

## Freddie Matherne Interview

**Interviewer: Don Davis**

Don: ...She passed away suddenly. We burned a CD and we didn't do a transcript. We just burned a CD. We gave it to the family. The family was so excited cuz their grandchildren could hear her voice. So that's one of the things.

Freddie Matherne: That's right.

D: And what we want you to do now is just give us your name, your age, and we want you to give us permission, verbal permission, that will allow us to capture your image, record the material. We're going to keep it at LSU. Roy works for a national program. It's gonna go on their server. We're gonna put one at ULL. And the whole purpose is...the wetlands have changed dramatically. You're the one that can tell us that. But first of all, what's your name?

M: Freddie Matherne.

D: And how old are you?

M: 78, well I'll be 78 in October.

D: And, do we have permission to record this material and put it online and let other researchers and individuals use it?

M: Yes sir, you do.

D: What I'd like to do is, begin by telling us where you grew up.

M: I was born in Lockport, Bayou Lafourche. We lived on the side of Lake Salvador, on the southwest side of it. There's no community there. My father had a little houseboat. So during the trapping season, he would run it into the marsh and we stayed there while he trapped the land all up in there, which is Golden Ranch now and Lake Salvador.

D: Alright, the southwest, over here? That's upside down.

M: Yeah, yeah, yeah let's bring it up, right side up. Okay. Lac des Allemands.

D: Lac des Allemands, right here.

M: No, I'm not in Lac des Allemands, I'm in Lake Salvador. I was wondering. I didn't see the. Okay, this is the way to get to intracoastal here. See this bayou here? Now we lived about right here.

D: Alright.

M: And this is?

D: Lafitte?

M: Lafitte. Bayou Perot or I went too far. We lived right here.

D: Alright, perfect. And it was a houseboat?

M: And it was a houseboat. Pulled up on the marsh.

D: And how old were you when you lived in that?

M: All the way from about one to about six years old. Then we moved to Lafitte.

D: Alright. You moved the houseboat to Lafitte?

M: Yeah. We were living on the houseboat.

D: Alright.

M: Okay.

D: Yes

M: We moved to Lafitte. I was, like I said, about seven, eight years old. And no, when we moved there, I was about three or four years old. Excuse me. And I was one the back porch. It had some children swimming. Young, 10 to 15 years old. You know, they were swimming there. So as a baby, I was crawling or walking around and I fell off. I decided to dive off the porch. And one of them... My mother hollered for me and wandered all around. I was under the porch but in the water, you know. So he come up and grabbed me by my hair and he pulled me in. Otherwise, this is where, I was born in Lockport, but this is would've been where I would be dead. So then, we trapped there for a while, but then we moved back to where my father was from, Bayou des Allemands, cuz he owned the western end of the lake, northwestern end. And see where it says Carmadelle Village? Now this was a village where they raised and all back here. And we lived in a place called Tete du Mort, French. It was the head of the dead. Anyway, Indians had lived there before and it was their burial ground. The biggest burial ground they had was the Temple Bay, right here, at the end of this bayou. And uh yeah. At the end of this bayou here. And it was about 35, 40 feet high, 120 feet around, you know. So, they wound up moving all the way down off. I think most of them moved to this area, somewhere around here. So my dad was born and raised right here.

D: At Carmadelle?

M: Uh yeah, next to Carmadelle. Between Carmadelle and Bayou Gauche.

D: Right here.

M: Yeah, no. I lived right here, right on this, almost the end of the road in Bayou Gauche.

D: Now did they take the houseboat, when they got to Bayou Gauche, and just pull it up on the land and that was your house?

M: No. They, in fact, they did pull it up, but then my father gave it to my grandmother.

D: Okay.

M: She stayed in it. And he built a house right over here. A pretty big house, you know. And he was crabbing then and fishing. You know, he would crab during the summer and all. And sometimes during the winter but during the winter he went trapping, trap Golden Ranch.

D: Now.

M: At this end.

D: Where did he take his fur?

M: Beg your pardon?

D: Where did he take his fur? You know, he trapped it. How did he get his fur to market?

M: Oh, where he took it. The man came and pick 'em up.

D: Okay. Alright.

M: Yeah, he'd come and pick 'em up in Bayou Gauche. And when he was, you see this distance here?

D: Here's Bayou Gauche.

M: No, Carmadelle Village. When he used to go to school, he had to row his skiff to school all the way here to Des Allemands. It's about seven miles.

D: Really.

M: Rowing the skiff to go to school.

D: Was there ever a school in Carmadelle?

M: Uh, once, a long time ago, we had one. But then they moved it to Des Allemands, for what reason, I don't know. You see all this land around here, around Carmadelle? All this, I hunted there as a young man and later on too. We used to go back in this marsh, you know, and [inaudible] and we seen barbed wire fencing all the way around there. Say, what did they need that for in the middle of...There's nothing but marsh, swamp, water. It wasn't like that before. That land had to be, had to sink. It wasn't washed out here. It just went down.

D: And it was cattle in there?

M: They had cattle, you know, all throughout this area here. Like I said, I'll jump back to where I was as a child, was over here. We used to go to. We had a school later on when I grew up. Not when my father. My father went to Des Allemands when he was young, but when I was young, they wound up putting a little school house right here.

D: In Bayou Gauche?

M: Yeah, it went up to third grade of grammar school. Anyway, we used to be in the classroom often. And the teachers would want to know, to pay attention to what she was saying, cuz we was looking out the back door. Because my father would come in with all these logs, you know, cypress logs, out of Lake Salvador. And uh, you know, he was [inaudible]. People wanted to see how many he had, you know, that for the fuel that's in there. So, she knew wanted us to pay attention and not be looking out into the bayou. So it was kind of hard to...

D: Your dad was getting sinker cypress?

M: Sinker cypress. Here's what they did. I'll use this as an example.

D: Sure.

M: All through this here and here, they used to cut loads. You can see where they drug the cypress out. You still can see it. They would ring it first, a bunch of them, one year. Then they waited until the next year. That way it was dead and it was dry. So they would cut it down and then would tow it over here and come all the way to here and go to Harvey. Let's see, Lafitte. From Lafitte. Not Lake Cataouatche, I know where that's at. They went to Lafitte. I mean to Harvey, right here. See this thing? Right along here.

D: Do you remember the name of the mill at Harvey?

M: I don't know if Rathbun had it then or not. That's who has it now, I think.

D: Okay, alright.

M: Rathbun Lumber Company. Anyway, they would bring it here and they would saw it up. But, coming across Lake Salvador, used to chain them, from one log, the front of one log to the back end of the first log, you know. They used to have strings of cypress trees, which we call logs. And they used to come across there. But when the weather got real bad, it would break loose these logs on here. Sometimes we would find one, sometimes two or three, sometimes a whole ten or so, you know, in the back. Just about all these pulled across here. It would sink, sink to the bottom of the lake. It's in most places seven feet. And I think sunk down there. The sand covered it up, you know, dirt, mostly sand. And it wasn't all the way covered up. They had some, where they tied the log, they had some [inaudible] to tie on top of them. And most of the time they were sticking up. So my dad took two small skiffs, could've been (Stratton?) or whatever it is, five, six horsepower. And they tow one of his crab lines and he would put extra chain on it to stay on the bottom. And they would drag a certain area, with their poles, and drag a certain area in the lake. They caught a heck of a lot of them up in this area. But they caught them all over the lake, but a lot of them up in here. And when they got 'em, you know, like I say, they was sunk. When they got 'em, he come there with 34 foot. Same size boat I have. And he had this big, like, ice hook, you know, that could go across this thing. And we used to go down the anchor rope, cuz it's pretty deep. It's hard to swim in. We would lose too much, go faster going down the anchor rope. Also down the hook, could pull us up, down with the hook. Then we had a little sledge hammer and we used to drive those hooks into the tree, into the log. Drive 'em and then he would pull slowly on it. We would watch it until we got, the sand would come up and then the log would float on up. The log dried themselves on the bottom of the lake. The water made them sink to the bottom and then the sand dried 'em off, being they was covered up. And sure enough, once you wiped that off, up popped the log. Some of them had holes, you know, that had gotten bad, the center of it. And we used to find great big catfish, 15, 20, 30 pounds cats that was inside the [inaudible]. And it was quite something, as a young boy, to see this big catfish coming out of there.

D: Now did your dad ever commercially hunt?

M: I don't think so. He took, he worked as a guide, bringing people hunting.

D: Really.

M: In Seminole Pond, a lot. They would just use pirogues then. And uh he used to bring people hunting.

D: Now these were primarily New Orleans?

M: New Orleans, most of them. And uh he used to bring them hunting. I don't know what they gave him for that, charged so much. But he, we all hunted, hunted for our dinner table, you know. But it was rabbits, deer, or ducks. I really enjoyed duck hunting, myself. I hunted when my folks, later on, they went back and they stayed in a camp. You see where it says Bayou Matherne?

D: Yeah.

M: They stayed in a camp right here on this bayou. It's kinda high. Maybe about five, six foot above the water, which is high to us, you know.

D: Yeah.

M: So they stayed up there. They had a camp there. He did that after we had to move to New Orleans. This is after he had left this area 30, 40 years. He came back and he did some trapping again. Felt that he wanted to trap. But then he would crab also.

D: Why did he go to New Orleans?

M: He went to New Orleans because he started working for Gulf Seafood Corporation with his boat. It was a wide 56 foot boat he had gotten with a big charter engine, paddle wheel. And he started working for them, but it went so slow to go from Harvey all the way to Grand Isle. You know, and alongside the (Manila Visions?) and (Ahi) and (George Lung?). You know, that's all different platforms. So they put a big 471 D (curler?). That was big to them. I have a 871, that's exactly double in my boat. And uh anyway, he was making those runs. He would bring in diesel. He would bring in lumber to repair these big platforms, cuz these platforms were about more than a block square. I'd say they're more than almost two blocks square, you know. And it was made, you know, way above the marsh, about 7, 8, 10 feet above the marsh. And we uh, it was made with these board-type; you know the frame that we would make it. Imagine an air base, like a bunch of hills on the top. That's what [inaudible]. We had the place where they used to boil it, the big steam boiler. And then they would take 'em and spread 'em out over the whole platform. When the rain come, they had to hurry up and brush 'em toward the top of the hill, top of the wooden hill, now. And then put the tarps on top of it. All it was a wooden deck. Imagine when we build a lot of wood up, a block and a half square. That was a lot of lumber. In fact, we worked on 'em. I worked in the mud [inaudible], salt water mud. Anyway, he did that. That's why he moved to New Orleans, cuz he used to go. It was on...St. Louis Street.

D: Yes.

M: Away from New Orleans. That's where the office was. You know, they used to ship to Chicago from there. But anyway, he used to go there and he had a big paneled truck. And he used to go and pick up the men that worked on these platforms. Mostly, alcoholics, you know, down on their luck and what have you. All [inaudible] what's out in the street and all. He used to go there and he would have a couple of cases or a case of wine and he used to tell them if they get in the truck, he'd give 'em a, one of

them bottles of wine. So they used to get in the truck. He told some of them that hadn't went before that's he taking them to the Chinese platform. And then he would go to Harvey, where he had his boat parked, with the truck, from New Orleans to Harvey. And anyway, from there, he would give them another bottle of wine if they get on the boat. Once they got on the boat, that's it, they was going onto that platform. So, in a way, he sort of Shanghaied them, but it did them good cuz they used to eat real good. We ate breakfast. They used to eat at 10 o'clock and at two o'clock. That's how the Chinese did that. They had eggs and all. Most of them gained weight when they out there even though they worked. And uh some of them was looking forward to going back out, you know, after coming in and staying in New Orleans for a while and getting bad off again, you know. So they would. But when they got out there, they couldn't get no wine, no nothing.

D: Dried out.

M: They could get all the food they wanted but that's it. And they would stay there, I believe, I don't know if it was a month or two months. I think it's more like two months they had to stay. And he would bring them back in. So that went on, he worked for Dempsey, he worked for exploration, you know with his boat, looking for oil. We had moved to the Irish Channel, close to the river, around Jackson Avenue and Rousseau Street, which is the last street to the river. And uh we stayed there a good long while. We bought a house there. Then later on, he bought another house. He was doing well with the exploration company. He bought another house on Camp Street, duplex. And then went to there. And then he quit. He had went to work doing something and he couldn't take it. He used to be the captain or in charge of something. Anyway, he had somebody tell him what to do. That didn't go over well with him. So he said the heck with this. He come back out, like, to the Bayou Gauche and then started the crabbing all over again. And I went to school, at one of the MacDonald schools in New Orleans. And then from there, I went to Eastern to finish my high school. And from there, I went to Delgado. I went first for pipe fitting and then I went for blueprint reading, sketching. Then I went for mechanical drafting, but I didn't stay the whole term. You know, I stayed one year, because I was working ship yards. And most of the men in shipyards couldn't read a print. So then we had layout mints. That's what I was doing. Besides, I worked as a ship fitter and a welder. But then I started working in the layout mint. You know, I laid out from the print, all the lines where the put the bulkhead and all the framework.

D: What shipyard? Avondale?

M: I worked at American Marine on Industrial Canal. I worked at Avondale a long time. I worked for the other one, Buck Kreihls. They the ones that used to, they worked on ships that come in there.

D: I wanna go back and have you talk a little bit more about the shrimp drying platforms. I'm trying to visualize.

M: The shrimp drying platform, like I said, it wasn't all the way to the way we boiled shrimp. It seemed like before it got real boiled, or something, they would put them out. That's when they could put them

out. And it took three days to dry the shrimp on normal sunny days. But when they had rain, it took longer, you know. They had to be boiled. They couldn't just put them out like that. Except for the big shrimp. These are all the small ones. The big shrimp, they had a mallet. They used to mash those shrimp flat with the shell, you know, the skin on the shrimp and all. And used to put them out in the sun. And that was big money for them.

D: What about fish?

M: The fish, they used have these guys in about a 16 foot skiff and go out there with a line but no barb on it. Just a hook like this. They didn't have that one [inaudible] so the fish couldn't unhook. They used to go out there with a line and cane pole and they would be right around St. Mary's Point. No, wait a minute, in a different place. Just a minute.

D: We're going the wrong way.

M: Yeah that's going to Slidell. Shrimp boiling throughout that area too. I used to go to Harvey.

D: Alright, there's Baratavia Bay.

M: Baratavia Bay. Where's Lafitte?

D: Oh you're not gonna, Lafitte's up here.

M: Yeah, you see that's what's wrong. Where Lafitte comes up. It would be on a point.

D: Alright.

M: Somewhere up in this area, anyway.

D: Okay. St. Mary's Point?

D: Yeah. We uh. Ping Wing was the name of the platform, by the way. Ping was a little short man, skinny, with wooden shoes. You could hear him a half a block away coming. He was a ornery type of guy. Wing was just the opposite. Man about your size. And he was a friendly as could be, you know. But Ping, Daddy, my father used to give him all kind of trouble, you know, used to mess with him, because he'd get so frustrated right away, you know.

D: Now, did they speak English?

M: They spoke some English. I remember one of them. My mother had made a trip with us and my sister. We went on the boat and we [inaudible] high heat. Anyway, he wanted to come in and please



yourself. Come in and piss on yourself. That's what he said. He didn't know what the heck he was saying. I think that's how he went. They didn't talk good then, but it's just for show.

D: But now we're catching...

M: Neither do I.

D: Now we're catching fish without a barb.

D: Without a barb. And they just all beautiful. And they would up that plum full. They had much, that 16 foot open hauled skiff. It was full when they come back. I seen they all...I said, "Boy, they gonna sink." You know, at the bar...They had so much fish in there. Fish was that plentiful. Now, the shrimp they used to boil, like I said. They had this straw basket. And it was made like in a cone, like ice cream cone except the bottom is maybe 15 inches in diameter or so and 24 inches up there at the top. And it was about three foot high. That was seven dollars' worth of shrimp. That's how cheap the shrimp was then. But, you know, that's small shrimp. 70, 80, 80, 100, you know, that size shrimp. The big shrimp, they got more for it. I forgot how much it was. But we were shrimping besides bringing the boat out there and we brought the ice. And we furnished. We used to bring enough diesel and ice that we used to furnish the shrimpers at (Full?) Bayou. That's a little bit east of Grand Isle.

D: Alright, here's Grand Isle.

M: (Full?) Bayou should be here.

D: And this is Grande Ecaille so it's right about here.

M: It's right, come about there. See that right there?

D: Yeah.

M: That's (Full?) Bayou. And uh, cuz that was a ways for them to come so we used to pick of the shrimp and bring them their food, some groceries.

D: Now, what time period, about what time period are we talking about?

M: You means years?

D: Yeah, roughly.

M: I'll say I was about nine years old til about 16.

D: Alright.

M: 16, 17.

D: So you were born in...

M: '35.

D: So it would be from late 30s to right up before WWII.

M: Yeah.

D: Alright, good.

M: So uh, that's, like I said, that's what we used to do. Bring them their fuel and the ice, whatever. But those trouts we used to clean. We used to gut 'em, I mean cut 'em to do gut 'em. Half of the intestines were still in there. They used to just dry them like that and salt them. I wouldn't eat that for nothing in the world.

D: Now, name the, you don't necessarily have to show us, but name the platforms you remember.

M: Manilla Village. Bayou (Brouleau?). The Grand Bayou, you know, that's right close. And then, Bayou (Ricault?). That's at Grand Isle. That's one, two, three, four.

D: What about Basa Basa?

M: Basa Basa? Yeah, well Bayou (Brouleau?) is somewhere around Basa Basa.

D: Now, did the Chinese own the platforms or work on the platforms?

M: They owned them. I don't know about the land.

D: But the platform. Alright, now name some of the Chinese that you remember at these platforms.

M: Just name them. Ping, Wing, Mr. (Ha-Hi?), and they had somebody else. I can't remember.

D: Did you ever see a platform constructed?

M: Constructed?

D: Buildded.

M: Uh no.

D: Cuz here's what...

M: That was before my time.

D: Alright, but you fixed platforms. I wanna know...

M: Repaired them...

D: How did you put the piling down?

M: I don't think there was pilings. There was posts.

D: Alright. And you just...

M: I don't know. They just pushed, we just pushed them down, you know. And they had boards to push your piling. And you nailed your board, like this, on the side.

D: Alright.

M: That way you, it wouldn't keep on going down.

D: Got it. Alright.

M: They didn't jet 'em or nothing like we do now.

D: It's all hand labor.

M: All hand-labor. No pile driver outfit, nothing like that.

D: And you were bringing diesel.

M: Diesel.

D: Food.

M: Food.

D: And ice.

M: And ice.

D: So if you were trying to, tell me how many buildings would be around.

M: Oh, there's a large building where they used to put them in this big granulated. It's a big cage about 8 by 8 or 10 by 19. It was real big. And maybe about 15, 16 foot long. They would dump the shrimp after it dried on the platform. They would dump it in there and this thing would keep turning and the shrimp would be bouncing almost like a regular clothes drying, except it would (sweat?). And all the peelings would fall out. Now, the shrimp peelings and the head, when they fall down, they used to sack those up. You know, great big sacks, and bigger than the dried shrimp. Dried shrimp had a 100 pound limit. These here were bigger, I don't they were quite 100 pounds, but it was hard to handle. I was handling those when I was 12 years old. That and sacks of salt. I remember how heavy it was. My dad wanted us to get two of us to carry about three or four hundred foot from the dock where we had the boat to where the house was where they kept the salt. And, like I said, about 300 hundred, 400 hundred feet. And two men trying to carry a sack of salt, you know how it would bend in the middle, uh two boys, that is. My brother's smaller than me. I used to get him to help me put it on my shoulders then I would bring it. You know, all you needed was help to put it on there. That was a load for me. At 12 years old, a hundred pound sack of salt. That's a lot.

D: Now, when your dad was working in New Orleans Shanghaiing individuals, that meant that the platform had a lot of people on it.

M: Oh yeah, they had, yeah. They had seven, eight, nine people each platform. All together, they had a heck of a lot of people.

D: Did they live in a dormitory or did they live...

M: They, yeah, they had the house next to the granulator. They had a couple of houses. Manilla Village had a lot of houses. But it has people living there, you know, like trappers and fishermen and things. And they (looked after?) themselves for the platforms.

D: Now do you ever remember any sailing vessels?

M: No, but in Harvey itself, at Southern Shellfish, they oyster boat come in. And it was goélettes. That's a schooner, French name for a schooner.

D: What's the French name?

M: Goélettes.

D: Goélette.

M: Goélette. Anyway, these goélettes was made, like the bow come way out. Some of them was pretty. Some had the clipper bow, you know, like France [inaudible] and all. And they made, this guy made one

out of fiberglass down here. You know, it wasn't the biggest, but they had used a [inaudible] boat that was 50, 60 foot long. You know, the big sail boat. It wasn't using sails any more. It was using diesel-powered engines.

D: Now, what company in Harvey?

M: (Southern Shell?).

D: (Sun Chil?)l. C-h-i-l-l?

M: Shell, yeah

D: Sun Chill. But your daddy worked for...

M: Gulf Seafood Corporation.

D: That's the (Scramatta?) Family. Yeah, how long did he work for them?

M: This was for Chinese. They had Chinese in the office.

D: Really.

M: Yeah, I mean, this, Hong is one of them. Yeah.

D: Really? In Harvey.

M: No, no, no on St. Louis Street.

D: Alright.

M: In Harvey, was a (Pan Am?) diesel [inaudible] we used to dock.

D: Right on St. Louis...

M: That's right next to Southern Shell

D: Quang, Sung, Wong, Son Company. Q-u-a-n-g on St. Louis. Or was it, it was a Mr. Hoy? H-o-y.

M: Hong.

D: H-o-n-g.

M: I think it had a r...

D: No, no, that, okay.

M: I think they had a r. But it was Mr. Hong and somebody else there. Har and Hong, I think. I know one definitely was Hong. And you know, they would...Daddy would have the truck down there. Then they used their own truck. He used his truck when he's going out with the men they used to pick up. But when we got in with the shrimp, they would send their truck from the office, from St. Louis Street to Harvey. And then they would bring it in to them. And then they had that warehouse there. And then they would send it to Chicago.

D: Alright now, let's think about this shrimp drying for a moment. Do you remember when the shrimpers were not...Were moving from shrimp drying to taking shrimp to market and they ran a little flag on their boat so the buyers could find the boat. You remember that?

M: All I remember when they used to fly that flag for the fifty barrel and that's a bigger boat.

D: Really?

M: But we had flags. See, I didn't know what it was for. But they had flags on that boat.

D: Alright.

M: Would be right there.

D: Wooden boats?

M: Yeah, all wooden boats. There ain't no steel then.

D: Who made 'em?

M: Themselves or the people in their town, Lafitte, Golden Meadow, you know. All over. A lot of people built them themselves, you know. They make them build them. They all cypress.

D: Wow.

M: Nothing else but cypress. They had good cypress for a while. When we used to pick up out of the lake, that was real good red cypress. But then we started throwback cypress. That's the ones, you'll have knots and rot [inaudible]. The red cypress didn't rot. It lasted almost forever. That's why it was under that water for years and years.

D: What kind of motor did they use, do you remember? You mentioned a Detroit diesel caterpillar today. What was the motors' names back then?

M: The (Lacker Dash?). The Charter. Charter Engine. I suppose they had some later on. I was using, they have Wisconsin motor.

D: Alright.

M: And (Bergin Stratton?)

D: With big flywheels?

M: Big flywheels. I had a (Petter?) diesel. That's made in London or England. Let's put it that way. And I had bought it used. It came off a oil driller, when the put bigger motors. It was a one cylinder but it had a clutch on the back of it. I bought it for a hundred dollars. And you know (Bergin Stratton?) was more than that then. I used to be able to put it in neutral. When they pick up a line, a crab line, we first started picking up the crab line, the front of the skiff had, like, a U with pipes. You know, a pipe bent like this. And the line would come from the bottom with the chain and then come up here and come on the spool, like a woman re-threads a machine. It has a spool [inaudible]. And a lot of them used little air-cool motors and all, you know, to pick it up. With this clutch, I got a little gear box. (Southern?) scrapped it. I went to town on it in (Duck Pool?) canal. I had bought this thing here. I think I paid five, ten dollars for it, cuz it was scrap. Supposed to be. And I had rigged it up where I could engage it and disengage. Now this really was a help to me, cuz I had. It had a clutch in the back too, you know, where I could put it in neutral and my propeller would stop turning. And the lines, whenever we'd pick up the crab lines, sometimes, when you're drifting with the wind, it would get caught in the stump or maybe a log. It would get caught in it sometime. And if you couldn't stop your motor, stop your boat in time, you'd break your line. I used to just hit the clutches, so that was a big help. Now some of the guys, I guess the first guys, I tried to do it. Used to stoop down in front of the boat. I can't stoop down. Something with my legs. I can't stoop down as good as they do. And they used to pull it by hand, like this, while the boat's running. And put it in baskets. So by the time I'm pulling like that, I got it all over, in the basket, on the seats. So I just forget it and poured some of it outside. So that's why it forced me to rig up this spool so I could pick up my line that way.

D: Now, were you picking up a crab trap?

M: Trap. They do that mostly.

D: But you were not picking up a crab trap.

M: No.

D: You were picking up a hook with a crab on it?

M: No, no, no, no. A crab line. Thought you understood what that was. Crab line might run for a mile this way then you had some that ran across. Sometimes it was in a square. Sometimes you had this from north to south. And we'd start off from the side and run a crab line. First we put it out. You know, you had chain. You went about ten feet and then you would put a chain in it of about four feet or so worth of chain that would weigh the line down. And the line itself would make a knot, a loop in there where you, if you put your bait in there, (cow lips?). That's what we used. Sometimes we'd use the end of the lip. Most of the time we had the [inaudible]. The end of the lip was the best, you know, it's tender. But the one with all the hair on it, we used to cut it in little pieces, little squares about maybe four inches, three or four inches. We used to tie it in there. Sometimes we made a little cut, you know, so it wouldn't come out when the crab was biting on it. But we had those at every, say, four feet or so. Maybe a little closer sometimes. But then we would run a mile and we used to use...Some of them use 36 line. That's pretty small. And some of them use 48. My dad was using 60, because he rigged up a basket that would catch them automatically. You wouldn't have to catch them with this little net. We used to fish with a little net like a tennis racket. But all webbing in it, you know, like a shrimp trawl, you know, made with a little bit bigger holes cuz it was crab. And we used to, crab line used to come up and it was coming up at an angle, 45 degree angle or sometimes less than 45. We used to see them come to. We used to catch it on the back. The force of the water kept the crab against the net. That's why she didn't get away. That was on the back. It was upside down. Then we'd throw it in the basket. My dad took a net, like this, and it was tapered. Right here, it had a steel bar he put. He built it out of reinforcement rod you use in cement. And then he had a smooth one that went across here that the line would go, would fall in. And he had another one that would fall in here. This one was a lot bigger than this back one. The front end, sometimes it would hit, you know, it would weigh down. A lot of crabs it would hit in the U. Sometimes it just would ride over. Cuz this thing here was about on this angle.

D: Alright.

M: It had a little wall here, you know, mesh. About that high. And the line would go across here. And back here, that's where that little U was. Now, the crab line and the crab and the bait would come through here. It would hit this U here. Now this was smaller than this one and it used to hit it and the crab would fall off and the bait and the line would go through. And he caught up to a hundred and five hampers of crab in one day when everybody else was catching 30, 35 hampers. That was a normal day's crabbing.

D: What's the weight of a hamper?

M: I tell you how many dozens they had.

D: That'll work.

M: Big crabs. They had four, four and a half dozen. The weight...



D: Four and a half dozen, that's fine.

M: Four and a half dozen average sized crab. We had different areas that we crabbed, cuz the crabs used to feed, you know, on different things. Just like the catfish. A white catfish would be on the north side of Lake Salvador, get back to Lake Salvador.

D: Take me a minute.

M: Where it goes into Lake Cataouatche.

D: Alright. Lake Salvador into Lake Cataouatche.

M: The white cats would stay mostly across here, the north side. It was a sandy bottom, almost like out here. Why it was sandy along here, I don't know. It had little red worms on it and the white catfish would feed on those. Where the other one would be up, just south, southwest side. A blue cat, eel cat, and yellow cats all would be in the bayou in the Lac des Allemands area. But the white cat, which was the best eating cat, was along here. That's what Dad used to fish, summer and winter.

D: Did he take his crab to New Orleans or to Des Allemands?

M: He took his crab to Westwego. That was a big crab (thing?). You got that Westwego canal. They used to have that water stinking in that canal, because of the crab. In other words...

D: it's Westwego. Alright.

M: Used to go to Westwego, but he went there with his truck. He had two of them paneled trucks. He also had a night club that he could...This would have come in right where the wharf (two?) first started. He had uh these papers like his brothers...His brothers all went into the service. And he was supposed to go too. But when they went to Westwego and told them he wouldn't be able to bring them any more crab, he said, "Well I'm gonna find out about this," the man that ran the crab. Somehow he got in with the Army or whatever the draft board was. And he was bringing in so much crab meat, canning meat, for the soldiers that they give him a deferment.

D: Really?

M: Then he closed the dance bar, you know, cuz he's the only one that was getting beer. But uh, he got beer then. Because you couldn't get beer, like 4-X Company on Jackson Avenue just didn't no longer in there. He used to bring in eggs. He used to take the fish and the crab for the guys with the eggs, you know, from (Foremans?), right before you get to Des Allemands. And then he used to bring that to the beer company. That was [inaudible] the eggs. So you did a lot of bartering. And the canneries did the same thing. Used to have a lot of canneries bartering...

D: So there was a crab cannery in Westwego?

M: Westwego.

D: Really.

M: And there's a joke on, I don't know if you actually pass...When teenagers coming back to go toward this way, laying in the back seat. The driver says, "You know where you at?" "Yeah, I know where I'm at. Westwego."

[Laughter]

M: The crab factory polluted the water and it stink so bad. Some of the guys with the wooden trawl boat used to go park their boat in there, because they had no oxygen in the water. The barnacles didn't grow in there.

D: Now, let's go back to the boats a minute. Locals are making the boats. So your daddy or somebody's making a boat.

M: Yeah.

D: Where did they get the cypress?

M: They got the cypress from Raceland...Robi...

D: Robichaux Lumber in Raceland.

M: 308. Most of it, they got from there, from (Duke's friend?). They got some from him. And they a little sawmill in Bayou Gauche. He used to get some from him too, the big cypress. In fact, that's where daddy used to bring his cypress logs. A Mr. Hogan.

D: Now, how long did you live in Bayou Gauche?

M: From about eight years old, I guess, to ten or twelve. Then I moved back there later on.

D: Now, if we look at Des Allemands, Des Allemands had a lot of crab processing and there was an oyster house there. Am I right?

M: I don't remember that.

D: Alright, in Des Allemands, there's a Mennonite church. Remember that?

M: Nope.

D: Alright.

M: I know the catfish dock they got. They always had a catfish dock in Des Allemands.

D: Really?

M: Yeah. They buy most of the catfish. My cousin in Raceland used to buy them too. And he would bring them to Manchac, across Lake Pontchartrain. They have that big, I forgot the name of that big...

D: Restaurant?

M: The big restaurant.

D: Middendorfs?

M: Yep, that's it.

D: And then there was Spahr's.

M: Spahr's, yeah. Spahr's was on Highway 90.

D: 90, yes.

M: They had one in Thibodeaux too. They finally put one in Thibodeaux, probably after you left.

D: Yeah. Now, clearly you're involved in shrimping, now.

M: Yes I am. But I only went shrimping one night this season.

D: Really?

M: I went in there and I did real good. I had 700lbs on the big truck. I said, "Oh, we're gonna have a good season." And they did. I come back a couple of days. I was over here. I said, "I'm going to get my ice." Then I want to see exactly how much diesel, because I had some diesel in some tanks and I said, "I'm going by the pumps to see exactly how many gallons I bought." Cuz that big boy down there, he's the one that comes with me. You know, I'm trying to get a better figure for how much fuel expense we had. So I went to the...I got got 31 baskets of ice, which is a lot of ice. We usually, used to buy it in blocks, 300lb blocks and crush 'em. But it comes in pieces of ice, you know, there are two ice machines there. So my boat was running good. I started it up quite a few times just to run it, you know. But, I ran

it over there. Then I went, I said, "Now I'm going to the other end of this dock." Which is not far, about 250 feet or so. I'm going to go put the fuel in. Hit my starter button. Nothing. The motor would turn over, but it wouldn't start. What the heck could be wrong? This thing been running good all the time. The shaft in the back of the motor that turns the blower on the motor and also turns the fuel pump. It broke. It stripped teeth, that is. It's a spline shaft and it stripped the teeth. It had happened before. And I said it couldn't be happening again because we put a brand new shaft in. But that was almost a year before. But we did change another one of the gears at the other end that the spline shaft goes into. So that one must've been bad. So it caused the new shaft to go out much sooner than we would normally expect. But I didn't know that. So I took the (distributor?) cap off, and the engine cover, and the (brutor?) cap and all this and start investigating. Sure enough, my (breeden?), you know, blades wasn't turning and I says "Oh lord." So I got somebody push me on this side. Look at, I went from there to here. I wasn't along the Gulf somewhere, like Caillou Island, Timbalier Island, or somewhere where I was by myself. But I did have, see that little cell phone? That saves us fishermen, that we can call up each other. Your marine radios...The marine radios, you got so many people talking on it and you have a lot of channels, they all full. Not as much, quite as much now. Last eight, ten years, the amount of boats went way down. We don't have nowhere near the amount of boats that we had before. So we can talk to each other. If you're on a boat and you might be two lakes away from me. And I'm catching good and I want to tell you. But I don't want to tell everybody else, so I'm not going to say it on the radio. I'll use my cell phone and call you direct. That way...Now, if we have any breakdown, I can call over here, to my neighbors, [inaudible], to my friends, wife, you know. I can get in touch with them so it's very important to have one of these. My GPS tell me where all this land was. See what I can show you on this while we're talking about the land.

D: You looking for where? Barataria?

M: Yeah. Bayou Perot. Yeah, here it is. Okay, see this canal? It existed.

D: Yeah.

M: You see this shoreline here?

D: Yeah.

M: We had to go all the way across here and then had to come back here and go into this canal. The one that went into Bayou St. Denis. Like the Manilla Village. We used to. I usually went right here into (Moon Lake?), into Grand Bayou. A trapper, who was also a shrimper, decided to cut right across here, a narrow strip of land, maybe, it used to be wide. Maybe 40, 50 feet. So he took his ditch machine and he went across that three or four times and cut it. Now it's as wide as this bayou and it must be 10, 12 feet deep. The current. That's why, right now, that end, it flood off much faster. There's Bayou Perot some places is almost as wide as the Mississippi River. This thing's gotten real deep too, around 17 foot or so. On the side, way on the side, is not, but the marsh part. That's why it look like almost a lake instead of a bayou. But this man here caused all that current to come in from this, Turtle Bay. Yeah, right here.

Through this canal which is deep too. And come up here to go all the way to Lake Salvador and on up to Des Allemands and Westwego, Westbank and all.

D: What's a ditching machine?

M: The marsh, just a little bit of grass and the salt mud that it grows on. It'll uh, what's underneath is water. They'll come across there. Sometimes the water might be two foot where the mud and grass. But, it's a big blade. Almost like an air boat, except it's not an air boat. It's a little barge, like, a square-front boat. You can say it's a little barge. They put this big engine in it. And they turn it around and have these blades. And when they start off, you see mud flying thirty, thirty feet up in the air, out the sides. A lot of it falls on the side making a little levee on the sides. And they'll dig the canal. The next, every year they gotta go back too, because a lot of them start growing back in. And we used that for trapping. The duck hunters use a ditch machine. My uncle has one. I would cut trinosses (sp?) That's what we would call them. Trinosses (sp?) with it. That's fine. But we had a hell of a time in Lake Salvador, (Broad's?) Point. Right here. Where it goes into the bay.

D: Yeah. Your daddy had a camp right there?

M: Well, he had a camp here and he'd trap all the way up to here.

D: Alright.

M: Anyway, the hurricane had put a lot of the old stumps, you know, broke the limbs. Some of the big limbs almost like a tree. And it dumped them into those little ditches that we used to go run the traps. So we couldn't use the ditching machine. We used to have to use the big fork, like a hay fork, to throw the stuff [inaudible]. Then we have to use passe-partout, French. A big saw that the guy used to saw trees, you saw that, with a handle on each end. We used that to saw the things. We had one with a handle on each end. We had one with just a handle on the one end depending on where we could use it. If we could use a two-handle, we used a two-handle. Can't use it, we had to use the...Had to saw it up in pieces to pull it out by hand.

D: Now when you were trapping, it's muskrat, nutria, and alligator?

M: Muskrat, nutria. The alligators, we didn't. My brother trapped those. Now, he got airboats. He'd take people on airboat tours. Des Allemands, right before you get over the bridge. Take people all over the place. [Inaudible] work in the oil companies. He wind up getting about five of those airboats. Had some of them made-to-order. He's really doing good with that business. Had a lot of people in Europe coming over here. People all over the United States come in. And he traps. He set out lines for alligators. My nephew had one, 15 foot or so. You figure 6 foot twice and then some.

D: Now, who do they get their leases from?

M: The landowner. Well, but wait a minute. The leases, you gotta get through the landowner. Luckily we had relatives that had some and some other places that we got other landowners to lease it. And the tags you gotta get from the state. I think you like 35 tags or so, depending on how much land, how many acres of marsh you get, how many tags you get. You have to have a tag on every one of them. Just like a oyster. You have to have a tag on every sack.

D: Now do you only fish shrimp or do you fish shrimp and oysters?

M: No oysters.

D: Just shrimp.

M: Just shrimp.

D: How long have you been doing it?

M: Doing it while I was working. I was doing that, let me see the age. Around from 30 years old to 80.

D: Fifty years. Now, is this a fiberglass boat out here?

M: Fiberglass. Stainless steel. I bought all stainless steel out of the scrap yard and I got it so much cheaper, you know. I couldn't afford to buy that much stainless steel from regular steel mill or steel dealer. And I bought it at scrap yard and I had the engine foundation. All my underwater structure that the shaft goes through and where the propeller is and the rudder. All that's stainless steel. All my rigging's stainless steel. I got it where I wouldn't have to chip. Like I'm old enough. I wouldn't have to chip. And I didn't want...I had wooden boats and forever having to caulk 'em and treat 'em with this antifouling thing to keep the worms from eating them. And that's constant work. And changing boards all over. And then I had that crew boat that I bought awful cheap, you know, guy was quitting his crew boat. It was an old one. But I used it. But steel hull, they rust out so fast. If you make 'em real heavy, that's a lot of weight to push. My fiberglass is pretty heavy too. The steel hull, you know, the electrolysis eats it. Static electricity underwater eats up that steel hull. Aluminum is much worse. Aluminum you gotta. We use a zinc anode plate. The aluminum, gotta use a magnesium anode plate, where it's a better conductor of electricity. Cuz aluminum is good for electricity, that's why the power plant, power lines are all aluminum. I figured the only thing I get are fiberglass. Now, the fiberglass, the sun affect it a little bit. But if you keep it gel coat, paint it good with that fiberglass gel coat, then it won't affect it. The rest of it's under the water. So it's almost like a brick household on a slab. My fiberglass boat's gonna be here long after I'm gone.

D: Now, would you call that a Florida or a Biloxi? Or do you know those terms?

M: That's a regular skiff model.

D: Alright.

M: Yeah I have a cabin, just like that big one that just left you might've seen going out. The Chosen One or something. That's a beautiful boat but with a steel hull. That's all skiff model. We got cabins now. All our shrimpers are putting cabins on, because we changed our method of shrimping. Instead of shrimping, pulling my nets, I still got my trout bottom net. My trawl doors and all on there, which I used to like doing. We used to do that during the day. Now we have to go out at night. Now, when you go out at night, you usually gotta go and stay a little bit longer out there. You can't run back in. You know, come back in. You can, some of the skiffs run back and forth, but they spend a lot of fuel going back, almost as much as they do pulling their nets. So these skimmers, we skim all night. And then we'll wanna go to sleep on the boat during the day. When there's a nice breeze, it's fine. You open your windows and all. But when there's not breeze, it'd get awful hot out there on that salt water. So we all put cabins on our boat and we have generators, which I'm waiting on that from Japan. And we use our air conditioner. That way we can sleep and got a place to shower in the back of my boat. So we had to almost make it like a cabin cruiser. From the Lafitte type skiff, we call it, cuz it got the fan tail. That way it's almost like a cabin cruiser now. Like this man that just passed with the Chosen One. That's almost like a house boat or floating palace. He got all kind of room. I have a stove. I can bake biscuits in it. You know, I got my tank and all. I worked four years while I was working at a plant on the river to build this boat. You know, after work into the night. And then whenever the plant closed, then I was working on it full time.

D: What's the largest number of shrimp you've ever caught in one day or however you measure?

M: One night.

D: One night.

M: It wasn't nowhere around this area. It was in The Rigolets, close to Slidell. I went out. I wasn't feeling that great. You know, I was kinda dizzy-like. So I went in and I anchored. When I anchor off, I'm not going to push tonight. So my friend with the Blue Water, it's a pretty boat too, big fiberglass one. They used to go in the Gulf a lot. So he was out there with me. From here we went to catch the Intracoastal and we went through the Harvey Locks. Come down with the river, with the current, to go to the Industrial Canal Locks. When we come back, we come through the Industrial Canal and go down river again to the Belle Chasse Lock, which ties in to the Intracoastal. That brings you to Lafitte. You know, and on this way. All the way to here. So, anyway, in The Rigolet, he turned around and come by me and start hollering at me. So the two guys, the one guy I had with my and the little boy, he says, "So why they hollering at you?" I said, "Yeah, that's [inaudible]." So he's jumping up and down and some. He said, "Come on, come one. Won't you come on. [Inaudible]." I said, "I'm going to sleep. Catch a lot." He said, "You gotta come now." So, sure enough, in Lake Pontchartrain, which you've got on there. I'll show you exactly where.

D: You're at The Rigolets.

M: At The Rigolets. See I trawl Lake Borgne in the marsh outta (Whikotsky?), you know.

D: Alright, this is Lake Pontchartrain. Fort Pike, this is going out to Rigolets. Here's Lake Borgne. Lake Catherine. Slidell's up here.

M: Oh, there's Pontchartrain, good.

D: This is I-10.

M: Yeah, this is where they got Fort Pike. Tie up here. Came over here. Which is just a short run, about ten minutes. And wind up right here. And then you get out here. And he came from here somewhere. So all this area here. The shrimp came out of Lake Pontchartrain...This is where we...

D: Yeah, this is Fort Pike.

M: And uh, the shrimp come out of Lake Pontchartrain and instead of going in here, this is Chef Pass, sometimes they don't know whether to go this way or this way. So they pile up, up in this area before they come in the Rigolets. This is some real deep water. Guy said something like 80 odd feet of water. They had a big cement thing here. I think it was a lighthouse. Yeah, lighthouse was here. But anyway, he told me that so I picked up my anchor. This is a new subdivision. Beautiful. Real expensive homes along the shoreline. I come over here and I shrimp for six hours. I caught 2500 pounds of 21/25 side shrimp in six hours. I mean, everything was full. I come back and sold it. I had never caught that much shrimp, you know, before. No way near that much. And then once in Lake Felicity, I had caught, not quite that much, but almost. About 1500 pound or so in a day.

D: Now, do you have one buyer you always take your shrimp to?

M: I usually try to sell retail, my bigger shrimp. Which is what I'm hoping to do with the white. They usually a bigger shrimp. And the smaller shrimp, I'll sell to Price, right here across the bayou.

D: Now wait, is that the same...that's Price?

M: Price Seafood.

D: The same ones that had a shrimp drying platform?

M: No, oh no. That's gone (Montegue?). Yeah, he had the shrimp. I spoke to him a couple times. He'd take his truck [inaudible], you know, real small and all.

D: Now when you try to sell wholesale or retail, how do you do that?



M: Lot of people that I know. Like, I started off when I worked for that plant. I used to bring in my shrimp that I catch. 'Course I wasn't catching that much in Lake Salvador and (Luke?). I finally went into Barataria Bay. They all knew I was shrimping and they ordered shrimp. But only sold it by the ice chest so I used to bring in a few ice chests, you know, and sell it to them. Save my going all the way to Lafitte. I do the same thing here, you know, when I catch.

D: So you have people that come here to buy from you directly at your building?

M: No. This last time, my grandson's friend knew them, so he took the shrimp to them and he sold them. So I didn't meet any of them people. But there are some people that buy from all those fishermen along here. We get a little bit more than we do at the dock. Not that much more. Usually it just about covers the ice, cuz we gotta re-ice it all. You know it's a little expensive, you know, to re-ice the shrimp and all.

D: Now, as...

M: And...

D: Go ahead...As you were growing up, which hurricanes do you remember?

M: The one, I remember the one. That's the one I come back in with from Timbalier Island.

D: It won't be on here.

M: From Timbalier Island, I was in my boat and I was riding fast and the waves was coming in, you know, in the back of me. I stayed there a little longer than I should. I said Timbalier Island, Timbalier Island, Caillou Island. 'Course Caillou Island is no island anymore. We used to go sleep in the canal but now it's all water. That's something I want to show you. Go back to Lake Felicity.

D: Did you ever go out Lake (De Cade?)

M: Yeah, I trawled that. There's a lot of shallow water.

D: Lake (De Cade?) right here. Caillou Lake.

M: Lake Merchant too.

D: And then here's the island.

M: And there's Lake Merchant. I crab in here. I trawl in here. I shrimp in here. I shrimp all this area, going to the (Fourleague?) Bay here. So I was right about even here, where the bayou come from (Fourleague?) Bay to here. This is Whiskey Pass. I trawled up in there. I trawled all along the shoreline

here. I trawled in Lake Pelto. Where's Caillou Lake? Lake Pelto right here. I shrimped quite a few different places, you know, all the way on the east side almost in Mississippi. Then Chandeleur Islands, you know, way out there too. What was the question again?

D: We were talking about the Chandeleurs and you wanted to show us something about Caillou Island disappearing.

M: Old Lady Lake. Terrebonne. [Inaudible]. If you go to the next page, will it show you more to the east?

D: Yeah, let me make sure. Yeah, here it is. So this is Lake Felicity. Lake Raccourci.

M: Old Lady Lake. You see these islands?

D: Yep.

M: This island was about a mile (and some?). It had a cut. Well you can see this was part of it. See right here. See that little bitty space here? It had shells way up there on the east side. That was one of my favorite places to catch...shrimp concentrated all the bottom of the hill. Still shrimp here a lot. You gotta come [inaudible] channel, way over here. Go across this. This is good, but usually we do better here and around here. In the white shrimp season, we do good in the northern end of Lake (Raccourci?). But I usually like to stay up in here. This whole island about a mile and a half after one of the hurricanes, the next year, I come looking for my path, see. I couldn't see nothing. I said, "What the heck?" I'm not in the right place. Lucky I had the GPS. I look at the GPS and showed me where it was. I was right in the right place. But there was no island there for me to see. From one year to the other one, a mile and something island just gone. From this cut going toward Lake Barre, all of this is gone. Now, this part of the island, on this side, on the east side of this cut, we go across here with the boats now. Three years ago, you had to go across the land. I say, three years, five years or so maybe. Had to go across (Hayward Lane?). This is, you got Bayou (Dumans?). You can't see it. It's in the water. See all this here?

D: Yeah.

M: This was a bayou. Right now, it's part of the bay. It's no longer the bayou.

D: So, you've seen the deterioration of the coast?

M: Boy, have I seen the deterioration. All the islands from Timbalier Island to here, all the islands that were here, are gone. Before my time, the guys tell me, Indian guys tell me, that they use to ride their horses all the way up to this island. A horse. Think double rigs trawl in here now. All the way across

here, between Terrebonne...Timbalier Bay and Terrebonne Bay, it had a ridge, it had land all the way across. You see this Bayou (Pointe aux Chenes?) here?

D: Yep.

M: That's what built up all this here. When you're in this lake, Lake Felicity, that's one of the only places you can see big oak trees along here. A line of oak trees here. Runs about a mile, I guess. It's got high land enough. And that's what most of the residents that moved here. When the government gave them this land grant, they can't sell the land or nothing. But they can live on it like they want. They moved away from here.

D: Now, you used the term, Indians. Were these Indians that lived here or anybody?

M: It was Indians. Now they sorta mix Indian and white man.

D: Alright.

M: Indian and black. And everything.

D: Now when did they move up, when did the government give them land?

M: Well, a long time ago, before I came here.

D: Alright.

M: I only been here 23 years or so.

D: What's a double rig?

M: Double rigs are the big offshore boats that can pull two nets off of this boom and two nets off of this boom, because he goes so far. He pulls a single cable that (spirals?) out. On the bottom, you have the...

D: The boards?

M: The boards, yeah but you got four boards coming out on each side. When they make a path, they clean up. Now they can only use 25 foot nets inside. Which is good for us. But now, mostly, big steel double rig you would picture just being out in the Gulf or being in Mexico. He's out here in the lake pushing skimmers, [inaudible] even little Carolina skiff. Nobody (open?) [inaudible] do you think the guy's going fishing with them. They put those aluminum, aluminum help them out. Put them big aluminum booms and they pushing skimmers too.

D: Now, a skimmer has a net. Do you buy the net or do you make the net?

M: Some guys can make net. I can't. I never could.

D: Alright.

M: And it costs us. That's the trouble. It costs a hell of a lot. When I tore a net, yeah I tore a net up right in this lake.

D: Felicity? Raccoursi?

M: No, right, little over. Old Lady Lake, right here. Now there's another island. See, that was, they had a oil company, big building, all this here. And all this was marsh. And years back, when they were working on the rigs, they had a new kind of trash pipes and stuff like that. They'd go throw it on the marsh. Which was nice. But now the marsh is not there no more. It's all water. So I went into, I wasn't, I didn't pay attention to my GPS then. You learn by your mistakes. So I had went in maybe 15 foot or so. And I turned around right away. It was too late. When I turned around, I caught and tore my net. I mean, tore it bad, too.

D: You mean to tell me there was a lot of oil field buildings out here.

M: Well, they had a whole lot right there passed Barre. I mean a big, I don't know how many people. A hundred people could live in there.

D: What oil company?

M: Texas Company. And then at Caillou Island, they got the same, they still have theirs. Caillou Island. Timbalier Island, the east end of it. Aw, about halfway really. And uh, but a lot of these places. Like, you see a well, if there's a well standing right here and I'm passing with my boat, I will not go any closer than about 200 feet or so from that well. Because this is where the people that build the rigs, you know, the barges, the cranes, the buildings, put the derrick, that put the well there. The drill for oil. Well, a lot of times they accidentally drop some (line?) or sometimes perfectly they throw their trash right overboard. So we all learned to stay away from the well, go way out there. Now I've already caught some right here. I caught a whole Christmas tree, the big pipe and all those valves and all. Right next to their camp. And I brought it to the man. I tore my trawl boat, brand new trawl boat, but it wasn't tore real bad. I come and tied up to his wharf, you now. I told him I wanted to bring him back the Christmas tree. "What you mean?" I said, "Come take a look." He look out there. I'm lucky to have a bunch of the guys that worked with me and we managed to get it on top of the cabin. Not this cabin, on my crew boat, old crew boat. And we had it across the cabin and he come there, picked it up with the crane, put it on the dock. They...It wasn't far from...Well, we'll make up the charge. No, I'm fixing the trawler. I'm going shrimping. I don't want nothing. So I didn't get nothing then. Later on, I did hook and did tear up and they had to come and un...take my trawler off and pick up the iron that was on the bottom. Then they got me another trawler. So that was alright.

D: Now, where do you go buy your trawler?

M: They got a place in Houma. Last one I bought was there. Close to where Walmart is on Grand Caillou Road. I bought there. I bought one in Du Lac. Bought one in Golden Meadow.

D: How about Chauvin Hardware?

M: No.

D: No? Alright.

M: I never did buy one there.

D: Alright. Now, when you were growing up. I mean, all of us have heard stories from our family who heard it from their grandparents. Is there one story that sticks out in your mind that your daddy told you?

M: Just about the times my uncle used to hunt alligators. He didn't go with a line. In the marsh, alligator makes a hole way down there and that's where, sometimes, they'd stay. So when alligator goes down there, we can see that he'd been walking on the side of the marsh. Uncle Tony, he went over to La Rose along Lake Salvador somewhere. Anyways, or Bayou Des Allemands. He goes there where the hole is and he had the big long push pole that we use to push our pirogues in the marsh instead of paddling. You know, you push much faster. So he takes it and juts down that hole. You know, cuz it's got a long enough push pole. Sometimes it's 15 foot down there. The alligator is. So you push 'em down and that makes them mad. So when he come up, he's holding an axe. So as soon as he come up, he hits them in the head. There's his alligator. I said to myself, "Hey, I been in the marsh too, but I ain't gotta." If they alligator's mad cuz we hit them on the head with a darn push pole, when he come up, he's ready to bite us. But you gotta hit him on the head with that axe, in the back of the head right there.

D: Well, when you first started shrimping, how was the canning industry managed? By that I mean, when you took your shrimp to a canner, what happened? How did it get into a can?

M: I sold to the dock. They bring it to the cannery. A lot of it now is frozen, I think. Frozen and shipped up north.

D: Now, you've given us the name of some early canneries. Can you think of others?

M: Just the one in Du Lac.

D: Is it St. Martin?

M: No, some other one. You got one in Golden Meadow too, big cannery.

D: That's good enough. And one other thing, when you go out shrimping, do you go by yourself or do you go with your wife?

M: I used to go with my wife, and then I went by myself often. And sometimes I'd take a friend of mine. Now, I take a relative, young guy, just starting off. And he'll go with me. Or someone that's out of work, you know, I'll take them with me. And they get 1/3 of whatever I'll get, after expenses. The boat gets a third, I get a third, and he get a third. A lot of guys give them 1/4, 25%. I give them 33, you know. Cuz I was sole [inaudible] from Bayou Lafourche. Most of them boats will give 1/3. Now, all this is different sized boat. That's for the size boat that I have, 35, 40 foot. The big boats, you might get 1/8 of the share, but they catch so much more. 1/8 of the share could be a good bit of money, you know. Like I said, they got four nets back there. They trawling 24 hours, night and day. Some sleep while others pull. So they wind up bringing in, you know, a lot of shrimp. Now, I figure my shrimp better than their shrimp for these two reasons. One, they out in the Gulf. They got saltier water. Salt water iodine. That don't taste as good. Second, I'll go out there. Right now I been going two nights then coming in. They might go a week, ten days. They'll ice up and everything, but I seen their shrimp at Rouse's and different places. The shrimp don't look nothing like our shrimp that we just caught, say last night, this morning or night before last. And naturally I got pumps on there. I was them real good. And you heard what I said about my ice. I carry a lot of ice. And I re-ice when I come in. It's a lot of extra work but it's a better quality of shrimp. The guys used to say, "Oh I like his shrimp." "Then buy it [inaudible]." He said, "I bought some from a man little further down the bayou, but he didn't have no nice shrimp like yours. I guess you caught 'em different place." I said, "That man caught 'em right next to me. He was in Lake Salvador." And I said, "He caught 'em right next to me." If you leave 'em on the deck too long, you can't leave them on the deck too long, like this one was trawling. Because the sun, you know, the sun would make them get bad. And you ice up with a lot of ice. Just don't put a little bit of ice, because when you come back, if you don't ice up with a lot of ice, they can be turning on you. Now, shrimping at night is better for the shrimp too. The sun don't hit you. But we still try to clean it as fast as we can. 20 minutes, half hour at the most. Then we wash a lot. That's something else. How much do you wash? We wash, you know, in a full container of water with the basket going down in it. Naturally put salt in it to make the small fish come up. And we use like a tennis racket to throw the fish away. And then we'll bring the water up. Bring it in. Shake it just a little bit. Then we dump some fish and mostly shrimp into the cleaning table I have back there. So there's a lot to shrimping. Now where you going shrimping, when you go shrimping, which way the wind is blowing, how was the current last night. All that makes a lot of difference, you know, the way the shrimp will be. Literally, they'll stay [inaudible]. And wherever the current is. But then you got favorite places that the shrimp travel. Now the GPS, like we can't see the islands a lot of places. They got passes that go through the lake. The lake is not all one depth and neither is the bay. You know, that's why they got buoys in the bay for the big deep draft boats to pass. In the bay they have, you see green buoys and red buoys. So, on my GPS, I can look and see. See, there's the lake. This would be the lake. And I can see where that bayou had passes here and went this way and went that way. I got an arrow on my GPS. It shows where I'm at and I'll stay right where that

pass is in the deepest part. Cuz when the shrimp leave to go out in so many fathoms of water and lay their eggs, I go exactly where they went. I been following them through the lake. The lake's so much deeper there. There's so many things about it, you know. And sometimes the shrimp will go in between waters, not all the way to the top. That's what's good about skimmers. We catch from the top all the way to the bottom. With our bottom net, we used to catch in deep water, it's real important. We used to catch, about, say, four foot from the bottom, our net would come. It had [inaudible] on it, you know. It didn't come all the way to the top. So we knew that. We tried to get it to come higher. We used to put these jacks-ups on our trawl boats, an extension to make them go up higher. And then we used to put extra heavy floats on our net to pull it up. So, you know, there are so many things we did. Now, one guy's trying to get where he...He's trying to stay off of the top, just the...The jellyfish, when hit, they almost, if they real bad you can't trawl. They'll load up your net and you'll never pick it up. They'll stay on the top. So if you can get in between, say, two, three feet from the top on down, you'll catch the shrimp. So he's trying to get one that'll be in between. And fish, you know, you gotta watch in the passes close to the Gulf. Lot of times, I already hit fish with my whole 50 foot net, from one end to the other one is full. I don't know how many times you gotta load it up a big dump truck with the amount of fish I had in there. What I could do? No way to pick it up. I had to dive and pull by the tail. Open it up and slowly pull [inaudible] 'til the fish come up...and the shrimp and whatever I had in it. You lose everything.

D: Well, speaking of loss. You've already mentioned Carmadelle, which was a community that's gone.

M: Gone.

D: I'm gonna assume there was a community at the temple, at least a few houses, gone.

M: Gone.

D: Can you name some other communities? We know that the shrimp drying platforms are gone.

M: Are gone.

D: You showed us two Texaco facilities that...

M: One of them is gone.

D: Can you name any others that you can think of?

M: We got some around Bayou (Large?) but I don't know...

D: The name.

M: I'm not familiar. I've been there but I don't know too much about it. Just over here, everybody moved away from Lake Felicity, where they used to live where the high ground is. They moved further up here. Like, and then later on, we're going to have to move out of here and move further up again, because you know we're losing our coastline. It only will do that, what you call it again? The levees to the Gulf?

D: Morganza to the Gulf?

M: Yeah, Morganza to the Gulf thing. That's the only thing that's here. And over here, every one of these bayous has a lock, except us. And you notice, back in Lake Felicity, looking back in Lake Felicity. I want to show you what it looked like.

D: Wait a minute. We gotta get the right map...

M: We want to go all the way to the Gulf from Lake Felicity.

D: Alright. Here is Lake Felicity. This is Terrebonne Bay.

M: Yeah. This is the Gulf. That water, that water's coming in in here. There's nothing to stop it here. Most of this is gone too. All the way through here, through here, Lake Felicity is here. Lake (Chien?). Through here. All of this. And then you see how it goes into it, to Pointe aux Chenes right here. When the waves are coming in, we get hit the whole way.

D: This is 665. Right at the boundary of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parish. And here's Lake Felicity.

M: Yeah, you see this?

D: Yep.

M: This, all this is gone. This is gone, except right here they got little bit. But in Barre too. All of this gone straight off into the Gulf.

D: Well, knowing that you're at risk living here, why do you live here?

M: I live here because I lived on the bayou all my life. Remember, when I was born and the (Challer?) was on the outpost. In fact, a good while back I was looking at a Boats & Harbor catalogue. And they had latch, fiberglass latch barges. That's the one they pick up and put in them boats, in the ship. When they go over there, they put them (old boats?) and then bring a whole bunch of barges together outside of [inaudible]. But anyway, it was 31 by 62. 62 or 64. I forgot. And it was a heavy built barge that had a winch. It was 14 foot high. And they was asking 28,000 for it. You know, had little bit of minor damage to the fiberglass, I could've fixed it. The cost of them new is way over 300,000. So if I got this for \$28,000, would that pay the houseboat? Not no flimsy little bitty one. My boat got 16 layer fiberglass.



Most boats got about five. Mine's a little heavy. They all say that, "Look like your boat come up another two feet if you didn't put so much weight on it." But I was trying to build a Titanic, I guess you'd say.

D: Well, we're in a camp that you mentioned to me was some sort of oil company...

M: In Grand Isle. They got the boats from the rafters all the way down to the concrete slab. This was made for Grand Isle and Key West, Florida, you know. They had, they built these for hurricanes that would stand 200 mile an hour wind. Lucky we ain't never had...

D: Who built this?

M: I don't know.

D: Did it come...

M: This was built, this was in '47. You know, I got the date on the thing. It was '47 it was built.

D: And it was built at Grand Isle?

M: At Grand Isle with 50 other ones.

D: For whom?

M: 50 or 60. For Humble Oil Company which is Exxon.

D: Alright. How did you get it from Grand Isle to here?

M: I told you I bought that old crew boat.

D: Alright.

M: You wouldn't think that you could buy a crew boat, 2671 v charge diesel. How much you think I paid for it?

D: I have no idea.

M: 5,000 dollars.

D: Wow.

M: You can't buy a speed boat for \$5,000. But I bought it then, because, you know, it's old. I had to do some work on the bottom. One of the engines, the clutch was bad. Had to work on that. But anyway, it

was pretty...But boy that was a scary experience. I had this man's barge. Friend of mine, Mr. (Plaison), he goes way back. He used to bring in, what you call it? (Rum?), outta the Gulf. Because he used to go from here through the Florida (Okeechobee?) Waterways in Florida all the way to Carolina and shrimp. And then back to Mexico and all. He'd shrimp all over. His [inaudible]. But anyway, he told me about this friend of his, cousin of his, had this barge. Nice looking barge. It was about 75 foot long, you know. The right size for what I want. I had the foundation built down here, for me to build. Oh I was working, trying to build a house way out here. I said, "This gonna take me a long time." Then I look, I look in the paper. Camps on Grand Isle for sell on bid, closed bid, you know. I said, "Hmmm." So they had a guy in Des Allemands. He said, "I bought one of those." He said, "I paid \$14,000." I told him which one I'm getting. "Oh ho," he said, "You ain't never gonna get that one. Maybe 18...20,000." I said, "No way. I ain't putting that kind of money into a house." It's a (sealed?) business so I bid on it. They had the thing. Called me. Thanked me for my business, you know. My bid was too far under. Two weeks later, we have to let you have it. I bid 7,260 dollars on this hurricane proof house. Then I moved it over here. I took the barge. I went there and Nick [inaudible] met me right there at the airplane base. I seen all kind of giant sized equipment. I said "Aw hell, I won't be able to get my barge [inaudible] with oil field equipment coming in." It wasn't oil field equipment. It was [inaudible]. He grabbed that barge. He pulled me up with this winch, giant winch that he has. And then he rolled the house on top. I had taken them over here and I had shown him the slip here. Whenever he caught the house, he had to catch it with his tractor, the truck on that end. You see, he had the thing already on the truck when I got there. He had it facing that way. I said, "Well, how you going to get it there now? You caught it on the wrong end." At land, I didn't have all these pilings and wharf and cranes. I hadn't had that til just yet. So, he said, "We'll get it." So he come over here. He did the same thing. He pulled that square, square-front barge. And the dirt, just like you take a bulldozer and go through it and the dirt builds way up high. That winches and them big cables strong enough they pulled that thing where it rolled up that dirt that high. I didn't think that was possible. The next day was shrimping season. He said, "You gonna..." He said, "You're going to have to park it in the people's yard over there." So they drove the truck with my house on it in the yard and then he said we're going to put it up there tomorrow. I said, "Can you explain where you gonna put it?" He gonna take one of his low-bed trailers and put it down here, out on the side of the road and all. And he's gonna roll. He's gonna back up with his tractor and go all the way across there. Then you gonna lift up the other one and then slide it over this way. I couldn't think of anybody being able to do that. But sure enough, that's what he did. And he said, "You gonna stay here?" I said, "No." I said, "Tomorrow is the first day of shrimping season. You know what you're doing. I know what I wanna do. So I'm going shrimping." So I come back. There's this fishing house sitting on top. It was white. Didn't look good at all. I re-painted it twice. First I painted it a light green then I painted it this [inaudible] color.

D: Now, how did you get it from Grand Isle to here?

M: I went through Bayou (Rigo?), around where the pass is, into the bay, not Baritaria Bay but Caminada Bay. Okay, I come up Caminada Bay to the west and I caught the East-West Canal. That was the East Canal I come in. And then I come to Bayou Lafourche, you know, where you gotta make around on there. There's the bridge. Now that's where I got real scared. I came around and that current, I didn't

judge my current right. The current was coming out so strong that it turned me sideways with the barge. And I was coming with the house, way up there to smash into the bridge. Ah, I put... Lucky it had two motors. I put one in reverse and one forward and I managed, just before I hit, I got into the pass where I was supposed to go. Whew.

D: That's by Leeville?

M: At Leeville.

D: The Green Monster.

M: They got a new bridge.

D: Yeah but the Green Monster.

M: They would've had a new bridge much sooner.

[Laughter]

M: So it comes around, you know, from Bayou Lafourche. You know, you gotta get in Bayou Lafourche, go 500 feet or so and then you take this little bayou. And it goes back into the West Canal, coming this way. And that's where the graveyard, you know, all that's washed out, with people's graves going in the water. I took the West Canal and I come in. And I made it. I was tired. I mean, I stayed so long without sleep. Two nights and a day or something like that. And I got into Lake Felicity. I said, "I can't make it in. I'm going to pass out before I make it in." I said, "I'm going to anchor out." I go over there and take my anchor. I look up at that house on top of that truck. Goodness gracious, it's like taking this pencil and throwing it out of the truck. I got the anchor out. I gotta do it. So I drop the anchor. I said, "I don't know where I'll be. I hope I'm not all the way in the Gulf by the morning, you know, because I have a long ways to come in." And they're going to be looking for me. So, sure enough, I had drifted back maybe a half a mile or so. That's all. It must've caught something. I was able to start my motor. I had the power. Start the motor then come back in. Then I pushed in. When I got here, I didn't have more than a foot between the boats. All the boats were parked that way then, not alongside of the bayou. The back end was sticking out. And I just barely made it. And Nick, when he seen, that was his brand new truck he had. He was worried about his truck. So that was an experience. But, like I said, those in Leeville, where all those graves are in the water now, everything washed out, you know. The levee now is still washed out. I was catfishing in Bayou Des Allemands and it was nighttime. I was coming along and fishing and I was next to some big trees. Big oak tree. And the roots were sticking way out. Everything was washed underneath. And I looked down there, there's a little chalon, they call it. A little square, like aluminum, but it's wood. And there it was sticking out. I said, "I got me a [inaudible]." I start trying to pull it out out. It was stuck. I'll get the mud out. I had a [inaudible] and a [inaudible]. And I sure enough started getting the mud out. But when I got to the frame, I pulled, and there's a skull.

D: Ohh.

M: Now this was a big oak tree that was on, like, Prince Island, they called it. Must've been one of Lafitte's men. That big oak and he was underneath that oak tree, you know. I went and put all that stuff back in there.

D: Do you ever remember a cemetery called Chinese Graveyard?

M: I heard of that but I don't know where it was.

D: How about Alombro Cemetery?

M: Never heard of that.

D: Well, we been doing this for about an hour and a half and that's generally where we say, "Thank you very much."

M: Oh, okay.

D: But we would like for you to continue to think about this. Maybe in a couple weeks, after shrimp season, come back and just catch up on some things, maybe you think about at that time. Would that be alright?

M: Yeah, that's fine. I got a better idea. If I don't have somebody come with me, then you two guys come with me shrimping. Then you can really see what it's like.

[Laughter]

D: Well, it's been really delightful.