

Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage          5/26/93

Ray (R1) and Stargill (R2) Pringle - Oral History "Vanish Culture Project"  
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Interviewer: Mike Jepson

I 1: Just pick out a couple of places that you know and I'll put a number on it.

R 1: Ok, we can start right along here is Wild Irishman's Cut.

R 2: This is it right here? I didn't know that.

R 1: Yeah.

I 1: I'll put a circle right in there. Why is it called Wild Irishman's Cut?

R 2: A man used to live there back in the '20s and '30s and he'd get drunk and come down there and raise the devil ya know? The guys just named him Wild Irishman and they named Wild Irishman's Cut after him.

I 1: Did you ever know his name?

R 2: I did but I don't remember. I knew him pretty well, him and his wife. In those older days I was icin' on the beach for about three years. In '40, '41 and '42. And I delivered ice to 'em. I was just tryin' to think of their names. Of course, when he got old he settled down. He quit his drinkin' and wild ways and all. But that name stuck, Wild Irisman Cut.

I 1: Is there a cut there?

R 1: Yes. Yes there is. There's a ditch right along there just away from the woods.

I 1: Does it run north and south or east and west?

R 1: It runs north and south. Then it stops and then this is the trailer park. But it runs up to here and then it goes into flat again. It comes up in an L and then comes

out.

I 1: So is it sort of a hole there?

R 1: It's actually a little channel that runs in there. It's always been the Wild Irishman's Cut.

I 1: Will mullet come in there?

R 1: Oh, yeah. There's docks right down through there. We'd catch quite a few fish there once in a while. Durin' the fall especially, and I'll get some catches down there every now and then. This up in here, Dad, did that ever have a name?

R 2: No. You'd just say north of the Cortez Bridge.

R 1: Of course, this is Grassy Point along in here.

R 2: Grassy Point Bayou. Then there's a creek there where they used to make moonshine. Gator Mora and Ike Pierce had a still up there. We called it Ike's Creek there at Grassy Point.

R 1: That's right in here. It just runs right up in here. It's covered by bushes now. Ike's Creek.

I 1: That was who?

R 2: Ike Pierce. And Gator Mora pushed his still. Boy I'll tell ya, it scared me when I'd go down that creek. They'd shoot ya if ya went in there.

R 1: Shoot across the water. And then on the other side, this is Jones' Bayou. Then just past that is Cobbs' or Humbug.

R 2: It was owned by Cobbs, that was his last name. Humbug Cobbs.

R 1: His first name was Humbug. We just always called it Humbugs or Cobbs.

I 1: Did he live there?

R 1: He had a marina there. And a lot of the boats, Tink and a

lot of 'em, would have their boats put out there. The bigger boats, Anna Dean and several of 'em. They would take 'em down there and get 'em painted.

I 1: So where is Mr. Cobbs now?

R 2: I don't know. He sold out and left and nobody's kept up with his whereabouts since he took off. His daddy's the one that built it and Humbug, the son, got it when his daddy died and he got to where he was quite a drunkard and he spent the money and sold it so he could keep on drinkin'. I guess he's probably dead by now.

R 1: Then there's School Key off out here.

I 1: Now this whole thing used to be called School Key, it says Key Royale.

R 1: Yeah, that's all School Key. All out here was the School Key Flat. But was this up in here? Didn't you call it somethin' different before they pumped it in?

R 2: It was one of the heads of Anna Maria Bayou. But we had one up in here too.

I 1: You could catch a lot of mullet there couldn't you?

R 1: A lot of mullet and all up in here.

R 2: All over that bayou there. Anna Maria Bayou. That was before they changed it that was the mullet-catchiningest place there was.

R 1: See right in here? This used to make a real big bayou up in here and that was the home of the mullet just about. You could go there about anytime and catch fish. But they pumped it all in.

I 1: So when they build all these canals now the mullet can go in there.

R 2: They dug dirt out of that, they closed up both ends, pumped the water out of the bayou and trucks went way down in that hole. They dug it so deep I don't know as you can find it with an anchor rope. Boy it's deep there in that

thing. That's the best fishin' place there was here on the coast.

R 1: They really fouled that up.

R 2: And then they outlaw commercial fishermen to make up for the mistake and destruction from all this mess.

I 1: So you can't fish in Anna Maria Bayou anymore?

R 1: No, it's against the law now.

I 1: But you used to.

R 2: Oh, yeah.

R 1: Oh, yeah. There was mullet in there all the time. It was mostly shallow in there.

R 2: Yeah it was. Had a few deep spots around.

R 1: A lot of folks caught a lot of fish there. Isn't this where Leebar's staabs was?

R 2: No, that was in Palma Sola.

R 1: Oh, somebody always told me Leebar's was out here.

R 2: I don't know. I thought it was up past the slough. Old staabs, and Alvee Taylor used to strike there. That's what he called Leebar's staabs.

R 1: Up in here?

R 2: Yeah, up past the sleugh there about half a mile.

R 1: This is Price's Sleugh right through here. It's deep from here and then it come right on out like so. It's a natural channel and it's called Price's Slough. Then there was some staabs run out in here.

I 1: What are staabs?

R 1: Docks. The dock washed off and then it was just staabs out there. And it was called Leebar's staabs. Everybody was

always racin' to go to Leebar's staabs.

R 2: Then to Price's Bayou.

R 1: Yeah, this is Price's Bayou here.

R 2: They messed it up too. Boy that used to be a mullet place. Soon as they built them condominiums and all that old fluid and fertilizer and this, that and the other washed off in it. Used to be deep out in it and now it's all filled with a bunch of muck.

I 1: That's when they put in the Perico Bay Club?

R 1: That's what happened. Absolutely ruined it.

I 1: Price's Bayou?

R 1: Yes. Now, this down through here is Clark's Shore.

I 1: Why did they call it Clark's Shore?

R 2: Fella, Clark used to live down in this end here. That's where they had that dock. The dock was there and he lived up there next to old Mr. Price. Pretty close to it. That was back in the early '20s. Then they moved away but some of these old timer fishermen knew them and just called it Clark's Shore. Just got to be a term they applied.

I 1: Again, was this a place to catch mullet?

R 2: It was then. See, since then they pumped up a big old hole.

R 1: They put that Perico Bayou Marina in here and it just ruined things.

R 2: That was dredged and a big hole off here and they pumped that Island up.

R 1: Right off this spoil bank here, it's really deep out there. It's probably 25, 30 feet deep. Just pumped it way down.

I 1: So part of it was the Causeway, the Marina?

R 1: As a matter of fact, right in here ... from here for about 700, 800 yards was an Indian Mound down through there and they just about wiped that Indian Mound out. But there's still some Indian artifacts. You can find some pottery and stuff. And over here is the same thing. They pushed it down and used those Indian Mounds for fill dirt.

R 2: Yeah, the commercial fishermen gets blamed for ecological destruction of this area.

R 1: But that's what's happened. This in here, you can still find a lot of conks with a hole knocked in the end of 'em that Indians did.

R 2: That was the point of the Cortez Peninsula. They dredged it all out.

R 1: That was all Indian Mounds in there. As kids we used to go and play on top of 'em.

R 2: They don't care about no artifacts.

R 1: This down through here is Seven Pines.

R 2: Used to be seven pines that grew on the shore and they named it after that.

R 1: That was a famous place for catchin' fish.

R 2: It makes clear out almost to the channel. It goes out Manatee River to the Gulf.

I 1: So would fish coming out of the River congregate there?

R 1: Oh, yeah. We still catch a lot of fish out there on high tide.

I 1: Let's go back, when was the last time you caught a good bunch of fish at Clark's Shore?

R 2: About ten years ago.

R 1: It's got to where there's a lot of cats.

R 2: And right here at Perico Bayou and that used to be one of

the fishingest places on this Coast too. And it since has almost collapsed.

R 1: Well, there's hardly any grass on it at all. There's very little grass. It used to be solid turtle grass and now there is none. There's very little grass there.

I 1: There's no development along these shores is there?

R 2: No, they put a stop to it but this development up here and that tide runs through there.

R 1: All this water in this Bay goes through here.

I 1: From Palma Sola Bay it goes through Perico Bayou.

R 1: Yes. Out here and out here. All the water here runs this way with the exception of right here on this corner it will cut this way. All the tidal goin' this way, most of it runs through here.

I 1: It goes North. That's strange. You would think it would be going that way.

R 1: It does come out here, but it runs very strong down through there and it's got to where it's so darn shallow you can't hardly get through there.

R 2: All that fertilizin' mess

R 1: They dredged all of this, Popeye's Cut, that's another place.

R 2: It goes just up to the bridge here at Manatee Avenue. That's as far as it goes. Then it gets shallow.

I 1: So it comes through out here?

R 1: Yes, it runs all the way out to the channel out here.

I 1: I've heard a lot about Popeye's Cut.

R 2: Do you have Bird Key marked on there?

I 1: No.

R 1: Bird Key is a little key out there. That's it. That's Bird Key. Back in the good old days they'd stop-net Bird Key. Tink and all them guys were always stoppin' Bird Key. And on this shore, all this from about right here to up here, is Tyler's Bend.

I 1: Now again, why was it called Tyler's Bend?

R 2: Oh, Tyler used to have a dairy close to there. Folks named Tyler and it picked up that name because they had a bunch of cows up in there. The next place with a logical description of course, is just the head of Palma Sola Bay.

R 1: This is all Palma Sola.

I 1: Why is this important though? The head of Palma Sola Bay? Is this a good place to catch fish.

R 1: Tink used to come in here, no one does it anymore, but he used to run a net all the way across this and haul this whole ... see it's deep. Most of all this water, with the exception of right along the shoreline all the way around, was all deep out there. He'd haul that whole thing out. He'd catch the daylights out of the pompano and trout and boy, I mean he'd murder fish up there. I still catch quite a few up there on occasion, but the catfish are takin' it over.

R 2: And them skis.

R 1: Yeah, those jet skis. They're so thick in there now you can't hardly get your net overboard, much less find anything.

I 1: What do you think Tink would say if he saw all those jet skis?

R 1: He'd probably start shootin' with his Pelican shotgun. He had an old shotgun he called Rust. Rrrrr, hand me old Rust!

I 1: To haul that whole thing, how big a crew would he have to have?



R 1: He had seven or eight fellas. He'd haul it with the donkeys see. He'd have the donkey and they'd run that pole in a skiff. They'd shove it out there with them deep nets and he'd haul a whole mess out. Boy he'd tear up the fish. But I still get good catches. See, there's a deep hole over here that they pumped up to fill this Causeway in. But over along here there's a little seawall. That old seawall's been there since I was a kid.

R 2: Even since I was a kid.

R 1: So, I've caught a lot of fish right in here and every once in awhile some here. But mostly down this shore anymore. What there is, there's gotten to be a lot of catfish in it.

R 2: Do you have Warner's Bayou on there?

I 1: We've got Warner's Bayou.

R 1: They don't have right here the Cattedock Cove.

R 2: They had a big old dock there. They'd bring cows over here and haul 'em out, haul 'em onto Tampa and put 'em on them trains that haul North. And they didn't have no railroad down here so they'd load 'em here and take 'em on a boat to Tampa and put 'em on the cars and ship 'em. So they got the name Cattedock.

I 1: That's right near the DeSoto Monument.

R 1: Just right around the Point. They used to bring in a truck and park it here and they'd carry those fish through when it was a real bad Northwestern. They'd carry the fish through the woods and haul 'em on the truck and take 'em to Cortez. I sunk right here, behind there in about 15 feet of water in a hard Northwestern.

I 1: Fifteen feet?

R 1: Yep.

I 1: Did you have any fish on the boat?

R 1: No, just me and another boy. We was tryin' to get home and

two seas busted way over the top of the boat.

R 2: All that in there is irrelevant to us.

R 1: Yeah. Of course, this is the cut off. What we've always just called the cut off. This ditch that goes through here.

I 1: Do you fish in Terra Ceia?

R 1: Yeah, caught quite a few fish there. And there's Emerson's Bayou there. Got another name for this one up here.

R 2: Yeah, we used to call it Clam Bar Bay. I don't know now.

R 1: I think this is Champlaign. But there's a bar that runs all down through here. All the way across like that and we just called it Clam Bar. I think that they call it Champlaign now.

R 2: You know what, we didn't say anything about Price's Key.

R 1: Yeah, it's got that on there. That's where old man Price used to live. They made moonshine there.

I 1: Right on the tip there. Not on Price's Key, but on the tip.

R 1: Right there is where Mr. Price's house was and he had a dock out in front of it and a little seawall.

I 1: So he had moonshine too?

R 1: Well, Gator and them made moonshine up there.

I 1: Did they have to move the still all the time?

R 1: What happened is they'd get after 'em and they'd just jump overboard and let the boat keep runnin' and they'd jump overboard and swim ashore. Then they'd go to a phone and call in and say somebody stole my boat. And they'd have to give 'em their boat back. Keep their moonshine but get the boat back.

I 1: It would be a long swim sometimes.

R 1: Oh, yeah.

R 2: Them old people who lived on that Island called it Price but it was Priest. They were from Germany. Priest was their real name but everybody cut it short, Price, because it was easier to pronounce. When I was a kid I'd go fishin' with my Daddy around there and I've seen them two old people come out on that dock. My sister and I'd go fishin' with my Daddy and they'd give us cookies. We was scared of 'em cause they was German. You know the Germans are very highly unpopular because World War I hadn't been over too long. Around 1930. Shoot, it hadn't been but ten or twelve years. Boy, we'd say Daddy, they may be poisoned.

R 1: So, this is all Clam Bar. Now, this is Terra Ceia Point and Terra Ceia Bayou. This is Hot 'n Tot Bayou.

I 1: How did it get Hot 'n Tot Bayou?

R 2: There was some old guy used to live around there. He was Spanish. But there's someplace they call 'em Hot 'n Tots.

R 1: Africa.

R 2: I think it was a Spanish possession. Africa used to be carved up by European nations and he came from that area so they called where he came from Hot 'n Tot.

R 1: So that's Hot 'n Tot Bayou.

I 1: Good place to catch fish?

R 1: It was. You can still catch fish there.

I 1: What time of year?

R 1: Basically all year round. The only time you can catch fish in there is on high tide because it gets low quick.

R 2: What's this?

R 1: Critical Bayou.

I 1: This is Flounder Pass. Here's Sister Keys again. And I notice, here's Little Bird Key and here's another Bird Key.

R 2: The one in Palma Sola.

R 1: Yeah, that's a Bird Key. One over here called Bird Key.

I 1: A lot of Bird Keys.

R 1: Just didn't have any other name to call 'em. Right here is McGill's Pass.

R 2: Well, that's Big McGill's Pass and this is Little McGill's Pass. Man, them mullet used to get in that place.

R 1: There's kind of a little hole that runs through there and mullet love to congregate there.

R 2: This up here was called Tillis' Bay.

R 1: No, it's Tilette's Bay.

I 1: This says Custer Bayou.

R 2: Here's Joe's Island, is that what it says?

R 1: It just says Joe Bay, but that's Joe's Island.

I 1: And this is Joe Mora, right?

R 2: I forget who that was named after. Joe's Island is just Joe's Island. You aren't goin' any farther than your map goes are ya?

I 1: Well, we'd like to.

R 2: Well, that right in there was called Cream and Honey. We stopped both of 'em and there were blue crabs.

R 1: Boy, I'll tell ya, there were some blue crabs there.

R 2: Oh, there's Hell's Half Acre in Terra Ceia Bay. It's right up here in this corner.

R 1: There are little cuts that run up in there too.

I 1: Why is it Hell's Half Acre?

R 1: Everything in the world would come out there and get in your net. Catfish and crabs and anything. Anything you didn't want.

I 1: So if you wanted to catch some mullet up there you were taking a chance?

R 2: Yes we were.

R 1: A big chance. But you know, it's changed. I caught some fish in there this last summer.

R 2: They got ditches.

R 1: Yeah, the cut some ditches through there now. Used to be all sand.

R 2: What's this say there?

R 1: Bishop Harbor.

R 2: Yeah, and on the other side of that is Moses' Hole.

I 1: Before we go I wanted to ask you about Cream and Honey. Why is it called Cream and Honey?

R 2: Because it was about like Hell's Half Acre.

R 1: Just always catchin' a bunch of junk. It was kind of a tongue and cheek name. The blue crabs over there was famous. You'd run your net overboard and you'd catch four or five hundred head of blue crab in your net. I mean, they'd ...

R 2: That's back when ya had flax and linen nets or nylon nets and they'd just fill it full and start eatin'.

R 1: There's a hole right in here, a basin it makes in there.  
Boy, I mean we laid the catfish low in there. All that  
up in there is bad cats.

I 1: Is it bad cats all year round?

R 2: Just about.

R 1: With the exception of cold weather.

R 2: But that's when it's real, real cold. About like Sister  
Keys. There's always cats.

I 1: Has it been that way?

R 2: Yep. Well, it wasn't as bad back there in the old days as  
it is now. The cats wasn't as bad. Blue crabs were. But  
now the blue crabs have kind of thinned out and the cats  
has got worse. I guess pollution and everything is drawin'  
them cats around.

I 1: What were you going to say about on the other side of  
Bishop's?

R 1: Moses Hole. There's another place just the other side of  
Bishop's, a bayou up in there and it's called Moses Hole.

R 2: What if you head over across the Bay. All them places like  
Scratch Ankle and ...

I 1: Goose was mentioning Scratch Ankle Key. I said I want to  
find that place.

R 1: It's over here. Scratch Ankle, and Gator Hole, Rotten  
bottom, Rattlesnake, Tarpon, Adams Shore, Bunch's Pass.

I 1: How far to I have to go North if I get another map?

R 2: Oh, clear to Pasa Grille.

I 1: You guys fished that far?

R 1: Used to. Every once in awhile we still do.

I 1: What about down this way?

R 1: I fished down in Lemon Bay. But, what's the ditch that runs through there, the channel?

R 2: Mango Cut.

R 1: I fished down around Mango and sometimes a little bit further. Oh, that's a rarity.

R 2: We talk about our grounds from here down here to New Pass.

R 1: Well, this is Longboat so I'll fish down to Big Sarasota cause I catch a lot of fish at Joe's Island.

I 1: So are there any other places here?

R 1: Oh, yeah. We'll get some more here. Of course, everybody knows that's Beer Can Island.

I 1: Yes, but it's not on the map though.

R 1: Ok, and that's Jew Fish and that's Sister's Key. From here where you see that little land split there's a little canal or just a ditch. It runs right down the edge of the woods all the way around to here. It's called Goose's Cut.

R 2: Do ya have the Kitchen wrote down?

R 1: He knows what the Kitchen is.

I 1: The Kitchen will be in there. Show me the boundaries of the Kitchen.

R 1: Ok.

R 2: That key there is Cliff's Key. That's another one. Old man used to go out there and live on it.

R 1: Cliff Harris used to live on it.

I 1: And that's the Audubon Rookery now.

R 1: Yeah, that was Cliff Harris' home.

I 1: He had a house out there?

R 1: Cliff used to build anything you wanted. You'd just go fix it then. Nobody was gonna mess with ya. If you could stand the skeeters, they could stand 'em too. The kitchen comes out and when they'd stop in, this is how they'd stop it. From about here and around like so. And this is the head of the Kitchen. We always just called that the head of the Kitchen. But this all through here was called the Kitchen.

I 1: So the head was up here by the ...

R 1: Right here's the head.

R 2: When they stopped the head of the Kitchen, they'd let it go here and run it over there.

R 1: Everything would drain off this way and when they'd stop the Kitchen they'd come out this way and go ashore here. Then when they'd stop the head of the Kitchen they'd let go and cut it off right there.

R 2: Well, they had that natural basin there.

R 1: There was a real nice natural basin that the fish would settle. My brother and I have caught the snot out of fish there. Now I'm fixin' to draw Coon Key.

R 2: There used to be a bombin' range or target durin' the War.

R 1: That's Coon Key.

R 2: That's where the pilots would train and they'd drop dummy bombs on that thing. Some of 'em were alive. They blew that thing up.

R 1: There are bombs layin' out there still to this day. You can go out there and still see the pins and everything.

R 2: Used to, we'd start there and get a net full.

R 1: This little bayou right in here at the end of Long Bar. See, Long Bar comes out here like so and makes like that. That's Long Bar. And that's Sleepy Lagoon. This is



Bishop's Bayou, this waterway right in here. And this is Porterman's Bend. Down there where the Seafood Shack is. That's where the Seafood Shack is right there.

R 2: You mean Moore's?

R 1: Moore's, yeah. Right in here is Porterman's Bend.

R 2: Or better known as Port Sad.

R 1: Yeah, Port Sad would be even better.

I 1: Why Port Sad?

R 1: Well, everybody said you'd go down there and get all sad.

R 2: Don't catch nothin'.

R 1: And there's Sleepy Lagoon. We always called that up in there the Buckaneer because the Buckaneer Inn was up there. And then right in here is the Buckaneer. This is Sleepy Lagoon, but right in here is the Buckaneer. This right here is Black's Point. This place up in here is Finley's Bayou. This is where you come through and right there is the Old Man's Hole.

I 1: Who's old man?

R 1: Well, some old man used to come out there and hollar at us.

R 2: With a shotgun.

R 1: He'd carry on and try to run us off. We always called him the old man so there was a hole right there and the mullet boy, they'd get there and you'd catch the daylights out of 'em and we called that the Old Man's Hole. Then all this in here is Crane's Bayou. Wait a minute, it takes way off out yonder. It takes the whole thing up. And there's Whale Key. It's too bad it don't go on down cause that's the Farms and the Nursery. Right in here is Harris' Rocks.

R 2: A guy, Harris, used to own that. That was Albert Fugh's daddy-in-law. No, his step-daddy.

I 1: Harris' Rocks you wouldn't want to be putting you net out in that area or was there a place where you would want to fish?

R 2: Yeah, but not with a kicker boat. But with a skiff that's wonderful.

R 1: Yeah, you could get in there and catch the daylights out of fish. This is Cabbage Point and this just Bayshore Gardens Flat. There's Bowlee's Creek so we don't need that. And the next one would be Riggins'. Let's find Riggins' here.

R 2: Named after the millionaire used to live there back in the '20s.

R 1: It makes a hole up in there like so, a channel. That right there is Riggins'. Crosley's at the Manatee County line.

R 2: Crosley's was designated by fishermen as the haunted house.

R 1: Yeah, old man Crosley lived there but we called it the haunted house or Crosley's.

I 1: Any good stories about that?

R 1: Yeah. I'll tell ya what. An old woman came out there in that hat and you'd look back up there and she wouldn't be there.

R 2: She was sittin' there on the seawall one night and I was by myself. She was lookin' down at me and she looked just like a woman I found drowned over on the beach. Just like her. Hair stringly. I said, hi there. She says hey. I said, you want some fish. She said, no thank you. Boy I got out of there. Instead of her gone, I was gone. I beat her to it.

R 1: And of course Ringling's is right here. This is Ringling's. And the hole in the wall and the purple cow.

I 1: The purple cow, is that the big purple building?

R 1: Yeah, we call it the purple cow. You can go right on down this side and there's the Farms and the Nursery and Cory's Dock and Cory's Point.

R 2: Yeah, a guy named Cory used to live there and had a boat house there.

R 1: Cory's Dock is first and then Cory's Point is on down and then the Farms and the Nursery and then Country Club Shore and Goldie's Cut. And then New Pass.

I 1: Do you remember the Ringling's?

R 2: Oh, yeah. I used to be with my Daddy and they had an old yacht up there and we'd have a strike and they didn't bother ya. The captain came up there with a pretty uniform. Mr. and Mrs. Ringling would go up them steps. Boy they was dressed up fit to kill. I'd just look with awe.

R 1: Well, Mr. and Mrs. Crosley would always come and speak to ya.

R 2: Them folks would come down there and treat ya just as nice. And it's strange how the boogers come down here and change. Used to the tin can tourists didn't act like these do now. The guy that owned that trailer park right there, his name was Joseph I. Sty. He was the one that developed it and when he died his wife sold it to them present owners. And when he was found dead and this was about 1943 or 1944, he had 150 pound trout in his boat. He liked to hook and line. Boy he could catch them trout.

R 1: We forgot one place. The cut that runs up there at the head of the Kitchen.

R 2: Oh, Strat's?

R 1: Strat's Cut. Strat Corsey. Wyman's daddy. He dredged that thing. He had a yacht. You could see him comin' up. Here he'd come. But he dredged that hole through those woods up to his house up in here. And you could see him. Here he'd come. Chooga, chooga, chooga, right on through the woods. Drunk. He wouldn't go fast. He was friendly as the dickens, but that was Strat's Cut. I knew there was one place we forgot.

R 2: Him and the kids had nothin' to do with each other. There

was Elena and another girl and Strat and Wyman. Four of 'em. When they got out of school they just ostracized him. And the old man and old lady'd go out there and get drunk and anchor off Tidy Island and stay out there a few days and pretty soon they'd be choog, choog, choogin' back up to the house. They wouldn't bother nobody. And them kids, I think they were ashamed of 'em or somethin'. I don't know. He was an attorney and he never could make it. He had the ability, but that bottle just ruined him.

I 1: They homesteaded here didn't they?

R 2: Yeah, at first. Then he sold it to the Eisenhowers.

R 1: It was \_\_\_\_\_, but we'd call 'em the Eisenhowers. They'd get a kick out of that. I'd say how are you Eisenhowers doin'. He'd laugh.

R 2: When we was in high school I remember the old school bus carryin' Strat and Elena and they'd get off down here and walk way up in the woods. And it was thick up there.

R 1: When I was a kid we used to go up there and hunt alligators. There was a 16 foot alligator out there.

R 2: It had an unusual kind of wood on that Point like cork wood. I forget the name of it. You can pick up a whole tree. And it had them trees all over it. Real light wood, just like cork. I forget what they called it. And they went down there and bulldozed everything out down there and messed the Indian Mound all up and everything.

I 1: The Indians were utilizing that wood along with the sealife and they made good use of it.

R 1: Yeah, those Indians stayed there for a long, long time.

R 2: You couldn't sink that wood.

R 1: Balsa. Probably Balsa.

R 2: Man, it was just like a cork. We used to cut it up and make us somethin' to paddle around on.

R 1: I imagine you could make a dugout out of it.

I 1: Tell me about the woman you found drowned. When was that?

R 2: It was in 1941 and she was floatin' on the edge of the water down toward Longboat Pass Bridge. About a mile this side. I was on an ice run. I drove an ice truck deliverin' ice and I saw her down there and got the constable. Back then they didn't have a cop, they had a constable and a justice of the peace. I got him and we went down there and pulled her out. He found her car up there and it had a note in it. She had swum way off and couldn't get back. To commit suicide. She was depressed and that's what startled me about seein' that woman down at the Haunted House. It looked just like that woman that we pulled out of that surf. It looked just like it was reincarnation. I wasn't gonna take no chance. Maybe she's back to get me for pullin' her out of the water.

I 1: Since we're on that subject, are there any other ghost stories that I should know about? Out there on the water or the surrounding areas.

R 2: Yeah, but there was always human beings connected with it. They had spooky fishermen like up there at Clark's Shore. Mr. Clark had a dock out there when I was growin' up and a teenager and it was a pretty good size dock. Had a cover and everything. Guys would stop-net on Clark's Shore on the land side of the North Bridge. Wasn't nothin' there but just a shore and that dock. And they'd go up there to sleep at night to get out of the dew or rain. And they had two or three guys on a couple crews that was spooky.

So one or two of 'em would get up there in the loft and start shakin' their nets and makin' all kinds of noises and they'd get out of there. They wouldn't stay. There's things like that just went on constantly. They'd scare each other. A lot of 'em were superstitious about black cats. There was one here, Gator Mora's brother, Jewel Mora. Trigger's Granddaddy. He'd be goin' down to the dock and if a black cat would cross his path, he'd turn right around and go home. He wouldn't go fishin'.  
No, sir.

R 1: Gator was the worst of any of 'em that I ever saw.

R 2: They had some that they'd dream. If they'd dream certain things about a cat or somethin' like that they wouldn't go fishin' for nothin' in this world. Tink Fulford had a superstition that if he came in on Friday night or Saturday, he'd pull them nets out. And you'd go fishin' Sunday night. But he'd pull them nets out.

I 1: He would never leave the nets in the boat overnight.

R 2: Not over Sunday. And another thing too, if he went out there and had a bad stop, and he thought there was a lot of fish and he didn't catch 'em, he'd make that crew lime and pull them nets out. They wouldn't sleep all night and the next day they'd put 'em right back on again and go back fishin', so that'd change your luck. All those superstitions were abundant around here.

There'd be certain things. You'd see the wind blowin' a certain way or the moon had a ring around it, you wouldn't go fishin'.

R 1: Well, Gator, I fished with him several years back and I come down with a watermelon one day. I was gonna put it on the boat and take it fishin'. He wouldn't get on the boat. Not with a watermelon. He says, we'll get out there and sink and we'll all die. It was very unusual, we was over at Egmont and I was always jumpin' in the water, playin' or somethin' and I found a small gopher. He was swimmin' in the water which is very unusual. I scooped him up and I was back there playin' with him, unbeknowns to Gator. He come back there and he says, what you got? I says, I got a baby gopher. He says son, if you don't throw that thing overboard right now I'm gonna jump overboard. He says, we won't get to shore. We're gonna die before we get to shore. He says, I'm serious. He made me throw the gopher overboard. He was really superstitious.

I 1: When you say gopher, you mean gopher tortoise?

R 1: The Florida gopher. The land tortoise.

I 1: That's just to clarify for the tape. Some people hear

that and they'd say, gopher?

R 1: Right. Well, it's the land tortoise.

R 2: Back there when I was growin' up there were a lot of things that happened like alligators, you know. We'd be haulin' creeks like Bowlee's Creek and there was alligators in there. And they'd be all around our nets. I never shot the first one. They'd get after the fish but they never did chase us. My Daddy, he'd get some by the tails and sling 'em ashore and almost get bit. But that wasn't as dangerous as night fishin' and catchin' rattlesnakes. Boy, I've had rattlesnakes in my net and I tell ya, some of 'em had rattlesnakes gilled in 6-8 net.

R 1: Farmer gilled one in a 4 inch net.

I 1: Were the snakes going after the fish?

R 1: They were swimmin' across the water. No, they was just swimmin'. Rattlesnakes swim. They get ready to go from one key to the next and they'll swim at night a lot. I've seen 'em swimmin', but Farmer had it in the Fall of the year and he had a 4 inch net and boy that thing ... old Farmer had him a time with that. He was tryin' to get that big old rattlesnake out of that net. He was a-thrashin' and carryin' on. And gettin' an alligator in a net was a mess. Boy, they'd roll up and roll that net for 30 yards.

R 2: I know they used to kill a gator once in awhile to eat but I ain't never seen nobody kill one and I've been around plenty of times haulin' up the nets catchin' fish and them gators were all around ya. And I've never seen one try to catch one. Me or Daddy or whoever I was with. But them snakes is a different subject. I was always more afraid of snakes than I was alligators. Boy, them things don't have no respect. They'd fall out of them bushes around your neck. They'd smell fish and them old big red Moccasins about 4 or 5 feet long would get up there and clamor to get in the boat. It makes your hair stand up.

R 1: I'll tell ya another thing is them old big coons tryin' to get in your boat to get your fish. I've had as high as nine of 'em tryin' to get in my boat at one time. I'd be

hittin' 'em with my pole.

R 2: Another problem we don't have anymore, but when I was growin' up ya had to get overboard all the time with stop-net, gill-net, any kind of net. You got overboard. And them stingrays was common around here. You'd almost get killed with them stupid stingrays. My Daddy, I ain't never seen nobody get \_\_\_\_\_ up with stingrays. Great days, he'd use a wash tub and they'd pop in and he'd almost bleed to death. They cut an artery in his leg, and hurt! It's worse than dyin'.

I 1: What would you do? What would you use for medicine?

R 2: You'd put it in some hot water and ask the Good Lord to help ya. About all ya had. One time they had some kinda stuff, it was purple. I don't know what it was.

R 1: It's that stuff they use for bulls when they cut 'em, or cows when they have some kind of sore. It was a purple medicine good for anything. It's a disinfectant.

R 2: I've seen me hurt but it didn't hurt as bad as watchin' somebody else hurt. Them old guys and ya didn't even have a stove to make no hot water. Didn't have nothin' and they're groanin' and Oh Lord, have mercy. Blood squirtin' and it scares 'em so bad. Well, you've got to do somethin' and you get a tournequit to stop the blood. But boy they were hurtin'.

R 1: It does hurt. I've got stung.

I 1: If somebody got stung like that would you take 'em to shore?

R 2: Yeah. Take 'em to shore as quick as ya could. Lord, I was up Palma Sola Bay one day and that guy that owns the guava jelly plant has a dock out there. Sam Watson. We was overboard workin' our nets up and one gouged him in the leg. Boy, I mean he was hollarin'. I took him up there to that dock and \_\_\_\_\_. He said no more overboard. Good old Sam, you couldn't push him overboard.

R 1: It does hurt. I got stung in the leg. One of 'em stuck



me in the leg.

R 2: I was fishin' with this old fella here, Alvee Taylor. Paul Taylor's daddy. He tried to get me and my cousin to get overboard and pull the net around and work the fish up cause they wasn't hittin'. I'd say, Mr. Alvee, why don't you get overboard too. He says, uh uh. He says, Doctor Chilson told me it's against me. We looked down at him and said, it's against us too. Now we quit it altogether. You get overboard now, it's cause your boat's on ground in about this much water where there ain't no stingrays.

I'll tell ya, fishin' has really changed. See today you don't have to pull your nets out and spread 'em. Most of the time you don't mend 'em. You don't lime 'em. You don't have to hang 'em yourself. Somebody usually does that for ya. You don't know have to work on skiffs and scows and net spreads. You had to build your own net spreads and keep 'em up and paint your own boats and turn 'em over. Mend your net and hang your net and lime your net. Now I tell you, you don't do one half the work by no means like you used to do to fish. Fishin' has certainly changed.

I 1: Do you think it's changed the fishermen?

R 2: It has. It's changed 'em. But the thing of it is that back then you was dependent upon a captain and more guys could make it because that captain was a top-notch fisherman and he could make a livin' for ya back in the '30s or '40s when you didn't need but \$20 or \$25 a week. But now you've got to be a good fisherman, each fella, or you ain't gonna make it. Because you've got to get out there and make it yourself. And the guy that's with ya, if he ain't gonna help ya to make it by seeing fish or helpin' you get 'em out and get the boat up and take care of things with ya, you ain't gonna make it either if you've got an old lazy bones with ya. So, it's got to be more self-reliant than it used to be.

I 1: More individualistic.

R 2: Yes. Used to, we always looked up a job with the best captain even if he was hard to get along with. Every one

of 'em that made money was the devil to get along with.

R 1: Oh, grouchy.

R 2: You'd go as long as you could stand it and then you had to quit. Then you'd stay off maybe six months and then you'd come back and you were new again and he'd treat ya good. Then after about three or four months he'd start cussin' ya and abusin' ya, and you'd have to quit again.

I 1: Somebody said that the good captains always had a list and if you wanted to get on with that crew you had to sign a list. Sign your name on the list and when they got down to your name you could get on that crew. Is that true?

R 2: I never heard about a list except in their mind. They always had their minds made up that certain fishermen would help them take care of the net. They'd mend net good. They'd help take care of the boats and knew how to save a fish. They'd find out who was the good fishermen. Who could pole a skiff good. Who could take care of the nets. Who could save the fish scoopin' and who would mend their net good and who would help him see the fish. Well, he wanted that guy fishin' with him if he could get him. That helped him. But boy, they expected you to see some fish too.

I 1: So there was competition among the crew to get on with a good captain, but the captains wanted good crew too.

R 2: Yep. And there was several that was good and you always had to get in line to get a job with them. Except after awhile they got so stinkin' mean wouldn't nobody hardly want to fish with 'em. Like Charlie Guthrie that I fished with.

R 1: Spanish Rocks, ain't they right in here?

R 2: If they're still there and didn't get covered up.

R 1: I got three places here I just remembered. This is the Spaniard Rocks and this is Whitney's Rocks and this is Target Range. They'd pull a thing behind the plane and they'd shoot at 'em and right over here is where they'd pull it.

R 2: You'd be over there fishin' in a skiff and they'd be comin' in your boat just like somebody poured 'em in there. Great days.

R 1: I remember as a little old kid, I thought we was gettin' shot. I dove under the bow.

I 1: They'd let you fish there even though they were bombing just on the other side of the Island?

R 1: Well, they'd shoot machine guns. The fighter planes that come in, and they'd tow a target and them fighters would come in and shoot at that target. Them 50 calibre machine guns.

R 2: They'd let ya. But they put a warnin' sign up there. It was at your own risk.

R 1: That's like them bombs. They'd run ya off. They'd come in there bombin' and they wasn't supposed to be there.

R 2: Down there at Coon Key though, it was not unusual to see one of them P38s or P40s to fall right on out there in the Bay. I've seen several of 'em fall. Two of 'em one day right together. There were pieces flyin'. We tried to pull it out cause we knew the pilot was still in it but that thing was heavier than it looked. We couldn't even budge it. We just called the Coast Guard but he had drowned by then. There was one fell right outside of Longboat Pass during the War and Albert Fugh was out there and that guy fell out there and boy. He had a son in North Africa flyin' one of them fighter planes and he had compassion. Man, he told them guys I don't give a hoot, we're goin' out there and save that pilot and he got there just about when that old boy was gone. Albert told me before he died, every year that guy sends me a card and thanks him for savin' his life.

R 1: I can't think of any other spots. Oh, here's one more place I forgot. That right there is called the Swimmin' Hole.

I 1: Because you used to swim there?

R 1: No, that's where they settled fish.

R 2: You'd settle fish and when you pull the net you're in deep water.

R 1: Yeah, you'd have to swim around. So it was called the Swimmin' Hole. Oh, we've got one more too. I forgot about this. It runs like so. Thigpen Channel.

I 1: Did I tell you we went to Tidy Island and looked at that museum? I contacted somebody over there who lives there and she is sort of the public relations person and she took me on a tour. They built a replica of what they thought the Thigpen Hole might look like. I think it's a little fancier in their mind. But they've got some photographs in there and it's kind of a nice interpretation.

R 2: That was a mean bunch of folks. They'd shoot right over your head.

I 1: That was Mr. Thigpen. He went to trial for that, didn't he?

R 2: Yeah, he got off. They cleared him and said it was an accident, they was just playin' with a gun. That old gal was mean.

I 1: But he shot Mr. ...?

R 1: No, this guy got killed.

R 2: Ms. Rissley shot Jack Thigpen. Right over in that big old house out there.

R 1: What he was doin' was foolin' around. Rissley was Damon's wife, right?

R 2: Yeah, he hadn't married her yet. That was later on. Oh Lord, what a bunch.

R 1: As the World Turns.

R 2: Up here on Anna Maria Bayou about that second mound, this old guy lived there named Swenson. He was a Swede. He was the only fella around that place and he used to offer

Daddy and I some tea. A "coop" of tea. Daddy'd say, you got any ice. No, I haven't. It'd be July or August.

R 1: Is that the fella that was tryin' to give us the puppies.

R 2: That was him.

R 1: "Poopies".

R 2: He said, do you want to give your little boy some "poopies". Then down here on Longboat Key and Crane's Bayou there was a man named Rod Riggers. He was Spanish. We called him Rod Wrinkles and he lived up there. We got some water there one day. He just had a hole dug in the ground. And it was clear and pretty and he said that good water. I took a swig and Daddy did too and it knocked us overboard. It was so salty.

R 1: It was an old brackish mess.

R 2: There was somebody in all them places. Like on Perico Island there, old Mr. and Mrs. Priest. You could always run into somebody, some old recluse that lived there and nobody bothered ya.

I 1: Nothing like it is today. There were so few people that you knew their names.

R 1: Well, even 20 years ago you knew most of the folks that lived up and down the water because they'd always come out and want some fish and there was a lady who lived right along here. Her husband had that sailboat and they were the nicest folks. Well, the husband died and now she's got Alzheimer's. I used to go out there after he did and make a set right along that ditch there and she'd come out and want some fish. I'd clean 'em for her and she'd always bring me some flowers or plants. Here, take them to your wife. I'd say, I don't want 'em. She'd say, oh yeah, you gotta have somethin'. She'd wrap 'em up in some wet newspaper and I'd get 'em and take 'em and throw 'em overboard. She was really sweet.

I 1: What about the River? You didn't fish the River much?

R 2: Yeah, years and years ago before they closed it up.

I 1: You'd come way on up here.

R 2: Cypress Bay, Braden Creek, all them places up in there. We never did catch a lot of fish up there except right in the dead of winter. But along here them Warner's Bayou, that was a fishing place. See, there wasn't nobody livin' in there.

R 1: That's actually Davis' Point. I never have heard it called McNeil Point. That's Davis' Point.

R 2: We'd stop them bayous and haul 'em out and catch plenty of fish. That's the main place that we fish. Daddy, he'd like to go on up there lookin' for coon tracks. I didn't care nothin' about that.

R 1: Cuttin' cabbages. Granddaddy loved trap.

I 1: Did you know the fishermen from Palmetto? Did you have much to do with them or did they resent you?

R 2: Yeah, there was always a clash.

R 1: There was kind of a controversy. Bat Thompson and that bunch. What was the guy you went in the Army with?

R 2: Pillsbury.

R 1: Yeah, the Pillsbury's are kin to my wife. They're cousins and uncles and aunts and all kinda stuff. They got a fish house right there now.

I 1: They had a boat works didn't they?

R 1: Yes they did. And they had a real big fresh water basin where you could put your boat out of the salt water. And they also had a big dredgin' company. The two or three brothers. They were quite a crew. But they're all kin to Marvin and my wife's Dad.

R 2: One of 'em used to live right there. Old Bud. He had that fish savin' place. That live fish place.

R 1: Yeah, he keeps 'em alive and sells 'em to somebody.

I 1: I think it was a Pillsbury that came to one of the O.F.F. meetings.

R 1: Yeah, that was Bud. Bud Pillsbury.

R 1: Well, nowadays the new crews don't have that controversy because there's a lot of 'em that come over and fish. We've gotten to know a lot of 'em. The rest of 'em have moved up this way and fish back this way. But the younger generations don't have the animosity that the older generations did. Especially Bat Thompson and Herman Thompson. Boy, he was crazy as a coot. They got out there and got in a fuss one day and he took his M-1 Carbine out and started shootin'. Shot holes all in the guy's boat and went to jail over it.

Then another guy run his boat, rammed it, and cut the other boat half in two and sunk it. They was always doin' something crazy. But after Bat and Herman and them died then ... as a matter of fact, Timmy Thompson is the grandson of Bat. His daddy was Bat's son and Herman was his uncle. Boy, that was a mess. But when they moved over here and there was another Thompson boy that moved to Cortez. I can't think of his name now. He was kind of a quiet fella. And Timmy's dad, what was his name? He was a pretty nice guy. He flew an airplane for awhile spottin' fish in the Keys. But he died pretty young. He contracted some sort of disease.

I 1: So Cortez fishermen have quite a range fishing?

R 1: Yeah. When I fished with Farmer Capo, a lot of times on a Sunday afternoon we'd leave Cortez and go to St. Pete. We'd fish Tarpon Key and Cow 'N Calf and all them places over there. Rotten Bottom, we'd stop it and Butler's Hole and Scratch Ankle and all them places over there. We fished all of that.

I 1: So if you're fishing someplace up there, how long would you be gone?

R 1: All week. We stayed over there until Friday morning and we'd come back. When we caught quite a few fish we'd call ... there was a phone on the Sunshine Skyway there

and we'd call and tell them we've got fish, send a truck.  
We'd unload 'em at the Skyway. But we fished all of that.  
Scratch Ankle Reef.

I 1: Why is it called Scratch Ankle Key and Reef?

R 2: Bugs.

R 1: Those no-see-'ems would come out and they'd make your  
arms almost black. I mean, they was just in your eyes,  
ears.

R 2: They called it somethin' worse than that. Scratch A S S.

R 1: You hear the cleaned up version. Boy it was, I mean  
there was some bugs over there.