

GENARO “JIGGS” ZINGARELLI
Oyster Tag Printer, Franklin County Press – Apalachicola, FL

* * *

Date: December 1, 2005
Location: Franklin County Press – Apalachicola, FL
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 28 minutes
Project: Florida’s Forgotten Coast

[Begin Genaro Zingarelli]

0:00:00.9

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Thursday, December 1st, 2005 in Apalachicola, and I'm with Genaro "Jiggs" Zingarelli at his print shop here. And Mr. Zingarelli, would you mind saying—telling us your name and what it is you do?

0:00:18.8

Genaro Zingarelli: Well I'm just running a print shop now—job—printing they used to call it. And I got an old cookie press and a type machine doing the hot metal work—right on, got all set, but it's outdated, so I'm just more or less semi-retired.

0:00:43.0

AE: Would you tell us your name for the recorder here?

0:00:45.3

GZ: Genaro Zingarelli.

0:00:49.9

AE: And what is your birth date?

0:00:52.6

GZ: May 27th, 1915.

0:00:54.9

AE: How long have you had this print shop?

0:00:57.2

GZ: Since 1946—got out the Army.

0:01:00.7

AE: Yeah? Where—where were you born?

0:01:03.7

GZ: Apalachicola.

0:01:06.0

AE: And what was it like growing up here?

0:01:09.0

GZ: Very good—good hunting and fishing; it's all changed, some for the better. What else you want to know now?

0:01:23.6

AE: Can you talk a little bit about the old days and hunting and fishing and—and what you went out and did and caught?

0:01:28.8

GZ: Well we used to do a lot of duck hunting here and a lot of squirrel hunting in the fall and mullet fish—cast net mostly all our lives around here.

0:01:46.3

AE: Did you make the nets also?

0:01:48.5

GZ: No, never could make it—dad always would buy the net. [*Laughs*]

0:01:54.4

AE: Who did you buy them from?

0:01:57.3

GZ: Well various friends made them. But we hunted—fished over St. George's Island—the little Island and the big Island, depending on the time of the year. We—in December we hunted those redhead ducks mostly, and before that we worked the marsh—fished there and hunted there, too.

0:02:27.5

AE: What would come out of the marsh?

0:02:28.8

GZ: Ducks, mallards, teal, every kind of duck. But it just depended the time of the year what we did. Dove season came in first. Well we would run the doves at the Island. It's two miles out here. But that's about it.

0:02:57.2

AE: What was the town of Apalachicola like in those days?

0:03:01.3

GZ: Well it hadn't changed too much since last—since fifteen years when the Island—strangers took up over the [St. George] Island, you know. And so we're not—we're not allowed to hunt over there anymore. Everything is gated off. so that's all right. We had our turn at it. **[Laughs]**

0:03:25.0

AE: And what did your parents do?

0:03:28.4

GZ: My father run a dry-goods store—yeah, for long years. And my mother—just a housewife, I reckon.

0:03:43.3

AE: Now you told me earlier where they were from. Can you say that again?

0:03:47.3

GZ: My father—father was from Wakulla County, little place—town up there near Arran [Florida]. The old fellow, his father, came from Puglia, Italy. His mother was a Roberts. My mother—her name was Elizabeth Shine.

0:04:08.6

AE: S-h-i-n-e?

0:04:09.5

GZ: Uh-huh, she's down here. Well at first went to Boston, and then she wound up in Apalachicola.

0:04:23.0

AE: Do you have an idea of how they met?

0:04:26.2

GZ: No. She came down here with some Ruges. They owned the—the seafood places. I think he's some kind of German or something.

0:04:41.2

AE: Do you know how to spell that name?

0:04:42.5

GZ: Ruge?

0:04:43.2

AE: Yes.

0:04:44.5

GZ: R-u—R-u-g-e.

0:04:50.0

AE: Okay.

0:04:50.5

GZ: And we met—like I say, I had one brother and two sisters and sister died early; she was about forty and brother died a couple years ago. He was about eighty-four or something. And my oldest sister she's still living; she's ninety-four. She lives over in Fort Walton [Florida] most of the time—sometimes here. And that's about the life of it. [*Laughs*]

0:05:30.2

AE: Can you tell me your parents' names and then your brothers' and sisters' names?

0:05:36.8

GZ: Well my father's name is—they called him AJ Zingarelli and my mother's name was Elizabeth—Elizabeth Shine. Of course she married and oldest sister named Helen and the next one was Teresa and then me and Joe. Joe was the youngest.

0:06:06.0

AE: Now how did you get the nickname Jiggs?

0:06:09.7

GZ: Well I used to do a little dance—my mother did—the Irish Jig. **[Laughs]** I used to do it at school, so they used to say come on and do the jig.

0:06:21.0

AE: Can you still do it?

0:06:23.1

GZ: Nah.

0:06:26.0

AE: Okay, so tell me about this printing business you have. You started in the [nineteen] forties?

0:06:29.8

GZ: Yeah, about [nineteen] forty-six, when I got out the Army.

0:06:34.3

AE: What made you want to get into the printing business?

0:06:36.0

GZ: Well I used to deliver newspapers at the time, and I had gone off to—linotype it was good thing—linotype school up in Nashville, Tennessee. They—newspapers wanting changes, you know, being printed in long type. It was just a good trade. That's the reason I got in it for a job.

0:07:02.5

AE: Has it been in this location the whole time?

0:07:06.2

GZ: Uh-hmm.

0:07:05.6

AE: What's the address here?

0:07:07.3

GZ: Fourteen Avenue D. Yeah, I was in the Army and went overseas on the Queen Mary and the invasions in North Africa and Suffolk. And Tu—Tunisia and then in Sicily and after that, back to England. We thought we were coming home, but we were in D-Day First Infantry Division—D-Day. And finally, they thought the War was going to be over Christmas, and I got to come home for that—a lot of points. I came home. I got married. **[Laughs]**

0:07:53.9

AE: Who did you marry?

0:07:55.7

GZ: She was a schoolteacher from North Carolina, and her name was Allie Wienel. And we raised four youngin's here.

0:08:10.9

AE: What are their names?

0:08:14.3

GZ: Well I told you while ago. Oh, their names—?

0:08:17.1

AE: Your kids?

0:08:18.9

GZ: The oldest one is Bill, the next one is John, a girl named Elizabeth, and there's a boy named Rob.

0:08:31.6

AE: And so you came back home to Apalachicola and got married and started a business and had kids?

0:08:39.0

GZ: They all done good—no problem with them. Wasn't a dud in the crowd. [*Laughs*]

0:08:49.1

AE: So when you started out with the press here, were you making oyster tags then?

0:08:53.6

GZ: Yeah, I used to—different, and then the law changes so much—changed and I did just general job work: letterhead and envelopes and invoices and—. Now I'm just—now I just about oyster tags. I farm out a lot of it. Hard work.

0:09:21.6

AE: Yeah? Did you have many employees when you first started?

0:09:25.3

GZ: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I had two or three school boys and girls, yeah. I used to keep them plenty busy, but the laws now, you know, you have to have all this and that, so I just backed off.

[Laughs]

0:09:44.0

AE: And so you were running that press for me a minute ago. You said that was about thirty years old—that machine?

0:09:50.1

GZ: That's the second one I've had, yeah.

0:09:53.1

AE: Okay.

0:09:54.3

GZ: Back in [nineteen] thirty-five. [It's an] old Kluge press. They're still making them.

0:10:00.9

AE: The first one you had, how long did it last you? Thirty years?

0:10:04.7

GZ: About that. [*Laughs*] I don't know. I wore it out, and I just—keep this oiled up and still running.

0:10:18.2

AE: And you oil it every morning you said?

0:10:20.2

GZ: Right before I run it every day, I oil it. I've already oiled it this morning.

0:10:24.8

AE: Can you describe how the machine works?

0:10:27.5

GZ: Well it's got a vacuum pump on it—one—one stroke. And the vacuum and runs the air. So it does all I want—this—this stage of the game. *[Laughs]*

0:10:50.3

AE: What about some of the other equipment you have in here? These hole punches behind us—?

0:10:57.1

GZ: Linotype. They call it hot metal type and I got a full shop—I got a perforator and old drill, and I got a copy machine.

0:11:17.0

AE: Uh-hmm. Would you mind if I went and got one of those oyster tags to bring over here so we could talk about it?

0:11:21.5

GZ: No, uh-uh. I'll get it.

0:11:23.0

AE: Okay.

0:11:35.5

GZ: I just got out of the hospital a couple weeks ago and—having my left knee replaced. I had the right one about six years ago, and my left knee had gone bad, and I had it replaced oh, about a month ago.

0:11:55.2

AE: All that dancing caught up with you, huh?

0:11:58.0

GZ: [*Laughs*] No, it just wore out.

0:12:05.0

AE: All right. So we have this oyster tag here. Tell me what kind of paper that is again.

0:12:08.4

GZ: Tyvek.

0:12:11.4

AE: Tyvek.

0:12:12.2

GZ: It's tough paper. And the name and address [of the oyster dealer] have to be on there and certificate number and wholesale license number, and you got a place [that says] "sell by" and where the oysters are from—Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi. There is certificate number, harvest days, harvest from, package contains—pound box, a pound—pound bag. This tag is required to be attached to—to containers empty therefore and kept on file for ninety days, and the consuming—and the information on the back.

0:12:59.2

AE: Uh-hmm, about the risk associated with raw oysters—consuming raw oysters. So this is for RD's Seafood here in Apalachicola. Do you do the tags for pretty much everyone here [in the area], or how does that work?

0:13:12.4

GZ: Well most—a lot of them get them—all computer tags now I do—[there are] a few oyster dealers left, and I do them for that—half a dozen left. I've done a two or three—two or three at Eastpoint.

0:13:29.5

AE: Can you name some of the places that use you for their tags?

0:13:33.0

GZ: Yeah. Well RD's—well he's actually—he's in Eastpoint, but they had to have the mailing address as Apalachicola. And Two Mile Shrimp and Oyster Company and Allen's Seafood Two Mile and Miracle Seafood Two Mile, and I don't know. Two or three at Eastpoint.

0:14:11.7

AE: Now you were talking earlier about the laws changing. When you first started making these oyster tags, what did they look like?

0:14:18.3

GZ: Well it was a regular paper tag, and then it had to have waterproof paper, and now the State said it wasn't tough enough, so we had to have this Tyvek. It's real tough paper; you can't hardly tear it.

0:14:38.2

AE: Was the information about the same?

0:14:40.5

GZ: The same thing.

0:14:42.4

AE: Have you changed the typeface or anything over the years, or is that regulated?

0:14:47.4

GZ: No, that's regulated.

0:14:50.9

AE: Hmm.

0:14:53.1

GZ: What else?

0:14:54.1

AE: I don't know. There's—there's an awful lot I surely don't know, so you tell me.

0:14:59.6

GZ: Well, it had to have that warning on the back of them. Consumer—consumer information.

[Begins reading the oyster tag] There's a risk associated with consuming raw oysters or any raw animal protein. If you have chronic illness of the liver, stomach, or blood or immune disorder you are at greater risk of serious illness from raw oysters and should eat oysters only cooked. If unsure of your risk, consult a physician.

0:15:36.9

AE: You have someone visiting you here. Let me pause this for you. [*Recording is paused for about three minutes, as Mr. Zingarelli addresses a friend. Recording resumes.*] Well I wanted to ask you more about these tags and—and how you make them because this paper, does that come precut, or do you cut it here?

0:15:50.7

GZ: I cut it.

0:15:53.6

AE: Where is your [paper] cutter?

0:15:55.1

GZ: Right there [points towards the back of the shop] It comes eight-and-a-half by eleven, and I cut it five-and-a-half each way and take the ends off and save those and see, this way, you're five—two and three-quarters. I do the back and front at the same time.

0:16:15.6

AE: And then you do something with the scraps, is that what you said?

0:16:17.1

GZ: Well, I save the scraps. I'll run them back through one at a time instead of back and front at one time. Expensive paper, so I conserve it that way.

0:16:30.4

AE: Have they always been that size, the tags?

0:16:32.9

GZ: Yeah, uh-hmm, the same.

0:16:35.4

AE: And then all the paper that you have loaded in that press right now, how many tags will that do in one run?

0:16:41.8

GZ: Well, I'll set the number in the machine—I got a number on there. I just—you mean, how fast?

0:16:51.6

AE: No, I mean just how many in a—in one print run through the machine?

0:16:57.6

GZ: At the most 1,000.

0:16:58.7

AE: A thousand?

0:17:00.5

GZ: Yeah. I do 500 and cut them in two and that makes 1,000, see. That's on the other side of it.

0:17:10.3

AE: How many do people order at a time?

0:17:13.5

GZ: Well this was a big order—5,000. So I do 2,500 and cut them.

0:17:24.6

AE: And then can I ask you how prices have changed since you started doing these tags? What they were then and what they are now?

0:17:30.3

GZ: I charge forty-seven dollars [for] a thousand [oyster tags] and hooks—eleven. Anyplace I had been, they were—they've been closed all up and down.

0:17:52.3

AE: So what were the price—what was the price for 1,000 when you first started?

0:17:55.8

GZ: [*Laughs*] About four [dollars] and fifty [cents], I think. Now it's forty-seven dollars for two sides printed, see, on Tyvek paper, which is a good price.

0:18:14.7

AE: And so I see all these posters in the back here, too. Can you tell me what some of those are?

0:18:20.1

GZ: Well I used to do all those political posters. I just covered up that old dirty wall with them. And so long as they're still up there blowing, I know they're still right here.

0:18:33.9

AE: Do you still do that kind of work for the town?

0:18:35.8

GZ: Nah, it's all changed. Printing has changed—magazine. It's all changed.

0:18:44.1

AE: How so?

0:18:47.0

GZ: Well it's all that you sell is magazine, color printing. I can never do anything like that. In other words, the world went off and left me. *[Laughs]*

0:19:01.8

AE: What do you like best about how you work here?

0:19:06.0

GZ: Just got a place to come to get out—just got a place to go and a bunch like these gentlemen come by.

0:19:21.0

AE: Yeah? You were mentioning that some folks come by and hang out. Is that every day?

0:19:25.3

GZ: Yeah, most of them.

0:19:32.9

AE: What do you—?

0:19:33.6

GZ: Just got a place to come to.

0:19:36.3

AE: What do y'all do when you visit? Just hang out?

0:19:39.6

GZ: Well, they settle in—natural situations, domestic situations and medical clinic—we—we cover all phases of it. [*Laughs*]

0:19:50.4

AE: Do you play cards or anything or just talk?

0:19:51.7

GZ: No. No, they all retired but me, and I'm just hanging around seeing what the hell is going to happen next. [*Laughs*]

0:20:09.5

AE: So you're going to keep this place open and running as long as you can, huh?

0:20:13.8

GZ: That's right. I don't work in the afternoons—just the mornings.

0:20:21.4

AE: Does anybody around town know how this operation works and can come in behind you [and take it over]?

0:20:26.6

GZ: No, no. No, it's all changed. Oh, it's—salesmen that come in here all the time, you know, but—. [To his friend, who has stopped by] Bill, what's new up [Highway] 65—what's new up [Highway] 65?

BILL: [*Talking about some mail that he is trying to open.*] My fingers are too big. [*Hands Mr. Zingarelli a card he received in the mail.*] Throw it away if you want.

GZ: You mean you got a [Christmas] card from [President] George W. [Bush]? You must send him a big donation. Oh that's—

0:21:33.1

AE: Christmas card from the President, my land.

0:21:38.3

GZ: The money will come next week. [*Laughs*] That's nice.

0:21:47.1

AE: It is lovely. My goodness. That's special. [*Hands card back to Bill.*] Here you are, sir. So Mr. Jiggs, how have you seen the seafood industry change here on the bay?

0:22:06.5

GZ: Well it's, changed—most of them are ordering the computer tags, and the shrimping industry is—what are we down—about three shrimp houses now, Bill? About three shrimp houses is all. Buddy Ward's a big one and Riverside Seafood. And well Leavins [Seafood] just does oysters. They're the biggest in the state. And that's about—Water Street Seafood they call it, he's got a lot of fish. That's about it.

0:22:59.9

AE: How have you witnessed the change of the landscape here like from your hunting days and catching all those ducks?

0:23:08.0

GZ: Well we—[*Coughs*—excuse me. Benjamin Franklin says no progress without change, but all change isn't progress. That is a pretty good quote. [*Laughs*] I just hanging around doing tags and do what I can get out doing, so I enjoy it right well.

0:23:44.6

AE: I can tell.

0:23:45.8

GZ: [*Laughs*]

0:23:47.6

AE: Do you like the smell of those inks?

0:23:50.8

GZ: You know, I don't notice it like—like you. Of course, women come in, and they detect the smell of ink.

0:23:58.8

AE: I like it.

0:24:00.0

GZ: Yeah, really? You're not the first one.

0:24:05.7

AE: What do you do when you first come here in the morning? What is your day like?

0:24:09.7

GZ: Do some oyster tags, make some phone calls. Like I need to make one now.

0:24:22.8

AE: Yeah.

0:24:23.7

GZ: Let me try those again.

BILL: Here comes your favorite person.

GZ: Who is that?

BILL: Jay.

GZ: Who?

BILL: St. Joe Jay.

GZ: Oh, my gosh.

[Recording is stopped for about ten minutes as Jay settles into the scene.]

0:24:43.5

[Recording resumes]

AE: So you mentioned the hooks. What are the hooks for? They hook the paper onto the—?

0:24:46.5

GZ: Hook the tag onto the bag.

0:24:49.8

AE: So you supply those, too?

0:24:50.0

GZ: Uh-hmm.

0:24:52.8

AE: Okay; well you have another visitor coming in. Why don't I go ahead and finish this up. Do you have—do you have something that you want to say that I didn't ask you or—?

0:25:01.0

GZ: No, we got the same retirees come by here, hang around. This one lives here. He's retired. He lives in St. Joe, the next town over.

0:25:16.0

AE: And you'll stay open here until about twelve [noon] and just receive your friends?

0:25:19.0

GZ: Yeah, and do the tags.

0:25:22.3

AE: Do you—do you cook for yourself?

0:25:24.0

GZ: No, no, my wife—uh-uh.

0:25:26.4

AE: Do y'all eat a lot of seafood?

0:25:30.5

GZ: Well, we like seafood. I like to go casting that mullet fish and pick up some oysters. No, we just eat regular—she's a good cook.

0:25:48.9

AE: You still go out cast netting?

0:25:51.0

GZ: Uh-hmm.

0:25:53.1

AE: Yeah?

0:25:55.6

GZ: Well, I hadn't been since last Friday but had my left knee replaced, so I'm not hurting anymore. So I'll be back fishing.

0:26:07.3

AE: How do you like to cook your mullet?

0:26:09.5

GZ: Fried. [*Laughs*]

0:26:13.5

AE: Everything is good fried, isn't it?

0:26:15.0

GZ: Huh?

0:26:15.5

AE: Everything is good fried.

0:26:17.9

GZ: Fish is and shrimp—oysters, too. Of course we eat raw—raw oysters.

0:26:24.6

AE: But you go get—you go harvest your own oysters?

0:26:25.8

GZ: Uh-hmm. Not all the time, but if I'm mullet fishing and the tide gets low, I'll pick them up.

0:26:35.9

AE: You've always done that, huh?

0:26:36.9

GZ: Uh-hmm, yeah.

0:26:42.4

AE: What do you like about living in Apalachicola?

0:26:45.5

GZ: I know too many people to leave. **[Laughs]** No, I don't know. It's a good little town—know everybody here and everything.

0:27:01.3

AE: Well, all right.

0:27:05.2

GZ: The youngin's all come back. Let's see, we had—Wednesday night before Thanksgiving we had eighteen [people] for supper—Thanksgiving dinner eighteen. And Friday we went fishing and oystering and ate at the beach cottage—my son's beach cottage. And then Saturday night christened the great grandbaby, so we had another eighteen for—.

[Another friend walks into the shop.]

0:27:42.7

AE: All right; well I'll cut this off. I sure do thank you for visiting with me.

0:27:44.4

GZ: Hey, Jimmy, come in.

0:27:45.9

Interview of: Genaro Zingarelli
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Interview Date: December 4, 2005

February 21, 2006

[End Genaro Zingarelli]