

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

Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster–Gulf Coast Fisheries
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Norman Yandell

Interviewer: Stephanie Scull-DeArmey

Volume 1043
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An Oral History with Norman Yandell, Volume 1043

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Biography

Mr. Norman K. Yandell was born on August 12, 1934, in Gladewater, Texas, to Jessie Andrew Yandell and Minnie Quave Yandell (born December 25, 1918, in Poplarville, Mississippi). Yandell moved to the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a young boy, residing with his mother and his stepfather Earl Holley (born January 1, 1916). His father was a self-employed sign-painter, and his stepfather was a net-maker who retired from the United States Army.

Yandell attended St. Stanislaus Elementary School, and he was graduated from Gulfport High School in 1954. Yandell served in active duty in the United States Navy for two years, in the United States Air National Guard for three years, and in the United States Navy Reserve for six years. He began working for Mississippi Power Company, Southern Company Service, in Gulfport, Mississippi on January 2, 1957, from which he retired in 1988.

On June 13, 1975, he married Tonda Kae McCarter (born June 26, 1946, in Union City, Indiana). They have five children: Yandell's children Adela Yandell Saucier (born April 8, 1956), Tammy Yandell Frierson (born December 31, 1957), Karen Yandell McConnell (born October 16, 1960), Kenneth Earl Yandell (born May 18, 1962) and Yandell's stepdaughter Shelley M. Rickey (born July 15, 1967).

Some of his interests and activities include fishing, woodcarving, creating and producing wooden, hand-carved Norm Bait Lures (1988 through 2005), creating limited-edition, lure-collections items, making fishing nets, and teaching the art of cast-net knitting. At the time of this interview, he was teaching net-making at the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum. Among his awards and honors are Honor Man of Navy Boot Camp Company 1956, Jaycee of the Year 1966, and Biloxi Volunteer Recognition Award 2011. Yandell has spent a lifetime fishing along the Gulf Coast of the southern United States.

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AN ORAL HISTORY
with
NORMAN YANDELL

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Norman Yandell and is taking place on November 15, 2011. The interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArme.

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 Oil Disaster Project. The interview is with Norman Yandell, and it is taking place on Tuesday, November 15, 2011, in Long Beach, Mississippi, and the interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArme. And first I'd like to thank you, Mr. Yandell, for taking time to talk to us today.

Yandell: Thanks for having me.

Scull-DeArme: And for the record, just in case someday all the labels would get lost, could you just state your name, please?

Yandell: Norman Yandell.

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

Yandell: Yeah. N-O-R-M-A-N, and Y-A-N-D-E-L-L.

Scull-DeArme: And I'm going to ask you something that you don't have to tell me if you don't want to.

Yandell: My age, [seventy-seven]. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme: When were you born?

Yandell: August the twelfth, 1934.

Scull-DeArme: OK. And where were you born?

Yandell: At Gladewater, Texas. (0:01:08.9)

Scull-DeArme: Gladewater, OK. Is that where you grew up?

Yandell: No, ma'am. We left there when I was about two years old and moved to the Coast.

Scull-DeArmey: Two years old, to here. Where, here?

Yandell: Probably in Gulfport, I imagine. I think Gulfport.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Gulfport. Do you know why your family chose to move to Gulfport?

Yandell: I don't know. That's where my mother and [my grandparents were] from, so they moved back down here. My mother met my dad in Texas, and they come to the Coast, [with my grandparents].

Scull-DeArmey: So have you lived here all your life?

Yandell: Well, we lived in New Orleans back during the war [World War II] for about two years, and then [Waveland], we lived [there] for about three years.

Scull-DeArmey: Was it World War II?

Yandell: World War II, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: In New Orleans?

Yandell: Yeah, World War II, about 1941 to about [19]44. Then we moved to Waveland. Then in 1947 after the Hurricane of [19]47, we moved to Gulfport, and [lived there until 1973] and then moved to Long Beach.

Scull-DeArmey: Tell me about your childhood on the Gulf Coast.

Yandell: Very, very nice, fished every day if I could. My [step]dad got me started fishing when I was about six years old. (0:02:41.9) And so we fished for bream with cane poles [in] all the little creeks and bayous from, I guess from Biloxi to Waveland. And then after the rods and reels came in, we started using rods and reels, and fished out of the boat. We fished for speckled trout and redfish but fished for bream when I was smaller. And I even got my kids fishing when they was all small, my daughters and my son.

Scull-DeArmey: How would you get from Waveland to Biloxi?

Yandell: How?

Scull-DeArmey: How?

Yandell: Highway [90] back then. Interstate 10 wasn't there, so it was Highway [90].

Scull-DeArmey: Was it Highway 49 or 90?

Yandell: Highway 90.

Scull-DeArmey: Highway 90. Were you walking?

Yandell: No. My daddy had a truck.

Scull-DeArmey: In a truck, yeah.

Yandell: Back then he had an old truck.

Scull-DeArmey: Did the beach and the seawall look different then?

Yandell: Oh, yeah, yeah. They did the seawall back in the [19]30s. But Highway 90 went all the way down the beach, and in some places it was right on the edge of the seawall. (0:03:57.7)

Scull-DeArmey: Did you just stand on the seawall?

Yandell: Fishing, you mean?

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Yandell: Oh, no. Well, we did in [Waveland] when I lived there. You could stand right on the seawall and fish, and throw a cast net, and flounder. The water came right up to the seawall. And here of course, it was always a lot of sand.

Scull-DeArmey: In Long Beach?

Yandell: In Long Beach. I can't remember. I think, seem like it was always sand in part of it, but a lot of times the seawall, the water came right up to the seawall, but it's kind of evading my mind because—but I remember going out and floundering a lot. I remember the seawall, the water coming up to the seawall in Waveland because I fished a lot. But after I moved to Gulfport, I didn't fish as much back then because I was in junior high, and I worked every weekend, so my fishing kind of stopped when I was in junior high. That's when we moved to Gulfport in [19]47.

Scull-DeArmey: Took a vacation. (laughter) What did you use for bait on cane poles? (0:05:04.0)

Yandell: Used either dead shrimp, or either in saltwater, cut mullet, cut bait. And if we were fishing for bream in freshwater, we used worms, or either small, live minnows.

Scull-DeArmey: Where did you get the shrimp and the mullet?

Yandell: [We could] catch them ourselves.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you catch those?

Yandell: With a net, a brill net for shrimp and a cast net for mullet.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you spell brill, B-R-I—

Yandell: B-R-I-L-L, I think that's right. I have to check.

Scull-DeArmey: And for the record, could you just paint a picture of a brill net? What does it look like? (0:05:45.1)

Yandell: It's knitted with nylon and has a lead line on the bottom. And it has [twelve lines that] go from the lead line up to the top and goes through a little [plastic ring, which is tied to the net. The brills are] tied to the hand line. And when you pull the hand line up, the lead line comes up and forms a bag for shrimp. And when you grab hold of [the plastic ring and pull up, the bait will] all fall out.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. So that would be how you would catch your bait.

Yandell: [Yes.]

Scull-DeArmey: You'd catch shrimp and mullet like that.

Yandell: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: Did you use a brill net for anything else?

Yandell: Just mainly shrimp.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Did you ever catch shrimp to eat that way?

Yandell: Oh, yeah, a lot of times, especially when I lived in Waveland. We lived right off the beach, off of Nicholson Avenue, and we fished, oh, every day just about, when I was out from school and on weekends because I was right there at it. And we'd catch black-tipped shark and redfish and jack crevalle. They'd come right up to the seawall. (0:06:51.2)

Scull-DeArmey: Did you eat the shark?

Yandell: No, no. We always turned them loose.

Scull-DeArmey: Turned it loose?

Yandell: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Weren't you afraid it might attack you later?

Yandell: No. Black-tipped sharks usually don't attack people. I understand now people eat them, but I wouldn't. I'd just turn them loose because they keep the Gulf clean. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Do they?

Yandell: Um-hm. I would say that probably when crab or fish die, if they get to them, boy, they'll eat them. And crabs do, too.

Scull-DeArmey: So the black-tipped shark is a scavenger?

Yandell: Almost all sharks are.

Scull-DeArmey: Really?

Yandell: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmey: I didn't know that.

Yandell: Just like a catfish. They're not near as much as catfish. You know, catfish are right on the bottom. They're more of a scavenger than sharks because they like live bait, too, but they will eat, they'll hit dead bait on a line.

Scull-DeArmey: Um-hm. OK. Tell me about floundering. How do you do it?
(0:08:01.2)

Yandell: Well, back years ago, they'd use—my grandpa used to use lighter knots in a wire basket, with a metal pipe. But then they had the Coleman lights; they used the Coleman lights or flambeaus. Flambeaus were kerosene, with a kerosene can, and it went out with pipe with a piece of asbestos on the end of it, wrapped around, and you'd light it and turn the pump, the tank on. And then later on when Coleman lights came out, with Coleman gas, had mantles in it, and a reflector. And you could walk along with a gig and stick your flounders.

Scull-DeArmey: What's a gig?

Yandell: It's just like a big, old ice pick but six foot long. (laughter) That's a good sample. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Why didn't the flounder fall off?

Yandell: Well, as soon as you stick them, you reach down with your fingers and grab a hold of the rod underneath them, and you pick them up, and while they're upside-down, you string them with your stringer, and then take it loose and put them on your belt, your stringer on your belt.

Scull-DeArmey: Were you walking?

Yandell: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: Not in a boat.

Yandell: Well, you could. In a bayou, you go real slow on a skiff. But mainly when you're out on sand, you get in shallow water. You go out, and you're talking about two inches. I've seen flounders on some of the sandbars with their back out of the water, even, waiting for the tide to come in. And they'd be waiting for bait. And I've stuck a lot of them have just their backs be out of the water.

Scull-DeArmey: Were they stuck?

Yandell: They'd just sit there and wait for bait to come in, with their mouth open. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Wow. So the tide, the waves are kind of breaking over, and they're—

Yandell: No. You flounder where it's real calm, when the water's real calm.

Scull-DeArmey: What was it that would float the—

Yandell: Small, little minnows. They're waiting for live bait they eat.

Scull-DeArmey: So maybe they were in a little tidal pool?

Yandell: No. They bury their selves up, and a lot of times all you can see is their eyes. When I was a kid, I'd be behind my dad, my stepdad, and he'd say, "Look at that flounder." I'd say, "Where?" And he'd say, "Right there." And I couldn't see him. But as you get older, you learn how to find them. But most of the time, you see them; you can see them moving sometimes. My grandson said he went several years ago, and a big, old flounder about five pounds that he stuck at him and missed him. And the flounder went out about four or five, six feet in front of him and came back,

and he stopped right back in front of him, and he got him the second time. He stood on top of him, and he weighed over five pounds. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Wow. (laughter) Did you eat that flounder?

Yandell: Well, my grandson did.

Scull-DeArmey: He didn't stuff it and put it on the wall? (laughter)

Yandell: No. I think he ate him. We was out in the bayou one time, back. My son was grown because it [was] a couple of years before the storm [Hurricane Katrina, 2005]. And he was floundering in a little, aluminum skiff, and I was sitting in a little lawn chair in the back, and he stuck a flounder. And it was about three foot of water. And he said, "Dad, I'm going to lose this flounder. Lean over the other side." So I leaned over the other side of the skiff, and I just fell in the water, muddy, about two foot deep in mud. And he said, "Well, since you're in the water, Dad, come get this flounder." So I walked around the front of it, and it was muddy, and it was just doing this." (gesturing) And I said, "You're sure it's a flounder?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Are you *sure* it's a flounder?" I reached down and got him, and he was over five pounds, and he just [soaked] me in mud. I had mud in my eyes and my ears, but we got the flounder. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Well, do you ever flounder in the daytime?

Yandell: No. It has to be at night.

Scull-DeArmey: Why?

Yandell: They usually don't, for some reason, they don't—you just can't see them in the daytime. At night's when you can see them with that light. And then later on after they came up with the underwater light with batteries and that light bulb that goes on a little PVC pipe, a friend of mine used to make them when they first started. And then they went to commercialize. But you can buy them now about six volt or twelve volt bulb in their, and the line comes up with a handle, and you just walk with it in the water, and you can see them right there.

Scull-DeArmey: Better than if the light's overhead?

Yandell: Yeah. It doesn't reflect on the water. Above-light reflects on water, but that just shines underwater. So you can see them better.

Scull-DeArmey: How has Waveland changed since you were a child?

Yandell: Well, now, they pump the sand in, and you can't fish off the seawall anymore. I think the only place they left the seawall is down towards where the casino's at, the Silver Slipper. I think it's maybe a couple miles there where the water

comes up to the seawall. Every time I've been there—I've been very few times the last several years—you'll see people floundering off the seawall and fishing off the seawall, but the water's so shallow, it's not like it used to be.

Scull-DeArmeY: Was it not shallow when you were a boy?

Yandell: Well, see, it depends on—it's constantly changes. Sand, one time washes in, and it'll be real shallow, and the next time you go out there, a storm will come and wash it out, and it'll be one or two feet deep. So it changes. It just changes with the tide. It's like all the islands now. (0:13:43.9) Most of the islands are just gone because they're just washed away.

Scull-DeArmeY: Erosion?

Yandell: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmeY: Is it daily waves or storms?

Yandell: Mainly storms.

Scull-DeArmeY: Mainly storms.

Yandell: Just like Chandeleur [was] about thirty-five miles long, [but now] four miles of the island's gone, [and] the lighthouse is in the water. It's underneath the water. It's sad. It really is. They're working on it right now. They're pumping the sand back in.

Scull-DeArmeY: Trying to build the island back?

Yandell: Yeah. They're pumping sand in. They say they're eventually going to pump in between, on Ship Island—Ship Island got tore in half, and they got East Ship [Island] and West Ship [Island]. And it's been where boats can go through there. I'm sure it's real deep. And they [will] eventually fill that back in. The island [has] protected the coastline.

Scull-DeArmeY: Ship Island is good fishing? (0:14:52.0)

Yandell: Oh, yeah, all around the island. I've caught redfish, speckled trout, and flounder [from both sides of the island].

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you fish from a boat?

Yandell: Usually you just get out of the boat and wade-fish. That's what we always did. You can fish out of a boat, but wade fishing [is best]. I've been doing that since I was a kid, so we still do. I don't do it anymore since I've gotten older, but my friends still go out there.

Scull-DeArme y: How deep do you wade?

Yandell: Oh, about waist-deep, from anywheres knee-deep to waist-deep.

Scull-DeArme y: I've heard there are hammerheads [sharks] at Ship Island. Do you ever see—

Yandell: Never had problems with sharks.

Scull-DeArme y: No?

Yandell: Never have. Been fishing Chandeleur since 1962, and the only thing we ever had problems with was stingrays and manta rays. The [rays] want to take your fish off your stringer. (laughter) But sharks will take your fish off your stringer, but never have attacked us. I [never had a] problem.

Scull-DeArme y: Do you ever see their fins?

Yandell: Yeah. You can see them swimming out there in shallow water, but you just turn around and go the other way. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: I would be so scared.

Yandell: Well, you can't catch fish if you get scared. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: I have heard dolphins. You know? I would be swimming at—

Yandell: Dolphins?

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah. And I could hear them in the water, but I've never seen them.

Yandell: Well, let me tell you a story about that. (0:16:18.4) We [were] out; I don't even know what island it was. It must have been in the Louisiana marshes somewhere because it was a real small key, and we happened to stop there. And I walked to the other side, and the water was real shallow. And [there] was a little pool, and it wasn't two foot deep, and it was closed in. And there was a little dolphin about three foot long, and I guess he had mullet [closed] in there. He had something going. We finally walked him out and got him over about a two-inch sandbar and got him in the deep water. Well, we went on fishing, and in a few minutes, we saw this school of porpoises [dolphins] coming in, and this little one was leading the way. And he come up, and he went all around my legs about three or four times, and he left, just like he was coming to thank you. And the big ones stayed out a little ways, and then they left. It was just like he thanked me for saving him. That was some experience.

Scull-DeArmey: That's really cool.

Yandell: I wish I'd had a camera back then [to take] a picture of that. He was about three foot long. He was real young, but like my [friend Don Parks] said, he was probably enjoying that little pond because he had all those mullet and everything [to] himself. (laughter) But we got him out. The tide was probably coming in, but we didn't know [when].

Scull-DeArmey: He might have died.

Yandell: Well, the water was about two foot deep inside that little pond, but eventually he would have probably got out of that, but he might have missed his mother and daddy. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. They might have left him.

Yandell: Yeah. They'd have probably stayed right there. But he come and thanked me. I mean, he swam through my legs and rubbed up against me. It was unreal. And I just stood there. And then he come back, and it was just like he come to thank me. It was two of us out there, and Don [Parks, my fishing buddy, and I were] pushing him. And [the dolphin] thanked me. Strange how things happen.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. That's really sweet. That's a great story. I was going to ask you something. Let me think a minute.

Yandell: About the storm?

Scull-DeArmey: No. Oh! What is Biloxi bacon? (0:18:29.6)

Yandell: That's mullet. That saved people back during the Depression because [people] couldn't get food. And during the war you had to have coupons to get any kind of meat, eggs, and bacon, or anything, or pork chops. You had to have a coupon, and it was issued by the government, of course. That would just keep everybody from hogging them up, I guess, and be sure everybody had [food]. But then everybody caught their own mullet, and net-making was real popular back then. People made their own cast nets, and they caught mullet, and that's when mullet was plentiful. You'd see them jumping. You don't see them jumping like they used to. They're there, but they're in deeper water, but they coming back. And that's why I started making nets, again, and teaching people how, hoping [to] catch more mullet.

Scull-DeArmey: You know, we may have an economic downturn where people need to be able to fish to eat, someday, not too far in the future.

Yandell: You never know. That's why you should be prepared.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. So I guess there wasn't a lot of meat, and you could only get a few coupons, maybe?

Yandell: Yeah. They were limited. I don't remember because I was small, but I remember you had to have coupons back then because we was living in New Orleans. But I remember my grandmother would give me a coupon to go get bacon or butter. I don't even know what all you had to have; I was so small. But I just knew you had to have coupons to get, I think, even coffee.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Do you remember, in New Orleans, did you fish in Louisiana?

Yandell: Well, I didn't fish over there, but I did crab. (0:20:25.5) I remember one time [when] we lived in Higgins, right [near] the old Highway 90 bridge. It was the Higgins Project. My mother worked in the shipyard, and of course back then, they built airplanes. And my stepdad was overseas. He was in the Philippines. And I went down and had some chicken necks. My grandma gave me some chicken necks. And I went down there and caught—I'll never forget. I caught 145 crabs. I had twelve dozen and one, and they were all great, big, blue crabs from the Industrial Canal. Now, you wouldn't eat anything out of that Industrial Canal because [I'm sure] it's polluted. But I used a dip net and had three throw lines with a rock on them, to keep [the bait] on the bottom. And I [went] back [to] the project, and some lady saw me with [those crabs], and she offered me ten cents apiece for them. I'll never forget. She counted them, and I had one dead. That was the most money I think I ever had. I started fishing and making money. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Did you sell all of them?

Yandell: I sold 144 of them because she said it was twelve dozen and one, and one of them was dead. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: What did you do with your money?

Yandell: I probably give it to my mother. I kept a dime for a root beer and a Moon Pie. Back then that's how much root beers and Moon Pies were, a nickel apiece. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: You didn't save any to eat?

Yandell: No. She wanted all of them, so I [sold] her all of them.

Scull-DeArmey: Tell me about a throw line.

Yandell: Oh, just a line with a rock on the end of it, and a chicken neck tied to the end of the line, to hold it down because that neck would probably float, but with the rock, it kept it on the bottom. And soon as you saw that line going out—[it would be]

tied it to a stake or something—and you see it going out; you know you had a crab. So you'd start pulling in and dip him up.

Scull-DeArmey: So you pull the line in.

Yandell: And then dip him up with a dip net.

Scull-DeArmey: And the crab just hangs on?

Yandell: Yeah. They hang onto that meat. You can take them out of the water; most of them don't even drop. They're going to hold that meat. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: So for the record, what does a dip net look like?

Yandell: It's just like—it's hard to explain. Made out of nylon line and stretched over a wire from twelve to fifteen inches, attached to a broomstick pole, and maybe ten or twelve inches deep, like same kind of thing, just like a hairnet, but it'd be made out of, maybe an inch, an inch-and-a-half mesh. We made those. (0:23:32.7) My [step]dad made those, himself. He made those for us. He would put it on a piece of cut wire and put it into a broomstick handle or something. Back then you couldn't buy them like you can now in the stores.

Scull-DeArmey: What happened to the crab after he got in the dip net?

Yandell: We put them in a basket, and back then you could get moss from trees, and you wet it and put it on top of [the crabs], and that'd keep them from dying. But I had one die out of that 145. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: And so crabbing was the only thing in New Orleans that—

Yandell: That's the only thing that I did because it was real handy. I was small, and Mother didn't want me to get away too far from the house. We stayed there two or three months, and then we moved over west of Lee Circle, St. Charles, and went to school there for a year. And then after that we moved back to Waveland when I was in the fourth grade.

Scull-DeArmey: What was school like in New Orleans, going to school?

Yandell: It was different. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: How?

Yandell: It was crowded. But I enjoyed it. I made a lot of real good friends.

Scull-DeArmey: Did you learn?

Yandell: Oh, yeah. I was in the second and third grade, and then we moved back to Waveland, and I went to Waveland School for the fourth and then for half a year. And it wasn't near as good as the New Orleans school. And then I changed to St. Stanislaus (0:25:16.5) half a year in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. And it was called the Day School for St. Stanislaus.

Scull-DeArmey: So you didn't board.

Yandell: No, I didn't. In fact we rode bicycles three miles to school every day.

Scull-DeArmey: Wow. St. Stanislaus, were those Jesuits?

Yandell: All boys.

Scull-DeArmey: Did the Catholic brothers teach you?

Yandell: Yeah, they taught, [but real strict].

Scull-DeArmey: They're good teachers.

Yandell: Oh, yeah. And back then it was four grades in one room, first through the fourth, and fifth through the eighth in one room. And we used a big, old potbellied stove for heat. This was [1945, 1946, and 1947]. In [19]47 we moved to Gulfport, and I started junior high in [19]47, September of [19]47.

Scull-DeArmey: Which one?

Yandell: It was Central Junior High, right where the courthouse is [located], in Gulfport.

Scull-DeArmey: I went to West Side Junior High in Gulfport.

Yandell: Did you?

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah, I sure did.

Yandell: You're from Gulfport. I went to West Side Elementary School in first and second grade when I first started. You was at West Side. I'll bet Second Street, huh?

Scull-DeArmey: I don't remember. I can't remember the address.

Yandell: I had a friend of mine. This is off the record. [A portion of the interview has not been transcribed at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArmey: So even in 1947 Second Street was uptown, huh?

Yandell: Oh, yeah, that was uptown. That was Second Street and Broadmore.

Scull-DeArmey: Second Street kind of got wiped out by Katrina, though, didn't it?

Yandell: [It certainly did.] I have a fishing friend that lives on Second Street, and he had three foot of water in his house.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. OK. So Waveland fourth grade. Then you went to St. Stanislaus. Then at Gulfport you were in junior high.

Yandell: Junior high, seventh grade, seventh, eighth, and ninth, and then I went on to, one year, my sophomore year, I went to Perkinston [Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinston Campus]. Back then the high school was, four years of high school and two years of college. Now, it's all college, but I went there my sophomore year in high school.

Scull-DeArmey: You didn't go to Gulfport High?

Yandell: Yeah, I did. I went there two years then went to Perk one year and then came back to Gulfport and graduated.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. What year did you graduate?

Yandell: [In] 1954.

Scull-DeArmey: That's the year I was born!

Yandell: I'm sorry. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: What did you do after high school graduation?

Yandell: I went right in the Navy. (0:28:28.8)

Scull-DeArmey: OK. What was that like? Tell me about the Navy.

Yandell: Fantastic. I enjoyed it. On my training, my grandma taught me how to make up beds when I'd first get up. Well, I did that and sweep and keep the room clean. It came in handy when I was in boot camp.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Where did you go to boot camp?

Yandell: Bainbridge, Maryland.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. What happened after boot camp?

Yandell: Well, I came home on leave, from boot camp leave, and got married. (0:29:03.6) And I was sent to San Diego for two years right after that, October of [19]57. Stayed in San Diego for two years.

Scull-DeArmeY: You were on another shore. You were on another beach.

Yandell: Yeah, another beach, but I fished only one time out there in a lake. My neighbor found out that I love to fish, and we went way up in the mountains in a lake and caught a lot of bream, but that's the only time I fished, that one time. I take that back. I went; they call it a yellowtail, and I don't really know what, I'm not sure just what kind of fish it is, but they call it a yellowtail, and they fished out, about fifteen miles out from San Diego. It was real rough, real, real rough, and I (laughter) got sick and stayed sick for three hours before it would get back in. I'm used to water, been around water all my life, but it's different out there. (laughter) So that was the only time I fished saltwater when I was out there. I never wanted to go back. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmeY: Did you catch anything?

Yandell: No. I (laughter) [got seasick]. In fact, I come home and come back into shore, and lived about two or three miles from the boat dock, and I got sick walking on those hills. (laughter) I was so sick. Anyway, we stayed out there two years, and then came back to Gulfport. And [when] I got out of the Navy in [19]56, I [went back to work at] the Doghouse on Pass Road. I worked there [in 1950 and 1951], about three months or so. (0:30:51.2) [After three months], I went to work at the steam plant in 1957, January the second, 1957.

Scull-DeArmeY: The steam plant?

Yandell: Plant Jack Watson.

Scull-DeArmeY: For electricity.

Yandell: Um-hm, yeah. I worked there for three months, and I got transferred to the Gulfport store room in March 1957.

Scull-DeArmeY: Gulfport what room?

Yandell: The Gulfport store room, Mississippi Power Company. We had the south end, the old bus barn on Thirtieth Avenue.

Scull-DeArmeY: And where was it on Pass Road you said you worked?

Yandell: I worked at the Doghouse on Pass Road.

Scull-DeArmeY: Doghouse?

Yandell: Doghouse Restaurant.

Scull-DeArmeY: Doghouse Restaurant. That's not there anymore, is it?

Yandell: No, unh-uh, afraid not. (laughter) In fact Mr. [Jack] Simmons opened up the Doghouse Junior in Gulfport, right there between the Hancock Bank and Twenty-sixth Avenue. He opened up a little restaurant. He called it the Doghouse Junior. I was in high school. And after he opened up, and I worked there on the weekends, Friday and Saturday and Sunday night; he stayed open twenty-four hours a day, [and] I worked there, making hamburgers.

Scull-DeArmeY: Wow. So you made a career with the power company? Is that right? How long did you work—

Yandell: Oh, I worked for Mississippi Power Company for thirty-two years and eight months. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. Thirty-two years, eight months.

Yandell: Eight months, yeah. I retired in 1988, [October].

Scull-DeArmeY: Oh, good for you! Are you having a good retirement?

Yandell: Very good.

Scull-DeArmeY: Good, good.

Yandell: I've been retired twenty-three years now. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmeY: That is excellent. That's fantastic. When did you learn net making? (0:32:36.6)

Yandell: Well, my [step]dad, used to, when I was about five, six years old, I'd watch [him]. He taught me how to do it back then, and I never knitted anything till I got older, and after I come out of the Navy [is when I started knitting nets]. I'd always watch him knit. And then how I got started net making, again: my son called me and said he had a friend that used a net made overseas, and it didn't work right. It was made out of monofilament line. And he tried to open it, and it wouldn't open up. So he wanted to know how to make a net, and he told my son. And my son told him, he said, "Well, my dad knows how to knit, but he hadn't knitted in years." And so he called me. And sure enough, he come to my house three or four different times, and started on this cast net. And about two months later, he had an eight-and-a-half-foot net made, and he caught mullet with it. And then I was at the Edgewater Mall, right outside the [Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry] Museum, and I didn't realize they had moved from the Point [in Biloxi] when they lost their building. And I walked in and asked them about net making, if they wanted somebody to teach [people]. They

said, “Yeah.” So I’ve been doing it every Saturday since April. April the fourth, [2011], [is when] I started. And I’ve had, oh, half a dozen people [have] already made nets. So I hope I can get something started. In fact, I got my son started. He’s a fireman, too. And he’s already got a five-foot net made in the last, just last month. So I hope I can get [more] firemen started knitting, [making nets].

Scull-DeArme y: Firemen?

Yandell: Yeah. Years ago you’d go by a fire station, [and] you’d see firemen sitting out there, knitting.

Scull-DeArme y: Is that right?

Yandell: And you don’t see it anymore because these monofilament nets became so popular, but they were so cheap. But now, people say they buy them, and they don’t open up because they make them so much different from [the way they are made here]. And so I’m going back to the basics, again.

Scull-DeArme y: Good. That’s great. That’s really good. Well, we talked about how you learned to fish. We’ve already talked about that. When you were growing up, what species of fish were you seeing? When you were growing up, what were the species of fish?

Yandell: Oh, species. Redfish and speckled trout and sheepshead and drum was what [we would] catch, close in.

Scull-DeArme y: Are they still out there? (0:35:16.8)

Yandell: Oh, yeah. Yeah, you can still catch them, not as plentiful as they were. They bigger, though, than even what they used to be.

Scull-DeArme y: Is that right?

Yandell: I think so, yeah.

Scull-DeArme y: There are not as many, but they’re bigger?

Yandell: Yeah, um-hm.

Scull-DeArme y: Why, do you think?

Yandell: I guess it’s season changes, and the storms. And after the storm come in, Katrina, it pushed all that—well, not Katrina. The [BP Deepwater Horizon] oil spill (0:35:46.3), it pushed all those fish from the rivers and bayous, and it pushed them over this way, and the fishing really got better, and right now you can catch big, old speckled trout at Ship Island.

Scull-DeArmeY: So they were running away from the oil?

Yandell: Oil, I guess that's what happened, yeah.

Scull-DeArmeY: Good. (laughter) That's good.

Yandell: They had to. It affected the dolphin, but I never seen any speckled trout dead or mullet dead on the beach, but we saw the dolphins. I don't know why. You'd think they could have got out of it. I know they tested the dolphins, but I've never heard any kind of reports why they died. I think they holding it hush-hush.

Scull-DeArmeY: I think maybe that dispersant, you know?

Yandell: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArmeY: I don't think anybody knows what that'll do.

Yandell: Yeah. And what's so sad, you never know what's still out there.

Scull-DeArmeY: Right. So you have seen a lot of dead dolphins?

Yandell: Yeah. I don't know how many, but quite a few dead dolphins [have been] found on the beach, in Louisiana, too.

Scull-DeArmeY: Yeah. What about turtles?

Yandell: Yeah, they've had—I couldn't say for sure because I don't know what some turtles died—they don't know whether [turtle deaths were] caused from oil, or they're caused from people shrimping and not having the right kind of apparatus on their nets to disable them. So I don't know what, so I wouldn't be educated enough to answer that question.

Scull-DeArmeY: What do you remember about sea turtles when you were a child?

Yandell: I don't remember them.

Scull-DeArmeY: You never saw any? What does fishing mean to you, personally?

Yandell: Oh, it was fantastic. I loved it. My grandpa used to take me [to Fort Bayou]. He lived in D'Iberville, and we'd go fishing for bream. That was always enjoyable. And he'd come to visit me, and I'd take him up on the Little Biloxi [River], fishing for bream. That's a couple of years after I was out of the Navy. That was probably in [19]59.

Scull-DeArmeY: What kind of bait for bream. (0:38:35.5)

Yandell: We use worms.

Scull-DeArmev: Live worms?

Yandell: Um-hm. (brief interruption; end of digital file 11-15-11 track 1 of 2; beginning of digital file 11-15-11 track 2 of 2)

Scull-DeArmev: OK. So we're back on the record, and there were two things we wanted to talk about: the commercial business, and you were going to tell me how you got started with your lures, making your lures. (0:00:17.4)

Yandell: Well, I started fishing with my buddy [Don Parks] out at Chandeleur [Island] in 1962, and he used a lure that was made out of wood down in Florida and bought them at the old Gibson Store in Gulfport for seventy-nine cents and attached a twelve-inch/sixteen-inch leader, with a jig head and grub and would catch double speckled trout and double redfish. It worked beautifully. Well, sometime in the [19]80s, they went from wood to plastic. Probably somebody was making them, like I did, later on in life, and went commercial with them, and somebody probably bought him out, whoever was making them, and it just never did [float] right. We used everything from a mirror lure to a Lucky Thirteen, all these different kinds of lures with a trailer. And so one day I saw a piece of wood laying in my shop; I always did a little woodcarving. And I picked it up, and it took me two months to get it perfected [so that] paint would even stay on the lure. I'd dip it in varnish, and the paint would curl. So I finally got it where it would work, and took it out. I went out with my buddy, and when we got to Chandeleur, I didn't tell him I had it. I took it out of my vest after he left me, and the first cast I made, I caught doubles on it, [two speckled trout]. And finally he come up to me, after I'd caught a half a dozen or so, and he asked me, "What you using?" I told him, "A Norm Bait." That's how the name got started. And after he looked at it, he said, "Well, make me one." And I thought to myself, "Yeah, sure. It only took me two months to make this one." But I made him one, made my son one, and his son-in-law one. And one day I was in one of the stores in Gulfport and buying some little screw-eyes. And the lady [who] owned it asked me what I was making. I said, "Lures." She said, "You are?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "You make them to sell?" I said, "No. I'm just making them [for my buddies and my son to fish with.]" I was hand-carving them, and it'd take me a couple of hours just to carve the lip in them. And she said, "Well, if you'll make enough, bring me some. I'll see if I can sell them." Well, I did, and it took me a month to make a dozen. And it wasn't three weeks later she called me and said, "Norman, I've sold them. I need some more." And I said, "My gosh. Look here." So I went, and I got me a broom or two and a sander, and I started. And from there I had, oh, twenty-some locations [selling them] before Hurricane Katrina. (0:02:48.2) And we lost thirteen of them after the storm; [the tackle stores] washed out. But that's when I decided to retire. That was 2005, of course. And so I turned it over to my son. But before, my son was a fireman. So I'd carve [the lures; I would cut the lures out with a jigsaw], cut them out of wood and then give them to him to sand down, and he took them and got

good with it. I knew one of these days he was going to take over my business, but he didn't know that. So sure enough, after the storm, I asked him if he'd like to have it, and he did. And he's doing a fantastic job.

Scull-DeArmeY: Great. What were the first prices for the Norm Bait?

Yandell: The price?

Scull-DeArmeY: When you first sold them?

Yandell: You mean what I sold them for?

Scull-DeArmeY: Yeah.

Yandell: I think \$3.50 apiece back then.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. So that would have been about 1962?

Yandell: No. It was 1988 when I first started.

Scull-DeArmeY: So \$3.50 in 1988.

Yandell: Yeah. That's when I first started.

Scull-DeArmeY: What do they cost now?

Yandell: The retail price is \$7.50 or three for \$21.00.

Scull-DeArmeY: So can you make money at \$7.50?

Yandell: Oh, yeah. Of course, I don't sell them now. My son makes them. I stopped in 2005. The real reason I had to stop—I don't know if this is for the record or not—but our (0:04:25.9) insurance man came to visit one day and take pictures. We have a commercial guesthouse and two rentals behind our property. And he was taking pictures of the houses, and he stopped by. I was out in front of my shop with a sander on a little workbench. And I was sanding lures. This was probably 1999, or [19]98. And he said, "Norman, I didn't realize you made Norm Bait Fishing Lures." And my shop went up sky-high on my insurance just because I made them. And I asked him why later on. He said well, if my shop would burn, catch afire and caught my house on fire, it wouldn't pay for the house. I said, "Now, that's awful. Anything happens to your house, your insurance should pay for it." So when I stopped making them, one of the guys that wrote articles for the *Daily Herald* about fishing, he wrote an article about me not making them anymore and my son took over. So I took the article to this insurance guy, said, "Now, drop my insurance because I'm stopping making them." But anyway, I do things I do now just for friends and stuff, Christmas presents. In fact he came in the yard about a week ago, and I was out making—but I wasn't making

lures. I was making something, but I know he probably'd think I was, but (laughter) he didn't stop to talk. He just stopped and took pictures.

Scull-DeArmey: I hope your bill doesn't go up.

Yandell: Well, it's OK now, as long as I don't make them anymore.

Scull-DeArmey: What is a commercial guesthouse? (0:06:09.9)

Yandell: It was my mother-in-law's, their retirement home. We bought that house from them. They was on Pineville Road, and they built a house, and we called it their retirement home. When they both passed away, we used it for ballgames on weekends for the Saints. And when the game would come in, my wife said—because everything was still there, bedroom and sunroom and a living room, dining room, kitchen, and it was real nice. And it was right behind our house. And so she advertised it through the chamber. Back then she was president of the Long Beach Chamber [of Commerce]. But she advertised through the chamber and got calls for it. But now she goes through on a website, and people come here from up North, stay with us sometimes two or three months at a time, now. And Katrina affected it because one group came down from Minnesota. Four of them came down and brought their boat and fished. They usually stay a week. And some other couples came down to fish. And after the storm they couldn't come down because the [water] was so bad. .

Scull-DeArmey: Right after Katrina?

Yandell: Yeah. And they came back last year [in 2009], and it wasn't near as good, but this year [2011], they came back. And the fishing around Cat Island was fantastic, best it's ever been. So fish all had moved in. But anyway that's the commercial guesthouse. Everything's completely furnished from coffee to sugar and cream, everything. Everything's furnished. All you have to bring is bring your clothes. [A short portion of the interview has been omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArmey: Tell me about Hurricane Katrina. (0:08:40.5) What happened to you during Hurricane Katrina?

Yandell: Well, we stayed in our house, but we had no water [from Hurricane Katrina] in Long Beach. Water was all around us in bayous and canals. It was scary to look at the waterline [map later], but we stayed right there, and the next morning, daylight or so, I couldn't even open the screen door for trees all in the yard. And I said, "My goodness, where do we start?" My wife said, "Right there by the steps." And it took us two months to get all the limbs and trees cut out of the driveway [and yard]. And our cars, we parked our cars in the front yard off of Pineville Road. And my stepdaughter lives in Holland. She went on Internet and saw a picture, aerial view of the area. And she saw our truck and car in that front yard, and she knew we was OK. But anyway, we couldn't even get in the driveway. [We put] seventy-five [to] a

hundred feet [of] limbs, [which were] ten foot high and twelve foot wide for five [or] six different times in the front yard, all the way across the property. So we [have] two and a half acres of land. So we lost about, oh, I guess ten, eleven big pine trees, in back in the woods area, about a acre of land. And I used to walk back there all the time, could take leaves and stuff. And since the storm, I can't even walk [through] there [with all the downed] trees. And now it's growed up so bad. It's sad. So it affected the fishing lures, and it affected my son. He took over, and it affected his sales, and affected the guesthouse. Everybody [was affected]. It wasn't the idea of how bad [Hurricane Katrina] was. It was just people were scared to come down. That was the main thing.

Scull-DeArmeY: How far is your house from the beach?

Yandell: Oh, [I'd say] about [two] miles.

Scull-DeArmeY: And you said you have bayous around you. Do you have other water around you, bayous?

Yandell: It's, I'd say, within probably a quarter of a mile where the bayous came up real high, but we didn't have any water in [our] house. We couldn't even see it.

Scull-DeArmeY: Good.

Yandell: It didn't stay [high] too long. It went down pretty fast.

Scull-DeArmeY: Did you lose power?

Yandell: Oh, yeah, [for] eleven days.

Scull-DeArmeY: Eleven days.

Yandell: They did a fantastic job.

Scull-DeArmeY: Yeah.

Yandell: Fantastic job.

Scull-DeArmeY: Yeah, they did.

Yandell: I'm a brick collector (0:11:29.8), and I have bricks, comes out of my shop and over to my walkway, about two foot wide, bricks with names in them. And during the time the guys were putting electricity up, the foreman walked through there, and we started talking. And he looked down, and he found a brick that was made in his hometown. And he called the other guy; he was on a pole. He said, "When you get down, Jim," he said, "come over here. I've got something to show you." And he said,

“That’s a brick that come from my hometown.” He couldn’t believe he’d come over here to Mississippi and found a brick that I had.

Scull-DeArmeY: Where do you get your bricks?

Yandell: I don’t get hardly any anymore, but I found them just in different places. People, though, would give them to me. I have one my aunt gave to me. She lived out in Texas. My dad, [who we found after I was forty-one years old], and his sister had a antique shop. And she had a brick that said, “Don’t spit on the sidewalk.” [A short portion of the interview has been omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArmeY: Oh, that’s great. That’s really great.

Yandell: I have about seventy-five, a hundred or so with names in them.

Scull-DeArmeY: What’s your worst memory of Hurricane Katrina?

Yandell: The worst memory? When the house started shaking. (laughter) When the eye come over. And that eye lasted on the Coast for twelve hours, so we had twelve hours of a-hundred-and-forty-mile-an-hour wind, excess. So that was enough. And the house was built back in the [19]30s, in the late [19]30s sometime, by two old winos. (laughter) And we lucky, though, it stayed because it’s made out of old, heavy two-by-fours. The two-by-fours back then were made out of old, heavy wood, so it stayed, but it was scary. I boarded up sixty-two windows at my house and shop and the guest house and two rentals in the back. So I had sixty-two windows to cover up with plywood.

Scull-DeArmeY: Did any trees fall on any of your houses?

Yandell: Well, yeah. One pecan tree fell and caused just a little damage. We have one of those—it’s a duplex—come from Hardy Court Housing Project, back during the war. And my father-in-law had it moved in back sometime in the [19]60s, and it messed up, a tree messed up just a little bit of one corner of the roof, but no major damage. I repaired that just real quick. Had all of the shingles, of course, came off the house, but the tarpaper stayed, and we had maybe a little water in one of the apartments. Just a little bit of water got [in].

Scull-DeArmeY: From rain?

Yandell: Yeah. We covered it because of course it stayed here for twelve hours, but we was lucky we was crossways to the wind. No tornadoes. If a tornado came through, we’d have lost everything, probably. One came through the backyard and got eleven of our big pine trees down, [so] we [were] lucky.

Scull-DeArmeY: Did you see it?

Yandell: No, we didn't. Just heard it.

Scull-DeArmey: You heard it.

Yandell: We covered—I had tarp, blue tarp that I bought enough to cover up the five buildings, and then two weeks later they came through and put commercial tarp on. And it wasn't a week [later], two of the buildings, [the covers] blew off and had to redo it. But we [were] lucky. [A portion of the interview has been omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArmey: What was it like to get food and medicine after—

Yandell: Well, everybody [I'm sure had food and medicine, but ice was needed]. I know I stayed in line one time in Long Beach at a Long Beach school. Walked over there about a half a mile from the house and stood in line, I know, three hours, waiting to get a bag of ice, and finally they came out and said, "It's going to be a couple more hours before the truck gets there." And we all were about ready to leave, and here come the truck, and everybody clapped. There were about 150 people standing in line to get a little bag of ice. It happened like that in about all the schools on the Coast with people standing in line to get ice. We was lucky we had a deep well, and we [had] a generator, and we was able to have fresh water. But you know, we never did lose [city] water. We had the [well and] pump, but our [city] water never [stopped]. We [were] lucky we had water the whole time. And [after Hurricane] Camille, (0:17:20.4) I was living in Gulfport then and didn't have water.

Scull-DeArmey: During Camille.

Yandell: Yeah. But Long Beach kept water. The pressure wasn't real good, but they kept it going.

Scull-DeArmey: And it wasn't contaminated?

Yandell: No, unh-uh.

Scull-DeArmey: But your water came from a well?

Yandell: Well, we had well water because we have a above-ground swimming pool, so we use it for emergencies, like flushing the commode, that kind of stuff, but we didn't need it because the water stayed on. It was good. We used the pool to swim in because it was so hot after the storm. But anyway, eleven days, they had the electricity. They did a fantastic job.

Scull-DeArmey: So were you able to turn—your air conditioner wasn't damaged. Did your AC [air conditioner] work after Katrina?

Yandell: Oh, yeah, after the storm, yeah, soon as we got electricity. We slept on the floor. I put screen. I didn't have a screen door then, but I put screen wire on the door; made a screen door and kept the big door open, the wooden door open, and slept in front of the door because you couldn't go outside because mosquitoes was so bad.

Scull-DeArmeY: Wow. During Camille, did you lose power?

Yandell: Camille?

Scull-DeArmeY: Um-hm.

Yandell: Yeah, in Gulfport we did.

Scull-DeArmeY: How long?

Yandell: You know I don't remember. I really don't. I worked for the power company, and I know I worked two weeks every day after the storm, and of course I was in payroll back then, and we had to stop working in the field and go in the office and get payroll out. And we did that for about three or four, a couple months or so. I didn't tell you when I started with the power company, I stayed in the store room for five years and then got transferred to the general office [as a] stock control [clerk]. And then after that I went in payroll. And then I stayed in payroll until 1982. And then my last five years I was doing [employee] relocation [work] for the company. And in [19]88, they downsized and shipped [a lot of] jobs to Atlanta. [About 120 employees retired in 1988.]

Scull-DeArmeY: Good. Yeah. Anything else you remember about Hurricane Katrina that people might be interested to know? Is there anything else about Hurricane Katrina?

Yandell: No, not really. I know they sent us down in Camille, before the storm, and after that storm, we all wrote the different VPs [vice presidents of] what they did wrong, and after that they started sending people down [to] locations after [any] storm was over. So there was nothing you could do because we had like eleven inches of [water] in the office. And we had about two or three inches of mud, so no phones, nothing you could do.

Scull-DeArmeY: That was Camille?

Yandell: It was Camille.

Scull-DeArmeY: In [19]69.

Yandell: Sixty-nine, yeah. That was in Pass Christian. When I got down there, they said it was twenty-seven foot above sea level; said not to worry about the water because it was only a twenty-five foot tidal wave. Wrong. It was a thirty-foot tidal

wave, so we had three feet outside and eleven inches in the office. But after Katrina, all those buildings were gone. So we was lucky.

Scull-DeArmey: So did you learn any lessons in Katrina?

Yandell: Did I do what?

Scull-DeArmey: Did you learn any lessons in Katrina? What advice would you give to people?

Yandell: Just stock up on water and any medicine you might need and food.

Scull-DeArmey: If you had to do it again, would you evacuate?

Yandell: No.

Scull-DeArmey: No? You'd stay?

Yandell: Because if you leave, if something happens at one of the houses, it's possible you could repair the roof. We have a utility room with a flat roof in the back of our house. [Katrina] took the tarpaper off, and it was a good half-inch thick. And it come off the house and went across the house and just missed our pool, thank goodness. And water started just pouring in, and we got tarp and put it down and routed the water to the garbage cans. If we hadn't been there, it would have flooded the whole house, but we saved [it]. It didn't get in our house. So if we hadn't been there, our house would have been flooded, probably would have been a foot of water from the rain. But we was able to stay there and saved it. [A portion of the interview has been omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArmey: Was it windy?

Yandell: Oh, storming, raining. And we did that for, I know, ten hours.

Scull-DeArmey: Good grief.

Yandell: Luckily I had a friend stayed with us. He lived in East Gulfport, and he knew his house wasn't going to survive in the low area, and he come and spent the night with us, and in fact, he ended up spending three weeks with us after the storm because his house was destroyed. [He got] a FEMA trailer. So he helped us. He worked half a mile from our house, and he'd been a friend a long time, and he stayed with us [for several weeks]. And every day, he'd get off of work; we'd use gas chain saws and [clear] the driveway out. We had to at least get the driveway done first. But it was three months getting everything picked up. But I suggest to anybody to get a gas chain saw and a little extra gas for the chain saw and a generator if they can afford to buy one and plenty of bottled water and medication for anybody that had heart

problems and have plenty of good, dry clothes, a good rain jacket and boots. (laughter) And a hammer and nails and tarpaper.

Scull-DeArme y: What kind of food?

Yandell: Just canned goods, something that could be heated with a little gas stove, soup and stew and that kind of thing, beans.

Scull-DeArme y: At your home, your address, was evacuation mandatory?

Yandell: No.

Scull-DeArme y: No. What if it had been? Would you go?

Yandell: Oh, we probably would if it had been mandatory. Yeah. They suggested everybody leave, but we wasn't in a flood area. Of course my buddy that I fish with wasn't, and he lived a block off the beach in Gulfport, just on the west side of Thirtieth Avenue, and he couldn't even get flood insurance, (0:25:09.8) and he lost his whole house because of Katrina. We went there, oh, six months after the storm; they wouldn't even let you go south of the track. And we walked over there, and he showed me the house that was just a slab, and he walked up to a tree that had a lot of trash around it, and he said, "Look. That looks like one of my chest of drawers." He kicked it, and the door fell off, and he found pictures of him and his wife, wedding pictures. And we both stood there and cried.

Scull-DeArme y: Wow. Yeah.

Yandell: It still gets to me.

Scull-DeArme y: Right. Yeah. Katrina was unbelievable, just unbelievable.

Yandell: He and his wife, they have a restaurant in town, and they stayed, they spent the night in the restaurant. And Marshall's Bookstore is only about a block south of them, and Marshall's had water, three feet of water in it, and luckily they didn't get water in the restaurant, but it took their roof off and had rain. So they stayed in their restaurant during the storm, and they lost their—he would have lost his boat, but it went off the trailer and stayed in the yard.

Scull-DeArme y: And floated on the water?

Yandell: Yeah, um-hm, just floated. And they had a little, old car in the carport, and they never found it.

Scull-DeArme y: Never found it. What's the name of the restaurant?

Yandell: The Palace Café, owned by Don and Shirley Parks, P-A-R-K-S.

Scull-DeArme y: Palace Café. It's nice to see those little places in Gulfport come back.

Yandell: Um-hm. He'd been in the restaurant business there and around for fifty-two years. In fact I made a big Norm Bait golden anniversary, and wished him happy anniversary for his fifty-years with the business. He's got more pictures of us fishing. Sometime when you're down here, I'll buy you lunch. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: OK. That sounds good. That sounds wonderful. Does anything else come to your mind about Hurricane Katrina to put on the record?

Yandell: No, not really. I just see where they got permission to drill again in the Gulf, BP, and I understand, I saw on TV not too long ago where they somewhere out in the Midwest, they discovered a oilfield, and they asking for people, all kind of jobs in the oilfield. And with all the people now, they're hoping to build a town and schools, and it's going to bring jobs in, so apparently it must be—so that shows you there's plenty of oil inland. They don't have to go—and I understand (0:28:05.5) they're going 2000 feet deeper than I think they were before. It don't make sense. And some of your oil's out there now. Why do something that could be a catastrophe again? It's sad.

Scull-DeArme y: It is, yeah. I don't think they should be drilling there.

Yandell: Yeah. It's amazing, too, them oil wells. I didn't realize how many oil wells there are around (0:28:34.2) Cuba. Did you see it in the paper, all the oil wells around? And they're afraid it's going to be a problem for Miami or that area, Key West, if anything'd ever happen to those oil wells. It's amazing.

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah. I wonder what kind of regulations are enforced in Cuba.

Yandell: Yeah. They probably don't have near what we have. And the oil companies should put on their own agendas to do it right. And I'm sure they have.

Scull-DeArme y: Well, I hope so. Tell me about fishing after Katrina. How did Hurricane Katrina affect fishing? (0:29:17.8)

Yandell: Well, I think mainly everybody was scared to fish out there, afraid the fish was contaminated. But really fishing got better after the storm. It brought all that freshwater out of Ponchartrain Lake, the freshwater from the river all came, and it flushed all those fish out of the—because there's always good fishing and crabs and shrimp. But right now, they had to close the oysters (0:29:46.0) down. Oyster season opened, and oysters were so small, and now we're getting oysters from Louisiana. I'm sure they're [west] of the river, now, but we're getting oysters now. The different restaurants now, they're getting oysters, but they're not from the [Mississippi] Coast. But they had to close the [oyster] season down here. It just opened up. And the

shrimp, you can talk to any shrimpers, and they say not near as good. They had to bring shrimp here from Mobile and down southwest of the river to sell.

Scull-DeArmey: That's since the oil disaster?

Yandell: Um-hm. So it's affected it. And you don't know. It could have been something else caused it. Who can say? I'm not condemning the oil companies. It could be problems could have happened even though the oil spill didn't happen. You don't know. It could have all been incidental. So I'm not putting the blame on anybody special. It's just something, human nature, it's going to happen.

Scull-DeArmey: When you heard about the spill, what thoughts went through your head?

Yandell: I worried about the fish and dolphins and that kind of stuff, mainly. That was my concern and how it was going to affect the oysters because [they lay] on the bottom. They can't move like a fish can. They can't get out of the way, and if it covers them up, they're dead. So I don't know if that's affected them or not, but they had to close the season down here.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you know where the oysters are on the Mississippi Coast?

Yandell: Oh, they're mainly around Pass Christian. That's one of the biggest oyster reefs, I understand, in the country.

Scull-DeArmey: And did oil actually come to the Pass Christian beach?

Yandell: Well, it come to all the beaches. They picked up—it told here in the paper; it's for the records. You can see how many tons of oil they picked up off the beach, tar balls.

Scull-DeArmey: Mississippi beach?

Yandell: Yeah. And I understand now, they're getting oil down in Florida being affected, but mainly Louisiana. And then Louisiana got the raw oil up in the (0:32:15.6) marshes and stuff. Did you see pictures of that after the [spill]? And then down here we got, after oil stays in the water a while, it becomes tar balls that washed up on shore on the islands and stuff. So you don't know if the fish got that in its system or not.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you flounder now?

Yandell: I floundered last year. I didn't flounder this year, but I floundered last year and did real well.

Scull-DeArmey: Was it after the spill?

Yandell: Oh, yeah. It was just last summer.

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you see anything on the bottom?

Yandell: I never did see any. I saw a few tar balls on the beach right when they was picking them up, but I didn't see anything real bad.

Scull-DeArmeY: On the bottom where the flounders are?

Yandell: No. The water was clear.

Scull-DeArmeY: The water was clear?

Yandell: Yeah. People were scared to go swimming even, but that's why we kept advertising how the beaches are safe. But who can say when there's oil and when there's not?

Scull-DeArmeY: You know, when I look at those pictures of the oil, and you can see it—

Yandell: Yeah, when it was raw oil.

Scull-DeArmeY: You can just see it. You know? And you ask yourself, "Would I eat that?"

Yandell: Yeah, right, especially in Louisiana where it killed all those fish [over] there because the oil was, it just smothered everything out. But after it came this far, it become tar balls, but you wonder how much is still out there that hadn't washed ashore yet. Who knows?

Scull-DeArmeY: So let me just think about this for a minute. Do you know anyone who worked in the Vessels of Opportunity, (0:34:12.6) cleaning for the—do you know any fishermen who—

Yandell: Oh, yeah. My grandson worked. He was a spotter for somebody who had a nice, little boat. And they went down somewheres out in the Gulf. I'm not sure where, but out of Biloxi. So they were probably down by Horn Island, that area, and they were spotting oil. He worked for about two or three months, during the summer after the spill. After he was a freshman in college, he worked in the summer.

Scull-DeArmeY: Was he eighteen, nineteen?

Yandell: He must have been eighteen. I think it was before he started his college. The storm was 2005, and it's [20]11 already.

Scull-DeArmey: But the oil spill was last year.

Yandell: That's right. I was thinking of Katrina. I'm sorry. Yeah. The oil spill, yeah. So he worked during the summer last year. So he worked right after the oil spill, that summer.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you think that was a good experience for him?

Yandell: Oh, yeah, it really was, and he made some good money. The young fellow that had the boat called my daughter and said, "Your son said, 'Yes, sir,' to me, and I'm not much older than he is." (laughter) He said, "You have a real nice son." In fact he's learning how to make a net now. I'm teaching (0:35:41.5) him how, and he's left-handed. I had to teach a left-handed kid, and it worked. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: That might be a little tough.

Yandell: I learned how to knit left-handed.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Your grandson—some people who worked after the spill have had some health problems.

Yandell: He hasn't had any problems.

Scull-DeArmey: He hasn't had any.

Yandell: No. They were, I think, in a boat, moving around, also. They didn't stay still, so I don't even know where they went to. I know he stayed in the boat. They worked seven days a week, eight, nine, ten hours a day, so.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you know what the spotters did exactly?

Yandell: I had no idea. I never did ask him.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Let me think about these questions.

Yandell: I think they were looking for oil slicks. I think that was what they was looking for. I'm going to have to ask him sometime if they ever found any. If I would have thought about it, I would have called him.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Do you know anyone who went through the claims process with BP?

Yandell: Mm-mm.

Scull-DeArmey: No. Since the spill, what do the waters of the Gulf look like to you?

Yandell: I didn't see very much difference in it. I really didn't. If it did, I didn't notice. It might have been there, and I just didn't see it because I stayed so busy, cleaning my yard up, [referring to Hurricane Katrina]. They wouldn't let us go down south of the track for six months. We finally got down to the beach over in (0:37:26.7) Bay St. Louis. They let us walk down Main Street to Hancock Bank in Bay St. Louis. We got down there, right there by the sidewalk on the scenic drive [Beach Boulevard]. The road went straight down. All that was gone. The road, the scenic drive was down below. Now, they're building a seawall. Did you know that? They're building a seawall.

Scull-DeArme y: Bay St. Louis?

Yandell: Bay St. Louis. [A portion of the interview has been omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArme y: Well, what is the health of the fisheries now?

Yandell: What is what?

Scull-DeArme y: The health of the fisheries. We've talked about this a little bit. You're saying that the fish in Mississippi are actually bigger.

Yandell: Yeah. They seem like they've gotten bigger.

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah. Because they're running away from Louisiana.

Yandell: Yeah. But the only thing I know is the shrimpers say that they hurting because shrimping's got bad, and the oysters they closed the season down.

Scull-DeArme y: No oystering at all.

Yandell: Not right now because one of my favorite eating places on the beach gets oysters from Pass Christian. Now, they get them from Louisiana.

Scull-DeArme y: You don't like the Louisiana oysters?

Yandell: Oh, yeah, they're good. Oh, yeah, they're bigger.

Scull-DeArme y: What's your favorite way to eat an oyster?

Yandell: Grilled.

Scull-DeArme y: Grilled? Oh, I've never tried a grilled oyster.

Yandell: Oh, you need to try it sometime, and the best place you get them is the White Cap.

Scull-DeArme y: It's on [Highway] 90, now, right?

Yandell: Um-hm.

Scull-DeArme y: It used to be down on—

Yandell: It used to be out on the harbor in Gulfport.

Scull-DeArme y: In Gulfport.

Yandell: They've moved down just east of Courthouse [Road]. If you ever go in there, tell them Norman sent you.

Scull-DeArme y: OK. (laughter) I remember the White Cap Restaurant. All my life it's been in my memory. Yeah.

Yandell: That used to be a favorite fishing spot of mine just out in front of the White Cap.

Scull-DeArme y: Really? Was that Moses Pier?

Yandell: Moses Pier, well, (0:41:10.9) we'd fish out of a skiff. You could get a skiff and plenty of shrimp for \$2.00, a penny a piece for shrimp and a dollar for a skiff [for] all day, and go [fish] out in front of where the White Cap was.

Scull-DeArme y: What did you catch?

Yandell: Anything from hammerhead shark to redfish, speckled trout.

Scull-DeArme y: Hammerhead shark? Oh!

Yandell: Yeah. I caught one out there one time; he was three foot long. And I drug him to the house, and [when] I got him [to] the house, my daddy said, "Get that thing [buried]." (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: You know, I used to swim out there. I was swimming with hammerheads, and I didn't know it. (laughter)

Yandell: They don't bite you if you don't bite them. (laughter) The big ones are man-eaters, I understand.

Scull-DeArme y: I know, yeah. They are.

Yandell: But when they're little, they're just trying to make a living.

Scull-DeArmey: I know. I know. I just don't want them to make a living on me.

Yandell: You remember that little breakwater that went out right in front of the White Cap a little ways? It [came] up to the sand. When I was a kid in the seventh grade, I could walk out on that thing, and the water was deep enough there, I could dive off of it. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: You'd break your neck today, wouldn't you?

Yandell: Well, the water was four foot deep; it was probably four or five deep out there then. But now, it's almost covered up with sand. They pump that sand in. Have you been out there since they redid that? When you come back down here sometime, drive out that way.

Scull-DeArmey: I have been, yeah.

Yandell: Go out, all the way at the end, turn around.

Scull-DeArmey: And turned around. The last time I was here I did that.

Yandell: It's pretty. (0:42:54.1) And you still can't put a boat overboard in the harbor in Gulfport. My son just put his sailboat in the harbor. He had to put it over in Long Beach and sail around. They hadn't opened [the boat ramps] up yet. That's sad. Five years or so [since Hurricane Katrina] and still [working on it]. [A portion of the interview has been omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArmey: Will they have commercial boats in Gulfport Harbor?

Yandell: Just pleasure boats, I believe.

Scull-DeArmey: That's what I thought. Yeah.

Yandell: All political.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah.

Yandell: Sad.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Is Moses Pier (0:43:52.3) built back that you can walk out there?

Yandell: Um-hm, yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: When I was a little girl, I saw someone on Moses Pier catch a fish that was about this wide (gesturing, six inches), and it was blue, and it looked like a catfish.

Yandell: Yeah. It probably was. If it was blue, it was probably a catfish.

Scull-DeArmey: He was so proud of that fish. He walked the line all the way down the pier and around the rocks, into shallow water.

Yandell: If he was blue and white in the stomach, it was a catfish.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. It was beautiful.

Yandell: Probably a (0:44:27.9) gaff top, if he had a big, old fin on top.

Scull-DeArmey: That man was so happy to have that fish. (laughter) He was really proud of it.

Yandell: I had a [cousin], my uncle's daughter, and I know she didn't weight ninety-five pounds, soaking wet. She caught a eighty-five-pound black drum off of the bridge at Henderson Avenue on Bayou Portage, on Henderson Avenue. And she was like that. She finally had to walk it to the edge, and she had cars, traffic stopped. This was way before Camille because my stepdad and mother lost (0:45:11.7) their house in Camille. They [lived] on the Bayou Portage because back then, before the storm, my grandpa [and dad] could go out in the Bay [of St. Louis] and tong oysters. (0:45:22.7) And he had an oyster [shell] bed there, out in front of [his house] that I know was ten foot wide and probably thirty foot out toward the bayou. And so they opened oysters all those years, and [they were] delicious. But now, you wouldn't dare eat one, because they say everything's so contaminated. I think that DuPont (0:45:47.7) caused more damage to the water than the oil spill. You could see the difference in the water there because [when] I went floundering, you could see how bad the water [was] after DuPont came in, a year or so [later], after they came in. Sad.

Scull-DeArmey: How long have they been there?

Yandell: They were there before Camille.

Scull-DeArmey: In the [19]60s.

Yandell: You know, I'm not sure. I'm really not sure how long they were there.

Scull-DeArmey: Do you eat the flounder? Do you eat those flounder that you get there?

Yandell: Well, we did. [A portion of the interview has been omitted from the transcript at the request of the interviewee.]

Scull-DeArmey: Did your niece get the eighty-five-pound fish?

Yandell: I was working, and I just saw pictures that she had.

Scull-DeArmeY: She actually pulled it out?

Yandell: Well, no. She had to walk all the way around the bridge, and somebody helped her pull it up on the beach. I've seen a picture of it. It looked almost big as she was, (laughter) eighty-five-pound black drum.

Scull-DeArmeY: Good grief. Can you eat a fish that big?

Yandell: Yeah. They good cut up in steaks or use it—my wife had a big drum like that, not that big, but cut it up and boil it in crab boil, and then cut it up into small pieces and put it in gumbo. It tastes just like crab meat. Redfish, we do redfish [the same way]. Redfish that's five, six, seven pounds, and then boil the fillets in crab boil and then cut it in real small pieces and freeze it. And then you get ready to make gumbo, you [use] it in gumbo, and it's almost like crab meat. Some people's allergic to crabs, so that's real good.

Scull-DeArmeY: You can substitute it, and they're not allergic to the drum.

Yandell: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmeY: Tell me about tonging for oysters. How do you tong oysters?
(0:48:17.0)

Yandell: Well, a tong is just like if you take two rakes and tie them together where they're about eight or ten inches from the rake up. And you reach out and pull them together, and it picks oysters up. The teeth on them's a little bit finer than a rake, a leaf rake. And you just take them like that. And if you have them this way, you close them up, and you pick the whole thing up and empty them out. You have to stand up in the boat to tong. Now they [have] dredges. They stopped dredging not too long ago before they closed the season down because they trying to get the beds [in better shape] because [dredges] kind of tear [the beds] up.

Scull-DeArmeY: The dredges do?

Yandell: Yeah. They have a big metal thing that drags on the bottom, and they should never had that to begin with.

Scull-DeArmeY: Really? You think they're too destructive?

Yandell: Yeah. They just tear the beds up. Tonging don't do that. Makes sense to me, but commercial, trying to catch more for the market, supply [and demand].

Scull-DeArmeY: When you tonged oysters—

Yandell: I didn't. I never have.

Scull-DeArme y: Oh, you didn't?

Yandell: Just my grandpa and [my dad] did. I never did.

Scull-DeArme y: About how many pounds do you think they lifted up?

Yandell: Probably two or three pounds I would imagine. I have a picture at home. I didn't think about bringing. It's my dad on a shrimp boat, and he was five or six years old, my stepdad. That boat's loaded down with oysters. You think the boat's going to sink, and I have it somewhere at home. I never thought about it. I'll bring it sometime and show you.

Scull-DeArme y: OK. That would be great. What do you see for the future of Gulf Coast seafood? (0:50:08.4)

Yandell: It's going to come back. It does. It'll come back till the next storm. Then we'll just have to work through it. It's coming back. It'll take a while, but it'll come back.

Scull-DeArme y: If they had another oil spill, do you think people would just say, "No more oil drilling"?

Yandell: No more oil in the Gulf. But you can't stop progress.

Scull-DeArme y: I mean, how many times—I mean, if it happened again, do you think the people here would say, "No. You have to stop"?

Yandell: Well, there again, political, it's all politics.

Scull-DeArme y: A few powerful—

Yandell: Big money talks. I rest my case.

Scull-DeArme y: Yeah. Well, is there anything I didn't ask you that you want to put on the record?

Yandell: I've enjoyed [the Gulf] all the years I've spent on the Coast, and I hope my grandkids enjoy it was much as I did.

Scull-DeArme y: OK. Thank you.

(end of interview)