

FRANKIE PACETTI
Commercial Shellfishing
St. Augustine, FL

Interviewer: Anna Hamilton

Date: 8/12/16

Location: Pacetti residence

Length: 58:34

[Begin interview]

Anna Hamilton: [00:00:04] Would you mind telling me what you had for breakfast?

Frankie Pacetti: [00:00:07] Nothing. Coffee.

AH: [00:00:08] Just coffee?

FP: [00:00:09] Just coffee. That's all I ever drink.

AH: [00:00:11] Breakfast of champions.

FP: [00:00:12] Yes.

AH: [00:00:14] I'm going to start and ID the tape. This is Anna Hamilton with Matanzas Voices oral history project. Today is August 11th, 2016. It's a Thursday, a little after 10:00 and I'm with Frankie Pacetti at her lovely house on Pellicer Creek. And we're here to talk about growing up in this area and crabbing and whatever else comes our way. So with that would you tell me who you are and a little about yourself, please?

FP: [00:00:42] Frankie Pacetti. Born and raised in St. Augustine. I don't know what to say about me [laughs].

AH: [00:00:53] Are you retired?

FP: [00:00:54] Yes. Retired. Worked for the newspaper [note: The St. Augustine Record] for eighteen years in sales. Just do a lot of fishing and have done hunting. But right now I'm retired, kicked back, doing nothing but whatever I want to do [laughs].

AH: [00:01:14] That sounds lovely. And can you tell me your birthday for the record?

FP: [00:01:14] 6/22/42.

AH: [00:01:24] Perfect. And we were chatting a little bit before we started recording and I'm wondering if you'll tell me how you came to live in this area?

FP: [00:01:24] Well my parents bought this property back in the early fifties, if I remember correctly. And right along the creek here there's approximately a dozen homes. They were basically cabins back then that people used to come down on the weekends and fish and hunt and do whatever. And I've known all these people all my life with the—well the exception, there's two homes that were sold to what we call 'outsiders' [laughs] and they're very nice people. They now live on the creek. But family history goes way back. And we love it down here. It still can't be tarnished like the rest of St. John's County has been, or St. Augustine, which is overpopulated. Too many people. What can I say?

AH: [00:02:21] And so this area is kind of unique because you have Faver Dykes and the Matanzas State Forest.

FP: [00:02:21] We have Faver Dykes State Park, which is several thousands of acres surrounding us. And the marshland to the west and to the—basically to the east of us can't be built on, at least not today. And then across from us—across the creek which becomes Flagler County, you have the Princess Place Preserve. So I don't have to look out my door and see condos and all that garbage. So yes we we are very fortunate to live where we live and enjoy the peace and quiet and tranquility of this beautiful pristine area.

AH: [00:03:04] And you mentioned that the houses here used to be cabins that people would come to on weekends.

FP: [00:03:05] Right. They were basically called 'fish camps,' and everybody would come down on the weekends and go fishing and everybody would get together as a group. We'd cook up fish and all that. And I was just a small child at that time and never really—when you're a kid you don't appreciate what you've got. But when my parents passed away and they left me the property we tore down the old cabin and built a home which was twenty years ago. And we've been on the creek here ever since. And I have to say I would not live in town, St. Augustine, ever again, the way the traffic is and the overbuilding and just the—it's terrible.

AH: [00:03:50] You prefer to have the quiet peace and space out here.

FP: [00:03:54] Right. I prefer being able to look around and see what I consider to be Florida. That's going by the wayside. But that's what power can do. And they call it progress. Not me [laughs].

AH: [00:04:10] What is your earliest memory of coming out here on a weekend?

FP: [00:04:10] Oh gosh. That was probably back in the early fifties. You know, I was a small child. And of course back then it was a dirt road coming in here. Just you know—back then you could hunt, you could fish. The fish were plentiful. Oh heck, you could even pull gophers [note: gopher tortoises] back then and we would all cook up a big gopher stew. You know. And just—it's just changed over the years. And like I said, when I come off of US1 and come down here it's like I'm back to reality. When I'm fighting the traffic in town and the rude people, oh my gosh. You know, I hate it. And that's terrible to say about your hometown, where you were born. But I absolutely do not like what has happened to St. Augustine.

AH: [00:05:05] How often do you go into town?

FP: [00:05:06] Maybe twice a week. [Coughs] Excuse me. Maybe twice a week and only because I have to [laughs]. Otherwise I wouldn't, you know. But it is what it is.

AH: [00:05:21] And you said your parents purchased this property in the fifties?

FP: [00:05:21] Yes.

AH: [00:05:22] Where did they come from?

FP: [00:05:25] Well we had a home on the bay front just south of the Santa Maria restaurant. And my family also had a thirty-six acre farm out off of Lewis Speedway. So growing up in town going through high school and all was great, you know, but I just preferred being out here. I don't—Don't ask me why. I just—I love being around the water. I love just being out where it's just really cool.

AH: [00:05:58] And how many people would come on the weekends when you said a big group of you would come?

[00:05:59] Oh there would probably be at least thirty people down here, you know, visiting or just everybody getting together. Everybody planning a weekend, you know. The neighbors—because we all knew each other and would call and say, 'Hey are you going to the creek this weekend?' 'Well I wasn't planning on it.' 'Well we're going down there and do so and so.' 'OK we'll be there.' And that's the way it went, you know? And Lord, driving from town down here back then was like forever, you know? And if you passed one or two cars that was

really something big. [Laughs] But that was great, you know? And everybody helped everybody. There was no there was no such thing as 'no.' You know you just pitched in. And that's the way it was and that's the way it should be.

AH: [00:06:43] Can you tell me the other family names who came down here?

FP: [00:06:44] Yeah. Stephens. Miss Winnie Stephens. The Bantas. They owned a place down here, which has since been torn down and another house built. Andreus. I'm trying to think. Espie. Miss Espie, she's passed away. And you've got me in a quandary now. I'm drawing a—oh. King. John King and his wife. They tore down the old place there and built their house. Gosh. Mr. Bo, he's passed away. He has still—that little cabin is still there. And gosh. And Colonel Powers, he bought the house but he was never down here a lot. They just bought it for a place to come down. You know. And they fixed it up. She passed away.

AH: [00:07:45] But are most of the people that live here descendants of the families—

FP: [00:07:45] Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. Minorcans. We are Minorcans and we will survive [laughs].

AH: [00:07:53] And what is your maiden name, if I may ask?

FP: [00:07:53] Manucy. My father worked for the government at the fort. He retired from there after forty years. So. He was a good man. He was my buddy. We did a lot of fishing together.

AH: [00:08:09] Down here?

FP: [00:08:09] Yes. Yep. He did not like the ocean. That's one thing he didn't like.

AH: [00:08:15] Really?

FP: [00:08:15] But—no. He loved the beach. He loved going mullet fishing on the beach, cooking up fish on the beach, which is something that is no longer allowed, and—but he loved fishing in the creek. You know that was his thing. So we did a lot of that.

AH: [00:08:34] What kind of fish would you go fishing for?

FP: [00:08:37] Redfish. Drum. Sheephead. But there's none in the creek anymore. Ha-ha.

AH: [00:08:39] Really?

FP: [00:08:40] [Laughs] I'm just messing with you.

AH: [00:08:46] [Laughs] I'll tell everybody that.

FP: [00:08:46] Yeah. Other than that—

AH: [00:08:54] What was your dad's name?

FP: [00:08:54] Will Manucy. William H. Manucy.

AH: [00:08:59] And what was your mom's name?

FP: [00:09:00] Myrtle. We called her 'Myrtey Lou.' She hated it [laughs].

AH: [00:09:04] I love that name.

FP: [00:09:04] I know. She hated it. But they were good people. They were married for forty-seven years. My mom passed away first in 1979. My dad passed away in 1989. And Lord I miss him to this day.

AH: [00:09:20] And that's how y'all ended up here.

FP: [00:09:23] Right. Yep.

AH: [00:09:24] And where did you live before this?

FP: [00:09:25] On the bay front. We—oh no. Married E. J. in 1969 and we lived on Hildreth Drive down at the end on the left. Nice house. And—but I'm so glad we're not there now. I love that house. Don't get me wrong. But with the traffic and you know, it's—no. I'm happy where I am. This is great.

AH: [00:09:54] How did you and E. J. meet?

FP: [00:09:55] Actually I'm trying to think if we're—on the beach. I was over there fishing. Me and my little girl [laughs]. My daughter and he pulled up and told me that there was no fish there. And he owned Marty's Restaurant. He and his father owned Marty's Restaurant at the time. And I looked at him I said, 'Really? You might want to check that cooler right there.' So he walked over looked in the cooler and he says, 'Son of a gun.' I said, 'That's the way it is.' [Laughs] But basically that's how we met initially you know. And he was in the process of getting a divorce. This is not for public—you know. But anyway I was thirteen years younger than him. And so finally after a period of time and all, we decided to have a date. My mother says, 'Honey, now don't you think that nice man is a little bit too old for you?' [Laughs] Anyway that's the way it went. And it's been forty-seven years.

AH: [00:11:05] Wow.

FP: [00:11:05] Yeah.

AH: [00:11:06] So you had been married previously, before E. J..

FP: [00:11:09] Yes, yes. I was married to Gerry Cooley who passed away a couple of years ago and we had a daughter, Kelley, and she's my pride.

AH: [00:11:18] Who lives behind you.

FP: [00:11:18] Yes she does. It's really good. She told me, 'Mama,' she says, 'When you get old and decrepit and mean—' I said, 'Why would you say that?' She says, 'Because old people tend to get mean. And I says, 'Don't you think we've earned the right?' [Laughs] And she said, 'Well,' she said, 'If you get too ugly with me when I'm pushing you around in the wheelchair I may push you down on the dock.' I said, 'Well just remember one thing: I'll be holding one of your little dogs if you decide to push me off.'

AH: [00:11:56] [Laughs] That's a threat.

FP: [00:11:56] Yes. But we have good times and we had a tradition in our family, and I know there are other families that do, Sunday dinners were always held at the grandparents' house or the parent. And my grandmother on my dad's side always cooked Sunday dinners and when she passed away my mama started—picked up the tradition. So we would always go to mom and dad's house on Sundays. And now that they're gone it's the tradition is here. Everybody comes

here on Sundays. So, you know, it's a great thing. I don't think my daughter or any of the daughters in-law are going to carry this tradition on after I'm gone. [Laughs]

AH: [00:12:37] Oh no.

FP: [00:12:37] I don't know. They might. But anyway. I love it.

AH: [00:12:43] What would you usually find on a table at your mom's and your grandma's—

FP: [00:12:43] Oh. Usually a pilau, you know. Or a fried chicken. Just Southern cooking. You know, that's what we do. And you just never knew. Spaghetti. Maybe one Sunday a big old pot of spaghetti, you know. So. I don't know.

AH: [00:13:02] Do you all still have the same kinds of things on Sundays?

FP: [00:13:03] Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I'll fix lasagna, chicken pilau, yellow rice and chicken, fried fish. Yeah. It just depends, you know, on what I'm in the mood for at the time. Or one of them will call me and say, 'You know what I would really like to have Sunday?' [Laughs] I'm like, 'No. What?' And I was like, 'Okay, we can do that.' So, you know, that's the way it goes.

AH: [00:13:32] How many people will gather on a Sunday?

FP: [00:13:36] Usually—sometimes there could be eight or ten of them. And like on the holidays—I've always done all the holidays and we'll have anywhere from thirty to forty people on Thanksgiving. Yeah. I cook for days leading up to that.

AH: [00:13:46] I bet you do.

FP: [00:13:47] [Laughs] Yeah. This place is just surrounded. And all the neighbors, you know, I have to invite them because we're, you know—and it's like, 'If y'all aren't doing anything for Thanksgiving, you know, we eat around 1:00. Y'all come on.' And so that's just the way it's always been and some of my neighbors are like, 'When are you going to quit doing this? And I said, 'I've been trying for the last couple of years but nobody has stepped up to the plate and said oh I'll do it.' I said, 'So.' You know, I guess when they put me in the grave maybe somebody will pick up on it. Who knows?

AH: [00:14:21] [Laughs] Pass it on to somebody.

FP: [00:14:22] That's it, yeah. Yeah. But it's fun. You know, all the girls get down here and we all—we have a little toddy in the afternoon with our—and we get out on the porch and we start telling stories and it just goes crazy. Just crazy. But it's fun.

AH: [00:14:42] Are there favorite stories that you tell every year?

FP: [00:14:42] Oh yeah there's always the—oh gosh there's one story where—I'm trying to think how it went. I hit E. J. in the back of the head with a loaf of pumpkin bread.

AH: [00:14:57] [Laughs].

FP: [00:14:57] [Laughs] This is not for publication.

[Portion redacted]

AH: [00:16:11] [Laughs] Can you laugh about it now?

FP: [00:16:11] You. Oh sure. Yeah we do. We laugh about all the crazy things we did. Lord have mercy. We were fishing offshore—well not offshore, off the beach, catching mullet to go king fishing. And so I put him out of the boat with the net and he was walking along, because the mullet were up close to the beach, and he was walking along chucking the net and he had a sack tied to his bathing suit and he would put the mullet in that. Well I noticed a shark popped up behind him and it was a big shark. Big fin like this [gestures at least a foot high]. And I'm like, 'Honey, there's a shark trailing you.' And I'm maneuvering the boat trying to keep between the shark and him and he goes, 'Okay, all right. I'll be alright.' 'Honey, there is a pretty good sized shark trailing you. You better get in the boat.' [Laughs] So he threw the net, caught some more mullet, had enough, so I eased on up there. He hands me the neck. I said, 'Get in. Just get in the boat, please, get in the boat.' And he got in the boat and turned around and looked and that shark came right up and butted the back of the boat. And he says, 'Well for God's sakes, why didn't you tell me it was a—'

AH: [00:17:28] [Laughs]

FP: [00:17:28] I said, 'I tried to tell you but we needed the bait anyway, honey and you got bait. That's good. Let's go fishing.' [Laughs].

AH: [00:17:35] I was willing to sacrifice you [laughs].

FP: [00:17:35] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. No big deal [laughs]. So you know, there's many, many, many, crazy stories.

AH: [00:17:45] Well after forty-seven years—

FP: [00:17:46] Yes, you can imagine. Yeah absolutely. And he has four sons. One works over Marineland. One has his own lawn service. One is retired. One is getting ready to retire from the railroad—thirty some years with the railroad.

AH: [00:18:02] Wow.

FP: [00:18:02] Yeah. So they've done well. And like I said, when you—we have a big family and an extended family and friends who think they're family and they are you know so they all—they all just show up. You never know when. But they're good people.

AH: [00:18:19] That's nice. It's so important to have a big community—

FP: [00:18:20] Yeah it is. It really is. And I'm going to miss it when I'm gone. And like I told them, I said, 'I will be watching.'

AH: [00:18:29] [Laughs] 'So don't act up.'

FP: [00:18:29] I will be watching [laughs]. Oh gosh.

AH: [00:18:36] Well so how often do you all go fishing?

FP: [00:18:37] Well we used to fish a lot years ago. But since we've been down here—and with him crabbing, he's a commercial crabber. And with the weather the way it's been, we haven't really been—and it's been too hot. It's just been too—my boat's sitting right out there in the slip. But it has been too hot to go out there and fish. So when it gets on more closer to fall ,we'll start doing a lot of fishing. And you know that's our kickback time and it's great.

AH: [00:19:13] So is there a time you go? Early in the mornings? Or—

FP: [00:19:13] It depends on what the tide's doing. Down here I fish the tides and when the tides are right for whatever kind of fishing that's when I go. So it could be any time. It could be early morning. It could be light in the afternoon, you know. [Coughs] But anyway, that's the way it is. But we have a situation—I don't know if the tide is low right now or not. I was going to show you—Yeah let's walk out.

AH: [00:19:40] Oh okay.

FP: [00:19:40] Can we—

AH: [00:19:41] Yeah. I will follow you. [Walks out to backyard]

FP: [00:19:56] You don't really get a good view of it. But see light green grass over there?

AH: [00:20:01] Mm-hm.

FP: [00:20:01] And you see the sand?

AH: [00:20:04] Yep.

FP: [00:20:04] That it's a light color? We don't have sand in Pellicer Creek. We have mud. Okay? And that is sand that's being pushed into the creek and I think it's coming from when they dredge [note: in reference to the dredging of the Matanzas River]. Okay? Because where else would it be coming from? But I mean we've never had white, you know, light sand. It's always mud. So that's that's a puzzlement to me.

AH: [00:20:31] And is that spartina compared to something else?

FP: [00:20:34] Yeah.

AH: [00:20:36] And that's unusual?

FP: [00:20:37] Yes.

AH: [00:20:40] So this is when they would dredge the inlet and it would push it back up here?

FP: [00:20:43] Well I think what happens when they dredge—and I don't know. Don't get me wrong, I'm not, you know, I'm not a pro when it comes to any of that. But I'm thinking when they dredge the inlet, that it's flowing the south because I've had some friends that live on the beach down around Crescent Beach and all who's rocks have been covered. Okay? Well if it's pushing it to the south then it's pushing it in the Matanzas inlet, which is pushing it into the Intercoastal, which is pushing it up here. I know that sounds like a far stretch but where is that coming from? We've never had that before.

AH: [00:21:21] Has it changed any of the, that you can tell, like the fishing or—

FP: [00:21:25] Well yeah. The fishing is nothing compared to what it used to be. It just isn't. And you know. But you just deal with it.

AH: [00:21:37] That would be an interesting story to look into actually.

FP: [00:21:37] Yeah. I'm sure. [Walks back inside] But we don't need a bunch of people down here that think they know what you're doing and don't know what they're doing.

AH: [00:21:51] How often do they dredge at the inlet?

FP: [00:21:51] I'm not sure. I think they're supposed to pretty soon dredge somewhere around Matanzas and something over there that's filled in they're supposed to dredge. I had made some notes. I don't even remember. Do do do do do. I don't know. I don't know what I did with it. Oh. They're supposed to be dredging what they call 'the sandhill' to fill back in the sand dunes somewhere over there. But I'm not familiar with it. I'm not sure.

AH: [00:22:39] Yes it's filled in a bunch of the other creeks where it used to be waterfront property. And now it's filled sand in so a lot of the docks are just—it looks like they're in—

FP: [00:22:48] Yeah. In a desert. Yeah yeah. Really. Well over there on that strip which should have never been sold—But what do they call that? Across from Marineland where that strip of land—where it it cut—

AH: [00:23:05] Oh the old A1A.

FP: [00:23:06] Yeah the old A1A were it cut through and you know it was all water. Then—I don't know the little storm that come along or whatever, pushed land up there and all, pushed

sand in there filled it in. Now it's nothing but sand. And you've got a few birds, whatever kind I don't know, that decided to nest there. Okay. Well that's all well and good but it's supposed to be water there. So they need to fix that. The birds can go nest somewhere else. You know I mean come on. There you have docks standing in sand. [Coughs]

AH: [00:23:48] Living on a barrier island, everything changes.

FP: [00:23:53] That's it. That's it. But you couldn't give me a piece of property over there to build a house on. Phew. No.

AH: [00:23:55] Why?

FP: [00:23:56] Well because it's ever-changing. Mother Nature is going to do what she wants to do and there's nothing we can do about it. You know if she wants to take land she's going take it. If we ever get a direct hit from the east coast with a hurricane they can kiss all that good by. I mean absolutely all that good buy. So all we can do is pray that we don't ever get a direct hit. But even saying that, we can get a storm moving up the east coast and get eighty, 100 miles an hour wind. You have got some serious damage, you know? But people want the view. Hah. And I want to see all the property lying down there and making a nice big dune that sand can fill over [laughs] and give us our beaches back. But that's—I probably haven't been on the beach in—well ever since they started charging. I have no idea when that was.

AH: [00:25:03] It's probably been my whole life. I don't know.

FP: [00:25:03] Yeah. It's been it's been fifteen years. Well—I don't know. I really don't know. But I refuse to pay to ride on a beach that tells me I can only go this way. 'Nope, you can't go that way.' 'No, you've got to park like this. You can't park like that.' And I'm like, 'Are you people serious.'

AH: [00:25:28] And that's enough for you to give up the beach?

FP: [00:25:28] Oh yeah. And you have—you must have a four wheel drive. Okay. And why? Why is that? And now they're in a quandary about, 'Oh what are we going to do? Where are we going to put the people?' Well you limit the amount of people on the beach. You let them drive north and south. You have ramps. They come and go from those ramps. It's very simple but yet they want to make it a monstrosity. And I don't get it. Commonsense, again, has gone by the wayside. That's—That's not for me to say.

AH: [00:26:12] That's—well as a resident, you can—

FP: [00:26:14] Well I can voice my opinion whether anybody listens or not, who cares? You know, 'She's an idiot, who cares?' But my husband been a commercial crabber for probably thirty years, and the crabbing business is terrible because of pollution. Again, that's the reason why you can't go oystering in North River. Because of pollution. The county is allowed to dump their waste into the river. Your condos you have the, what do you call them? Water plant—wastewater plants [coughs]. They're allowed to dump their waste into the river. And they say, 'Oh but it's treated.' Well yeah you're probably right. I'm sure it's treated. It's still waste any way you look at it. So consequently, up and down the rivers, where all the people want to be and want condos and all that kind of stuff, this is what we deal with and this is why we lose what we grew up enjoying, loving. It was perfect. Everything was great but not anymore. And it's just sad to me that that they call it progress. And I don't know how they can call it progress when you're destroying—Georgia-Pacific [note: a subsidiary of Koch Industries] has dumped for years into the St. John's River. Now some idiot gave them the right to build a bigger pipe, run it right out into the center of the St. John's River and pump. Excuse me, Georgia-Pacific, you have enough land that you could have built places to get rid of this and taken care of it. But it's easier to run a pipeline and dump it. And that's sad to me. And who are all these people that say, 'Oh we're going to get something done.' No you're not. It's who has the most money wins. That's the bottom line. Nobody wants to stand up and say that. But that's the truth. Then somebody will want to sue you. Okay, have at it. I got nothing [laughs]. You know? Go for it. I don't know what the answer is. I don't think there is an answer. And, you know, it's not going to get better. It's only going to get worse. The traffic is going to get worse. And where are we supposed to put these people? The developers keep building and building. And for what? Oh because we have great schools. Oh well. So that says the rest of the country are idiots? [Coughs]

AH: [00:28:58] How did your—but your husband is still crabbing?

FP: [00:29:00] Yes he is. He will be eighty-seven years old this month. I know. I know. He's amazing and he still goes crabbing. He only grabs a couple of days a week now. But he has—he's a man that's always worked and he loves being outdoors and he's very good at what he does. But he's very disappointed in what he has looked around and seen. He was born and raised here. You know, how St. Augustine, St. Johns County, has evolved the way it has [coughs]. And like he says, you can't do anything anymore. They've taken everything away from us. But it's made the people with the money that came down here happy. They've got what they want. Well Okay. You know? So I don't know what the answer is. I don't think there is an answer.

AH: [00:29:54] You mentioned he started crabbing thirty years ago.

FP: [00:29:55] Yeah.

AH: [00:29:58] What did he do before that?

FP: [00:29:58] Well he and his father and Marty's Restaurant but we also had a snapper boat so he fished offshore and we used a lot of that fish in the restaurant. It was great.

AH: [00:30:10] And you worked at the restaurant with him?

FP: [00:30:10] Sort of. Helped him now and then, but I was working at the newspaper at that time too. So you know.

AH: [00:30:20] And—but Marty's was up there where—

FP: [00:30:20] It's where CVS pharmacy on [State Road] 16 and US1 is. Yeah.

AH: [00:30:25] I remember when I was little—

FP: [00:30:26] Yeah. Right. Yeah. It was a great restaurant.

AH: [00:30:32] Why did they sell it?

FP: [00:30:33] He was—I guess the easiest way to put it is he's not an indoor person. He's an outdoor person. And he came over to help his father who had the restaurant at the time. And he really didn't like it but he did a great job of it. [Coughs]

AH: [00:31:05] Sorry. Yeah. We can pause it. We can pause any time.

FP: [00:31:06] Would you care for a mint?

AH: [00:31:06] Oh thank you. [Unwrapping mints] I love these.

FP: [00:31:12] I do too. And my husband loves them so I keep him on hand. My throat was just getting dry.

AH: [00:31:22] Well I've been picking your brain for about a half hour.

FP: [00:31:28] [Laughs] Not much to pick there. Okay what else.

AH: [00:31:36] Well I'd like to talk about Marty's a little bit and then go into crabbing again. What kind of food was at Marty's for people who don't remember?

FP: [00:31:36] All right. Fresh seafood, steaks. All homemade desserts. Everything was—everything basically was from scratch. It was really a great restaurant. People loved it. So they ran that for years. I don't even remember when his dad acquired it. But yeah it was a good restaurant. Everybody loved going to Marty's.

AH: [00:32:08] Did you have a favorite thing to eat there?

FP: [00:32:08] Anything [laughs]. Seafood. Best shrimp. Like I said, everything was fresh so that what makes it. When you go to a lot of these restaurants everything is breaded frozen or it comes in like that. You know, it's like, whoa. But there's still some good restaurants here. I love Schooner's. That's a good restaurant. There are a lot of good restaurants. Other than that, after the restaurant was sold—well when we had the restaurant, that's when he had the Miss Frankie built, the snapper boat.

AH: [00:32:49] Who was Miss Frankie?

FP: [00:32:50] That would be me [laughs]. And then after sold that boat. That's when he—actually that's when he got into the crabbing and I can't—like I said I don't remember exactly when that was. It was about thirty years ago.

AH: [00:33:11] And what about crabbing was it that you all said—

FP: [00:33:11] Do what?

AH: [00:33:11] What about crabbing was it that made y'all say, 'Yeah. Let's do this.'

FP: [00:33:50] Again, being an outdoor person and [coughs]—went down the wrong pipe.

AH: [00:34:23] Oh I hate that.

FP: [00:34:23] Before—years ago, when he was—my husband was young, his father was in the shrimping business. And they shrimped all the way around from here to Louisiana. They had a home over in Louisiana. E. J. actually grew up and went to school in Louisiana. And so they were in the shrimping business before his father got into the restaurant business. And then he got into the crabbing because he liked being outdoors and he saw that it was something he would like to do. Basically that's how he got into it and it was very good and there weren't that many people doing it. Now there's people all over doing it. Of course there are no crabs to speak of now because of pollution. That's our answer for it. But people do a lot of traveling. They'll go over to the west coast and crab when the crabs hit over there. They'll come over here when the crabs hit over here, which they haven't this—the last two years have been bad. And—but that's what he's always loved doing. So he's very outdoorsy.

AH: [00:35:03] And did you retire to also help him crab? Was that something the both of you did?

FP: [00:35:09] No. Not really. Because he told me I'd be in the way [laughs]. He said, 'No, you'd want to spend too much time looking at stuff that would be in the trap.' [Laughs] Okay fine. So I didn't. But like I said it's just—we've had a great life. We really have. We have no complaints.

AH: [00:35:35] That's good. Did he learn crabbing from someone in particular?

FP: [00:35:35] Himself.

AH: [00:35:42] He just picked it up?

FP: [00:35:42] Oh yeah. Yeah. That's something you have to learn and you know he taught a couple of his boys. They wanted to do it so they did it for a while too. And you know—but then they got out of it and went to do other things. But he's just stuck with it. And it's because, like he says, 'It's what I know how to do.'

AH: [00:36:04] What is the season like for crabbing?

FP: [00:36:04] Well you've got a fall run and you've got summer and—it's pretty much all year round but then there'll be periods where there's not much going on. Then you've got the stone crab season which opens in October. And that runs until May, if I remember correctly. And that's been pretty good the last few years.

AH: [00:36:29] And people do that here?

FP: [00:36:29] Oh yeah. Oh yeah, my husband does it. Yeah. And on the west coast it's really big because they've got the right kind of bottom.

AH: [00:36:38] That's what I think of mostly when I think of—

FP: [00:36:39] Oh yeah. Yeah. But yeah, that's—that runs for a while. But then of course with any business, you've always got—there's always certain people that want to mess with your stuff, that want to, you know, steal your traps or run your traps and just—you know. And that goes on. It goes on everywhere and you just deal with it. And there's good ways to deal with it and bad ways to deal with it. It's whatever works for you.

AH: [00:37:16] So literally other crabbers kind of poaching your traps.

FP: [00:37:17] Oh yeah. That's exactly what they do. Yeah. Yeah. Not good. And not good for them if they get caught.

AH: [00:37:23] By law enforcement or by E. J. or who? I mean do people regulate—

FP: [00:37:28] Law enforcement tells you, 'I didn't see him do it.' Well no, of course you didn't. [Laughs] I'm telling you, you know? But that's not good enough anymore. So you just—

AH: [00:37:44] You have to police your own traps.

FP: [00:37:44] Yes. Yes, you have to be the policeman. And, you know, it works. People get messages. It works. So that's the way it is.

AH: [00:37:54] And how often does that happen?

FP: [00:37:56] It varies. Sometimes it'll—it'll be like, you know somebody, an outsider, is coming here because it'll be maybe two or three weeks of something going on. And then all of a sudden it stops. So you know it's an outsider. Or they get caught and that's why it stops. It's just varying things that keep it working. But my husband has— there's nothing in the world he wouldn't do for somebody. He's a very good man. He's a hard worker. But don't mess with his livelihood. That's how simple it is. And that's not hard for anybody to understand. You know.

But I don't know what it is about law enforcement or the powers that be or whatever. I don't know why they don't think that crabbing is a business. That would be like if you had a clothing store and I went into your clothing store and I thought, 'Oh I like this. I like this.' I picked up two or three things and walked out the door with it. They'd be on me like white on rice, you know? And I'm going to jail. But why can't they say, 'Well we didn't see him do it,' like they tell us. 'Well we didn't see him do it.' So you know it's like—well you're on your own. Okay if we're on our own, then don't mess with us when things happen you know?

AH: [00:39:29] So it's not very regulated or—

FP: [00:39:33] Oh it's regulated to the point that they make the crabbers nowadays jump through so many hoops and have to have so many pieces of paper, so much legal work, so many cards—you have to pay for—now they've got these little tags, little red—this year they're red, they're little strips, you know. Little tie straps. And they're like fifty cents apiece. We'll figure it out. You've got 500 traps and there's got to be one on every trap. Then you got to have a certain kind of o-ring so the little crabs can get out. Okay that's fine. We've got that. There's—they've regulated it so much till it's so expensive to be a crabber that it's totally ridiculous. He has to buy—he sells to seafood stores. Used to be, the seafood store had the license to purchase the crabs. Well they reversed that. My husband has to pay \$550 for a year for a piece of paper that says you can sell that crab. And then there's a \$250 charge for another license. And it just goes on and on and it's like, okay, what they're trying to do is they're trying to put the crabbers out of business because probably the hoo-has don't like seeing the crab traps in the waterways. You know? And that's sad because that's a way of life. They don't get it.

AH: [00:40:56] So he still sells to seafood markets today.

FP: [00:40:59] Yeah.

AH: [00:41:06] When he's out on the water what does his day look like? Like when does he get up? What's the routine?

FP: [00:41:07] Oh he leaves here—like if he goes to the St. John's, which is where he is right now, he'll leave here about 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning, drive out there, put his boat in the water. As soon as it cracks daylight he's pulling traps. And he will get home probably—it depends on what he's actually going out there to get. But usually he'll get here 12:00 or 1:00 and then he asked to, of course, jump in the shower, you know, the whole nine yards, then take the crabs and

go deliver them. So then he gets back home, it's usually around 4:00. So that's kind of the day in the life.

AH: [00:41:48] So that's like a twelve hour day.

FP: [00:41:48] Well it—you know, sometimes, sometimes not. It varies. And—but you know—then he comes home and takes a nap [laughs], which he's entitled to.

AH: [00:42:02] So he delivers straight from the water.

FP: [00:42:07] Right.

AH: [00:42:08] There's no storage that he does or anything.

FP: [00:42:09] Oh no. No no. No. Because you can't—in other words, if you had a huge cooler, which we used to have years ago—Yeah you can. But that's when you were getting ten or twelve boxes of crabs a day. You would put him in the cooler. And that's a different thing you have to know exactly what temperature they have to be kept at. You can't mess with them a lot because, you know, they die. The death rate. And right now in the summertime in the salt water you don't find a lot of crabbers out there because for some reason the crab won't live very long out of water in the salt water. But in the St. John's they will. They're a tougher meaner little crab [laughs]. And you know, that's the way it is. But now, come fall, most people will go back to salt water and that's when the people who live along there complain. 'Well there's this crab buoy this close to my dock.' Well how about if I come saw your dock down?

AH: [00:43:10] [Laughs]

FP: [00:43:10] Then we won't have to worry about it [laughs]. Just joking.

AH: [00:43:18] Do you all really get complaints from people?

FP: [00:43:18] Oh yeah. Yeah. But one time my husband was out in the river and he sees a trap tied to a dock and a trap sitting on the dock.

AH: [00:43:35] One of his.

FP: [00:43:35] So he eases up there. The one sitting on the dock is his. He pulls the one—the man comes walking down there. He says, 'You can't touch my trap.' E. J. said, 'Mister, you might want to turn around and walk on back to your house.' And he said, 'Because this is my trap.' He called the patrol. They came down. E. J. had put both of his traps and his boat. They didn't see him do it. E. J. said, 'Okay, no problem. Not a problem.' When the man came out there and E. J. said, 'Mister I may be eighty some years old, but if I climb out of this boat onto that dock, that officer might better look the other way.' He turned around and went back to his house [laughs]. Oh it's been crazy over all the years.

AH: [00:44:32] And is that in the Matanzas mostly, where that happens?

FP: [00:44:32] Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. And Matanzas, that's a good area for stone crabbing. That's where my husband puts traps out there. So—but like I said, I do not tolerate people that cheat or steal. I just—I have no tolerance for that. And for some reason, I don't know what it is about people that live along the river, they think it's okay to pick up anybody's trap and just use it for their own. I mean it's like where is their mindset? You know?

AH: [00:45:05] Is each trap registered, then? I mean you know what is yours.

FP: [00:45:08] Oh yeah. Well, yeah, especially if you build your own traps, which he does not do anymore, but he has tags and things on it that he knows it's his. And you know—most crabbers, they know their own trap.

AH: [00:45:24] Right. It's not just an anonymous box floating around.

FP: [00:45:24] Oh no. No. And they're not all alike. They have their own certain little things or certain rope or, you know, whatever. But they know their own traps.

AH: [00:45:38] Are there—you know, when you harvest oysters there're oyster beds and people have leases. Is it the same for crabs?

FP: [00:45:45] No. No. Crabbing, you can go out there and as long as you stay out of the channel, you can pretty much put traps anywhere. And there's certain areas that fish better than other areas, certain what they call 'dead areas.' So it's just a matter of knowing where to go, knowing where to dump traps. And like I said, E. J. has done this for so many years and he's so good at it, and what one of the things that kind of ticks him off is he'll have traps out and he'll go back the next day or the day after or whatever, and all of a sudden there's traps all around him.

And it's idiots who don't understand: Okay here I am. I've got a line, because you put them in a line and I run down that land and pull my traps. Well I have to make a turn every time to come back, throw the trap back over, pick up the next trap. Well now if Joe Blow comes in there and throws a bunch of traps on top of you, how are you supposed to do that? You know? How do you run down your line when—And I said, 'See that would do it for me because I would just run along and cut every one of them loose.' But that's me. If you're going to be that stupid to cover me up with your traps, then shame on you. Or I'm going to pull them all up and go throw them on the bank somewhere. You know, shame on you for doing that to me. But there again, that's people who are not thinking, or who have not learned the rules or how you go about doing this, you know? So I don't know. But I would not have the patience to put up with that [laughs]. And E. J. says, 'And that's why you don't crab.' [Laughs] Oh Lord.

AH: [00:47:34] So he's just in the St. Johns and Matanzas then. That's pretty much his—

FP: [00:47:35] Right. Right. He used to fish the west coast. He used to go down south around Titusville and places down there when—that's been several years back when there were crabs everywhere. And a lot of the crabbers would go down to the west coast, way southwest, you know, and crab out of there but that's when it was profitable to do that. Now it's not. And then when gas went crazy like it did, oh my God. You know, that was tough. But no, right now he just plays in St. Johns and out in the Intercoastal.

AH: [00:48:09] And is it just him or does he have a crew that works with him?

FP: [00:48:09] Nope, just him. He—there is one guy that will go with him because he's helped this guy and sometimes he'll go with him and he lives out that way so he'll holler at him, 'Are you going tomorrow? I'll go with you.' He'll say, 'All right, I'll pick you up.'

AH: [00:48:25] What do you think his favorite part is about crabbing?

FP: [00:48:30] The money? [Laughs] Just being on the water. He loves being on the water. And he's always been that way. Like I said, he grew up shrimping when he was a kid, you know. And he's always been around water and I'm the same way. People say, 'Why don't you move to Georgia?' I said, 'Well I'd have to be right on the Intercoastal where there's some salt water.' I said, 'Because—' Or, 'Why don't you move—' 'Does water run through there? No, I'm not going there. I got to be around water.' So anyway.

AH: [00:49:11] And he—you all have seen the crab populations decline in the last few years?

[00:49:12] Oh big time. Yeah. Big time. And you know, everybody says, 'I wonder where they went?' They didn't 'went anywhere.' I think it's all the pollution. I mean when you look at everything that's being dumped into our waterways, it's sad. Because they're destroying it but they don't care. It's all about the money. And that's just like—my biggest concern, and it probably won't be in my lifetime but it's going to happen, we're going to run out of water. But do you think the people that are running this county and state, do you think they really care? No. They do not care. It's all about the money. And it just blows me away when like I said, your developers and people like that are pushing to sell land to build monstrosities, and you ride by a construction site and you see hoses laying on the ground, water running out of them. Okay. You think those guys are going walk over there and turn off the faucet? Not happening. No of course not. They've got a job to do. It doesn't require them to turn off the water. But there's so much growth and now all of a sudden you're starting to hear a little trickle about the traffic, the congestion. And you didn't think of that twenty years ago? Or thirty years ago? Because it's all about the money. Just like the May Street thing. What idiot, I have no idea who he or she was, that allowed that piece of property to be sold to that fuel company that was going to put twelve stations in there. What are you thinking? And thank God the city bought it back. And God knows what hoops they had to jump through or whatever. I have no idea. I'm not into politics. Don't want to be because they wouldn't like what I had to say. But what idiot would have even thought that could have worked. And do they not realize that in the event that we have to evacuate this county, this city, you have one way—two ways off Vilano Beach. You can either go north or you can come across May Street. Hello? What are you thinking? You haven't prepared yourself. You're an idiot. It's all about the money. We'll think later. Well later is here and there is nothing they can really do. Now they're talking about closing off the streets going through the neighborhoods. That's not fair. That's not right. Like I said they wouldn't want to get me involved in any of that.

AH: [00:52:11] What was the tourism presence like when you were younger in St. Augustine?

FP: [00:52:11] June, July and August. That's when we made our money and life was grand and everybody was happy and we were safe. You could leave your house open, your windows open, your car doors unlocked. You could walk up and down the streets and not be bothered by anybody. And if that's wrong, if they don't see that, then shame on them. But that's the way life was growing up in St. Augustine. It was absolutely wonderful. If I were twenty years old today I would have no children. I would not bring a child into this world.

AH: [00:52:46] Really?

FP: [00:52:46] I really really wouldn't. Because to me they don't have a chance.

AH: [00:52:51] In what way?

FP: [00:52:51] Well what do we have to offer them? What can we teach them? You're afraid to let them go out in your yard and play before some pervert might scoop them up and run off with them. You know, you're afraid to go to some big huge [bumps microphone]—excuse me—entertainment thing for fear somebody may start shooting. I mean what is wrong with this picture? I don't know. I don't know what the answer is. But you know—then you've got people wanting to take your guns away from you. Then you got—we're in trouble. That's that's the bottom line. We are in serious, serious trouble. And it's like, life goes on. Okay, one day at a time. I don't know. I'm babbling on here and this is ridiculous [laughs].

AH: [00:53:47] If you could say one thing to the county commission about planning for the future in St. Johns County, or to Flagler County, what would you say?

FP: [00:53:47] Too little too late. I mean really. You can't make more land. Okay? You can't stir the people with a stick. Right now the traffic situation is unbearable. But yet there's not one of them sitting up there that can stand up and say, 'No.' 'No' is not in their vocabulary most of the time. And it's like I said again, it's all about the money. And you know what I mean when I say that. So they're going to push through whatever hoo-has want something done. [Door opens] Oh my goodness. Is that my husband? Hey. There's a stranger in your house.

AH: [00:54:39] Hi.

EJP: [00:54:39] Huh?

FP: [00:54:39] There's a stranger in your house [laughs].

EJP: [00:54:41] A stranger?

FP: [00:54:41] Yeah. Was it hot out there baby?

EJP: [00:54:46] No it just now got hot.

FP: [00:54:47] Oh did it? OK. E. J. this is Miss Anne.

EJP: [00:54:51] Who?

FP: [00:54:51] Anne.

AH: [00:54:54] Anna.

FP: [00:54:55] Anna. I'm sorry.

AH: [00:54:56] That's okay.

EJP: [00:54:56] Don't get up.

FP: [00:54:56] I'm going to call her 'Annie' [laughs]. And we're doing an interview on the river and fishing and crabbing and all that good stuff.

EJP: [00:55:06] All that kind of good stuff.

FP: [00:55:07] Yep.

[00:55:07] Yeah. All right. I'm going to go get out of these clothes.

FP: [00:55:13] All right baby. How was the crabs?

EJP: [00:55:24] You want to do an interview, you've got to get on these people that are causing all this trouble.

AH: [00:55:25] That's what we've been talking about.

FP: [00:55:25] That's it. Yeah.

EJP: [00:55:34] I'm telling you. Excuse me.

AH: [00:55:34] Well we've been talking for about an hour so I don't want to take up your entire day.

FP: [00:55:34] Oh hey I just have nothing else to do [laughs].

AH: [00:55:41] No, I really appreciate it.

FP: [00:55:41] Off the top of my head, I was just trying to think of anything that you know, and of course when you're caught in a moment like this with this thing in your face it's like your brain's not getting kicking in [laughs].

AH: [00:55:51] I know it's a little intimidating at times.

FP: [00:55:52] Yeah. But no I just—like I said, there's so many people here today who do not know what the beauty of St. Augustine and St. John's County was. They don't know the history behind it and they don't care because it's not important to them. And that—we've lost a lot right there. And that's very sad to me. And St. Augustine, St. Johns County, is changing every day and eventually it's just going to be like any other big city. Nobody cares. You just go from day to day. Do your job, get paid, move on, blah blah blah blah. And and that's very sad. There's no closeness, you know, with people today. And so many people have the attitude that, well, 'It's mine and it's all about me.' Okay. Well that's the way it is. That's very sad to me because I love St. Augustine and St. John's County. I always have. It's my home. Always will be. I will die here. And you know, there again, I just would like to see this little area down here remain the same. All of us feel that way. We don't want anything to change down here. And then people say, 'Well that's not good. Change is good.' If it's good, look around you. The next time you try to find a parking place—I haven't been downtown in probably eight or ten years. Not going. No. That's not my town anymore. That's like some strip mall somewhere where they sell t-shirts and whatever. No. Not for me. But then I guess I'm one way when it comes to my hometown.

AH: [00:57:53] Well that's everybody has their own idea of what—

FP: [00:57:53] Yeah. And a lot of people think I'm an idiot because of the way I feel but, I'm sorry, it is what it is. And I'm not gonna change, not this stage of my life. They're not going to make me [laughs]. Oh well. That's the way it is.

AH: [00:58:13] Well you have this beautiful place right now.

FP: [00:58:14] Yes I do. I love it. I absolutely love it. And everybody is welcome. You know we just we just have a good time and we don't bother anybody and nobody bothers us. And that's the way it should be [laughs].

AH: [00:58:34] Well I don't have any more questions—

FP: [00:58:34] Well Miss Annie, I have enjoyed this very much. It—probably when you play it back you're going to go, 'Oh my god I can't use this. This is—what crazy—' [Laughs]

[End interview]