

The Karinas Family Interview

Interviewers: Carl Brasseaux and Don Davis

Carl Brasseaux: Well, if we could just begin by having each of you identify yourselves and indicate where you live now.

A: Uh, Anne Karinas-Broussard, I live in [Palacin], Louisiana.

J: Jodi Karinas, I live in Morgan City, Louisiana.

DK: Diane Karinas-Austin and I live in [Albenmorrow], North Carolina.

B: Well, as we indicated earlier, we're simply here to try to record your family's contributions to the local seafood industry both in menhaden and in shrimp processing in any offshore fisheries. So, I guess the best place for you to start is for you to tell us a little bit about your father, who really was a pioneer in all this. And tell us a little bit about him, his background, and how he came to be involved in it.

A: Well, he was born in 1896 in [Ongnon] Portugal.

B: Okay and your father's name was?

A: John Santos Karinas. He died April 16, 1976. He came to this country when he was 16 years old. He had two brothers that were already here. And they worked in New York fishing. Later he came down south and he ended up in Bernadina Beach and then ended in St. Augustine, Florida.

B: What was the reason for his migration south? Did he just find a job—?

A: Uh, he was shrimpin'. And he met a J.J. Hanson and they shrimped the boats [and aw] south port I think, South Carolina, and in Florida. And then from Bernadine he moved to St. Augustine. And he worked with some, the [Basaggies] I believe, I'm not sure.

DK: And the Salvadors.

A: And the Salvadors. Working for them on a boat until he was able to accumulate enough money to get his own boat.

D: What year would that be? Approximately.

A: Oh, I don't know. I have records. That may show it. Articles that may show all this, I don't have everything up here.

D: Mm hm. But it was pre-WWII?

A: Oh, well yeah.

D: Okay.

A: He was 16 when he came to this country and he was born in like 1896 so...and he migrated south and he started—after he accumulated enough money he got his own boat. And then eventually, I think the shrimpers was playing out in Florida and they ended up down here. He was the second shrimper with boats to come in the area.

D: Now He brought his own boat.

A: He had some boats, yes, when he came here.

B: So he had more than one boat—?

A: I am not sure about that.

D: Now, were they sail or were they—?

A: Well, they were first piloted out there—in the early days the shrimp boats were first piloted with kerosene and ended up being nicknamed Kerosene John. But as the years progressed and they started having the different, uh—

A: Engines, but when he was down here they had a gold mine with the shrimp.

D: Now, inland or deep water? Because Morgan City's known for deepwater shrimp as well.

A: Gulf. Inland Gulf. Deepwater.

D: Okay so he had to be one of the pioneers in deepwater shrimp.

A: Yes.

B: When he moved here did he bring crews with him from Florida? Did he recruit new crews?

A: There was some that came but a lot of people in the area started working on the boats and became--you know. And they used to haul the shrimp in big ole shrimp trucks to the markets in New York!. They weren't refrigerated they just had, I mean, crates iced down, and they had truck drivers to drive 'em up to, I guess it was New York, or maybe sometimes it was Washington D.C., I'm not sure.

D: Hm. Now, those trucks were coming from Patterson Morgan City?

A: From Patterson.

D: Now, when—you know, you have to have a boat, maintain a boat, your father spoke, I'm sure, Portuguese, did he bring any other Portuguese with him to Morgan City? And the reason I ask is that Carl and I have found in the Morgan City archives some incredible photography that we think may be Portuguese—mending nets.

A: Uh huh. I have a picture right up here with the net men mending nets. But they were brought later when he went into the Menhaden business. They worked on the Menhaden nets. And some of the shrimp, but mostly the menhaden. And he had a net shop with someone doing most of the shrimp nets but the Portuguese men did the Menhaden nets.

B: Now, did he eventually get into shrimp processing or was it always a case of sending the catch directly out?

A: Oh no, no! **The** processed the shrimp off the boats here, but to sell the shrimp they had to put 'em in—ice 'em down, put 'em in trucks and take 'em to market whether it was New York or wherever.

B: Ok and when we're talking about processing, we're talking about just beheading them? Or was anything more done to the shrimp before they were put in cases and shipped off?

A: Well in those days I don't--they had headers, I believe. Didn't they [Daddy]? In the early days?

Daddy: They were catching so much they couldn't head 'em on the boat, they'd bring 'em in.

B: Mm hm.

A: Brought 'em in and headed 'em.

DK: Because I headed shrimp with all the little—workers, you know. I thought it was fun. I'm quite a bit younger—Well I'm the youngest and I have somewhat of a different perspective and more of a--I don't know--sentimental type perspective but I'm Diane [Karin Austin] and when my daddy moved down to the Fernandina

area, I understand that he went back to Portugal to take a wife and came back with her and she died of influenza. And when he was working with the Salvadors and the Versages, my grandmother was a Salvador and she died early, I guess of influenza too...

A: She was not a Salvador she was a Versage.

DK: She was a Versage. Right. Um because my aunt Salvador was a Versage and let's see, if there were what, 5 kids? How many? Momma's family.

A: I have to stop and count.

DK: How 'bout it Ginger?

Ginger: Huh?

DK: How many kids in—?

G: Five weren't there?

DK: Some boys some girls, but my mother lived with my aunt Salvador and some of those children went to the orphanage.

G: My mother did.

DK: Your mother did.

G: Her mother died when she was two weeks old.

DK: Okay, so my aunt Virginia died when Grandma was...Aunt Virginia—

DK: Was born and then Grandma died. So, my dad, having no wife, and my grandfather, Trengale (Tren-gal-ee), needed to look for all the girls, arranged marriage, between my mother Francis Trengale, and her nickname was "ChaCheena," and to my mother, who was an upcoming, wealthy, young fisherman of the time. And so, it was a lifelong marriage and I'm sure it was a rocky one but when the boats came—weren't some of you born in Florida?

A: What?

DK: Where were you born?

A: Uh, four of us were born in St. Augustine, Florida. She was born in Louisiana.

DK: And I was born here.

D: So the influenza would have been about 1918-1920? Because that was the great influenza epidemic in this country.

DK: Mm hm. And it probably got my grandmother. And my dad's first wife was Rosa Bent Karinas.

D: Mm hm.

DK: Really pronounced Karinas. (car-een-yas).

D: Now, from St. Augustine you brought your boats to Louisiana?

A: He brought some. I don't know how many he had or what, but he came to Louisiana. He, by then, had stopped shrimping, himself. He just ran the business and he built what we called a "Fish House."

DK: The Fish House.

A: And they operated out there. They unloaded the boats and they headed 'em and then they put 'em like I said, in large crates with ice. They put 'em on these big trailer trucks.

B: I have a couple questions. Um, first, you talked about the Portuguese who came in to do the Menhaden fishery later, uh, the people from what is now Croatia that came in to do oyster fishing, below New Orleans, they would go back to visit family

periodically. Would your dad go back too and is that how he recruited people later on?

DK: Yes.

A: Yes. He had a contact in Portugal who was an attorney that helped him get the papers and all in order to bring these men over here. And he housed 'em, he fed 'em, and he paid 'em.

B: Getting back to the shrimp industry, you said your dad was operating boats, [not necessarily] operating them himself, but he had boats out in the fishery off the coast, was he supplying these boats? Did he send supply boats out from Patterson or out from Morgan City—?

DK: They would go out and come back in.

B: To supply the boats that's--and they stayed out and they brought the catch back in?

DK: Mm hm. And now, when I came along, um it was more of a—more mechanical of an operation. They would actually unload and it would go onto a conveyor and the shrimp would go through a grater so the different sizes would be all together, and then they were boxed and then they were glazed and put in the freezer. So it was a quick--

A: Well in those—at that period of time, you had freezers.

DK: Right.

A: Before that they didn't have freezers so they had to get those shrimp outta here in a hurry.

DK: Oh! And the other story I wanted to tell—I get so excited about this—I don't know half of it—she can correct me, but my uncle was...Aunt Ellie's husband, but anyway, his nickname was Smokey Pete, and he drove for Dad. And he was known for getting those shrimp wherever he had to get 'em very quickly, dodging the cops...You know, all kinds of stories that you can imagine from that era. Uh, did you dad drive—?

G: Yes.

DK: Ginger's dad, Uncle Ralph—Ralph White did drive for dad also. So he—it was pretty much of a family type of an employer, you know, people he could trust and knew would do a good job for—

DK: him.

B: Don, I know you have some questions. I've got a bunch too.

D: Well, one of the things that I think's real fascinating: go back before, you know, you're putting them in boxes. What Carl was addressing was that, if you go towards Bayou LaFourche, fishermen would go out and fish but they were working for a fish house. Your father's fish house. In order to keep the shrimpers working, the fish house would send a boat out, which we would call a grocery boat, and that would take groceries and some cases, ice, so the fishermen never left the fishing grounds. And that way they would off-load the shrimp to the grocery boat, the hold was big enough, and they were constantly at work. And we wanted to know if your father had the same arrangement.

A: I don't remember an arrangement like that.

DK: No.

B: Okay well there was also an arrangement out of—

A: They took their groceries—now I don't know how far back you're going with this, you know, where they take the groceries out, but they always brought their groceries—

B: Well, this is about the same time period.

A: And bought their ice and...

B: Well out there they even had a system of flags so that if you worked for a certain fish house, you flew a certain flag, that way the grocery boat could identify you by that and they would come up to them and offload the shrimp and on-load the groceries and fuel and ice and everything else.

A: Well you know in those early days the ice was made, they had ice houses here, and it was made in blocks, and they put that ice on—I guess they chopped it up themselves to put on a catch. But I don't think he had that kind of arrangement. This is the first I'm hearing of that.

D: Did he ever have a flag?

DK: He did have a flag. Maybe my brother made the flag. But I have a flag. It's a green flag—

A: No, that was done—

DK: Years later.

A: Yeah that has no bearing—

DK: Okay.

D: Okay, all right. The reason we ask, they're really hard to find.

DK: Hahah. Is that why you lit up? Hahahaha.

D: I'm thinking, we've never seen one!

A: You mean where they marked who they were fishing for?

D: Yes.

B: Right, right.

A: You see, this is the first I've heard, but as far as I know, they got their groceries before they left here.

D: Okay. Yeah.

A: And they got their ice--and like I said, years ago, we had a couple of icehouses in Patterson and they'd buy the block ice. I can remember the big old tongs they had to pick that ice up with.

DK: Were those type of fishermen that you just mentioned boat owners of the—they owned their own boat?

D: Yes.

DK: Well that's probably the difference, because my dad owned all of the boats.

B: Can we talk a little bit about the shipping aspect of it? Making the contacts with the restaurants--and I'm sure you must have had regular customers that they serviced over and over again, regular routes I'm sure, where they set the fish out, they didn't just go out there hoping to sell it. Can you explain a little bit about how—?

A: Well, in the early days I don't know. But later on he had a broker in...I think it was Washington D.C., I forget the name. Do you remember that?

[Daddy?]: No.

A: He doesn't remember. Aw. And he would send the shrimp to him and he would...aw...have—

B: So it's just strictly a case of getting it to his warehouse and he would distribute them?

A: Well, he would--a broker would tell him where to—

B: I see. Okay.

D: Mm hm.

DK: They would call that person a consultant.

B: Or an agent.

D: Now, Joseph, you worked on the boats?

J: Yes, worked on the Menhaden boats.

D: On the Menhaden boats.

J: Yes.

D: If I use the term Flor-ee-da, is that a term you recognize?

J: No.

D: Okay, that's all right, I'll explain later.

J: Okay.

B: But when did your dad first become involved in the Menhaden, you know he was well established obviously, as a—

A: Uh, yeah, he uh--they came to him—George Wallus came to him. George Wallus was from North Carolina. They came to him. Now, I don't know if that was in '55, '54, I don't remember. Uh, when he started in the Menhaden—

B: Was there any Menhaden fishing going on before these contacts in this area?

A: I don't think so. They were doing it in North Carolina—

B: Right.

A: and Virginia.

B: Right. But I meant strictly with the Patterson/Morgan City area.

A: Ah. Not that I know of. And they—he had accumulated a fleet of--through the years—Menhaden Boats. That were built at the Patterson Shipyard. Which he owned and unfortunately gave half to someone.

D: So if I say [Zapata Haney]. Zapata Haney's boats, were probably owned by your father, maybe not all of them—

DK: No.

D: No?

DK: Zapata was a different operation.

D: But I know that you were producing boats. So if I say Zapata Haney—was Zapata Haney buying boats from the Patterson Shipyard?

A: Mm mm.

D: No? Okay.

A: Different operations. I think he feared our boats unloaded at Louisiana Menhaden and Cameron.

D: All right.

A: And Empire Menhaden.

D: All right.

A: And Empire Louisiana.

D: Okay.

A: That was the—he was—my father owned a share in those factories but the boats that he owned, that's where they unloaded the Menhaden.

B: Oh, they operated out of Morgan City as a home base or out of Cameron?

A: Um...

J: Out of one set—Out of Cameron—

A: Just like I said—

B: Out of Empire.

[J, A, & B TALKING AT ONCE]

B: Right, well I know they deposited their catch there, I just didn't know if they were—

A: That's where they stayed during the Menhaden season. At the end of the season all the boats that my father owned came back to Patterson.

DK: For repair—

B: Right, well that's why I was asking.

DK: And upkeep.

J: Maintenance, and—

D: Now, one of the things we've learned is that the captains of these boat, some of them would live in the Carolinas or Virginia and they would come to Louisiana and work the Louisiana season, then go back to Virginia and work the Virginia season. So they were almost 6 months-6 months. It doesn't work **exactly that** but is that about correct? To your knowledge?

J: Well most of those guys did come from those areas and worked this season. As far as the seasons up there, I'm not quite sure on that—maybe there was some overlap but I'm not sure if it was actually a 6 month-6 month thing.

D: Okay.

A: Well, the season here--we're from April...I think it was the third week of April, or the second week of April, to the end of October. And they extended it a couple of years back to November. After that, that's the off-season and then the boats would come here for repair.

B: Most of the crews, were they coming from the—Virginia and the Carolina's too?

A: Uh, at first, the captains—

B: Well I knew the captains were but remember we're talking about the crew being, you know—

A: Well, I'm sure they brought like their pilot and their engineer with 'em, but the other labor that got into the seine boats were probably people from the areas.

B: Okay.

D: Is there another name for the seine boats? I've heard the word "Dorrick"? Or something like that?

J: No, I don't think—we refer to 'em as "Purse Boats."

A: Purse Boats.

D: Purse Boats.

J: Yeah because they—purse seine is the net type that—

D: Mm hm, and how big would the seine have been?

J: Somewhere...1,200 feet? Isn't that right?

A: What? The seine? [huggy you asked daddy] how big were they?

[Huggy?]: Let's see, about a quarter of a mile...

J: Yeah, about 1,200 feet.

D: Wow. Hm.

J: Hm. And why they called it—[for me]—not familiar with purse but purse seine is actually flotation on top of the net, and as they circled the fish, there was a line running through a set of the rings at the bottom of the net and it closed it up at the bottom like a purse and made a purse. And then you retrieved your net and then actually pumped the [lawn mower and fish are]--in the old days scooped it with a big bucket-type device.

D: Was it a bucket-type--I've never quite understood, was it a bucket-type device that was done by hand, or like a mechanical arm picking up?

J: It was basically a--almost if you would see a concrete bucket that they'd use in construction, as a crane would pick it up it'd set it and dump it in the bottom.

D: Okay.

J: Very similar that--from my knowledge and pictures and things, not actually seeing that type, as we came along with technology they began to use a pump, a centrifugal-type pump that would just suck the fish right out of the net...flotation device...Basically hang it off of rope and tackle, go with—

J: And I guess sit it down there as some type—how to scoop it and bring it up and dump the fish.

D: Mm hm.

B: Now the fishing grounds, did that change over time? Or were they fishing basically the same general areas from the start 'til later?

DK: The way they found fish changed of course, because they started using spotter planes.

B: Right.

DK: They used to—wouldn't they throw some firecrackers down there? Cherry bombs?

J: Yeah, they'd have cherry bombs like fire crackers to—to you know, stimulate, just to see if there was any activity in the area, they kinda had an inclination to see those different things you can see fish up on top of the water with what they call a rip or you can see some color and, you know, these guys from the east coast with years and years of experience can actually—and it's one thing that amazed me is that they could look at the water and I could see water. And they could see fish.

A: Well the fish kinda stirred the water up.

J: Yeah, you had that, they kinda [did] a little mud [and in] the mud you'll see that periodically, but uh, that was the advantage of spark planes, they could see 'em real well in schools.

D: Well for a seven-month season, essentially, 8 month if you go to November, your equipment had to be in pretty good order. 'Cause you—

A: Well, they had mechanics at these factories. If the boats had problems they'd work all night to get 'em out the next morning.

D: These were all diesel powered?

J: Yes.

A: Yeah.

D: Alright.

B: How [arch] was the crew on a typical boat?

J: In the old days, I'm not quite sure, I think it was a little more extensive--I may be wrong, but when I was on the boat, early 80's-late 70's, that time frame, it was about 17 if I remember. Is that a very good number? 15? 17? What that is—

A: It was quite a few to get in—you had to have quite a few to get into that first boat and [spread that out and everything.

DK: How long did they chant and—did they chant and pull the net?

J: That was in the old days when everything was by hand. And you know, those guys, just to keep in rhythm and together and to pullin' they had all these different chants and—

B: Do you remember any of 'em?

J: No.

[ALL TALKING AT ONCE]

A: What's that?

D: The chants.

A: Oh no, I don't remember. I have a tape of Menhaden Fishing and I haven't looked at it in years so I don't know if they chantin' on that or not.

D: Mm hm. Well one of the things that we're trying to get a better understand of is that, you mentioned there was a facility at Cameron, facility at Venice. Well, people had to live there. So did they—and again, in the early years—Did they live in a camp boat? Did they build some sort of temporary quarters? Did they live on the boats? Because, when you start taking the number of boats involved and if you multiply it times 20 and you got 30 boats, you got 600 people, that's not an insignificant number of people perhaps working in the early 1950's.

B: Yeah, but it's comparable to the work force at you know, a sugar mill, you know, the early 20th century and I'm just kinda curious to see how they accommodated the workers because mills—sugar mills had to do the same thing.

A: Well Island Bobber lived on the boats and then you had some captains that lived right there and they got off the boat, but the crew, I think, most of 'em stayed on the boat. And they had a galley to feed 'em, and food to feed 'em, you know, groceries aboard every day or whatever, and...

J: Back in the old days prior to refrigeration, these vessels would go out, basically in one day. Leave before daylight, come back after sunset. Offload—

B: Offload at night.

J: So those guys would typically stay on that boat. Especially if the guys were from the east coast, or you know, those guys that come down. In the later days of the federation, you know, you had so-so days and you had great days but you were able to anchor out, stay, refrigeration run to keep the fish in them good—you know, keep 'em cold and whether it wouldn't rot and then those kinda things, so everyone stayed on the boat but mostly guys did stay—if they lived local—when you got in, got offloaded, most of the time, they could go home.

D: Yeah because I know in Cameron, there was actually what looked to me, like a dormitory

D: facilities. Now this is not a big dormitory but it was clear, this is a place, almost like a motel room, with little air conditioning units, so that's why I asked the question, logic tells you they slept on boats, but as you got more sophisticated, we're just curious if perhaps, on the land base side, they built small dormitories, or some place, even a trailer. Some place you could go get the air conditioning, stretch your legs, that kind of thing. And there's not in the literature that tells us if that was done at all.

A: Now I know they had a—my dad had a house for the net men. Because he had net men at both factories to repair the nets. If they needed to be repaired, they worked all night. Now as far as the crew and all that, I'm really not sure about that, I...you know...Did they stay on the boats, Daddy?

Daddy: Yeah!

A: He said they stayed on the boats.

J: If there was some type of dormitory facility that was very isolated, or either something that's come about in the last 20 years.

D: Okay, that makes sense. Sure. Now, your shrimp--your family interest in shrimping pre-dates the family interest in Menhaden.

A: Yes.

D: So, you could almost divide this by WWII. Prior to WWII and perhaps a little bit after we were in the shrimp business. After WWII we were in the Menhaden business. That doesn't mean you couldn't have been still shrimping, I don't wanna imply that that wasn't there, but it was clear that if you look at this in a straight line, we come from St. Augustine to Louisiana, as shrimpers, we go offshore and begin to take advantage of the jumbo shrimp, and then at WWII we see a transition from roughly to 1954, somewhere in there, then we got into the Menhaden business. The Menhaden business right now would be 55—well not quite 55 years old. And then you had almost 50 years before that. So your family has 100 years pretty much involved in the fisheries. So I think what we're also interested in that pre-WWII shrimping—because the jumbo shrimp put Morgan City on the map. That single fisheries allowed Morgan City to claim shrimp capital of the world, along with Biloxi, and along with others, right?

J: Right.

D: So, if you could give us some insights, and even though you may not have lived it, you may have heard the stories, we'd like to hear a little bit about that fishery as well because certainly the mechanization was not nearly as well developed until post WWII.

DK: I do remember my dad talkin' on the phone all the time. And at one point the shrimp were measured in barrels. Boat came in with so many barrels. And then toward the end of that, they had another standard, which was boxes, and that was a smaller standard. Boxes of shrimp.

A: He operated, started here in 1938.

B: Was your family involved at all with the canneries? The shrimp canneries, before refrigeration?

A, J, & DK: No.

B: Okay.

D: Now, when you talk about boxes, are we talking about a wooden box or something made of paper?

DK: Uh, I don't know. I think it was—had to be some kind of standard of measure.

D: Oh yes.

DK: And I don't know what that was, just the terminology.

B: Well, Don, the reason Don's asking that is because of the proximity of Patterson to the William's Cypress Operation which made boxes--Cypress boxes. All sorts of industries—

DK: Oh, I see.

A: I don't think it was out--I don't know how they came to call it a box—he's gonna go, my husband, he don't wanna get involved, but he knows a lot.

D: Well, and again, if it was Cypress boxes, that is a tie between—

DK: One industry to another.

D: Exactly.

B: Exactly.

DK: Exactly.

D: It's just like over here, there's Mill Road. Well, Mill Road—

A: Well the mill was right back here.

D: There you go!

A: But, the mill—the cypress industry had faded when the new industry was the shrimp industry because they didn't plant trees after they cut 'em down to have more in the future. So...

D: So we're talking 1938. And that would have been towards the end of the great Cypress logging industries.

A: Oh yeah.

B: Which basically dies around WWII, so.

D: Mm hm. But you can see, we're trying to—you live in Patterson and Morgan City. Both of you have this tremendous interest in Cypress Logging, you also have the interest in fisheries. Early fisheries best vessels were made of wood, so the question we ask, were they made of Cypress?

A: Mm hm.

D: Were there shipwrights locally? And remember with Portuguese influence—the Portuguese have an enormous history with fisheries. Well, all of this could tie together and that's what Carl and I are trying to work out in our own minds, if one industry depended on the other industry simply because of proximity.

J: Right.

A: I can't see it.

D: Okay.

A: One thing I forgot to tell you, my daddy's father died when he was nine years old so he went to work in the sardine business over there, Whether it was a factory—and then as he got a little older, he got on the boats, and then he saved his money, and that's how he got to the states. [Did you tell you any—?]

J: Well, getting to the box standard and what have you, and how it became that--if it was a size of a box or, you know, whatever dimensions that they had, but in terms of that weight class is 100 lbs. 100 lbs of shrimp.

DK: A box was 100 lbs of shrimp.

J: [I had to go] clarify that.

DK: Okay.

J: Thought that.

DK: So what was a barrel?

New Man: What was a barrel?

B: Well I suspect it's a container easy to transport in trucks if you're, you know, you're switching, because that's the—the shippers of various commodities being able to move from trains to trucks.

D: And who was--did you father have his own trucks? Or were they—?

A: My dad had his own trucks. I can show you a picture with us and he shows the truck.

B: Mm hm. And these were about 1-ton size trucks?

DK: We had some good photographs.

D: Yeah, because if you think of the period, the roads were not--now, after WWII we start getting better but prior to WWII the road were pretty poor. And if you have a family member making record trips to—

A: You could barely see—here's a truck but you can't see all of it. This is all of us standing--now that's in front of the—this first shrimp company.

D: Yes, yes. And it says J.O.H. That would be for John? Joseph?

A: What on there?

D: See on the side there, on the door, do you read where it says J-O-H?

J: J-O-H, yeah.

D: Would that be John? Joseph?

A: That's John Santos Karinas. That's what he's puttin' on there. See you're seeing part of "John"

J: Mm hm.

D: Good.

A: And this is the four oldest ones. She came later.

DK: Ta-da!

A: [Laughing] But anyway, that's what you're seeing, is part of "John."

D: Alright.

J: That was probably...How old were you? Whatchu think? That was probably 1940-41? '42 maybe?

A: Well I came—I was born in '35, we came here in '38, so I must have been about--

DK: Wanna see your momma?

A: Six or seven years old or something like that.

J: Early 40's, during WWII.

B: Okay, well while we're on the subject of WWII, how did the war affect your dad's operation? I mean was he able to get gas? I know gas was—

A: UH! That I don't know. Uh...I know one man here that had a fleet of boats. He had—he was an Italian, and he had boats named like Mussolini, and—and the government came and made him change the names of 'em, but as far as how the war affected it, it looked like they kept on fishing! I don't know.

Addy: They took some of your daddy's boats and made fireboats out of 'em.

[INAUDIBLE]

A: Were the shrimp boats?

Addy: Yeah.

A: He took some of—ya heard him?

D: No I didn't.

A: They took some of the boats and made fireboats out of 'em.

D: Really? Okay.

B: Some of the shrimp boats.

D: Sure. Well how big of a shrimp fleet did he own?

A: Well in those days I don't know. We had lots of boats. We have pictures of the early—

A: iewer boats. Or we had—

J: We got 'em somewhere.

G: There's one right there.

A: Did you get the other ones back?

J: Oh he's got 'em.

DK: Ginger what boat is that?

G: I don't know but it's an old—

A: That's the Social.

J: Social.

A: That was one—his first shrimp boats.

DK: His first shrimp boat:

A: It was run with Kerosene.

D: You have photographs?

DK: Oh yeah!

A: And that's how he got the main kerosene job.

J: Mm hm.

B: About when did they make the switch over to gas-driven engines, you have any idea?

A: No.

DK: ...Gas or diesel?

B: Oh that's true, I—

A: When they came here, they were using, I'm sure, diesel I guess, huh [Daddy]?

Addy: Oh yeah—

A: Yeah.

B: Okay.

G: And then your dad sent my father to school--diesel school in Philadelphia so that he could repair boats.

J: Mm hm.

B: Well, um...

D: ...Just a minute...Now, the Social, that was your dad's first boat?

A: To my knowledge, that--now some of these articles, they not saying that, but that's what we always heard. That that was his first boat.

D: Now that boat came from Florida here?

A: No I don't think--I think he did that—fished that in Florida.

D: Was the Social built in Florida?

A: He bought it from someone I believe.

D: The reason I ask, Joseph getting back to Flor-ee-da, or Bee-loxi, in the shrimp business a bee-loxi, from Biloxi, the wheel house is in the front. A Flor-ee-da, the wheel house is in the back. The social, the wheel house is in the middle. I've never seen it.

A: In this one here?

D: Yeah. I've never seen it. So what you have is maybe one of a very few number of boats with a design that I've never seen. Because we always talk about a Bee-loxi, that's why I asked about a Flor-ee-da. Clearly that tells you where they're from. This one—

A: Is in the middle.

D: Yeah. I'm gonna have to go look at some books I have at the house and try to figure it out. So what you have is one of the most unique boat types. Carl has a colleague at ULL that knows—I mean he's really highly skilled at boats, and we'll be—we'd like to—not today—but sometime come and scan that so we can show it to some of our colleagues. It's good. I'm sorry, I get a little excited.

[ALL CHUCKLING].

A: We had a great big one in the office, but I don't know who got that when we, you know took the fellas out before we sold the building.

B: Well do you still have a large collection of pictures?

DK: Well that boat is on that copy from up [INAUDIBLE].

D: Yeah. You see you have a schooner here—

A: That's not the Social.

D: No, no. And Schooners were very important in Louisiana early on.

B: Yeah, because they get navigated in shallow water, mm hm.

D: They were also good in rum running.

J & DK: [LAUGHING].

B: Speaking of which, have you heard any stories about the fishing industry here and its involvement in all of that during prohibition?

A: No, well what, I don't quite understand you.

B: Well the rumors—

DK: Running booze. Running liquor.

A: Oh no. I never heard of it. Now, that doesn't mean it didn't happen.

D: Oh no no. We know it happened.

[ALL LAUGHING]

D: This is south Louisiana after all.

A: I don't think that—

D: We know it happened, and we know—I can—think I can show you people that were involved...Uh...yeah...Now where was this article from?

A: That was out of the National Fishery Magazine, 1955. December of '55. And I guess that reason I didn't get one, that's the year—the month I was married and I guess I wasn't around when he was giving 'em out.

D: Carl, look. See the boat?

C: Yeah. Yeah.

D: Yeah. And it doesn't look like it was rigged for sails so it was Kerosene powered--

C: Or diesel powered.

A: That boat didn't come down here.

D: the Social. It was built here.

A: Now he—No. that boat was built in Florida. After—he uh—Now he had another boat that he built and called it the Social.

B: Okay, well at the time this was published it was still operating [out of Brunswick-Johnsriver].

B: The Social. So apparently it changed hands and [INAUDIBLE].

D: Hm.

J: I need to read this article.

A: Yeah, you'll see after he sold it, it's still—

B: Still in—

A: But that was according to this date. But he bought this boat with several people and then eventually he bought 'em out.

D: Yeah, it says here he had a schooner that had been motorized but it's a lovely little schooner and you see where the wheel house is?

J: Mm hm.

D: Compared to the—

A: Now that's called a what when it's in the front?

D: That's a Bee-loxi.

A: Oh, Bee-loxi. And uh--

D: In the back it's a Flor-ee-da.

A: Flor-ee-da. And in the middle you don't know?

D: Never seen one before.

B: That's what makes it--

D: I've never seen one in south Louisiana before. And the reason we ask those questions is that it's like learning to build anything. If you build it based on tradition that your daddy's taught you, and your daddy's daddy, and you carry that tradition. So we see a boat type, it tells us a great deal about the families who made it, perhaps where they learned their skills, and that skill I have not seen and I've not seen one with a--

B: Right.

A: Well you see, this boat was on the east coast.

D: Right.

A: Never came here. I mean it was—

D: Right.

A: Obsolete by the time he came—

B: But you see, what was happening here wasn't happening in a vacuum. That's what Don is trying to say, that there are connections with other ports and areas along the gulf that strongly influence what's going on here. And it's a two-way street. This area is influencing other areas too. But that's something people don't generally look at.

DK: That's my Uncle Jack. Jack Gomez Karinas. And when the boys came over from Portugal, the four brothers, and Anne said that two came before, I didn't know that,

that all took their middle names because the United States was only accepting one person from each family at that time.

B: Wow.

DK: So my daddy was John Santos, Jack Gomez, Manuel Jesus, and Tony Lopez.

A: Well, the Portuguese spelling has no z's, what happened was, see, that's Jack Gomes.

DK: Gomes.

A: And Anthony Lopes. What happened after the came down here, somebody—you know, a lot of names around here—

DK: the French had to get that other syllable in.

B: Sure. Oh sure, no no. And that's been going on for centuries.

DK: Yes!

A: Well, you see—

DK: That's how language changes.

A: All my school records here is under Santos. I didn't know my name was Karinas until I went off to school. My last name.

J: Mm hm.

D: Hm. Now, when your father recruited the Portuguese through an attorney and I assume Lisbon was—

A: Yeah, it was Lisbon.

D: And then they came here--did they come for a long period of time? Or just for a short period of time?

A: Well they—some of them came and stayed and some worked the season and went back.

D: Now, are any of those families still here?

A: Uh, they didn't really bring their families. Just the men came and they—

DK: Was on a work visa I supposed.

A: They still have some that are in...at the Menhaden and company in Empire, the one in Louisiana, I mean Cameron, doesn't exist anymore.

D: Mm hm.

A: The lease came due and the people that owned the land wanted too much money so they tore it down and said "Bye-bye." And the one in Empire, I think they still have some--a lot of the Portuguese men. Now as far as how many, I don't know.

D: How long were the boats? Joseph?

A: Daddy. How long were the boats, do you know?

Daddy: Jodi doesn't know, I don't know.

B: How long were the boats?

Daddy: The Pogey boats?

A: Yeah.

J: They were...

Daddy: They were about 165.

J: 165 feet were the last—the biggest ones that we constructed—they constructed.

D: And how much would they hold?

J: Phew. Calculating what we called about a thousand, when they'd dump a load of—you know, each dump at the factory was 1,000 fish and most of those were hold—

J: One point, you know, the big ones, 1.1 million fish as we called it. If I remember, that's about 70 tons of fish?

D: 70 tons.

J: I think it's something in that—

D: 'Cause I've read 600, and I'm thinking, "That's a lot of weight." But a zero would be easy to misplace. You know, with typing, that is—

J: I'm trying to think of—my calculations—from what I understand, one dump at the factory, they called it—classified it as 1,000 fish, and that's 600 pounds.

D: Alright. Now were the captain—I've also been told the captains were paid by the fish?

J: Yes. the captains and the entire crew were paid by the catch.

D: Everybody! Alright.

J: [INAUDIBLE] to the catch.

D: Alright.

A: When they got the—they fished the fish for the oil, and the meal, and it fell under the soybean market. And don't ask me why the prices of the oil, it fell under the soybean market.

DK: And most of it must have been oil—a majority of it must have been processed into chicken feed.

D: Okay.

DK: Because Dad watched the chicken market. Poultry market. All the time.

D: Hm. Now...when your family decided to go into the Menhaden side did you give up the shrimp side?

DK: No.

D: So it was—

A: No, they kept that going too.

D: So was your father, we'll call it, the CEO of both sides or was there another family member running it?

A: Oh no. With the Menhaden?

D: With the Menhaden and the shrimp fishery.

A: Well he was on top of his own business but he had people under him that were capable of doing things—

J: I think what he's asking is—

DK: Yeah, he's asking something different.

J: Is the shrimp side of things was his own.

DK: Yes.

D: Okay.

J: He did that at home, and on the menhaden side he was partnered—

A: Yeah, he didn't have any partners in that.

J: Partnered with Mr. Wallus and some others, and—

B: Okay, yeah, that's what--

DK: Depending on amount of shares he owned—

A: Is that what you wanted to know?

D: Oh yes.

DK: In each of the factories.

J: Right.

D: Because it would be a large undertaking to manage both sides simultaneously.

A: Oh no. He didn't manage the plants, he—watched his boats, and what they brought in and everything to the factories.

DK: And he knew the captains and he supplied the captains to the boats.

D: Alright.

B: Now, we were talking about the factories, about how many employees were there on the two different sides, do you have any idea?

A: On the factories?

B: Right. [Let's say] the shrimp processing area.

J: Well the shrimp processing wasn't a lot, I mean it was pretty simple. Um, I mean it was maybe five or six guys.

B: Okay.

D: Mm hm. Mm hm.

J: As a youngster, we would go in—

A: Well they had to load them on the conveyor belt and then they had to weigh 'em and box 'em. They used to put 'em in five-pound cartons.

DK: And in the hey-day they would have headers. When the people couldn't—the people couldn't head the shrimp—all of the shrimp on the boat. So.

D: Now there are—generally there are two seasons in Louisiana. There's a May season and an August season. Uh, May season, brown shrimp, August, white shrimp. Did he fish both?

A: With the Gulf did they have that? I don't know.

D: No.

J: Everything that he did was offshore fishing.

D: He was deepwater, nothing near the shore.

DK: Right.

A: He didn't have any—

DK: White shrimp.

D: Alright.

J: Except maybe—

A: Well they brought in some brown, but all of his boats went out to the Gulf, they didn't do any inland—

D: So they were all steel hull?

DK: Yes.

D: All steel hull.

DK: Yes.

A: Later.

D: Yes. yes.

A: At first they weren't.

D: They were wood hulls.

J: Wood hulls, steel hulls, and then fiberglass.

D: And then you brought the shrimp to Patterson? Or Morgan City?

J: Patterson.

DK: Patterson.

A: We didn't have nothin' to do with Morgan City, I don't know how Morgan City got that title anyhow.

[ALL LAUGHING].

D: I just ask the questions!

[MORE LAUGHTER]

A: No, my father had nothing to do with Morgan City.

DK: At one point he built an ice house and the boats for Morgan City would come down the Atchafalaya to purchase ice. Then go out and fish it. But we did it mainly for ourselves, but it became a more lucrative—

A: Yeah, but that was much later, when there wasn't—

DK: It was later.

A: When they didn't have many boats then and mostly—most of 'em are more independently owned.

J: I think at one time in the early days—

J: And it probably tells us how many of those plants—there was Grandpa Versage, here in—

A: Oh, the shrimp plants? Well, [Feliz Galini] was first. Then my daddy. Then you had Joe Remus, you had the Versages, uh, I think that's it here.

J: the Hardy's came along later—

A: Yeah, but the Hardy's were in uh—they came later but they fished out of I think Morgan City for a while and then they came here.

DK: What about Uncle Jack?

A: Oh, I—yeah, he was here, but he moved on to Brownsville. When Brownsville started—they started catching more shrimp there, he moved on to Brownsville.

G: And that was in the '40's.

D: Okay. Hm.

J: So at one time, would you think in—?

A: Well my daddy--another thing—my daddy opened a fish house in Brownsville. And some of his boats were fishing out of there.

DK: And our brother ran that. The day to day.

G: And they shipped shrimp from there in trucks also.

D: Hm.

A: But by that time they must have been refrigerated trucks.

G: Yeah, they were.

A: You see, in the early days, they weren't.

D: Well it's the early days we think's important also because there's a certain amount of ingenuity in moving a product that's highly perishable to a—

B: To market. Especially given the road conditions of the time. That's why I can well understand your [miracles]! [LAUGHING]

A: Well how they got that out in good condition, I don't know, but he made a fortune.

D: Well, it's important, I mean, you work hard, you—

A: Well, like I said, they put 'em in boxes and iced it down. They might've poured some rock salt on top of 'em to keep the ice from melting for all I know.

J: Right.

D: Yes. Yes.

DK: His name was Alfred [Convenuto] and I could not think of it, but they named him Smokey Pete because he could—

D: Could move quick through the—

DK: Yeah.

D: Move product.

DK: Can't believe I couldn't remember that.

D: Now, how long was your family in the business?

DK: Shoo. Too long. [CHUCKLE]

A: Uh...He came here in '38 and I think we sold in the 90's.

D: In the 90's. Close enough. 56 years, let's just say, round it off, 60 years.

A: Didn't I put a picture up here of when we sold it.

B: I saw it, it's in one of these yes, and it's '97 I think.

A: Was it '97?

J: Yes.

D: Well that's an impressive—

A: Well they had already closed. We closed it in '90.

D: Okay.

B: Uh, what are the big changes that occurred in the Gulf? Over the course of this period as the emergence of offshore oil drilling and you know, over the emergence of all these offshore platforms and drilling rigs. Did that affect the shrimping industry, the menhaden fishery out there at all?

A: I don't think it did.

J: Not at all in fact—

B: I was just curious.

J: It actually took some of the shrimping guys in the industry who became [spla] vessels for the oil industry as it began and we had several guys here that actually—you know, in New Orleans, people became—work boat owners. They had gotten away from the shrimping and [INAUDIBLE] working for the oil field.

D: Now what about the dead zone?

A: Whatchu lookin' for?

D: Has it affected—?

B: I was just looking for that '97 pic—

D: [and then made in Mississippi]

B: Oh no, it's just—

A: Oh, I must have brought that back in here.

J: Yeah, not being around it for the last 20 years, you know it's really hard to say.

D: Okay.

DK: What is the dead zone?

D: A lack of oxygen. Um, high nitrogen load comes down the Mississippi, and offshore current pushes it toward Texas so you get this long, elongated plume, in which the fish are just—there's no oxygen.

B: So they can't survive. Nothing that breathes oxygen can survive in there.

D: And it changes in size but it's in the area that—it's not the primes of it, the primes of it tends to be towards the Delta, but it's never the less and area that can be impacted.

DK: Wow.

J: The shrimping side, I'm not sure because of that dead zone. Do they classify that from surface to sea floor?

D: Yeah.

J: You know, and then you got something—four is the menhaden, you know, that fish is typically your fishing maximum, two or three miles off shore, everything is pretty much close to the beach so that I think the dead zone typically stays further offshore.

D: Okay, that makes sense.

J: You got a lot of [ant farm].

A: We used to fish a lot in Britain Sound off of Empire.

D: For menhaden or for shrimp?

A: Menhaden.

D: Alright—

A: But they would still go out--they would go out too.

D: Now, when they were—alright, when the offshore oil industry started, Mobile Oil had a camp in Morgan City that allowed people to get to [Ship Shoal] so we suddenly see that there's another new industry added to the mix. Your father never got involved in any way in the offshore oil and gas business?

A: He had some...The Black Duck and all, what did they do, Daddy?

Daddy: They [went for] the oil industries [and all].

A: He had a few of 'em.

D: Okay.

A: One or two boats that worked for a while. But uh, he didn't stay in it.

DK: Well wasn't the Diamond Gem an oil survey boat? Wasn't it built as a survey boat?

A: No, the Diamond Gem was built as a yacht, a pleasure boat. And he had another one called the [Boucarée], did you remember the Boucarée?

DK: Yes.

A: Those were yachts he built for just to go out and have a good time. But he had one, the Black Duck, and I don't know which was a shrimp boat. Uh, I don't know. I don't remember.

J: Yeah that may be what I refer to as some of the other—

DK: I can't believe that Daddy would anything just to put—

J: Who said, "Hey, we need a boat, can you come bring supplies for us?"

D: Oh yeah!

[D, J, & DK ALL TALKING AT ONCE]

D: That's why I brought it up, because, you had a long history by then. In 1947, come in the 30's, you had at least 10 years.

J: Mm hm.

D: And the oil industry was looking for anybody that could teach them how to get to where they had to go.

J: That's right, exactly.

B: And let me—around the LaFourche area that's exactly what they were doing.

DK: I'm gonna find out about the Diamond Gem, and I don't know about the [Voucaray], but I believe that that was an oil survey boat.

D: Well, it might very well have been—

DK: And that he did outfit it for himself and for us but it was too much of a workboat. It wasn't like any yacht that you would think of.

A: Well, you might be right, because I tell you why, my neighbor and another man rode out—was it on the Diamond Gem, Daddy?

Daddy: Yeah.

A: On the Diamond Gem they rode out Hurricane Audrey, in Cameron on that boat.

D: Woah. Woah.

A: Right.

D: Hm. That's...

A: Now, when Audrey hit Cameron, shoo! It just about ruined my daddy as far as the menhaden business. The season had—that happened in June. So, what? June 20-somethin', Uh, the season started in April, it was just getting started good when it hit. Well it of course, messed up the plant. Not only with all the people that died. Do you all remember anything about Audrey?

D: Oh yes.

B: Oh yeah. Went through it.

A: Well he—huh? You were there?

B: No I wasn't in Cameron but I was about 60 miles inland and that was bad enough.

A: Oh really? Well anyway, they used those Menhaden boats to carry bodies to Lake Charles.

D: Hm.

DK: What was the date of that?

A: That was—

B: '57.

D: 1957.

A: That was 19—and Steven—

DK: So I was 10.

A: My son was 6 weeks old when that hit, my oldest boy. I think it was 20-somethin'?

D: I think you're right.

DK: And I remember riding with Dad, Momma was there too, I believe, to Cameron, and the picture that I remember—it's nothing to do with the fishing industry, it was a cow. One half of the cow was on this side of the barbed wire and the other half was on that side.

A: Might've had a tidal wave there!

DK: Just hanging there. I mean it wasn't alive of course, but I just...It was just major.

A: But anyway, he was able to come back with the aid of some friends as far as like giving him credit for the fuel, until he could, you know—but of course they had to get the plant back in operation and that season was just ruined that year.

J: Hm mm.

D: Now, how did your mother interact in all of the—

A: When and they lived in Florida—

A: And they—she worked with him when they unloaded boat. He must've—might've had a place there, I don't remember, but I do know that she worked there with him in the business, but over here, no. She was strictly a housewife and mother.

D: And a good one!

DK: Uh, excellent. Excellent.

D: Mm hm.

DK: And you know, she was of that generation that was extremely subservient.

D: Mm hm.

DK: And it was, to her credit, that she had a circle of friends—um, Italian friends—who were "in the same boat," so to speak, and they sort of supported each other through the "man-things." So to speak. And um...

A: Diane you don't have to get into all that! [LAUGHING]

DK: Well, I think it's important! These women were way stronger than we are. You know, what we do, we just say, "Puh! Go!" But they stuck it out.

A: They were raised during the depression.

DK: And that's to their credit. You know.

A: And that's—they were raised during the depression, and they didn't throw their money away even though they had it, and very frugal, very strong people.

D: Well, Carl's parents and my parents both went through the Depression. So we're not young whipper-snappers, we fully understand precisely what you're saying.

A: I've heard stories where they went from Florida to Texas City looking—they passed through here looking for fishing grounds and they slept on the box springs. Now I'm not talking about on the springs, not box springs, and then they finally ended up here. But all that was during the Depression or maybe right after.

B: Was there a fall off—a tremendous fall off in the amount of shrimp that they could ship out? I mean obviously it's a luxury item—the shrimp is—and during the Great Depression they must have taken a tremendous hit in their ability to—or it a case of the people who can afford it are gonna buy it regardless of the economic circumstances?

A: Well, you know I don't know, he probably—he was still in Florida and all during the Depression and they survived it. Now whether there was a market for the shrimp and all that I can't tell you that.

DK: What [year were you born]?

A: I was born 1935.

DK: And Joyce?

A: Joyce was '32 and um...

DK: Johnny?

A: Johnny was '31 I believe, or '30. He and Joyce were a year and a half apart. And Joe was born in '36.

D: So you were about two when you came to Louisiana.

A: I was three years old. Came here in '38.

D: Alright. So it had been right after the depression? Close enough?

B: Well, as it's winding down. It doesn't really end 'til WWII.

A: Well the Depression lasted several years. My husband was born during the Depression—'32. So Mom and Daddy had two children during the depression. But I guess it was coming to an end when I came along in '35.

B: Right, so winding down. Um, we were on the subject just now of hurricanes and we just wanna get some of your observations about how the storms of the last 10 years or so—since Andrew I guess, have changed the Patterson Area.

A: I can't see where it has.

J: I don't think it's really changed, as you see, when you're driving or whatever. The big change is through, of course, the marshland, uh...I fish quite a bit down the Atchafalaya, I'm a saltwater fisherman and there's been a tremendous change—

B: Well can you talk a little bit about that? What kind of changes have you seen? Just the disappearance of land, I mean we're very fortunate here with the Atchafalaya River system to actually gain land--you see some gains in a lot of places—mainly on the channel and that, but in other areas away from that you see the disappearance of land, you think that really—

A: Uh, Patterson is above sea level. Seven, I think—

A: Seven miles, or seven feet above sea level. Uh we rode out Andrew here. I was at my mother's, and my husband and his niece was here. That was a wicked storm. And that thing never had an eye. I mean it blew for over 12 hours. I don't stay anymore for...we go.

D: Where do you go?

A: Well, a lot of times we just took off and were fortunate enough—we always go west and north. And fortunate enough to find a hotel without reservations. Now I have a son that lives in Monroe so that's where we head.

B: Hahahaha.

D: That's okay. That's okay.

J: That's good.

D: That's good. Just leave early.

A: We did! Before this last one here--which one was the last one? Katrina? No, Katrina—

B: Ike and Gustav.

A: Gustav. I was drinking coffee in the bed, my husband came in there and said, "We better go." Instead of telling me that the night before. But anyway we got out of here by 9:30, no traffic at all. We were in Monroe by, let's see...1:30.

B: Mm hm.

A: But when they give that evacuation order, that's when you run into the trouble. You just as soon stay put. Because you don't make any time on the road.

D: Now when you're fishing the salt, where do you fish?

J: Uh, typically Point au Faire Island. Which is the east side of the river.

D: Which side?

J: The east side of the Atchafalaya.

D: Yeah, right.

J: That area. Four-Leaf Bay, over in [Tolossalay] down through Oyster Bayou and that area. Now, after Gustav, the prominent fishing inlet that we go into the access Point au Faire island is a place called Pellerman's Cut. And they--probably about 10-12 years old—12 years ago, they installed a weir there to keep, you know, the running and the erosion out of that pass. But after Gustav passed, the rock area and the weir that you could cross—it was about four feet under average [turning] so you would just slow down and cross over. And—but after Gustav, it left a 50 foot gap--50-60 foot gap to the north of that small inlet right there. And so that's just one indication of [natural]—and in the marsh area and the small lakes there, it changes, but the depth—it's just basically, in my opinion, it's just taken the marsh and then

the meat of the marsh and it's just laying it out and leveling it out [in the northern water].

D: How long have you been fishing Oyster Bayou?

J: Uh, probably about 20 years. 25 years.

D: Alright, on the east—no, the west side, do you remember the shrimp drying platform they have out there?

J: Yes. Yes.

D: What's left of it?

J: It's been...maybe a few pilings.

D: That's it.

J: Maybe a few pilings [picking up]—

B: Was there enough there to tell you about how big it was? Approximate size?

J: Yeah, a few years back you could actually see the tops and I would say, probably, what I can recall, maybe...I would say 100 feet by 30-40 feet.

B: Okay. That was probably the western most platform ever built in this state.

D: Yeah, and we've been told that many of them were about a football field. Yeah. So you're approximation's a little smaller.

J: Right.

D: Now when you saw the pilings, about how far out of the water were they? We're getting some mixed notions on this one.

J: Well actually, I think there's still some piling that are sticking up in the marsh on the land itself. Unless that was part of the shed or some kind of [INAUDIBLE] like that. But right now I would say those pilings may be 2-3 feet, maybe 4 feet out the water as of now.

D: Yeah. Well that's exactly what we were told--somewhere between 4 and 5 feet, so you get air underneath them.

DK : What were these platforms for?

B: To dry shrimp.

J: Dry shrimp.

DK: Oh!

B: For the [INAUDIBLE]...most of it shipped to China, but some of it's still marketed here.

A: You can buy all [size] shrimp—

J: [I like it].

A: I don't like it do you?

B: Uh not particularly...I've eaten it at lent all my life, so—

A: You like it?

D: It was before Ice—

A: [INAUDIBLE].

D: Before ice you had to have some way to preserve the product so you air-dried it outside. You boiled it in super-saline water, then you laid it out to air dry. Uh...2 days—2 and a half days.

B: Right and people shuffled their feet over it in the early days to get the shells off.

DK: Okay! Awesome!

F: And it was—the company that handled them in Louisiana had an exclusive right to distribute to China and **there** just amazing—well we are still trying to figure out the weight, you know, it could easily be 20 or 30 or 40 tons that went to China by boat because that's how we--so we're still trying to work that one out, we're not—

B: And it takes about 8-10 pounds of fresh shrimp to make a pound of dry shrimp so...

DK: Wow!

A: Are they--they're not still doing that are they?

D: Yes.

A: I know you can buy it so they must be doing it somewhere.

B: Yeah in the Houma area.

A: Houma?

B: Mm hm.

DK: So this would be the brown shrimp?

EVERYONE: No.

A: Not necessarily.

D: No.

J: [Equal smalls].

DK: Oh [they're tiny]!

D: They're sometimes called Sea-bob. Which is a corruption of the term "Six-barb." Six-barb got changed to Sea-Bob. They're very small but they didn't throw anything away. They got out there, they dried it. They dried fish, they dried anything! It was all money-makers. Went to--we haven't quite worked out the distribution but it largely went to China towns. From New Orleans and Houma to San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York—

DK: And were these baby shrimp?

B: Well it's a shrimp that doesn't get very big.

DK: Okay. All right.

A: Which was not good for the shrimpers.

D: No, but for shrimp drying it was ideal.

DK: They weren't infant shrimp.

D: We're still trying to reverse—

DK: That shrimp that generically did not grow.

A: Oh!

D: Yeah.

DK: Anymore. Okay? So they weren't—

D: And they were just packaged in a barrel. I mean they were preserved. In fact, the banana plantations in Middle America, they took a great deal. Because you could take the dried shrimp, put 'em in your rice and a little water and they'd hydrate back up then you would get a protein with your starch. And that industry was started by Louisianans as well. So.

DK: Wow.

D: Trying to work that one out, we're not sure that--

B: That's a case where there was a connection.

DK: Mm hm.

J: Yeah.

B: Between these neighboring industries.

D: Yeah that, you know, that's why the questions are always being asked, you know? Where was he connection? From where? If you had a unique hull design or propeller. Did you independently invent it or did you learn from somebody else and then you re-crafted it a little bit to fit the waters here.

DK: Interesting. Uh, my husband worked 20 years for United Fruit Company so he's familiar with the banana business.

D: Well that company was started in Louisiana.

DK: Yeah because the headquarters were in New Orleans.

B: New Orleans, right.

D: Mm hm. Mm hm. Yep. The Great White Fleet. Other questions?

B: I think that's it. Well, there's one question I'd like to ask—if you do have some of these original pictures, we'd like to be able to come back and scan 'em. And what we do it just give the family members copies of the files and we take 'em anywhere, and have your prints made.

A: Well, um, he has a box of pictures, he couldn't find.

J: That I packed away in my hurricane take-away—like most photos you do now. Like you say you learn—

A: I put all mine in Ziplocs so they don't get wet!

B: Well, you see, what we hope to do with this is create a safety net, you know, they're gonna be stored away from here, hopefully they'll be there forever, um, but we can make copies available to family members [INAUDIBLE]—

A: Now some of this is [INAUDIBLE] stuff.

B: Any prints that you want?

J: We have several photos—and a lot of the grandchildren all kinda—when everything kinda dispersed everybody kinda took what they wanted and—

D: Sure. Oh Sure!

J: [What they felt good about]—

D: We would be, you know, give us a little time, we'd love to come back and Carl brought two scanners, I have one, we ended up using them with four computers—

A: Now when you say you can scan that picture, do you have to take it out the frame?

B: No.

A: Okay.

A: At marine lakes, where he had the shipyard, right?

G: I know my father—I don't know whether my father also had a shipyard, or he worked—

A: Your dad had a Shipyard that went back of Momma's house. And then he sold it to Daddy.

G: [INAUDIBLE]

A: It was back there.

G: I didn't know how it came about. I knew my dad had a shipyard but I didn't know—

A: Yeah he had it back there—

G: Whether they were one and the same and apparently they were.

A: What?

G: The shipyard. My father had it and then he sold it to your dad? Or vice versa?

A: No, no Ginger. The [Palacin] shipyard has always been there.

G: Yeah.

A: But there was some land back along his house—

G: Yeah, right—

A: That your daddy used for a shipyard.

G: Yeah.

A: It had a railway on there but then Daddy bought that land from him.

G: Yeah. Okay. I didn't know that part.

D: Hm. Well if you have any photos, give us a little time, we're actually—one of the large lumber companies is allowing us to go through some of their records

Track 77:

[NOTHING]

Track 78:

[NOTHING]

Track 79:

[NOTHING]

Track 80:

[NOTHING]

Track 81:

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Track 82:

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Track 83:

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