

*Interviewer:* What is your name?

*Patricia Fredette:* My name is Pat Fredette.

*Interviewer:* How long have you been fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* I started fishing when my grandfather took me out when I was a little kid, and we had to dig worms and put them on the hook and catch little sunfish, and so that was when I was in grade school, but I didn't do too much fishing after that, when I was a teenager or early on. It wasn't until I learned how to scuba dive when I was in my thirties and discovered spearfishing. I've been spearfishing since then.

*Interviewer:* Do you like spearfishing or line fishing with a fishing pole?

*Patricia Fredette:* I don't line fish at all. I spearfish, and the reason I like to spearfish is because I can see what I'm shooting at. I don't have to haul this fish all the way up to the top to see that it's this long and put it back. I already know what it is that I'm looking for, and so I can be more selective and what make sure I know what the limits are. I even, on my spear gun, had marked with a marker how long the minimum grouper size is, just so when I'm underwater that I can eyeball it and make sure that it's big enough, the fish is big enough.

*Interviewer:* What's the biggest fish you've caught with a spearfish?

*Patricia Fredette:* Back when it used to be legal, when they called them jewfish, and now they're goliath grouper, the biggest one I ever got was 200 pounds. Goliath grouper are big, but, of course, you can't shoot them anymore, and so this was a long time ago.

*Interviewer:* What kinds of fish do you catch?

*Patricia Fredette:* I love hogfish, because hogfish are great. They don't bite on a hook-and-line, but they are so good to eat. They eat little crustaceans and things on the reef, but they don't bite on a hook-and-line. I like those. I like grouper, too. One thing about once you catch them is then you have to learn how to clean them, which is interesting and kind of messy, but that's part of the deal. If you're going to catch them, you have to learn how to clean them.

*Interviewer:* Do goliath grouper and red grouper taste different when you cook them?

*Patricia Fredette:* The grouper? No, they're all good.

*Interviewer:* Was fishing a hobby or an occupation?

*Patricia Fredette:* It was a hobby.

*Interviewer:* Your grandfather taught you how?

*Patricia Fredette:* My grandfather taught me how to line fish and how to put a worm on a hook, but he didn't teach me how to spearfish. I learned that from my friends.

*Interviewer:* What is your best fishing spot?

*Patricia Fredette:* Well, there's a lot of good places. Mostly in the Gulf is where I spearfish, although I have gone to the Bahamas and spearfished there too, and I have spearfished in the Keys, when it was legal. Mostly, it's the Gulf. This is where I dive most of the time.

*Interviewer:* How deep do you have to go to catch fish?

*Patricia Fredette:* Well, it depends on what kind of fish it is. You don't have to go very deep for hogfish, maybe forty or fifty feet and so forth. Usually we dive that far out, because the visibility is better and there is more bottom structure, where the fish like to hang out. If you have ever gone out in the Gulf, there is a lot of sand and just a few places where there is old ledges or old bottom structure or artificial reefs. Anything that sticks up off the bottom is an attractor for fish, and so that's why fishermen like the artificial reefs, because they can find them really easily.

*Interviewer:* What is your opinion on illegal fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Well, if it's illegal, they shouldn't do it. That's kind of a broad question.

*Interviewer:* Why do you like to fish?

*Patricia Fredette:* Why do I like to? Because I like to eat fish, and it's a challenge. Some people hunt with a bow-and-arrow or shoot rifles, and other people shoot fish. I like to do that.

*Interviewer:* Is there a sport for spearfishing? Is it a freshwater and saltwater sport?

*Patricia Fredette:* Is it competitive? Absolutely, yes. If you talk to any of the divers that like to spearfish, they will tell you. First of all, there is a lot of clubs in the area, and all the guys that are in the men's clubs, they're very competitive. They hold tournaments, and we have regional tournaments. This summer, the United States Free Diving Spearfishing National Tournaments are going to be held at Tarpon Springs. If you want to see some guys that really can free dive and shoot a fish and come back up, that's the thing to see.

*Interviewer:* How many years have you been spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* I started when I first got certified to dive in 1978. I'm not doing so much anymore, because my shoulders aren't letting me load my spear gun anymore, and so now I take pictures, but I have been spearfishing for a long time.

*Interviewer:* What do you think of the pollution in the water? Do you see a lot of trash?

*Patricia Fredette:* Trash, well, that's another competition that we have. We pick up as much trash as we can and get points for it. Yes, there is stuff on the bottom. There is a lot of fishing line, and we try and collect that and get it off the bottom, so that other things don't get caught on it. Pollution, it's hard to say, because the tide -- If you're out say off of the Egmont Channel, for instance, when it's incoming tide, going towards high tide, the visibility is usually very good. When it starts going the other direction, then it gets yucked up. A lot of it has to do with tide and a lot of it has to do with weather and the algae blooms with certain temperatures in the water, and that kind of is creepy. If it rains a lot, the runoff from the land gets a lot of silt in the water, and so that messes up the visibility, too. It varies. Usually, the further out you go, the better the visibility is, just as a rule of thumb.

*Interviewer:* How do you think red tide affects fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Well, the last red tide bloom that I saw the results from did a lot as far as killing the fish that end up on the surface, and

the smell is unbelievable. The color of the water was different and all the shells, like the big whelks and other shells, there were a lot of dead ones, but hopefully we won't have to deal with that all the time.

*Interviewer:* What is the best weather to go fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Flat and calm and nice and warm, because, when you're spearfishing, you're getting in the water, and so, of course, it's nice if it's not too rough. Some people get seasick going out on the boat. Warm temperatures and warm water, so you don't have to wear a wetsuit, because that's very constricting. That's pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* How often do you go fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* I'm getting older now, and so I don't go as often as I used to. I probably dive once a month or so, but not always fishing. The last time I went diving was up to the springs at Ginnie Springs, because I like that, too. There is fish there too, but we don't shoot them.

*Interviewer:* Why is that?

*Patricia Fredette:* It's against the law. You can only spearfish in saltwater in Florida.

*Interviewer:* What is the most exciting story you have since you started fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Want to hear a shark story? One time I was in a tournament, and we were diving up off of Tarpon Springs. My buddy and I were supposed to stay together, but, when you get in the water, you sometimes lose each other. We got down to the ledge and he went one way and I went the other way. You work your way along the ledge to see if there's a shootable fish, and there were a bunch of fish out there. There were a lot of fish there, but there was one really big fish, and I said, okay, I think I'm going to turn around and go back the way I came, which I did, and I shot a couple of fish on the way back.

The next thing I know, this big shark was following me, and he wanted my fish. I was kind of chicken. I went and knelt down behind a big rock and left my fish on my stringer on that side and me on this side. He came and he

ate my stringer, and then he swam off with about this much sticking out, and he was probably about as big as my living room couch. He was big. His eyeballs were that far apart, but I still have all my fingers and toes, and so that's okay. He could have my fish.

*Interviewer:* What type of fishing gear do you use?

*Patricia Fredette:* When I was doing a lot of spearfishing, I used a spear gun. It's about this long, with a long shaft, loaded with two rubber-bands, big, fat rubber-bands, and a stringer is just metal, like a safety-pin, only big, that you string your fish up on. That's pretty much all of the equipment you need. A pair of gloves, because they sometimes don't like it when you spear them. If you are trying to grab them, you don't want to get stuck or bitten.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever been injured while you've been spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Yes, but not from the act of spearfishing. I got the bends on a spearfishing trip one time, and so, yes, that was a bad injury, but, other than that, the only other injury I got was when I had a triggerfish on my stringer and I had the stringer looped over my arm. The triggerfish was still alive, and he bit my arm.

*Interviewer:* What attire do you wear while spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* I usually wear a full dive suit made of bathing-suit material, because it keeps me from bumping up against things. You can get scraped or exposed to other things, and so I usually just wear a full suit and my dive gear, a buoyancy compensator, a regulator, tank, mask, regulator, fins. I like big, long fins, because they help me move faster.

*Interviewer:* I also heard you go stone crab hunting or what other crabs have you caught while you were out there?

*Patricia Fredette:* Stone crabs. Well, it's been a while since I caught any stone crabs, but they can be tricky. You have to be fast enough to grab both of their claws before they grab you, and so I haven't really -- Those are the only crabs I really have caught. I've caught lobster. One of the tournaments that I entered back in 1990, it included lobster. My lobster weighed 10.2 pounds, and he won me first place, and I have

him mounted on my wall.

*Interviewer:* What is the best type of weather to go fishing in?

*Patricia Fredette:* The best type of weather is warm, flat, and calm and nice. That's the kind of weather I like, just because it's more comfortable diving.

*Interviewer:* Do you enjoy fishing with my family?

*Patricia Fredette:* Actually, my family -- Two of my children are certified divers, but they don't dive much anymore. It's just me, and so I dive with my friends, mostly.

*Interviewer:* What are some of the oddest things that you've seen while spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* That's a hard one. One time, when we were spearfishing up off of Bayport, there is a big, big ledge up there. We were working our way all around the edge of the ledge, trying to find fish to shoot. Then, sitting right up on top, was a big nurse shark, I mean a really big one, and he was just kind of watching us all and seeing what we were doing, except I was last one going back to the boat, and he decided to follow me.

I was swimming backwards. Here is the boat, and I'm swimming backwards looking at this nurse shark that came to follow me, and I ended up having to poke it in the nose to get it to go away, and so that was my other shark story.

*Interviewer:* Do you have any fishing tips for beginners starting to spearfish?

*Patricia Fredette:* First of all, learn your fish. Make sure you know what you're looking at. Sometimes people take a waterproof card with them to help identify the fish. With spearfishing, because the fish can see you at the same time you're seeing the fish, the trick is to not scare them, because they will take off and go. If the fish is down here on the ledge and you're up here, if you angle yourself so that they see the smallest profile and all they see is this part of you coming towards them, you can get closer to shoot them, so that you get an accurate shot.

Usually, what I do is string them up on my stringer and

leave the stringer on the bottom, because it's not going to go anywhere, and then go up about ten feet to reload the gun, because the other fish are curious. They will come around and see what is going on with their buddy down there, and sometimes you get to shoot another fish.

*Interviewer:* Do you have any funny stories about spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* I will have to think about that. I don't know. Of course, if you shoot a fish in the tail, everybody else laughs at you, because that's not where you're supposed to shoot the fish. You're supposed to get them so that you sever their spinal cord or their spine, or, if it's something big, as in the goliath grouper that I shot a long time ago, the best way to shoot them is you make an X. If you're looking down on the top of his head, you look at that eyeball and that gill and that eyeball and that gill. Right where they intersect is the kill spot. That's how I got that fish.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever considered fishing in a different industry?

*Patricia Fredette:* No, I like spearfishing.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever encountered lionfish while fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* I did in the Bahamas. The last time I went, there were a number of them, and usually at least two of them together at the same time. I had never seen those before, and I understand there is -- From the other divers that I have talked to, there is a lot of them out deeper. Now, I went and participated in a lionfish derby last September, but I didn't see any that day. Only one person on the boat found a lionfish in sixty feet of water, but the people who dove in a hundred feet of water got lots of them, and so they're out there.

*Interviewer:* What do you do in that kind of situation, if you encounter one? Do you avoid it or go after it or what do you do?

*Patricia Fredette:* Now, we try and kill them, if we can. If you have something to spear it with, it's a good idea to do that, because they are so prolific. They multiply exponentially. They are very, very much a problem, and so, yes, take a picture of them first and then shoot them.

*Interviewer:* What problems have you encountered over the years?

*Patricia Fredette:* Most of them had to do with as I get older. My vision is not so great, and so I had to get a mask with my eyeglasses in it, so I could see the fish well enough to shoot them. That's pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* Why did you start spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Well, I learned how to dive, and I went on a couple of dive trips with some of the people in this club that I joined, and they were all spearfishing. One of them said, here, try my spear gun, and I was hooked. What can I say?

*Interviewer:* What kind of spear guns are there out there?

*Patricia Fredette:* A lot of the people in this part of the state use wooden or metal spear guns that are loaded with rubber-bands, heavy rubber tubing, and a long spear shaft. Other places, you might see people using a pole spear, which is basically a long pole with a rubber loop on one end and a point on the other end. Those are good for -- In fact, that's what you have to use if you go to Bahamas and you want to spearfish. That's what you have to use. You can't use any other powered gun.

There is another kind called a Hawaiian sling, and that's a really old version, where there is a wooden grip with a hole in it and a rubber-band on it, and you take the spear shaft and stick it through and pull it back, manually, and shoot the fish. I have never used one of those. They are kind of hard to use. One other kind is called a pneumatic gun, where it's powered by compressed gas, and they're short. They look like about half the length of a normal spear gun.

*Interviewer:* If you could go anywhere in the world to spearfish, where would you go?

*Patricia Fredette:* I have a lot of places on my bucket list, but not so much spearfishing. Actually, I like spearfishing here, because there is good fish and there is plenty of them. In the Keys, you can't spearfish so much anymore. A lot of it is sanctuary, and I understand that. I like spearfishing here.

*Interviewer:* What is one of the most common fish you encounter while spearfishing?



*Patricia Fredette:* Grouper, of all the different varieties, and a lot of little tropical-type fish.

*Interviewer:* What's your favorite type of fish that you like to catch?

*Patricia Fredette:* Hogfish and grouper. They're the most edible, and they're big enough to be good food fish.

*Interviewer:* What is the rarest fish you have caught?

*Patricia Fredette:* Probably the goliath grouper that I was talking about earlier. It's not rare in that it doesn't exist, but, for me, that's the only one I've ever shot.

*Interviewer:* What is the clearest memory of a fish that you have caught?

*Patricia Fredette:* Probably the goliath grouper. I will never forget that. That was cool. He already had two spears sticking out of his head, and he was looking at the guy that shot him. He didn't see me coming.

*Interviewer:* How long did it take you to learn spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Probably one summer, and I had a lot of friends that were spearfishing as well, and so they helped me learn good techniques for how to spot the fish and how to follow them and how to shoot at them.

*Interviewer:* How long do you think you will continue spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Actually, I am not spearfishing much anymore. I'm seventy-two years old, and my shoulders won't let me load my gun anymore. If I shoot anything, it's going to be with a pole spear.

*Interviewer:* Do you want to teach anybody spearfishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* Actually, most of the guys like to teach spearfishing. It's a guy thing, that they like to teach other people, but I belong to a club called the Sea Bunnies. It's all girls, and so we teach each other, too.

*Interviewer:* How long have you been with the club?

*Patricia Fredette:* I joined the Sea Bunnies club in 1984, I think, and the first club I joined was in 1979, and I'm still a member of that

club too, but the girls club, the Sea Bunnies, I joined in 1984.

*Interviewer:* Do you like the group?

*Patricia Fredette:* It's a great group of girls. We all like to do things involving the water and other things as well, but, yes, it's a nice group.

*Interviewer:* How did you decide to join the group?

*Patricia Fredette:* A lot of the girls were very supportive of me after I had an accident. I got the bends after I was scuba-diving, and that group of girls was very, very helpful to me, and I said, you know, I really like this group and I am going to join them, and so I did.

*Interviewer:* Did you find it a big difference when you joined the Sea Bunnies, because it was all girls and there were no men in it?

*Patricia Fredette:* Well, yes, because that particular group of girls is very tuned into diving and not all the girls spearfish. Some of them don't, but I really like that we could be competitive. In fact, we have a competition every year of who shoots the biggest fish and who gets the best pictures and who finds the best shell. This past year, I got the best fossil. It was a big horse tooth from out in the Gulf, and so we compete a lot. Even when some of the girls don't dive anymore, they still belong to the group, because it's a nice bunch of friends to have.

*Interviewer:* Other than spearfishing in the Sea Bunnies, what are the main activities that you guys do?

*Patricia Fredette:* We have competition in photography, and so we learn how to take pictures underwater. We have social events. We have speakers that come in to help us learn how to do certain things. Like if you want to do stone crab hunting, then we have somebody come in and show us how to hunt for the stone crabs and how to take the claws without killing the animal. We collect shells. We learn how to clean them so that they don't stink up your house when you put them out. We collect lobster, too.

*Interviewer:* What was your deadliest catch or the most dangerous?

*Patricia Fredette:* I usually kill them well enough so that they don't come back to bite me, except for this triggerfish that bit my arm when I wasn't looking. When you learn how to do this stuff, that's one of the things you have to learn, is how to avoid getting hurt. Most of the fish have some spines on them. Some of them, if they scrape you or stick you, your skin, you can get infections, and so you try to be as careful as you can when you're dealing with a fish after you catch it.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever been spearfishing in another country?

*Patricia Fredette:* The Bahamas. That was nice.

*Interviewer:* Was that your best fishing?

*Patricia Fredette:* It was really good fishing. The fish were plentiful. In the Bahamas, you can only do it free-diving. You can't put a tank on when you fish, when you spearfish, and you can't use a gun that has a trigger on it. You have to use one of the pole spears.

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