

Ray Pringle, Jr. - Oral History - "Vanishing Culture Project"
Funded in part by the Florida Humanities Council

Interviewers: Mr. Mike Jepson

I 1: Ray, we ask you to start out by giving your full name and your date of birth.

R: Ok. My name is Raymond Stargill Pringle, Jr. I was born September 19, 1941.

I 1: Tell us your parents' names.

R: My Dad is Raymond Stargill Pringle and my Mom is Naomi Fay Pringle. It was Cook before that.

I 1: Where were you born?

R: I was born in Bradenton at the old hospital that was over on Manatee. It was a big long thing that they had built over there and it was called Manatee Hospital. It was kind of like a barracks. It's where the Zoning Board is now.

I 1: Were your parents living in Cortez at the time?

R: Yes they were.

I 1: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

R: Yes, I have a brother William Newell and my is Naomi Fay and she died of Hodgkins Disease. Of course, I have a brother very young but he was adopted. He was my sister's son and my Dad adopted him. He's Chris Lamar Pringle. And another sister too who was my sister's that was adopted by Dad. Noel.

I 1: How about your grandparents, what were their names?

R: On my father's side it was William Newell and Leona Pringle and they lived two houses down from here. They moved here

in 1919. My mother's side was Newell or Bob Cook they called him and I'm trying to think of my grandmother's name. I always called her Nana. Gracious, I can't think of her name right now.

I 1: Was your mother from this area?

R: She was born in Missouri but they moved down to Bradenton. They lived out on the Beach. My Grandparents and Mom and them when they were younger lived out on the beach and they moved into Bradenton or Manatee. My Granddaddy was the ... Papa Cook ... Game Warden in Manatee County for several years. He also was a Bradenton Policeman. Then he got a job as Game Warden and he was Game Warden until he died.

I 1: So your families were both in this area.

R: Yes.

I 1: Did you spend a lot of time with both of your grandparents when you were growing up?

R: Yeah. Well, of course a little bit later, when I was in high school I would go out to Papa's house and they lived out on Lorraine Road. They had 50 acres and cows and stuff. I'd go out there and spend some time in the summer time and the people here in Cortez would give me orders like rabbit. So, they'd give me \$2.00 apiece for clean rabbit and \$1.00 apiece for the ones still with hide. So I'd make some spendin' money by shootin' rabbits. The folks here in Cortez loved rabbit. I'd shoot the rabbits and come back to Cortez and sell all my ... of course, I'd just always clean 'em. But I'd go around to their houses and take the orders and when I'd get 'em filled out there on the ranch. Of course, Papa bein' a Game Warden, I could get on about any ranch out there. So I'd shoot cottontails and skin 'em and clean 'em and get 'em refrigerated and bring 'em to Cortez after I got all the ones folks wanted.

I 1: What would you use a 22?

R: A 22 rifle. My Granddaddy bought me my first 22 rifle when I was 5 years old. And there was a salt flat across Cortez Road that was in back of Gibson's now. There was a big salt flat there and a big pond and there was alligators in it. But I'd go out there and shoot blue crabs with my 22 and bring 'em to my Grandmother. She loved blue crabs.

I 1: I don't think there are too many people today who would give a 22 to a 5 year old, do you?

R: No, I don't think so. But when I first got my 22, at 5 years old I was walkin' around with my 22 and I never hurt anything. We were always raised up to get things out of the sea any way we could.

I 1: You were sort of taught early what we would call subsistent skills.

R: Oh, yeah. That was taught me from as young as I can remember, gardening and of course catching fish, goin' and gettin' scallops, tryin' to get stone crabs out of the holes and blue crabs and oysters. I'd go with my Granddad a lot and he trapped. My Granddaddy Pringle. Him and Austin Wiley that lived here for a long time, they would trap across the road here and down those little creeks and catch coons and otters. They would skin 'em right there at the house. They'd have otter and coon hides hangin' everywhere. Smelled to high heaven. Of course, that was what everybody knew. If you wanted a coon, go see Nash Pringle. That was what they called him, Nash.

I 1: Did you learn a lot of your hunting skills from him?

R: From my Granddaddy Pringle and of course, my Papa Cook taught me some too. Dad never did care much about

hunting, but my Grandfathers liked it and we'd squirrel hunt and quail hunt and several different things. We was always in the woods somehow or another. I'd go with him when he'd cut the Buttonwood and make the stern timbers on the skiffs. They would go in the woods and find the right L shaped piece of Buttonwood and it seemed like the only thing they wanted to make a stern timber out of was a piece of Buttonwood. So I thought that was a real thrill. A great rush for me to be with them when they'd go in the woods and go cut the stern timbers, not necessarily for a skiff, it could be on a launch or whatever they were building.

I 1: Your Grandfather was a carpenter wasn't he? He did a lot of building didn't he?

R: Yeah, he built quite a few boats and some houses. He was well known for his hatchet. He would use his hatchet a lot and if it had too big a crack in the floor of the boat or something he'd just tar it. He was quite a hatchet man. He was funny. He'd build polin' oars a lot and in my younger days I remember he was always in his shop with a table saw cuttin' pieces of lumber. We'd go up town in a truck and we'd go and roll lumber to find the pieces of wood that didn't have knots in it that would make real good polin' oars. So, we'd roll and roll and roll, which I had a lot of fun doin'. I was easily amused. I enjoyed being with my Grandparents. They taught me a lot. I enjoyed Cortez. I learned to ride my bike when I was 5 years old. I could ride my bike without training wheels when I was 5 out on 123rd Street. It was a shell road. Of course, I fell in the middle of that shell. I remember it well. I fell out there and got shell all in my elbows. But I learned to ride that bike that day. I about killed myself. Got my first rifle and first bicycle at 5 years old.

I 1: Well, tell me about what life was like in Cortez when you were young and what you remember about that?

R: The thing that I remember most is as kids, all the mamas knew where we were at. Somehow or another they had a communication line that I just can't imagine how they did it. But we thought we were sneakin' around, but one

of the mamas always knew where we was at. And how they knew it, we didn't have telephones. Whatever we did, if we did somethin' and messed up, by the time we got home our parents knew about it. And of course, they'd tear our tails up. But the people looked after each other. If there was a hardship or a problem, the animosities weren't there because they stuck together. The commeradery of us as children, we were very tight to the part of being clickish. Even in school we were known to, if you mess with one you mess with all of Cortez. That's how we survived a lot of times. People wouldn't bother us because they knew if they did fool with one fella from Cortez, then they fool with everybody. That was just the way it was.

We ate a lot of fish and a lot of scallops and oysters and stuff that, back then, people looked down their nose at us because that was all we had to eat. Now they take

it away from us. But it was pretty nice. It was very laid back. We'd go to the docks and of course, the fishermen, they would throw us kids overboard. They thought that was great sport. It terrorized us. I mean, if you'd get around Gator or Vernon Mora and some of those other guys. Paul Taylor was another one, if he'd get a chance, he'd push you overboard. Off the docks. Of course, it would terrorize us but it was just teachin' us how to swim. We could swim like otters when we were very young. So, I guess it was good even though I never did care about that. I always told 'em, one of these days I'm gonna get big enough and you're not gonna push me off anymore docks.

You know, you left your screen doors unlocked. You just went in and out of the house. No one fooled with ya. Like I say, there was kind of like what they call the neighborhood watch now. Just everybody looked out after everybody else's stuff. It was very close-knit. All the kids in the neighborhood ... one would get a basketball and I know right here in this yard here when O.K. and Idella, that was my mom and dad-in-law, their kids had a basketball goal. Set a post out by the street and there was no grass there because we played so much. It was just packed, hard dirt. Marvin's son, Bubba, he had a basketball goal on the garage on the other side and we had that all packed down. But all us kids played. Oh, we'd get in a scrape every once in awhile and fight each other. But, it was kind of like joustin' more than anything.

I 1: When you would go down to the docks and spend time down there, was it just play and fun or was there work there for you all?

R: There was a lot of work. Especially when we got up a little bit. Now when I was small I'd go down to the dock and try to catch mango snapper and stuff that we could eat. My Grandmother dearly loved mango snapper. And I'd catch some trout every once in awhile. But a lot of mango snapper and sheephead and angel fish. Heck, even with a hook and line we was always tryin' to catch fish. I remember just with a stick and a piece of string and a little hook and mullet gizzards. The guys around the dock

saved the mullet gizzards for us kids cause we was always down there bumming mullet gizzards. So instead of havin' to cut one open and get the gizzard out, they'd just save 'em when they'd clean 'em for us kids. So we knew where the mullet gizzards were and we'd get down there after school and we'd head down there with our old pole and get some mullet gizzards and catch some fish.

Then when we got up a little bit bigger, us boys, there was six of us that were about the same age or within a year of each other. And we worked on the docks a lot. We always had employment. I was probably better off then than now because we'd make good money down there guttin' fish. We'd get a dollar a hundred for mackerel and king fish or whatever we're guttin'. I could gut 11,000 pounds and hour, mackerel. That was pretty quick. But it got to be a skill that you'd learn. The more you applied yourself the better money you could make. Eleven dollars an hour in

the '50s was unheard of. But I could do it. There was a lot of times I'd gut mackerel all night long and get home just in time to take a shower and cleaned up and go to school. We had some understanding teachers at Manatee High and some that weren't so understanding. But a lot of 'em would know we'd worked all night. I'd tell 'em, I can't help it. I can't hold my eyes open. I would go to school. But every once in awhile I felt like I deserved a vacation and I'd take a day off or somethin'.

I 1: What were your plans growing up and going to school? Did you always know that you were going to be a fisherman?

R: No, I wanted to do more than just be a commercial fisherman. I enjoyed it. There was something about being a fisherman that, I don't know whether it's heredity. It seems like its heredity, but not really so. It's more a liking that each individual has. His own way of thinking about commercial fishing. Mine was that I loved it. I loved hard work and I loved catching the fish and being on the water. I didn't necessarily care about being IN the water but I loved being ON and AROUND the water.

From high school I went on and learned a lot of skills, to college and I was a computer expert and had some other things. And I was in the Army for awhile and learned some things in there too. But mostly, after I got out of the Army, I had been in college and I pursued that for awhile. But while I was still working at that I still went back. I always had a boat. Never was without a boat. And when I would get off from work I would change out of my clothes and head to Cortez as hard as I could go and jump in my boat. As I said, my Grandparents are here and of course, I married a gal from Cortez too. So everything I've ever done is pretty much Cortez. And that's the way my Dad is.

Now my Brother, to him Cortez is ok, but he could take it or leave it. But I never could get away from it.

I 1: Let's talk a little bit about your Dad. Did you learn most of your fishing skills from him?

R: Yeah, in my earlier days. He used to take me in the boat when I was just a little kid and of course, I didn't fool

with the nets or anything. But I would ride in the boat with him and most of the time he fished at night and that scared me. Well, the waves would get high and I'd get concerned that we was gonna sink or something. But as I got a little older and got into high school, I started fishin' with Buster Bell, seine fishin'. And Walter Bell too. I fished with him some. And Joe Capo, I fished with him some and Burr Lewis. I learned a lot in the skills of seine fishing. Then I started fishing with Farmer Capo and he taught me more of the skills of gill netting. Him and Paul Taylor. I fished with him for a couple years and learned quite a bit. He was rough.

I 1: Who was rough?

R: Farmer. He's quite a crusty old coot. Anytime you've got what we call a green horn it was always a little bit

difficult. And of course me bein' young and considered the green horn, I was big and strong and willin' to do things. But a lot of the things I was willin' to do was not really the things that I should have done. And he would get a little upset and hollar and rant and rave, and cuss a little bit.

I 1: I've heard that he was hard to work for.

R: Well, maybe with certain people. The older guys couldn't hardly get along with him. But I know that Paul Taylor worked for him for I don't know how many years. A long time. And I fished with him quite awhile. Then I went to school. Well, I went in the Army and then went to school. I always felt like that all he was tryin' to do was to teach me something. I had a different attitude about him than most folks did. He was just crusty and a colorful individual. I laughed at him more than I was aggravated at him. He'd say some mighty funny things. One night he had been fishin' all night long and his daughter, Sandra, about my age, and she chewed bubblegum all the time and somehow or another a piece of that bubblegum got on Farmer's flannel shirt and he was real hairy. And it was up around the collar. At night it got pretty cool at night and he put on that flannel shirt and all night long that bubblegum, he called it blow gum, pulled on his hairs. He says, I tell ya right now ... he always talked pitiful ... I suffered nine hells last night. Old Sandra and her blow gum.

Or he'd get aggravated and say in the mornin', well I've cussed enough last night to send my soul to hell ten times.

I 1: I think I remember Paul Taylor telling me that he cussed a lot.

R: Yeah, he'd cuss and carry on.

I 1: He was sort of mean?

R: Well, his demeanor was kind of ruggid but the one thing I remember about old Farmer was he was fair at anything he done. If we had a bad week and we didn't make much money he shared equal. Everything was equal. And he

always made sure the crew was taken care of. I mean, he worked hard and he'd get me and say Ray, watch what I'm doin'. I'm doin' this for a purpose. But I don't know if he did it with anybody else, but he done it with me and he would take time and explain why. Not, get your rear end over there and do it. But now, the reason I want you to go over there and do it is because such and such and we're gonna catch more fish if you do it like that.

Well, heck. Then it was an incentive. I didn't need much incentive. If they just told me I was gonna make more money then I was ready to do it. And as long as I knew what I was doin' and why I was doin' it then I had no problem with the hard work that was involved in it. Farmer was always explaining to me why he was doing something. We would form off, what we called forming off, when we was

skiff fishin' and I was the inshore man. Farmer and Paul was the offshore men. He would, a lot of times, pole over to me just to tell me now look, I'm lookin' for such and such and this is the reason I'm doin' it. And then I would know why I was doing what I was and it taught me a lot and it made me a good fisherman because it made me understand what fish do. You've got to know the reason that fish is doing such and such to be able to catch him.

A lot of times you won't catch 'em if you don't understand why and what you're doing.

I 1: What type of fishing were you doing when you fished with Farmer?

R: With Farmer we had our gill nets. We always used gill nets and pole skiffs. But we stopped a lot of places. We'd run our gill nets out and root-bumping. We did quite a bit of root-bumping. And we would take in big holes like in Rotten Bottom and Gator Hole and Scratch Ankle Reef and all those places. Tarpon Key, Bird Key, Cow 'n Calf. All those different places we fished across the Bay. Of course, Joe's Island and over this way. But once we run our net overboard we'd immediatly get overboard and start what we'd call cork-screwin' 'em. We'd move our net and pull 'em right on down where we could catch the fish.

I 1: You'd do that in the water?

R: Yes. And during the winter months when it was real cold we caught a lot of trout by doin' that. He taught me how to run two nets side by side. We'd take the two skiffs and shove right along beside each other and then we'd get back up and get overboard and tie the nets together and it would give them double strength. And we'd catch red fish in those nets. Had no chance of catchin' red fish but he showed me how to do it. To this day I haven't forgotten how that's done. You can catch red fish in gill net if you double the nets. So it was a lot of things that I enjoyed with him.

He snored real big time bad. But I always would get up and go out and sleep on the net. When you're young you don't really need much sleep. He had to come get me one night

when he told me to wait. He was gonna shove on down the shore and he said I'll hollar if I want you to come. So him and Paul shoved on down the shore. No, Paul stayed back too. I stove my pole down and got my arm around it and went to sleep standin' up. He come back and he thought somethin' had got me in the bushes. Of course, he had several cuss words for me. I could sleep anywhere. In a half sunk boat or wherever. Had no problem sleepin'.

But he was quite a guy and Paul was too. Paul was protective of me. He would always say now Ray, Farmer's grouchy so you come over here and what I do you do. And if I go somewhere you go right with me. So he protected me a lot from Farmer when he'd get on one of his old grouchy rages or somethin'.

I 1: Paul's quite a character.

R: He's a nice guy. He is. He is a super nice man. I mean, that man even when we was kids when he run Royal Fish Company down there. That's when we was just little tykes. He always watched after us. He took care of us kids. He was always concerned about our safety. He was always out there watchin' and when we needed somthin' he was there helpin' us. We'd get an old dog fish and couldn't get it off our line ... I remember one time I caught a big old dog fish and you'd have to kill him because you couldn't hardly get him off and he'd bite the crud out of ya. He come out there and told me, oh give him to me and I'll show you how to get him off. He reached in there and that dog fish bit his thumb. We had to cut the dog fish's head off and pry his jaws open. I mean, it really mashed his thumb. He was hollaring and carrying on. It was hard for us to keep a straight face until he left and then we really laughed.

But Paul is a super human. Him and Dad are very good friends till right now. Dad and Paul were very tight friends and he was always a great help to me too. I just can't say enough good things about Paul Taylor. He's always helped us and some of the other men in Cortez that have watched over us and helped us. Instead of yellin' and screamin', they explained things. There were some that we knew to stay away from and we did. Trigger's daddy, he used to scare the tar out of me. Every one of us kids in Cortez was petrified of Dan Mora. Boy, here comes Dan and we'd be off like a dirty shirt. He scared the heck out of us.

I 1: Was he sort of gruff?

R: Yeah. Very stern and gruff. Of course, he never did hurt any of us. But we just felt like that he was gonna snatch our head off and stick it up our rump or something. We just never did know really what he'd do. But he didn't hurt us.

I 1: The captains at that time, who were some of them?

R: Farmer of course and Joe Capo was another one. And I fished with him. He was another one that was ... I don't know. There was always somethin' about those guys that they'd put

me up on the bow with them and I was kind of like their valet sort of. I was a big old boy and I was always trying to learn something. And I would stick around those captains trying to learn. Burr Lewis was another one that was a fella where I'd always sit up by him. He'd call me R A Y M O N D. He'd say R A Y M O N D, you come over here and sit right by me and whatever I want you to do, just don't let nobody else fool with ya. Which I was plumb glad because some of those old fellas in that crew would give me heck.

Then Tink. I fished with him some. Didn't fish a whole lot with him and I didn't really care about fishing with Tink. He was really an old grouch and he'd just work ya for no reason. I never did understand. There was no rhyme nor reason to what he did. He was real superstitious in a lot of the things he done. I fished with him some and I

couldn't handle that. And of course, Buster Bell had a crew and Calvin Bell. I didn't fish a whole lot with Calvin. I only fished with him a couple of times. Bub Bell, he had a crew also and I fished with him some. He was a good captain. Most of the time I fished with Charlie Guthrie. Of course, he was too old by the time I got up and he was a grouchy old codger. Boy, was he a grouch. He got on me and chased me off one time because I scared his cats. I never did like him. Of course, I hate cats. They get under the house and fight and beat the pipes and aggravate the heck out of us in the middle of the night. But he was one that I was very cautious around.

Millard Brown was another one who had a crew. He was a real quiet individual. Didn't have a whole lot to say. I never fished with him but I was around him quite a bit.

I 1: So when you were youngsters you were allowed to play around the docks and work in the fish houses. Were the girls allowed to come down too?

R: Well, only when they could go swimmin'. Every once in awhile one would sneak down there. But I mean, they were in hot water if they got caught. But on the Royal's dock down there all of us ... it was kind of co-ed there at times. But most of the time it was always just the guys or the girls. The girls would go swim over on the dock that went out from Burton's Store, the Albion Inn. There was a dock and a lot of times the gals would go over there and dive off that dock. Most of the time Royal's. Trigger and some of 'em would get up on the top of the roof quite a ways up there and jump off. Trigger sailed off there one day and we stood there and waited on him and he didn't come up and he didn't come up. Finally we decided, well somebody's got to go check and see where Trigger is. I forgot who it was but somebody finally volunteered to jump over and see where Trigger was. He was stuck in the mud down there and couldn't get out. So we had to pull him up out of the mud.

He was always doing something crazy. But we'd jump overboard over there at Royal's and swim out to the channel. There was a big channel marker out there that had steps on it. It was probably 15 feet out of the water and had a little platform up there and we could dive off that channel

marker. That's where we'd go dive at because it was deep and you wouldn't stick in the mud.

All of us could swim pretty good. We all swam well. We would get behind people's boats and slow 'em down where they couldn't go anywhere. We'd get behind their skiff and if they didn't see us we'd hold onto the skiff and stand straight up in the water and brace ourselves. Some of those little air cooled boats ... we'd get a good cussin' for it. But we'd stop 'em dead in the water. A couple of us behind the skiff and the boat wouldn't run. It'd run, but I mean it wouldn't go anywhere. We pulled some boners and had a lot of fun.

I 1: You said something earlier about how you loved hard work. Tell me a little bit about that.

R: Well, the hard work is something ... or gracious, there's times when we were stop nettin' that we would go all night

long and wouldn't sleep for the day before and all that night and the day afterwards. A lot of times our nets would get full of moss and so you'd have to stay on 'em all night long rolling moss out of 'em. Pushin' the boats and pickin' the nets up and a lot of times you'd have junk in the nets ... horseshoe crabs and naval pinchers. Farmer called 'em banjo pickers because they had little sharp nails on the end of their legs. He always called them banjo pickers. I don't know why but that was his description of 'em.

Then catfish or something. It's always hard work. There was repairing your nets. In the younger days you had nylon nets and you'd fish all week and then on Friday, usually Friday afternoon, was when you'd quit fishin' and you'd go to the dock and spread your nets. Then on Saturday mornin' you went down to the net spreads and mended net all day Saturday. Now that particular part of it I never did really relish but it was just part of the fishing. But we'd get overboard and pull the nets and it was always something that you was doin'. It was very rare that you'd just sit around.

Farmer, or any of 'em would always find something for you to do. Not much sluffin' off.

I 1: Were you expected to be down at the docks and helping if you were on that crew?

R: Oh, yes. If you wanted to fish in that crew you'd better be there. It wasn't something like if you wanted to be there, no. You were there. There were no ifs, ands or buts unless you was sick. If you was sick then they understood but if you weren't sick you were at the docks.

I 1: So if you came in and you got a good night's rest, you were expected to be at the docks the next day?

R: Uh huh. Whatever it was that had to be done. It was a continuous situation. Then the times that there was no fish ... there would be times that there wouldn't be fish and it would be kinda slack then we'd go scallopin'. We always found something.

I 1: Where would you scallop?

R: In the Kitchen. Most of the time we'd go in the Kitchen. The Kitchen was full of scallops. Us kids used to love to scallop because we could get out there and we'd scallop for a little while and then we'd get to throwin' horseshoe crabs at each other or somethin' or other. Banjo pickers as Farmer says, or chasin' the girls with the blue crab. We always made great sport out of it when we were young especially. I loved to pick 'em up. Just gettin' 'em out of the hull was the big pain to me. The women did most of that. They'd get out there with their bonnets and all the regalia that they'd put on. They'd put on a dress and then put on blue jeans under the dress. It was quite a sight. It was quite a sight. And you could hear 'em. On a calm day you could hear 'em laughin' and carryin' on for a mile, the gals out talkin' like gals talk.

I 1: You loaned a scallop box to F.I.S.H.. Tell us a little bit about that scallop box. Did you ever use one?

R: Oh, yeah. We built a box and put glass in the bottom of it. then it wasn't just the box on the top because if you did that you'd get a glare on it and you couldn't see no matter if you had the glass on the bottom. So you built a top on it and you cut a hole in it. Then you'd put rubber around it so you wouldn't wear places on your face or get a splinter or something and that kinda padded it. Then you could look down in the box and you'd kinda lay forward with your face in the box and go along on your knees to where you could use both hands pickin' up scallops.

I 1: So your hands were under the water?

R: Oh, yeah. Everything was going to really pick up a lot of scallops. Of course, in the Kitchen when the scallop season come in it was whew! We would just get tubs, number 3 wash tubs that we took baths in. We'd use our bathtub to catch scallops in. It was an all-purpose tool to us. Everything that was owned by people was a tool of some sort. There wasn't much just havin' it around if it wasn't to be used.

I 1: Do you think life was hard in Cortez when you were growing up?

R: Well, no. Not really, because I used to look at other folks and think ... well, I didn't realize it, but we was just as poor as a church mouse too. But we always had food to eat and the Good Lord was always good to us. But I'd always look at other people and think wow, those poor old folks. They're sure in bad shape. I guess they were because there were a lot of folks out on those old farms that were sharecroppers and stuff and they'd come to Cortez and we shared our food. I mean, if they didn't have food to eat we'd even take it to them. We'd find out somebody was down and out on some of those Gladiolia farms or on any of the farms that were around and we knew that they needed food. We'd clean fish and take it to 'em. Or a gallon of scallops or a bushel or oysters or whatever that we had that we could share with them.

There was always mullet. But we shared what we had. It wasn't something that we kept for ourselves. We never felt selfish about it.

I 1: Was there a lot of disparity as far as status in Cortez? I mean, were most people about the same level of socio-economic status when you were growing up? Or were there some people who did have a lot of money or some that didn't have anything?

R: Well, there was some that had more. They had moved in and some of 'em were in better shape than others. But by far though, it was kind of an even keel thing. Even the ones that did have a little bit more, and usually it was a fish dealer, he'd loan money and stuff. It's like the old song "I Owe My Soul to the Company Store". But mostly the status of the people I was around, we all had the same thing. I

mean, our houses looked alike. We were all barefooted. I mean, I'm lookin' at it from the kids' point of view. I never did care about the grownups when I was growing up. I just cared about my playmates. We were all barefooted. We all got our butts beat when we were crazy or had done somethin' wrong. And if we was at one house or another and they were eating, well we all ate. We were just a bunch of kids with a bunch of mamas. I mean, that's really about the way it was.

I 1: You felt as if it was a large family?

R: Oh, yeah. I always felt like ... like Trigger. The house that he was raised in has burnt down. But we spent our time, we might be there or we might be at my house or somebody else's house. We was always around in each other's houses and I never felt uncomfortable when I'd go into another home because it was just like Kid Reilly's mama and daddy was tellin' me. Him and Kid was playin' together and his mama hollared out the window and told 'em kids, you get in here and eat. He says, oh mama, I don't wanna eat that stuff you fixed. She yelled back and says, you come in here and eat your fish and grits and have your guava jelly and like it. That was about the way it was. You eat your fish and grits and guava jelly. And I loved it anyhow. I mean, I had no problem. It wasn't always fish and grits but it was a lot of times fish and grits. But to this day I still like fish and grits and guava jelly. If I could find some good guava jelly I'd buy it. I mean, I do. The majority of the jelly that I eat, I found a place in North Carolina that makes good guava jelly. And I have it shipped to me. We used to have guava trees all over Cortez and then some sort of blight or something come in and killed the guava trees. But we was always with a guava in our hand or an orange or a banana. They had those little lady finger bananas. Granny had trees and good oranges and grapefruit and just everything was all fresh.

Granny would ask me, son do you want a lemon pie? Lord, I loved lemon pie and she had a big lemon tree right outside the house there. She said, go out there on Granny's tree and get me two lemons and bring 'em to me and I'll fix you some lemon pie. Boy, I'd tear out over there and all I had

to do was go get two lemons. Then it wouldn't be long and I could smell 'em. I'd see 'em in the window. That's how they cooled down things. They'd stick the pies or whatever they had in the window to cool. I'd go by there and I'd see them pies with that big old meringue piled up on top. Mmmm. Won't be long.

I 1: Was your mother a good cook?

R: Oh, yes. A real good cook. She always cooked the basics. It was always potatos and grits and biscuits of course. That was very high on my list, and still. Biscuits. Very staple. I loved the sinkers that they'd put in the collard greens. My Granddaddy had a garden. They called 'em sinkers. What Grandmother would do would be to take corn meal and mix it up and patty cake it out and when she cooked her greens, collard greens or whatever kind of greens she

used, she would put these sinkers. Other people call 'em different things, dumplings. But it's made out of corn meal. But we always called 'em sinkers because they sank to the bottom. Boy, we'd get those things, you know, after a thing was cold and a lot of the greens would be gone. But in that pot there was always some sinkers still left and when we was hungry we'd go in there and get us one of those big old sinkers and go outside and eat it. There was always somethin' available. A cold biscuit with some guava jelly. I love banana sandwiches. I'd take the bread and put mayonaise and peanut butter on it and slice up bananas and eat banana sandwiches. I eat the dickens out of them things. I was terrible about banana sandwiches. I love bananas.

I 1: Did you eat together as a family? Did you sit down at the table?

R: Yes, it was the one thing that we were made to do. We ate. We didn't come in one at a time or anything. When Mama got dinner ready, or Grandmother, wherever we was eating at. I can remember by Grandmother. This still rings in my ear now. She'd hollar "Dinno". She'd hollar out the back door and all of us were runnin' around and pretty soon ... well, we'd pretty much know when dinner time was comin'. Trigger's mama, she'd yell loud. And my Mama could yell loud. I think them two were the loudest in Cortez. You could hear Trigger's mama, "T R I G G E R". Then it wouldn't be long and "B A B Y R A Y". That's what I was called when I was young, Baby Ray, cause I was a Junior. You could hear Mama and Trigger's mama yellin'. So we knew it was time for supper.

I 1: Your father is a minister isn't he? He's very religious.

R: Yes.

I 1: Did he raise you children to be religious?

R: Yeah, we went to the Church of God. Went to Sunday School and Sunday night service. Wednesday night they had YPE, Young People's Endeavor and they had young people sing and we'd have our little social and stuff. Yeah, I was taught to go to church. I went to church very religiously. Our

whole family was that way. My Grandmother and Grandad was a minister of the Church also. They were very religious and people could hear Grandmother prayin' and hollerin'. Of course, she'd pray for somebody and they'd come up there. And them fishermen could hear her all the way to the docks. She was very noisy about her prayin'.

I 1: The Church of God is Pentecostal.

R: Yeah. They're noisy. I know some of the fishermen used to get outside and watch it and kind of make fun. But a lot of 'em didn't. Of course, there was the Church of Christ and the Church of God. It never seemed to be a barrier because I went to that Church and the others went to the other Church. Some of 'em didn't go to church at all. But we never, as children, had a barrier. I mean, I never looked down at anybody or look up to anybody or feel any

different or have animosities because of their faith. I never even thought of it. I mean, the way I was raised was hey, this is the way we do it. But everyone else, they do it how they want to. I know there was some animosity with different folks that were grown, but as children there was no problem. Once in awhile one of them would act like one of the people at the church, hollarin' and carryin' on, but I'd just laugh at it. It was just a way of life to me.

I 1: That's interesting that it didn't really rub off on the children.

R: Uh uh. Well, I don't know. Being raised in a family that was very religious, sometimes ya get hung up about faith more than religion. Because, what was it Karl Marx said, religion is the opiate of the mind. I never felt like it was a belief. It was somebody's belief. Our Country was pretty much founded on different beliefs. The Puritans and all the other Anglicans and everybody that co-existed. And it seemed like it worked pretty good. As a little community there was a few grown folks that I could hear. My Grandmother and Grandad and my Dad and Mom never made light of somebody else's faith or belief in anything. I was never taught to think that way. They never taught that way. They had their strong faith. They believed and they were very strong in their faith in God and their prayer. Before we ate, you didn't just sit down at the table and say Grace. You had to get down on your knees at the chair and Grandmother would pray over that food. I mean, when you got up and ate, it was blessed.

Sometimes, I'd think whew, I wish you'd hurry up cause I wanna eat. And there was times when she didn't. I mean, it wasn't always that way. It was usually, when you got down like that, it was Thanksgivin' or Christmas or a very special occasion. Especially at Thanksgivin'. Boy, everybody had to get down and she prayed for about 15 or 20 minutes. I mean, thankin' God for everything. And she prayed for everybody in Cortez. Boy, I mean she'd go right down the list, namin' every family in Cortez. I guess that's the reason I never had that animosity because it was never born in me that way. I can hear my Grandmother pray but she always prayed for everybody. Then when she couldn't think of nobody else to pray for, then she'd say

and bless everybody that it's my duty to pray for. I can't remember the name, but if I can't remember the name, do it anyhow. I can remember that. "And all those that it's my duty to pray for". She always said that at the end of her prayers. So she made sure she got everybody involved. But she'd go down that list.

I 1: Tell me a little more about Christmas. What were Christmas' like?

R: Well, it was kind of an exciting event for me. We would get Granddaddy's boat and go down to Crane's Bayou and now where all the big condos and everything are, there was cedar trees down there. They weren't the fanciest things in the whole wide world, but they were cedar trees. And we'd go down there and we'd take Granddaddy's hatchet and we'd cut us a Christmas tree. It was a real thrill to me.

All of us, as many as wanted to, we'd get in that boat and it was quite a trek down there to get us a Christmas tree and take it home. We'd sit down and I'd make all kinds of little things out of paper, but 'em in loops and stars and stuff. It was all handmade. We had strings of popcorn. Some of it we'd food-color. And we'd put a little string of lights on it. Now, that was in my time. Of course, in Dad's time there wasn't even lights. It was candles. But we did have the Christmas lights and we usually had one old string of lights that we'd run through it. And Mama would make a star with tin foil and put on the top of the tree. It was real exciting. It was a thrill for Christmas. And I looked forward, of course, to our presents which weren't that many. But in that age and time I never really wanted that much. A bicycle or a b b gun. Boy, a b b gun to me was a main item. That and a slingshot and I'd be gone forever.

And the Christmas dinner was so beautiful. Grandmother would ... I mean, it was always a family affair. Everybody from the family. And if somebody was down and out and didn't have somethin' we'd always fix for 'em. No one was left out at Christmas or Thanksgiving. Nobody ever got left out. Not any of the people that I knew in Cortez.

I 1: When you say family, what family were included?

R: Well, the aunts and uncles would come from wherever they lived. Georgia or wherever. They'd come down and they'd be there. And of course, Mom and Dad and all their children and aunts and uncles and cousins. Sometimes the folks, well a lot of times the folks from North Carolina ... all the kin folks from where we came out of Carteret County ... a lot of them would come down. We had quite a feast. Grandmother's table would be full and then the table in the kitchen would be full and then we'd put up another table and it'd be full. Gosh, what a bunch of food. It was somethin' else.

I can remember those things that were so beautiful. The way people acted. And then the first thing in the mornin' all of us kids wanted to open our presents and then us kids would get out and we'd have our cap pistols and new bikes and whatever. All the kids in the neighborhood would

be out in the streets. I mean, the streets would be full of kids. That was mostly where we played, in the streets. Or down at the school house in the open parts where we'd play football. We'd be out there and somebody'd get one of those motorbikes and they'd be runnin' around. It was all kinds of diverse things that the kids got and we'd make the best of anything we had. It was always pretty neat. You never heard anybody grumble or complain about things. It was very thankful.

I 1: I'm going to jump ahead a little bit now and go back to when you were out of high school and you were working at various jobs. When did you get married?

R: I got married October 19, 1963.

I 1: How did you meet your wife?

R: Well, I've known her all my life. We only lived two houses apart and I always thought she was a pretty cute gal. She had pretty legs. I always thought wow, she's a good lookin' woman. Of course, we moved away for awhile when Dad went to college and he pastored a church for awhile in Arkansas. But I was always back here, I always called this home, during the summer. I always spent my summers in Cortez. We played basketball and sometimes we'd go swimmin' and bicycle ridin' and then when I come back here to stay and we lived down by Bell Fish Company, we were going to high school together. And one thing led to another. I had a date with Marvin's daughter and Janet went out with this other guy. We double dated and somehow or another it wound up I was with Janet and I don't know just what all went on. But after that it got to be where we were starting to date quite a bit.

We dated for 3 or 4 years. Dated just off and on for awhile because I knew I was too crazy to get married. None of this marriage stuff. I was too nuts and I knew it. Janet was going to college training to be a nurse. I just didn't want to mess up our lives by doing something too fast. That's another thing, I pondered and watched folks just mess up their lives by getting in a hurry instead of getting settled and then do something. So I was pretty calm and level headed about a lot of things that other guys, they were just goin' crazy.

But, like I said, I didn't patron the bars like a lot of the guys did. Drink and carry on. I guess it's because of my upbringing. We started dating quite a bit and finally I decided well, I've got a good job and she's out of college and she's a nurse now. I helped her get through nursing school. So we got married and we bought a house in, not actually Bradenton, it was near Manatee Junior College. A couple of blocks from the College there. That's where we started our life.

I 1: You said you had a good job at that time. What was it?

R: I was workin' for the phone company. Started workin' for the phone company and I knew that the way fishing situation was goin', I didn't want to lose that but I wanted to do more than just be a commercial fisherman. I'd keep my boats

but ... now I'm back to square one again. It's all I do is commercial fish. But I've done a lot of other things. But we bought us a house. My Grandmother loaned us \$200 to make the downpayment. That's a real grin nowadays. The house cost us \$9800. Big deal.

I 1: You can hardly buy a car for that now.

R: The interest was 6% and of course, right after that it escalated to 19% for awhile. But ...

I 1: Janet was a Drymon?

R: A Drymon, yeah. She was a Drymon. OK and Idella Drymon's daughter. She has two brothers, Cooter or Otis and Vince Drymon. They're older than she is. Otis, or Cooter I always called him, is living in Houston, Texas. He's been out there quite awhile and he does electrical work. Vicne

is living in Bradenton and he works for the Phosphate Company out there. He's been doin' that for years and years.

I 1: Do you have any children?

R: Yes, I do. I have a son. The youngest. My daughter is the oldest, she's 26 and she has two children which is Joshua and Coty. Her name is Jennifer Myer now. Her husband is a general contractor and she has a job working at Prudential in Jacksonville. She still loves to come down here. Then my son is 24 and he's married to a Jenny. Her name was Layton and she's workin' for the same insurance company. His name is Sean and he's got his own little work shop and he builds and repairs outboard motors and stuff. They live in Jacksonville. They were raised a lot right here and used to go with me a lot of times in the afternoon. When we'd want some fresh fish I'd get the cast net and take the family and we'd just go and catch mullet right there and I'd clean 'em right at the water. Used to they had a lot of bones and I wasn't going to feed that to the kids so I started skinning mullet and then totally deboning them. We'd take 'em home and fry 'em with our grits and of course other stuff. To this day the kids dearly love it.

Once in awhile my son comes down and fishes with me. He's a big rascal. He's 6'5". Gosh, he's bigger than I am. He's quite a moose. He's a real super kid too.

I 1: Tell me about Cortez. You have a little saying about Cortez. Can you tell me, what is Cortez?

R: Cortez is Cortez.

I 1: What does that mean?

R: The saying, "Cortez is Cortez", means there's an air about it like no other place I've ever been. There's a ... I don't know ... it's kind of like a storybook to me. It's something that you read about but you don't ever really see. People that come here, if they ever get to know what Cortez really is, then its always in 'em. I mean, they can always relate back to Cortez. It has its idiocincrosies and it's people are diverse. There's grouches and good

ones and in the middle of the road types. Some that's very aggravating. But when you get to the shoreline and you get down around the boats there's a mistique about it and an aura of satisfaction that ... I don't know ... you can look out across the water and even if you're aggravated or somethin' you can hang around for awhile and you forget what you're aggravated about.

You meet with the guys and they've always got somethin' to say to ya. Whether it's teasing you or asking ya have ya seen any fish or such and such. Or telling about what kind of fish they caught. And then looking off across that water knowing the places that you know and the sights that you see and the beauty of it. Every once in awhile you'll go down there and there'll be a big old bald eagle sittin' on Jim Campbell's rock pile. It's that bunch of oyster rocks out in front of Fulford's Dock. For some reason I've always heard it called Jim Campbell's rock pile.

I don't know whether he built something on it or he was over there always gettin' oysters off it or somethin'. Jim Campbell was always doin' something. But its got a majesty about it. I guess it's about as close as you can get to God without gettin' there. It's a little bit of heaven to me. I don't know ... I can be comin' down the road and I'll get to Cortez and drive in and it seems like I've closed the door behind me. And anybody that comes in here has got to play in my game. This is the turf that we play in. And if you want to play by our rules fine and dandy. If you don't you go back through that door and leave us alone.

It has something to do with an escape and as I say, it's the mistique. Even crossing the road. When you go across the road it seems like that barrier begins to open but over on this side, on the South side of Cortez road, there's something about it. The old school house and the fish houses and the church houses and all the riding in here. I knew all those folks. A lot of 'em are dead and gone and some of 'em are still alive.

I 1: There are a lot of symbols here.

R: Yes. It's where I've learned what life is about and even in some of the work that I've done in the past with super rich folks and flying all over the world and doing things, the things that I learned from Cortez have been kind of the guiding light for the stuff that I've done. And I bring these guys to Cortez and take them to the restaurants and show 'em down the dock. They say, wow this is quite a place. Never, never had anybody down here that didn't like Cortez. It just has something like when you itch and you put some ointment on it.

I 1: It feels good.

R: Yep. It does feel good. It has a good feeling about it.

I 1: Do you think that the young fishermen today feel the same way about Cortez? Do they have that same sort of sense of place?

R: Well, some of 'em do. Some of 'em ... as they get a little

older you see some of 'em get pretty rowdy about things. Then all of a sudden they realize what their heritage is. I think that's what happens and they get this sense of value. Like Dutch or some of the others that have moved in. They were never in Cortez in their young life but they've got here and found out, and they're just as protective of it as the individual that seemed like he was born here.

They have a tendency to blend with the mentality of what Cortez is. It don't get erratic in its way of life. The people that have been here have a calmness about 'em that assures someone else that it's alright to feel that way. I know that there's some folks who've moved down here in the last four or five years and heck man, you start talkin' about Cortez and they're ready to fight. I don't know what it is, just an aura that they belong and I guess it's the people that make 'em feel like they belong. It

has to be because you can move in other areas and you never feel like you belong. I mean, you always feel like you're the red-headed step kid. But here once they find out that you're not gonna try to tear up something ... they are cautious. People from Cortez are very cautious. I'm very cautious about folks that come in. I want to know what they're thinkin' before they're gonna get out of me what I'm gonna say.

But once I find out that they're not gonna try to blow up Cortez or something then I'll warm up to 'em.

I 1: Do you think Cortez has changed much?

R: Yes, in a way it has. Of course, the old guard has died and gone on and there's an individualistic Cortez that's appearing. But I believe there's enough of the older fellas like myself that are here to keep it on an even keel. The big crews are gone but it's not by choice. It's by law that's forced a change and there's nothing that we can do about it because the people on the water is not like it used to be. Now you see people everywhere, along the woods, up in little places that no one ever knew about except us and now everybody is everywhere. But there's jillions of folks around and it's havin' to change because of the population. Florida is so popular and the area that we're in is very popular.

I 1: It's no longer an isolated fishing community.

R: Not to a point it isn't because the old time Cortez, the fish dealers were all from Cortez. Now fish dealers are comin' in from Taiwan. And it is making an impact. Yet it seems like it's changing to a point and yet it hasn't been radical.

I 1: It hasn't become part of the mainstream.

R: You've still got that door you go through and you're in Cortez.

I 1: There's still a little bit of isolation.

R: I guess it's the locale and no one can encroach on it.

I 1: Someone said that they see Cortez as a haven.

R: Yeah, I would agree with that. It's kind of like a hiding place because there's no encroachment. Where can you come from? They've tried building the big marinas in the out-basins and folks in Cortez stopped it dead in its tracks. I don't agree with some of the stuff that some of 'em do yet I feel all in all it has its tendency to work out and things will still go on. I'd like to see it back up a little bit, but it'll never back up. So there's no sense in trying to make something that's not there. With life you learn to adjust with things. But Cortez still is Cortez. It hasn't lost its identity by no means.

I 1: Let's talk a little bit about fishing because fishing is changing too, just as Cortez is. You've been very active

in trying to mediate some of that change that people are trying to force on you basically by banning nets. How do you feel about what's happening with that movement and the changes that you see?

R: Well, the way I feel first off, first and foremost, as an American I feel that the Constitution of the United States gives us rights. Those inalienable rights that we have I believe have not just been infringed on, they've been trampled on by people that aren't well meaning either. They know what they're doing and how they're doing it. And the way they're doing it and how they're doing it is not the way it should be. As far as I'm concerned it's as un-American as communism. I mean, I feel that it's more Third Column like Hitler than anything, Facist if you will.

I think that the way they're going about it and looking down their nose at a people who have been and are proud people, they're very plain and ordinary. But a lot of our guys from Cortez have fought in the War too especially and a lot of 'em give their lives. I know Warren Bell was one that got killed there in World War II and he was a good friend of my Dad's. Gray Fulford and fellas that come back all shot up. Marvin Carver has been in all kinds of hot fighting and stuff, defending our freedom. We have a freedom that these folks are trying to take away from us that's not right. I think it's beyond just the Constitution. I think it's God given.

We as individuals, I feel like Patrick Henry, why are we standing just idly by just like the English thought they were right when they was doing what they were doing. Just as much so as what these F.C.A. and other people think they're doing that's right today. But they were dead wrong as far as infringing on our freedom. And this is what I feel. I'm very history-oriented and I love Patrick Henry and I love reading all of these men that would stand up in the face of odds that were so great it didn't look like they could ever possibly achieve what they was after.

Those men that signed that Constitution. They didn't know whether they was ever going to achieve it. They was gonna do everything in their power to get it done because they didn't like their rights trampled on no more than I like

mine trampled on. That's how I feel. I haven't lost my patriotism in this Country and in our way of life and I'm not gonna stand idly by as Patrick Henry said, can't you hear the winds of war coming and the clanking of the chains that they're gonna bind us in? I'm not gonna have it. I'm not gonna have that kind of thing.

I think that's what they're trying to do is chain us into oblivion and I don't want it. I just don't think it's right. I don't think it's American. I think that the way this Country existed and the way ... and we have a way of life and a culture that's just as right as anything. We was here first. We have supplied food for our Nation when our Nation didn't have food in the Great Depression. The food that come out of Cortez was the only township in all of our Nation that didn't have to have any government help.

We existed on our own and we can exist again. But far be it from that. There's something that's deep-rooted in us that's wrong by looking down their nose because when we come to the dock we smell like a fish, we sweat and sometimes it's not a pretty sight when we come in with sweat runnin' down our face and we're grouchy and irritable. But a lot of times when I come in I'm happy cause I caught fish. But it's because I've worked and this Country was built and founded on hard work.

None of the men that come over on the Mayflower, all of 'em had to work hard to get this Country to where it is today. And I just don't feel that a few rich entities that can annihilate a people and a culture because they want it for themselves ... it's wrong. It's wrong. There's nothing in our courts that I can possibly see that would substantiate the philosophy that these people have taken. I don't care how popular it is. I don't care where the person comes from or how he feels about something. If he would go into their culture and try to do the same thing they'd fight just as hard as we are.

If they expect for me to give up and to lay down my armor and my weapons and tools that I do to defend myself in this thing ... I'm not talkin' about shootin', I'm talkin' about the system that we work under, and doing everything in my power to stave off this seeming, looming disaster. And it is a disaster to tear up a culture. It's terrible and especially one that has been going for so many hundreds of years. It's ridiculous. My folks come from North Carolina. They fished up there. It was a way of life and they still do it.

I'm tied to generation after generation after generation after generation of fishing people and because I'm here in Cortez and it's only been goin' on down here for a hundred or so years, big deal. It's still going on. And a hundred years I think you got a pretty good foothold. So I'm gonna do my part in this thing and I'm gonna do what I can to help these folks. Some of 'em can't speak well. I'm one that can talk the horns off a brass goat at about any time, day or night. I have somethin' to say. The ones that can't say it, I'll say it for 'em. But I'm not gonna say it just because I said it. We'll all agree on what to say and we'll

go out and say it. It's like me sayin' it for 'em, so it's all of us saying it. To let this thing die and just go into oblivion without a major battle and go through the court system, even to the Supreme Court, in fighting this situation ... I know it's gonna cost some money. But we can win it because Cortez is Cortez and I don't want to see it go.

As I've always said. I want a preservation of Cortez and a preservation of a way of life that has gone on for a century that needs it still yet with supplying food, our economy the way it is. Putting these people on Welfare or sendin' them back to school to teach 'em a different trade, there's a lot of these guys that can't even read or write. And because they can't read or write, I'm not gonna look down my nose at 'em. I don't care if I was the brightest man in the world, I would still reach my hand down and help 'em out any way I can. And I feel sorry for 'em. I mean, I

don't look at 'em and say well you jerk you should've learned how to read or write. It happened. I don't know how it happened, but it did. And these guys can't read or write.

I 1: Cortez as you know it can't stay the same. It can't remain Cortez without fishing.

R: It'll never ... if the fishing goes, the big money people, the developers are doing everything they can to buy out Cortez. This is a prime location on the water. It's almost totally ... it's got water halfway around it and it's got the channels and everything it would take to make a monstrous big-time money situation for these high rises. And they would love to see us go down so they could make their millions.

I 1: Do you ever feel like it's us against the rest of the world?

R: Yes, I do sometimes. I get very despondent sometimes and what they call in Cortez, in the vernacular, the "black ass". I mean, and I know it's always been told that back several years ago they had a paint called Mary Carter Paint. Somebody would have a rough time catchin' fish and they'd say I'm goin' uptown to buy me four or five gallons of Mary Carter white paint to paint my ass back to white. That's just the way it goes too. You can get the black ass but you can't get it that bad especially when somebody is trying to take everything you've got.

I feel like that I've been robbed. I honestly do. I feel like somebody has come in my home when I was gone and took everything I own and went off with it.

I 1: What is it about fishing that you feel so strongly about?

R: I guess it's about like a farmer that had a farm and he's growin' stuff that he can see grow. I go out there in that Bay and I can see the fish, I can catch 'em. I harvest those things and send 'em off knowing that we as Americans are the breadbasket of the world. We have the most of everything. We have over half of the goods that the world has. We have half of it. And look at our population.

What is it, 225 million? And we've got just about everything and all these other countries, the have-nots ... well they're fightin' us, well it still don't make no difference. I have been taught from day one to share. And why is it that people that have a lot can't share the bounty with folks that don't have very much.

It's something you know, you're sendin' the mullet roe to Taiwan. Still, it's sharing. Something that we do to make our money. And what about the stuff that the Tai's send us. What are you gonna do, cut it off? What these people want is to take the fish, the seafood, and say we'll buy it from other countries so they can play with theirs. That is dumb. The majority of the fish come from Bangladesh, India, down in Nicaragua, Brazil, Venezuela, over in some of the African nations. And it's shipped here. They're the countries that are starving to death. Half the world's population goes to bed hungry.

Ten or fifteen percent of 'em are starving. They starve to death. Tens of thousands of people a day die of malnutrition and they keep saying they want to play with the food. I just can't imagine.

I 1: You really take pride in being a provider. You see yourself as a provider, not only for your own family but for people of the world.

R: Well, sure. Plus I dearly love fishing. It's a challenge to me when I get out there on that water and I have to use my wits. I can't just go out there and run a net overboard and catch fish. I've got to know what I'm doing to be able to get out there and do it. It's hard work. But I love it. I mean, it's something in my blood. I can't explain it any more than someone saying that they like to drink coke. Well, I like it because I like it. To let that go by the wayside and just go into oblivion, I just can't imagine a Country as big as ours allowing things like that to happen.

They annihilated the Indian culture which now, they've restored it. They've annihilated all kinds of things, the Indian Mounds and stuff that was around Cortez. They've leveled it and put high rises on it. When are you gonna stop? When is there a stopping to all this mess? We've got plenty of property and there's land. Everybody don't have to live on the water. And when you armor the shoreline you've lost anyhow. You've killed the nurseries for the baby fish to grow. It's just ridiculous

I 1: Give me your forecast. What's the future for fishing and for Cortez?

R: The future relies on us as individuals from Cortez to get allies with people that are professional. I don't feel any way that we're gonna lose out. I'm very optimistic. I've never been pessimistic about anything. But I feel good about what we're doing. I feel that we're gonna win. That Cortez is gonna stay Cortez by the grace of God and by help from professional folks. And as we're doing this study it'll happen. It'll come to pass. I predict for Cortez that in the next century you'll be able to come to Cortez and enjoy seeing Cortez.

I 1: Cortez will still be ...

R: Cortez will still be Cortez.

I 1: Ray, thanks for doing the interview. I appreciate it.

R: You're welcome.

