth, of 1959.

Scull-DeArmey: Yesterday was your birthday. (Granddaughter in background.)

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Happy birthday a day late.

L. Ryan: Thank you.

Scull-DeArmey: And where were you born?

L. Ryan: Pascagoula.

Scull-DeArmey: Pascagoula. Did you grow up in Pascagoula?

L. Ryan: Yeah, yes.

Scull-DeArmey: Was your father a fisherman?

L. Ryan: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: So you grew up fishing.

L. Ryan: Yeah. I was born into it.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Tell me a little bit about your childhood.

L. Ryan: Well, it was tough because my daddy was a fisherman, but we survived. And we eat off seafood. But he pulled me and my brother out of school when I was nine to help him. (0:01:44.8) So it just wasn't a regular childhood like everybody would have had because we went to work so early, but basically it was a good childhood, though. Yeah, really. Like I say, we fished all of our life, and Daddy pulled us out of school when I was nine, so I've been in a boat since I was nine, and I'm fifty-three now, so. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: What was a typical day like on your father's boat?

L. Ryan: Hard because things were a lot different then than it is now because we used oars instead of motors. So we had to roll our nets out of the boat instead of using motors to get them out. (0:02:35.4)

Scull-DeArmey: OK. So you used oars?

L. Ryan: Yes, ma'am.

Scull-DeArmey: How big was the boat?

L. Ryan: It was eighteen foot. It was a eighteen-foot skiff, and we had to, what they call, "pull" the nets out. We used oars, you know, and that's how we got around.

Scull-DeArmey: What kind of nets were they?

L. Ryan: Regular, what we call, gillnets. (0:03:00.5) And that's how we made our living. Of course now, you know, they outlawed gillnets, now, because of false information, if you want to know the truth. But other than that, it was a hard life to make it, you know, ends meet because back then we got four cents a pound for our fish. (0:03:28.7) And most people, you had to get different buyers to buy them, and we'd haul from Pascagoula, Mississippi, to Bayou La Batre, Alabama, to sell for that four cents a pound. So it was a tough go.

Scull-DeArme y: How many oars were in your eighteen-foot skiff?

L. Ryan: Two.

Scull-DeArme y: Two. OK. How do you put out a gillnet? Is it a rectangle, the gillnet? (0:04:06.9)

L. Ryan: No. It was a circle. You dropped anchor overboard on the end of it, and you took the oars, and you just made a big circle around the fish with your net. And then you just give them time to get in the net, and then you just pick it right back up. And then you go again and do it again.

Scull-DeArme y: How did y'all pick that net up?

L. Ryan: You just picked it up by hand. You just picked it up; let the boat, come up under the boat, you just pull the boat up, back up under the net, and you pick it up and put it right back in the boat, and you'd do that twelve, fifteen times a day, sometimes less, sometimes more. When me and my brother first started, we wasn't big enough to use the oars, (0:04:52.5) the two oars, ourself, so he'd be on one, and I'd be on the other one. So that's the way we worked there till we got big enough till we were able to put the oars in our hands, together.

Scull-DeArme y: How young were you the first time you went out on the boat?

L. Ryan: Oh, I was—you wanting to know as far as working or just going?

Scull-DeArme y: Just going.

L. Ryan: I was probably about two years old or younger because Daddy had us out there all of our life.

Scull-DeArme y: What did you do when you were two on the boat?

L. Ryan: I just watched Daddy work.

Scull-DeArme y: How did he keep you from going overboard?

L. Ryan: We just didn't. I mean, we just set there. We just, I guess, knowed not to.

Scull-DeArme y: How many were in your family, children?

L. Ryan: They was five kids, two girls and three boys.

Scull-DeArme y: But there were just two brothers on the boat?

L. Ryan: When me and my brother first started. Now, I don't know; about the early [19]70s, maybe middle [19]70s, my third brother got into it.

Scull-DeArme y: He got old enough to be able to do it.

L. Ryan: Right.

Scull-DeArme y: What did you do with those fish? When you pulled the gillnet up on the boat, did they stay in the net? (0:06:10.9)

L. Ryan: No. You'd have to take them out of the net and throw them in the boat, and you went in and put them on a truck and put ice on them. And then you hauled them to fish market.

Scull-DeArme y: What were they in, in the boat? Were they just on the floor?

L. Ryan: Just on the bottom of the boat, yeah. They just lay there until you get—

Scull-DeArme y: Where were y'all fishing?

L. Ryan: Pascagoula beach, what they call Gautier beach, Horn Island. (0:06:35.5)

Scull-DeArme y: What bay is that? Is that the Mississippi Sound?

L. Ryan: Mississippi Sound, yes, ma'am.

Scull-DeArme y: How deep were you?

L. Ryan: Well, sometimes you was twelve, fourteen foot or water. Sometimes you was in two foot of water. It all depended on where the fish was at.

Scull-DeArme y: How did you know where the fish were? (0:06:53.9)

L. Ryan: You just, you had to see them, just kind of know what you're looking for to see them in the water, breaking, or sometimes you hunt them [as] an old, black shade. You know they're there.

Scull-DeArme y: So you'd see just like a darker—

L. Ryan: Yeah, like a darker color of the water, and you'd know they was there. And that's basically what you done, or you seen them breaking, or sometimes you seen them jumping. Sometimes you done good when you put your net out. Sometimes you didn't do nothing.

Scull-DeArmey: What species of fish, what kinds of fish—(0:07:34.2)

L. Ryan: Mullet, popeye mullet.

Scull-DeArmey: Popeye mullet. I've heard people say ground mullet. I've never heard anybody say popeye mullet.

L. Ryan: It is what Mississippi calls Biloxi bacon. (0:07:46.6) That's what generally everybody knows it as.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. You and I grew up on the Coast, so we know what Biloxi bacon means. But for the record, for somebody a hundred or two hundred years from now, why would they call a fish Biloxi bacon?

L. Ryan: I don't know why they call that, unless they just give it that name in Biloxi. I don't really know why they give it to them, but we was always under the impression because they was so good, and nobody ever—for years they considered it a trash fish. Then now, they like everything else. You can sell them as fast as you get them now, because they good to eat.

Scull-DeArmey: Did you eat them when you were a kid?

L. Ryan: Oh, yeah. That's what I was raised on.

Scull-DeArmey: How did your mother prepare them?

L. Ryan: She fried them, and then she'd make mullet stew, and then she'd bake some of them. But most times they was fried.

Scull-DeArmey: For the record, can you just walk us through frying from like cleaning the fish to, say, putting it on the table? (0:08:56.4)

L. Ryan: Yeah. You come in, and you clean him, and then you put him in cornmeal, roll him in cornmeal, and just lay him in grease till he turned brown. And he was ready to eat. That's the best way.

S. Ryan: What about when you'd be at the island, and you'd nail it up on a board?

L. Ryan: When we was over at the islands, the way we eat over there, we take them mullet and split them down the middle. And we tacked them up on a nail, and we'd prop the board up against the fire and let the heat cook them because the grease out of

the fish, itself, would run down on him as he was cooking, and it'd cook it golden brown just like if you'd laid it in a skillet. We done that, too.

Scull-DeArmey: Just on a campfire?

L. Ryan: Yeah, just like a campfire because we'd be over at the islands, and you going to stay a couple of days, so that's what we eat over there. We caught what we eat. And you'd take the fish, and you'd clean him, and you just tacked him up on a board and just propped the board up by the fire. And heat, coming off the fire, would cook him.

Scull-DeArmey: So was the mullet facing the fire?

L. Ryan: Yeah, facing the fire, yeah, just like if you put a board up, and you'd nail the fish here, and the heat coming off that fire would just cook him. And he'd cook just as golden brown as he could. Yeah. Sometimes we even boiled him.

Scull-DeArmey: That's amazing. That's a great story.

L. Ryan: That's the way we done it, or sometimes we'd take a pan and put them on the fire, and we'd kind of like cut a onion up, maybe, with them, and we'd boil them. And that's the way we eat them, there, too. Well, you just done what you done to eat. So (laughter) that's what we done. It ain't like it is now. You just couldn't run to a store and get something, so you caught mostly what you eat.

Scull-DeArmey: You know, I think one of the reasons that we might call it Biloxi bacon is like, say, in the Delta on a farm, you would have hogs. So you would know that if you didn't make any money, you could eat your bacon. But on the Coast, you didn't have hogs; you had fish.

L. Ryan: We had fish, right.

Scull-DeArmey: And if you didn't have any money, you knew you could eat the fish.

L. Ryan: Exactly.

Scull-DeArmey: So Biloxi bacon.

Samantha: You know how they say, like, that tuna, like "Chicken of the Sea?"

Scull-DeArmey: Exactly.

Samantha: Kind of like your fish is your bacon (inaudible) here.

Scull-DeArmey: That's right.

L. Ryan: Yeah. Well, I mean, it's fed a many a people on the Coast.

Scull-DeArme y: Right, yeah. What do you remember was in mullet stew?

(0:11:40.6)

L. Ryan: It was like Daddy would cook it, with brown gravy, and he'd put taters, and he'd cut the mullet up in little, square chunks, onion, and you just, like if you was going to cook a stew, but it was just you had fish in it instead of other meat. It was just basically a mullet stew, and just brown gravy, taters. That was about it in it, and it was—

Scull-DeArme y: OK. Potatoes, onions. Any other vegetables?

L. Ryan: No. That was it. It was good, though. Believe it or not. (laughter) I know it don't sound, but—

Samantha: (inaudible) (laughter)

L. Ryan: Well, I mean, you have to stop and think. Back then we didn't have all the vegetables that you have now to eat, and like I say, most everything we eat come out of that bay. If we didn't catch it, a lot of times, we didn't eat. (0:12:33.1) And that's the Gospel's truth.

Scull-DeArme y: How do you make brown gravy?

L. Ryan: Out of flour. Now, we always brown it with water and just make brown gravy.

Scull-DeArme y: Is that the same thing as a roux?

L. Ryan: Yeah, a roux, yeah. And that's what we call it. And Mama'd cook the biscuits or either cornbread, and that's what we eat with it. Very seldom we ever got light bread. I try to tell my kids now, and I've always tried to tell them; they've had it, even though we've seen tough times, they've still had it pretty good because when you come up and open the icebox and there ain't nothing in it but wind, (laughter) then it's slim; nothing but the light bulb in there. So it was tough when we was coming up.

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah. My mother grew up during the Depression, and she used to tell us—she's passed away several years ago. But she was born in 1917, and so she used to tell us that they would work in the cotton fields, a long time, all day. They had a cow; they had some chickens at home. So they had eggs and milk. And they would pick wild berries on their way home from the cotton field. Her mother would make a cobbler, and that was their supper. So you know—

L. Ryan: I know because I mean, even though I grew up when I grew up, you had to stop and think, my daddy couldn't read or write a lick. (0:14:16.7) And he didn't

have but one eye. So back then you just couldn't go get like a job at Ingalls [Shipbuilding] or something because his health wouldn't let him. So of course he wouldn't, anyway. Fishing was his blood, too. So it was kind of tough on all of us. And that's the reason me and my older brother got on out of school, to help Mama raise the other three.

S. Ryan: He was thirteen when he quit school. He was nine when he got in the boat, but he was thirteen when he—

L. Ryan: I was thirteen when I actually quit [school], just had to quit.

S. Ryan: —quit school and started working full-time to help raise the other kids.

Samantha: The other ones quit school? I know Aunt Dianne(?) didn't.

L. Ryan: No, she—

S. Ryan: She's the onliest one that graduated, his younger sister.

Scull-DeArmey: She got to go on through.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Because of your work.

L. Ryan: Mine and my brother's and then my other brother, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Well, believe it or not, you're not the first person I've interviewed who did that. I think in a lot of families, that's the way it worked. The older kids put the younger kids through school, but then as their lives went on, the younger children started taking care of the older children as their health got bad, and they needed help; so it came around full circle, which was nice.

L. Ryan: Well, that's the reason I say my wife's a blessing to me because I can't read or write on account of this. And she does most everything for me, so.

Scull-DeArmey: That's wonderful. Was your grandfather a fisherman?

L. Ryan: Um-hm, yes, ma'am, and his father was.

Scull-DeArmey: You know what I've noted in fishermen since we've worked on this project? Very independent.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

S. Ryan: Also very clannish, too.

Scull-DeArme y: What do you mean, clannish?

S. Ryan: OK. They don't have very many friends outside of the seafood industry. Everybody that they're associated with has some type of job in the seafood industry, whether it's actual commercial fishermen or the seafood markets. But if you're a commercial fisherman, you don't have—I guess, the other outsiders who are not commercial fisherman, they will come up to your boat and want to buy your seafood or anything like that, but they don't have any inkling of what it is like if you don't catch any fish or shrimp or crabs or oysters, you and your kids don't eat that day. And that's just the way it is. So they all just are around and friends with other people who understand.

Samantha: They pretty much stick together?

S. Ryan: Yeah. And that's what a clan is, so.

L. Ryan: Well, we just don't have time as a fisherman to take vacations and really, what we call, socialize. I mean, not being rude, not trying to be mean. You just go to work, and you come back, and you just don't have the time to—

S. Ryan: When you're chasing a mullet, sometimes you'll be out there like twenty hours, trying to catch enough to sell, eat, get the gas money to come back, and whatever, so you don't have time. And so not everybody can be a commercial fishermen because they don't have the temperament for it. You have to have a certain kind of temperament to be in this business.

L. Ryan: Yeah. It has to be in your blood.

S. Ryan: I had no clue what a commercial fisherman was. I'm from the country. I had no clue, so it was a wakeup call. I had no idea. And the first few times that he took me fishing with him, I think that's the reason he loves me the way he did is because I was completely blown away.

L. Ryan: Well, her mother, right to today, she can tell her mother, "Well, Larry can find fish at night because he hears them." (0:19:01.4) And she can't comprehend that you don't [see] fish at night because it's dark.

S. Ryan: But you do [hear them] because he took me night-fishing with him and turned everything off, and it's an amazing sound from somebody who was born and raised in the sticks to hear that. It's not something you can describe or anything. And now, it's not plop, plop, like you hear fish jump. It's a distinct sound, and you're going—from somebody, me, who'd never been on the water, really, to hear that, you're going, "What is that?"

Scull-DeArme y: What does it sound like? (laughter)

L. Ryan: It's hard to describe, but what we used to call, when you'd hear mullet, what we'd call, "raising" or "shower." And what it is; you stop, and you listen, and it'll be a bunch of fish, a school of fish, and they'll just come out of the top of the water all at one time, going across the top of the water. Something may be in them, porpoise, shark, anything, feeding in them, and you hear them just come up, and they go, "Chrrrrrr," like that. And a lot of times you may not hear but one, one fish moving. And when you get there, you can go to see them breaking around the boat, and then you know that they's a school there. And so it's—

Samantha: Like gliding on the water or something?

L. Ryan: Yeah. They just come up and just like you're liable to have—

S. Ryan: I can't describe it because that was not a noise I had ever heard in my life.

L. Ryan: —from one to maybe five hundred fish in there at one time, just all at one time, and it's different. It's hard to describe.

Scull-DeArmeY: So it's a special noise they make breaking out of the water and going back in?

L. Ryan: Um-hm, yeah. And you can hear them.

Scull-DeArmeY: And it probably wouldn't sound like someone swimming because we're probably pretty clumsy in the water compared to a fish.

L. Ryan: And if you actually listening, but like she said, you got to know what you listening for. He's liable to be two miles down the beach from you or two miles offshore or maybe a mile when you'll hear him doing that. And then you got to go start just hunting him, and you got to stop and listen till you actually get up on him and find him. It's amazing. And that's the reason that I took it so personally, me and other fishermens, when the State of Mississippi wanted to put us out or take our nets away from us (0:21:45.0) because they tell the universities and the colleges that we run miles and miles of gillnets off and let them set (0:21:52.6) and let the fish get in them. And that's not true whatsoever. We struck our nets out, and time we put it out, we'll have it back up within thirty, thirty-five minutes. It all depends on how many fish you catch in that one set. And then we'll pick up, and we move. We steady on the move.

S. Ryan: You're chasing fish.

L. Ryan: Yeah. I know they do it in China and in Japan, set them long nets, but we don't, and the Gulf Coast never has. But they said the commercial fishermen took 20 percent of the catch; recreation took 80 [percent]. So they felt like it was better to

save the 20 percent than save the 80 percent. So now I've had to quit fishing and go to crabbing. (0:22:40.8)

S. Ryan: Yeah. Since 1997 it's illegal to catch fish here.

L. Ryan: So I been crabbing since then.

S. Ryan: It's not as exciting as fishing. (laughter)

L. Ryan: And since the oil spill, (0:22:58.8) this year, I've seen it worsen this year, far as the crabbing and talking to other crabbers and one that you actually interviewed, himself—I don't know when, but—Wain Rogers. We've never seen crabbing get like it's got this year. We can put our traps out and leave them setting two or three days, and we go back. They still won't have no crabs in them. And we don't know if it's to do with the oil spill or the dispersant they put over it that's caused this, or what's happened. But this year they has definitely something happened to the seafood. And it kind of started back in, we started really starting to feel it towards the end of the summer, and it's just went downhill from there because like today, I went this morning. I run 150 crab traps, and I had fifty pound of crabs, so.

Scull-DeArme y: What would you expect to have in a good season?

L. Ryan: You should have between four and six hundred pounds, and just like from that. And that's working every day. This fifty pound is like working every two or three days. What I'm saying is I'll go tomorrow and run a hundred pots that I didn't run today and hope to get fifty pound out of them. Then the day after tomorrow, I'll go back and run the same hundred and fifty that I run today, and it's actually costing us more to work than we making.

Scull-DeArme y: And is this the first crab season after the oil spill?

L. Ryan: Well, no. We had one last year, but it was—

S. Ryan: You could see.

L. Ryan: But you could see—

S. Ryan: You still had crabs, but you could see—

L. Ryan: You had crabs, but you could see it because you didn't have all your—

S. Ryan: Your babies.

L. Ryan: Your baby crabs. You wasn't seeing the young crabs like you generally see, so we don't know if that was—but see, all of our stuff comes from out of the Gulf,

in: the Gulf of Mexico into the Mississippi Sound. And I really think that the stuff's just not coming in.

S. Ryan: The seafood's not coming in.

L. Ryan: You know what I'm saying? I'm not saying that has anything to do with the oil or what they spraying on water, but it just seem like it happened since the oil spill. You just ain't got the fish and stuff coming into the Sound like you normally do.

Scull-DeArmeY: Where do baby crabs grow up?

S. Ryan: In the marsh.

L. Ryan: In the marsh.

Scull-DeArmeY: In the marsh. In the Mississippi marsh or the Louisiana marsh?

L. Ryan: Both.

S. Ryan: Any marsh.

L. Ryan: Any marsh. You got what you call a sponge crab. (0:25:55.8) He's a big crab, but he's got a sponge on the bottom of him. It's either orange or kind of gray-looking, and it looks like a diaper up under him, is what it looks. And he walks in out of the Gulf with that sponge, to come ashore, is where he'll rub that sponge off.

S. Ryan: To feed the babies.

L. Ryan: For the little ones. But we not seeing that either. We not seeing the sponge crabs coming in. It's illegal for us to catch them because it's your future crabs, but we not seeing them, even. Generally we catching fifteen, twenty, maybe twenty-five to a trap this time of year, and we may get one a day, two a day, and they just ain't coming in.

Scull-DeArmeY: So usually you would catch them and let them go?

L. Ryan: Yeah. You'd catch them and put them right back overboard, but we just not seeing them at all this year, so for.

S. Ryan: And also, usually he catches at least ten to twenty small baby crabs. I catch them and throw them overboard, right then.

L. Ryan: But you just not seeing them. (0:27:07.1)

S. Ryan: But the last time I went with him, he run all two hundred crab pots, and we didn't have, not one baby at all in there.

L. Ryan: So we just don't know what's happening. I'm not setting here saying this has anything to do with the oil.

S. Ryan: We think it is, but we haven't had proof.

L. Ryan: Well, my opinion it is, but I don't have no proof, so I'm not going to set here and say something I don't know.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, it's certainly easy to see that there—what do you call that? A correlation. You can't necessarily prove cause and effect, but there was the spill, and now there are no babies. And if the babies need the marshes, I mean, remember what those Louisiana marshes looked like during—

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Those photographs of—

L. Ryan: Well, see, when I went to work for BP, (0:28:02.0) we would find oil out there. And I'm talking about, it'd be miles of it. And we would drag your booms on it. But when we'd knock off at night because we couldn't see, there'd still be miles of oil on top of the water when we'd leave coming home. We'd get there next morning, the oil wouldn't be there. So only thing I'm thinking, and it's my thinking only, is that at night, they were spraying so much of that stuff over the Sound, sinking the oil because you'd leave, and it'd be miles of it, today. Well, tomorrow you wouldn't see it. And you may go five or ten miles down the beach, east or west, and you'd find it again, same thing. Once it come dark, when you'd get back the next morning, that oil wouldn't be there. So we felt like that they was sinking it. And I thoroughly think that that's what they've done to our bottom. I think they poisoned our bottom; I really do.

S. Ryan: Well, we seen it on TV from somebody. I don't know if it was USM [University of Southern Mississippi] or who it was or the Gulf Coast Research Lab. They showed a picture of the bottom. They sent one of those little sub things that takes pictures of it, and it was dead. I mean, you ought to have seen all the seafood that was laying there dead. So it has to be, like you said, cause and effect.

L. Ryan: This summer we was crabbing, (0:29:37.2) and the way you string out your pots, you'll east, west, north, south, how you put them in a string. And you liable to get in this spot and go—I don't know—maybe a half a mile down your crab traps, and every crab you'd have in that crab trap would be dead. You just dumped him back overboard; he'd be dead. And then all at one time, it'd just quit, and you'd go back to catching live crabs. Well, then maybe tomorrow you'd be a half a mile one way or the other from where this spot was at today; it'd be down here; everything'd be dead.

S. Ryan: And smell.

L. Ryan: It was just awful. And I bet you out of the eight or ten crabbers that we was down, what we call Belle Fountain beach between Gautier and Biloxi; I'll bet you we dumped over ten thousand pound of crabs that was just dead. I mean, you'd get there, and that was running overnight. Well, when different ones would tell the DMR [Department of Marine Resources] about it, they said because the water was too hot, and I couldn't buy that because if the water was too hot in this place, it'd been too hot in this place, but they living here, and they ain't here. And I believe it was that bottom. The bottom's (inaudible), and it was killing your crabs.

Scull-DeArmey: That's a lot of dead crabs, ten thousand pounds.

L. Ryan: Yeah. And it could have been more. You know what I'm saying? Because we dumped a lot of crabs. You'd just go pull your pots, and you'd take fifteen, twenty crabs to a pot, and you just dumped them right back overboard. It's been tough since the oil spill for us.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah, since the oil spill. A couple of things for the record. You deal with crab pots every day, but there are many people who don't know what they are. So for the record, could you just describe a crab pot? (0:31:45.9)

L. Ryan: It's a square, look like a box, and it's about two foot by two foot, square. And it has what they call four eyes in it where the crabs enters, and then he goes up in what they call a partition. And he goes up to the top of the pot, and that's what holds him in there. He goes in after the bait, and he'll walk up. And it's basically almost what you see on TV with the Alaskan crabs. It's just a square where they walk in, but they don't walk out. Not that he can't walk out; he just don't walk back out.

S. Ryan: He gets confused.

Scull-DeArmey: Crabs check in, but they don't check out.

L. Ryan: Right, exactly. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: What do you use for bait for crabs?

L. Ryan: Pogy fish (0:32:43.8) because it's got oil in it.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you catch the pogy or buy them?

L. Ryan: I buy them.

Scull-DeArmey: Did you ever sell pogy when you were a kid?

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Scull-DeArme y: What did you sell them for then, and what do you pay for them now?

L. Ryan: Well, actually we pay thirty cents a pound for them. Back when I was fishing, we got about two cents a pound for them. And some people calls them—what is it? Menhaden?

S. Ryan: Yeah, menhaden.

L. Ryan: But it's actually a pog y fish, but they call them menhaden, but it's a pog y fish. And the reason we use him because he's oily. He's nothing but a trash fish, but he's real oily, and that's what attracts the crabs to him is the oil.

Scull-DeArme y: We've covered a lot of these questions that were up front. Was there anything you wanted to add to who taught you to fish?

L. Ryan: Well, my daddy, by watching him, going with him, and doing it.

Scull-DeArme y: Did your grandfather ever go with you by—

L. Ryan: No, ma'am. I lost my grandfather; I wasn't even born. (0:34:04.1) My daddy lost him young. And I'm trying to think. My daddy was born in [19]32. My grandpa got killed in [19]43, I think. And my daddy been on his own since then, him and his twin brother.

Scull-DeArme y: That's like what? Ten or eleven years old. Wow.

L. Ryan: He had brothers, but they all had their own lives, and now, he did live with them off and on, but him and his twin brother was actually on their own from the time they lost—because he lost his mother in [19]37. He was born in [19]32, and he lost her in [19]37. A tornado got her. They call it a cyclone. Well, it didn't. It picked up one of the kids, and she seen it pick it up, and she had a heart attack. Daddy said it scared her to death, watching her. And he said the twister put the baby down, said, about three or four hundred foot away from us, and he was fine; wasn't hurt. But he caused her to have a heart attack.

S. Ryan: Her death certificate, on it, because we seen it, and it said, "Cause of death: scared to death."

L. Ryan: Yeah. Caused her to have a heart attack.

Scull-DeArme y: Did y'all hear about the little baby with these tornadoes?

L. Ryan: Yeah, I did.

Scull-DeArme y: And that baby died, yeah.

L. Ryan: No. I didn't know that.

Scull-DeArmey: They took her off life support. She was not going to ever—

S. Ryan: I heard about the mother that got her kids to the basement, covered the kids up with a quilt, and right when she did, and she dove on top of her children, and her house caved in on her. And they had to amputate both legs to get her out. And her kids are fine.

Scull-DeArmey: But she's alive.

S. Ryan: Yeah. She's alive and grateful that her children are still there. And they were calling her a hero because of her—she said, "I'm not a hero. I'm a mama."

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. (laughter) Well, mamas are heroes.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

S. Ryan: Yeah. I think so.

L. Ryan: Kids don't realize what the parents goes through for them.

Scull-DeArmey: Till they have their own.

L. Ryan: Just like we didn't until we had our own.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. (laughter) Yeah. How has equipment changed through the years since you've been fishing all your life? (0:36:46.6)

L. Ryan: It's changed a good bit. We went from, like I said, using oars to motors, and they went from what they call cotton and linen nets to monofilament. Then we went from regular galvanized crab pots that was just a galvanized wire to what they call a plastic-coated wire, which helps protect, let's your pots last a good bit longer. Now, gas is about to kill us, (laughter) but that gas is putting a hurt on everybody. And that's one reason a lot of your shrimp boats is tied up because on account of there ain't no shrimp to start with, on account of the oil spill, but the fuel's so high, they can't even go try. And they import so much seafood now (0:37:50.3) till we can't, it's hard for us to try to even break even and sell our catch for what they can already get it for so much cheaper.

Scull-DeArmey: In a lot of those countries where they're getting seafood, they have slave labor, children.

S. Ryan: And they don't have FDA [Food and Drug Administration]. We've seen pictures of it, and it's disgusting.

L. Ryan: That's what me and her has discussed. We have so many rules (0:38:24.2) that we have to abide by to keep our stuff fresh, and that's good to do. And then you got your import comes in, that they don't care how it's treated.

Scull-DeArme y: You can't compete with slave labor, if somebody's working free.

L. Ryan: You can't. Right. That magazine where they was working them kids over there for thirty-one cents an hour.

Scull-DeArme y: Some of them are literal slaves. They get nothing except food.

L. Ryan: That's what I'm saying. Time they pay for their food and stuff, the way they living now; all they doing is just working, just to live and eat.

Scull-DeArme y: Right. Do you remember what fuel cost when you got your first motor? (0:39:11.5)

L. Ryan: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArme y: How much was it?

L. Ryan: Twenty-four cents a gallon.

Scull-DeArme y: How much is it now?

L. Ryan: Three [dollars and] fifty-eight [cents]. (laughter) Yeah.

Scull-DeArme y: That's a huge change. Can you think of any other species that you saw when you were a kid? (0:39:32.0)

L. Ryan: Oh, yeah. I saw speckled trout and sheepshead and drum and redfish, what they call red drum. So we mostly just caught mullet, but I mean, we caught the other species, too, but our main thing was the mullet.

Scull-DeArme y: So would you say those were your bycatch?

L. Ryan: Yeah, more or less for us.

Scull-DeArme y: What did you do with it?

L. Ryan: We sold it, but we caught it as we was catching mullet, but our main concern was the mullet, but we did catch the other stuff to go with it. And I'm trying to think. Back then we got twenty-three cents a pound for speckled trout, and I think it was fifteen cents for redfish, a nickel for the drum and sheepshead.

Scull-DeArme y: Per pound?

L. Ryan: Per pound, yes, ma'am. And now I think that the markets is giving the recreational fishermen, (0:40:47.8) I think, like two [dollars and] fifty [cents], two [dollars and] sixty [cents] a pound for speckled trout, basically probably the same on the redfish.

Scull-DeArme y: Probably still isn't keeping up with fuel.

L. Ryan: No. It's nowhere near what you spend on your expenses.

S. Ryan: Well, by law, recreational fishermen are not supposed to sell them because that's what they are, recreational.

Scull-DeArme y: So are charter boats considered recreational?

L. Ryan: They supposed to be, but they can buy commercial—

S. Ryan: They're under a different law. I'm not sure—

L. Ryan: (inaudible) line license. So best I gather, the license they carry, like if we toured on their boats, chartered, our fish that we caught, we'd leave on their boat for them to sell, and that's how they make their money, other than the charter money, itself. Now, that's what I'm wanting to understand.

S. Ryan: You pay to be on there like a tourist, and they go out there, and you are supposed to go out there and like they're supposed to try to help you catch a good fish, and you get a picture of it, and that's it.

Scull-DeArme y: You (laughter) don't get to keep the fish.

S. Ryan: You don't even get to eat it or anything. You know what I'm saying?

L. Ryan: That's the way we understand it.

S. Ryan: That's the way we understand it.

Scull-DeArme y: My husband's going to be real disappointed. (laughter)

S. Ryan: I'm not really sure. That may be just the opposite from what we telling you, but that's what we hear.

Scull-DeArme y: Michael wants to go on a charter boat just because—he said, "I want to do it just once."

L. Ryan: The DMR [Mississippi Department of Marine Resources] had asked me how come I didn't book my boat a charter boat, but see, they say you have to be in a clique to even get license to be a charter boat, so they say that you got to know somebody to get that (laughter) nowadays. So I don't know.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Let's see. What was I going to ask you? All right. Well, let me just ask you this question. What does the seafood business mean to you and your family? (0:43:07.6)

S. Ryan: Life.

L. Ryan: Life. I mean, it's just our life, and wouldn't know what to do without it, even with the struggles and all, but it's just part of life. Yeah. It's everything to us.

S. Ryan: You cut him open; he's got saltwater in his veins. (laughter)

L. Ryan: It's everything to us.

S. Ryan: We wouldn't know what to do without it.

L. Ryan: I have three sons, and two of them's in fishing, and the onliest reason the third one ain't in there, because his wife wanted to move to Birmingham, and so they living up there. But I got two that's hard at it everyday, same as I am.

S. Ryan: And they wouldn't give it up for nothing. We talked when they were small. We never wanted them to be commercial fishermen because it's too hard.

L. Ryan: Because it was so hard.

S. Ryan: But we wanted them to know how to commercial fish in case there was another Depression, they could at least go out there and catch their family something to eat. And just like their daddy, they went and got hooked, (laughter) got addicted.

L. Ryan: Yeah, it's in their blood, so they hard at it. I mean, I'm pretty proud of them, but I know it's a hard life for them, and that bothers me, but at least they know what it is to make a honest living.

Scull-DeArmey: When you were young, how did you market your catch? (0:44:55.2) You talked about catching it and bringing it back and putting it on ice. Did you have to buy the ice and haul it somewhere?

L. Ryan: Yes, ma'am.

Scull-DeArmey: Where would you typically haul it?

L. Ryan: We'd have to haul it—you talking about the ice or the fish?

Scull-DeArme y: Either way.

L. Ryan: Well, we'd have to go by Pascagoula Ice House, and they'd blow so much, what they call, they'd blow so much ice on our truck, and we covered it up. And then when we come in with our catch, we'd put the fish on the truck and put the ice on top of them. And then we'd haul them from Pascagoula to Alabama to sell.

Scull-DeArme y: To Bayou La Batre?

L. Ryan: Yes, ma'am. Yeah. And they had a couple of fish houses around here, but they never wanted to actually do the fishermens right, so most time we went to Alabama because they done a little bit better by you. I mean, so that's—

Scull-DeArme y: Could you count on them to buy from you? Did they ever turn you away?

L. Ryan: Yeah, sometime. But they had to make sure they had it sold, but yeah, we been turned away. But then we'd go to another fish house, and they'd probably generally take. Thank God we never had to throw nothing back overboard and put it back. But we went through that, too.

Scull-DeArme y: Do you remember when you got your first freezer, where you could freeze fish?

L. Ryan: No. I don't because we've always just iced ours.

Scull-DeArme y: But I mean, in the house so that if you had a good catch, you could freeze it and save it to eat.

L. Ryan: Yeah. It was after me and my wife got married. We'd been married about—I don't know. Maybe ten years, and we finally got our first one, and we started freezing fish, but most time we just kept ours on ice in the icebox.

Scull-DeArme y: When you were growing up?

L. Ryan: Right.

Scull-DeArme y: What year did you marry?

L. Ryan: I married the second time in [19]84. The first time I married was in [19]76. That was just a disaster waiting to happen. (laughter) But anyway.

Scull-DeArme y: How has fishing changed? (0:47:38.3)

L. Ryan: Well, they's a few more people in it, and the laws has changed so bad till it's hard for a commercial fisherman to make a living at the fishing on account of the laws has changed so bad. (0:47:57.1) I mean, just for instance, they pulled off the beaches to half a mile offshore, so you got to at least go a half a mile offshore before you can ever start fishing. And that made a big difference because most of our fish is inshore fish, and so it's—

Scull-DeArmey: So the fish that you're looking for aren't even, you can't even find them a half mile offshore.

S. Ryan: You can, but not like in—

L. Ryan: Maybe. You can, but it's about 10 percent of the time, but 90 percent of the time they stay inshore. They stay a quarter of a mile and even closer, all the way up to the (inaudible).

Scull-DeArmey: Can you think of some other examples of regulations and laws that—

S. Ryan: Taking our gillnets.

L. Ryan: Took our nets away from us, so that hindered us.

S. Ryan: No. That stopped you.

L. Ryan: Yeah, I understand. And then for instance in oystering, they got so many laws and regulations on oysters, it is hard for a man to make a living, because he's only allowed to catch so many per day. And you got to have so much different equipment to catch these oysters, to get in to sell.

S. Ryan: Certain areas, too.

L. Ryan: And you got certain areas they'll let you work.

S. Ryan: And then you have to go to certain areas, what they call, to tag in and tag out. It's like clocking in and clocking out.

L. Ryan: And then you got a certain time to be in, and you got a certain time before you can leave instead of being able to go to work when you want to and come back when you want to.

S. Ryan: Catch what you need to catch, and then either go sell them or come home and open them. OK. You have to have permission to bring them home to open them. OK?

Scull-DeArmey: From whom?

S. Ryan: The DMR.

L. Ryan: From DMR. For example, if I'm oystering, and I want to bring a sack of oysters home for me and my family, I have to get permission from them to do that. Well, you shouldn't because it's a open area.

S. Ryan: And we shouldn't have anybody telling us what we can eat and what we can't eat.

Scull-DeArmey: Do they ever say, "No, you can't"?

S. Ryan: Um-hm.

L. Ryan: Oh, yeah. Certain times they'll tell you, "No. You have to sell them down there at the dock. When you come in, you have to unload your catch there."

Scull-DeArmey: Do they tell you why?

L. Ryan: No. They don't have to give you no reason.

S. Ryan: They say they don't have to give us a reason. And see, something we also learned are oysters are high in the good cholesterol, the LDL. OK. After he had a heart attack, learning the things that he could eat, well, his cholesterol was out of whack. You trying to find the low-fat and everything he has to eat, trying to find out how to cook it and everything like that, and here's something that is good no matter what. It is good in the LDL, but—

L. Ryan: For example, they'll say, just like where you was at—

S. Ryan: Bayou Heron, Sidney's.

L. Ryan: —out in Bayou Heron. See, all that out there has got beaucoup (boocoos) of oysters out there, and the water's clean. And Mississippi won't open it for commercial land, but they said they could open it for recreation, but they won't on account of because if they do it for the recreation, then they'd have to do it for commercial. And they don't want to open it for the commercial. I mean, it's just—the laws in Mississippi ain't what they should be, just straight up.

S. Ryan: Yeah. You get more time and a bigger fine to be a commercial fisherman here in Mississippi than you do for buying and selling crystal meth.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: If you break a DMR regulation or law?

L. Ryan: Right, um-hm.

S. Ryan: It is a bigger fine or more time.

L. Ryan: For example if they catch my boat and I got commercial license on it, if they catch me going out, say, before daylight, maybe just after dark, and I don't have no running lights on my boat, my fine is five hundred dollars. Now, if a recreation fisherman's coming out and he gets caught with no running lights, his fine's only a hundred dollars. The next time I get caught with no running lights, my fine doubles. His don't; his stays the same. So it's just things like that the DMR does to commercial [fishermen] that I felt like if a commercial boat runs over you and kills you, you dead. If a recreation boat runs over you and kills you, you just as dead. It don't matter. (laughter) But it's just things like that.

S. Ryan: It doesn't make sense when you actually think about it. You sit down and think about it. OK. This boat doesn't have running lights, and this boat doesn't have running lights. Really, seriously, what is the difference? None. The onliest difference is is who's driving it. And to me that's profiling.

L. Ryan: And see, I'm not against no man making a living. I don't care what he does, as long as it's honest. But now you go back to your live-bait shrimpers. (0:53:52.9) I don't believe in them because to me all they have is a license to steal. They can go up your rivers. They can go in your bays, and all your closed areas that's closed for a regular shrimper, they can catch what they call bait. And it don't matter what size the shrimp is. If he's this big, or if he's this big, he can catch it. And so when you get up your rivers, anybody knows that a white shrimp goes up north in your rivers and up in your bays to lay its eggs. And then the little shrimp starts back out, going back to the Gulf, your little white shrimp. Well, then your bait boats catches all that up. Not only that, they get out there, and they drag their trawl boards all over the eggs on them, and it just don't make sense to me why they should—if they going to put one boat a half mile offshore to catch shrimp, they ought to have the other boat offshore out there a half a mile. And my count's got to be sixty-eight, which is a good law; that it is because that gives shrimp big enough for you to eat. But all boats should have to go under that law, not just certain boats. But that's just me, personally, because just things the Mississippi law does just don't (laughter) go over very well with me.

Scull-DeArmey: Now, for the record, can you tell listeners what a live-bait shrimper is?

L. Ryan: He's a bait boat that catches shrimp, small shrimp for your recreation fishermens to have bait for their hooks.

S. Ryan: They have to be alive.

L. Ryan: Live shrimp, and that's what he is. They sell theirs by the count. At the bait shop, they can sell their shrimp individuals. They count their shrimp one by one, and that's how they sell theirs, so that's how they sell them to the customers.

S. Ryan: Yeah. You can go up there and like say, "I want five live shrimp." And they give you five live shrimp to go catch your fish. That's just an example.

Scull-DeArmey: So the shrimpers who are selling to, say, the restaurants or the processing plants are going to put theirs on ice or freeze them in a quick-freezer.

L. Ryan: And a live bait boat don't. He keeps his alive for the recreation fishermen.

S. Ryan: But they have to be a certain size before they can even go. They have to be what? Sixty-eight count?

L. Ryan: Yeah, before they'll open the season.

S. Ryan: Sixty-eight shrimp to a pound or bigger.

Scull-DeArmey: For the shrimper who's not catching live bait.

L. Ryan: Right. Yeah, can't—

Scull-DeArmey: But the live-bait shrimper—

L. Ryan: He works year-round.

S. Ryan: And he can catch what we call fleas.

L. Ryan: He has no size.

S. Ryan: They can be small, small. They're not good for actually eating.

L. Ryan: But they catch them so the recreation fishermen can have something to catch fish with, what they call live bait.

Scull-DeArmey: So if they're catching the babies, what does that do to the population of adults? (0:57:12.1)

L. Ryan: It kills it because if you up the river and you catching all your little white shrimp, coming out, well, see, they don't have time to go back to the Gulf to grow, to come back because you done caught them up. To me, you kill your shrimp population because you killing your nursery.

S. Ryan: And you have to have the babies to—

L. Ryan: Yeah, to lay more.

S. Ryan: It's senseless to catch everything up where there's nothing for you tomorrow. OK. What are you going to eat tomorrow?

Scull-DeArmey: It's not sustainable.

S. Ryan: Right.

L. Ryan: Right. But—

S. Ryan: Now, this is just our opinion, so.

L. Ryan: But being as it is for the recreation fishermen, they OK with it. And see before shrimp season opened, see, your live bait boats can go catch all the shrimp they want. It's a law that they can't, but once they get back to the dock with that boat, it don't matter how many dead shrimp they got on that boat, they legal.

Scull-DeArmey: So you said that they can start shrimping before the regular shrimpers can?

L. Ryan: Yeah. See, what we have are what you call a brownie season. All right. It generally opens—

S. Ryan: Sometime in June.

L. Ryan: June, generally around the sixth till about the fifteenth of June. And well, see, they'll start working in May, catching shrimp. Like I said, if they catch five hundred pound of shrimp, well, once they get to the dock, if them shrimp is dead and the conservation didn't check them before they get to the dock, then they good to go. They can sell them shrimp. And trust me; you don't see too many conservationists checking a live bait boat because they generally just don't fool with it. But a fisherman's life is hard, and it don't really pan out for what you'd go through, for what you do have to go through. But if it's in your blood, that's what you do, anyway, (laughter) so.

Scull-DeArmey: Have you seen changes in species over your lifetime? (1:01:10.5)

L. Ryan: No, not really. It's pretty much stayed the same. It's just—

S. Ryan: Now, you said you caught something here a while back, here a couple weeks ago, you said you never seen.

L. Ryan: Yeah. But I don't know what it was.

S. Ryan: He still don't know what it was.

Scull-DeArme y: Oh. Did you save it?

L. Ryan: No. We threw it overboard, but now we are starting to see some of them— heck, I can't think of the name of them. Is it manta rays or manatees?

Scull-DeArme y: The stingrays with the—

S. Ryan: Describe it. Does it look like the whales?

L. Ryan: Yeah.

S. Ryan: The manatees.

L. Ryan: Manatees. We seen them coming in here a lot more, and like out there toward Bayou Heron, they seen them out there a good bit one year. Well, this year we've seen a couple, three that we've never seen here, but we seeing them now. But it's pretty much stayed.

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah?

L. Ryan: And up to the [BP Deepwater Horizon] oil spill I ain't seen no increase in it. I ain't seen the fish decline or the crabbing until we had this, what happened out there in the Gulf. And now I'm seeing it. (1:02:53.4)

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah. How long have you been crabbing? (1:02:56.7) How many years now?

L. Ryan: Oh, almost, well, since [19]97.

Scull-DeArme y: Right. So you've been doing it long enough to really notice a change like that.

L. Ryan: Oh, yeah. Um-hm, yeah. And up to this, we ain't really seen decline. It kind of basically stays about the same. Now, this year we've—

S. Ryan: At different times of year you have an influx of certain species when they come in to spawn and stuff like that. There's like a rhythm to it, before the oil spill. And then since the oil spill, that rhythm is gone haywire. You're not seeing it.

Scull-DeArme y: Can you explain how that has changed?

S. Ryan: All right. Well, like say, the oystering. (1:03:58.0) You can only catch oysters here in cold weather, during cold weather. All right. And like he said before, there's only certain spots that you can oyster, so usually November, December, January, is your best months to catch oysters.

L. Ryan: For oystering.

S. Ryan: All right. Now, Katrina devastated our [oyster] reefs. So they had started trying to rebuild them. Since the oil spill there has been no new oysters made; there are no babies. And we been watching the news, trying to see what they're going to do, the state's going to do because oystering's a big deal, here. You're talking, I mean, millions of dollars, and the oyster reefs are dead. I think they said they got one in Hancock County—

L. Ryan: Yeah.

S. Ryan: —that they were talking about opening just to—short-term solution, trying to help the oystermen, but I hadn't heard. Did they open it or not? Did you hear?

L. Ryan: No, they ain't opened it.

Scull-DeArmeY: They have not opened it?

L. Ryan: They have not opened it, no. The oyster fishermen, just like shrimpers and the crabbers, they having it tough. It's just they ain't no money to come in.

S. Ryan: And like he told you before, the crabs come in to the marshland to have their babies, and they have live crabs. It's not eggs; it's live crabs. (1:05:59.5) And like I said, I'm not really sure how, when they spawn as far as like coming in to have them, and then you'll see the sponge crabs coming in, and like I said, you have to throw them back overboard. You can go back to the same place a couple of days later. It doesn't take long for them to get rid of the sponge, and they spawn, and you can catch those crabs, once that—and to me it looks like a real sponge. And you're not seeing them coming in like they're supposed to, to have their babies. And like he hadn't seen any babies in the crabs, but because we're not allowed to fish, we don't know how bad the rhythm of that is since [19]97. We know roe mullet season usually happens—that's when they have their babies, usually in October, November, but there's nobody allowed, in Mississippi, to catch these. So we don't know how those were affected. And shrimping, they have live shrimp, also. And usually like if you're going through these little ditches there, where the Pascagoula River, the West(?) River and the Pascagoula River kind of meet—we call them the flats—there are little ditches and stuff in there, and usually if you go through one during the spring, you can see shrimp, (1:07:52.0) small shrimp, jumping out of water ahead of the boat. And I can't tell you the last time I seen a shrimp jump. What about you?

L. Ryan: It's been a while.

Scull-DeArmeY: Since the oil spill?

L. Ryan: (inaudible), yeah.

S. Ryan: You see a difference, but you have nobody in the scientific community that's willing to stand up and say, "Yes, the oil spill did this." I mean, we can only tell you what we think, and we personally think that the oil spill, the oil and the dispersant—

L. Ryan: Killed this bottom.

S. Ryan: —has killed the whole [Mississippi] Sound. (1:08:36.4)

Scull-DeArmey: The Mississippi Sound has been known for having a really diverse population of lots of different kinds of seafood and big in number, more so than the Atlantic or the Pacific. And for that to disappear is going to really be a loss.

L. Ryan: Yeah. It's heartbreaking.

S. Ryan: Well, you see those new reality shows that they've been coming out with where the people in Alabama there, in Bayou La Batre, shrimping, and they went down to Texas to make the opening and different things like that. But see, we heard up until this fall that they were still spraying dispersants out around Horn Island (1:09:35.0) and all your barrier islands, trying to disperse the oil. I personally think that what the dispersant did is just made it sink, and the oil is sitting on the bottom because when you pull a crab pot that's sitting on the bottom, and you pull it, and you see oil, a little oil thing—and you know how when you drop oil in water or grease in water, and it makes that little slick-looking thing—and you're pulling it, and there you see this oil slick come up out of the bottom. (1:10:07.6) Well, I mean, there has to be oil for it to be there. I mean, I don't know of anybody that's going out, dumping their grease that they've been cooking out there, so I think it's the oil. But that's just my personal opinion. I still think that there's millions of gallons of oil, sitting on the bottom, here in Mississippi and Louisiana, and it is deep, thick.

L. Ryan: And I believe you going to see it get worse in the next couple years.

S. Ryan: And they're still talking on the news about (inaudible) on the shore. That's all you're hearing is (inaudible) this place, and then you hear from somebody else, there's still people out there, cleaning (inaudible).

Scull-DeArmey: What will you do if there are no crab or oysters? (1:11:32.1)

L. Ryan: I don't know. Me and her has discussed that. I don't know what's going to happen.

S. Ryan: He has no other trade.

L. Ryan: I just don't know. I go to bed at night, praying that everything's going to work out and be all right, but I really see it being bad for the next two or three years. I really do.

Scull-DeArme y: Have you made enough money crabbing this year to make a living?

L. Ryan: No. And the thing is this is the first time maybe in fifteen, twenty years, me and my wife went and filed for food stamps. Don't know if we going to get them. And that's the first time. In fact, this is the first year that I've struggled so hard to pay my bills.

S. Ryan: We're not paying our bills.

L. Ryan: And we not paying them. We backing up, and it's been a chore.

Scull-DeArme y: That just breaks my heart.

L. Ryan: Yeah. I pretty much raised my family without having to be on any kind of welfare benefits, and I'm not—

S. Ryan: There's nothing wrong with that. We're not talking about people who are on them. We're not saying—

L. Ryan: I'm not saying nothing against it. I'm just saying that I've been fortunate to make a living without having to do it. And so we went Monday and applied for food stamps, and it's been tough.

S. Ryan: And have no clue what we're doing, so—

L. Ryan: Yeah. And I hope we get them.

Scull-DeArme y: Of course, you wish you didn't have to.

L. Ryan: Right, exactly.

Scull-DeArme y: That's what they're there for, so—

L. Ryan: It broke my and her heart the other day to have to walk in there and do it, but it's—

S. Ryan: Your eyes are this big around because you don't know what you're doing. You're terrified. And you're thinking, "OK. If they say no, what are we going to do? Who else is there? We can't borrow from other people because they're in the same boat we are. Our parents are both on social—they're all retired, so they're on fixed income. They can't help you. I mean, why would you want your seventy-something-

year-old to support, start all over again, supporting us, and we're in our forties and fifties.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, if you end up like all living in a big commune together, that's really how it used to be, and that's what families are for. And to tell you the truth, I'd love to live communally. I hate living in isolated houses where you go to work, and you come home, and you're tired, and you—

S. Ryan: You don't even know your neighbors.

Scull-DeArmey: Don't know your neighbors, at least not well.

L. Ryan: Well, we fortunate. Our house is paid for, and that's the onliest good thing we got going (laughter) for us.

Scull-DeArmey: You guys know how to plant a garden? (laughter)

S. Ryan: Oh, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: My mother did. See, my father died when I was thirteen. I grew up poor. My mother had a garden, and my aunt and uncle had a farm in Red Level, Alabama. When they killed a cow, we took as much as we could and put it in our refrigerator and our freezer.

S. Ryan: He doesn't, but my daddy, him and his family were sharecroppers. My mother, they were farmers. They had the cows, the chickens, everything, hogs. Every fall we slaughtered a hog or whatever. I told him here a while back: milk for her, OK, you're paying almost five dollars a gallon for a gallon of milk for her. I said, "We need to go get us a cow." (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah, really, or goats.

L. Ryan: Yeah, or goats.

S. Ryan: And our oldest boy couldn't take formula, so we had to put him on Carnation cream. Goat milk was fixing to be next. Our daughter who just left out of here, she was premature. You ought to seen the milk we went through. Goat milk was fixing to be next on that list, and they finally found something for her to be on. But I was raised in all that, and yeah, me and my parents and my sisters, we've had a communal garden. We go up to my parents, and we all planted a garden, (1:16:11.7) go up there, and we was doing it, and fresh vegetables and stuff like that, but yeah, we thinking about starting our own garden.

Scull-DeArmey: That's how my mother fed us, and I'll tell you what; the more expensive gas gets, the more people are going to have to decide, "I can't pay anything but gas to get to work, buy food, and a roof over my head." We're not going to be

buying pillows, so this whole culture that we have, this economy that's based on consumerism—"Let's buy these things we want and that we like, these trifles"—that's going to disappear. Those people are going to get out of business.

S. Ryan: We haven't bought anything that we just wanted in what? Two years?

Scull-DeArmey: Everybody's going to be like that, and then this economy is really going to shut down. And if you don't know how to grow a garden, if you don't know how to keep two goats as pets in your backyard because the City won't let you keep them as—

S. Ryan: Here, you can, because let me tell you something. (laughter) I don't know if you noticed, but when you was driving through here—and this is something I've never—they let their chickens run wild. They don't even put them in a coop. How do they find their eggs? And they're everywhere; chickens are everywhere. And you're going—

Scull-DeArmey: But see, chickens'll come home to roost, and they'll lay their eggs. Also they're like pigs. This is what people used to do years ago. The pigs and the chickens went out in the woods and foraged for themselves. They didn't have to be fed, and then they came back in, or somebody went out and got the pigs, I guess, but the chickens'll come home to their coop where you can close them up.

S. Ryan: They don't have a coop. That's what I'm talking about. They don't have one. And so how are they getting their eggs? But I'm from the Pascagoula River swamps, and my granddaddy and all the men used to go into the river swamps and catch the hogs, (1:18:24.4) bring them back to a pen, fatten them up, feed them to corn, cleaning them out, and then we'd slaughter them.

Scull-DeArmey: Had a smokehouse?

S. Ryan: Yeah, the smokehouse. Now, my granddaddy's been gone since 1988. So there has not been anything slaughtered since, oh, God, years before then because he was in a nursing home, and he had to get rid of the cows and everything. He didn't have any of the cows when me and you got married. Did he?

L. Ryan: Unh-uh.

S. Ryan: So we've been married twenty-seven years, so even before then, but you can step in that smokehouse—

L. Ryan: And you still smell it.

S. Ryan: Oh, it smells so good.

Scull-DeArmey: Y'all, it's going to come back to that, I'm afraid.

L. Ryan: But I say it; I told my wife. Me and her's talked about it. I said, "You ain't seen the thieving and the stuff that's happened that you going to see when this economy falls, when people don't know how to make a dollar, or don't know how to farm or something.

Scull-DeArmey: And if we just didn't have to pay so much for gas, the whole economy would pick up. We'd have some spare money.

L. Ryan: That, and I'll tell you something else that hurts us pretty bad, and that's insurance. (1:19:40.1) I mean, don't get me wrong. I know they pay out, but—

S. Ryan: They don't pay out when something happens, though.

L. Ryan: That is ridiculous, too, is—

S. Ryan: Just like with Katrina and Hurricane Elena, wasn't it Elena or Fredrick? Whichever one that hit Florida, and all the insurance companies went bankrupt, and they hadn't even paid anybody. And you're thinking, "OK. I paid \$307 a month."

Scull-DeArmey: For how many years? If you'd just put it in the bank—right?

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: You would've been all right.

S. Ryan: Yeah.

L. Ryan: That buddy of mine lived right there in Bayou Heron. And he had State Farm, and he had them, well, since he come out of high school. He went to work at Ingalls [Shipbuilding], the day he come out of high school. And he retired. He had State Farm from the time he built his house, him and his first wife, until Katrina hit. And wouldn't you know, because he didn't live in a flood zone, well, they wouldn't pay for his house, and it's like ours. It got flooded out. He said he could have took every bit of that money every month and put it in the bank and would have had enough money to rebuild and had money left over.

Scull-DeArmey: Left over.

L. Ryan: And they would not help him.

S. Ryan: Yeah. When he opened his door, they had to break into his house because once the water came in, it swelled everything, so when the water receded, he still had six foot of water trapped in his house because it—

Scull-DeArmey: —couldn't get out.

S. Ryan: Right. It had swoll everything. So he had to break down something to let the water out before he'd ever go in there. And it floated our refrigerator out of our kitchen, into our front room and into our foyer and—(1:21:31.8)

L. Ryan: —jammed our door.

L. Ryan: And jammed the door. You ought to seen them, trying to get into the door. And I'm thinking, "Oh, my God." You don't realize the force of water, even inside of a house. And our beds were tumped over, like this. And you're thinking, "What'd it do? Come in from the bottom and just shoot up like you see on TV? Them fountains just spewing to knock the—how did it get?"

L. Ryan: But they could drop that gas down to half of what it is now, (1:22:07.5) and you'd see a lot of people, being able to do a lot more spending.

S. Ryan: I really don't think oil is costing no hundred dollars a barrel. Not really.

Scull-DeArmey: We're exporting oil.

L. Ryan: That's what I'm saying.

Scull-DeArmey: Let's keep it here and lower the price.

S. Ryan: Chevron is right there. Why can't we just run up there and get our own oil?

Scull-DeArmey: Let's have those shareholders and CEOs not make as much money to save the economy of this country because I don't know what they think, where their money's going to come from when the whole economy collapses because nobody can buy anything.

L. Ryan: Then they ain't going to get nothing for gas.

S. Ryan: They would have no clue.

Scull-DeArmey: Maybe they're just going to go live in Europe or something.

S. Ryan: But see, from what we heard, it's double in Europe than what it is here.

Scull-DeArmey: But in Europe they have better public transportation. The countries are smaller, and they can really micromanage everything.

L. Ryan: You can't here, though. I seen on TV, ain't even been a week ago. They said they could use our gas, here, and it would cost about thirty-eight dollars a barrel where we paying a hundred dollars a barrel to get it from over there. I said, "That's a big difference."

Scull-DeArme y: Absolutely.

L. Ryan: From thirty-eight to a hundred. I don't know.

Scull-DeArme y: We shouldn't be exporting any gas. We should be saving it for this country to use.

L. Ryan: Right, exactly.

S. Ryan: But the people that are—this is the way I feel about our government. They're our employees. They work for us. But they don't take us into consideration whatsoever.

Scull-DeArme y: They're lining their pockets.

L. Ryan: If you destroy one thing, by saying you saving something else, then you not doing nothing.

S. Ryan: How would those, the president and all them senators and all that—if you cut their salary back—

L. Ryan: Well, if they had to buy their own gas.

S. Ryan: —to at least even fifty thousand dollars a year, that's still a good chunk of change, specially when we're making—before the oil spill we were making what? Thirty, thirty-five thousand a year? (1:24:26.8) OK? Not bragging. We paid our bills. We, every once in a while, got to go out to eat, if we managed our money correctly. No, we're not the Rockefellers. We couldn't buy everything, but we were happy, paying our bills, content. OK? They're making over two hundred fifty thousand dollars a year. And for what? Because when you tell them, "I elected you to do this. You said you were going to do this, and that's the reason I elected you. You get up to Washington, and you think, 'OK. I need two hundred fifty thousand dollars a year, and I have to send my kids to private school. I have to redecorate this home.'" And that home, really, is not—if it was anywhere else, what would it be appraised for? A hundred thousand dollars. This house right here is appraised for a hundred and fifty.

L. Ryan: It goes right back to Feinberg, the way Feinberg done people on the oil spill. (1:25:21.1) He offered a lot of people twenty-five thousand dollars. They hurting for money. Everybody is. So they go down there, and they take it [twenty-five thousand dollars]. And he kept holding back and holding back and holding back.

S. Ryan: Making people where they were desperate that they needed it.

L. Ryan: He's making his every day.

S. Ryan: They were losing everything.

L. Ryan: BP's paying him big time, so naturally—and we hoping that we'll get a little something out of BP on this lawsuit. Who knows?

Scull-DeArme y: I hope so.

L. Ryan: We ain't seen nothing yet.

Scull-DeArme y: I truly hope so.

L. Ryan: But we hoping.

S. Ryan: Well, this is our first time ever doing it, so we're clueless. We have no idea what we're doing, and we're trusting people who are not commercial fishermen, first time for us.

L. Ryan: (inaudible) actually from—

S. Ryan: Michigan. They're from Michigan; the company's from Michigan, but they did the Exxon *Valdez*, and so they have some experience, but it's hard for a commercial fisherman to trust somebody outside of the business.

Scull-DeArme y: Well, you just have to.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

S. Ryan: Yeah. And it's a learning—

Scull-DeArme y: But I mean, you got to be vigilant, too, as much as you can. I mean, you may not be able to see into everything they're doing, but stay on it.

S. Ryan: We're trusting people and doing things that we've never done before. (1:26:47.4) And you're thinking, "Lord, am I doing the right thing? Wow."

Scull-DeArme y: It just takes a long time, all that red tape in a bureaucracy takes a long time.

S. Ryan: Well, we hired those lawyers in September of 2010, and here it is March of 2012. And we're asking, "Does it normally take this long?"

Scull-DeArme y: It does. Anything that has to go through the courts, it's just incredible.

L. Ryan: Well, they said that we should hear something, forty-five days?

S. Ryan: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: Good.

L. Ryan: Then BP decided to settle out.

S. Ryan: Yeah. It was in the newspaper, right at eight billion dollars that they said that they were going to—

Scull-DeArmey: They should just divide that up among all of you fishermen. That's all it should go to.

S. Ryan: Well, they said there was over a hundred thousand different victims, and that's Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. And he told me that Florida's even stepping in now.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. The Gulf Coast of Florida got some damage.

S. Ryan: Yeah. And that's the commercial fishermen, the seafood processors and stuff like that, but also it's got to do with real estate agents.

Scull-DeArmey: Restaurants.

S. Ryan: Restaurants, now, restaurants you can understand, but we're having a hard time on this real estate thing.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, just a dirty beach becomes a less desirable waterfront property. If people perceive that it's contaminated and polluted, then they don't want to buy there. They certainly aren't going to pay a premium price.

S. Ryan: Well, here a while back, it's been a couple of years or so ago; we were out looking for some waterfront property down there on the Ocean Springs. And I like to had a stroke.

Scull-DeArmey: It's expensive.

S. Ryan: One of them was \$1,375,000 for a *lot*.

L. Ryan: Not a acre or nothing, just (inaudible).

S. Ryan: And you're thinking, "OK. This is Mississippi. When did we get land that's worth a million dollars? I'm from Buzzard Roost. The top price there is twenty-five hundred dollars an acre. (laughter) And here you are paying a million, three?"

Scull-DeArmey: Don't know if they can really get it.

S. Ryan: Well, it has a big sign, for sale, one, three seventy-five and all that, *firm*. It has under it, "Firm," so we haven't been back down there. I don't know if they sold it or not.

L. Ryan: Too rich for our blood, so we left.

Scull-DeArmey: Oh, that's just ridiculous.

S. Ryan: We just kind of slunk off, like, "Oops."

Scull-DeArmey: I wish that the government would just buy up all those empty lots and turn it into a nature preserve. Everything, as things come for sale south of the railroad tracks, just turn it into a national park. We'd get tourists in here, paying money to be here. The hurricanes wouldn't kill so many people. You'd just evacuate all the campers out. There wouldn't be that much built down there, maybe some concession stands.

S. Ryan: I think they need to rebuild the beaches and the islands. They were—what was it called that tore up all your pots, here a while back? Dredge boats, they were dredging out.

Scull-DeArmey: Really? You lost crab pots to dredge boats? (1:30:30.4)

L. Ryan: Oh, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Did they pay for it?

S. Ryan: No.

L. Ryan: No. They told me I shouldn't have been out there. I tried to hunt the letter because I had called the Coast Guard and talked to the Coast Guard in Mobile. But I can't find my letter. But they sent me a letter—

S. Ryan: Saying it was the Coast Guard's fault.

L. Ryan: —stating that they notified the Coast Guard. I lost about seventy-five brand-new crab pots, overnight, from, what was the name of that dredge company? Whitney?

S. Ryan: Weems, W-E-E-M-S.

L. Ryan: Weems, or something, Dredging Company.

Scull-DeArmey: How much does a crab pot cost?

L. Ryan: They thirty-six dollars apiece. And must have been—hadn't it been about another month ago?

S. Ryan: Um-hm.

L. Ryan: They come back in there and did just a little bit of dredging at Ingalls, and I lost another twenty-five pots, because they just drag them dredge pipes over them. And you lose them, and you just out because they said they not responsible for it.

S. Ryan: And once they crush them, we can show you what they look like. You cannot use them again.

L. Ryan: They almost put me out of business.

Scull-DeArmeY: Just for the record, can you explain what dredging is?

L. Ryan: It's a dredge boat that comes in and dredges your channels and stuff and makes them deeper.

S. Ryan: They vacuum the sand out.

L. Ryan: Suck the bottom, mud off the bottom, and they got long, must be at least a mile or better, big pipes that they drag behind them to wherever they going to put it to pump the mud, wherever they going with it. And they come through and just with the dredge pipes, (inaudible) and just cleaned us out, myself, a couple more crabbers. They almost put us out of business. And I wrote them a letter; sent it to them, how much it would take to replace my crab pots that they lost. I even got it on camcorder where I went out there, trying to get the crab pots back up, trying to save them. And they said they notified the Coast Guard, and it wasn't their fault, and I shouldn't have been there.

S. Ryan: The Coast Guard should have got—it was the Coast Guard's fault because they notified the Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard should have got us and made us move our pots.

L. Ryan: But nobody notified us that they was even coming. And when they come in, they don't care; they just destroy whatever's there, and you out.

Scull-DeArmeY: You fishermen have a lot of challenges to survive. (laughter)

L. Ryan: It is. You have to either laugh about it or cry, so.

S. Ryan: Mother Nature is our biggest—

L. Ryan: Yeah, but you can deal with Mother Nature because you know that's (inaudible).

S. Ryan: Fishing in the weather that we fish in sometimes is hard enough. We don't need red tape and other people that's just, for hatefulness sake, adding to our misery because like in the month of March, the winds come in, either come in like a lamb and go out like a lion or vice versa. And spring's trying to march in so you've got all this bad weather, springtime. So that's a big enough challenge, so we don't need—

L. Ryan: Well, our crab pots is marked with our names, and all they'd had to do was pick one up and notify you, "We coming in." Give us twenty-four hours to get our stuff up, and we're going to move it. But they don't, so they just come in.

Scull-DeArme y: Over your lifetime, how has the market for your seafood product changed? (1:34:58.6)

L. Ryan: How do you mean? For the good, bad?

Scull-DeArme y: Either way.

L. Ryan: It's changed both. You know what I'm saying? Since Katrina, we only have one crab house that buys crabs in the state of Mississippi. I think we only got one or two people in Biloxi who buys fish, and one in Pascagoula. So you only got about, I'd say if you got a half a dozen seafood markets in Mississippi, you going to be lucky. And I don't think you got that many. They just ain't no more money in it for the fishermen or the markets anymore because your imports has killed you. (1:35:47.1)

Scull-DeArme y: Is there any chance that you could take orders from restaurants and just sell to them directly?

L. Ryan: Yeah, you could, but they won't buy from us directly because they can get the imports so much cheaper than they can buy from us because where they'd have to pay me two dollars a pound for shrimp, for me to come out, for my gas, they can get it over there for fifty or seventy-five cents a pound. I mean, that's just the difference I'm talking about. So they can buy it so much cheaper.

S. Ryan: It's already cleaned and boxed and shipped to them for a lot cheaper than we can catch.

L. Ryan: For a lot cheaper than what we can make the catch for. We can't catch it and sell it for what they do because our gas and stuff is so high here. And then you got your farms, your fish farms. Now, them has put a big hurt on your fresh seafood because they can get it out the pond the same way. They raise it and can sell it so much cheaper than we can catch it for. (1:37:07.1) So that's another thing that's hurt you, your fish farms, shrimp farms and stuff.

S. Ryan: That's the reason you see all them signs that say, "Buy—

L. Ryan: —fresh seafood.

S. Ryan: —wild Mississippi seafood," or "Alabama seafood, wild Gulf shrimp," or whatever, and what that is doing is trying to get people to buy locally instead of from overseas.

L. Ryan: And farm raised.

S. Ryan: Help your community before you help somebody overseas that you don't know, and you'll never meet. So that's what that's out there for.

Scull-DeArme y: Well, moving on to Hurricane Katrina, how did Katrina affect your business? (1:37:58.8)

L. Ryan: It affected it pretty bad. It knocked us down hard because it killed the oyster reefs.

S. Ryan: People lost whole boats and motors.

L. Ryan: We lost all of our equipment to work with.

Scull-DeArme y: Did you lose a boat?

L. Ryan: Yeah. We lost everything, home, boat, cars. The onliest thing we saved was the old truck that we (laughter) had. That's the onliest thing we saved. Hurricane Katrina got everything else.

Scull-DeArme y: Except your lives.

S. Ryan: Yeah.

L. Ryan: That's right.

S. Ryan: Now, we evacuated. I'm chicken. I'm not going to stay. I'm going to leave in a hurricane.

L. Ryan: Yeah. We lost totally everything. We tied our boats down in a open field where we thought they'd would've been safe, but we didn't know that it was going to have the tide surge it had, coming as far as it did.

S. Ryan: Everything you did under all the other hurricanes, all bets were off under Katrina. The things that we had done normally to save our property and our boats and equipment and stuff didn't work with Katrina.

Scull-DeArme y: What happened to your boats?

L. Ryan: Oh, it got destroyed.

S. Ryan: It went out in the woods.

L. Ryan: It went out in the woods, and it got destroyed, and just wasn't no saving it. We lost all of our crab pots.

S. Ryan: They were up in trees. We have pictures of it somewhere around here, wire up in trees. And like he said, he had a boat, and our boat's on a trailer in a field, and—

L. Ryan: Mine, my son's.

S. Ryan: And when we went back to them, they were up in a wooded area, a thick, thick wooded area.

L. Ryan: Busted all to pieces.

Scull-DeArme y: The surge took them into the woods?

L. Ryan: Yeah. It took them in.

S. Ryan: And went off and left them.

Scull-DeArme y: You never expected a surge in that field.

S. Ryan: No. We never expected it.

S. Ryan: Well, we were three miles from the—

L. Ryan: The water.

S. Ryan: —Sound proper. Yeah. We had Bayou Heron running up there, but whoever thought that it would come? And it actually went up like six miles, I think, the surge, is what they said.

Scull-DeArme y: That's just incredible.

L. Ryan: We didn't get no help from FEMA, as far as that or the Red Cross.

S. Ryan: Salvation Army. Now, we did get some help from churches from North Carolina.

L. Ryan: Yeah, different places.

S. Ryan: There was this one church who come through, and they were handing out clothing and shoes and stuff like that. And because they didn't have the size for me or Samantha, it devastated the two women that come. And we kept telling them, "It's fine." He got some shoes; the boys got some shoes, and what we have are not great, but, hey, it was better than barefooted. And they come the next day with some Wal-Mart cards, gift cards and told us—but see, you couldn't even go to the stores and buy anything.

Scull-DeArmey: Where was a Wal-Mart?

L. Ryan: They wasn't.

S. Ryan: Well, the outside building of Wal-Mart was there, but going in it, you couldn't buy anything that you know, was necessities.

L. Ryan: Well, you know how it was. It just wasn't nothing to buy.

Scull-DeArmey: People who are listening to this, though, won't know unless you tell them.

L. Ryan: It was hard.

S. Ryan: I mean, we went to—it was us and his brother and wife, and it was several of us went to Florida to get gas and ice and different things down there that was—

L. Ryan: Groceries.

S. Ryan: Yeah. That they had that we couldn't have.

L. Ryan: But then, if you remember, we got down there. They was so many people coming from here and Louisiana and all that the gas lines were so long that you'd wait hours to get up there to get gas.

S. Ryan: Now, the ice house that we actually went to, when they found out that we were from Mississippi, they donated us some ice.

L. Ryan: Didn't charge us for the ice.

S. Ryan: Because Mississippi had helped them through Fredrick and different storms. And very gracious, very, very gracious they were. And we were—

L. Ryan: Told us to come back.

S. Ryan: —filthy. We were taking a bath—

L. Ryan: In the river.

S. Ryan: —right up the road up here, in the river and washing clothes, washing your hair. And you can't tell it, but my daughter's hair is really thick. And trying to get her bathed and washed in the river, and it was a nightmare. But we wasn't the onliest one. You was talking about communal. Well, that's what we had, communal baths down there.

L. Ryan: The men would go down there and try to wash the best we could without having to strip too much. And then we'd let the girls go down there.

S. Ryan: You'd have to watch out for snakes, also.

L. Ryan: Then the men, we'd get back up and make sure they wasn't no other men, coming down there where the women was down there. And it was tough; now, it was really tough.

S. Ryan: And you were washing your clothes.

L. Ryan: So hot, God, it was hot. Who!

S. Ryan: And you're thinking to yourself, "How did those women back in the"—
(laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: In long dresses and corsets.

S. Ryan: Get down here and wash and get clean? Clean clothes, how did they do it out of the river or creek or whatever?

L. Ryan: But it must have been—no, I don't guess it was. But it seemed like it must have been 105, 110 degrees. We was about to smother, no air-conditioning. We just wasn't used to it or something.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, the trees were gone. All the leaves were gone. There was no shade, right?

L. Ryan: It was hot.

S. Ryan: And usually after a hurricane, it's nice. You have beautiful weather. But after Katrina, no.

L. Ryan: And fact is, we was talking about it night before last, about us, my daughter and my wife, my son, and myself was out there in that old house, and the mud in it was about that deep. And we was cleaning it.

Scull-DeArmey: About a foot deep in mud?

L. Ryan: Yeah. It was every bit of that if not deeper. And we'd got some of the house pretty much clean where you could—and we all kind of just sat down, and we was almost falling asleep. And we realize now, after watching TV the other night, that we was all having a heat stroke and didn't realize it. It was actually—

S. Ryan: Every one of us.

L. Ryan: It was putting us to sleep.

S. Ryan: All of a sudden, you're cleaning, and all of a sudden, you just got really tired.

L. Ryan: It was so hot.

S. Ryan: And you had to physically make yourself get up, to move, because I mean, we were like this. And you'd fall down like you were heat exhaustion.

L. Ryan: That's what we thought; we kind of come to the conclusion that we was actually having a heat stroke.

S. Ryan: And one of the DMR [Mississippi Department of Marine Resources] come up while we were cleaning, and he told Larry, he said, "Y'all have got to be very careful." Gave us water and them MREs [meals, ready-to-eat] and stuff like that. He said, "Larry, I'm worried to death about you." And we were living up here with his brother because our house was—you couldn't live in it. And we had generators, but you just couldn't—

L. Ryan: Well, gas, remember? We couldn't get no gas, so you was scared to run them, and only at night we'd run them to cool the kids down.

Scull-DeArmeY: Yeah, just when you had to have it.

S. Ryan: And then you hear all them horror stories of people getting shot over ice.

L. Ryan: There was five or six families of us, seven? In that one house.

S. Ryan: Well, there was me and you and the kids, Rammie, Marcine(?), and their kids, Edna and David, and their kids.

L. Ryan: And Larry, Lee(?) and Tony(?), they'd come once in a while. And then Judy(?) and Steven(?).

S. Ryan: There was about twenty or thirty people, living in their little three-bedroom, one-bath house.

L. Ryan: And we'd been a week without a bath. And you could start smelling us. (laughter) So me and my brother-in-law, I told him, "Let's go down to this river." And we got down there; they was another couple there, and that's what they was doing, taking baths in the river. So we was kind of waiting on them to get out because it was kind of like a boat ramp. They handed us soap and said, "It makes you feel so much better." So me and him went on in and took a bath. We come back and got all them, (laughter) and it looked like a bunch of mad people down there (laughter) in that river, taking a bath. But you did feel better, though, when you got out.

S. Ryan: And that other couple? We become really close friends with.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Samantha: It was freezing cold in that river.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

S. Ryan: Oh, it felt good after being hot all day, and the smell. You actually felt ten pounds lighter when you got out of that river, even though you had sticks from the river in your hair and all that.

L. Ryan: Well, we had a well, and I got the pump going on our house, the well pump, but they told us not to drink, take a bath, or nothing out of the water because it was—

S. Ryan: Contaminated.

L. Ryan: —contaminated so bad.

Scull-DeArme: So you were drinking bottled water.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

S. Ryan: That was hard to find, too.

L. Ryan: And it amazed me that that DMR officer (1:48:16.6) —of course I knowed him all my life. He'd come and check on us, and he'd bring us water, food, and he checked on us at least once a day every day. You could hear about—he'd come out there and check on us, and one day I remember him coming out there, and he said, "Larry," he said, "I know you and your family is having it tough," he said. But a bunch of officers and different ones had all got together, and they'd cooked pan pizza. And he brought us one, and that was so good, or it was just different or something.

S. Ryan: And I already told you about the story about her when that truck come by.

L. Ryan: I was grateful for that [pizza]. I truly was.

Scull-DeArme y: How did you get your boat back? (1:49:03.7)

L. Ryan: I didn't.

Scull-DeArme y: And get going again? I mean, a new boat?

L. Ryan: I had to go get another one. A friend of mine up in Vancleave, he had had an old, fiberglass boat—it was out there in the woods—that he was through with, hadn't used for years. And he told me if I—and I went up there and got it. In fact, I still got it till today. (phone rings) I'm still using it, and I had to do a little work to it and all, but that's how I got going back.

S. Ryan: It was about that much in leaves in it, and we had to clean out, but hey, beggars can't be choicy. And it's a good boat; it's seaworthy. I love that boat.

Scull-DeArme y: Are you still using it?

L. Ryan: Um-hm. Still using it today.

S. Ryan: You seen it out there. It's the big white one with the house on it. Him and my son built the house on it, and they are not carpenters. (laughter)

L. Ryan: But yeah, we went and dug it out and cleaned it out and fixed it up, and we've been using it.

S. Ryan: A few patches to make it watertight and stuff. And as far as a crab boat, that is one of the best crab boats that we have ever seen or used.

Samantha: It's just ugly.

S. Ryan: Yeah. It's just ugly, but looks don't feed you.

L. Ryan: The DMR did come in after Katrina. (1:50:29.2)

Scull-DeArme y: What came in after?

L. Ryan: The DMR. Was it a year, that they got a program going for us to transfer oysters from out of [west] Jackson County, east Harrison County, to carry to west Harrison County to replant oyster reefs. And they paid us to do that, and that helped us out.

S. Ryan: Yeah. It was a grant that the state of Mississippi got—

L. Ryan: —from FEMA or something. But anyway, they done good by us.

S. Ryan: They hired commercial fishermen to replant the oyster reefs, and like I said earlier, they started bouncing back after Katrina, and then the oil hit.

Scull-DeArmey: If you can, just for the record, just paint a picture of what that was like when you were getting the oysters and bringing them.

L. Ryan: OK. We'd go catch the oysters, and we carry them to a DMR boat, and we'd put them on it, and then they transferred them from off their boat, and they replanted them. They took them out of this area and put them in another area. And the reefs was coming back, growing back good. And on top of the oil spill, they opened the floodgates. (1:51:53.5) Was it in Louisiana?

S. Ryan: Yeah, in Louisiana.

L. Ryan: And all the freshwater come down, and see, on top of the oil, the freshwater killed your [oyster] reefs, again. And the best I heard, Mississippi DMR was trying to get another grant so they could redo it, again, which needs to be done. But now, they going to have to do some serious looking around because now you got your oil hitting from coastline to coastline, so you're liable to be taking them out of one bad place, trying to put them somewheres else.

Scull-DeArmey: What did you expect from your season, crabbing, before the oil spill? (1:52:39.2)

L. Ryan: Before the oil? I should have made around thirty or thirty-five thousand dollars, over my expenses, and I don't think we've even made eight thousand this year. Ten thousand?

S. Ryan: We only made like five hundred or a thousand for the month of February.

L. Ryan: So it's went down.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you know what your expenses would have been in a typical year?

L. Ryan: No. (laughter) Because it costs me right around a hundred ten dollars a day, each day I go crabbing. So when the crabs is down to forty and fifty cents a pound, I have to at least catch two boxes to pay my expenses. And if they up a little bit, then it's—so you have to average out, well, you averaging out about seven hundred dollars, between seven and eight hundred dollars a week to work. So you got to at least turn a thousand or twelve hundred dollars a week worth of profit for you to make anything. And it just ain't happened since the oil spill. It's just, I think we had a ticket the other day we looked at, and it was eleven thousand dollars, wasn't it, for eight months?

S. Ryan: Nine, I think it was.

L. Ryan: And that's including expenses and all. That was total.

S. Ryan: That's everything he sold.

L. Ryan: That's everything I sold.

S. Ryan: Before, this is before you take out—

L. Ryan: And that was about eight months.

S. Ryan: —your expenses and your deckhand.

Scull-DeArme y: What do you pay your deckhand?

L. Ryan: Lately, nothing. (laughter) But he generally makes a third.

S. Ryan: After you take your expenses off, and then you split it three ways. The boat gets a share, and Larry gets a share, and then Joshua gets a share.

Scull-DeArme y: Are they equal?

L. Ryan: Yeah. They all equal.

Scull-DeArme y: That's pretty generous. That's pretty generous.

L. Ryan: Yeah. Because I take one-third, and it's put back to repair the boat, anything that happens to the boat, buying your crab pots. That's what that's for.

S. Ryan: It's a decent living. Like I told you before, you're not the Rockefellers. You're not getting rich, but you are paying your bills, and—

L. Ryan: —feeding your family.

S. Ryan: —feeding your family, and every once in a while go out to eat, and go to a movie, or something like that.

Scull-DeArme y: You have some security where you can just enjoy your time together, like she [granddaughter] is such a pleasure to have around. (laughter)

Samantha: I appreciate you saying it. (laughter)

S. Ryan: That's number ten grandchild, right there.

Scull-DeArme y: Wow. (laughter) You guys don't look old enough to be grandparents.

S. Ryan: Oh, yeah. Let me tell you something. I was thirty-one when I become a grandmother, and he was thirty-eight.

L. Ryan: Yeah. Because there ain't but a couple more years to be honest—

S. Ryan: She'll be fifteen; Hailey, our oldest one will be fifteen this January.

L. Ryan: Couple more years, see, we can become great-grandparents.

Scull-DeArmey: That's right. Not too long.

L. Ryan: That's kind of scary.

S. Ryan: I'm supergluing her legs together. (laughter)

Samantha: That's scary.

S. Ryan: When we were told we were going to become grandparents, the way he told us, it was joking. My kids, all four of them, have a very strange sense of humor. (laughter) So when he told us, "Hey, Grandma. Hey, Grandpa," we were just, "Ha, ha, ha." You know? And I mean, he was sixteen. And then a month later we found out—that's our youngest son Joshua.

L. Ryan: He's the one that works with me.

Scull-DeArmey: Hi.

Joshua: We don't want to interrupt nothing.

L. Ryan: You can come in here. You ain't interrupting nothing. Come on in.

Scull-DeArmey: I'm interviewing your father and mother.

L. Ryan: Come on in.

S. Ryan: Come on in.

L. Ryan: They fine. They ain't going to bother us.

S. Ryan: That's the baby boy, and he's the one who is the deckhand.

Scull-DeArmey: Oh, great.

L. Ryan: Yeah. He's one of the sons that I told you that, out of the two, that's actually fishermen.

Scull-DeArme y: This thing is making noise, and I don't know why. Are you still working? Testing. It looks like it's still working. I'm going to turn my phone off because it just occurred to me that it's not turned off. When you were getting ready for that season before the oil spill, how did you prepare for it? (1:57:40.3)

L. Ryan: Just like we do every year.

Scull-DeArme y: OK. But for the record, for people who don't know what you do, what does that consist of?

L. Ryan: Well, we have to go put our crab traps overboard.

S. Ryan: Well, you buy them first and then put your tags in them. You have to mark your pots. You have to have a color of your corks.

L. Ryan: That's your float. That's on top of the water; tells you where your crab pots at.

S. Ryan: You have to go to the DMR and register a color that's your color for your boat, your crab pots.

L. Ryan: Then you go put them overboard, and you wait generally twenty-four hours because, say, if I get them overboard today at seven o'clock, I'll start running them between six and seven in the morning. And you let them fish all day and all night. So it's basically, what? And if you ain't got nothing when you get to them, then you move them out of one spot into another spot. You hunt. You got to go hunt them. You might have a few here, and then you got to move somewheres else, put some more, and then you work. And if you ain't catching nothing, then you pick them all back up, and you move them somewheres else, and you put them back overboard. And the next morning, if you get there, if you ain't got nothing, you got to pick them all back up again and move them again, somewheres else. So it's, it's (laughter) tough.

Scull-DeArme y: What thoughts did you have when you heard about the oil spill? (1:59:20.1)

L. Ryan: Sad because I was hoping that they could stop the oil leak before it got as bad as it did because our future and our kids' futures depend on our Gulf and our bay.

S. Ryan: The TV was never off, on CNN [Cable News Network], the news channels, watching the oil spill.

L. Ryan: Plenty prayers that they'd get it stopped and thankful when they did.

S. Ryan: I mean, we were rooting for them, every time they tried, when they went for the mud, when they went for everything.

Scull-DeArme y: Golf balls.

S. Ryan: Yeah. Everything that they tried, we're going, "Really? Well, I hope so."

L. Ryan: It broke my heart because we looking at our way of life being destroyed, and that's what's sad.

S. Ryan: Lot of tears, lot of prayers, and a lot of worries.

L. Ryan: Storms, hurricanes, we can rebuild and get over and go back to work, and it'll rebuild itself, but this is just something I don't know if we going to get over, or not, to be honest. I think our way of life may be in the balance. I feel like God only, his self, is going to help us on this one.

S. Ryan: Yeah. This is a unknown.

Scull-DeArme y: Did you have a chance to harvest before they closed the waters?

L. Ryan: Yeah. But it was short.

S. Ryan: Is that you a beeping?

Scull-DeArme y: Is there another phone over here that I might need—

L. Ryan: Yeah. It may be hers.

Scull-DeArme y: Oh, maybe it's this one. OK. Good, good, good.

L. Ryan: Yeah. We got to go shortly, (2:01:16.3) and then one day, the last day, we went out and made our catch, and DMR come, made us put it all back overboard. Said it was unsafe. And that's when they closed us out altogether for a while. And then BP was supposed to hired us to go to work, but we stayed out of work for a while. Didn't we?

S. Ryan: Um-hm.

L. Ryan: Before BP called us (2:01:47.2) to go to work. And then they worked us fourteen days. They laid us off for fourteen days, and I forget how many days they let us go back to work for. They laid us back off and was supposed to called us back, and we ain't never got called back, since. And then it was—you remember how many months went by before they let us go back to actually, to go back to work? It was a while before we could go back to work. And then finally they told us we could, but—

S. Ryan: Well, they also told us that if we used our boats in the oil spill that we couldn't use them to catch seafood, that they were going to buy us all new—

L. Ryan: Buy our boats out, (2:02:39.4) yeah.

S. Ryan: Buy our boats out so we could buy all-new rigs—

L. Ryan: On account of the oil.

S. Ryan: —because of the contamination, because of the toxicity of the oil and everything like that.

L. Ryan: But they didn't do that, either.

S. Ryan: Yeah. That was just—we had to go have our boats decontaminated.

Scull-DeArmey: Tell me about that. What did they do to decontaminate it?
(2:03:01.4)

L. Ryan: They just sprayed it down. I don't know what kind of chemical they used, but they just sprayed it down, outside, and kind of sent us on our way with it.

Scull-DeArmey: Did you have to pay for that?

L. Ryan: No. No, they paid for that. They had a thing set up to do it for you.

Scull-DeArmey: How did you find out about the opportunity to work for BP?
(2:03:25.9)

L. Ryan: On TV.

Scull-DeArmey: And how did you apply?

L. Ryan: I went to Ocean Springs and filled out a application at, I think it was a meeting in Ocean Springs that they held. And me and my oldest brother filled out a application through them to go to work, for them to hire the boats.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you think they implemented that program fairly? I think they called it Vessels of Opportunity. (2:03:59.6)

L. Ryan: Yeah. I really do in a way, and in a way I don't. And since I said the reason I don't, because they was a lot of recreation boats took the commercial boats' jobs because in the state of Mississippi you can go down and buy a commercial hook-and-line license; well, that makes you a commercial fisherman. And when the oil spill happened, a lot of your recreation fishermen went and bought the commercial license, and it threwed a lot of commercial fishermen out that they never hired. There was a

lot of boats, and they was a lot of people *with* jobs, got to go to work for the VOO [Vessels of Opportunity]. And the ones that really needed it didn't get to go. And we was blessed; we got a little bit of time, but they was a lot of fishermens that didn't, that set back on the sideline, and they watched boats (inaudible) as twelve foot long work in this VOO when they really didn't need to be working because they had jobs. When you had your shrimp boats and stuff that could have been working, that needed to work, they never got hired. So that's both ways.

Scull-DeArme y: So those recreational fishermen might have had other forty-hour-a-week jobs that they were—

L. Ryan: Oh, yeah. They did have.

S. Ryan: They did have. Yeah.

L. Ryan: Most of them would—

S. Ryan: They took off vacation because we spoke to them; they'd tell you.

L. Ryan: Either that, or they'd hire somebody to run their boats. They'd say, "Well, I'll get him to work my boats." So he's still working at a job. And I don't think that was right because their pay kept coming. These guys over here was out.

Scull-DeArme y: But he probably wasn't paying him as much as he was getting for the use of the boat, so he was still making money at his job and with his boat when you, the commercial fisherman, who have no other income—

L. Ryan: Right, no other income, couldn't work. I talked to Americans and Vietnamese that was out of Biloxi and Pass Christian said their boats never got called, and they watched these million-dollar yachts come in and out that was working. Well, people that's got that kind of money—

S. Ryan: But the yachts wouldn't actually get in the oil. When they found oil, they called a shrimp boat.

L. Ryan: To come in there, and they wouldn't put their boat in the oil.

S. Ryan: A commercial boat to go; they wouldn't carry them yachts into that oil.

L. Ryan: And they was making the same money the shrimp boats was. Like I said, the program was all right as far as what they done it for, but it was just people that stepped in that had jobs should have stayed back and let the people that really needed it, work. You know what I'm saying? And they didn't. They come in and—

S. Ryan: Oh, you'd hear them, "Oh, I'm going to get that free money."

L. Ryan: I couldn't fault BP because BP was hiring boats to clean up. I could fault BP for not straining them a little bit more. To me, instead of showing a commercial fishing license, you should have showed your income tax; 51 percent of your income come from seafood. (2:07:25.5) Then you'd have had your true fishermens working. And then if they still needed boats, hire them—

S. Ryan: Well, DMR should have stepped in, too: "These are the ones that are commercial boats," because they know who we are. They know who all the commercial boats are. They should have took it to the people who was hiring and said, "Look. These are the people who are out of work because of y'all. These are the ones that should be working."

L. Ryan: Yeah, right.

S. Ryan: OK. "You need more boats? Fine." That way you know that the commercial people was working and supporting their families.

Scull-DeArmey: Right. Have you gone through the claims process for lost income? (2:08:11.2)

S. Ryan: Um-hm.

L. Ryan: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: How did that work out for you?

L. Ryan: It didn't.

S. Ryan: He didn't get a dime.

L. Ryan: We didn't get nothing. My son didn't get nothing, and we still fighting over him because I brought check stubs, tickets and all, showed where he did work for me and where I did pay him, and they still denied him.

Scull-DeArmey: Did they tell you why?

L. Ryan: No. We never got no answer, and me and my wife went up there, and we talked to a lady, and she told us to write a letter to BP, so sad that it would have made them cry. I said, "Well, lady, the story I'm giving you is true, now. You ought to be crying, now." So we went on and hired a lawyer to try to get through with ours. We just wasn't getting nowhere.

S. Ryan: Yeah, because he is a commercial fisherman. That's what his job is. We shouldn't have to beg somebody to help him support his family. He's got a family, and it doesn't do me any good, because when you mess with the children, you mess with me. And I'm not going to put up with it.

L. Ryan: But I mean, BP, to me, was doing pretty good with the people. I say that, but when they turned it over to Feinberg, (2:09:42.4) to me, people got done pretty sorry. Feinberg caught people in a bind, and he offered him a little bit. Well, they going to take it. You know what I'm saying? Because they hurting for money.

Scull-DeArmey: But then that's all they get, right?

L. Ryan: Right. Yeah, they through now. They'll never get no more, and if our seafood industry is gone, well, then they just out, period. You know what I'm saying?

S. Ryan: And a lot of our good friends had to take the twenty-five thousand, and because they signed that paper, they can't get help anymore.

L. Ryan: It's sad.

Scull-DeArmey: But they were so desperate that it seemed like their only option, so it was *virtually* their only option. And they were bought out cheaply when BP could have really offered more than that.

L. Ryan: That's what we saying.

S. Ryan: Well, it wasn't BP; it was the Feinberg. And I think President Obama hired him. Wasn't it?

L. Ryan: Mm-mm. BP, I think, did. Didn't he?

S. Ryan: No. I think it was—

L. Ryan: I don't know.

Scull-DeArmey: I don't know, either.

L. Ryan: Whoever did. But you know they come on TV saying how many millions of dollars he was making every month, so naturally he's going to do and wait people out as long as he could because every day that he waits me out, that's that much more money he's making. And some of the guys that—

S. Ryan: And he was saving BP all this money. If you have a hundred people that deserve, just say, a hundred thousand dollars, but you can get them to settle for twenty-five thousand, yeah.

L. Ryan: But when the people would go up there and say, they made thirty thousand dollars for the year. They was supposed to paid them twice that, which would have been sixty. But the claims office told them, "Well, if you file it in like this, and we take out what we going to take out from you, you going to owe us." So they wouldn't

have got nothing. So therefore they just went back to take the twenty-five thousand because it was sure money. And it's hard to explain, but that's what it all boiled down to. If they'd have pursued to try to get anymore, they wouldn't have got nothing. So it was more or less, "You either take twenty-five thousand, or you ain't going to get nothing."

Scull-DeArme y: I know we've talked about this a little bit. I'm going to ask the question, again, just to see if there's anything that you want to add or just to reiterate it. As far as your catch, where do things stand for you now? (2:12:25.7)

L. Ryan: Right now, it stands critical. I just don't see it right now. Looking at it now, I don't see it getting no better; just getting worse. That's what I'm trying to see. It just ain't—but yeah, to me, I think the seafood industry is literally gone. And if it comes back, it'll be a surprise to me. I pray that it does, but I don't see it coming back until something else out there happens, either get the oil up, clean it up. But right now the seafood is, I figure is, what would you call it? It's just critical. That's all I can say, and I don't see it getting no better.

S. Ryan: The bottom is devastated.

L. Ryan: Yeah. That's what I'm trying to say.

S. Ryan: I mean, the bottom's dead, and we need the bottom.

L. Ryan: It's devastating.

Scull-DeArme y: You just answered a whole bunch of questions that were on [my list]. What do you see for the future? (2:13:51.7)

L. Ryan: Well, that's just it. I don't see no future. You know what I'm saying? I'm going to be honest. I don't.

S. Ryan: If they don't really get up the oil, there's nothing.

L. Ryan: Or something changes drastically, I don't see no future in the seafood. I get aggravated. I watch TV. I see these commercials come on; they saying, "Come to our Gulf Coast. It's better. It's clean." And it's not. And I just don't know how you could—I guess you'd pay somebody to get on TV to say that because if you know the real truth, it's not no better; it's worse. And it's getting worse. So I just don't really see no future. I see it getting worse. I pray it gets better, but I feel like it's going to get worse.

Scull-DeArme y: There are some bacteria that live in the Gulf of Mexico. They occur naturally. There are some natural seeps of oil in, I think, all of the oceans, and that's why this bacteria evolved over the years. And they actually eat the oil. They're oil-eating bacteria. So to me, I mean, there's some hope that the natural bacteria that are

already there can take care of it, and maybe if there's more oil to eat, they multiply faster, and there are more bacteria, and they eat more.

L. Ryan: Well, like I say, I don't know. I pray it gets better. I do. Now, my main concern about the oil being out there and its being in the Gulf, if we get another major storm like a Katrina, I say our shoreline's gone because if all that oil comes, pushes ashore on a tide surge like Katrina pushed before, I think you going to see your beach lines from coast to coast is going to be devastated. It's going to be—

S. Ryan: They had to have special training to clean up the oil, Haz-Mat and all that stuff, so it's toxic.

L. Ryan: That's my big concern, right there.

S. Ryan: So even the marshland that is so important to all your wildlife and even us, if they kill it, what's going to happen to that? What's going to happen to us? Because like I said, Katrina, the storm surge went six miles. OK. You have six miles, inshore, of oil. So I don't know.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, thank you so much.

S. Ryan: We're talking about the worst-case scenario.

L. Ryan: Yeah. Well, I mean, I pray every night that it'll get better.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

L. Ryan: But like I said before, God only knows what's going to happen out there, and leave it in his hands.

Scull-DeArmey: I just have a few more questions to ask you. We are starting a project on foodways, and so we've been asking everybody what their favorite seafood is. What's your favorite seafood? (2:17:22.8)

L. Ryan: Mine is mullet and oysters.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. And how do you like them prepared?

L. Ryan: Fried.

Scull-DeArmey: Both of them, fried.

L. Ryan: Yes. (laughter) Right. (laughter) Yeah, both of them fried.

Scull-DeArmey: What about you, Mrs. Ryan? What's your favorite?

S. Ryan: I like mullet and your bream and your shrimp.

Scull-DeArmey: Bream, now, there's one I haven't heard mentioned. So how do you like the bream prepared?

S. Ryan: Fried with some syrup.

Scull-DeArmey: Syrup? What kind of syrup?

S. Ryan: Any kind of syrup. You dip your fish in that syrup, and oh, it's heavenly.

Scull-DeArmey: Paint me a picture of frying bream. (laughter)

S. Ryan: OK. When you clean your fish, like you would any other fish, and then you season your cornmeal, salt, pepper, garlic, and you coat them. And then you fry them a golden brown. And a bream is small, so your pieces are only little, little pieces. So unfortunately, I can eat a lot of them. That and creamed potatoes, with a little extra butter in them, and I am set. I could eat that for days.

Scull-DeArmey: And you dip the bream in syrup?

S. Ryan: Um-hm. Well, I dip my mullet and my bream in syrup.

Scull-DeArmey: What, if you could have any syrup you wanted, what kind?

S. Ryan: Mrs. Butterworth's.

Scull-DeArmey: Mrs. Butterworth's, like a maple?

S. Ryan: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you like the shrimp prepared?

S. Ryan: Fried. Well, actually, however I get shrimp. I mean, there's no wrong way to—boiled, shrimp spaghetti, fried shrimp, steamed shrimp. Bozo Seafood has a wonderful way of preparing shrimp, and it's—

L. Ryan: —marinated?

S. Ryan: Yeah. I don't know what they put on it, but let me tell you. Oh! It's a little expensive because of the marinade; they marinate it. And it is so good. But like I said, you can't mess up shrimp.

Scull-DeArmey: This is the last question we always ask. Is there anything that we did not talk about that you would like to put on the record?

L. Ryan: No. I basically think we covered everything, other than I wish the people would learn the truth about the gillnets (2:19:59.2) where they outlawed us from our gillnets and took them away from us.

S. Ryan: To give them back.

L. Ryan: And if we could get them back, and then that'd be a blessing to a lot of fishermen.

S. Ryan: Yeah because fish can leave where the oil is at, and you can go out and catch a fish in uncontaminated water, where you can't other species.

L. Ryan: But that's about it.

Scull-DeArmeY: Well, thank you so much.

L. Ryan: Yes, ma'am.

Scull-DeArmeY: I'm going to turn this off.

L. Ryan: All right.

(end of interview)