

Carole Allen

Interviewed by Jen Corrinne Brown

January 30, 2017

Telephone interview conducted in Corpus Christi and Houston

Jen Brown: ...if you want. [Carole had started talking but I didn't have the recorder on yet]

Carole Allen: Okay.

JB: Okay. This is Jen Brown. It is January 30th, 2017, and I'm on the phone with Carole Allen, and we're here to talk about her involvement with sea turtle conservation. Do I have your permission to record this?

CA: Yes, you have my permission.

JB: Okay, great. Thank you. Um, so perhaps I could have you go back then and tell me about your early life.

CA: Okay. Um, I grew up in Illinois, and when I was about five or six, my brother had gone fishing and brought home a little red-eared slider, a little water turtle, and I was fascinated with it. I thought it was the cutest thing I ever saw, and I tried to keep it and others over my childhood years and wasn't successful. I lived in a little bitty town, and no one knew much about them, so my mother had written to the St. Louis Zoo and told them I was trying to keep turtles and not having success, and they'd get sick and die, and what they'd recommend. Of course they told me that they needed special diets, special light, and all those things so she suggested that I, instead of trying to keep real ones, that I collect turtle things. I started this monstrous turtle collection that has lasted years, years, years so that my house is full of them (both laugh), my yard, buy them on shirts. I get a lot of turtle items, and of course, any birthday, Christmas, I would usually will get a turtle. So, I married another Illinois person, and Bill and I, he was a geologist. He's no longer living, but he was a geologist, and we ended up in Houston. I saw an article in the paper about the National Marine Fisheries Service had two thousand hatchlings, sea turtle hatchlings, and of course someone that likes, loves turtles, was very much interested in this. I went to Galveston, I live here in Houston, about an hour and something from Galveston, but not that far. I went down there and saw these hundreds of Kemp's ridley hatchlings, and there were a lot of people around, everything looked good, successful, and I learned that they were quite endangered and our government was working with Mexico to try and increase their numbers. I went back home, and a couple years passed, I guess, and I decided to go back and see how they were doing. When I went back, there weren't many people. One of the staff told me that they had received a grant to raise the little turtles, but that money was running out, and that the project was probably going to over. So I asked the lab director, Dr. Ed Klima, at that time, what—you know I couldn't stand the thought of them not trying to help this turtle if it was going to become extinct, which it was going to, the Kemp's ridley. And he said, well he normally couldn't say anything about raising money or anything else, but he said, the main thing here was that the turtles did not have a voice, they don't have a constituency because, working for the government, there was a limit to what he

could say or do, so I said, well, you know, I'd like to work on this, I don't want these turtles to be extinct. I came back home and my daughter was in Oak Creek Elementary School, which is now Reynolds School, but she had a principal who very interested in getting kids involved in things. What happened first was a field trip on a Saturday for anyone who was interested in the turtles, in seeing them, to go down to Galveston. Well, the lab director didn't think anybody would show up, but they did, like a couple hundred people and kids, their parents. We had just a great turn out, and after that, the principal called a meeting of students who were especially interested in the turtles, and they got together and they formed a group, and they named themselves HEART, Help Endangered Animals-Ridley Turtles, and that was the beginning of HEART.

JB: And what year was this?

CA: Yes, yes, oh yeah. I was right there.

JB: And, uh—

CA: I'm sorry, go ahead.

JB: I'm sorry, and what year was this?

CA: Oh, this would be 198—let's say 1982, right in there. The Galveston project had been started by the government in 1978, and it maybe had a four- or five-year life. I came in with the HEART, interested kids and people, at the end of their budget year. At that time, he said, Dr. Klima said, if you want to help, we could use some letters to, you know, for lobbying to your senators, your representatives, to the president. The turtles need a voice, and the other thing that could be done would be to raise money and feed the turtles and help with the budget. So, for five dollars a turtle, a child could sponsor food for one of the little turtles for like a year, I mean, it's cheap, it was Purina turtle chow.

JB: Hm.

CA: And it has to be special because it has to float on top of the water and their little buckets, little containers, so they could eat it. Anyway, oh, the kids jumped on that, loved that idea and started raising money. One of the parents, I believe, worked for the *Houston Post*. We used to have two big papers, the *Chronicle* and the *Post*. Well, the *Post* reporter came out, and talked to the kids, and wrote a big story about it, what they were doing. It was a good news story, you know, they were working to help the sea turtles. After that, I was contacted by a lady with Exxon, and she said, can you take donations, are you tax deductible? And I said no. (Allen laughs) We're just a group of children and a principal, so after that, I began to think that people might donate if we did have the income tax status. That was '82. Shortly after that, HEART was adopted by a nature club in Harris County, which is still going strong, the Piney Woods Wildlife Society, and we were and still are, a special committee of the club, so we had the 501c3 status, and after that, if people gave money, they could take it off as a tax write-off. Well, we didn't receive that much, although I think Exxon might have given \$5,000. We were able to print some literature, some brochures about the turtles, and what was their problem. The more I learned, I

learned the problem was that they were being drowned in shrimp nets in the Gulf of Mexico, and at their nesting beach, where most of them live, which is in Mexico, on the northeast beach on the Gulf, that people were taking all their eggs and eating them and selling them, and all that. So, between the two problems, the eggs being taken and the turtles, the adults, being drowned in the Gulf, we were in dire straits. In about '85, I guess, the number of adult nesters at the beach in Mexico, it was just in the hundreds. It was very close to being extinct, and not having enough turtles to continue the species. Probably the greatest thing that I did in all of this is build public awareness because people did not know about the turtle, they didn't know about the species, they didn't know what trouble it was in, they didn't know what was causing the problem. This is really where I started, with education. Children loved to raise the money for the turtle food, and this spread to other schools very rapidly because I was a volunteer. The money that was raised bought the food, or bought educational materials, and went directly to saving the turtles, no middleman, no overhead, nothing, it was (Allen laughs) directly to the turtles. This got bigger and bigger and bigger, and we called any school that raised maybe twenty-five dollars, they were HEART Council, and I issued homemade, a nice little certificate, and we got to the point where we had two hundred HEART Councils all over the United States, and we had one at an American school in Saudi Arabia. (Allen laughs)

JB: Wow.

CA: So that was very interesting, and all of this, I have to remind myself, I did not have a computer (both laugh). All of the writing, all of the letters, everything else was by typewriter, and get copies made at a store or something, but I did not have the Internet that I have today. Over the years, we raised way over a hundred thousand dollars from donations from individuals and kids and a few companies. We bought the turtle food for way over ten years. We bought—they needed at the Galveston lab, they needed a PA system, an answering machine, an electronic scale, we bought that. We raised \$40,000 to build a new turtle house down there, and of course, the camp in Mexico received very little money from the Mexican government, the nesting turtle camp down there. We were able to buy them a generator, four-wheel ATVs, and what else, a Zodiac, a boat and a motor, and all sorts of things for them. We also helped a couple of students, one at A&M at College Station. And just worked very hard to get this story into the media and into every place we could get it. As all of this developed, I realized that we had to have a law about the shrimp industry. That got to be extremely difficult (Allen laughs). That was eight-six, about in there, 1986, and I received word from the US Fish and Wildlife Service that they were very interested in what I was doing and they needed help. They weren't going to get—and the National Marine Fisheries Service, they were not going to get anything done about the shrimp industry unless they had a lot of backing. And, of course, we had, starting in 1973, we had the Endangered Species Act and the turtles were included, but nothing really was being done. National Marine Fisheries Services was working on a device they called the turtle excluder device. In the beginning, it didn't work very well, it was very heavy, it was set into the shrimp trawl, and then when the turtle got caught in there, they would have a way to get out, but it didn't work very well, the shrimpers didn't like it, and the word got out that this thing wasn't any good, and that it cost money, and the shrimpers didn't have to do it. So we had not a good receipt of this from the shrimp industry. Well, you know, that was too bad because the sea turtles belong to all of us, not just the shrimp industry, and they are able to go out into the gulf and catch shrimp and make a living. And, the turtles didn't have a chance, they get caught fairly easily in shrimp

trawls. So this started the battle (Allen laughs) which really was very difficult, um, there was a—let's see, it had to be federal and state also because the Endangered Species Act is federal, so a resolution went forth from the Marine Fisheries Service and also Fish and Wildlife Service, and there were hearings all over the place on the gulf. Now, there are shrimpers on the East Coast, and we were not just talking about the Kemp's ridley, we were talking about the other species being caught in shrimp trawls and they're drug along, and they drown because their oxygen breathers like us. It applied all along the Gulf Coast and on the East Coast. For some reason, the East Coast found much better cooperation from the shrimpers there and there was one man in particular who invented a turtle excluder device that worked better than the ones the government had. His name was Sinkey Boone, and I was able to meet him at a meeting, and he was just an ordinary guy, shrimper, and he didn't think the shrimpers would have to drown turtles, if they would get with the law, get with the turtle excluder and save a lot of turtles. So, um, I testified about this, I wrote letters, I got the schoolchildren to write letters, all the nature clubs write letters and support the resolution, and it was very hard to get it going. The shrimpers simply denied the fact that they caught turtles, and it was just really incredibly tough. I spent, like, eight hours days working on it. My husband was working full time, and my daughter was in school, I felt like that this was something that needed to be done. We kept working on it, and we had hearings and everything else, and it was a federal law so the shrimpers went to their representatives and senators. Their biggest friends were in Louisiana and Mississippi. We had a very good friend, Representative Kika de la Garza, who is in—he lives down in South Texas, and he was well known for protection of wetlands, and also, did a lot of legislation in the fields of education and the environment. He was very helpful, and somehow we managed—I think he helped a lot (Allen laughs) get budget extended for raising the turtles at Galveston. That was a big victory there, to keep on, because their numbers were declining, until we get some laws going protecting the turtles from the shrimp industry, then we need to keep trying to do whatever we can to prevent them all from being drowned. This went on and on, and the National Marine Fisheries Service unfortunately decided not to raise them anymore. I don't know, there was competition then, as there is now, for various budgets, so they were going to quit raising them, and I made a personal trip to Washington to lobby for continuing this program because it was such a tremendous educational program. We had educated the country about the Kemp's ridley turtle, and this whole generation of children, but they couldn't see it, so they stopped with raising a couple thousand hatchlings which Mexico gave us every year. It was a gift to the people of the United States. That was a difficult time, but we did get the legislation through Congress. Now about the time it went through, the shrimpers were putting up a really big fight about it, and they proposed that the installation of the turtle excluder be postponed until a big study would be done by the National Research Council. The good thing to happen in Congress was that they said, okay, we agree there should be more of a study, although there were so many studies then, it was crazy. Marine Fisheries Service had put observers on boats. They knew, I mean they knew, they were drowning the turtles. Anyway, the Congress said, well okay, we can do this study, but we're not going to wait to put the turtle excluders on the nets. That was a big, big victory. They got on with the study, National Research Council did a very detailed study, and that was in 1990, and they printed a book, and when they released the findings, it was incredibly true, and it stated in no uncertain terms that the greatest threat to the existence of sea turtles was their interaction and being caught in shrimp trawls. Well, of course, then the shrimp industry got all uptight about that again, and they knew they'd lost, but they weren't ready just to put the turtles on. At the time they were supposed to do that, then there was a big protest, something like the scene across the

country today, but this was only the shrimp industry. They blocked the Houston Ship Channel and also, they did the same thing down at Corpus Christi. But the ship channel, when they did that, it cost millions of dollars. They stopped the huge ships from coming in from all over the world for two or three days, and it cost millions of dollars, and the Coast Guard was out there, and I think in Corpus Christi somebody fired a gun up in the air.

JB: Oh, they were out in their shrimps boats blocking the channels?

CA: Yes, yes, yes. Blockaded here and down in Corpus also, but that did not do them any good because they lost millions of dollars for the shipping industry and the Port of Houston, and they broke the law. The law was put the turtle excluders on and get out there and shrimp. [added later: I don't know if you want to add anything else to this, but during the battle to get Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) on shrimp trawls in 1989, the Secretary of Commerce was Robert Mosbacher. The Congress had already approved this law, but he was pressured by the shrimp industry to take some action to delay or stop implementation of the regulations. This caused confusion within the industry and law enforcement. Finally, US District Judge Thomas Hogan ruled that "Congress has spoken" in the matter of sea turtle protection and there should be no delay in the implementation and law enforcement of the TED regulations. Although there were rough days ahead, this was a major step forward.] It was a very difficult time right in there. It was, oh let me see, it was around the nineties, '91, '92, and they really were not cooperating either. We had to get to work to ask the state and the federal government for more law enforcement. They had to go out and stop the shrimp boats, and see if they had the turtle excluder installed and even if they did, they had figured out how to close, how to sew the hole shut, where the turtle was supposed to be able to get out. This is very contentious, very difficult, and in 1994, I recall that date because it was such a bad summer. There were like hundreds of dead turtles found on the beaches of the gulf, Texas all the way down, dead turtles. Well, it was really an organization which I ended up working for, the Turtle Island Restoration Network, and also other groups, filed a lawsuit against the National Marine Fisheries Service for not protecting a species covered by the Endangered Species Act. At that time, the state then called in every warden, every law enforcement person they could get, to board boats, not only in the water, but when they came in to shore, and see if they had a turtle excluder, and if it was installed right. As you can imagine, that was a very difficult time, and when all the law enforcement came, and when the shrimpers were being checked, then the number of strandings, or dead turtles, immediately went down. They proved right there that this was the problem, and that the shrimpers have to be regulated, there has to be law enforcement or this wasn't going to work. It's probably the same thing today, there has to be law enforcement, it's like people speeding. If there's not a DPS officer somewhere out there, they're going to speed. This is the same human body of people, they're going to, you know, break the law if they can, which is too bad, but that's what was going on. So by then, HEART was extremely well known and so was I, I made a lot of enemies in the shrimp industry, but there were a number of fishermen that understood that they can't expect to make their living from the Gulf of Mexico and then not cooperate in protecting an endangered species. That was a very difficult time. I did get a lot of awards from the government, from other groups,

[US Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of Interior)
National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA)]

National Park Service (Department of Interior)
 Lone Star Sierra Club Hermann Rudenberg Award
 Piney Woods Wildlife Society
 National Wildlife Rehabilitators Award
 Houston Zoo Allen Reiser Award
 The Environmental Awareness Award from Seaspaces Scuba Divers
 Houston Sierra Club Special Award and Conservation Award
 Turtle Island Restoration Network Lifetime Award]

and I think it would be difficult to pick my favorite, but I think some of the best awards, I consider awards, are letters from children across the country who wrote to HEART and wanted me to protect the turtles, and I have a lot of them, and they're treasures. I remember one day, the mail came, and here's a little envelope, and it had a little piece of paper in it, and on it was taped like a nickel, a dime, and a penny, and a little boy signed it and said, please help the turtles. That's one of the best things that I received, and I also was able to work with a lot of very, very outstanding people who helped so much. The HEART organization will, one reason I'm glad to talk about it, it will probably, you know, it's kind of fading away, I want people to pick up the work that I have done. When it was most well known, Dr. Dave Owens at A&M at College Station was extremely helpful, Dr. Andy Landry at A&M at Galveston, also Dr. Charles Caillouet, who was with the National Marine Fisheries Service, and Dr. Donna Shaver who's with National Park Service, and also Dr. McKinney, Larry McKinney, who's now at the Harte Institute, but he was with Texas Parks and Wildlife then, and I think they recognized that there was a very big need for public attention to the problem of endangered species, and particularly endangered sea turtles. I appreciate their help a lot. We had to have a lot of help, a lot of teachers, a lot of science teachers, I might say, and other organizations, the Sierra Club. You ask about working with the Coastal Bend folks, we had a very strong group with the Sierra Club on the Coastal Bend, and they also realized, even though, for them, they're living among the shrimp industry, which is more difficult, I live away from the coast about fifty miles, but they were very, very helpful. And of course, I don't want to forget Ila Loetscher, the lady who first, I would say, brought attention to the sea turtle issue on the Gulf Coast and she lived in way south Texas, and she appeared on television with a little green sea turtle, she was on Johnny Carson's show, and she had this little turtle, and he had a little sombrero on (both laugh), and he had a little sarape, and everybody saw this little turtle and her, and said, gee, you know, that's a neat little animal, and we don't know about them. She gave educational programs at Port Isabel for years and years, and I really admired her, and I thought, if she could do this, do her work living right there, with the shrimp industry, I mean, gee, she's certainly no chicken (Allen laughs) so I knew I couldn't be. Anyway, it has been rewarding and I think what would be the two things was public awareness. We had to have public awareness and education or we weren't going to get a law to get the turtle excluders on the shrimp boats, and I think that was my, legislatively, my greatest accomplishment that I'm very proud of because I was the only one on the gulf, the other organizations, National Wildlife, let's see, the Center for Environmental Education, they were on the East Coast, the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club was on the West Coast. When a newspaper writer, an editor, wanted a story, they always want both sides, and they could call the Sierra Club or someone with one of the big organizations, but I was the one on the coast, I was easy to talk to and they could call me up and talk about the sea turtles and what we were doing and why and all of that. I worked directly with HEART, it was still a volunteer group, until 2002. I had gone to

work because my husband passed away, and I was working for the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, I was their public information officer. I learned that the Turtle Island Restoration Network would like to have a representative on the Gulf Coast, and I jumped at that (both laugh) so I became the representative for them on the Gulf Coast, and I just took HEART with me, all the people, and everything. [added later: Their executive director, Todd Steiner, is a pioneer in sea turtle conservation. He is credited with bringing about pressure on the Mexican government to close a sea turtle slaughter house by obtaining photos secretly and showing the world. The Mexican government also enacted laws to protect sea turtles.] I said, you know, HEART is HEART, and we're all interested in the same thing: we want to save endangered sea turtles. It's still known, although the longer it goes, it may not be, so that's why this recording is so important, to point out that this was truly a grassroots organization of children, parents, and the public, and they did a tremendous job in pointing out, look here (Allen laughs), you need laws to protect these turtles, and you certainly need to have enforcement of the law, that's where it went. We have an office in Galveston now, there's a very wonderful hard worker, her name is Joanie Steinhaus, and she's down there, and she's very much involved with patrolling beaches. (coughs) Excuse me. She gets volunteers together and every year they get out, and they look for turtles on the upper Texas coast because they do nest up here. If there's any disappointment in my work, it's the fact that the government is not flexible in trying anything new. We would like to keep the eggs that the Kemp's ridleys lay on the upper Texas coast, and have them hatch out up here, let the turtles go down and get in the water, so maybe we can build a bigger nesting group of turtles on the upper Texas coast, but the Fish and Wildlife and Dr. Shaver with the National Park Service will not, at least up until now, they will not even allow a program of any kind to even—a pilot program to try that. That's very disappointing. I've tried to work on that for a long time.

JB: Do you know what their reasoning is for that?

CA: Well, their main reason is that, um, the plan for the recovery plan for the turtle was written in 1978. They pretty much maintain that that has to stay in place, and it does not recognize the fact that we could have more turtles up here and a population. They just simply won't give it a try. I love Dr. Shaver with all my heart, she's dedicated her life to saving the ridley, but she just won't hear to it. Dr. Landry, he emphasized that, if we could do this, we could build another population, and depending on climate warming and all this, it would not hurt to have another population of Kemp's ridleys. And, especially, you know, we just took this big hit from the Deepwater Horizon. We don't know for sure what is the long-range effect of that. Nobody knows how many turtles we lost right there, covered with oil, the food supply was covered with a dispersant, covered with oil. We don't know long-range effect of it, and why not give this a try, you know, keep the eggs up here. The people would love it. The people in Galveston always have wanted to keep the eggs up on their beach, maybe the Galveston County state park, release the turtles, allow kids and students to go down and watch the turtles go, and yet we can't get anywhere with it. That has been extremely disappointing, and after you work on something for a long time, people just seem to give up. I really haven't, but I don't see us progressing, and the people of Galveston, their city council, their county commissioners, they all would like that, but the Fish and Wildlife Service they won't try it, or Dr. Shaver. All the eggs have to be dug up, and driven down to the National Park Service, down at Corpus Christi, the national park down there. Now, it isn't exactly good for eggs to be moved either, and we object to that because if you

bounce them around very much, it will ruin them. They won't hatch, and she has hatched out a number of the ones that have been moved, but I think it's a risk that is taken unnecessarily to move them. As I say, we haven't gotten very far. There's one project, maybe the last thing I mention here, that I think that Galveston needs a more public show of what they've done down there for years, not just the Marine Fisheries Service, but the support of the public too. There's a school, Oppe Elementary, that petitioned the state, it would be two years ago, to make the Kemp's ridley sea turtle the official sea turtle of the state of Texas, and they wrote a resolution, they gave it to their representative, and they went to Austin, and they got it passed, so (both laugh). Yeah, it's wonderful. They had a group called the Green Team, and they still have one, but that particular group worked for the sea turtles, and that brought more public awareness also. As a result, I think that Galveston should have a statue, a sculpture, of a Kemp's ridley sea turtle. There is one down at Rockport, and I inquired about it, and I found out that the gentleman, the sculptor of it, would work with us to get another one made, of course it's expensive, but anyway, he'd help us get one made and put on or near the sea wall in Galveston. The mayor likes the idea, I have quite a bit of support for it, we've raised ten thousand dollars I think so far, ten, fifteen. Maybe next fall, we'll invite you to come over to the dedication of the Kemp's ridley sea turtle in Galveston.

JB: Yeah, that would be great.

CA: Yes, I'm excited about it. The people, the city, have supported all of this going on. They support National Marine Fisheries Service, and we used to have an open house every February around Valentine's Day because our group was called HEART. We did that for several years, and we had busloads of students coming from all over the Galveston, Houston, Beaumont area to see the turtles. People want to see them. People love sea turtles, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, it's a federal property, and you can't just go in there and look at the turtles, you've got to get permission and all that but when we were doing the open house, that was before 9/11 so it was easier to have groups of people. When the Mardi Gras started, it was about the same time I guess, about now, and we began to have people on their way to Mardi Gras so the competition was too great, and we quit doing that. They have an open house at the National Marine Fisheries Service so people can go and see them, and one of my wishes would be that there would be—there's several places on the East Coast that have a rehab/educational center for people and rehab for turtles that are brought in. One of them's on Jekyll Island, one of them is Juneau Beach, one of them is down in Miami, down in that area. I know that we could have one in Galveston. I know that there would be so many people who would want to come and see turtles, or a turtle, if it's not releasable, just being able to walk in, maybe give a donation, buy a t-shirt or something, and see a turtle, and there'd be educational exhibits and volunteers could run it, it would be wonderful. I hope that happens one day because there are thousands of schoolchildren in Harris County, in the Houston area, that will never be able to get to Corpus Christi and get to the national seashore because you have to go the night before so you can get up early and see the release of the hatchlings.

JB: Um-hm.

CA: Well, a lot of kids in the Houston area cannot afford to do that. Their families cannot afford to do that, but they would be able to get up early and go down to Galveston and see a release of

hatchlings. There's a lot of potential there, if people would just—I don't want to say bureaucrats (coughs) excuse me, I'm getting a cold, if they would just get behind it and say let's do this. And we can do all sorts of other things, you know, but you know how that goes. The right person has not seen the opportunity to have a turtle facility that is available to the public. The federal one never will be, they can't operate, having the public pop in there, but an educational rehab center, like there are other places, there are several. There's another near, I think, Panama City, Florida. Thousands of people go, let's go see a sea turtle and let's buy something, let's get a necklace or whatever, but everybody likes sea turtles, there's very few people that don't. I think there's really a lot of possibilities so maybe when they hear me, they'll say, oh, maybe we'll go down there and do that (both laugh).

JB: Yeah.

CA: So, is there anything that we did not cover?

JB: Do you mind if I ask a couple follow-up questions?

CA: Sure, go ahead.

JB: What town in Illinois did you say you were from?

CA: I grew up in Hillsboro, Illinois.

JB: Okay.

CA: I was actually born in Jacksonville, but Hillsboro is Montgomery County, it's about halfway between Springfield and St. Louis. Are you an Illinois person?

JB: No, I'm not, actually (Brown laughs).

CA: Okay (Allen laughs).

JB: I just wanted clarification for the record.

CA: Oh, okay, well it's down state from Chicago.

JB: Okay, and what year did you move to Houston?

CA: We moved here in, let's see, 1970. See, I am eighty-one years old, and my husband was with Sun Oil, and they were bought out by Texas Gulf so we moved, we went first to Lafayette, Louisiana, and then we moved over here, and that's seventy, so I've been here a long time. Um, but that is why I was able to drive down there to Galveston to see the turtles (Allen laughs).

JB: Um-hm.

CA: It was great, it was great. I've had a wonderful experience. I've been on a couple of releases where the Coast Guard released the turtles, and I've been all over the place giving speeches. I did go to Chicago, to a herpetological club. I've been to California with the Turtle Island Restoration, and all over Texas, and let's see, just a lot of places, most concentration in Texas because the teachers want to be part of it and many of them think, well maybe we can get the kids down there and see the turtles and there are a lot of field trips that are arranged to go to Galveston to see them. I just try to keep things stirred up.

JB: Yeah. Uh, you mentioned—did you ever make it to Mexico?

CA: Oh yeah, I forgot about that. I went two times. I went before all this drug cartel thing started. I was able to see a turtle nesting and going back to the water, which is a thrill, and I saw how they removed the turtles from outside the—they move them into a fenced area where they're safe and rebury the eggs. Now, they've gotten so many, they have to leave some of them in place, I'm sure they lose some, but the situation is a lot better, but they're still not out of the woods. We lost a number of them, nesting was down the year after the oil spill, and a couple years later, I went back and took my daughter Jane, she's a pediatrician, and she was in high school, I guess, and we went back and saw everything again. I took a couple teachers with me. They've received a lot more money since then. It was very primitive. We built, HEART built a little building so we could get in it at night, and we had fans, but it was still terrible, it was the hottest place you ever were.

JB: Hm.

CA: And, um (Allen laughs) yeah, but then after the drug cartel thing started, it's in Tamaulipas state, and I don't think it's really safe anymore.

JB: And we're talking about the Rancho Nuevo nesting grounds?

CA: Yeah.

JB: Okay. Yeah. Um, just kind of shifting gears here, why do you think the shrimping industry specifically in the gulf was so hesitant to, um, adopt the excluders?

CA: Well, the early TED, they call them TEDs, the early ones weren't very successful, but the later ones are lightweight and worked very well, but unfortunately there was a man over in Louisiana, he wasn't a shrimper, but a shrimp processor, his name was T. John Mihalovich(?), okay, he started telling the shrimpers of Louisiana, we don't have to do this, we don't have to, we don't catch any turtles, and we don't have to do this. Of course, he was egged on by all the shrimpers and they just got the idea that they didn't have to use the turtle excluder. Then, they came over here to Texas, and of course you know how people are, here's a man, we don't have to do that, you know, we're not going to do that, we're going to fight it. He caused really, he's dead now, but he caused the whole thing, very charismatic and got this huge following. I remember when I went, we had a federal hearing in Galveston in the courthouse, and when I went down there, actually I'd get pretty scared because, uh (laughs), you know there were hundreds of shrimpers and a lot of Vietnamese shrimpers at that time, and I think there still are,

but they had been convinced, no we don't have to do it, don't have to worry about the turtles, we don't catch them, which is of course a lie. There were hundreds down there. I'd get up and start talking about it (laughs), you know, I was speaking for the turtles, the Endangered Species Act, everything. I remember at one, the shrimpers started yelling at me, what does she know about it, and the man who was running it, he told them that other people were going to speak and if they want to stay there all night, they can, but everybody was going to talk. I didn't really enjoy testifying because, you know, it's not fun.

JB: Did you have any other—

CA: And it had to be done. What's that?

JB: Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you there. Did you have any other instances where people were saying things like that to you?

CA: Were mean?

JB: Yeah.

CA: Well, let's see. There was a hearing up at Clear Lake City at the University of Houston, and that was a state hearing, and there were—you know I took my daughter, and there weren't many, there were a few of us. That's the thing, there were always more shrimpers than conservation people, but I know one hearing at Galveston, I got a lot of people that came. They came from A&M, they came from everywhere to support the turtles, the TEDs on the shrimp trawlers, but the one at the University of Houston, they also started yelling, they just didn't agree to the research that had been done and they'd just yell in general. They'd yell, go away, you don't know what you're talking about, things like that. I did get a few calls on my phone, and I finally changed my number. My husband was dead then, and I didn't put Carole Allen, I put C. H. Allen because I was getting too many calls, they weren't like awful threats, you know, just kind of unpleasant.

JB: Yeah

CA: So, I never put turtle or any kind of stickers on my car because you never know. I used to go to Galveston a lot more, but now that we have the office, Joanie does that, and of course the law is passed, the law is through, and the main thing we have to do every year, like this year, the turtle people need to make their voice known to law enforcement. We expect you, we want you (unintelligible). They did a good job boarding boats and (unintelligible). We had a lot of difficulty with Louisiana, they fought it and they got a law passed in 1987, they got a law passed when the federal law went through, that they would not allow their law enforcement to board boats in state waters, they could on federal waters, but the state waters go out, not too far, but five or six miles, and you can have a lot of shrimp boats in five or six miles because the turtles are in the shallow water quite often. We worked on that for years and finally last year, a woman sponsored a bill that—is that you?

JB: Um, no, I don't think so.

CA: Okay, maybe I did that. But anyway, she sponsored a bill finally, and most of the legislators over there they were ready to support it because there was an organization that (unintelligible) They filed a motion and they redlisted the shrimp industry of Louisiana and that means they're telling people that you eat Louisiana shrimp, you are hurting the environment, you are killing turtles, and did you ever hear of that?

JB: Um, no I haven't.

CA: Okay, well, that was very successful because a lot of the big food producers, there were a couple big ones, that said no, we have people that won't buy that because you, Louisiana shrimpers, you are redlisted. So that was a big force to get this passed. The last year, she finally got that passed so (unintelligible) so it's not been easy because of things like that, that go on and on and on, so you know, every year, I think it gets better for the turtles, I'm hoping that it does continue. I'm not as active as I used to be because I think and hope that, you know, people that are picking up the challenge and going on with it. Turtle Island Restoration Network is very good out of California and so are Oceania, Defenders of Wildlife, and a lot of good groups, they know what the shrimp industry—they know what can happen if the laws are not abided by. I keep my eye on it, believe me (both laugh).

JB: Yeah.

CA: Yeah, no, you can't walk away from it. Well, we're trying to get some money from BP from all that, but Texas really didn't get a lot of direct oil, but my point was, but we lost a lot of ridleys, maybe we didn't get a lot of oil, there was some over there, but it didn't get to Corpus I don't think. There was some around Beaumont, over in there, but not much, but it did kill the ridleys, the ridleys were migrating over there. So there's that, too. Hopefully we don't have any of that anymore. There's a lot of trouble for the turtles. They get hit by big boats, they get hit by little boats, and sometimes killed. There are still shrimpers that try to find a way not to use the TED, it's just a constant, it needs to be constant vigilance for them. Now you can do the same.

JB: Yeah, hopefully. Um, is there anything else you'd like to share?

CA: Um, let's see, I'm looking at my list. Well, I just hope, we have a new administration, and we don't know what that will entail. I certainly would encourage everybody to belong to a group (coughs). Excuse me. It takes a large group that has someone in Washington to go to the representatives and senators, you know, representing the membership. So, I hope not only will people make calls if they need to, you know we can all call our representatives and senators, we can all do that, but also belong to a group that has the funding and has the people in place to go to Washington and to give them a hard time if they're not protecting not only the turtles but all of the marine life, all of the natural resources, all the federal parks. I think right now, particularly, we need to ask questions. What is the new president's view of all these things? So, just be aware and don't ever think that you can't speak up, and you should speak up about things. I guess that would be it. I can't think of anything else. I've done all my notes. If you have any other questions, or if something doesn't make sense, just call me back.

JB: Okay, great. Well, I appreciate you talking with me today.

CA: [added later: In closing, the most recent project I am working on is helping raise the money for a bronze sculpture of a Kemp's ridley sea turtle to be placed near the sea wall in Galveston. Several people are working with me including Mr. Robert Lynch or the Kempner Foundation, Mr. Ed Sulzberger, both of Galveston and Mrs. Joanie Steinhaus of the Galveston office of Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN). (TIRN was established in 1987 in California as an all-volunteer, grassroots organization dedicated to saving endangered sea turtles.) The proposed site of the sculpture is Menard Park near 28th Street. It will be an attraction and educational opportunity for visitors who may not know the history of the Kemp's ridley sea turtle and the years of support of the people of Galveston for its conservation.

The Galveston Sea Turtle Sculpture Project operates under the auspices of a recently formed community development group. Members include representatives of the business community, city government, the arts community and various environmental organizations. The group is led by Ms. Carole Allen, a well-known sea turtle expert and environmental activist. Ms. Allen serves on various boards and committees and is a long-time member of the TIRN board.]