

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

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Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Oscar and Helen Sanzin

Interviewer: Barbara Hester

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*An Oral History with Oscar and Helen Sanzin, Volume 1043*

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## Biography

Mr. Oscar Sanzin was born October 15, 1925, in Yugoslavia. When he was thirteen years old, the Nazis overran his hometown in Yugoslavia, destroying the town and killing its occupants. Sanzin escaped and served in the Resistance. He was later a prisoner of war in Germany, and he was taken to Africa in the hold of a ship as a slave laborer. He was liberated by the Americans, and he immigrated to the United States where he became a commercial fisherman on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. On June 22, 1950, in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, he married Helen Martin (born July 12, 1930). They have four children, Michael, James, David, and Cynthia. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Sanzin was forced to retire from commercial fishing after sustaining a back injury while he was clearing downed trees.

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AN ORAL HISTORY  
with  
OSCAR and HELEN SANZIN

*This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Oscar and Helen Sanzin and is taking place on November 15, 2011. The interviewer is Barbara Hester.*

**Oscar Sanzin:** Now, you have to ask me slow, you know?

**Hester:** Sure. If you don't hear me, you let me know, and I'll repeat the question.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** And if I ask you anything, and you say, "Well, I don't have any experience with that," or "I don't want to talk about that," or whatever you say—

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. I ain't got nothing to hide, not really.

**Hester:** And also if there's something that I'm not asking you that you would like to talk about, that maybe I just haven't thought about it, that would be great. So just feel free. This is very informal. It's not anything formal, at all.

**Oscar Sanzin:** What you really want to know, fishing industry. Right?

**Hester:** That's right, but you tell your story because your story has more to it than just fishing. So if you want to repeat what you told me before we started, and put it on the tape, we'll transcribe it for you. You'll have a record to give to your family, or if you would like to confine it, it's up to you.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I don't have nobody left in Yugoslavia but my nephews—

**Helen Sanzin:** Niece.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Niece. I never see them.

**Hester:** Yeah. But you might want to leave it to your children and your grandchildren. It's up to you.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, I never tell nobody nothing.

**Hester:** Well, this might be your opportunity. Would you like to tell your story, again, from when you were born in Yugoslavia and how you got to Linz(?) and how you got to Gulfport? Would you like to get into that, again?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well—

**Hester:** All right. Let me go ahead and introduce us and get started officially, and then I'll ask for your name and your address and all those things, and then we'll do a history, an oral history? OK? All right.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Now, listen. How long this going to take?

**Hester:** Well, it can take as long as you want. Usually they take about an hour and a half.

**Oscar Sanzin:** At two o'clock I got to shave. At two o'clock I got to be by Dr. Bombay from India.

**Helen Sanzin:** Tell her about your fishing. That's mostly what she's interested in.

**Oscar Sanzin:** OK. Well, you just tell me, and I'll answer you.

**Hester:** OK. So I'm going to go ahead and introduce us. I'm Barbara Hester with the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage from The University of Southern Mississippi. I'm here today with Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Sanzin. Ma'am, I didn't get your first name.

**Helen Sanzin:** Helen.

**Hester:** Helen. Helen and Oscar Sanzin at their home at [the address of the interviewees has not been transcribed in order to protect their privacy]. Today is Tuesday, December 20, 2011. Thank you so much for having me in your home, Mr. and Mrs. Sanzin. Before we get started with taking the story, would you give me your name and address for the record?

**Oscar Sanzin:** My name is Oscar Sanzin, and I live at [the address of the interviewees has not been transcribed in order to protect their privacy].

**Hester:** May I ask how old you are, Mr. Sanzin. May I ask your age?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, eighty-six, I was.

**Hester:** The last interviewee in Bayou La Batre, actually in Coden, was eighty-six years old.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I'll be darned. What was his name?

**Hester:** His name was Milton Zirlott.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, I'll be. Yeah, I know him.

**Hester:** You know him?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Hester:** Oh, is that right?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. He used to have a boat.

**Hester:** Yes. He did. He did. He sure did.

**Oscar Sanzin:** But he don't fish no more.

**Hester:** No. He doesn't.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That's right. Matter of fact, let me see. I used to go to Landry's Shipyard, all my boats in Bayou La Batre, you know. And they haul them up and clean my bottom and this and that and the other. Yeah.

**Hester:** At Landry Boat—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, at Landry Shipyard.

**Hester:** Shipyard, uh-huh.

**Oscar Sanzin:** He used to go there.

**Hester:** Is that right?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** And that's how you knew him was through the (inaudible).

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, I know him. I know his brothers.

**Hester:** Well, I'm going to contact some of his family.

**Oscar Sanzin:** OK. Go ahead. You ask me—

**Hester:** OK. Good. What is your occupation, or what was your occupation? I understand you're retired. (0:05:47.0)



**Oscar Sanzin:** Fishing, shrimping.

**Hester:** Shrimping.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That's right.

**Hester:** When did you start?

**Oscar Sanzin:** In 1950.

**Hester:** And how did you start in 1950?

**Oscar Sanzin:** I went down on the beach. I walked down—no. I catch the trolley from Gulfport to Biloxi, you know the trolley car. And I come, and I stopped at DeJean Packing Company. That was the name of the place; was a factory. And I went over there to the boat, and John Ross, there was a Mr. John Ross. He had a bunch of sons, and he was fishing all his life, too. And the name of the boat I went, talked to him, it was *Mary Margaret*.

**Hester:** *Mary Margaret*?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. *Mary Margaret*, the boat. And he was the captain. And I couldn't speak much English. And I said I was looking for a job. And he give me a job. And I went on the *Mary Margaret* with the man, John Ross.

**Hester:** John Ross.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** Do you know if Mr. Ross is still alive?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, no. He died many years ago. Yeah. His sons, they all dead but one, I think. You see, Eley is his [nephew].

**Hester:** Eley Ross.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Eley Ross.

**Hester:** I have heard of Eley Ross.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Oh, I—

**Hester:** I interviewed his cousin, Earl Ross.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. I know all the Rosses.

**Hester:** Is that right?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Every one of them.

**Hester:** Oh, my goodness.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Bayou La Batre Coast and—

**Helen Sanzin:** He worked with Eley for a long time.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. No. I work with Ernest Ross on the *Johnny O'Keefe*.

**Helen Sanzin:** You worked with Eley out of Bayou La Batre.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Never Eley. Ross, John Ross. I mean, listen to me. Ernest Ross, the one that cut his leg off on a winch. Remember he used to hop, all the time? That's who I work, not Eley. Eley had the *Lenora*(?). I never work with him, but we friends. Then we fish for years together. Not me, my own boats and him.

**Hester:** I see.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I know all the Rosses, Edmond and you name it, all of them.

**Hester:** Is that right?

**Helen Sanzin:** And you worked for Talsavoo(?). You were on a boat for Talsavoo.

**Hester:** How do you spell that name?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. Elsie D. Taltavoo(?).

**Helen Sanzin:** I have no idea.

**Hester:** How do you spell that?

**Helen Sanzin:** I have no idea.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Taltavoo, he—

**Hester:** Could you say it again?

**Oscar Sanzin:** He had about—

**Helen Sanzin:** Taltavoo.

**Hester:** Taltavoo?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, that's Frenchman. They had a factory, Miss Jane, his daughter, in around the LCT(?) (inaudible) four or five years, maybe? Yeah. And he's Frenchman. He had forty-seven boats. Yeah. I can name them all.

**Hester:** When did his business close because I haven't heard of him?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, he die in 19—Miss Jane died not too long ago, his daughter, run the factory.

**Helen Sanzin:** You worked with Miss Jane for several years, and then you bought the *W.J. Moody*(?) yourself.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, one of his boats I bought.

**Helen Sanzin:** You don't have a picture up here, do you?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Let me answer what she say. What she ask me?

**Helen Sanzin:** He started with his own boat with the *W.J. Moody*.

**Hester:** OK. What year did you start with your own boat?

**Oscar Sanzin:** In [19]56, [19]55? I start with my own boat about five years later. Yeah. I bought from Avery Toups(?), yeah.

**Hester:** Avery Toups?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. He was another fisherman around there.

**Hester:** What type of fishing did you do when you started with DeJean?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Shrimping.

**Hester:** Shrimping. And then when you bought your own boat, did you do the shrimping?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Shrimping.

**Hester:** Did you do any other kind of fishing?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yes.

**Hester:** Did you do oystering? (0:10:57.7)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. Not much, but I did oyster, (inaudible) oysters, tong oysters, all kinds of work with oysters. I built my own skiff, (inaudible) with my own hands.

**Helen Sanzin:** You croaker fished.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Then I croaker fished, cat food. (phone rings) I unload once a week, and I averaged to catch about fifty ton a week.

**Hester:** Fifty tons?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Ton, yeah.

**Hester:** Tons, T, tons, like weight.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Tons. Yeah. I would unload at a factory in Gulfport and Biloxi. They make cat food out of it. And I used to crab, catch crabs, trawl for crabs, cages for crabs, all in fishing.

**Hester:** Well, can you tell me the type of equipment you used for each type of fishing that you did?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Nets.

**Hester:** Nets for all of them?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, not for all of it. Cages was out of wire, (0:12:09.8) like they use in Alaska. We set them out and empty them once or twice a day. That's crabbing. But fish I catch; I use, I put twenty-five, thirty ton of ice on the boat. (0:12:35.3) And we catch, some day, twenty, thirty ton a day, some day. Sometime it take us five days to catch, but I usually bring around fifty ton a week. Every job was, every week that many because for so many boats. We could catch more, but we was scheduled, the factory work. (0:13:00.7)

**Hester:** How would you schedule it? How would you handle that?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, we went out, say, like on Monday. And we have certain days to come in. Say, like I usually unload on Friday.

**Hester:** How long would you go out at a time, generally?

**Oscar Sanzin:** How long? Oh, fishing, I don't know; three to four days, croaker fishing.

**Hester:** Did you ever go out with him, Ms. Sanzin?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. She went with me.

**Helen Sanzin:** I went with him on the *Moody* one night, out here, and it got dark. I didn't know where I was or nothing. I said, "Dear Lord, when I get home, I'm going to stay home." (laughter)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, gets rough, you know. We fish in some terrible weather, so bad.

**Helen Sanzin:** And I couldn't tell where I was. (laughter)

**Oscar Sanzin:** It got so bad sometime, the Coast Guard can come get them; it was so bad out there. (0:14:05.3) We fish all over the place out there, coral reefs in different places. She went, yeah, one night. That's about it, huh? That's all you went?

**Helen Sanzin:** That's it.

**Hester:** That's it. Wow.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** On the *W.J. Moody*.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I fished down in Louisiana, all over, Dolch(?), Alabama, all over down there.

**Hester:** Did you go into Florida?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, sometimes, almost (inaudible), yeah, Port St. Joe and down there, all the way down almost the Keys, and all the way the other way to Galveston, Texas, or further, all the way down to Matagorda Bay, (inaudible) down there. We would fish the coast. I fished the coast of Louisiana pretty heavy several years. Several years.

**Hester:** And what type of fishing would you do? I mean, is this all the croaker fishing and oystering and shrimping from Texas to Florida, or just to shrimp you went that far?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Mostly shrimp. When oystering, it was off Pass Christian, the reefs.

**Helen Sanzin:** But with your boats, honey, you shrimped—

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. With my big boats, I shrimped. That boat there was eighty-seven. (0:15:34.5)

**Hester:** When you say eighty-seven, you're talking about—

**Oscar Sanzin:** —length.

**Hester:** The length, eighty-seven feet, uh-huh.

**Oscar Sanzin:** The big one was ninety-one. Yeah.

**Hester:** Maybe I can take some pictures of these pictures you have on your wall when we're finished with the interview.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** That would be great.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I had different size of boats.

**Hester:** When you went out oystering, did you take a boat like the one that we're looking at?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, no, no, no.

**Hester:** What kind of boat would you take then?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, when I worked for Caruso(?), it was about fifty foot, shallow draft. That big boat's draw between seven and a half and eight foot of water, eight and a half feet draft. You know? Now, the oyster boat, the most she'll draw, five foot, down to four foot because oysters are so shallow, shallow reefs. Oysters is not in deep water too much.

**Hester:** So you had two boats then? You had two boats then for your own use, or you were doing it with Mr. Caruso?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oystering?

**Hester:** Yes.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, with a skiff we oystered. It draws seven, eight inches (inaudible). Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** Honey?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Huh?

**Helen Sanzin:** Start with your boats. The *W.J. Moody* shrimped. You didn't do no oystering.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, not with—

**Helen Sanzin:** And I can't remember—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Me and—

**Helen Sanzin:** He'd sell a boat and buy a bigger one until he got up to—

**Oscar Sanzin:** —big boats.

**Hester:** The big boats, yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** And then when you would crab, you would use the little skiffs, as well?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, no. When we used to—I bought the *Cynthia Maria*. You remember on Port St. Joe, me and David went down there, and I bought that we catch crabs with that one, cages. We set them out every so many hundred feet, one, a hundred feet, another one, just like catch lobsters up there.

**Hester:** I see.

**Oscar Sanzin:** But your crabs, see—

**Helen Sanzin:** But, baby, your main thing with shrimping—

**Oscar Sanzin:** In the summer, yeah.

**Hester:** How did that work during the seasons? What type of fish would you catch, and what season of the year?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, when we croaker fish, all the fish. Just no big sharks, (0:18:07.5) we throw away and big stingrays and great, big manta rays and stuff like that, you see. We dump them on deck, and on deck we had plates, brass plates, and we unscrew them. And we push them down, and the man that's down below, shovel ice on it in a big place that holds fifteen, twenty tons. And he was throwing ice, steady in it. And all the big fish, we slide them overboard through the scupper holes. They couldn't use them.

**Hester:** Well, when you went fishing for croaker, did you catch—I realize you catch things that you're throwing away, but would you catch shrimp at the same time, or was that a different time of year?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. We didn't stop where there was no fish. We tested. We had a try-net, a small, which every fifteen, twenty minutes, we pick up. When it's too many crabs, we had to move away, or it's too many big catfish. We didn't want them

because the cat food, they didn't want too many catfish in it. It's a croaker; it's a white trout; there's a ground mullet; there's a mecko(?) minnows; there's all kinds of fish. (0:19:43.5)

**Hester:** I never heard that last one.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Mecko minnows.

**Hester:** I never heard that before. Mecko minnows?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. It's a fish kind of shiny, real pretty. You can pinch the head off and fry them and eat them. Yeah. They so many of them; sometime we could catch five, six ton in an hour. Yeah. And croakers, they was plenty, plenty. And all fish was pretty heavy. Years ago, we couldn't shrimp for the fish, yeah, before they open up all the cat food plants. We were so many fish. We couldn't drag thirty, forty minutes. We have to pick up, catch the shrimp; was shrimp in it, but the fish was plenty thick in this Gulf.

**Hester:** Is that right? How has that changed? Over the course of your career, how did that change?

**Oscar Sanzin:** What, the fish?

**Hester:** Uh-huh.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Overfishing, (0:20:46.9) then they build the big boats; they haul three hundred ton, five hundred ton. And they fill them boats up in three, four days, with that many fish. That was *tremendous* amount of fish.

**Hester:** So they couldn't reproduce fast enough?

**Helen Sanzin:** They had a cat food—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Cat food in Biloxi, cat food in Gulfport, cat food in Pascagoula, cat food in—(0:21:15.3)

**Helen Sanzin:** They took fish only. They took fish only.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Only fish.

**Helen Sanzin:** What shrimp y'all saved, you (inaudible).

**Oscar Sanzin:** We had to pick them out on the bill, you see. When they sort the fish out with a pump, and there's a long conveyer, and they put so many ladies on or so many men, and take all the shrimp out because when they grind them up, I don't



know. It was some kind of a horn the shrimp got, or something, that they didn't want to cut up so good.

**Hester:** So what would they do with the shrimp?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, sell it.

**Hester:** Oh, they would sell it?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. They throw it out, put it in a box, on side. You remember? And take them to the shrimp factory—

**Hester:** Got you.

**Oscar Sanzin:** —with a truck.

**Hester:** Was there a particular type of shrimp that you caught?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, the size? The what? The little, the big?

**Hester:** The type?

**Oscar Sanzin:** The type. (0:22:22.9 ) Coppers, brownie, white shrimp, different type of shrimp, yeah.

**Hester:** And you caught all of them?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yes. Yes, of course.

**Hester:** Could you catch all of them here, off the Coast of Mississippi, or did you have to go to different places to get different types?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. The shrimp was pretty well all over, different. White shrimp, this year, too, there's plenty big, white shrimp. And then as the season go, progresses, when the Northerners start coming, the shrimp shrink, and they get down to forty, fifty, eighty to the pound, hundred to the pound, or ten to the pound. See, different type of season, different shrimp, just like in May, June, July was plenty medium shrimp, like a thirty-one/thirty-five, or they got from a hundred and twenty down to ten to the pound.

**Hester:** Ten is a pretty big shrimp? A ten would be a pretty big shrimp.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Ten to the pound?

**Hester:** Uh-huh.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Well, yes, ma'am, because, whew, we catch—sometime you just get a school of big shrimp, and there's nothing but big shrimp. It depends where you at, how deep, how shallow. And then I never went out there in three hundred feet, four hundred feet, actually shrimping. They tried, but everything tangle up.

(0:24:11.6) You see, the current, every so many feet, changes. People think you go down to—we used to go to eighty foot, ninety foot, a hundred foot, but then the currents are so bad, everything come tangle up all the time, (0:24:34.1) and (inaudible) they out there from a hundred on out to three hundred feet. But too expensive to—I don't know how to say it, but that was not too profitable. See, Jim Tillman(?) tried. You probably heard his name.

**Hester:** No. I don't think I have. Say it.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Tillman.

**Hester:** Terman?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Tearman(?).

**Hester:** Tearman, OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. He passed away. His sons are still living, some of them.

**Hester:** Do they fish? Do his sons fish?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. They fish, yeah. Yeah, but no—

**Helen Sanzin:** They did at one time, I know. I don't know if they (inaudible).

**Oscar Sanzin:** Some of them quit. Some of them went to Jehovah's Witness, and they different religion, and they—I go to this church down here, Baptist. What? Fifty years now almost?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah. He made his last trip a-shrimping just before the hurricane. And—

**Hester:** Just before Katrina. So you retired in 2005, right before [Hurricane] Katrina? (0:26:00.5)

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. The day before, I fish out in the Gulf. I come into the river for the hurricane, and one day I come home (inaudible), and here we lost lots and lots of trees. In [Hurricane] Georges, we had stumps grind up. A hundred and nine trees I lost here.

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, honey, she's wanting stuff that—she's talking about shrimping now. You—

**Hester:** No. This is fine. No. He can cover—

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, he took his boat and—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, we going on a shrimping deal.

**Hester:** Well, we were talking about when you retired.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, oh, retired?

**Hester:** Yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, after I fall off the tree here—

**Hester:** OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I had a big chicken yard, and the big tree blow down, and it laid over in a (inaudible), broke the fences. But the chickens went up these limbs, and chicken went down there in the swamp; he never come back. And I come home one day; they was all gone. And I grabbed the chain saw, and I run up this tree to cut them limbs off and going to drag with my tractor out to burn them. And I had my leather shoes on, and I slip, and I flip down, off the tree. And I fall (0:27:30.6) long on my back.

**Hester:** Oh, my goodness.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. And every since I'm kind of—

**Helen Sanzin:** When he come in for the hurricane, though, he put his shrimp boat back here on the seaway.

**Oscar Sanzin:** In the canal.

**Hester:** Uh-huh, to protect it.

**Helen Sanzin:** Boat back over the seaway.

**Oscar Sanzin:** There was hundreds of boats out there.

**Helen Sanzin:** And you had to go way down to—

**Oscar Sanzin:** I couldn't go to—the (inaudible) took on my boat.

**Helen Sanzin:** And his son would have to go for him, and he was working. He went to work right after the hurricane, so he was working. So Oscar sold the boat—

**Hester:** I see.

**Helen Sanzin:** —to get rid of it, and he hasn't shrimped since.

**Hester:** Who did you sell the boat to? (0:28:12.8)

**Oscar Sanzin:** A Vietnamese, believe it or not. Yeah.

**Hester:** So it's probably still plying the waters out there.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I don't know. The lady I sold it to, they tell me down in Pass Christian, somebody bought it; never come back, the boat. Matter of fact, I don't believe they ever shrimped with it. I don't know anymore.

**Helen Sanzin:** I don't think she ever moved it.

**Oscar Sanzin:** But I got a picture in there. That was a small boat, sixty-five by twenty, yeah. I got that when—

**Hester:** I'm not real clear on the boats. Could you just take me forward? The first boat that you bought was, (0:28:57.3) how long was it?

**Oscar Sanzin:** How long ago?

**Hester:** No. How long was the boat? That was the thirty-seven-foot boat?

**Oscar Sanzin:** That was small boat. First one was a thirty-seven-and-a-half-foot-long.

**Hester:** OK. And can you say what kind of boat it was?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Kind?

**Hester:** How would you describe it?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Biloxi logger.

**Hester:** A Biloxi logger.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. That's the name of the boat.

**Hester:** Where was it made? Do you know?

**Oscar Sanzin:** The name was *W.J. Moody*.

**Hester:** OK. The name—

**Helen Sanzin:** He doesn't know where it was made. You don't know where it was built?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah, yeah. In Biloxi.

**Helen Sanzin:** It was built in Biloxi?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yes. Right there at West Garden(?). Yeah. Bourgois(?).

**Helen Sanzin:** He's had so many boats till I don't know which one's which.

**Oscar Sanzin:** About thirty—

**Hester:** And he sold this to you? He sold that thirty-seven-and-a-half-foot boat to you?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, I traded in for a bigger one. I done this. I done that. As I went along, a thirty-foot boat couldn't carry but five, six, seven, eight ton, and it was the capacity. And then I went croaker fishing. I got a bigger one, then, seventy-foot; then eighty-foot; then ninety-foot; then just different type of boats and—

**Hester:** So how many all together? How many have you owned, I mean, over the course of your career?

**Oscar Sanzin:** How many? Boats?

**Hester:** Um-hm.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I don't know how many.

**Helen Sanzin:** This boat we had built out towards (inaudible).

**Hester:** And you're pointing to the picture on the wall.

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That was a eighty-seven foot.

**Helen Sanzin:** He didn't like the steel boat.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, I didn't.

**Helen Sanzin:** So he let his son run it.

**Oscar Sanzin:** My son.

**Helen Sanzin:** Michael.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Michael.

**Helen Sanzin:** And he bought another wood boat.

**Hester:** What didn't you like about the steel boat? (0:31:03.2)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, so many years on the water, and steel don't give any. And your body—I don't know. It's just, it got different feeling, different motion. Steel boat don't give any, at all, and I'm used to them boats kind of wiggle. You stop in any kind of weather. We just dropped anchor and go to sleep and wake up and fish some more, but steel boat's got a different feeling, different. But all my sons say that, too. They didn't like steel boats. No.

**Helen Sanzin:** Our oldest son learned it for quite a few years.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. I run, the first eight and a half years, I run it when it was brand-new, but they never change, the steel boat. Once you move it, wooden boat kind of crawl on the sea more. I don't know. Different feelings. You got to be an old fisherman to know. Like a skiff, you never get tired. On a steel boat, you get so tired because nothing gives, and you got to be with it all the time. Before you know, most of them get bad knees and bad back, and I only run that one—but you see that looks little. But that's pretty big.

**Hester:** And is that a wooden boat? Is that a wooden boat, the one on the wall?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, steel.

**Hester:** That one's steel. OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Steel boat.

**Hester:** What's the name of that boat?

**Oscar Sanzin:** *Helen and Oscar.*

**Hester:** *Helen and Oscar.*

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. That's what I named it, her name and mine.

**Hester:** Well, which type of boat would require the most maintenance, the wooden boat or the steel boat? What type of boat, for you, required the most maintenance? (0:33:22.6)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Wooden boat. Wooden boat, I don't know. You never get tired on it. Steel boat—

**Helen Sanzin:** No, honey. Which requires the most maintenance, most work on it?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Maintenance?

**Hester:** Maintenance.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Steel boat because it start rusting. You have to chip it, and you got to metal coat it. You got to prime it. A wooden boat, you pass a sander and put a fresh coat on it; that's it.

**Hester:** It's ready to go.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And it stay. And if you keep it once a year, haul it, maybe two years, and it lasts forever. Steel boat—

**Helen Sanzin:** You had to cork the bottom of it. You don't have to cork a steel boat, but a wood boat, you had to cork the—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, cork it because every couple of years you had to cork it.

**Hester:** Which was most expensive to keep up?

**Oscar Sanzin:** To build?

**Hester:** To maintain?

**Oscar Sanzin:** I don't know. I'll say steel boat is more expensive because the wooden, the logs, they used to go down Louisiana swamp; it's all cypress. (0:34:47.4) Otherwise don't last no time. Pure, red cypress. And that big one, that ninety-one-footer, that was mahogany, Honduras mahogany, and it was built two inches outside and two inches inside, whole inches of wood thick, double frame, double—

**Hester:** Pretty sturdy.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. And (inaudible) steel.

**Helen Sanzin:** Isn't this the last one you had made?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. That's the little one, huh?

**Helen Sanzin:** Is that the last boat you had?

**Hester:** The *Tina Marie*?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** Yeah. I'd like to take a picture of this when we're finished the interview. That's the last boat you had. OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That's the last one.

**Hester:** Is this where the shrimp nets, this extension here, is that where the shrimp nets—

**Oscar Sanzin:** That's all nylon.

**Hester:** It's nylon nets?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Pure nylon.

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah, but where—she's asking where the shrimp nets are.

**Hester:** Does this swing the net out, here?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. You see the two boards? (0:36:03.3) This is the doors. You stuck them out with a winch. You untie them, and you put the winch on it and come into here and to here. They hanging out yonder. These things, and that was sixty-five foot long, the booms. And this net here, when you let it out, it'll open up. These doors open the nets. Net's got a chain on the bottom, and these boards here, got a one-inch thick steel on a shoe, eight inches wide, one inch thick that bring the (inaudible) chain like a kite. When the wind catch a kite, it'll go. And these boards here, they open the nets sixty, seventy—that boat out there's pulling eighty-five foot nets, eighty-five foot across. That's how much.

**Hester:** How far down, how deep do they extend? How deep do the nets go down?

**Oscar Sanzin:** All the way to the bottom.

**Hester:** Is that right?

**Oscar Sanzin:** They drag on the bottom. They got to be pulling; then got a big stainless steel tickler chain in the front. That aggravates the shrimp. Shrimp trying to go up, and when the net passes, it catches. But these nets, that one, I pull four sixties, a hundred and twenty foot wide on each side the boat. You know what I'm talking?

**Hester:** Yeah. Yeah, I do. I do.

**Oscar Sanzin:** They open up, up to sixty-five to eighty foot, eighty-five foot wide.



**Hester:** How long do you leave them open before you close them and—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Three (inaudible). There's the catch. It's a little try-net. (0:37:50.7) Every twenty minutes, you got to look at it. You never stop. It come up, and you look what you got. You might have a hundred pound of fish. (phone ringing) You better pick up right away because you get two, three, four, five, ten tons. You see, I pull my boats; I painted every two years. I run sixteen years; I run that boat.

**Hester:** Wow. That's amazing. What did you call this? A board?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Booms.

**Hester:** Oh, the booms, OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, booms. You see that thing falls out.

**Hester:** Yeah. OK. So what's the most that those nets'll carry? What weight is the maximum weight that the nets will carry?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Carry? How much can go in there?

**Hester:** How much can go in there?

**Oscar Sanzin:** The bags hold twenty ton.

**Hester:** Twenty tons.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. If you fish that many. The bags is big, two hundred meshes. Real heavy webbing, it don't tear, that nylon. When you pick up, you got the blocks on the top would be triple and double, three-to-one (inaudible). And when you get two ton, it just like it pick up a hundred pounds. You see? And this boat here draw eight and a half foot of water. It's eight and a half foot down deep.

**Hester:** Yeah. I understand.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And that big one, it's one with seventy-two-inch wheel, seventy-two inches tall, wheel, propeller. The propeller weighed fourteen hundred pounds. Oh, yeah. Five-inch shaft, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Hester:** That's amazing.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That boat there, the last ones they built that size, they run close to a million dollars. (0:40:11.0) Yeah.

**Hester:** Did you have a crew? Did you go out with a crew? How many people worked with you on the boat?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Just three of us. Everything worked with the winch. You don't pick up nothing, not even the little try-net. We got a winch because by hands you can't pick up nothing.

**Hester:** When you first started out, did you have to go by hand.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That was a little different. We got to get into that so I can explain. We had winders on there (0:40:46.5) for the try-net. No winches like that, but then we had a winch for our big nets because this boat here, as you call it, twelve foot; that one was twelve foot long and eight foot high. And it weighed about—one door weighs about twelve, fourteen hundred pound, alone.

**Hester:** Now, this is the word that I didn't understand. You call it a boar?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Boards, yeah, the one I open. (0:41:25.8)

**Hester:** Oh, the doors?

**Oscar Sanzin:** You see? They gather up, and soon they touch the water—

**Hester:** They open up, the doors. OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** You keep open, and you just go fast. You speed up to seven, eight mile an hour, and they just open. And the winch has wheels on. And there's such a pressure on it that when it slack out, it holds the tension on it, and that opens. And when it gets close to stop, we just tighten up. We had a wheel up there; the brakes is real big, now, on them boats, and you just tighten it. In case we hit something, a wreck, another boat or something, so it don't tear up everything, she starts sliding. So we slow the engine down and pick it up. They was pretty well designed. That winch, that McElroy(?) Machine Shop built it, (0:42:31.1) and I believe the winch alone cost forty-two thousand on the big boat.

**Hester:** Uh-huh. And what machine shop?

**Oscar Sanzin:** McElroy.

**Hester:** McElroy, uh-huh.

**Oscar Sanzin:** McElroy Machine Shop. Yeah. It's still in business. They up here. They up here, McElroy Machine Shop.

**Hester:** In Gulfport?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** It's real complicated because the boat, itself, is built by shipyards, and then you have to go to these other places to put what they call the winch on—

**Oscar Sanzin:** All different things, like radar, like radio, like fathom-meters, like oh, so much, so complicated, so much stuff, pumps, automatic pilot, so different things, like—I don't know. It's so complicated. It's not just build a boat, and that's it. That—

**Hester:** I understand. You have go to through—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Boat is just—

**Helen Sanzin:** But if you buy one already built, most of that stuff is already on it.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** I see.

**Helen Sanzin:** This one here that he had built; he had to put all of it on it.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** When you started out, did you do—when you first started fishing—

**Oscar Sanzin:** We didn't have nothing, just a compass. We didn't have any tech, no fathom-meter, no show you how deep. We (inaudible) sink, (0:44:14.7) throw out, and measure, and we count the knots, see how much water was under us. And it was altogether different. When we start, we didn't have all them luxury, and no radios to call home. Now, you can talk to my son, wherever he's at; you can talk to him. Before we—

**Hester:** You didn't have those radios.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Nothing, nothing. No equipment.

**Helen Sanzin:** Did they have anything to run in a fog?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. We run in a fog. We run on everything.

**Helen Sanzin:** But now—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Radar.

**Helen Sanzin:** Radar to run in a fog.

**Oscar Sanzin:** See them up here, radars?

**Hester:** Yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That one, see them up there, on the house, everything? Everything. You put that machine on and—

**Helen Sanzin:** It's like everything else. The further they go, the more equipment they've got to have.

**Oscar Sanzin:** They require.

**Hester:** Sure, sure. I understand.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. First radar I bought was cabin-used from England, and Bill put it on. And Caveneuse(?).

**Hester:** Caveneuse?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Caveneuse, yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** And (inaudible) on this boat, isn't it, honey?

**Oscar Sanzin:** They built in England.

**Helen Sanzin:** Honey, that was on this boat.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** He put all the electronics on the boat for you, and you built it.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** What is the first advancement that you remember that you bought for the boat that helped, that made your job easier? What was the first advancement?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Advance?

**Hester:** Was it the radio?

**Helen Sanzin:** Radar.

**Hester:** The radar was the—

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. You remember when Red Louis(?) come over here, and I talked on the radio because I got a letter from Black Sea, Russia, from when we talked, was

kidding to Michael, was planning a garden and talking on the radio. And they sent me to—they got to cut out. The thing was—

**Helen Sanzin:** But what was the first advancement you got on the boat?

**Oscar Sanzin:** What do you mean, advance?

**Hester:** What was the first piece of equipment?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, winch.

**Hester:** The winch. OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, to pull the nets in. Used to pull by hand, yeah. They didn't have no winches, (0:47:05.3) no nothing. They had the nets with the big bag, and they surrounded, and so many peoples pulling the nets at the beach, and then pull the boat alongside and scooping shrimp. They didn't have nothing like that.

**Hester:** And people would be on the beach?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, pulling the nets.

**Hester:** Pulling the nets.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** That's interesting.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, the first, the very first. You tested for the shrimp; we had that little brill net, one they cast? Throw it, and pull it up, and look. Two, three shrimp? There was some shrimp there. Yeah. That was the first.

**Hester:** And what was the next piece of equipment that came that made your job easier?

**Oscar Sanzin:** The nets?

**Helen Sanzin:** No.

**Hester:** Any piece of equipment on the boat. What was the next piece of equipment that made your job easier?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, the next. I don't know.

**Helen Sanzin:** Next equipment that made it more easy?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. The winch.

**Hester:** After the winch?

**Oscar Sanzin:** After the winch, let me see. The winch was the main thing first. Then they bought the rack to bring the nets in. They put it on a scoop, the shrimp on the boat. Block and tackle. You see the things up there to pick up the bag, pull her up, and put on the winch on the (inaudible), they call it. And then trip it and just drop it on deck. Didn't have to scoop it no more all day long. You make one drag, and that take half a day, especially if you're not careful; get too many fish. If you don't want to turn loose everything, you maybe have two, three, four hundred pound of shrimp and two, three ton of fish. You have to pick shrimp one-by-one, out. Yeah. And then next—oh, radio come till later on, radio waves.

**Hester:** When did that piece of equipment come? When did that happen, about what year?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Radios?

**Hester:** Well, yeah. Let's start with the radios. About when did you get the radios? (0:49:31.1)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Bill build me one. You remember? Radio. He build me that big radio on the *Moody*. See, Miss Jane just stop by, and some of them little, they call them Mickey Mouse—no. Them little radios, you know? But we used to talk long way, like two hundred mile. Yeah. But they was nothing. They was just a cheap, little box, just a little, bitty box like that.

**Hester:** And about what year did you get that?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Hm. Around [19]60, something like that, huh? Yeah.

**Hester:** And what about the pulley that brought the net up?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Block and tackles?

**Hester:** The block and tackles, yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. About the same time, I think, like that.

**Hester:** And what about the winch?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, the winches, they start building them in Biloxi. They called them McElroy winch; then they called—

**Helen Sanzin:** When, though, honey? When?

**Hester:** When?

**Oscar Sanzin:** When I started.

**Hester:** About 1950?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Winches, they start putting them on the boat around [19]50, yeah, or a little before maybe because some of them, they already had when I went on the boats. Yeah.

**Hester:** Did you always fish for the different types of fishing? From the start, did you do the oystering and the shrimping and the croaking? Did you do all of these types? Crabbing? Did you do all of these from the start, or did you start doing one particular type of fishing, and then—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, the oysters was kind of old-timer, (0:51:31.6) like Chesapeake up there in—

**Hester:** Chesapeake?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. They started (inaudible). Then they moved down, and all the factory men down there build them little cabins, (0:51:46.4) and they put people in it. They call it, Tallavue (inaudible) and Bill Caruso(?) had them. And Southern Shell had them.

**Hester:** What's the first one that had them? Tallavue?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Tallavue, yeah. And they had these little houses. They bring them down from different sections of America, and they have to clean all the shrimp by hand. (0:52:12.2) And oysters, they all open them by hand. And then they invent the steam boxes. They steam them and can them. (0:52:23.1) They just put them in, and a lot of steam. And they open them, and the ladies take them out with the knife. And then they can them, and stuff like that. Every time they can some shrimp, they have to clean everything by hand. Each factory had maybe sixty, maybe a hundred ladies come with the buckets. And the peelings, they gave them a quarter for a bucket or ten cents, and all day long, she might make three, four, five dollars. I remember Southern Shell, they was good money then. When you go to the store, I was smoking Pall Mall [Cigarettes], then. And them cigarettes cost a nickel and a penny for a pack, Pall Mall. And if you buy in a carton, it was ninety cents a carton or eighty cents a carton, a little less.

**Hester:** Big difference now.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**Hester:** I've been hearing—

**Helen Sanzin:** Everything is.

**Hester:** Everything is.

**Oscar Sanzin:** About the fuel, we got some letters over there, when we first starting was four cents a gallon, four cents. (0:53:46.8)

**Hester:** Four cents a gallon.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Still had some.

**Hester:** That, the fishermen that I've spoken with have said that the biggest problem that they're having now, one of the biggest problems that they're having now, is the cost of fuel.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah, four dollars, \$3.75 a gallon. And like that boat there burns twenty-eight gallons an hour. Oh, yeah. Every hour, turn over twenty-eight time. Yeah. I bought, and I took a—when Jim Martin(?), they give me a thousand gallon at the shipyard when they built it; go try out the engine. We put thousand gallons, set the compass and do this and do that, and there's a lot of things you got to do. And they brought it down and (inaudible), they put that on the boat, four cents a gallon; I remember. Then it went up to six cents a gallon, and like that. And when the fuel got to twenty cents a gallon, they said, "We can't make it no more." One two-hundred-ten-pound was one barrel. And I could shrimp for twelve dollar a barrel, two hundred ten pound for twelve dollar. Yes, yes. And then when the fuel went up just a little bit, eleven cents a gallon, but the shrimp jump up to two and three dollar a [pound], much more now. And now it's \$3.50, \$3.75. Look, like that big boat there, when we went to the station, if we work any amount, (inaudible) seven, eight thousand gallons; it was just replace what we burned that trip. We burn up to twelve thousand gallons in about ten clocks; ten days and nights, it was gone, two hundred and fifty to five hundred gallons, twenty-four hours. Oh, yeah. We go in to refuel. Yeah, the fuel was high. Fifty cents a gallon, then, whew, you would complain a lot. And right now, just like it was this last year, fifteen, twenty, I never went down there, but down the stand, they only give them \$1.10 for twenty-one/twenty-five.

**Helen Sanzin:** The big shrimp.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Big shrimp.

**Hester:** I hear that farm-raised shrimp and imported shrimp has created a lot of competition that has brought the price down.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That was just phooey, just so they can steal so much. (0:57:04.1)  
Japanese for shrimp, bring them here and work them; you sell them as American.



They no good, and they paid them more than they pay fishermen. Yes, ma'am. That boat there, we catch quite a few shrimp, and the price was—we broke the heads on them for ninety a pound, tails. And now they want to give you a dollar and a half.

**Helen Sanzin:** Now, with the fuel being so much, you can't make it (0:57:53.2) shrimping.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Ken Fortenberry(?) was working. He come see me a little bit. He said, "Oscar, it takes ten days now, pay for the fuel." (inaudible) gas, and they ain't giving nothing to them, \$1.60 a pound for ten/fifteens. It just almost unbelievable.

**Helen Sanzin:** But that's just like everything else.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah, everything costs the same thing.

**Helen Sanzin:** They get from overseas. It's cheaper than it's made in America. I see—

**Oscar Sanzin:** You go ahead and ask me something, something different.

**Hester:** OK. Why don't you tell me about regulations? How have the regulations changed? (0:58:45.4)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, Lord! That's unbelievable.

**Hester:** Can you describe that?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Just like the turtle trap [turtle excluder device, TED], excluder they call it. (0:58:57.6) You went into that with somebody else?

**Hester:** Yes. Some people have talked about the TEDs.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. They almost ruin you. Any little thing that gets in there, a limb—see, we got them nets wide. A whole tree, almost, get in, and still save the drag. But now, that little hole, something blocks, a sack or something, and everything goes out. You drag two hours; you pick up; you didn't go over ten pounds in it. Then the man, they catch you without it, they hang you, almost. And that was all useless.

**Hester:** How long did you use the TEDs?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Quite a few years. Man, we suffer with that. And it's unbelievable how much shrimp we lost. Even bunch of crabs. You catch a bushel of crab on the try-net, you better pick up, shake out all that. They just block, them balls. We just rake out all them crabs out. Nothing in it. Nothing. Just flip-flop out there.

**Hester:** Did you ever catch any turtles?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Really and truly, we only caught some, but not what they call it, them people want to save. Other country they just kill them for fun, eat them. And we never done that. We always turn them loose. But yeah, we caught some, but nothing where they was advertising and do (inaudible). They brought them here at night. I better not go into that because it was so much fighting with them, and then womans come up north. I don't know where they was from. They—

**Hester:** Was it a meeting?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Ooh! Meeting after meeting, fighting and this and that. They almost ruin us. Yeah, you maybe drag two hour and pick up; you didn't have ten pound in it. When, according to the try-net, you know shrimp (inaudible) five, six hundred pound. Nothing. They just, when they blocks them bars, I got one out there in the yard, one of them excluders.

**Hester:** Do you?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, a little one.

**Hester:** I'd like to see it. I've never seen one.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, it's out there under my carport. There was some down there in the barn, and I give it away to some fishermen. They still got to pull them. It most unbelievable.

**Hester:** What about other regulations?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, they had so many regulations, it almost unbelievable. That thing got to be set, and we buy a clock, to certain degrees, or they give you a fine. Something (inaudible) that throws it out, you don't even know on there, underwater. "Oh, this ain't right. This ain't right." They make you go home. They make you this. They make you that.

**Hester:** I don't understand about the meter. Can you explain that some more? Can you explain the meter some more? I don't understand.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I got some out there.

**Helen Sanzin:** The meter for what? The depth?

**Hester:** Well, what he's talking about, about the—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, we have to put it when the net is down in the water that it stands up like that. If it's like this, they scared—so the turtle can just go right straight on

through. When they get caught in net, he just go down in the funnel like that, whoop, out on top of the net.

**Hester:** Is that part of the TEDs?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. If you sew it inside the net, where all your shrimp go down in the tail before it gets in the tail, it shoots everything out. And any little thing that you catch, that blocks them bars—see, them bars was only three and a half inches across and blocks it; everything went straight out. And they didn't save a single shrimp.

**Hester:** What about gillnetting? Did that affect you at all, gillnets or the change from gillnets?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Gillnets, no. That's different. Gillnet is you feed them off the stern the boat, little boats, that they call for gillnets.

**Hester:** But you didn't use that when you did croakering?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, no. No, no, no, no. I never fish with that kind of nets. That was, again—they just set them out, and they pull the net in. They hit, gill the net, and they just take it back on the stern, the skiff. And they take the fish out, but that's different altogether.

**Hester:** OK. What about limits on your catch? When did they start placing limits on the—

**Oscar Sanzin:** On what?

**Hester:** On your catch?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No limit. I never had no limit. Whatever you can catch, after they choke you down this and that. No, no. No limits. My son took the big boat. Sometime it depends on the weather, really and truly. Sometime if it's so rough, if fishing too shallow, undercurrent just takes everything out. (1:05:13.5) Like I say, it depend. Right after big blow, a big norther or cold weather or so, you go out a little deep water, in the still water, you catch better. Sometime you don't catch nothing. Fishing, it's a tough life. People just don't understand.

**Hester:** If you had a choice, if you could go back, would you do it, again?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Right now? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I love it. It take me six years now since I fish, since [Hurricane] Katrina, a little over six years. And just like it's unbelievable how hard it is after you do fifty, sixty years.

**Hester:** To give it up.

**Oscar Sanzin:** It's just, you know everything, the tides. You know this. You know that. You know the weather. How much degrees weather change, you got to change positions. You can't go fish the same place. Every time it has to be different, different, different, different, different.

**Helen Sanzin:** None of our boys get any shrimp anymore. They work for the oil company.

**Hester:** Oh, they do? OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** It's unbelievable. Some people say they think you just throw the nets overboard, fill them up, and come home. It's funny. See, sometime you go two, three days, we don't even find a sign of shrimp. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. You say, "Why you down there so long? How come?" You never know what Nature—it's all Nature. Yeah. And shrimp is real, real funny. It may be one shrimp here, twenty boats tried, and never see a sign, and one come along behind us and fill up their nets. I know what they do, you see. Me and a fellow by the name of Red Louis, we experiment. (1:07:32.1) I made a box like a apple crate and cover with a wire and make slots in it. I wonder where they go when they disappear, and we put us some mud in it, and we bury and put a can of dog food, punch a bunch of holes. They love to eat, shrimp, like that. And we put them cans in it, and we pull it underwater. Nothing, nothing, nothing. Soon as it gets dark, whew, the cage is almost full. They go in there, but they all hide in that mud down there. You see, we drag at night, the hoppers they call it, with the little pink. It wouldn't be one there. Soon it gets dark, the cage, there's two hundred in that cage.

**Hester:** Isn't that something? So they come out at night?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. They come out of that mud. The bottom, we sometime anchor behind the Chandeleur Islands with this real clear water, and you can see little holes in the ground kindly. But you got to be experimental that many years, then when you see them holes, if you hold a stick, and you stare at something—you split a stick, like bamboo. And you shove it down that mud and you twist it, and the whiskers get tangled up, and you pick up, and there's some shrimp. See. They down there, when they nothing around.

**Hester:** Well, after you did that experiment, how did you change your fishing habits?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Nothing. Just got to wait for the weather to change. Dark. Soon the sun going down, the first test, the try-net come up with two hundred. Before you can pull it ten times, not even one. Then it's two hundred. And then we put the nets out.

**Hester:** So it became more efficient after your experiment. You became more efficient.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, we tried everything. Tried to put the tickler chain closer. We trying to do this. We trying to do that. We improve all the time. One time—

**Helen Sanzin:** What they call hoppers, you catch them at night.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, only.

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah, only at night.

**Hester:** Only at night.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, hoppers.

**Helen Sanzin:** Now, white shrimp, though, you can catch in the daytime.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** It's a season for all of that. (1:10:18.6)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, season, yeah. That's right.

**Hester:** Interesting.

**Helen Sanzin:** It's a certain time for shrimp, some seasons and some—now, wintertime, mostly is white shrimp season.

**Oscar Sanzin:** In August on up until now. Now they—

**Helen Sanzin:** And then they call them brownies, that you can catch them day or night, most of the time.

**Hester:** And what season would be good for the brownies? What season?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, June, July, August.

**Helen Sanzin:** Summertime.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Summertime. You see, when the certain grasses start coming in, in the Gulf, we pick up the try-net, and you shake that grass, and you're all white, and you'll see it's a little, bitty shrimp, white-looking. It's all shrimp. And you pull it close, and you see it. And then three days later, four days, they about like that.

**Hester:** What's that? About two inches or an inch, something like that?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, like that. And next week they'll be forty/fifty already, about like that shrimp.

**Hester:** They grow that fast?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yes, ma'am. They sure do. They spawn—so I've been told—four time, like one shrimp, they might have a million.

**Hester:** And how many survive? How many, do you think, survive of the million?

**Oscar Sanzin:** I do not know, but I know when we start see that white stuff, when it brush our slicker suits down, when it get a little cold, can get wet too much, and you can gather them up on your clothes, (inaudible) shrimp. (inaudible) white.

**Hester:** Isn't that something?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. You can put them on the sun; you can see he's got little legs on and everything.

**Hester:** Isn't that something?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** And what time of year is that?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, different type of shrimp, different time.

**Hester:** They spawn at different times of year.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** Well, I've heard the term nymphs. Is that a nymph? Would that be considered a nymph? I've heard the term, the word nymph. Is that little shrimp like you're talking about, do they call that nymphs?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, like larva? Yeah. No. You see, that's what I was telling you, that white-looking thing, and they hop all over, like rain on top of the water, when you pick the (inaudible) up, you shake it, we would be full of it. Yeah, they let take, yeah—

**Hester:** Could you tell me how the wetlands have changed? Have you noticed over the course of your career the changes in the wetlands? (1:13:30.5)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Weather?

**Hester:** Wetlands. The wetlands.

**Helen Sanzin:** The shrimping grounds.

**Hester:** The grounds, yes. (phone rings)

**Oscar Sanzin:** How they change?

**Hester:** How have they changed?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, some places you can never catch a shrimp, they there now. I do not know exactly, but I used to be up to all that. If the wind come, a northeast wind, you got to go another place. When the north wind, you got to reverse it; go the other place; look for them. And everything you do, you got the knowledge. You got, like the Old Man Ross, his daddy used to tell him, “Ain’t no use to go out today.” And when I was little boy he told me—he die at ninety-two about thirty-five years ago almost. His daddy used to tell him (inaudible) he says to one of his sons, he said, “Put another rope on the dock.” And he was right. If you go out there, you couldn’t find a shrimp if you dying. And next morning, weather changes different, Ross say, “Hurry up, now. We’ll miss them.” There they were.

**Hester:** Isn’t that something?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Hester:** You get to know the environment and when is the most productive time.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yes, ma’am. Yes. That so funny, just like fish. We used to go catch some fish (inaudible) slow down where last year, last week, we caught a load in two days, fifty ton, sixty ton. And sure enough, it was (inaudible) when the current run so swift, the fish (inaudible) at kind of an angle, and it just takes them away. And then when—that’s Nature. Like birds, you go out there in the woods, the tree is full of them. Last week or two, you didn’t see a single bird. They here, but where they go? Same thing. Ain’t no difference. That’s another water out there (inaudible). That’s funny, but what they used to tell that fellow in Bayou La Batre? What did he tell you? About the same?

**Hester:** Milton Zirlott you’re talking about?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** Yeah. He did. He talked about the different types of shrimp, and he talked about how he fished a long time himself. And so he—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Zirlott up there, he used to be another man I used to—he broke down one time out there, and I lend him some tools off the boat, a whole box of tools, and I didn’t see him no more about twenty years. And one day we went and get some planks to put on the boat. Meantime, he built a shipyard. And I walk in there. Somebody called me, “Hey, Oscar.” Turn around, and I say—(laughter) He say, “I

still got your tools.” Every one of them he had. Every one. See, we used to lend one another a net, anything, cost five thousand dollars, we still lend to one another, everything. And he—

**Helen Sanzin:** The fishermen was always good to help one another. (1:17:41.3)

**Hester:** I can see that.

**Helen Sanzin:** Oh, yeah, anything, anything. I told them already all day and all night, out of the way cost Helen and Oscar their buggy, worse than it was sunk. It did sunk on a bar. I almost lost the boat, too. Michael, one happened to get it, and to the last drop, we helped one another. Was no (inaudible). I already was home already, and he called me seven, eight, nine, ten hour backwards, say, “I’m broke down.” I went and get him, and we didn’t even blink eye, just turn around. We went and get them, bring them back. We used to do one another. Yes.

**Hester:** Do you stay in touch now? Do you talk to each other now? Do you keep in contact?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, they’re mostly dead. See, they ain’t many left, my fishing days, starting days, now. No. They—how can I say? Like Mitchell(?) die not long ago. What? Four, five years ago. No? And Rudy(?)—

**Helen Sanzin:** Rudy’s still living. We don’t never hear from him.

**Hester:** Is that Rudy Lesso?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, no. Rudy Lesso’s (inaudible), he had a factory. No. That’s other Rudy. Rudy Rowe(?), and he had *Lady M*(?), and we broke a net. We all stop, and we all jump on it and fix it, put it back together, maybe ten of us, or either we stop; they eat supper or something, jump to another boat and do everything one another. Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** They were all good to help one another, all the fishermen.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. All the fishermen, yeah.

**Hester:** I have got to ask this. What is your favorite seafood dish? What is your favorite?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Fish?

**Hester:** What is your favorite seafood dish?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Ground mullet.

**Hester:** Ground mullet.



**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** How would you fix it?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Just fry it, any kind of way. Ground mullet is my favorite fish of all the fish. Preacher across the street used to like sturgeon, the one that make the caviar. And I used to bring them. You remember?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah, for Christmas, we're going to have it at my son's house, going to have shrimp gumbo, shrimp and crabmeat.

**Hester:** Oh, that's good.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And that's my favorite fish, honest, just small ground mullet, chop his head, skin him, one or two slabs in a little flour, little pepper and little salt and roll it in there, and hot grease, like a doughnut, throw it in there. Yeah. That's it. Oh, I love them. I still miss them. My son David, he always said, "Ground mullet is the best fish in the water." Yeah. Well, after you spend fifty, sixty years, that's—we used to run in the thick fog. I mean, we going and coming, just when in close places like Back Bay, them bridges and this and that and narrow channel in two feet of water out there, and just a little pass. Sometime we get messed up little bit, blown, but otherwise we never blink and eye to go in fog. (1:21:51.8)

**Hester:** What is the worst weather you've been in? (1:21:55.6)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Ooh, real bad, real bad, real bad. I broke down with that boat and was coming home. Maxwell(?) towed me, was a big fisherman, and he broke, I don't know how many rope we broke; it was such a big sea. Pretty bad, sixty-, seventy-mile winds or maybe more. We didn't pay no mind to it, too much. No. We trawl in some bad weather, now, real bad. Sometime we didn't have no time to run nowhere. It was too far; when we get there, the weather be over with. And when we left Cameron, oh, say, about three hundred mile down the road, and before we got to the Empire(?) Canal, we left, about ten of us, Robert Bignolian(?), Robert Corbin(?) and all them. And we come as high as ten hours difference in port. It was so bad. Some boat was better sea boats, just like that boat, there. That was a sea boat out of this world, or that big boat I had. Where is the picture of the big boat?

**Helen Sanzin:** I don't know where it is. I've got to look all that stuff up. I've got it stored somewhere, but I don't know just where, but I got to look that all up and put it all together for the (inaudible) when they grow up.

**Oscar Sanzin:** You see, the boat, if it's built properly, way the old-timers built it, it was no ending. But if they didn't know how to build them, it didn't want to steer, want to go around it; they want to go in circles. When the old-timer built that boat, the right length, the right width, the right everything, they just, there's no ending.

(1:24:20.3) It used to blow so bad that the sea cover the pilothouse, was pretty high. They just went slap under the ocean, slap under, and come the other side up and just keep going. I mean, covered completely. Yeah. Oh, yeah, completely under.

**Helen Sanzin:** You see why I didn't go. The night that I went, it wasn't blowing or anything. But I couldn't see where I was. I couldn't tell where I was.

**Hester:** So there weren't any lights on the boat?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah. There's lights on the boat, but underneath the water, you don't—

**Hester:** Oh, with the water, you couldn't—yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** So when I got home, I didn't go back.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. No. Oh, yeah, we got lights all over the boat, yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** Some of the wives fished with their husbands.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I had enough power that I can light ten houses.

**Hester:** Is that right?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. I had my own generator, a big—well, not so big, but I can light ten houses, refrigerator, everything, air-conditioners, everything,(inaudible). Oh, yeah, yeah. But that's because not used to. Day or night, it don't make no difference.

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, it was light on the boat, honey, but not out in the water.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, no, no, nothing, no, nothing.

**Helen Sanzin:** You couldn't tell where you was out in the water.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** Wow. What do you see as the future of commercial fishing, now?  
(1:25:58.0)

**Oscar Sanzin:** It's no more because just like if you be potato-raiser, if it costs you to produce a hundred pound potatoes, say, three hundred dollars, who's going to give you three hundred dollars for? The same thing with shrimping, same thing with fishing. They run it to the ground. Vietnamese come, instead of like oysters, they kill all the oysters. They drag; they plow up; they put overboard them dredges, and they drag it two, three hour, and they just cover them up. They (inaudible) them. We used to go just touch the bottom and get the good oysters. Same thing for shrimping. They

go out there, and they drag and drag and drag, and they get black, and they get ruined. They throw them overboard. And they just like animals. They don't have no respect for nothing. We used to, before we shovel overboard, if we see one shrimp out there, we pick it up. We was real particular. They don't care about nothing, nothing.

**Helen Sanzin:** We was selling our shrimp off the dock in Gulfport, and a man come and looked at our shrimp, and he didn't buy them. He went to a Vietnamese and bought some shrimp. About an hour later, he come back to buy some of our shrimp, and David wouldn't sell them to him. He said those shrimp he had to throw away. They didn't take care of their shrimp. You know how they turned black—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Nothing, nothing.

**Helen Sanzin:** —when they're old and all?

**Oscar Sanzin:** They was running black water, a lot of them. We give them just like life, just—

**Helen Sanzin:** But they were selling them cheaper than the Americans on the pier so they could get the business. So we always sold most—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Y'all know it's raining out there?

**Helen Sanzin:** We sold most of our shrimp to people we know.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Customers, they come from all over, all the way Liberty, Louisiana, up to Wiggins. They come from Tennessee, from all over. They come. They still asking about me and our shrimp.

**Helen Sanzin:** When he's going to be in, and they would come get their shrimp.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Soon as we catch them, (1:28:42.4) we pick them out, pick them, and we put in a basket, and put some ice. We chill them, you see, in the hot summer. And that ice melt in them with water, and they put them down there, just as cool as the ice melt, cooler because the ice melts through, and we put them down. They look like gold when you take them. They just let them stay on deck there two, three, four hours, and they put it down hot; they got hot spots in it. And they red and trying to sell that to people. Used to come there in some—I don't know where it was. And they say my shrimp, they old. They look at my shrimp, and what they say? “Oh, my God.” They say, “They beautiful.” I used to take care of real cautious. That mean everything to me. (1:29:43.1)

**Helen Sanzin:** He iced his shrimp down good and took good care of them where some people didn't. We sold every—he'd stay out, now, three or four days. And the oldest shrimp, he didn't sell to people, just the fresher ones.

**Oscar Sanzin:** The rest of it I sold to canning factory. They don't care. Yeah, I always—man, they come. Mr. Bill, how many years he bought with me? Ten, fifteen, twenty. He just—

**Helen Sanzin:** A lot of people bought every year from you.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** So you mostly sold to individuals, or did you sell to wholesalers as well?

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, he sold to factories, but they started selling shrimp off the docks, and he sold.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I had my building out there, too. She sells some. I used to bring them home the fresh shrimp. They come and bought it, but we know you can only fool a person one time, and then they turn them back on you.

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, most of our shrimp was sold to people we knew.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. They waiting for me when I come home. They line up, down there. I see fifty of them, waiting. Isn't that the truth?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** That's nice because when you come in, you know you have a buyer.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**Hester:** Yeah. That's nice.

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, you could sell them at the factory, but you could get more for them selling them individually.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** Did you sell them—did you say you had a place on the property here, where you're living now, where you sold them, as well?

**Helen Sanzin:** We had a little seafood market here.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Right there.

**Hester:** Oh, right down the—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. That building out there.

**Helen Sanzin:** Right next to us.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I had my own ice machine unit. Had a freezer in the back. You see a crab; when you catch them, you want to sell them live (1:31:55.5) to the people. You get in a tub, and you put just a little water, and you put them in there, and it stuns them. And you take them out a week later, it just swims away again.

**Hester:** Isn't that something?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Oh, yeah. And shrimp is the same way. When they still kicking, they still jumping, we catch them right away, and we chill them real good, put them down. When you break them down, people see them, say, "Well, you caught them last night?" (inaudible) Huh?

**Helen Sanzin:** But this oil spill has ruined a lot of the shrimping around here. (1:32:37.8)

**Hester:** What has?

**Helen Sanzin:** That oil spill.

**Hester:** Oh, the oil spill. I was going to ask you about that.

**Oscar Sanzin:** You better ask me something because—what time is it now?

**Hester:** I've got twenty-five after twelve.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, at two o'clock I got to find the place; it's a fellow from India, and he, six months ago, and he called last night?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** To come back at two o'clock at Memorial Hospital, but I got to shave. But now, let's—

**Hester:** I don't want to keep you.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, no, no. It's all right.

**Hester:** But let's talk about—

**Oscar Sanzin:** I don't mind.

**Helen Sanzin:** But listen. She wants to ask you.

**Hester:** Yeah. If you would, there are three more things that I would like to talk about. First of all, I would like for you to tell a little bit about your history because when people listen to the tape, they're going to detect your Yugoslavian accent, and so would you just tell us on the tape, now—you told me before we started. But tell us now, on the tape, where you're from and a little bit about your background. (1:33:49.8)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, you asking me something seventy years ago, and I haven't been back. And that's a long time ago. And when I grow up, my folks was, raised a lot of grapes, and they sell the wine, like people from San Antonio and them places, they went over there, to that country, and they married, and they come, stop here and talk to me. My brother had a dugout, they call it. And he had mugs there. Each man had his own mug up on the walls, and they come drink the wine they're selling. And I was a little boy, and it happened (inaudible) I was loving to plant some trees and things like that. And the war went on when I was twelve. And when Hitler take the Yugoslavia, and he was going to kill everybody and say, "We are the God." I guess you know that. And they (inaudible). And they going to kill everybody, animals, cut the trees down. They going to destroy it. (1:35:30.6) And my daddy want to put me away; I was too young for him. I say, "No." I was fourteen, not quite, like a month or so, whatever it was. And I want volunteer; not just me, my brothers, my daddy, everybody, my sister. She was operated. She was blow up, or something, too. And I was taken prisoner. They took us, and they send us into Germany, but now, I start in the wrong way, but I was just a little boy, just like normal little boy. But I was helping Daddy plant everything. That's why I love to plant stuff here in (inaudible), graft things. And I go hunting for Mother, killing ducks, killing different things, what she needed, what she asked, fish. We didn't fish like we fish here.

**Hester:** They weren't commercial fishermen?

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, no. We had a river running by, and we had a house down there, where we make our own flour, mill. There was a big wheel down there in the river, and we turned so much water on the peddles, and it turned, and there's stones inside. For corn you put one grade, for flour different, for fine flour for make doughnuts and stuff, different, and so on. Their own mill, iron saw to make lumber and stuff. And was my brother and my sister and me and my mother and my grandfather, Tony, my mother's daddy, and he was in World War I. And he come home, and he got froze, and he lost his hearing then from cold weather up there in Old Austria, we called it. And so anyway, they took me away, and they put me on the train, and they kept me into Germany. Over there, they mostly kill most of the people, but me, I was healthy and full of energy wherever I was. They send us into Africa in the bottom of the ship, as slaves. (1:38:34.7) And then we was liberated in 1942. So almost three years of it. But home, we lived normal life, just like everybody. (1:38:47.5) We cut wood for the fire. We make our own flour. We make our own wine, our own vinegar out of grapes. Everything our own. Just one thing we didn't have, salt. Daddy—oh, it's raining pretty good. Daddy used to go—

**Helen Sanzin:** But honey, she's wanting to know where—

**Hester:** This is—

**Oscar Sanzin:** What?

**Hester:** No. This is good. Yeah. Go ahead.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, and we, on Friday we eat fish. We'd eat rabbits. We eat everything the Nature produced, but also we eat pigs. We kill pigs and make sausage. We make bacon and hams. We had a smokehouse and stuff like that. But the house was a mountain (inaudible). And my daddy's daddy before, they dig in this mountain. And the lake froze pretty deep, three-, four-foot-thick ice. And I don't know how to explain you can understand. We cut slabs of ice ten-, twenty-foot long with wedges, crack it, and take a team and pull in a cave and have ice year-round.

**Hester:** Interesting.

**Oscar Sanzin:** We keep it with sawdust and big doors with a little door to get in like a icebox, just walking in. And every year we added. Some ice was ten years old in there. It never melted all, half of it. And we lived like that until slipping away.

**Hester:** And can you kind of give an idea of where your home was located?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. OK. I got some pictures of the mountains. You can see pure mountains, and we live in the valley, kind of. We raise plenty grapes, plenty cherries. There'd be snow behind the mountain, yet behind the house, in the front, strawberries is ripe, kindly. It's cold but no wind, not that type of cold. We get used to. It was a river, running, but I don't know how far up, a long way, a big waterfall, just about twelve mile back up in the mountains. We see big waterfall. It's in the picture, falling down, real tall.

**Hester:** Sounds beautiful.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Some people live alongside, and I didn't go to school because it was bad. My brother went to school. I was the baby one. And I don't know (inaudible) just what they tell me there. And we didn't have no big excitement or nothing. We lived normal life and good life. We never were hungry. They produce everything, like peaches, like figs. When she baked bread, she take two, three bushel of figs off the trees, and she cook them enough that they dry completely. You mix them, big sugar, sprinkle on and put on (inaudible) and put it in the salad. Make sausage out of pigs and different things. We live good, plenty to eat, until war come along.

**Hester:** You said it was close to Trieste?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, the big city.

**Hester:** Somewhere.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Vienna was pretty close, too, and Capodistria, they call it, Koper, pretty close, and there was four or five little villages throwed under the mountains. Up top, first snow hits up and around, you see; Grandfather said, “Tomorrow be snowing here.” And Tony, he can’t hear too good, either. And sure enough, it did. And we didn’t have no problem with nobody until all that come along, but World War I was a little different, (1:43:34.3) what he tells me. I know all about it. He used to tell me over and over. But it was nothing like this war was. This one was with plenty force, with plenty killing. World War I wasn’t like that. It was kind of similar, but they didn’t have as much equipment.

**Hester:** It’s different.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And when I was taken away, then I have to go along whatever they say.

**Hester:** And then you came to this country. You told me you came through Linz, and then you came to this country about 1950.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yes, ma’am.

**Hester:** And a family on the Coast sponsored you. And their name was?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Norris(?).

**Hester:** Norris, Norris. And they sponsored you, and then you went into commercial fishing.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, right after. Yeah, yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** He’d married me before—

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, we got married, you see.

**Hester:** Before the fishing, yeah, yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** He worked with his—he called him—dad, with him on air conditioners and all, but we married in [19]61.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No, [19]50.

**Helen Sanzin:** Fifty?



**Oscar Sanzin:** We got married.

**Helen Sanzin:** And then he went into fishing after we married.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, before [19]60 we was married, be sixty-two years in July.

**Helen Sanzin:** We was married sixty-one years.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, in July, June.

**Helen Sanzin:** June.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, June, yeah, the twelfth.

**Hester:** Well, congratulations. That's wonderful.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And that's a short time. Now, it'll be sixty-two now, this year.

**Hester:** Ms. Sanzin mentioned that when you were coming into this area, when you were first coming to this country, and you were sailing in, you saw shrimp boats, and—(end of digital track one, part one; beginning of digital track one, part two) OK. I think we're good to go now. I changed the battery. It was getting—

**Oscar Sanzin:** OK. What do you want to know?

**Hester:** OK. We were talking about Hurricane Katrina.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** You did tell me about the tree incident, and you sold the boat then. So I guess maybe you've explained the conclusion of your occupation, your commercial fishing with the hurricane. Your wife mentioned something about the oil spill. Can you talk any about either your experience with the oil spill, or what you've learned from your friends?

**Helen Sanzin:** He wasn't, he didn't fish after the hurricane.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I did not go back. I couldn't go on the boat, and my boat, it was by the bank. And the bank got a (inaudible) to go down and another lighter from the bow, go up. And I couldn't go. My boat didn't—my son have to go and bump her out or do something. So I didn't have anything to do. I didn't know what's going on out there. Just like right now, I stumble; I fall, get hurt. And I don't know what happened to me. Before—she can tell you; anybody can tell you—was no end in me to work, to do. And I don't know if I got lazy or what, but I just not able to do anymore.

**Hester:** Right. I understand completely. Well, if you take a fall from a tree, that's a pretty serious injury.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, yeah, but I never was sick, huh?

**Helen Sanzin:** No. He's never been—

**Oscar Sanzin:** I never was cold. I can go open skiff, tong oysters, just a t-shirt. And shoes, I wear boots or nothing. It's just—

**Helen Sanzin:** But he hasn't done anything since the hurricane.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No.

**Helen Sanzin:** That ended his fishing.

**Hester:** Got you. What did—go ahead.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And the boats, I never was—I just, I see (inaudible) and do better or can—I change boats. I didn't wait to do this or that or scare. I go to the bank, and I talk to Mr. Sawyer(?) or Mr. Holmes(?) or Mr. Hutchison(?), whoever. And Sawyer can tell you I always pay. I didn't stop, not a penny to owe nobody. If I couldn't see my (inaudible), wasn't scared to ask, just like when I build that boat. They say, "Never in world you can pay that kind of money." But I did, so.

**Helen Sanzin:** When he was paying on this boat, he had decided he was going back to Yugoslavia, but still things wasn't settled over there, and people was telling him that he better not go and take a chance of not being able to get back. So he didn't go, but his sister came to see him many years ago, and that's the onliest one of his family that he has seen.

**Hester:** Since that day, since he left?

**Helen Sanzin:** Since he left.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And I didn't have intention to do like I done. It just, I never was worried about owing debt because I knew I can go to work and pay, some way, somehow. I just if it would take what it takes. I used to take the boat by myself, right? And go by myself. People were too lazy to work, or they want to drink, or what. I just (inaudible) it and go. I'd cook myself. I'd pick my shrimp, myself. I iced them, stay as long as I want to, and bring home and sell it and pay my debts.

**Hester:** That's amazing.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, just by myself. From here to two, three hundred mile, just go, five hundred miles.

**Helen Sanzin:** When Michael and Jimmy got old enough, they'd go.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. They was in school, and I just didn't—I had enough knowledge in me that if they discover new country, just go looking and do it and produce. And that's why I just keep on (inaudible) the boat. And didn't ask me no questions because I start slow and pay my debts, and I never order another one or get another one if I had the other one to pay. Pay clear. I know I can sell this one or that and get another one, more money, more (inaudible). Life went on, but if you don't try it, you never know what you can do. But I did, and I was taller, and I was all the way—believe it or not, as she know—around two hundred and two pounds, but I wasn't fat. Just like this. And I lost about over three, three and a half inches; I shrunk after I fall off that tree.

**Hester:** You had lots of muscle.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. I was taller. Yeah, was eight. On my driver license was eight and a half.

**Helen Sanzin:** Never owed anybody anything that we didn't pay them. You got a clear—

**Oscar Sanzin:** That was my main thing. And I was two hundred and two pounds, she said, for forty-some years, huh?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah. We got four—

**Oscar Sanzin:** And taller and—

**Helen Sanzin:** —four kids, three boys and a girl.

**Oscar Sanzin:** And I was real, real, real strong from my time, and I never find anything I couldn't move.

**Hester:** Could you tell us about your children and their experience in the seafood industry? (0:06:58.6)

**Oscar Sanzin:** For me?

**Hester:** For your children?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** They did a little fishing, themselves, and your younger son is still doing it. Isn't he?

**Helen Sanzin:** No.

**Oscar Sanzin:** You mean Mike and Jimmy, all my boys?

**Hester:** Your boys, yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Well, they went with me, and they learned, and they was good fishermens.

**Helen Sanzin:** No. None of them fish anymore. Michael and Jimmy work for the oil company now.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Hester:** Which oil company do they work for?

**Helen Sanzin:** I don't know which one.

**Oscar Sanzin:** What?

**Helen Sanzin:** That was one of my sons on the phone, telling me he's headed out or someplace. I forget where they tell me.

**Oscar Sanzin:** When, now?

**Helen Sanzin:** Michael.

**Oscar Sanzin:** He left day before yesterday. Didn't he?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah. But he's just now skated out to go get that barge that's broke down.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Barge is so big, he can't come in. (inaudible) go out, out to sea and bring it in to Bayou La Batre.

**Helen Sanzin:** And Jimmy works with the oil company. I don't know which one. He takes the men out to the rig and brings them back in.

**Oscar Sanzin:** What do you mean? Jimmy?

**Helen Sanzin:** Uh-huh.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, he's working for the same man—

**Helen Sanzin:** He works on the rig, but he's got a boat to take them back and forth.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. He's on elevator boats. You know the one that—

**Helen Sanzin:** And David, he did—

**Hester:** Oh, OK.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** David never did like shrimping or fishing, so when his daddy sold that boat, he didn't go back fishing. He works, I think, for the City of Gulfport, doing something. I don't know.

**Hester:** How long did they fish with you?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Whew. Jimmy—

**Helen Sanzin:** Jimmy fished until the hurricane (inaudible).

**Oscar Sanzin:** Jimmy fished. David fished till the other day, the Katrina. Me and him was out the night before, yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, Jimmy was, too.

**Hester:** Did you have a good catch that night?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. We had. Matter of fact we had some shrimp on the boat when we tied the boat up. We didn't come to the dock.

**Helen Sanzin:** Jimmy was out in his boat, too.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** He parked back there, and it sunk, back in the canal back there.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. I spent many hurricanes down, way down in Vermillion Bay, down in Louisiana, Cameron, different places, different hurricanes, several hurricanes. That many years was plenty hurricanes, and one of them up here in Tchoutacabouffa and different places, different boats.

**Helen Sanzin:** But they, after Katrina, they was so mixed up till all of them got other jobs.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I never had another job, I mean, actually employed, no place.

**Helen Sanzin:** He's never worked anything but fishing.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Fishing.

**Hester:** Was your career.

**Helen Sanzin:** These sixty years we was married, he never worked anything else (inaudible).

**Oscar Sanzin:** And I went to see every boat they build and had different ideas, different this, different that. But I never (inaudible) nothing to nobody.

**Helen Sanzin:** But he's been home now since the hurricane, since Katrina.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Always different fishermen like he say, "Oh, I got a good taste. I got one of the best boats in the water." And like that boat here, never leaked a drop. Never. (0:11:10.1)

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, he always kept his boats up.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Fixed up, first class.

**Hester:** Kept them up, yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** It don't matter what it cost.

**Hester:** And the *Tina Marie*, right, is this one? This is the *Tina Marie*?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** And this is the last boat you had.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** And then that one is the *Helen and Oscar*?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, yeah.

**Hester:** And that was the one, the one up on the wall was the one that preceded, that came before this one?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** Yeah. Yeah. OK. I'd like to take some pictures.

**Helen Sanzin:** This is the last boat we had.

**Oscar Sanzin:** You see, that one was painted in Japan.

**Helen Sanzin:** One of Michael's friends—

**Oscar Sanzin:** One friend—

**Helen Sanzin:** —in the Air Force.

**Oscar Sanzin:** —he's a lieutenant colonel, and he was one of the fastest planes America had, thirteen hundred mile an hour.

**Helen Sanzin:** He had it painted in Japan.

**Oscar Sanzin:** In Japan. He took a picture of my boat.

**Helen Sanzin:** That one that's over the fireplace, one of his workers got a photographer, a painter to do it. But it's not like this here.

**Hester:** That's a good pic[tur]e. Well, the one over the fireplace, which boat was that?

**Helen Sanzin:** It's the same.

**Hester:** It's the same one as the *Helen and Oscar*.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, yeah. A fishermen down there, they wanted me to have—some painter was down there, looking the boat, and down in the harbor. And Nate and that bunch, you know? They give me for my present for birthday or something, they have it painted and give it to me.

**Hester:** Oh, that's nice.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. But the big boat is in there someplace.

**Helen Sanzin:** Baby, I don't know where that picture is.

**Oscar Sanzin:** It's real beautiful. It's a big, wooden boat that's—

**Hester:** Well, I'll leave my phone number, and if you find it, let me know, and I'll come over and take a picture of that and put it with the—

**Helen Sanzin:** I'll look in things, and he had (inaudible) boats.

**Oscar Sanzin:** You see, if you noticed, she's hooked up. She's running her level. These people here build many, many boats, and this, she run perfect.

**Hester:** And who built that one?

**Oscar Sanzin:** She don't set down; she don't list. The bottom, it's—I always noticed like the big boat, you got to see how beautiful that thing is.

**Helen Sanzin:** Who built this one, honey? Who built this boat?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Landry.

**Hester:** Oh, that's Landry, yeah. Yeah. You said that.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Landry Shipyard in Bayou La Batre, yeah? That one was Taches(?) in Ocean Springs. The Yugoslavs build that.

**Hester:** Taches?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** You had that one built, yourself.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** This one was already built when you got it.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. But I know what I wanted. Yeah. And that's the way—I don't know. This boat here, I didn't pay too much for it, but I forgot now what. No. I didn't but a hundred twenty-five, I think, huh?

**Helen Sanzin:** Baby, you bought so many boats, I can't keep up with what you paid for what.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah, that's right. You're right. I wanted something; I bought it.

**Helen Sanzin:** When he wanted to change from one boat to the other, he started off with—what was the *Moody*? Thirty-two foot? The *W.J. Moody*, how big was it?

**Oscar Sanzin:** How big? Thirty-seven and a half, fourteen and a half foot wide, pretty boat, real pretty.

**Helen Sanzin:** It was pretty, but it was small.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Small, yeah. Well, she carried—

**Helen Sanzin:** So he kept selling and buying bigger boats (inaudible).



**Oscar Sanzin:** But I went out to three hundred miles from here with her. I went all over.

**Helen Sanzin:** I know, honey, but you wasn't—

**Hester:** You could catch more fish with the larger boats.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. It was too small for capacity. Didn't burn as much fuel. But this one here carries, oh, right at nine thousand gallon. This one carried that.

**Hester:** The *Tina Marie*, yeah.

**Oscar Sanzin:** That one there carries eighteen thousand. The big boat carried—she had eleven fuel tanks—twenty-eight thousand, I think.

**Helen Sanzin:** We had two. One was named the *Miss Cindy* after your daughter.

**Oscar Sanzin:** *Miss Cindy*, yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** And another one was named *Cynthia Maria* after your daughter.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Hester:** How many grandchildren do you have now? Just curious. (0:16:30.1)

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, I don't know. Quite a few.

**Helen Sanzin:** Nine.

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. Great-grandchildren, quite a few.

**Hester:** Do you think any of them might go into commercial fishing?

**Helen Sanzin:** No.

**Oscar Sanzin:** I don't think so because—

**Helen Sanzin:** Two of the sons, two of our sons fished, and one of our grandsons fished with his daddy, but I don't think (inaudible).

**Oscar Sanzin:** They big boys, six foot. They big. David, my son, he's six foot. Isn't he?

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah. But he didn't like—

**Oscar Sanzin:** No. He went because—I don't know. He fished about thirty years with me.

**Helen Sanzin:** David?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah.

**Helen Sanzin:** No. He didn't fish (inaudible).

**Oscar Sanzin:** Oh, you mean—

**Helen Sanzin:** Not thirty years with you, honey.

**Oscar Sanzin:** He's fifty-two.

**Helen Sanzin:** I don't care. He didn't fish with you no thirty-two years. And he didn't like fishing. He liked to stay home. He was the baby. He's still the baby. He lives over on the corner over there.

**Hester:** OK. Well, good, he's close. That's good.

**Helen Sanzin:** Yeah, he's close. And my daughter lives here in this trailer, and they all live close around us.

**Hester:** That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

**Helen Sanzin:** All our family lives close to us.

**Oscar Sanzin:** David, he was a good fisherman. He was excellent to watch the boat and a real good mechanic. Everything fixes it. He was a good—well, Jimmy is same thing. Michael, well, he's the number one electronic man, anything. He can fix anything under the sun.

**Helen Sanzin:** Well, Michael is more electronics than anything else.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Jimmy is, too. He fix anything.

**Helen Sanzin:** And he's gone now for some oil company to get a barge—

**Oscar Sanzin:** A big barge, can't go in the coast. The canal is too small.

**Helen Sanzin:** —that broke down, down in Intercoastal.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. But then he's thinking go where? Venezuela someplace.

**Helen Sanzin:** Don't tell me that.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. Something.

**Helen Sanzin:** Not that far.

**Hester:** I can understand, being a mother, myself.

**Oscar Sanzin:** He stay up to thirty days, thirty-five days.

**Helen Sanzin:** He's got a wife and three—well, he's got one son by his first wife.

**Oscar Sanzin:** You say you want to take pictures.

**Hester:** Yeah. I'm going to go ahead and turn the tape off, but before I do that, is there anything else that you would like to say?

**Oscar Sanzin:** Well, I don't know. It's just, I'll say anything what you ask me, and I'll tell you what—

**Hester:** All right. Well, why don't we—I think I've asked all the questions that I have down here for you. And we'll go ahead and turn the tape off, and we'll take pictures. And I understand you have an appointment to go to, too.

**Oscar Sanzin:** Yeah. I'll be right back.

(end of interview)