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Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage

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Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Irvin Eugene “Gene” Stork

Interviewer: Stephanie Scull-DeArmey

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*An Oral History with Irvin Eugene "Gene" Stork, Volume 1043*

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## Biography

Mr. Irvin Eugene Stork was born on April 23, 1932, in Moss Point, Mississippi, to Mr. Henry W. Stork, a commercial fisherman, and Mrs. Hattie B. Clark Stork. At the time of this interview, Mr. Stork had retired from Dow Chemical Plant and from commercial fishing. He was graduated from high school, after making the All State Basketball team, and he became a captain in the Army during his military service. He enjoys gardening and fishing in his retirement. His children are Tammy, Vickie, Donna, and Edward.

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AN ORAL HISTORY  
with  
IRVIN EUGENE "GENE" STORK

*This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Irvin Eugene Stork and is taking place on March 9, 2012. The interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArme. The interview was conducted in the wetlands of Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, on Bayou Heron, in Pecan, Mississippi.*

**Scull-DeArme:** This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Project of The University of Southern Mississippi, done in conjunction with the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Voices from the Fisheries/BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster Project. The interview is with Eugene Stork. Is it Irvin Eugene Stork?

**Stork:** Yes.

**Scull-DeArme:** And it is taking place on March 9, 2012, at two p.m. in Pecan, Mississippi. The interviewer is Stephanie [Scull]-DeArme. And first I'd like to thank you, Mr. Stork, for taking time to talk to me today, and I'd like to ask you for a little bit of background information. I'm going to ask you, for the record, could you state your name, please?

**Stork:** Irvin Eugene Stork

**Scull-DeArme:** And when were you born?

**Stork:** April 23, 1932.

**Scull-DeArme:** Do you have my pen?

**Stork:** Yes, I do. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArme:** I need to be writing with it. (laughter) Thank you. Tell me when you were born, again?

**Stork:** April 23, 1932.

**Scull-DeArme:** Nineteen thirty-two. And where were you born?

**Stork:** I was born in Moss Point, Mississippi.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Where'd you grow up?

**Stork:** I grew up in Pecan, Mississippi. (0:01:36.9)

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Tell me about your childhood.

**Stork:** Well, my childhood, I guess time I was six, five or six years old, I was fishing for crawfish in the ditches around the area. (0:01:52.0) We'd split a potato sack, and we'd call it like "dragging." We'd start on the shallow side and go up the dark side, two; one on one end, the other. And we'd catch crawfish for them to fish with. I was a little bit too young to fish then. I had to walk, but we had a lot of fun. We would catch fish in the ditch, (0:02:14.6) even, sun perch, goggle-eye, and bass, and different types. We had cotton fish and what we call a jackfish. And then every once in a while we'd drag up a snake, which we, most of the time we'd maybe kill him with a stick if it was around, or we'd just throw him back up on the bank, somewhere. (laughter) We wouldn't come back in. But we would travel over the area and catch crawfish, all out in the ponds and different places. And we would come back. Sometime we would sell them to people. (0:02:54.4) They would give us maybe twenty-five cents for a hundred just to go fishing with, you know, and we had a little change when we went to school. (laughter) And let's see. What else on that? Well, cane-pole fishing, that come later. Of course, I was up around ten, eleven years, and my dad, and we would go cane-pole fishing. (0:03:20.6) And we didn't have no hook sometime; we'd us a straight pen. And when you hooked a fish, you would have to pull him on in pretty hard because we didn't have no barb on the straight pen like a regular hook. (phone rings) That thing's aggravating me. (laughter) Let me cut it off. I'm sorry.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** That's OK.

**Stork:** Maybe it'll be off. Put it way over there where you can't hear it. Now, where was we at, about the cane-pole fishing?

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What is a barb? What is a barb for?

**Stork:** The barb, it's like a hook, your hook comes out like that, if you can see it, the regular fishhook, and then you got a barb here, what's your barb, I think what they call it. And when it goes in the fish's mouth, you see, he don't come off. He don't come off as easy. But a straight pen, you didn't have that on there. You just had to, when you hooked him, you had to just pull him on in because he'd shake himself off and go back in the water. But sometime we'd lose them. But it wasn't nothing to go out here in the woods, back then, and you had old, what we called alligator holes (0:04:29.3) in these swamps and things, and you'd catch all the fish you wanted. 0:04:33.0

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What kind of fish?

**Stork:** We would catch what we call a goggle-eye and bass and bull bream, what we call a bull bream, a bluegill, actually what they call them, and we'd catch some that we didn't eat, gar and grenal sometimes, that different—

**Scull-DeArmey:** Grendl?

**Stork:** Grenal, which we called them cotton fish; that was the proper name for them, but we called them grenal back then. And some people would eat turtles. (0:05:04.4) We'd catch a big turtle, and they'd eat them. They'd eat snapping turtles and them old loggerhead turtles, which I wouldn't eat one of them things (laughter) back then, but I know a lot of people would eat them. They'd get them out of the shell and eat them because they needed food. But they enjoyed that, a lot of people.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you ever sell turtles that you caught?

**Stork:** No. I never did sell turtles.

**Scull-DeArmey:** When people got the crawfish for bait from you, what were they going to catch?

**Stork:** They was going to catch mostly goggle-eye and bream and bass. Different fish would bite them.

**Scull-DeArmey:** OK. And what did y'all use for bait on your cane poles?

**Stork:** Well, we used mostly worms and crawfish, also.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Where'd you get the worms? (0:05:54.5)

**Stork:** Oh, you could dig just anywhere back then, north of the railroad, around a old barn or something. You could find them, or you could lay boards out, and if it got kind of dry, them worms would come up under them boards. You'd turn them over and catch them. We had just oodles of wiggle-worms back then. I mean, they were some big ones.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I have a compost heap at home, and I bought some bait worms and put in there. They have gotten (laughter) enormous.

**Stork:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, them little red worms; they call them. (laughter) Yeah.

**Scull-DeArmey:** They're huge.

**Stork:** Coffee grounds, you can dump coffee grounds, anything in there, they love it.

**Scull-DeArmey:** We moved some bricks in the backyard a couple of weeks ago, and found a lot of worms under the bricks, and every time I found one, I carried it over to



the compost pile. (laughter) Is there anything else you remember about your childhood? Like what was the perfect day in your childhood?

**Stork:** Well, I guess, the perfect day was going swimming. (0:06:52.7) We had a little swimming hole over here by Highway 90, but the only time we swam in that swimming hole was after a lot of rain. My parents always thought long as the water was moving, it didn't get what you call stagnated. If it quit running, that was stagnated water to us, and we wouldn't want to fish in that or swim in it. And we would roll tires, and we'd walk on tom-walkers. You know what tom-walkers is? You build them out of poles, and you put some foot-braces up here, and you step up on them, and you get going. The pole's up here, and you walk way up high, moving your feet on them poles, and walk around on them. But I would like to have a pair now. I don't know if I could walk on them. (laughter) But we'd roll them tires. We'd roll old truck tires sometimes, and mostly what we rolled was we'd roll them three miles from the railroad up here to down here at Bayou Heron. Back then you had a lot of little iron wheels off of wagons and things. We'd get a stiff wire, and we'd fix that wire where it just fit around that tire, and you'd push it. Of course back then, it'd be some sand bed, and we'd see who could push it the furthestest. And the tire, you got in the sand bed, it might fall over on you, so you was out of the game. (laughter) And whoever went the furthestest, they won.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you try to go faster than each other?

**Stork:** Yeah. Sometime we'd go faster. We'd get on a good stretch road; we'd drive it wide open, fast as you could run, just about it. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** Sounds like fun. Sounds like a good way to—

**Stork:** And plenty of hide-and-go-seek back then.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Well, now, you and I know how to play hide-and-go-seek. But what about people two hundred years from now who don't? How did you play it?

**Stork:** Oh, I don't guess they'd ever play it no more.

**Scull-DeArmey:** What were the rules?

**Stork:** Well, we had a rule, one, was base. You'd have a base center just like this table we sitting at. It was a base center. And then you'd close your eyes or turn your head, and they'd go off and hide. Had a certain area where they hid in. And you'd walk out there, and you maybe saw somebody over here, and you might not want to get him. You'd move on to try to find someone else, and then if you could outrun him back to this base, he was the next one in line for it. He would have to hunt us.

**Scull-DeArmey:** That's the way we played it, too. Yeah. It's amazing how those childhood games last through centuries, and the rules stay the same.

**Stork:** We played a lot of washers and marbles.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Washers? What's that?

**Stork:** You'd get the washers off of a big boat. They got a hole in them, big washer. And back then my mother and them, they hoed the yards instead of—didn't have lawn mowers. If the weeds got up, you'd have a little thing to cut them with, but you'd get a slick place on the ground. You'd make a hole about twice as big as the washer, and you might get thirty or forty feet down there, and you'd throw them washers in that hole. But if you had it smooth, you could slide them in the hole. You see. And they would count so many points. We'd go to forty or fifty, counting five every time you rang it. But that was a enjoyable game back then.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Yeah. You kind of made your own toys.

**Stork:** Yeah. We made our own toys in a lot of that.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Well, Mr. Stork, when did you learn to fish? (0:10:30.9)

**Stork:** I learned to fish really before I got out of high school. And then when I went on to high school and I went in the army, when I come out of the army, let's see what year that was. That was 1954 I got out of the army. I started fishing commercially with what they call a mother boat for Clark Seafood. (0:11:02.2) In other words we had a mother boat, and then if it was four men to the boat, you had four skiffs behind you with your nets in there, and we rowed them, rowed the boats, you see, but you pulled that behind the mother boat. The mother boat's the one you slept on. We called that the mother boat. But we'd go out, fish in the daytime, sometimes at night. We'd get maybe to Cat Island or Horn Island. We fished a lot around there and right off the coastline here we fished a lot. We'd go to Chandeleur Island, Petit Bois. We fished all around. But you'd take them four nets; (0:11:42.5) they was approximately six [hundred] to seven hundred foot long. One man used them. A trammel net we called them. Wasn't gillnets. Gillnet didn't have walling(?) in it, the walling, that you could catch just about any kind of fish. Then the walling might be fourteen inches, and they hit the webbing, the small mesh, and it'd bag in there, you see. A redfish or anything, it'd bag in there. But we would row them nets out. Now, sometime two would go one way, and two would go the other one, if you had something, the bank, to put them up against. And you'd row apart. One would go one way, and one the other, and you'd come up here to the beach, and then you'd make a little circle in what you call a "pigtail" you'd put in there. Well, now, that clear water (0:12:28.4) speckled trout, mullet, different fish, a lot of time they wouldn't hit the net out here. They'd go down that pigtail, and that's where you'd catch most of them. And then sometime we would four-net fish. In other words, like at Chandeleur, you would straddle them bars, a lot of shallow water, and even out here at Grande Batture, before it washed away, you'd get out here. Say, the bar was here, and you'd have two people here and two over here, maybe. Might be fifty or sixty years apart, or even a hundred apart,

according to the way you wanted to fish. This one would go this a-way, and this one would go that a-way, and this one, this a-way. Well, the guy with the two head nets, they'd put their nets side by side, and these would put theirs side by side. But the one with the back net'd make a big pigtail. We would, what you call, take the fish in, and most of the times the back nets would catch most of the fish. They had a bigger pigtail in there, more net on the inside, before we had them fenced off.

**Scull-DeArmey:** A couple of follow-up questions. What were you catching in those nets? (0:13:35.8)

**Stork:** What were we catching? We was catching flounder.

**Scull-DeArmey:** You said speckled trout, mullet?

**Stork:** Speckled trout, mullet, sheepshead, drum, redfish, and sometimes we'd catch great, big croakers, which is a good-eating fish. But that was about the limit of it. Every once in a while you'd catch bluefish and different things. Bluefish likes the deep water most of the time, but we would catch one once in a while.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How far offshore did you go?

**Stork:** Well, we went to Chandeleur Island. Now, from Pascagoula, I don't know how long that is. Forty or fifty miles, I imagine. Ain't it? It's a long ways time you go around Horn Island and go out there.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Is Chandeleur about seven miles offshore, something like that?

**Stork:** Oh, no. It's actually in the edge of Louisiana, Chandeleur Island. They got a lot of what they call Shell Keys where the birds raise. Chandeleur Island used to run way down there, but the hurricanes have busted it up, they say. I hadn't been out there. But they stopped us from fishing down there in about—stopped it all, I guess it was about, seem like it was about 1970 or something like that. I don't really know the deal on that. Louisiana changed the law, just like, and then Mississippi followed suit on the law.

**Scull-DeArmey:** They closed the waters at—

**Stork:** Yeah. All the waters is closed now, to it. You cannot fish close to—I think they let the pogy fishermen fish. (0:15:08.4) They catch them pogys for fish oil and fertilizer. They got them right across the river there at Moss Point, pogy fishermen.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How did y'all get the nets and the fish back on board the boat? (0:15:23.7)

**Stork:** Well, we would pull it in by hand, and you'd get the fish out and stack your net. You'd stack your first part of your net up towards—it was in the rear of the boat,

but it was kind of up front. And as you pulled it in, you would stack some more, and you'd stack it up high as you wanted to go, or you could stack it low. We had a boat that had a transom on it that kind of was slanting. That's the reason your net run out easy. It was smooth in the back. You see. You had your ten-foot oars in the oarlock sockets. And you'd row that boat, and it'd slide out easy. But pulling it in like that, that was a problem sometimes if you caught too much. Now, we would pull it all in and go to the [mother] boat where we could get them out and throw them right on ice because we wanted them fresh.

**Scull-DeArmey:** That would be the mother boat?

**Stork:** Yeah.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Had the ice on it?

**Stork:** Yeah. We'd carry maybe three or four thousand pound of ice (0:16:19.6) on the mother boat.

**Scull-DeArmey:** So you didn't actually bring them on board the skiff?

**Stork:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we brought them on board, but we'd go to the mother boat to shovel them out.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How many pounds of catch would four skiffs get?

**Stork:** Oh, well, whoo, Lord! We'd catch six, seven thousand pounds sometime at a set. Mostly that would be mullet. We have caught big sets of speckled trout, but very seldom, and redfish. Sometime you'd catch a school, but we wasn't allowed to keep a redfish (0:16:51.6) if he was over twelve pounds back then because that was the seed of the fish. They don't lay eggs until they get about ten or twelve pounds, a redfish, where a speckled trout and a mullet, they lay eggs young, in the younger stage. But if we took in them big redfish, (0:17:09.2) bull redfish, twenty-five to thirty-five pounds, we'd get them out of the net and turn them back in the water because we knew that that was our future, to keep them going.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you have any bycatch that you didn't use? (0:17:27.7) Like squid?

**Stork:** No, no. We didn't use nothing like that, squid, for bait or anything, or never catch a squid. You'd catch a crab every once in a while.

**Scull-DeArmey:** What did you do with the crabs?

**Stork:** Well, we would generally turn them a-loose if we could keep them alive. Sometimes we'd get so messed up, we'd just have to kill them to get them out of your net because they will bite you. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Right. What seasons did you fish? (0:17:58.0)

**Stork:** Well, mostly in the fall of the year was the best season, the fall and then spring. Say, April, May, and June was good for speckled trout fishing really. And in the wintertime we mostly fished for mullet. Once in a while you would catch speckled trout, but speckled trout would go offshore most of the time, in the winter months. I don't know why.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** So you could pretty much fish year-round.

**Stork:** Yeah. Yeah, you could pretty well fish year-round. Sometime they'd get a big order for mullets. Sometime they wanted speckled trout. Sometime they wanted sheepshead. Sometime they might have wanted redfish. When we got up to modern, back up there in the [19]60s, we had radios, and they'd call us and sometime tell us to catch a bunch of sheepshead if we could. He had a big order in New York for sheepshead or redfish or something. And then we'd try to catch redfish and sheepshead.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** How would you know where they were?

**Stork:** Well, we'd just have to hunt them. We'd spot them; (0:19:01.1) stand up in the boat and spot them. You see. And you could tell the difference. If you saw the water was still, and you seen a big quiver on the water, you'd figure it might probably was redfish or maybe sheepshead or anything. But he would buy them if you brought them in, but they did tell you to just try to catch that. They always could sell speckled trout and redfish.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Those were eating fish.

**Stork:** Yeah. And then they went to that blackened redfish, (0:19:28.8) which they used the drum, and that really put the hurt on the redfish. In Louisiana they got to catching so many, and they would blacken them redfish. They was catching them big, old ones, twenty-five and thirty a pound. That's your seed. You see. But some people don't realize that. I mean, if you fished all your life, you know that. These old-timers knew that. When you cut one open, we used to have to get, draw them, what we called draw them to get the entrails out. You see. We had to do that to speckled trout, and you could tell when they was roeing; that's getting ready to lay their eggs. And you cut a twelve-pound redfish open; you see his eggs in there. We didn't want to keep them that big, but they would have them once in a while, but most of the time ten or twelve pounds, they don't have the eggs in them. But you get them up fifteen to twenty, they just full of little eggs. You see. And that's what happened, I think, down in Louisiana, when they started blackening them redfish, and then they had to go to the drum, to blacken the drum.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Because they overfished the redfish?

**Stork:** They overfished the roe, the mother fish that laid the eggs, the spawning fish. You see.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What is the redfish population like now, here in Mississippi?

**Stork:** It's pretty good, now. They coming back. They raise a lot, I think, over there in Ocean Springs [Gulf Coast Research Lab] and turn them loose and different aquarium things. But they put a limit (0:20:47.5) on them for a while. But they catch quite a few on the hook sometime out here. So I imagine they coming back pretty good.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Is there a limit to the number of fish you could catch on a hook if you were just fishing off the pier?

**Stork:** Well, it's according to what kind of fish you catching. I think you can keep, right now, if you got commercial license with a hook and line, you can catch all you want to of speckled trout. But the redfish, I think they still got a limit in that, about five to a limit as of right now. But other fish, flounder, I don't know if they got a limit on the flounder, but they got a size limit, you see, on the speckled trout and the redfish. Speckled trout got to be fourteen inches, and I think the redfish got to be fourteen or twelve, at least, before you can keep them.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** That's good.

**Stork:** Yeah. That's all right, there.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Were there any other species that you gathered that you can think of? (0:21:48.3)

**Stork:** Oh, well, we'd catch sharks.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What did you do with the sharks?

**Stork:** We would generally turn them back a-loose if we could get them out of the net, if they wasn't messed up so much. We'd carry what we called a billy club on our boat, and we'd have to hit him right over the—you hit him right on the front of the mouth, and that would stun him. Now, I guess I don't know if it killed him or not, but you could put him back overboard. Now, whether he come to and went to swimming I don't know. I never did know. But I caught a lot of that. Stingray, we'd catch stingray and fish that you didn't want to catch, like we call them a hardhead catfish. They're a little catfish about six to eight inches long, and they got thorns on their side, and one of them stick you, they're real poison.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** They must have venom in there.

**Stork:** Yeah. And most people'd carry a pair of pliers or something that'd break them fins off before they got them out of their nets.

**Scull-DeArmey:** There are some pretty dicey fish you have to deal with.

**Stork:** Oh, yeah.

**Scull-DeArmey:** A shark could do some damage.

**Stork:** Oh, yeah. I got thrown out of the boat one time with a shark and like to went in another shark's mouth. I caught two together. Boy, it didn't take me long to get back in that boat, but they was hung up in my nets, you see. But when I went to pull him up to hit him, it was kind of rough, blowing that day, and that shark hit his head up against the boat and tilted it, so I just fell on out. And them other fishermen, I don't think they even saw me. They could have eat my hand off, (laughter) and they'd have never knew it till they got back to me.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Yikes. You got back into the boat pretty good that day, huh?

**Stork:** Oh, yeah. I was young.

**Scull-DeArmey:** You were scared?

**Stork:** Yeah. That scared me. And they have all kinds of dangerous fish out there. They have them old, what they call a man-of-war that floats around in there. And if you touch him—he's a pretty color. I had a nephew to touch them one time; they had to fly him into New Orleans. It's real poison. It just burns you up, which they have jellyfish, but they not as potent as that thing. Jellyfish'll make you itch and burn a little bit, but not them things. Them things are rough.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you ever catch man-of-war in your nets?

**Stork:** I don't believe I ever caught a man-of-war.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Um-hm. Do you remember what kind of sharks you would get? Were they hammerheads?

**Stork:** Well, we'd catch a hammerhead once in a while. Most of them was black-tipped sharks.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Do you know if people still see these same kinds of fish now? Has it changed at all? (0:24:19.1)

**Stork:** Oh, yeah, it changed. Now, a lot of people eat them sharks, which we didn't eat shark back then. Yeah, shark's pretty good. I have eat it since then. It's pretty good, just cut it up in small pieces and season it. It's real good.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Are sharks regulated at all? (0:24:36.7)

**Stork:** Yeah. Sharks is regulated, too. I don't think you can keep one, and he's got to be over four or five foot long, if you go out here, fishing, now.

**Scull-DeArmey:** It's hard for me to have sympathy for sharks. (laughter)

**Stork:** It is, me, too. It is, me, too. That's just like these cottonmouth moccasin things. (0:24:54.4) Now, when I was a kid, which I didn't pass up. I could have told you about that. When we'd start at the railroad, and we'd come up to the head of this bayou, it'd be dry, be some little hole, and we would kill them cottonmouth moccasins in them holes. They'd eaten up the fish, the little fish, laying there. But it was some vicious-looking snakes. That head was like that, and he had them little white stripes, some of them, in this black. This is black. They're different; they are, up in different parts of the country. They'll turn a yellowish-looking. They kind of camouflage theirself like a green lizard on a leaf, and then he'll turn brown. Their color'd change, but they'd be solid black and have little white stripes here. And them things, man, you get close to one of them. His tongue was out. He'd curl up there. He looked like he was ready to strike you. Now, them things, we traveled through there one time, me and a guy, and I think we killed seventy-two, but we carried a hatchet with us, and we'd put them on a log. We cut every one of them's head off. We got rid of some of them. And then the hurricanes, (0:25:58.0) the saltwater gets rid of them sometimes. It makes them go crazy. They get out of it, but they will eventually come back. They get on the railroad track, or maybe some of them get up in trees. But I saw them a-crawling along this road, after Hurricane Katrina (0:26:13.4) up here a little piece, right this side of that shooting range. They coming back down in here.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I remember interviewing people after Hurricane Katrina who were in their houses, maybe close to a wooded area, and they wound up with—

**Stork:** Oh, yeah. Them snakes wound up in there. They get up in them bushes out of that water and stuff, but I saw them one time; it must have been real salty, a hurricane. I don't know. That was about, I guess it was about [19]46 or [19]47 (0:26:44.2) we had one. I remember over on Highway 90, them snakes went crazy. And cars run over them all. That was before the other roads was open. And cars would run over them. That was something. Down here at that Nine Mile Lake, the saltwater just drove them crazy or something.

**Scull-DeArmey:** It makes them irritated.

**Stork:** But I have seen them offshore about a mile after a big rain or something.

**Scull-DeArmey:** They just got swept out.



**Stork:** Floating. I believe them cottonmouths could survive better than them other ones because he likes marshy places, but he don't like to be in big lakes, a-swimming in a lake much, like other snakes. I don't know about a copperhead, but them water moccasins, they'll dive under the water and swim. But them cottonmouths, every one I ever seen, if he fell off in the water, he had his head up above the water, like more so he's going to strike. I remember one time I was fishing up Big Creek and had a big, old plug on there. We was bass fishing, (0:27:49.4) and a big, old copperhead moccasin was swimming along there. And he looked like he fell off a steep bank. I told that boy that was with me, I said, "I'm going to throw behind that snake and see if there's a bass there." I throwed around there, and that snake turned around to grab the plug. About that time a big bass grabbed it, about two- or three-pound bass I caught. And he was trying to swallow that snake, what he was doing, but he was too big for him to swallow. He was pulling his tail down, you see. But I have caught bass with rats in them. They swallow a rat, getting around this, lot of marsh grass, which is around this alligator farm. We caught them in there that had rats in them.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Good grief! I had no idea that—(laughter)

**Stork:** You didn't know.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I didn't know a fish would try to eat a poisonous snake.

**Stork:** Yeah. Them bass, they'll catch a little bird off a limb, too. I've seen them strike a bird. I've never seen actually catch a bird, but they'll grab just about anything, a butterfly, anything that hits the water, and they ready to feed. They know that's nature; they going to get it.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Well, I guess the snake can't bite them if the fish pulls it underwater.

**Stork:** No. I don't imagine he can, but what he's doing, he probably, might've thought he was going to drown him, and the snake was too big. Now, they say a snake can't strike underwater, (0:29:05.9) but if you step on one, he can bite you because I had a friend to get bit like that. We didn't know what kind of snake it was.

**Scull-DeArmey:** He stepped on it in the water?

**Stork:** Stepped on it in the water. The water was about two or three foot [deep]. We were dragging some small chicken-wire to catch some catfish bait, some bream and stuff, and when that snake hit him, he said, "I believe I'm snake-bit." And when we jumped out on the hill, he said, "No, I ain't, either." And he looked down there, and that blood was running right around that ankle. He said, "Yes, I am, too." So he stepped on one under there. And we had to get—we went up to a little bar right up the road there, and the man got two fellows to carry him to the hospital, the old Jackson County Hospital. But he stayed—I don't know. That must have been a poisonous snake because he'd vomit and was all swelled up the next day. He was still in bad

shape. And he played basketball. I guess we was about the sixth or seventh grade, and he played basketball, and in the eighth grade he was still limping. I don't know what kind of snake it was, which we didn't see no snake. That's the reason he didn't know if he was bit. Maybe he thought it was a little briar or a piece of a bottle or something he stepped on. But I can remember that plain.

**Scull-DeArme y:** When I was a kid, growing up in Gulfport—I don't know if this is true or not, but we would hear—I remember, this story that somebody was skiing and fell, and he was saying, "Come get me. I've fallen in barbwire." But he had fallen into where there were some snakes.

**Stork:** Snake bed. Yeah. I've heard stories like that. Now, I don't know whether to believe some of that, but it could be. You don't know such as that.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Lots of stuff out there in the waters. (laughter)

**Stork:** Are you recording all this?

**Scull-DeArme y:** Yeah. This is—

**Stork:** Oh, my. We just a-talking, ain't we? (laughter)

**Scull-DeArme y:** This is fabulous. This is what we want. Why did you become a commercial fisherman? (0:31:04.5)

**Stork:** Well, back then, it wasn't that much to do. That's the first thing I had to do. I tried to get on at the paper mill, and I couldn't. They was filled up. So I decided to go commercial fishing, so I really started commercial fishing with my brother.

**Scull-DeArme y:** What's your brother's name?

**Stork:** Cecil Stork, he's the one that come down here with me. He's older, ninety-two, he is. He's still going. He could probably answer some of them questions better than me. I might leave out some and get him out here. Would that be all right?

**Scull-DeArme y:** Sure. So who taught you to fish?

**Stork:** Actually my brother Cecil Stork, really. Of course, I knew something about it, but he really educated me on it more than any of them. I would fish, what we call play-fishing. We'd go out there and set the nets, but we never did catch much till we started commercial fishing around Horn Island, Cat Island, Petit Bois, and Chandeleur Island. We'd go to Cat Island and even down in the edge of the Louisiana marsh, off of Gulfport down there, Bay St. Louis, Viper(?) Keys we'd call it. Little keys just [at] the edge of the Louisiana marsh. We'd fish down there a lot in the spring of the year. (0:32:18.5) A lot of speckled trout on them oyster reefs.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Oh! Oh, I guess they eat oysters if they can.

**Stork:** Well, there's a lot of bait fish in there, you see. Little crabs and things gets in them oyster shells, them reefs, and minnows and stuff, and they feed off of that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** So the little fish are there because the reef is safe?

**Stork:** Yeah. Yeah because the reef is there.

**Scull-DeArmey:** For them to hide in?

**Stork:** Yeah. Yeah, it's kind of like you see on Geographic, all kinds of fish down there and them big sharks and things can't get in there to get them that good.

**Scull-DeArmey:** So then the bigger fish that you want to catch are on the reefs.

**Stork:** Yeah, after them, you see. So we returned the favor. They catching the other, little fish, and we trying to catch them. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** Why would you fish around islands? What's good about that?  
(0:33:08.1)

**Stork:** Well, because our nets wasn't deep enough to fish out in the open, you see. They wasn't over five foot at the deepest when I fished. Now, they got them, oh, Lord, they got them I guess twenty foot and like that. Two people handle a gillnet.

**Scull-DeArmey:** But those were trammel nets you were using?

**Stork:** Yes. They was trammel nets.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you ever switch to gillnets? (0:33:31.0)

**Stork:** Yeah. I switched and used a gillnet, but they was only six foot.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Why did you make that switch?

**Stork:** Well, you didn't catch as many trash fish, hardhead fish and little fish to get them out, crabs and stuff. You can shake them out of your net a lot easier, where they would bag in that trammel net. But we would catch a lot of bluefish, and we sold a lot of skipjack (0:33:52.6) we'd catch out at Horn Island at night. And the snapper fishermen would buy all them from Clark Seafood, the dealer that we sold them to, you see. He had four or five snapper boats, and they'd buy them, about two or three hundred pounds. Boy, them mosquitoes rough today.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I got one.

**Stork:** It's cloudy, cloudy.

**Scull-DeArme y:** If you could put into words, what does the seafood business mean to you and your family? (0:34:22.9)

**Stork:** Oh, well, back then, the seafood business, actually we made pretty fair money back then. Sometime we thought we was making good money back then, make sometime three hundred, four hundred dollars a week once in a while. But sometimes you'd go out there and what you call make a broker(?). Excuse me. I'm going to go get some [bug repellent] spray.

**Scull-DeArme y:** OK. I'll pause this. (end of track one; beginning of track two) What did fuel cost (0:00:10.3) when you—let's say you were making four hundred dollars a week, fishing. What—

**Stork:** Fuel, in 1954, when I started, I imagine fuel was about eighteen to twenty cents a gallon, and at the end when we was fishing, it jumped up to twenty-seven, right on up the line. I don't know what the highest price. We used mostly diesel on the mother boat. It was cheaper back then, and now it's higher, you see. Ain't that something how things go? But a lot of people would buy their own nets, you see. I owned my own net and the sixteen- or eighteen-foot—I don't remember—skiff that I put the net out in, you see, because we bought our own nets, most of us. If you didn't have your own net, (0:01:07.7) if the company furnished your nets and boats, they would take out 25 percent of what you made, you see, to pay for the nets and the boat, which we didn't think that was too bad, a lot of people.

**Scull-DeArme y:** That's about a fourth. And I've heard people say now that like they'll give a third to the boat, a third to the deckhand, a third to the captain.

**Stork:** Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Yeah. So when you first started commercial fishing, were you marketing (0:01:45.2) only to Clark Seafood?

**Stork:** That's what we, the only one that I ever marketed to, Clark Seafood in Pascagoula.

**Scull-DeArme y:** That's the only one you ever used.

**Stork:** Yeah. They still going, now, but they pretty small.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Hurricane Katrina (0:02:03.4) really messed up that business.

**Stork:** Yeah. It messed them up.

**Scull-DeArme y:** But they've rebuilt?

**Stork:** Yeah.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Oh, good. That's great. So we've talked about some of these questions. You told me that sometimes you would make three hundred to four hundred dollars a week, selling your fish. How much fish did you have to have to make three hundred dollars? (0:02:31.6)

**Stork:** You would probably, on a mother boat back then, you'd have five to six thousand pounds, you'd make three hundred dollars. Now, if you had a good trip, maybe caught eight, you'd jump on up to maybe four hundred dollars. But some months you wouldn't make hardly anything. All depends on the weather and everything. It was kind of a guess, kind of like shrimping is, come and go, according to the weather. You couldn't get out for a week or so. (0:03:02.1) That's one reason I quit.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Really?

**Stork:** I had to get a public job.

**Scull-DeArmey:** What public job did you get?

**Stork:** I worked at H.K. Porter Company, which was a brake factory, as a lab technician.

**Scull-DeArmey:** When did you start that?

**Stork:** I started that in 1961, and [19]71 we had a bad hurricane come, too. I don't remember the name of that hurricane, but it ruined all the kiln that we dried the fire brake in, and they never did start it back up. So I went to work—actually I was working as a laborer, cleaning up, just to have a job, and before I left there, I got a job over at Thikol Chemical.

**Scull-DeArmey:** What did you do there?

**Stork:** Well, I started out in the shipping and labor department, and I say about—that was in [19]71, June of [19]71, and then I took a job on security; worked security till I retired in 1992, at the age of sixty.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Are you having a good retirement?

**Stork:** I'll have twenty years in this twenty-third of April.

**Scull-DeArmey:** That's the way to go.

**Stork:** That's right. I never missed a beat. You might have to watch your budget a little bit, but outside of that, you quit doing a lot of things, buying a lot of things I used to buy.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** But every day is Saturday.

**Stork:** Yeah. That's right. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmeY:** When you were working at these other jobs, did you still fish?  
(0:04:49.8)

**Stork:** I still oystered, caught oysters and fished on the side. I'd go out fishing, mostly for flounders.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Well, tell me about oystering. (0:05:01.8)

**Stork:** Oystering. Well, now, oysters, it used to be a pleasure to go out there oystering. It's a lovely life. You go out in the fall of the year when it's good and cool. Some days it's too cool, and you get out there just about sunup. But most of us saw the oysters. We had what you call them nippers, like you saw, little oyster nippers with about four prongs on them, kind of made like a rake, only they closed together. And we would see the oysters. And we would catch them. In other words, most of the time if you saw them, you wouldn't have as much trash in your boat as you do with them people that really commercial fish for them. They got big tongs. They just get up in twenty foot of water, and they gather up shells and all.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** How could you see them?

**Stork:** Well, the water gets clear in the winter, you see. The fish goes out offshore, and the only thing that muddies up, maybe a outboard come by. If the tide's a-moving you got to know which way your tide's a-running and all that. You go against the tide because it's taking the murky water behind you a lot of time. And we'd go up all these little, old bayous and sloughs out here and different places, on bars, what we call shallow water out in the middle. But Grand Bay Bottom, that was the best place there was to oyster out here and over towards Bang's(?) Lake, Bayou Cumbest. And that was nice. But I would catch oysters. I could have sold every one I caught there at Thikol, but I couldn't catch them after I got on the guard job because I worked too much overtime. That was the catch to that, but I did sell a lot. But now, you can't do that, you see. You got to have license. (0:06:46.5) You got to have hot, running water, which I had running water I kept, (0:06:50.9) but I'd open mine in my shed. And my wife even got to where she could open oysters, and she never had saw a oyster, I don't think, till I married her. But she got pretty good at it.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** It's kind of tough to open those.

**Stork:** Yeah, it is. But she sure found a way. She was a lot slower than me, but she'd open a pretty oyster. She wouldn't cut it. When you go to that shell, you got to hang to the bottom part of that oyster, and what you call, you got to, according to how big the oyster you got, what you call a eye, you got to cut it off of this shell, and then you open it up. And then you got to cut it. In other words, it's stuck to both sides of the shell, but it will give a little bit. But you cut the first one, throw one shell this a-way and open the other one. And then you just cut it here and throw him right in the pot. And then you quarter them up or put them in gallons, however people wants them. But a lot of people would want the oyster juice (0:07:39.6) to put in their gumbo. They said that flavored it. They give off a lot of water; a oyster does. If you open a gallon of oysters, you think it's a gallon. You probably a quart shy unless you pour that water off of them and put more in there. And then they're going to have a little water. But I've had people come to the house, and I'd save that. They'd say, "Can I have that gallon of oyster juice? I want to make my mama some gumbo." And they put oysters in it and do that. It kept the saltwater in the oyster. But I would oyster according to the way the water was here because I like to eat them, myself, salty. And if it rained too much, I'd go as far out as they grew and catch them. They'd still have a little salt in them. I wouldn't catch them up in the bayou because they'd get fresh, especially in December, January, and February, when it rains a lot. We'd call them freshwater oysters, but a lot of people would. You can put a little salt in the jug and make them salty, but they not like the same thing.

**Scull-DeArme y:** What's your favorite way to eat an oyster? (0:08:42.9)

**Stork:** My favorite way is fried, fried and raw.

**Scull-DeArme y:** And raw. OK. How do you eat them raw?

**Stork:** I get me some hot sauce, and sometime I mix it up with ketchup and mayonnaise. And sometime I like—trying to think of that—

**Scull-DeArme y:** Horseradish?

**Stork:** Horseradish, that's right. I love them with horseradish and hot sauce. That's my favorite, but my favorite is fried.

**Scull-DeArme y:** How do you fry an oyster?

**Stork:** Well, I fry him sort of brown where he got a good crisp on each side of him.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Do you batter it?

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am, you batter it. You put cornmeal on it, or you can buy batter to put on it. I favor cornmeal on mine. Seem like they get, yellow cornmeal, they look prettier on a plate. They look browner.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I guess the cornmeal just sticks right to them.

**Stork:** It does, mostly. Some of it'll come off, but they still look brown. But you can't let them set too long. You need to meal them and fry them right then. If you set them in the meal, that meal'll get soggy, and it will come off in cakes, a lot of time. It's all in processing one and knowing how to cook it.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How deep is the oil?

**Stork:** The oil, you can fry them in a small amount of oil, but the best to have it—and get it as hot as you can when you put them in there—say, a inch thick in the bottom of a pan; that's OK. And get it good and hot, and you put them in there. You don't have to leave them in there long at all. You can shake them up if you got a screen in there, where you can kind of shake them up, or you can turn them over with any kind of a fork or anything if you want to.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Do they float in the oil?

**Stork:** No. Most of the time they'll sink. Some of them will float a little while, but they'll eventually, when they come up, when they get fried, they come up if you got a lot of oil in there. I know that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** When you were oystering, how big was your boat, and how many oysters did you get? (0:10:40.4)

**Stork:** Well, some days I'd get six sacks, which would be, we called them, bushels. They wasn't as big as the sack they sell now, but they had to weigh at least forty to sixty pounds, probably sixty pounds. And that was a day's work for me when I was a-working three to eleven. I'd go out and get six sacks and carry them in. Sometime I could keep them in the garage for three days if the weather was real cold. I would separate them. I'd put the first one there I was going to open first, and the next one, and the next one. My wife would start on the end, and I'd rotate them. And I would bring all the shells back. (0:11:20.2) They'd have, sometime, little oysters you couldn't get off, what you call culling them. You knock all the old shells off before you bring them in. But we'd spread them out up the bayous and things, and then you could go back the next year or the next year and find them again, and harvest them again. You see, you might have three or four oysters on that shell, a-growing.

**Scull-DeArmey:** So you were kind of building a reef.

**Stork:** Yeah. We was building our own reefs as we went along, you see.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Very good thinking. So if you had six sacks, sixty pounds, on your boat, how big was your boat?



**Stork:** Well, I fished in a, just going out where it wasn't rough, I fished in a fourteen-foot, aluminum boat, but I'd have to adjust my oysters. I'd get them where I could stand up on the front, and you can see better. The boat was jacked up by the first two sacks or so I'd catch. I'd cull them, and I'd put them in baskets back here in the back to balance my boat. And I could catch the oysters, and then the next one I can work from the front and fix them, but I always tried to cull some of them where I caught them, a lot of times, knock the shells off, and then maybe go to another place and get two more sacks, or sometime I might get them all in one place.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Well, tell me about getting flounders. How did you do that?  
(0:12:43.6)

**Stork:** Flounders, well, I was the first guy that used a net, really a flounder net. Now, we had trammel nets; you could catch a few in them. But I ordered a four-inch mesh from Memphis Net and Twine Company. I was going to try it, a three-hundred-footer, a flounder net. And a big mesh like that, it was fine twine. The fish couldn't see it as good. But I got to going out there, and I noticed I got to catching all my flounders in that three hundred foot, and I wasn't catching none in the other three hundred foot, or the hundred foot. And then what them flounders doing, you have them small mesh catch the speckled trout, maybe three inches, three and a half inches, in this big, old webbing, and they wouldn't run into it. But they got eyes. They don't just run in the net, but we'd punch around on the bottom, and you'd scare them in there. And they was bagged. You'd have twenty- or thirty-inch walling(?) in the side of it. You'd catch a flounder, oh, big flounders. But they'd get in there, and they'd get hung up, you see. And the gilling nets, you couldn't hardly catch them unless he got hung by the mouth, but a trammel net is a lot different. But I learned how to flounder. I was the first one that bought me a net like that, and I got to coming in here with flounders, and then everybody got to buying them. And now they can't use nothing. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** They're not allowed now?

**Stork:** No. They not allowed.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Can you gig flounders now?

**Stork:** Yeah. Yes, ma'am, you can gig flounders.

**Scull-DeArmey:** There's no regulation?

**Stork:** I don't think it's no regulation on that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Flounders (0:14:27.5) are a little different than other fish because they—

**Stork:** They stay on the bottom. And they got eyes just on one side, but they can see you forward real good. They look like they looking towards the inside of their selves

all the time, but they can see you either way. You walking out there at night, if you get, on the bottom, you step too close to one, he'll run. But they'll be bedded up with just their eyes out. That's the way they catch other fish at night; they can see. You see. You probably saw some of them halibut and things on them TV shows where they'll be buried up and just the eyes. They get bigger than a flounder does down here, but they'll grab a fish. And that's the way a flounder does. You can catch them on a hook with live minnows, even artificial plugs now, they catch them once in a while, which we used to never would have even thought about that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** In the day or night?

**Stork:** You can catch them in the day and night.

**Scull-DeArmey:** On a hook?

**Stork:** Yeah. Yes, ma'am.

**Scull-DeArmey:** OK. Where's the best place to fish for flounders with a line and hook?

**Stork:** Sometimes the flounder'll get close to shore around grass beds and things. They love that, where the grass, the marsh grass is growing kind of out in the water, edge of that. And they love places like that because them little shrimp and stuff coming up in there all the time. But we used to wade for miles out here. We'd start over there at what we called the East Grande Batture, run off of Grande Bayou over here, which is in Alabama, and come all the way back in to Mississippi, and we would go out there, and we'd light our mantle lights. And that tide would be low where that bar would be low, maybe a foot of water in it. You could tell it was rising. We'd walk; two or three of us would walk all the way up that bar back to Mississippi, (0:16:07.8) a-gigging flounders and things.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How many did you get?

**Stork:** Oh, well, we varied, sometimes fifty to a hundred. And now, now, they got them big lights on the front of the boat. They get high as two or three hundred pounds, some of them.

**Scull-DeArmey:** You said it was a mineral light?

**Stork:** Mantle light, they call it.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Oh, mantle, OK.

**Stork:** Mantle, see, you buy them little mantles, and then every now and then if a big bug hits it, you have to tie on another one. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** And I'll bet there are some big bugs out there. (laughter)

**Stork:** Yeah, sure is. (laughter) But we would scoop crab. (0:16:40.4) We'd have a scoop net for crab, but we'd have it made out of chicken wire because the crab'd be big, and we'd have it where it didn't have no bag in it. You'd just get behind him and scoop him right in the boat, real quick like. And we'd save crabs a lot of times. They'd stay alive all night in a boat with a little water in it. We loved such as that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** What kind of bait did you use for crabs?

**Stork:** Oh, we didn't have bait. They'd just be swimming with the tide; you'd see them and catch them.

**Scull-DeArmey:** So you would see them.

**Stork:** Yeah. Yeah, we would see them in the water. They'd come by, and sometime we'd maybe carry somebody young or new out there with you and let them catch the crab. They enjoyed that. Says, "There goes one!" He'd grab him. Sometimes they'd get away from little ones. "Here's the way you got to do it, real quick."

**Scull-DeArmey:** What were you fishing for when you saw the crabs?

**Stork:** We was floundering, mostly, walking in the water a-floundering, along the sand. Sand bars mostly where you wouldn't bog down. It's a muddy spot; you bog down. (0:17:40.4)

**Scull-DeArmey:** That's scary.

**Stork:** That there, yeah. I carried people out there, wanted to get out. They'd try to tell you how to set your nets. And one time I took a fellow out there. Me and him went out there, and he kept a-wanting to get out of the boat. "Look at all of them fish out there." I said, "All right. You step out right here." So I got in about a foot of water. (laughter) And he stepped out. I was rowing that boat. First thing, he set down in the water. (laughter) He got hung up. His feet bogged down to his knees in that mud, you see. He lost his cigarettes. (laughter) And then he come in and told them that I put him out in the wrong place. He's the one kept a-wanting to get out. I said, "I won't catch no fish because it's all mud here." They won't run in the net in the mud in the daytime in the summertime. I might have caught one mullet. And I come back in; I told Mr. Arnie Coscar(?) about it. He told that old fellow, he said, "He done it on a purpose." I said, "No, I didn't." I said, "He kept a-wanting to get out of the boat. So he got out of the boat, but he bogged down." So when we got there, I was a-laughing. I had to get him back there and pull him in.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I mean, you really can't walk if it's that deep, up to your knees.

**Stork:** No. No, you can't. We used to what we called coon (0:18:45.3) them oysters. Now, we'd put on a pair of tennis shoes and go out there, but we wouldn't get in water that deep in the bottom. Of course you was real light back then, and we would coon them oysters, and we'd pile them up side the bank when the tide was low; it'd be low. We'd get on them mud flats and bog around, but we had a box, we'd kind of keep our—push it. You'd keep a lot of your weight off of going in there. But we'd pile the oysters up there on a dry hill. Well, about one or two o'clock that afternoon, the tide'd get up there. We'd drive the boat up there and put the oysters in the boat, you see. But we had little skids behind like you see people riding on skids, mules. Only they was made upside-down, and we had two little holes in the back and made out of metal or wood. And we'd tie it around our waist, and we'd drag it, and it slid across that mud, you see. And we could put a lot of oysters in it, too, and it drug easy.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Was that when you were a kid?

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am.

**Scull-DeArme y:** How is cooning oysters different than using nippers?

**Stork:** Oh, cooning oysters, you got to be overboard or wading. Most people, they'll call it bogging (0:19:54.6 oysters), which you do get bogged down sometimes, you step off in the wrong place. But if you know the bottom, sometimes you don't. Some places the bottom [is] hard. It might have a little coat of mud on it. But you can catch them a lot easier. You can grab one here and there and just have your oyster gloves on and put them in your skid or whatever you pulling or put them up on the hill till you can get back in there. But the tide would go out. I saw the tide so low you couldn't get out the mouth of this bayou in the wintertime. (0:20:21.3) It would go low. But you had fishermen back then; they'd be up on the hill a-fishing. They'd be lined up the bank, all here to Uncle Bennie's place, and all up there, they would fish. And I was telling you the other time that interview about my uncle had all them hogs. (0:20:39.0) And them people'd be up there a-fishing, and they's catching the fish kind of fast. They'd forget about the hogs. Them hogs would grab them fish and run off and take them out and eat them. They'd be chasing the hogs, and they'd be chasing one hog; the other hog would come and get the rest of them. It was funny. (laughter) People'd never been out here knew it, but we knew the hogs would do that, so we'd put them on a string. (laughter) But they wasn't talking nice, either, some of them. They'd get mad. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArme y:** Oh, gosh. That's funny. Let's see. I had another question. I don't know if I can find it. Scooping crabs, cooning oysters. We talked about floundering. When you were wading and floundering, were you gigging them?

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am.

**Scull-DeArme y:** What did you do with the flounders after you gigged them?  
(0:21:34.8)

**Stork:** Well, we would drag the bigger boat behind us. Sometime you'd have two, or you take out a boat, and you'd put two or three out a-walking on the sand. And you might just go by yourself, and it wasn't hard to push a eighteen-foot boat with a ten-foot oar. You'd just skim; you'd be in shallow water. You could move around fast enough and hold your mantle light, one. But most people if they stayed in the boat, they would use what you call a harpoon. It was made; it had the barbs on it like a hook. When you stuck it through him, the barbs there, and then you'd have to rake him off on the back of your seat. But them flounders always had a little, black spot on it. They wasn't like you caught in the net. The meat looked a lot prettier. But with the gig, if you giggered him right behind the head, which a good flounder man would, you didn't mess up the body of the flounder at all.

**Scull-DeArme y:** The part that you eat.

**Stork:** Yeah. But I mean, it was just a black spot. It really, like if you caught a pound flounder, and you giggered him through the center instead of his head, it can leave a black spot when you cooked him or cleaned him. You need to cut that out, but if you caught him in a net, you wouldn't—he'd be more fresher. Was when we fished because I always took ice with me. (0:22:47.3)

**Scull-DeArme y:** To preserve the fish.

**Stork:** Yeah. Even when I was mullet fishing, I had a big ice chest I'd put right up next to my seat, and the first fish I'd catch, and maybe the last set, if I couldn't get them in the box, I'd run on back home with them to keep them fresh. Because a lot of people, that's what stopped a lot of marketing the fish. You had people go out there and fish all night and wouldn't do that, and the fish was kind of mushy, and when you got them in, why, they wasn't fresh, you see. It's a lot of difference in that.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Harder to sell.

**Stork:** That's right. They harder to sell, and then people give them a bad deal on fish like that. They don't want to buy no more from them.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Right. Now, you mentioned that sometimes you put your fish on a line. Can you explain that for people who don't know what it is? (0:23:38.7)

**Stork:** Well, now they got a line. What we'd do out here, every once in a while a crab, if it was cold enough, a crab might eat the tail off of one, but you wasn't bothered with snakes. We would just have us maybe a wooden stob, drive it down kind of the edge of the mud, edge of the grass, about a foot, and we'd tie a big line on there, and every time we'd catch a fish, we would run it through his gills. And he'd be out there in the water, you see, a-swimming. And fresh water, I don't know if you could really do that too much, on account of the snakes. But saltwater, you know, and

we'd keep them alive most of the time we'd come down here. And we'd stay all day sometime, in wintertime.

**Scull-DeArmey:** So if you had fish on a line in freshwater, the snakes might actually eat—(0:24:27.5)

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am. They come up there, them snakes, and swallow a big fish in that water.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Just bite it off.

**Stork:** They'll try to swallow it. He'll be hung up on there. Well, I wouldn't want to eat them fish after a snake gnawed on them. I have been through that before, too.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Really?

**Stork:** Catching goggle-eye, and them water snakes get up there and start to try to swallow one. You wouldn't even know it was on there till you pulled your fish out. And then you'd see the snake and look at the tail or part of him where he'd bit on him, well, I'd throw him away. I wasn't going to eat that. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** It might have venom in it.

**Stork:** That's right.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Was the snake still attached?

**Stork:** Well, sometimes they'd hold on till you got his head out of the water, and he'd turn it a-loose because he knew he was in danger.

**Scull-DeArmey:** That's just like milking [the snakes]. (laughter)

**Stork:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Milking the snake into the fish.

**Stork:** Whoo-hoo, not me.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Mm-mm. When you think about over your lifetime fishing, how has fishing changed? How has the equipment changed? (0:25:24.7)

**Stork:** Oh, the equipment has changed a good bit where you never see nobody rowing a boat. And the nets has changed so much. Where we used to use four-foot to eight-foot nets, oh, they use twenty-foot nets or more, some of them, in deep water. And they run them out with outboard motors now, and they got a roller on the back of the boat where the net'll roll out, you see. Kind of like a rolling pin, but it rolls; it

freely rolls and run them out. That's the way they fish, now. But it has changed a lot, the netting and everything. It's all nylon now. When I first started it was all cotton. (0:26:07.5) Well, cotton, you pull your net in, your boat would be half full of water. And the nylon didn't take in as much water, you see, especially in the gillnets. You wouldn't hardly throw water out of your boat till you made three or four sets. And even the floats on the nets has changed. We used to use wooden floats. Now, it's all Styrofoam and plastic floats they use now.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Wood will float enough to—

**Stork:** Yeah. I guess they was cypress, but we used to run them through there when we dyed our nets. (0:26:45.6) We'd have to color our nets, you see. We'd mix kerosene with a little tar, so much where it wouldn't be too sticky. And we'd dye our nets like that. Some people would dye it even with mulberries. Mulberries gets ripe; they'd pick up a lot of mulberries or shake them off and put them in there, and they could dye them that way. But you had to heat it for it to take, most of the time. Now, I don't know about the mulberries, but we heated the tar a little bit to get it to blend in with the kerosene.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Now, if you put tar on it, would it make it hold less water?

**Stork:** No. It would hold just about as much to me, but the nylon, now, it don't hold that much water, but everything is nylon now. I don't know if you can even buy a cotton net. (0:27:36.0)

**Scull-DeArme y:** You know, I've heard people talk about cotton nets in interviews, and they don't like them because they tear up so fast.

**Stork:** Yeah, now. But I tell you the reason they tear up, a lot of them tear up. Another thing they don't know. If you put a cotton net, and you tie it with nylon, bigger string on it to tie it on your ropes, that nylon rots that cotton. It eats it up. Something in that nylon makes that cotton come out; it'll come out of the ropes. So you got to know that, too. You cannot tie nylon on cotton because your nets would come out of the ropes, and then you'd have to redo it; we call it rehangin g it, putting it back on the floats and cork and the line.

**Scull-DeArme y:** What was the purpose of dyeing it? (0:28:25.3)

**Stork:** Well, it seemed like the fish would run into it better. They wouldn't want to run into a white net.

**Scull-DeArme y:** It kind of camouflaged it?

**Stork:** Yeah. It kind of camouflaged it. We'd have spots out there that have grass in it, and I guess it looked more like the grass and land. And at nighttime, now, they run into it pretty good. Now, even in the daytime—I don't know why. They claim they

can't hardly see that nylon white. I don't know a fish—but I still believe they can see it. They catch good. I think it's size of the mesh because a fish, he's got eyes. The bigger the mesh you got—like I was telling about the four-stretch. I didn't catch no little catfish. Once in a while, I'd catch a crab. Didn't catch no croaker, didn't catch all that. Well, you make better time. You just picking out flounder, you see. And once in a while you might catch a two-pound mullet in it, but he had to be a big one to stay in that four-inch stretch mesh.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What's the biggest mullet you've ever seen? (0:29:19.0)

**Stork:** The biggest one I ever seen around Pascagoula here, I caught one weighed six pounds, and I smoked him and carried him to Thikol and gave him to a friend of mine. Now, we used to go down in Louisiana and catch them during roe (0:29:31.9) mullet time. They'd weigh six to eight pounds. The eggs in them, the roe, would weigh a pound and a half or two pounds, some of them. But they got to using all that for caviar, Japan. They got to shipping all them roe to Japan, them yellow roe, you see.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Did you ever eat roe, growing up?

**Stork:** I have eat them, but they wouldn't be near about that big. I'd get them before they got ready to lay them, mostly. They was better, but yellow roe is kind of like eating cornmeal if it gets big. But it's a little bit (inaudible) after you fry them. But they got a good taste, even the white roe. I've eat them. They got a good taste, the male roe.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** How do you fix it?

**Stork:** Well, them white ones'll pop. You can put him in a skillet, and you don't have to have much grease. I'd watch my mama cook on a wood stove, old thing, but she would cook in chicken oil and hog lard and stuff like that, but she'd cook on that wood stove. She'd turn that thing over with a fork, three or four times. She wouldn't have to have it full of oil. I don't know; I guess she thought she was saving, which she was on the fish because she didn't want to cook nothing else in fish grease. But now, they can cook them in a lot of grease, but just make sure he's cooked. But they fine eating them, white roe. And a lot of people, they can't get them no more.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Why not?

**Stork:** Well, people just don't have—they catch them, and the people buys them up so fast. They paying so much at the dealer for them. See, when they start catching roe mullet, roe mullet time, they pay a dollar and a half a pound or so for mullet now to get the eggs out of them, where in the summertime, they only about seventy-five [cents] to a dollar.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What's that going to do to the mullet population?



**Stork:** Well, if they catch enough of them, they going to be real harmful, like I say, but they need to go to the net size, at least a four-inch stretch, you see. And the pound mullet and a little bit bigger is going through it. It won't catch one under a two pound. And that way, that would stop it, too. But they just stop it all.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** How have regulations changed since—(0:31:53.1)

**Stork:** Oh, my goodness, regulations. You can't do nothing anymore. I'm not blaming them. I guess some of the people's brought it on their self, I think, fishing illegally and all that. You got some; you got people abides by the rules, but it's something now. I don't think too many people makes a living at it no more, like we did. There's so much overhead (0:32:16.8) with the gas and the motors and the stuff. They just don't do it, where we done most of the work with our hands, rowing, outside the mother boat if we commercial fished out there. But it's not too many commercial fishing for mullet and stuff, only in roe season, in October and November. They catch quite a few. But they'll cut the roe out, (0:32:40.2) and a lot of them, a lot of people give the fish away because the fish, it kind of gets strong when they lay them eggs. I don't know why, kind of musky like, and the fish not near as good to eat. Now, if you go down this bayou, if you had a cast net and throw it and catch them small fish that I see coming up here, they got a pretty good taste because maybe they didn't roe this year. But them good mullet won't come back till June, mostly.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** For people who don't know, for the record, can you describe a cast net, and how is it different, say, from a gillnet? (0:33:17.6)

**Stork:** Well, a cast net, a lot of people'll throw it over their right hand and have a little in their left. Some people put it in their mouth. It's got leads on it. But it's round, and you throw it. The rounder you throw it, the better spread. You can use ten-foot ones, six-foot ones, seven-foot ones. People got different size and throw it out there. I wish Sidney had one. I'd get Cecil to show you how to throw it. My brother, he likes to throw that cast net. But that's hard chasing mullet in the daytime. They see that thing a-coming, they run out from under it, if you see the fish. (laughter) But it's made round. It's long; hold it in your hand, and it slides down. When you throw it, you got heavy leads on it, and it sinks to the bottom fast. And the fish get in there, and you gradually pull it to you, and them fish'll stick in that net. And they got another one, like I say, kind of like a brill net. That brill net, (0:34:13.4) that's kind of like we use a trammel net up beside a gillnet. It's got lines a-hanging down on it, and when you get it up there, it kind of makes a little bag, and the fish stay. And a lot of people likes a brill net, but most of them likes a cast net because brill net get hung up a lot, if you throw it over a stump or a big wad of oysters or something. Now, I have covered a crab pot out there with them, and that takes you a week to get that out, if he's old and rusty. But it's a lot of fun sometimes just going out there on a beautiful day, pushing your brother, and letting him throw, or you throw one.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** From a boat?

**Stork:** Yeah, from a boat.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Do you ever throw it, wading?

**Stork:** You can. Yeah, you can throw it wading. They do a lot of that, too, sometimes.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** So when you pull it up next to the boat, what keeps the fish from getting out?

**Stork:** Well, the lead sticks together, and they'll stay in there, and you just pull it up in the boat, gently. And they easy to get out; you can just dump them out, you see. You don't have to pick them out of that because you got small mesh, maybe a half inch, or quarter inch. You can catch shrimp in them things, too. Old-timers, that's how they used catch their shrimp.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** That's right. I remember that. Over your lifetime, how have you seen the marshes and the wetlands change? (0:35:41.0)

**Stork:** Oh, well, the marshes, to me, outside of washing away in hurricanes, hadn't changed that much, around up in the bayous. Now, on the outer edge, when you get out in the bays, it's changed. It's so much washed away. Islands wash away. Used to have little oak trees and cedar trees come up, which we used to go out there sometime in November, and we'd get a little cedar tree and use it for a Christmas tree at the house. They'd come up all over them oyster-shell beds. I guess where the Indians had made them shell beds out there. But up in here, it changed quite a bit. Seem like it's more saltwater that goes further up, now, than it was freshwater back then. Freshwater, seem like, come further down. A lot more trees has growed, too.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Are the trees disadvantageous in any way?

**Stork:** Oh, them trees wasn't there fifty or seventy years ago, sixty years ago. I know I used to could see all the way and look and see all the way down here, out there. Of course they had all types of animals on them, back then, kept it down, goats, sheep, cows, hogs. You name it.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** So where do you think all those seedlings came from?

**Stork:** I don't know. It don't take much. I imagine sometimes the high water would float them up in there, and they come up all at once. I don't know where all them—they had to come from up-shore there.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** So if they floated down on freshwater, the pine cones would have had seeds in them.

**Stork:** Yeah. And them pine cones, if a tree—but we didn't have no trees that big, back then, what got me. Maybe a few out in there, but them things, when they go to—the wind'll carry them things a long way, a-whirling. Now, they'll blow all over.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** I'll bet you're right. I'll bet it was the pigs and deer and everything.

**Stork:** Could have been. That's right. Scattered them. And of course, now, the rabbits wouldn't have done that, but these rabbits eat a small pine sapling when they get small. And they will. I know they eat little chinaberry treetops out because me and my daughter, I planted twenty for her. She wanted a chinaberry lane all the way, and them rabbit eat the top out of every one of them things.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Deers will do it, too, when we've planted trees. My husband's mother lives in Walnut, Mississippi, and we've planted some trees around her house. We had to put a fence around it to keep the deer off of it.

**Stork:** Yeah. They come right in my garden up there, and it's right by my house. I ain't got no dogs. The other dogs are barking. Yeah. I have to watch them.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** How did Hurricane Katrina affect you?

**Stork:** Oh. Well, I moved a way away for about ten years after I retired in [19]92. And I guess it was [19]93 before I moved away, and I moved back, and I was going to build me a house up here. I own most of—I own about fifteen acres right north of the railroad tracks, in that curve, going towards Alabama after you come off the interstate. I own that, and I own all the way down to around the other curve. But me and my wife was going to build us a house, but we were going to build it up. But in the meantime I rented from Sidney. Sidney had a little house, and I bought a trailer (inaudible), but the trailer wasn't big enough, so I rented a house from Sidney and was in there about a month, and here come Katrina. And so I wind up getting a little money out of Katrina. No. I didn't get anything out of Katrina. I take that back. The Corps of Engineers come in here and bought everybody out. And I think they—I don't know what I got for my property. It wasn't what I wanted, but I got a good bit, so I moved up to the country, looking for a place. So we found a home. That was about two months before my wife passed away. She liked the house, and I liked it, so we bought it, a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar house. And that's where I'm living now. We call it Big Point, little town that's in Moss Point's school district. But it's changed a lot. I'm up there. I got two daughters, live pretty close to me. But I had moved up to Smith County, and I was growing pretty good crops, different crops, rutabagas, turnips, and corn, just about anything. And I had these Kataki(?) sheep. They was a good thing. They a hairy sheep. They a white sheep, and I had a pretty good market for them. And I made some pretty good money off of them sheep after I retired because I couldn't start drawing my social security till I was sixty-two. I retired at sixty. But I really enjoyed it up there. And then after her mother died and some of her sisters died and then she got sick, I was doing the housework and the farm work. She wasn't able, so I said, "We going to move back down here by my girls."

And we moved in with Sidney, and then I paid to fix up their old place, and then the Corps of Engineers bought that out and give me money, what I had in it and a little bit more. And that's the reason I wound up with that place.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did Katrina take away the place that you had fixed up? (0:41:26.4)

**Stork:** No. It knocked the walls out up to about four feet; took all the plyboard out. It wasn't nothing. And the floors was messed up. We had to redo all of that. Well, it did. I'd just bought brand-new bedding and everything. I couldn't get nothing out of it, I guess, because I was renting from Sidney. But it didn't get in my trailer over there on the river. See, I lived north of the welcome center over here, off of Franklin Creek Exit. I bought a trailer from a lady from Michigan, and I didn't give her much for it, but we stayed over there after the hurricane hit.

**Scull-DeArmey:** The trailers withstood those winds?

**Stork:** The trailer withstood the winds good.

**Scull-DeArmey:** That's amazing. Did you have any boats or equipment that you lost in Katrina?

**Stork:** No. I had a boat, but I tied it up at Sidney's, now. And I saved my outboard motor was the only thing, but I lost my oars. It took my oars, and I never did find my oars out of the boat, which I had the boat tied, looking for maybe the water to get high there.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Around here you had it tied?

**Stork:** No. No. It was up there across the railroad track, on the north side of the railroad track. Across that railroad track, that tidal wave, (0:42:37.9) it went all the way to Highway 90 up there, well, across [Highway] 90 right there, going back towards Pascagoula.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I had talked to Larry Ryan earlier this week. And he used to live out here. He was a fishermen, and they said that they had four feet of water in their house, I think, here. Might have been more.

**Stork:** Well, I sold the house to Mr. Ryan. Now, I can't say all that on there, but I sold the house to Mr. Ryan, and they moved up there. But I'd moved back to Sidney's. I wished I hadn't have sold it, but it was going down because nobody living in it, you see, so I just practically give it to him. I didn't sell it for big money. But my wife wanted to sell it to him because they was living over here on a little houseboat at the time. And they had their grandkids on there, and I felt for them.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Wow. I'd be so worried about little children that close to water.

**Stork:** Yeah. And all them alligators crawling around, too. (0:43:47.5) I don't know. I have left my net over there, and you see big tracks where that alligator, and he'd get it hung in his foot and drag it out there twenty or thirty foot. Yeah. Them alligators crawl out on the hill over there, at that second canal, goes right down by that little house over yonder, past that—well, I think he goes in there where that little ball's right there, hung up in there. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** They remind me of dinosaurs.

**Stork:** Yeah, yeah. Well, my Uncle Bennie had them hogs out here. He didn't pay much mind if he lost one. He didn't know if he lost one or not. They was all black. He had them Guinea hogs, and then they crossed with the wild breeds. But alligators'd get one. Well, they'd swim this bayou right around in here, go over here, and there's big acorns.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Well, I know boars are pretty impressive foes, but if the alligator got it in the water—

**Stork:** Oh, yeah. He couldn't do nothing. He'd pull him under to drown him, you see. That's just like a lion'll catch a crocodile or alligator if he's out of that water. He's equipped. He knows right where to grab him. I saw them on Walt Disney catch alligators. I don't know if a tiger'd catch a alligator. But I don't know, now, if they'd catch one of them big, twenty-foot crocodiles. (laughter) That'd be a tough one.

**Scull-DeArmey:** In the water, they wouldn't stand a chance.

**Stork:** No. They wouldn't stand a chance in that water. They know that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How has the fishing business changed since the storm [Hurricane Katrina], just from your observations? (0:45:18.9)

**Stork:** Well, it done away with so many boats. It's not near about as many boats as it used to be. It destroyed so many vessels and everything, and the fishing has just been bad since that. I don't know. I imagine they still got oil. (0:45:36.8) They got plenty of oil still over in Louisiana marshes. I don't know about here. They pretty well cleaned it up on Ship Island, Horn Island, around. I don't think none of it got up in here, in this bayou. It's got around the mouth, but they had the floats out there to block it off from getting up here all the way from Alabama to way out there, off of the islands, to keep it from coming up in this bayou.

**Scull-DeArmey:** So the booms kept it out?

**Stork:** Yeah. The booms kept it out, out of here, sure did. But that's a long ways from where (inaudible). But they still got it way over there to the east in Dauphin Island and all over there in Florida. But it stayed out along the edge. I guess the barrier islands kept it off of us, a lot of it, too.

**Scull-DeArme y:** When you are floundering now, do you ever see anything on the bottom, or is there ever anything on your fish that looks like tar or oil or tar balls?

**Stork:** No, unh-uh. No. It's mostly in the sand, (0:46:37.0) sand and that edge of the marsh where the tide come up high after that oil spill. A lot of it in Louisiana marshes, it really hurt them, some in Mississippi.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Did you see it out here in the grass?

**Stork:** No. I didn't see any in the grass here. They patrolled it good, now. On down, off of, around Dauphin Island, there was a good bit of oil down in there. I guess it went straight east mostly, according to the way the wind was blowing before they got to sucking it up. But they had spotters; they would get it up a lot before it even got to us.

**Scull-DeArme y:** What did you think when you learned about the oil spill?

**Stork:** Well, that's just another thing, I think, was going to ruin conservation. It's bad, but it's coming. It's coming, again, I imagine; they going to keep drilling and everything, and they going to still, they going to continue to have disasters, I think, like that. And it ain't no way. It's down in that Gulf. One day it's got to break off or something. We might not live to see it, but I think in hundreds of years, now, it will.

**Scull-DeArme y:** So what about regulation? Do you think regulations would help, if they regulated the oil industry more?

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am. That would help a lot.

**Scull-DeArme y:** And enforced the regulations.

**Stork:** That's right, enforce it. That's the main thing. That's just like the commercial fishing and things. Like I say, a lot of people abused it. A lot of them abused it. That's what caused a lot of it, shutting it down, I think, which I think the oyster business out here, they over-reacted (0:48:42.4) on it out here. It's all in Harrison County. They catching oysters right on the line where this bayou goes out, Alabama line. They catching oysters there, and we can't catch them a hundred feet over here? It's something wrong with it. I don't know why they want to do it that way, but we could go out there and get us a good mess of oysters every once in a while, if they just let you go out there and get a mess, not sell them; eat them yourself.

**Scull-DeArme y:** Does it have anything to do with this being a wildlife reserve, that you can't take wild animals out of it?

**Stork:** Well, now, wild animals, no. We know that. They still go out and duck hunt, long as they got their license. Now, as far as people hunting deer, they can't shoot up

here on the land. They got to have a bow and arrow. You can get a permit to hunt, but it's got to be a bow and arrow.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I guess you're less likely to kill a human being that way.

**Stork:** Yeah. But I don't do any of that no more. I used to love to shoot duck and stuff when I was growing up, but I don't bother with no wild game no more.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you eat it as a kid?

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am. We eat every bit we killed.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Deer?

**Stork:** Yeah.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How did you prepare the deer?

**Stork:** Well, I hardly ever killed a deer. Wasn't many deer around here then. They was all, all over toward Vancleave and north of here. But you hardly ever seen a deer here. A few turkeys you'd see once in a while, but we never did try to hunt them. They was mostly, they'd stay around some maybe pine thickets. You'd have some pine thickets way off out through there. You see them pine trees? And you had little ridges like that. They probably stayed out there most of the time because that's kind of a little bit higher than where this grass is at. I imagine that's where they laid their eggs, mostly.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Do you ever see turkey, now, wild turkeys?

**Stork:** Yeah. There's turkey around here. We see them every once in a while down the edge of this road, deer and turkey.

**Scull-DeArmey:** They're beautiful, wild turkeys.

**Stork:** They are, too pretty to shoot.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Yeah.

**Stork:** Sidney got a whole bunch over there around his house. He tells me about them, which I lived over there where I had that trailer, pretty close to where he's at now. We used to see them all the time. In fact, I'd throw them corn back of the house. I'd walk back there, and I'd hear them chirping. I'd go out there, and maybe a day or two later, they'd be out there eating it, which that guy had game chickens running around in there, too. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** They like corn, too.

**Stork:** They love them bush and things, game chickens.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you work for BP in cleaning up the oil?

**Stork:** No, ma'am.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Did you know anybody who did?

**Stork:** Yeah. I knew quite a few people. I had a boy to work for them a little bit, Edward Stork.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Your son?

**Stork:** Yeah, my son.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Do you think he would talk to me about that?

**Stork:** Well, no. Mostly what they did, they picked up trash after the hurricane, you see. They did go out spotting for oil a time or two, and then they stopped it. (0:52:09.2) But he didn't have his own boat. Mostly it was people that had their own boat did most of that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Have you noticed any change in the fishing that you do since the oil spill? (0:52:28.8)

**Stork:** No, not that much. Fishing's still fair. You have good years, and you have bad years on that, but I think the fishing's pretty satisfied during the summer months, catching fish this year. They caught quite a few fish.

**Scull-DeArmey:** What about crabs?

**Stork:** Crabs, I don't know about crabs, now.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Larry Ryan's having a real hard time, crabbing.

**Stork:** Yeah. Well, Larry's the one I sold—you called him a different name, but him and Sara I sold my house to.

**Scull-DeArmey:** He just can't catch enough. They just aren't there.

**Stork:** I know he can't. Larry's a good fellow. He's a nice guy.

**Scull-DeArmey:** He said they're not catching any little crabs, which they always did before and threw them back. And they're not catching any roe crabs, which they



always threw back. And he's not catching any great number of crabs to really make a living at it. So it's been hard on him.

**Stork:** Yeah, been rough on him.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What do the waters look like to you since the oil spill? Any different? (0:53:37.6)

**Stork:** I can't tell a difference in waters around these bays here and the bayous. It always looks the same. It looks a little browner today because we got some rain last night. It looks a little bluer some days; saltwater gets up in here. But outside of that, I can't tell a bit of difference in it, that respect.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** How is the health of the seafood that's on the Gulf Coast now, in your opinion?

**Stork:** Oh, I think it's legal to eat it because I know everybody that catches on hook and line been a-eating it. And I've eaten quite a bit of it. Didn't bother me.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** OK. What do you see for the future of the Gulf Coast seafood industry? (0:54:29.1)

**Stork:** Well, if they keep doing like they doing, have the limit on stuff, (0:54:35.7) I think it'll really come back unless you have a big oil spill, oil disaster or something like that because I think it's less people commercial fishing now, even shrimping.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** Which would mean there are more fish surviving.

**Stork:** That's right. I think most of the shrimp they get in now, a lot of them is from the East Coast and around Florida and around.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What is your favorite seafood to eat? (0:55:09.0)

**Stork:** That's a hard decision. (laughter) Favorite, my favorite, I would say a flounder, a popeyed mullet and ground mullet and then oysters. I guess I ought to put oysters ahead, but that's OK. That's still one of my favorites. And shrimp, I do eat shrimp. That's my favorites.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** How do you fix the flounder? How do you prepare it?

**Stork:** The flounder, you can bake a flounder, or you can just fry them.

**Scull-DeArmeY:** What's your favorite?

**Stork:** I like mine most of the time fried. I'm a fried-fish man. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** How do you prepare it to fry it?

**Stork:** Well, if he's a small one, I cut him crosswise three or four times, from where you cut his head off and his tail, and salt and pepper him down there. Sometime you can put a lemon in there or just have lemon juice to pour over him is real good. Now, if you bake him, I do them the same way, but he's got to be a larger one. You get a couple two- or three-pound ones, put them in a pan, that's the best way to bake them.

**Scull-DeArmey:** What temperature do you bake them, for how long?

**Stork:** I bake them generally, I'd say 150 for an hour or half or so, but some people go up higher than that.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Do you batter the flounder before you fry it?

**Stork:** Yeah, before I fry it, I sure do, flounder.

**Scull-DeArmey:** With cornmeal?

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am.

**Scull-DeArmey:** OK. What about mullet? How do you prepare—

**Stork:** Mullet, I just put cornmeal on them. I get me some yellow cornmeal and put on there.

**Scull-DeArmey:** And fry them. OK. What about oysters? How do you like oysters?

**Stork:** Oysters, same way. Most of the time I might mix a little flour in it and the yellow cornmeal and fry them, or you can fry them in a good batter. Sometime I fry them in a batter.

**Scull-DeArmey:** OK. What about shrimp?

**Stork:** Shrimp, I'd say cornmeal, myself, for shrimp.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Frying?

**Stork:** Yes, ma'am.

**Scull-DeArmey:** OK. What about boiled shrimp?

**Stork:** Boiled shrimp, I'm not much on boiled shrimp, but I can eat them. I have boiled them. Best way to boil them, a lot of people, they'll boil shrimp, and they can't wait to eat them. If you boil shrimp and you put a lot of salt in them, you need to let them sit in that same water for a hour or two, and then you can put whatever you put

in there. You could put crab boil in there with them. Some people put Irish potatoes in there and eat the Irish potatoes out of them, and different [stuff], even corn people put in there. It's real good. In fact, I ate some over at Biloxi here a while back. They had Cruisin' the Coast. I was down there. My nephew set up a stand, and he had corn, potatoes, and all that in boiled crab stuff. (laughter) Boy, that was some fine eating. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** The last question that we always like to ask: is there anything that we did not talk about, that you'd like to put on the record?

**Stork:** Not really I know of unless it's kind of like what the old-timers did years ago. (0:58:27.2) Some of the old-timers, they'd have to drive a horse and buggy or walk down here, or go get the stuff later on to haul the stuff up off the coastline. And they told one time—I'm not going to call the man's name, but they lived about a mile and a half from here, and back when they finally got where they could buy a truck, he had a old about 1932—I think—Chevrolet truck, but he had him a mule and stuff. And he'd plow other people's gardens a lot with it, and they'd always have a big body on there, about five or six foot high to haul that mule around in case it could jump out. They'd have cross pieces up there at the top. They told one time that he got up early in the morning and come down here oystering on this shell pile right west of me there. And he had everything in there at night, and when he drove down and parked his car, it wasn't no houses down here then. It just had some cedar trees, little pin oak trees. Well, he goes out oystering all day, and when he come back in, it was a bunch of chickens a-walking around out there. He said, "Well, that big, old yellow rooster looks like my wife's rooster, and that Dominecker rooster there looks like hers." And he discovered it was his wife's chickens, got up on that truck body, and roosted, and he drove them down here before daylight. And he had to stay till after dark when they got back on the truck and roost. So he drove them back home. He had to wait till dark to drive them back. (laughter) Now, a lot of people thinks that's a tale, but that's supposed to been the truth. Now, I don't know if it was true because I was born in 1932, myself, but I've heard people tell that said, "That was the God's truth." But that was funny to me. I laughed like you the first time I heard it. That's funny, and it could have been possible.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Sure.

**Stork:** They'd build them barns way up high, and then the chickens'd roost under the barn, most of the time, just yard chickens, running out. And he had that big—he parked his truck and got out his oyster nippers and everything he was going to take to come. He just jumped in his old Chevrolet truck, putt-putt. Well, them chickens stayed on the side. It was solid boards. He got there, and they got off in the day. He got to looking. That look like his wife's. He called his wife's name, but I ain't calling no name. He said, "That looks like my wife's chickens." A big yellow rooster and a big Domineck rooster out there and a bunch of hens. (laughter)

**Scull-DeArmey:** And they were.

**Stork:** That was pretty good. But that's the way it worked back then. They'd do all kinds of stuff like that. Walk, they'd have to walk three miles to get down here to go oystering back then, a lot of people. And then that evening they'd know about what time, maybe his daddy or some of them might meet them in a horse and wagon and haul the oysters back in.

**Scull-DeArmey:** To bring them back, yeah. They didn't have refrigerators in those days.

**Stork:** No, no. We finally, I guess it was in the [19]40s before we had iceboxes, seem like it.

**Scull-DeArmey:** How is an icebox different than a refrigerator?

**Stork:** Well, you just set the ice in there in blocks. We'd call it a icebox, you see. You'd have a top and a bottom. You could get one as big as you wanted to, and you could keep your milk, and your eggs and stuff fresh and put it up in one. See, we'd buy fifty pounds every day. The ice man would come around and deliver ice back then. If we wanted more, somebody might buy a hundred pounds. We could put that in there, also. But mostly we just, our milk, we milked cows and stuff. We'd put our eggs and stuff in there to keep them cool. They'd last a lot longer.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Um-hm. Is there anything else that you want to put on the record before we stop?

**Stork:** I'm trying to think of something else to tell you that was kind of funny, but I can't think of nothing right now. I have to think of it when I leave. But they would tell all kinds of tales like that, but they said that was true about the chickens. Now, I don't know.

**Scull-DeArmey:** I love that story.

**Stork:** Yeah. That's a good story. That is possible.

**Scull-DeArmey:** Sure. Well, thank you so much, Mr. Stork. I'm going to turn the recorder off.

(end of interview)