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

Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster–Gulf Coast Fisheries Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Thomas J. Schultz Jr.

Interviewer: Barbara Hester

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Biography

Mr. Thomas J. Schultz Jr. was born on October 22, 1932, in Biloxi, Mississippi, to Mr. Thomas J. Schultz Sr. (born June 25, 1907, in Bon Secour, Alabama) and Mrs. Ophelia A. Quigley Schultz (born November 25, 1908, in Biloxi, Mississippi). His father was a fisherman and a boatbuilder. His father's paternal lineage was Danish. His maternal lineage was Mississippi Native American. His mother was a housewife who also worked in the seafood processing industry. All of her family worked in the ice cream business until the death of the grandfather. Her father made the first one-cent ice cream cones in Biloxi. He sold them from a horse-drawn cart. Her mother also worked in a seafood processing factory.

On July 14, 1970, he married his wife Rose (born in Biloxi in 1940), in Biloxi, Mississippi. They have four children, Rose Love Dellenger (born February 3, 1959), Dana A. Ennis (born November 8, 1964), Elliott Voinedich (born August 29, 1966), and Reva Rose Hopkins (born May 21, 1973).

Schultz quit school to become a fisherman. He served for four years in the US Navy during the Korean War. Later he earned his GED. Other than his livelihood, he enjoys his grandchildren. He is a member of the Southern Shrimp Alliance. In 1983, he was the shrimp king.

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AN ORAL HISTORY

with

THOMAS J. SCHULTZ JR.

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Thomas J. Schultz Jr. and is taking place on October 17, 2011. The interviewer is Barbara Hester.

Hester: This is Barbara Hester with the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage with The University of Southern Mississippi, and I'm here today with Thomas Schultz in his home at (the address of the interviewee has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy). Thank you so much for having me here today to take your interview here in your home, Mr. Schultz. For the record, would you go ahead and state your name and your address?

Schultz: Thomas Schultz, it's a junior. I didn't put junior on my name just now, but it is junior. And this is at (the address of the interviewee has not been transcribed in order to protect his privacy).

Hester: OK. And what was your occupation? (0:00:56.8)

Schultz: Well, I was a commercial fisherman most of my life, from the time I was young. And I had went to work when I retired off of the boats. My legs give out and my shoulders and stuff. And I went to work for Mississippi State University. I worked up there twelve years.

Hester: In Starkville?

Schultz: I worked here. I worked here on the Coast with the Coast group, coastal research.

Hester: And what year did you retire from commercial fishing?

Schultz: [Nineteen] ninety-five.

Hester: Ninety-five. And when did you start?

Schultz: Oh, God. I started; I went on the boats when I was—in 1949 with my dad, and I done that until a couple of days before Christmas in [19]50. And the Korean War had started, and everybody was getting drafted, so I just went ahead and joined. We'd been on strike here in Biloxi for six months for shrimp prices, and there was no movement on it, so I just went ahead and joined the Navy.

Hester: And you served in Korea for?

Schultz: For four years, yeah. And I come out in [19]54 and went back on the boats, again. And I worked with my dad and a couple of other men, prominent fishermen here. And then I got my own boat. I got a small boat, and then I got a bigger boat, and then I got a big boat. So it progressed along through the years.

Hester: What would be your earliest memory, fishing, I guess with your dad?

Schultz: Well, back with my dad, (0:02:45.9) this was in the [19]40s, late [19]40s. It was entirely different shrimping to what it is now.

Hester: How so?

Schultz: Well, back in those days, you didn't pull as much equipment as what you pull now. You pulling, for the same size boat, you're pulling twice as much net as what you used to. So you've become more efficient, you know, and boats have a lot more horsepower. Used to be a boat with eighty-, ninety-, a-hundred-horsepower diesel in it was a pretty-good-powered boat. This boat here's got 850 horsepower, so a big, big power shift. You can feel the difference in the response of the boat when you're dragging with it. You can feel it. You can feel the power.

Hester: And the equipment itself changed as well? (0:03:48.7)

Schultz: Changed, yeah. Used to be I could pick a net up, a fifty-foot net. I could pick a fifty-foot net up and carry it on my shoulder. Well, now, you couldn't even think about doing that. They're so much heavier. The webbing's heavy, and it's all synthetic now. It was all cotton back in the days when I started; it was all cotton webbing. Now, it's all synthetic. Most all of it's being made now in India.

Hester: Is that right?

Schultz: Yeah. They put all the local people out of business as far as netting, equipment, that type equipment.

Hester: Um-hm. What kind of fish did you fish for when you first started?

Schultz: Shrimp. We shrimped, strictly for shrimp. And of course you had to kind of diversify because you had seasons when they wasn't—part of the season there wasn't many shrimp, so you did other things. (0:04:49.7) You caught fish; caught crabs. You oystered. That was on this type of boat here. But when these boats come along, well, it changed it up. You had to stick with whatever you was doing, shrimping or fishing, one or the other. You didn't oyster. You didn't crab (inaudible).

Hester: You pointed to a photograph that you have on the table here. You showed it to me earlier. Could you tell me a little bit about the photograph here?

Schultz: This boat (0:05:19.2) here was built in [19]43, [19]44 era. This boat here was the *Snowdrift*, and the boats were built by Southern Shell Fish Company on Back Bay in Biloxi. And Southern Shell's parent company was Blue Plate, and it was headquartered in New Orleans. So they had the boats was named *Snowdrift* like Snowdrift Shortening, and Blue Plate was a bunch of the canned products that they had, canned beans.

Hester: I remember Blue Plate.

Schultz: Blue Plate, they had a whole, big bunch of products. And Scoco was another one, the oil companies that they had. It was a big bunch of companies within the Southern Shell Fish Company. But this boat here was built and put to work for around sixty-five hundred dollars, the total boat, engine and all, less the nets and the rest of the equipment on it. But this boat here is a five-hundred-thousand-dollar boat.

Hester: You have one outside. Oh, the one on the wall here.

Schultz: One on the wall, yeah. So you can see; you understand the changes in the cost of things. As a matter of fact the generator on this boat here cost more than what the whole thing here cost.

Hester: Wow. That's amazing.

Schultz: This old boat.

Hester: And this is an oystering boat.

Schultz: This is a shrimping and oystering, yeah.

Hester: And you parked next to?

Schultz: This was Weems Brothers Packing Company right here, and we was unloading oysters right there. You'd unload them, (0:07:01.6) and they'd go in a tub, and they'd dump them over here, and then they'd go up a conveyer, go up into the factory.

Hester: And it's Weems Brother?

Schultz: Weems Brothers Packing Company, W-E-E-M-S.

Hester: OK. What year did you say this would have been taken, about?

Schultz: This was [19]63. This was the year that there was a lot of oysters in Mississippi; [19]62 and [19]63, they was big production years of oysters in Mississippi. And since then it's went downhill, and it's due to pollution (0:07:32.2)

more than anything else. And the can market has been taken over by foreign countries. They getting all your canned stuff, [that] you get now; it's coming out of Thailand. They completely taken over the can market, canned oysters, canned shrimp, canned tuna. But in its day, this here was a real boat.

Hester: How far out could you take that boat?

Schultz: We been all over. We been up and down the—well, Coastwise, up and down the Coast here. I fished this boat here as far as Tarpon Springs and as far as Galveston. But it was a good workboat. It was a good workboat to work off of. It was a good sea boat. You could come and go with it pretty good.

Hester: And what year did you go from this boat to the one on the wall, the picture on the wall.

Schultz: I sold this boat in 1970 (0:08:36.9) and started that boat, there. And that boat come out in [19]71, and this boat come out in [19]73, and it was built by Covacevich here in Biloxi.

Hester: Covacevich.

Schultz: Um-hm, boatbuilder.

Hester: And this was an oyster boat, and that was a shrimp boat.

Schultz: Shrimp boat.

Hester: So you changed from oyster fishing in the [19]70s to shrimping.

Schultz: Yeah, shrimping. And this boat did both things. It shrimped during the shrimp season, and normally you'd start oystering in October/November. Well, usually along that time, well, then the shrimp season would start going down. Colder weather (0:09:23.9) your shrimping would play down, so everybody would go oystering. So you'd make the whole winter, up until April, oystering.

Hester: I see. So you could do more than one type of fishing with the boat.

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: That's great. Well, your dad was working with you when you had this boat?

Schultz: No. My dad had his own boat. He had a little boat; he had a little, forty-foot boat. The name of it was the *Miss Ocean Springs*, and he had it from about 1944 up until—when did he get rid of that boat? [Nineteen] sixty-eight, I guess, [19]69, somewheres right there. He got off the boat. Then he didn't do anything for a while, and then when this boat here come out, he'd go work with me on that. He'd help me

take care of—you tore up a lot of equipment, and lot of nets. You'd tear up a lot of nets. (0:10:24.3) There's a lot of junk on the bottom out there, and you'd tear it. So he'd kind of help me keep the nets patched.

Hester: Oh, that's nice. So you're pointing to a picture on the wall, so that would have been in the [19]70s that he went out and worked.

Schultz: Yeah, [19]73, [19]74. Well, he worked with me just kind of off and on as he felt like it until [19]79 or [19]80, probably around 1980.

Hester: And when did you get the boat over here?

Schultz: That's the same one.

Hester: Oh, that's the same one. OK.

Schultz: Same one, yeah.

Hester: So when you retired you were on the boat that's depicted in the photograph or the artwork on the wall. And the name of the boat is the?

Schultz: *Reva Rose*.

Hester: *Reva Rose*.

Schultz: That's named after my youngest daughter. And it's a Portuguese name. It means to give strength. I say it took a lot of strength, (laughter) between raising her, but it's an entirely different work, working from this type of boat, here, which your life was completely, totally different. (0:11:41.6) With this boat here, you was—and I'm speaking of the *Snowdrift*. The *Snowdrift* was, six or eight days you'd be out, ten days probably at the most. With this boat here, you [out], thirty, forty days.

Hester: Is that right?

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: So this area that's enclosed in wood in the photograph here would be the living quarters in the boat.

Schultz: Yeah. Well, I can point it out to you. See, this is the front of the cabin, right here, and it went back to right here, and that was the back of the cabin. And this was the living. What this is is what they call pens. That's just put up there temporarily to hold the oysters on because you could carry more oysters back here than what you could carry up in the forward part of the boat. I don't know whether you can see it, but right here in the middle, this is the middle deck they call it. Well, there was about this much water all the way across the deck of the boat from one side to the other.

Hester: Is that right?

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: My goodness. So the water actually lapped over the boat.

Schultz: Yeah. You had to have boots on to walk on deck. (phone rings) Excuse me.

Hester: Sure. (brief interruption) This is on Back Bay?

Schultz: Yeah. That's on Back Bay of Biloxi. That factory was tore down in the storm, in [Hurricane] Katrina, and they had a little bit of this part over here was left, but all this was the shrimp-packing operation here, (0:13:16.7) and this was the oyster operation, was on this side.

Hester: So is that close to Rhodes(?) Point?

Schultz: Yeah, fairly close. You familiar with Oak Street?

Hester: Somewhat, yes.

Schultz: Somewhat, OK. Well, you turn up off the beach at the Grand Casino; well, that's Oak Street. And you go all the way to the water in the back. Well, that's Weems's, all that property that when you come to the end of the street, from there to go out this shipyard, well, that was all Weems's property there. And they had a warehouse and a ice plant and the whole works there, and the storm got all of that.

Hester: I was going to ask you, did your father follow in his father's footsteps?

Schultz: Yeah. Well, I'm fifth generation fisherman.

Hester: Oh, my goodness. All on the Coast here?

Schultz: Yeah, right up and down this Coast. My daddy, (0:14:14.9) they were born and raised around Bon Secour, Alabama. That's right above Gulf Shores. And back in them days, they had a river; they had the Bon Secour River. Well, that's where they lived, on that river. And there's two or three shrimp plants in there now. And then in later years, they cut the Intercoastal Canal through there, and it cut across the river, but they used to, they done everything by hand. They fished. They oystered. They crabbed. They floundered, and whatever the season was. And they would fish, like from Monday to Thursday, and they had pens built along the water. (0:15:09.2) And they'd put the oysters, and they'd gig the flounders, and they'd gig them in the tail-end, but it wouldn't kill them. And they'd put them in the pen and keep them alive. And on Thursday they'd gather everything up, and they'd go to Mobile and sell it.

Well, Mobile was about thirty miles, thirty-five miles up there, and they had to row up there in a skiff. But it was a big skiff, and it was two men on each oar. So they'd pull up to—they called it pulling. They didn't oar; they pulling.

Hester: They would pull the pens?

Schultz: They would pull with oars, but they called it pulling; they didn't call it oaring.

Hester: I see.

Schultz: And they would go to Mobile and sell the stuff on Thursday, late Thursday and Friday. And next day, they'd turn around and come back home.

Hester: Would they sell it to a wholesaler or strictly to restaurants?

Schultz: Like a vender type. The people would know they was going to be there the certain day, and they'd just come down to the water and to the dock and buy the stuff off of them. And they'd have, during oyster season, they'd have oysters. They'd have crabs. Shrimp season, they'd have shrimp. Fish, they did a lot of fishing. They made their own nets, gillnets, and they knitted them theyself. But then they didn't have an engine. They had a little, old mast in the boat. I've seen pictures of the boat. They had a mast in it and had a little piece of sail on it. And if there was any wind, they'd sail a little bit. But they didn't think nothing about pulling that twenty-five, thirty miles.

Hester: My goodness. That had to be hard work.

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: And fishing all day. My goodness. What type of finfish did they catch? (0:16:57.6)

Schultz: They'd gig flounders, and they'd catch speckled trout. Speckled trout was a big seller for them. And in the late fall, they'd get roe mullet, have roe mullet for sale.

Hester: And your father did the same type of fishing?

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: Or did it change any for him?

Schultz: Well, it changed for him when power boats started coming around. (0:17:20.3) In [1922] he come to Biloxi, and Biloxi was starting to be a boom town for the seafood industry. So he come to Biloxi and went to working on the boats, and then got a captain of a boat, become a captain, and then he bought his own boat.

Hester: And then when you started fishing, how did it change then for you?

Schultz: Well, it was basically the same thing, it was low-powered boats, and it went to big-powered boats. And they learned—(A portion of the interview has not been transcribed as Mrs. Schultz offers coffee.)

Hester: The species of fish pretty much stayed the same, grandfather, father, son. (0:18:16.3)

Schultz: Yeah, stayed the same. Trout was always a big, big-selling fish; still is a big-selling fish. And red snapper, they'd catch red snapper, hand-lining them.

Hester: You spoke of gillnetting. I have done some interviews with other commercial fishermen, and they were telling me about the changes in gillnetting. Can you comment any on that? (0:18:44.3)

Schultz: The gillnetting's changed big time. They started off; they was using strictly [cotton]. Started off with cotton, cotton nets, and then they went to nylon. Well, when they went to nylon, they thought, "Oh, man, that was going to be the end of the industry," because it was so efficient. Well, as it turned out, the nylon was more efficient, but when they went to monofilament, that was like daylight and dark.

Hester: How's that?

Schultz: Well, them fish can't see that gillnet because it blends with the water so good, so you can really, really catch fish with a monofilament net. In fact, that's probably why they got it banned (0:19:31.8) here now where you can't have them. You can have a gillnet just to fish mullet, roe mullet season, but it's got to be a biodegradable net. You can't have just a standard net.

Hester: And how do they work? How do the new nets work?

Schultz: New nets is just really a killer with fish. Well, they're efficient, is what they are. They're real efficient, and you can target a certain size of fish. The restaurants, people buying the fish (0:20:03.6) want a certain size fish. They want a two-pound, two-pound-and-a-half, three-pound fish. That'll get a fillet off that'll be a complete serving on a plate, so they want that. They don't want a fish this big, and they don't want a fish that big. They want that slot, so you can target that size fish. You can make the mesh size in that net so that you going to catch that fish that you want.

Hester: I see. I see. So it's really become more efficient with the gill nets.

Schultz: Oh, yes. Yes. It's become more efficient. You got more fish to escape. You don't catch a fish that you're not going to be able to sell or keep.

Hester: So there's less bycatch.

Schultz: Less bycatch.

Hester: Um-hm. Let's see. How have the prices changed over the course of your career? (0:21:03.7)

Schultz: When I went to work on the boat, the price on a barrel of shrimp was twenty dollars a barrel. A barrel is two hundred ten pounds, and they was twenty dollars. And then it went to twenty-five dollars, and this was for top-count shrimp. This was for ten/fifteen, fifteen/twenty, twenty-one/twenty-five count shrimp. They had a forty count law in those days. (0:21:36.4) You couldn't catch anything smaller than forty count. They come with these picking machines, and they could pick anything. It could be two hundred count, and they can pick it, which they was a market for it. So I guess you could say, "Well, hell, there's a market. So be it." But the prices really went goofy. The best price we got for shrimp was in 1984. It had steady built up to that point, and then after that it started going down. And they blamed it on all kind of things, but the big problem is the packers (0:22:22.4) that control everything, they got you. You come in with little shrimp, you got to get rid of them. So they know all they got to do is wait. And if they don't unload to you, they're going to unload to this other guy. Well, these two guys got their heads together, so they going to pay the same price. For years they was a lot of squabbling amongst the factories, "I'll pay what I want to pay. I got my market, and I'll pay what I want to pay." But it's all changed now. You got two or three people that's doing all the buying, and the price that the boats [get], just disastrous right now. I got more for shrimp in 1970 than what they getting right now. And here it is, the cost of fuel (0:23:19.2) now is three dollars and forty-five cents a gallon, three dollars and forty-eight cents a gallon. Back in them days, they was buying it for six cents a gallon.

Hester: Yeah, big difference.

Schultz: Yeah. So here it is you burning, you're going to burn thirty gallons a hour in these big boats. So some of them are burning seventy, eighty gallon a hour.

Hester: So it's a real challenge for fishermen these days just to hang in there, it sounds like.

Schultz: Yeah. It is. It really is. Now, this boat here, the *Reva Rose*, it's been—he left here about six days ago, and he's up off of Brunswick, Georgia.

Hester: And this is—who are you speaking of?

Schultz: Well, the *Reva Rose* went up there. That was the boat I owned, and what happened after that Hurricane Irene (0:24:16.5) went through up there, well, shrimp showed up. There was a little, few shrimp up there, not many. But after about a month after the storm went through, shrimp were just everywheres.

Hester: And this is somebody that you sold the boat to?

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: That's taken it up there.

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: I see.

Schultz: Taken it up there. He fishes out of Pascagoula, is where he lives at, but he went up there, and they catching good shrimp. So that's the spot to be.

Hester: And who is that?

Schultz: That's Steve Bosarge.

Hester: OK. I've heard a number of people say that they had a Bosarge boat. Is he in the family that builds boats?

Schultz: That's a cousin to them, yeah. But the one you speaking of, talking about a Bosarge boat, that was Floyd, I think his name was, Bosarge in Bayou La Batre. He was the one that built a lot of skiffs (0:25:14.5) and gillnet boats and all that. In fact, Pete, I think Pete's got one of his skiffs, too. And he just made a good model. In fact, I had one of them until recently. They a good skiff. They wide. They carry good. They work—

Hester: That's what everybody's saying. They were good boats. Yeah.

Schultz: They easy working out of. You can stand on one side of them; the thing ain't trying to turn over with you. These guys were just shade-tree boatbuilders, but they knew what they was doing.

Hester: They're still in business?

Schultz: Floyd died, and I think his son kind of took over where he left off. I don't know. I hadn't talked to anybody that's had one of his boats that they built.

Hester: Could you take me through a day as a fisherman? What would you do when you got up in the morning? How would your day go, and how long would it be? (0:26:16.1)

Schultz: Well, a day, a day fishing, it wasn't like an eight-to-five job. Take you from the beginning: we'd leave out of Biloxi, and we'd find out where we were going to go to work, whether it be right offshore out here, off the mouth of the river, off of west

Louisiana coast, Texas, wherever it might be. Well, we had contacts up and down the Coast, and we'd find out what different guys were doing, and what shrimp looked like there. So you'd start looking for you a place to work.

Hester: And this would be radio contact from one to the other?

Schultz: Radio contact, yeah. And once you'd make contact with some, well, you might start working. Your first drag might be at night. It might be in the morning. It might be in the middle of the day. But what we would do is when we'd start, say you start in the middle of the day, well, you'd make, depending on how much trash there was, you was catching—sometimes there wouldn't be any trash at all, hardly. Just be shrimp. Sometimes there'd be a lot of trash. Well, when you'd pick up and dump out on the deck, and you sort the shrimp out, well, the minute you get through, get the shrimp on ice, well, somebody's going to go to bed because you don't stop. It's constantly go. See. But this boat here, with this little boat, we used to stop at night a lot of times, or if we was working at night, we'd stop in the daytime. These things here, we didn't stop.

Hester: What was the longest period of time that you were out fishing?

Schultz: Forty-two days. Yeah, forty-two days straight. And I've made trips where I would work eighteen, twenty days and come in and unload and turn around and go back the same day and fish that many days again. It just depends on what size the shrimp are. The smaller the shrimp, the shorter time you could keep them. The bigger the shrimp, the longer you could keep them because the little shrimp, they would smash; they would turn—the product wouldn't' be good. They'd get what they call black spot on them. There wasn't nothing wrong with the shrimp far as eating it was concerned. What it was, it was the acid that was in the heads of the shrimp would come out, and it would cause them to turn black. But once you would peel them and wash them, that would come off of them. But people didn't want to buy that. They'd think there's something wrong with it; think they bad.

Hester: What does the seafood industry mean to you economically and personally? I know you're retired now, so you're not active in it any longer, but do you still go out, or maybe occasionally or—

Schultz: No. I don't go out any on the boats, but I'm still active in the industry. I belong to the Southern Shrimp Alliance. (0:29:32.9) It's a group of commercial fishermen from, we all the way from Texas to North Carolina. And I'm on the board of directors of the organization from Mississippi. There's two of us from Mississippi, and each state's got two, two people. Well, we're fixing to have a meeting now in Tampa, first of November, first week of November, and we have a meeting in March and April in DC, and we'll go up and meet all the Congressional people from all the different states and tell them what our problems is and what our needs are and try to get support on the issues pertaining to the industry. One of the biggest problems we've got is the perception that people have about this turtles, (0:30:22.9) killing the

turtles. That's the biggest myth they ever was. What generated that whole thing was the National Marine Fishery Service, Pascagoula, was one of the—well, for the Gulf of Mexico—was just about to fold up. And they had to have an issue, so the issue become saving the turtles. So we was in Washington; this was in 1965, maybe [19]66. And we was at Washington, a meeting, and they told us at the meeting, the people in, the head of the fishery service was telling us, he said, "You can walk down these halls." And he said, "Nobody in here could pick out a shrimp boat from a tugboat, but," he said, "everybody in this hall, they could talk about how terrible it was they was killing the turtles." He said, "These people ain't never seen a turtle in the open before." But yet it become an issue with the environmental groups; the turtles become an issue. So it bloomed out of proportion. The environmentalists just took it and run with it. So the fisheries lab in Pascagoula got twelve million dollars to fund, to do turtle research. Well, since then, they've got hundreds of millions of dollars that's just been totally throwed away over that. But it's just the biggest mess that you ever see. If you ever been up there and you sit in on these meetings and you listen to these people, some of these people are well-educated people, well intentions probably—don't know the issues. We've had a lot of trouble since the [BP Deepwater Horizon] oil spill (0:32:22.9) out here. They say that's because of the shrimp boats is killing the turtles. There's a lot, a lot of turtles were killed, died out here. What they seem to think now, is people that's in the industry that knows a little bit about it, is that these young turtles—and these are turtles as big as your hand. These turtles come up in here every year. Well, when this oil spill come, this oil just pushed them, kept pushing them, and they wound up, up along these coastlines here. Well, this oil come right in there with them. The ones that could get off and go up these rivers and get away from the oil, they survived. But a lot of them did die. But the fishery service has never proven that they died from the oil. They died from fisheries, drowning, shrimp boats, drowning. But the whole time the issue was going on, there wasn't a boat working out here because everybody was shut down because of the oil. So it's—

Hester: Doesn't make sense.

Schultz: Doesn't make sense. The other day there was some turtles that was picked up here that they died. And they died. They was caught by fishing, sport fishermen, and they cut them to get them off. So they picked them up on the beach. Moby Solangi over in Gulfport took and autopsied them, and they had fishhooks in them. Well, they won't accept anything that he does because he's not certified as a scientist with the fishery service, so they won't take anything. They will not take anything that he gathers up and sends to a private testing place to test it. They will not accept none of that. It's strictly got to be done in they lab.

Hester: Um-hm. Did you ever catch any turtles in your nets?

Schultz: Oh, yes. Yes. Sure did. Caught some of the biggest ones; caught plenty of them. They still catching plenty of them. The main one that they was worried about was the Kemp's Ridley. It's a small turtle. They get about a hundred pounds. There's a lot of them around here. They constantly here. They tag one. What's

amazing to me, and I didn't know this until recently; they tagged one in Tampa Bay. Six weeks later they caught him in Mobile Bay. Now, who would have thought that that turtle could have went that far that fast. (A portion of the audio has not been transcribed as Mrs. Schultz serves coffee.)

Hester: So did you pull a TED [turtle excluder device]? (0:35:40.2)

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: You did.

Schultz: I did some of the very, very early research work with TEDs. What it was, the fishery service come out with a TED, and it was a box. It was about this wide, and about from here to the edge of the rug along there, about eight foot long. And it was made out of rebar, and they had webbing sewed around it, and they had a trap door on it, and in the trap door, was had rebar around it. And the theory was when the turtle went in it, he'd go back and hit the grid and go up and open the trap door and come out. The most massive piece of junk that you ever wanted to see. So we got with a guy in Brunswick, Georgia. His name was Sinkey Boone. Well, Sinkey Boone had made a rig to get rid of cannonballs. Cannonballs are big jellies [jellyfish]. Well, there's certain times of the year around here that the cannonballs get real bad, so he made up, all it was was a big hoop, and it had a grid in it. And it had a taper on it, a forty-five degree taper. And what the theory was behind it, when the cannonballs would go in the net, they'd come hit the grid, run up the grid, and go out through the trap in the top of it. Well, when he come with that thing to get rid of the cannonballs, they said, "Well, let's adapt it to the turtle problem." So I started doing the work on that in the Gulf here, to get rid of the turtles [in nets]. And instead of making it a top-opening turtle chute, we made it a bottom-opening because we figured the turtles would hit the grid. The grid was on forty-five, and they'd hit it, and they'd be more apt to go out of it, which it did. But then when we started, we had them—I think they was thirty-eight inches across. Well, that would get rid of anything in that size, but some of the turtles that we was catching was four and a half foot, five foot across them. So they would get there and get jammed. So we had to make the ring bigger to get rid of the leatherbacks and the green turtles. The leatherbacks are huge. They're six-, seven-, eight-hundred-pound turtles. So that's some of the work we did. We started off with that, and that's the same TED that they use, and everybody's pulling now. And it's certified by the National Marine Fishery Service. But it wasn't the piece of junk that they had come up with.

Hester: Yeah. So the TED was more of a problem than the change in the gillnet?

Schultz: Oh, yeah. The TED, what the problem with the TED is, you can make the TED work. It'll work. It'll do what it's supposed to. It'll get rid of turtles, and you might lose 10 percent of your shrimp, but you'll get rid of the turtles. Where the problem was in it, is in the times of the year when they get grass on the bottom out here, sauerkraut grass grows, that sauerkraut goes, it'll shut you down with a TED

because it'll get on that grid and plug it up, and everything goes out, shrimp and everything goes out. But just under normal conditions, if you don't have anything to hinder you, that TED'll work. It's aggravating to fool with. It's dangerous on the deck when you picking up, and the thing gets to swinging around. They can get you hurt. You really got to keep your eyes on what you're doing.

Hester: Well, do you think that the turtles were truly endangered from the—what do the turtles do to help with the water? Why are they important I guess is the question.

Schultz: Well, it's important because it's a part of the ecosystem. It's part of the Earth. It's just part of—why get rid of something? It's there. It's been there. Leave it alone. But I think that there's certain times of the year the turtles come up in here. In May and June is when they come in here big time. The reason they come here is because there's a lot of crabs, and turtles like to eat crabs. When the crabs show up at the north end of Chandeleur, we call them scissorbill crabs; they're a little blue crab about that long. They not the same crab that you see on the beaches that you pick and eat. They're a little, bitty crab. Long claws on him with a long, long claw, and he'll cut you real bad when he bites you. He's really a different species. But when them crabs show up, you can look out because the turtles is coming. And that's what they get there, and we used to eat them. We used to eat the turtles. If we'd catch one, if we took a notion to, we'd kill him and eat him, but it wasn't—

Hester: Was there a market for it at any point? (0:41:05.2)

Schultz: Years ago there was. It was a good market in New Orleans, in the Orientals. There's a lot of Chinese in New Orleans, Chinese community. They were big into that. But there wasn't everybody fool with them. It was just a few people that knew who to sell them to and when you could sell them. And it was just like with the sharks. (0:41:30.5) You sell sharks over in New Orleans the same way. There was a community there, Orientals, that like shark meat. To me it's not any good, but everybody's to his own taste. But I had a picture somewheres around here, and I don't know what happened to it. My youngest daughter, when she was seven years old, I had a turtle, leatherback, and he was about seven hundred pounds, six hundred pounds (0:41:59.2) And had him on the stern of the boat and come to the dock with him and had her take a picture, standing on him. And she was about seven years old. His head was that big around. He was big. He was a big thing.

Hester: I don't know about sharks. (laughter) I'll stick with shrimp and finfish.

Schultz: I took and my middle daughter, she's kind of a little finicky. So we belong to the Biloxi Yacht Club. So we were going to have a cookout, and we were going to cook daube and spaghetti. You familiar with daube?

Hester: My mother used to make a good daube.

Schultz: Well, we were going to cook daube and spaghetti, so what we did, we butchered a turtle, and we used the turtle meat for the daube, and nobody ever knew the difference. So we cooked. We served everybody in the yacht club. Everybody raved about how good it was, and after we told them what it was that they had ate, they would not believe it. (laughter)

Hester: Oh, my. What year was that?

Schultz: That was probably about [19]74, [19]75, somewheres right in there. But nobody would believe that it was turtle. You had to be careful with it. You had to. You had to get all the fat off of it. If you left any fat on it, it was strong. But you would skin it off and get the fat off, and then parboil it, and then when you parboiled it a little bit, well, then that fat would, what you missed would boil up on it. Just cut that off. I guarantee you; you could not tell the difference in a piece of beef or—

Hester: That's amazing. Well, it sounds like you were still doing some commercial fishing when the casinos came. (0:43:47.9)

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: Did they affect your business in any way?

Schultz: Oh, yeah. Before, we had places to tie, tie up. We had a lot of dock space to tie your boats up and be independent. You wasn't tied to this plant or to that plant over there. You could tie where you wanted. They was a bunch of places around here that you could work, but after the casinos came, they took all the beachfront property, so there was no place to tie.

Hester: So where did you tie before, and where did you tie after?

Schultz: Well, before we was tying on Back Bay at Weems's, and then I had left there, working there, and went and tied on the front to Ziggy Guitterez(?). I don't know whether you've heard that name before or not. But Ziggy had a facility there at the M&M Shrimp Company, and it's right where the Grand Casino; it built out on the south side of the highway. Well, it was one of them little pieces of property that was in there. Well, Ziggy had a place in there, and we unloaded there to him. And then the City of Biloxi built the commercial harbor down here, and then we all got in the commercial harbor after that, all the independent boats.

Hester: So then [Hurricane] Katrina, this is after you retired. (0:45:32.3) I understand that you did fine in your house here north of the railroad tracks. South of the railroad tracks they had some flooding down there. Have you heard anything as far as the fishing industry goes? The people that were still doing commercial fishing that you know, what have they said about Katrina? Were they hit hard?

Schultz: Most of them was, the people started getting, as time went along and the younger people come into the industry, most of the older guys like me, you set in your ways. It's hard to believe that I've been living here since 1962. And you'll think, well, you'll stay here so long, and then you'll get a different house, or you'll move to a different area, but your family grows up, and they all go. So here you are. You got a house that's too big for her and I, really, now. But the younger guys, they all moved north. They went up Saucier, Vancleave. They went just north of here, Woolmarket; they went up in the Woolmarket area, and they started building up there, so it wasn't too many of them that got hurt bad by the storm, the boats, the guys I know. Now, like my daddy, they lost they house. Her mother, she lost her house. My youngest daughter lost her house. And I'm talking about losing; I'm talking about they was just gone.

Hester: Right. So I guess they were all coming here.

Schultz: Yeah. The weather gets bad; everybody comes here because we know what we can do and know what we need to do. And everybody just, you pool all your resources together, and it's easy; once you know where everybody's at, it's easy.

Hester: How did Katrina affect the waters and the fishing out there?

Schultz: It was good shrimping after Katrina, yeah. Yeah. It was real, real good. The *Reva Rose*, it made some unbelievable trips, and it made them fast, too. And that's going to be the key to the future of this industry is to catch shrimp close, close to your home, and catch them fast. And when there ain't none, you tie up. You can't shrimp the way we used to go. We used to just go and go and go and go until you found something and then catch it. But it's changed now. You can't do that anymore. You can't go and look and drag for nothing. You've got to be producing because your fuel costs (0:48:34.2) is so much. This boy took off from here the other day with that boat, and he went to Cape Canaveral. That's 120 hours. Well, you're burning forty gallon an hour.

Hester: It's expensive.

Schultz: It gets expensive. He's like four thousand dollars just to go up there to work, to start with. Now, he'll make it. He'll make it up there, but it's a gamble.

Hester: Um-hm. And they hear that that's a good place to fish right now.

Schultz: Right now, yeah.

Hester: And so they know it's worth (inaudible).

Schultz: And they know that with any hope at all, they going to do good up in there until up in November, late November, December. They going to do good up there because that's the time of the year when they catch shrimp up there. After them cold

fronts start coming, and it runs all the shrimp out of them bays and stuff, before they get on the outside, well, that's when them guys are going to catch them, and they going to do good.

Hester: Yeah. Got you. You were telling me that you serve—I know you weren't fishing then, during the BP oil spill, but you served on the governor's commission. (0:49:42.8)

Schultz: Yeah.

Hester: And I was wondering if you could tell me something about that. How did you get involved in that?

Schultz: Your name kind of gets, if you've been involved in the industry all your life, well, if you got any kind of qualifications, I guess you'd say, or any kind of accomplishments in your life, well, you make friends all over the place. Some of these friends have become really, really good. George Schloegel, Gulfport's one of them; he's a close friend. We got involved with George Schloegel way back in early [19]70s, I guess it was; become family friends, and he was young in the bank at the time, and he went on up in the bank. And well, he become really, very influential in the politics of the state. So he was friends with Haley Barbour. And so the governor was wanting to put this group together, and so George suggested, well, me. He said he would like to see me represent the commercial fishing industry. So that's how I got on it. It was a big group of people there, some disappointments, conversations. Of course that's going to happen. It was probably fifty, sixty of us; probably fifty people there, directly talking, speaking. They was probably that many fringe people around, making comments. But what it got to be, what they was looking for, we really didn't get to accomplish because it got to be where the politicians in Bay St. Louis and Waveland and Bayou Caddy and over there, Hancock County wanted one thing. The ones in Pass Christian and over that a-way, and Long Beach, they wanted something else. People in Pascagoula, they wanted something else. So instead of homogenizing this and getting it all together and saying, "Listen. This is what we got to do now. We got a great opportunity here. Let's take this money, and let's really do something with it." I know where you seen that in the paper the other day, there, about it. They going to clean the bayous out behind Bay St. Louis. Well, that was the mayor of Bay St. Louis. That was one of his things he wanted. He wanted BP money to clean them canals out. Well, the canals were filled in by Katrina, and they was filled in gradually over a period of a whole bunch of years, and he seen an opportunity to get the money to do that with. Well, everybody wants they part of the pie. They could have done a lot of things. To me, that was all private property owners there, the canals. A bunch of them canals was privately owned and all that, that shouldn't have been used for that. The mayor of Ocean Springs, she wanted a bunch of other stuff, artsy type stuff, (inaudible) this and that. And they sit there, and they argue about this stuff. And we were supposed to have a meeting that started at ten and ended at one. We didn't even get the meeting started by one o'clock, so it went to five o'clock. So then we broke out into groups of about fifteen. And they said, "OK. This group's going to handle

environmental problems. This group's going to handle industry problems or business problems." Well, I wound up back with the group, with the environmental group, about what we could do, and it was the same thing over and over again. Connie Rockco, who I like, and she's nice to me, but she had different ideas about what to do with this money. And they seeing millions and millions and millions of dollars, "Oh, man. We can do this, and we can do that." And it was the BP money.

Hester: And what were the commercial fishermen saying? You were representing their interests, right?

Schultz: Well, what I was interested in, I said, "Look. We got a great opportunity now. The oyster reefs caught hell out there, (0:54:31.2) and what happened: the slug of water that come in, when the water come in, it didn't just come up gradually like that. It come in in about a twenty-foot slug of water. Well, that tears the bottom up.

Hester: And you're talking about the water coming in from?

Schultz: From the Gulf, out of the Gulf, for Katrina.

Hester: Oh, for Katrina.

Schultz: Yeah. You see in the movies that it just gradually come, and it come in twenty foot. It was sixty foot at the sea buoys off the mouth of the river. And when it hit the barrier island, it was thirty foot. And they had that measured. Well, that whole slug of water, that's what went up through Bayou Caddy and Bay St. Louis and New Orleans. That's what really tore New Orleans up. Well, what we were saying is, "We got to start from scratch. The oysters are all gone. Let's take"—now, this was six years after the storm, now. They just started doing some planting out here this year. "Let's buy a bunch of this limestone aggregate and put on the bottom out there around those reefs and start building those reefs back up again." Now, it'll probably take a lot more than what they put out there. Well, they could have put, seeing they got these millions and millions and millions of dollars, put a bunch of that stuff around these reefs and get these reefs started good, and then oysters would stick to that stuff. That would have been the startup for it. But it just didn't happen.

Hester: Did they do anything? (0:56:14.4)

Schultz: Well, they started planting some shells that come from Crystal Seas in Pass Christian. Of course them shells belong to the state already, so all they had to do was get them on the barge and then pay the guy on the barge to take them out there and put them out. So you had to have money to do that with. But the bureau had got enough money from BP specifically to do some of these things with. But what it had done, they had took too much money. They buy a hundred thousand barrels of oyster shells. I mean, they had them. So they going to put the on the barge. So the barge guy's got the barge and the tug; he's going to charge them so much a barrel to cart them out there, and then the bureau's going to blow them off the barges. Well, it just, the

money evaporates. Instead of you getting a barrel for your dollar, you getting a quarter of a barrel for your dollar, things like that. And it's a known fact; I mean, this is not gossip. This is not hearsay. It's just what the hell happened. They should have done ten times what they done out there for the amount of stuff that they had, and the money that they had. They had to buy new boats, new fire boats. They had to buy new patrol boats. They had to buy new guns. Everybody had to have a new gun. Everybody had to have this, GPSs [global positioning systems], the whole (inaudible). And there again, that's what those people thought they needed, and they pitched they case that, "We need these new boats." They bought some new boats down there, and they jet-powered boats, very good boats for law enforcement to have, but they got nobody here that knows how to run that boat. They got some of the guys barred off the boats; they can't even—and this is the guy that's chief of law enforcement. He can't run that boat anymore because he's tore up so much stuff in the harbor, trying to get it out. So you got to (laughter) send these guys to school—

Hester: To learn how to do it.

Schultz: To learn how to handle that particular boat. It's a different boat than what—and I was talking to one of the guys that works with that type of boat. And he said it's an entirely different feel of a boat when you handling it, when you maneuvering it and backing it up and all this. But he said once you do it a few times, he said it's not different from the other boat. But it's just something new.

Hester: Was it something to monitor the waters? What was the purpose of the boat?

Schultz: The boats, they was—there again, they pitch these things with public relations people. And they pitch, "Well, we're going to have these boats. They're going to monitor the water. (0:59:24.5) They're going to monitor the water quality." What kind of water quality they going to monitor? They going to monitor top of the water? The bottom of the water? And you go ask these guys because I know them, all of them, and I go talk to them. I said, "How many samples have y'all taken off the water column at the bottom?" "None." "Don't you think it'd be a good idea to take, check water quality, say, at the bottom, halfway to the surface, and at the top?" "Well, what's at the top's going to be at the bottom." "Not necessarily." And it's just things like that. So he got an expensive boat that the drives on these boats cost a hundred thousand dollars. So the boat probably cost five hundred thousand, six hundred thousand. "Shouldn't you get a little something more what you need than having all this flim-flam stuff?" Something that would make sense with it.

Hester: Did they go out and find any? I mean, were they finding oil?

Schultz: No. They don't listen to nothing that you tell them. I go all over the place, talk to all these fishermen. I was talking to some of these guys that gig flounders at night. (1:00:50.3) And what they do, they gigging flounders commercially. One of them told me the other day, he said, "I'm going to tell you what the floundering's like." He said, "We doing pretty good gigging flounders," said, "three hundred pound,

four hundred pound a night." He said, "Pre-oil spill," he said, "we'd be doing six hundred pound a night right now. But," he said, "three hundred pound," he said, "that's still good money. But," he said, "what we seeing," he said, "when we were gigging, we'd gig one out of four. You'd have a good flounder. You'd have three or four small flounders. Well, there's no money in them small flounders, so you don't fool with them. You get them later." He said they're not seeing those small flounders. He said, "Everything you see is a pound and a half, pound and three/quarter flounder, up." He said, "You don't see any little. How come there's no little flounder?" Something's wrong with the bottom. Something's wrong with the recruitment of them fish, the spawning, or whatever that's caused this problem. But he said—you go talk to these people, "Oh," they'll, "they got good years, and they got bad years," they say. But he said, "I can go back and look at the last ten years, and month by month, I can tell you where I gigged flounders, how many I gigged. I can tell you about what they weighed." So nobody's listening.

Hester: What recommendations did the commission make as far as restoring the Gulf waters after the spill?

Schultz: Well, the group I was with, the environmentalist group, mainly what they—they going to depend on DEQ [Department of Environmental Quality] and those agencies to furnish them with information, what they picking up and then report back to the group I was with. And I can't think of the boy's first name, but his last name is Peoples. And he is directly tied to Haley Barbour. That's his representative on this commission. And he's a nice kid. He's good, honest, really wants to get answers to what it is. So what they got, they got these state agencies reporting in to them, but if they not getting all the necessary information or listening to the people that's out there every day and are finding out what's going on—now, outside of Horn Island, (1:03:38.6) in them gullies, you wouldn't think that you'd be up on what goes on. They got a bunch of gullies out there, and you go from the beach line, and you go out, and it'll go down two or three feet. And it come up on a gully, and then it'll go back down. As you offshore, you get a little deeper each gully. You'll get deeper. Well, my nephews is out there fishing the other day, and they said that there was plenty of fish. They said they was catching good fish. They was wade-fishing. He said they got out till they was chest deep. He said in them gullies you can feel the oil, (1:04:16.8) coming up between your toes. But the fish was still there. He said they were still feeding around there (inaudible) that oil is not bothering them fish. Or is it that fish got big enough to survive being around the oil, or what is it? Nobody's listening to what—they get there and catch some of them fish out of that gully and do some sampling (1:04:45.1) on them and find out if there's anything in the fish, anything with his makeup that's changed; find out what's going on.

Hester: And they're not doing that?

Schultz: They're not doing that, no.

Hester: I had taken the interview of Pete Floyd in Pascagoula, and he had said that the tar balls (1:05:07.3) were actually creating a habitat for some of the fish that they, I guess whatever they were feeding on was clinging to the balls.

Schultz: Yeah. He come from a net-fishing family, Pete did, yeah. And his wife works for the bureau, but if they'd just take some of the common-sense approaches to things and put it with the scientific stuff, then you'd get a little bit better idea about what's happening.

Hester: And it makes a lot of sense to go to the commercial fishermen to get information because they're out there, working in the waters every day.

Schultz: And you seeing it every day, every day on the boat. Now, I was talking with a friend of mine, Donald Baker, who's a good fishermen, and he said under Ship Island (1:06:03.9) where they traditionally catch big shrimp this time of year, he said there's nothing there. He said there's no trash. He said, "You don't catch a conch. You don't see nothing. There's nothing on the bottom out there alive." Now, when you get from about the Biloxi East Channel, going east, he said you start seeing some stuff on the inside. You get around the grass beds and stuff, you'll start seeing live stuff and live fish. How come there's nothing out there? (1:06:41.1) Why not get some bottom samples, get some water samples? Something has changed something that that was productive ground, and all of a sudden it's not. What has happened?

Hester: The commission, does it still have a function?

Schultz: No. We hadn't been having any meetings or anything. I had talked to—there's a friend of mine; he's on the Audubon Society in Pascagoula, and I was telling him about some of these things I've been hearing and trying to get some input from his end of it to go look at some of this stuff. And he said, "Well, every time I talk to," some of the people that he's talking with, he's getting the same thing that I'm getting. "We got it. We looking at it. We doing this. We doing that." He said, "Well, what are y'all doing? We hadn't seen anything. We hadn't seen any newsletters come. We hadn't seen any paperwork. Hadn't got any phone calls. Nothing. What's going on?" And they seem to think that the bureau, which they should be I guess, should know all of these things, but it's just not happening.

Hester: How much is BP still hands-on in this area, communicating with the people and still helping? (1:08:22.6)

Schultz: Well, they still got a big project going on Cat Island. And a fellow I know that's working, got his boat hired out to them, and they doing a rebuilding process down there, putting sand up on the beach and all that on Cat Island. I think that's just a show thing. They bought the east end of Cat Island from Goose Point to North Point. They bought a strip of land there. And that was all pretty high sand hills previous to Katrina, but Katrina knocked them sand hills down pretty bad. So they pumping some of that sand back up there, and they trying to restore a bunch of grass

and bushes and stuff up on the island. He's been working with that. I think he's working partly with the park service and with BP.

Hester: Who is he?

Schultz: That's Steve Bosarge. Yeah. He's got a partnership with him and his daughter and another boy. And they built a boat specially to do that. It can get up in water, oh, that deep, and it's fifty foot long, and I think it's fifteen foot wide. It's a big barge, and that's what they been using it for.

Hester: Is he active in the Ship Island restoration as well?

Schultz: No. He hadn't been involved in that. He's been doing some work with turtles in Gulfport channel. But now they took that dredge, and you see it; it's right inside of Deer Island, (1:10:14.0) right here now. And that's another goofball project. And what they did; they pumped sand up on the outside, and they made a barrier out there. Well, now they pumping the mud out the channel to go between the sand they pumped up and the island itself, and they going to plant grass in there they said, marsh grass. But he had been dragging for turtles (1:10:38.9) around that dredge. And what they do, they just drag around and around that cutter-head and catching turtles. They been catching pretty good bit of turtles, too. And they relocate them. But I drug for turtles in Cape Canaveral Channel, and there was more turtles there than anyplace I ever seen in my life.

Hester: Is that right?

Schultz: They was some turtles in that place, and we'd make forty-five-minute drags. That's all they'd let you. I was working for the fishery service. Make a forty-five-minute drag, and you'd catch seven, eight, nine turtles on a drag.

Hester: And that's in Florida.

Schultz: Yeah. And we would take and tag the turtles, take them offshore, turn them loose, and we never caught one of them tagged turtles again. We caught the same amount of turtles every day. And right there, cruise ships, I mean, they just coming and going, and they got to be killing a bunch of them turtles because them big boats going out of there, I can't see how they could miss killing them.

Hester: I was going to ask you. What recommendations did the commission make in regard to marketing Gulf seafood? I know there've been some problems with perception that it's been tainted. (1:12:09.8)

Schultz: Well, we had an organization that we had started up, and it was too much money, too easy to get to, and the money disappeared. And I'll tell you how much it was. It was eleven million dollars, and it was for a marketing group. And they was doing some marketing, and they had a good marketing program going. But what

happened is we asked for an accounting of the money. So they give us an accounting of the salaries, the office, the electricity bill, the telephone bill, and all this stuff. But we wanted to see the total outlay of the money and how much it was costing for all these different national programs to get on TV and the cook shows and all this stuff with it and caused a bunch of trouble, anyhow. That money went. So when we had this first meeting at the Hancock Bank for this commission with the governor, before them guys showed up at the meeting, and they seen all this money BP was throwing into this. All they could see was dollar signs.

Hester: Now, these guys are?

Schultz: Let me see what they organization—I can't think of they name right this second. It's a group that was put up from Savannah, Georgia, and it was—my mind went blank.

Hester: Somebody that, a group that BP hired to—

Schultz: No. It was a group that we'd had hired as Southern Shrimp Alliance, that they'd hired to market shrimp; promote Gulf shrimp is what we were wanting to do, wild-caught, American shrimp. That's what the name of it was, wild-caught shrimp. Well, we had guys like Emeril Lagasse, and he did a bunch of stuff for us. And Louisiana Seafood Promotion Board did some stuff. And so we tied a bunch of this stuff together, and it was doing pretty good. But like I say, it just went to pot. And they showed up over here for this first meeting in Gulfport, and they was wanting me and two or three of the other guys there to support them in this thing. Well, I told George Schloegel—he was at the meeting. I said, "George, I can't support these guys." Now, they showing movies about what all they'd done and cookouts they had done and all the promotion work they had done, and a lot of this stuff they had actually done it. But I said, "Eleven million dollars went through the cracks. We don't want to get tied up with this bunch." And they didn't. So the Bureau of Marine Resources said what they was going to do, they was going to go out and make available, if you wanted to put a promotion together to promote Gulf shrimp and safe shrimp, Gulf oil-free shrimp, or whatever you want to call it, well, you could come to them and pitch your proposal, and they were going to accept one of them. Never heard no more about it. I don't know where that went. But that's another thing that fell through the cracks. But I know this bunch here that we were tied up; he didn't want to fool with them because they was snake-oil salesmen, all that bunch.

Hester: I think we've pretty much covered everything that I was thinking I would ask, but just in closing, could you tell us, where do you see the seafood industry going on the Mississippi Gulf Coast now? (1:16:31.1)

Schultz: Well, I was at a meeting. There's another meeting coming up shortly here, I think, but last year we had a meeting with—it's a group, and it's the people, the driving force behind it is the fishery service in Tampa. And what they want to do is find out that same thing, is where the industry's going. And prior to 2000, say 2000,

they was 7,986 commercial licenses in the Gulf of Mexico. Now, it's a difference between shrimping, buying a shrimp license and shrimping in the Mississippi Sound, Louisiana, or Texas, or Florida. But to fish in federal waters, outside the twelve mile, (1:17:32.6) you got to have a commercial shrimp license issued by the feds. There was seven thousand. They said that we going to have to eliminate bycatch, cut bycatch. We going to have to do all of these things. We going to have to do. We going to have to cut them 60 percent. Well, the shrimp fleet went from that 7,986. It went down to year before last they was fourteen hundred boats that fished. They had the license, but they chose not to fish. This year here that just passed, the (inaudible) season, they was nine hundred and eighty people that fished. So here you went way the hell under that 60 percent just by the number of boats, but they said that that don't count. It don't count that a-way. Said if you got one boat out there, he's still got to reduce that 60 percent.

Hester: So what would you say, just in looking at the big picture, were some of the hardest-hitting—

Schultz: What's going to have to happen—and I've talked with a bunch of fishermen about this on these big boats. What's going to have to happen is that you going to have to catch shrimp close to home. You going to have to catch them fast. You going to have to have a closed season, or you going to have to close the whole Gulf down. Nobody wants to hear that. A big majority of the guys that was at the meeting that we talked with about this, "What the hell do we do?" Don't make any difference. If you can get the Gulf shut down for three months of the year, when it would open back again, you'd be able to catch shrimp closer to home, catch them quicker, when the shrimp were gone, go tie back to the dock because you can't run them boats the way we used to run them. (1:19:43.6) You can't pay the bills. When I had this boat built, the insurance on it was twenty-five hundred dollars a month for P and I [protection and indemnity] and for liability. That same boat there, that insurance on that boat's sixty thousand dollars a year. Well, that's another big bill you got on top of you. So you're going to have to have a—what we wanted to do is have a season, and man, we got into all kind of controversies with this. We wanted a season where when the Texas season opens, we'd have a closed season in Mississippi, and we would open the same time that Texas. What that would do, that would scatter the boats out over the whole Gulf. And you wouldn't put a big bunch of boats in Texas at one time, or a big bunch in Mississippi at one time. It would make you catch shrimp a little longer because it'd be less boats in your area, so you'd be able to produce longer, closer to home, shorter runs, less expense, and you going to survive. If you don't—I was talking with Steve the other day. He said the only survival thing he sees, he said they going to have to diversify and go to doing different things. (1:21:04.3) And like him, he's got one boat working turtle work over here. He's got one boat that's working long-lining in the Gulf out here for NMFS [National Marine Fishery Service], but that job's fixing to end. And that's been running since the oil spill.

Hester: As a research effort.

Schultz: Yeah, research effort. And what they doing, they looking for fish where there were never fish before. Goofiest, it's goofy crap. It's a shame, and I hate to be so negative about things, but I mean, I go all over talking with fishermen, talking with fisheries groups, "What do y'all think?" Everybody said, "We had it."

Hester: They're leaving?

Schultz: They leaving. They ain't encouraging none of the young people to get in it. The kids ain't getting in it. If they get in it, it's just going to be, if they can't find a job doing anything else, they can go out there, and they can fish, and they can survive. Ain't going to make money, but you're going to survive. And that's what Steve's saying. That's what most of the guys that I know of. One guy told me, he said he could have sold his boat, and he could have made money. He could have sold his boat for seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, but he said by the time he'd have paid income tax on it with the capitol gains, he said it took half of what he had. So he said that big number would have turned out to not be a big number.

Hester: Right. Well, do you have anything—there may be questions that I should have asked that I didn't think of. Is there anything—you're making history here, and this is going to be archived, and a lot of people will have access to it. And so is there something that you would like to put on the record?

Schultz: Well, I think that for me, it's been a great life for me. (1:23:15.0) I started off with nothing. I quit school in the eighth grade, and my daddy didn't want me to quit. And school just wasn't in my thoughts. I wanted to be like him. He was a fisherman. He seen it coming way back that you had to have a good education. Everything that I learned in the Gulf, I learned the hard way, the school of hard knocks. You learn, and you learn from your friends and from your older guys. And you learn, and you go along, and it's been a great experience, been fortunate enough to put four kids through college; had a good family. There's nothing in it that I would want to change. I hate to see the industry going the way it's went, and I don't blame it on BP. I just blame it on just times. It's just something that happened. BP might have something to do with it. Maybe all this water that come down the Mississippi River with all these chemicals and stuff (1:24:36.1) because all it is is a big drainage ditch for the rest of the country. Maybe that's where all the problems was coming from, or some of the problems is coming from and then the mixture of BP and all the rest of it. It might be that, but it seem like with the technology that we got in this country, some of those questions should be able to be answered without—but everybody's scared of pointing the finger at the other guy. They don't want to point the finger. I've been to meetings where they talked about the fertilizer, overuse of fertilizer in Nebraska, coming down the rivers and coming into the Mississippi River and Missouri and then to Mississippi and coming out to the Gulf or what it's done to the Gulf out here. And somebody's going to have to take responsibility for it at one point in time. It's got to happen. And they already know they can use a lot less fertilizer and still get by. So maybe that'll help, but they got a dead zone out there that grows every year by leaps and bounds that there's nothing in it.

Hester: If a young person came to you and said, "Mr. Schultz, I'm thinking about going into the commercial fishing industry," what would your recommendation be? What would you tell him?

Schultz: I'd tell him he better go back to school and find him a—I was listening on the talk radio yesterday, and a guy was talking about one of the problems in the country is they say that none of the young people in this country of America are getting into the sciences, engineering and that type of stuff. None of them are getting into that. They getting into marketing and this and that and the other. But the reason they not getting into it is what the man said afterwards. He said these guys can't find a job because you can have a good engineering degree and be a good student, and if you don't have a job to get into, what good is that engineering degree going to do you? And they speak about the Southeast Asians and all these bunches, how smart they are. Well, I don't care how smart you are, if there's not a job there for you to get into, you're going to be just like me. You're going to be stuck right in the fishing industry. Of course it's been good to me, so I can't complain about it.

Hester: Yeah. I can tell that you really enjoyed fishing (inaudible).

Schultz: I did. I loved it. I loved it. To me it was a challenge, when I'd throw the lines off and the dock, and we started out, it was a challenge. From that day right on to the time I come back to the dock and unloaded whatever I had, it was a challenge. And it kept your mind going and thinking, "Where can I go? Where can I do better? Where can I be at? Where should I be at?" And it's a big Gulf out there. It's a bunch of, bunch of water to thread through, and them shrimp ain't every place, either. They's a little bit more here than over there, but they not all over the whole Gulf because they got miles and miles and miles of it that, it's nothing. I even hung up on a Spanish galleon one time. (1:28:25.5) And the guys told, said, "Now, you be careful when you get off down here, off the mouth of the river. They got a hang out there. It'll take a bunch of equipment away from you." This was before the oil fields got to drilling so much out there, and they got so much junk on the bottom. So damn if I didn't hang up on the thing. And I got a couple of pieces of wood off of it and some junk. And what they said, it was an old boat that had burned up or something. And I got to looking at the piece of wood, and I had one piece of wood that was about that long, about that wide, about so thick. And it was full of copper tacks. Well, what I didn't know is that a long time ago, they didn't have copper paint, so they'd put copper tacks in the bottom of boats to keep the worms from getting in them. Well, them Spanish galleons had done that, had them tacks. So I hung up on that thing, and tore up a bunch of equipment, got off of it, and I told them guys, I said, "I hung on that thing, and I don't know what the hell that is, but I got some pieces of wood off of it." They said, "Well, that's an old boat that burned up." Well, a few years had passed, and some guys come along, and they hung that same wreck because everybody had readings on it. We got lorans [long range navigation] and all that stuff by then. So everybody had a reading on it. These guys got some of the rocks off of it. They had some rocks that was ballast in the ship, and them ballast rocks was—one of the kids

that was on the boat was going to school at Texas A and M, and he was going in the—what the heck you call it? The geology department. So he brought the rocks to class with him, and they said that those rocks come from a certain place in Mexico. So I said, "Well, I'll be damned. How can that be a burned boat there that come from Mexico?" So they got to checking into it. So they hired them a diver, and this was in like forty fathoms of water, which is pretty good depth there, two hundred and forty feet. And they dived on the boat, and they found out that it was an old Spanish galleon.

Hester: Was that in Mississippi area?

Schultz: No. It's west of the river, down here. It's what they call west of the hole. It's about due south of Grand Isle. And they got a bunch of stuff off of it. They got a bunch of silver coins and cowhides that was wrapped and folded and tied for shipment, and a bunch of artifacts off of it and stuff. But due to the depth of the water and the muddy, muddy bottom, they didn't get what they should off of it. So a couple of years rolled around. Well, down off Cameron, Louisiana, they had one that was there. And it's marked on the chart, and it said, "Burned boat." So we'd dodge around it when we down there, dragging that area. We'd dodge around it. Well, right inshore where that boat was at—and this was in shallow water, five fathoms, six fathoms—they had a bayou. The name of the bayou was the Constance, Bayou Constance. That boat that was sunk there was a Spanish galleon, and the name of it was *The Constance*. Same story, almost to the T. Some boys dived on it, young guys dived on it, and they got a bunch of rocks off of it, and they took it to school, and they found out where it come from in Mexico. The come, dived that thing, got a bunch of coins and all kind of artifacts.

Hester: Do you know where in Mexico, specifically?

Schultz: No. I don't know, but they said the rocks was almost like glass. He said you could break them easy. You could hit them together, and they would break.

Hester: Like a quartz, maybe.

Schultz: Yeah, something like a quartz, I guess. And what happened to them was because it was in state waters, well, they just went and dived it, and they got a whole bunch of coins and stuff, and they went and put them in a safety deposit box in Lafayette. And then the state of Louisiana comes back and seizes them because they wanted they part. Then the feds had to get they part out of it. So when it got down to the crew, they didn't get nothing.

Hester: Oh, wow. Well, does Texas A and M have the stuff that they found in the first?

Schultz: Most of the stuff went to the—the artifacts and stuff that come off of it, the guy's name was, his last name was White. And them Whites is a big family back

around Lake Charles, somewheres in that area there. Right below Lake Charles there's a little community there, and that's where they were from, the Whites. But I don't know what happened. But they did get a lot of stuff off of it. They got some navigation, like a sextant-like deal off of it and cookware and some guns.

Hester: That's amazing.

Schultz: But I said that's two times now, here I get tangled up with gold, but I don't get nothing but a plank off of it. (laughter)

Hester: Oh, my. Oh, wow.

Schultz: But it's really been a great life. I'd hate to know what the younger people are going to have to get into. A bunch of the guys that I had on the boat with me, that started off, were young guys. They wound up getting they own boats, and now, most of them is getting off the boats. (1:34:55.6) I just talked to one the other day. His brother said he just got disgusted. He just tired of fighting it and fighting regulations and stuff, so he says just about all those guys. So that's like the second generation from me, and that's guys that learned on the boat with me and for the most part become good fishermen.

Hester: So what industries are they going to when they leave fishing?

Schultz: Well, this one boy, he's going to make trawl boards. He's pretty good with nets, making nets or patching nets. He's going to get into that, fool with that. And one of them, I [was] talking to him. He said his wife's working, and he's going to get social security; he collect him some social security, however long that lasts. And he said they'll get by. They live back up in, almost to Ramsey(?) Springs, which is back up on Highway 15, north of Biloxi. They bought up there right after Katrina. And he said he wasn't going to get washed out again, so he got (inaudible) back in the woods.

Hester: And his name is? Who is he?

Schultz: I wouldn't recommend nobody to get into the fishing industry now. For the amount of money that you got to put into it to get into it, I just can't see it. There'd have to be some drastic changes made in the industry for you to—there'll always be an industry there. There'll always be somebody to do it, but to do it the way we did, no. It ain't going to be like that no more. Most all of the dealers that I dealt with, all them guys are dead. I said, "Hell, I'm getting to feel like a whooping crane here, now." (laughter) Ain't too many left.

Hester: Well, I think the commercial fishermen have a good voice in you. You're still active, and it sounds like they need somebody to speak up for them.

Schultz: Well, I like to think that I don't think a lot of the stuff that I—I don't think up myself. I like to go talk to everybody. Talk to these other guys, "Well, how do

y'all feel about this? What do y'all want to do about it?" And most of the guys are so damn independent, including myself. I was told the same thing; say, "You know what's the matter with you? You too independent. You don't want to listen." I said, "Well, maybe. But that's the way I learned from my daddy." And one time the priest down at St. Michael's, we was having a conversation, and he said, "We want you to get together with the Vietnamese (1:38:03.8) community and kind of bring harmony between the Vietnamese and the American fishermen." I said, "It ain't going to happen. It just is not going to happen." He said, "Well, why not?" I said, "Well, look. I don't agree with the bunch from Gulfport and Pass Christian. How in the hell am I going to agree with somebody from the other side the world? You can forget about it. It ain't going to happen." And this is your home. This is your turf, here. The people in Pass Christian, they the same way. That's they town. That's they oyster reef out there. "Don't bother with us." Pascagoula's the same way, Bayou La Batre.

Hester: I find that in a lot of other industries, as well. It's not just a commercial-fishing industry characteristic, but in other industries everybody's pretty much staying to themselves and their own communities.

Schultz: Yeah. I know when we back in the days when I was working at DeJean's—my daddy worked for DeJean Packing Company, which was right where the Grand [Casino] sits now. And they was four fleets of boats there. They was about fifteen boats to the fleet. Well, my daddy worked with Jack Williams and that bunch and his sons and two or three outsiders. Then they had my father-in-law; he had his brothers, and he had a few people that they worked together with. The Frenchmen, they worked together. They had some Polish; they worked together. And they always hollering about the people. This was all at one factory. We talked to each other, but we all went our separate ways when we went to work. You just went your separate ways. I said, "I know why we got to be so uptight about not wanting to work with the other guy." The Vietnamese, as far as the Vietnamese, I don't have any use for the Vietnamese, period. They the ruination of this city. They the ruination of the Coast, and I don't think that all the Vietnamese in Southeast Asia is worth one thimble of blood, American blood that was shed. That was shed for nothing over there, that whole damn war was nothing but a—that was the biggest mess they ever was, we ever got ourself into. But then they running the drug business here in Biloxi; 99 percent of the drugs in Biloxi, right now, that's what it is, is Vietnamese. I mean, and I know a lot of what goes on behind the scenes, and I got family involved in the police department. And I hear these young kids talking about what's happening. You would not believe how bad the drug problem is around here. We had a little drug problem before, but it wasn't nothing like it is now. It's a big, big business, millions and millions and millions of dollars.

Hester: Wow. Well, Mr. Schultz, thank you so much. I really do appreciate you doing this for us.

Schultz: Well, I hope you got just a little bit about what you was looking for.

Hester: We've got a lot, a lot of information here. And we really do appreciate it. Thank you so much. And I'll go ahead and turn this off now.

Schultz: My daddy, they started sailing, and he shrimped, sailing, and they seined for shrimp. Then power boats come along, and they converted the schooners to power boats, so he come along with that time. Well, right after that's when I come. I can still remember at the foot of Oak Street, in the summertime, the boats didn't work. So what they'd do, that whole fleet of schooners, they'd anchor them out right there in that middle, between Deer Island, and they'd go out there, a couple of the crews, and they'd put sails up. If the weather was nice, they'd put the sails up and let them dry out.

Hester: That was a sight to see.

Schultz: Yeah. It was.

Hester: Beautiful.

Schultz: And they'd take and put the sails in a—they had big, old barrels, and they'd take and put the sail in a barrel; put a layer of salt; put some more sail, layer of salt. I said, "Man, that seem like that rot the canvas." But they said it kept the canvas, protected it. So then they'd hoist them up and let them dry. But I can remember. I can still remember that. I wasn't involved with the sailing part of it, but I can remember. That was a sight to see.

Hester: I bet it was.

Schultz: There were forty or fifty of them big boats there.

Hester: Yeah. I bet it was. Well, I'll go ahead and turn this off now, and—

Schultz: OK.

(end of interview)