

Interviewer: So we're in Port St. Joe, it is August 7th, I believe 8<sup>th</sup>, August 8th and we are with Danny Ratfield.

Danny Ratfield: You with Ratfield, Raffield, Raffield and I answer to Ratfield.

Interviewer: Raffield.

Interviewer 1: Sorry, Raffield, okay.

Danny Ratfield: Raffield.

Interviewer 1: Raffield.

Interviewer: Sorry.

Danny Ratfield: Yeah it's okay. I'm just call me.

Interviewer: It is most important name in the area, right. We know about that.

Danny Ratfield: Yes but yeah welcome, glad to hear. Early on, I alluded to how important it is for you all to do what you do and for a program to document, you get a timeline. It's not history into, it's recorded, or otherwise it's hearsay. So anyway, anything I can answer my reflections, glad to do it today.

Interviewer: So maybe let's start back what's the earliest memories you have from this area or stories you've heard from your family, what was fishing like here at the beginning?

Danny Ratfield: Good people, whole of what the earliest and even into my, and to me being a young man into my 25, 26 years old. But in the beginning, the area was very sparsely populated as a whole, the city we had around 4,000, 5,000 people in the area. And as I grew up, I was born in 1949, we had industry arrive into our county, which was changing as to the surrounding area. If you were to zoom out now leading to the industry, we live in a sea of trees [00:02:00] to the east, it's one of the largest areas of green, over satellite map.

Now, when I grew up, the town was primarily the people that lived here, either worked at the paper company, they harvested ponds, and planted ponds of sustainable resource. And they did that from, I think, they opened in 1937 and they closed in 1996, I think. But with all that said, that begin to set the feel of this Gulf County, we had a natural deep harbor here, one of the deepest harbors in the Gulf natural.

And that was one reason why the industry of the paper industry chose here, the trees and resources. And the owners of the company owned over a million acres of land at the time. So I grew up in the shadow of a paper company, we could tell which way the wind was wrong by looking at the smokestacks. And in fairness, most of the smoke was stain and set our clocks by the sheriff whistles. And with that all said, my dad came here he fished here as a young man, his father fished here and his grandfather fished here in this area.

But when the paper company came, the canal that is sound here to your right, was dug 1937. With that said, that made Gulf County think of the name Gulf County is truly, they chose the name correctly, because the county had very little bit, the very little [00:04:00] protected

places to top boat, you had Bay, but the bay could be rough. It wasn't a place to just anchor or top boat. So they dug the canal. This was the first protected place only bay and consequent to that my dad started and business working here right after the canal was dug down before he was fishing.

And they were doing the best they could a lot of time they carrying the fish back to Bay County and back west. So growing up here, there was the bay I can remember my dad saw another vessel. We might have seen him early in the morning. But if he saw that vessel, it wasn't really moving going to and from before he would leave, he would go see him.

He knew they weren't commercial. And he was afraid that they may be broke down that we didn't see tourism and recreation for water was very limited. It wasn't until later that the area was discovered for recreation more and more.

We all had it. We all into it, everything that it had to offer a paradise. Here, there's not another Bay, in the whole Gulf like this one that might have been in the past Tampa Bay and different ones. They had a lot of things we had. But that's brought us to where we are today. And there's a lot of reasons why St. Joe Bay has survived is had relatively to most of the years, little bit of impact from boating and this at another as far as recreation in the last 20 years, it's become more and more [00:06:00] sought after and our people is -- people is coming here are getting more and more.

So the impact of people, has an impact on the habitat but would you like me to leave me a little bit, how you would like me to pursue, continue just...

Interviewer 1: Yeah I mean if you could talk a little bit about the history of fishing, what kind of fishing your family did and?

Danny Ratfield: Well, of course, this is audio and I can point folks who listening to it. But this picture over here is a good example. That's about 1900 and I'd say is about 1905. That picture was taken in the days before it was available. So it was a medium to preserve fish.

And what they're doing, they're splitting that and they are cutting the heads off as my grandfather and my uncle into the boat to send back was called Isabel and both the PFUC [indiscernible] [00:07:14] bowers and they brought the fish and they're to the table, they're working on there. And that is a splitting table own shade over, they are standing in water and the deal is to cut the heads and guts out of the fish like throw them in the water and the crabs and the catfish and different breed leaving a hob out there he is getting, no it was waste treatment. But also that was a place, I could split these and they salt them, salting processes, you salt it into watertight [00:08:00] or barrel those days dry salt, with rock salt to turn the flesh down.

Normally you would turn to flesh down, some people do it little different but they fill that barrel with dry salt and then they would cover the top of that barrel with whatever they had like it was [indiscernible] [00:08:24] three days later, the salt was dehydrated pour water on the pitch, they pull them back out the barrel and dry salt them again, put additional salt and then they would store them into other barrels to be shipped and salt on average would last a good year. A lot of in-land interior they traded with Georgia and Alabama and interior Florida.

Lot of folks who got their fish, they want and they will keep it in a cool non-refrigerated but in a room out of sun and they would eat it, they call it out the barrel. They would reduce into smaller barrels to sell. Here this story about tie and everybody knows the name Chick-fil-A, it one time my daughter worked for the corporation Chick-fil-A in their corporate office and there was an open house around Christmas and with her working there, we are invited.

So we got into a line to and meet and Mr. Cathy, Truett Cathy the founder of Chick-fil-A was there and he is out passed on that but still I found the tail, he grew up in [00:10:00] Georgia and I would have told my daughter Emily I said you ever get a chance to talk to Mr. Cathy asked her would you like to have any coach to Florida safely who will send himself and tell him she was at home but in the receiving line, I got there and I wanted to make what I said brief thought there was 100 people by then and we got out pitch and I introduce myself and she smiled and I said real quick, I said Mr. Cathy I told my daughter I'm fourth generation Floridian fisherman family. But if you woman good for seafood, let me know.

And I said okay one question. Oh yeah, he was shaking my hand on one hand. And I said have you ever been knew for his age, I knew before I asked him I figured this, I said if you ever had any self love when I did his mind immediately went back to the young boy and his mom and dad, they grew up with love lot. And he remembered those fish he grabbed her shake his hand, he grabbed the fall with his other hand yeah, yeah I remember they come a little. So that was where all that started. And my family and so many other part of your families up and down this coast and different places along coast to Apalachicola coast around hatches St. Marks it goes Caribbean. There was entities fishing families producing a resource that was and consumed for the biggest part of the concern. [00:12:00]

And so farmers and fishermen are very similar, they produce something for somebody to consume. And that's the role that the commercial fisherman or farmer or yoga whoever that set chain recreation produces, entertainment produces fun and food. But the cost when I go catch a snap brownie will tell you how much it cost me for the effort. But it also is a lot of good comes up all this course what the commercial fisherman only do with or way to build a bridge and then everyone could participate in the stops, commercial fishermen thinks as consumer or she's producing stuff and selling it, it is livelihood but that's about to change their population, demand and habitat is one of the biggest things in commercial fishing today is concerned about, we have little bit of initial commercial fishing, habitat that we are losing in Florida.

Although in Florida, you mentioned red tide more and more now we're getting into a point that that discussion is being exchanged on both sides, commercial guys when they up to the waist in motor and they rounded there they're the ones anybody or woodman or somebody, they know what's going on in the forest ahead of them.

And so and now millions of people in the recreation go on fishing [00:14:00] weekends and there they are now savvy in what is in Florida and not only Florida with east any coastal areas he has run off. Mississippi River has got a big issue, a lot of things going on there, Florida anywhere you got a watershed especially one it is connected with agriculture or river system there are some issues that need to be dealt with. And it's a doable thing, the great thing about nature fish if you've created habitat for try good lord when he took the fishes and he fed the moment, you don't have to fertilize it, you don't have to do anything, if you take care of the habitat it will explode and we know that there's cases in nature where nature at times creates a natural thing that does things and we have a downturn in resources from if get too much rain over, too much time naturally.

So nature it just can change but the good thing is I'm not saying that every problem over the habitat is always man but the biggest part, the highest percentage is affected by man, so St. Joe Bay is having issues now collectively over a period of years with one, if you zoom out [00:16:00] and you kind of take you on the airplane take you ride, you might have drove in here, you see all these red, brown water this is not natural, this man is covered by man. So you said while this bay and this and we're talking about St. Joe Bay now in some waters connected it, they're all connected and you can have situation is here effect 20 miles over hydraulics of water works but this canal was dug in 1937, it's 5.8 miles and this is part of the discussion now there's been, I've been preaching this a long time but people are beginning to see culture spend more time but the canal was dug 37, well that created there is a wide hot ground up for 5.8 miles and it runs that direction to intersects into the RC dug and what that says.

Interviewer: Is that so there is there?

Danny Ratfield: Maybe you go ahead, RCW?

Interviewer: Yes.

Danny Ratfield: It was dug in basically what happened here, the Apalachicola River, the overflow or the basin, when the river was high, I used to back up into Lake Wimico and the surrounding creeks and valleys. That man in 1915 took it from 12 foot of water, what they've dug for, all the way to Apalachicola went through Lake Wimico which is in-land lake and when all the way to East Bay. All this is man-made [00:18:00] there's a few places where followed an existing low places of that was one of them.

But with that all said, so this all and then with tree farming and now with they are changing converting a lot of the land, it was traditionally tree farms and which had a base of pine needles and compost a tree. Basically, I think they harvest upon somewhere 15, 20 years for the pulpit. But when you had rain, they didn't really care about much of a runoff in where they planted these ponds.

They put them in Pharaoh's raised it, once they got it going they are pretty well left alone, but they had a large ditch system and roads to harvest. Well now this is just part of the situation, we've got going on today.

Now we're into cattle fall. And there they are just the opposite. They don't want any trees, they want grass. And so acres and acres and acres of trees have been cut, stopped and planted in grass and ditches and et cetera, et cetera had been improved because they don't want where they want cow standing in water. So consequent to that, we get rain. That rain goes quickly now into this for the biggest part into the inner coastal canal, the East Bay, Sandy Creek. Some of it is running and we'll talk about this picture right here. Lot of runoff going there, well this is connected into the Bay.

This Bay were nine where my dad was young fell, he born my dad was born in 1915. [00:20:00]

He fished here, he was already a man he run it, he had a boat by the time this was dug, but this was a clear look like destiny. The only time this bay ever got money was there was which had large amounts of man, see those fish over there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Danny Ratfield: They feed on the bottom, and they have mother. And that's the only time he ever saw mud and the bay is masses of Manheim. Well, so with this all said, I'm just giving you a comparison. So we know this bay was very, very clear. It had very little bit of water. In fact, the Spaniard who came here named this bay France also had a fort but they gave up on this place because it did have readily access of water, fresh water. And they moved on, I believe that they moved to Pensacola that there was a study the history of it.

So, think about this, 1915 we started changing their time, this river the Apalachicola the three river, the flat Chattahoochee formed into Apalachicola. In the old days, when river and you get you range and all, whatever, when it would get a high river it would come and surge and it go into Apalachicola bay. It would back up into like Lake Wimico and at time then a lot of rain, it will actually it had another place called *[indiscernible]* [00:21:47] over on the Gulf, it was actually when I was younger used to occasionally open up and wash out there.

You can go there now and you can see where but there's so much [00:22:00] drainage, the water used to go there is being diverted this way. Now the big attention to the water, such problems in Apalachicola is attention that come from Georgia and Alabama where the farmers in the city, the dams and reservoir well that's playing a big role in but we're losing, when that Bay would normally get a surge of freshwater, you can catch on a high river freshwater catfish here on a real high river.

It'll turn it run for a couple of weeks and never on the top, it's fall the whole time and then course with you mentioned red tide when water runs out the woods and all that, the color of that water is a lot different than water it runs out of air, is it not wooded well now we're having red tide more and more and more.

And when I was younger, the only time that I ever saw dead fish with red tide was from my dad, we fish the keys, commercial fishing, Tampa down that area. Tampa grew up and got bigger and bigger and the runoff that was happening in Tampa Bay, the nutrients gets so hot and they prove that that kicks the natural what makes you tired is natural situation but it over blooms and takes oxygen at work. So we're having more and more issues with red water coming up here than we've ever had.

Interviewer: So one of the things we are doing with this [00:24:00] product is trying to document just where you're talking about time, if you can remember even general timing as well as drawing on the map, so if you remember like in this area where have you seen the red tides, if you could draw those for us or even your recollections of fishing with your father, where have you seen it in the past?

Danny Ratfield: Well, the red tide we had it so much that we've had it in the early days, we know that had red here and saw the southeasterly weather, you know that this is soft and wind at the southeast here you get days of Southeast weather, we start hearing about red tide fish floating out here.

Interviewer: Okay.

Danny Ratfield: This is Florida milligram, the Sally you notice the taper way out here see how shallow all this here, I mean can show, this is a foot map in it.

Interviewer: Yeah. It seems good.

Danny Ratfield: For sure, what is it?

Interviewer: Fathom, some Fathom?

Danny Ratfield: Fathom?

Interviewer: Yes.

Danny Ratfield: Okay. Let's see all of this when you see this was no soundings, this is all shower within Fathom and here but that is kind of. Yeah this is a large one.

Interviewer: Yes.

Danny Ratfield: In all format but so when have Todd in Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor all this down here. You get southerly weather the current we have list of Snapper Fisherman recreational list or RCN group different thing floating out here for this Todd.

Now our Bay, so there are several things that can bring it here, you got to realize [00:26:00] that this right here and this you take an inch of rain and show it's somewhere around 24,000, 27,000 gallons somewhere in Africa I should know, each rain produces 70 gallons. Well, when you get each rain and it immediately goes into drains well it accumulates in things and it comes out here, when it flushes here quote all this red water and one of the things about St. Joe Bay this help save it, this is documented, the bay the water flushes it comes in around the pond and goes up and back, that's why all the years of the paper company was there and they were pulling for many years that give them they do.

They cleaned up their act tremendously before it was closed down. But the water comes around and up and here and then come back out that way. So if you got red tide and stuff, some of that it catches it's just like, you've got the count of the creature that creates red tide when it hits is nutrient rich water, it blooms well that's the same reason it formed up down, it's a natural thing in the water all the time. But when you get this run-off, so it's soccer time bomb clicking, you get summertime, a lot of rain, so what's happening to us now, we get more and more run-off the nutrient levels going up and up and up in the past, it was mainly pantries and such at very little glass, population is [00:28:00] been small.

But like Panama City, its grown here's foot destined, the population got big and big. They have good studies you see how many pounds of natural rich fertilizers sold at Home Depot and different places to a mass of people, hundred thousand, if at all they use five pounds of fertilizer here, where does that go, they put new laws, it goes to cover the drainage in that in the bay or so you just got a situation waiting, so I don't remember any situation to call for any attention with red tide that I can remember any farther back in about 20 years ago maybe a little longer than we thought.

Interviewer: 1998 kind of?

Danny Ratfield: Yeah, that could be documented when but as far as my recollection of that being an issue, I can remember when we get close to that and if you're out in a boat in the nighttime, the phosphorus you can read you watch but when you in it but when it gets sick enough or heavy enough fish they will try to get away from it, a lot of them will but if I get trapped that's why when this goes process shallow water, you pick up a lot of dying.

Interviewer: Right. So yeah so what you're saying is kind of just slowly the winds take it in this direction, fishermen start reporting dead animals and this kind of this general vicinity and I mean is it snappers, is it groupers, is it everything?

Danny Ratfield: It tends to be more when it gets real bad the big fish, when you start seeing macro and stuff like that, but it first shows up groupers and stuff that's on the bottom movement, but [00:30:00] it's not to say that all our red tide originates from here. We're in there now working on our own deal. Same thing.

Interviewer: Right.

Danny Ratfield: Many million people live around Tampa St. Louis.

Interviewer: Yeah, too many.

Danny Ratfield: You find out where that water goes is all trying to get away from there.

Interviewer: Right.

Danny Ratfield: When it gets there naturally you got to the wish I could say Jim and I something, but it explodes and course that they had a terrible time last year, I think it was unbelievable.

Interviewer: Yes of course.

Danny Ratfield: And so we're having more and more as our population grows. Panama City, Panama City is called Bay County. So user base, Gulf County, our County like this. So but then we had this, we got this Inter coastal that drains, all this it drain here, here in East Bay last year some transit fish trout speckled trout over at one of the values over here, I think it's Sandy Creek value they were telling me at the math oh these kitchen speckled trout on the bottom and they fish it some top water and they caught some bass on top, freshwater is on top before it mixes.

So we've got something here, so big problem and then to insult to the injury at Red water, you go down at white sand beach and it's supposed to look like the Bahamas and here we go you know and we've had red water out of this bay reaches far this is [00:32:00] Panama City, that's a pass right there. That's what we call a new pass, you don't have one word of shopper point?

Interviewer: Yes and I think that one might be a good thing going on here. Here is again.

Danny Ratfield: So this pass was dug in 1940 something, think of there's all things to do with water and how it runs in that and what you shore line, we don't have a rocky shoreline, we

have a slack ice cream this white sand and weather system or trend suddenly weather make a beach wash out and in the wintertime it goes back and build a different thing but with all that said and we're talking about red tide, so you got this is what we call the new pass right there, it drains all the way down here just like this and wherever the curve of the Kearney is, it is some important place where the tides rise and fall, that is kind of separate but we've had it get so much of this river get so much of this water getting in here that we've had it go all the way up in the East Bay in their country with all their run-off because they are having the same issue with trees.

And then we got here and now, several billion dollars worth of timber and so as it comes out course it incubates big time in these bays, temperature keeps getting hotter, the color of the water makes it more to get hotter. Yes, yes and it's creating that [00:34:00] situation.

Well, last year we had water come out of this canal earlier and up all the way right there about 35 miles. Now over here Panama City Beach that's and Mexico beach the tourist industry. They don't need red water, people come from Texas here because Texas bigger beaches but there they got mud, they got it's just not clear. So and then the red tide jumps in there, so this is most of this, we've got going on is man-made. The deal is we all get together, you can build a bridge and you can find a way, retain water, do whatever this one, I don't know exactly how much luck they've had in Everglades National Park.

I know they've been working somewhat with a lot of that. But this is some big issue for she got the Mississippi River. It comes out of here. One of the issues with Mississippi River, they've been building levees for years. And course, the velocity of this water when it comes out. You got three passes here but most of it comes out here.

This pass right here, but there's a dead zone out here. Out here and it's growing because this freshwater intrusion, there are lot of things but nothing actually lives there. That's from run-off of course this strange whole interior of America. But Florida is a unique place in as far as water quality and cost consequently there, that kind of water [00:36:00] is not productive for species to thrive and clear, salinity water, scallops and different things. So it really took it on the chin but this year we had a nice natural phenomena when the storm came. It washed the washes into right there. And it stayed open.

Interviewer: That was a breach?

Danny Ratfield: Yeah, it was at Eagle Harbor.

Interviewer: Still making that sort of breach from Michael?

Danny Ratfield: Yeah.

Interviewer 1: I think this is risk.

Danny Ratfield: Eagle Harbor, and you can document how long still do it, one time somebody said it but 14 making foot water. But now this year after the storm remember I told you that the water comes in here, goes around like there come and nobody they've got a hard scalloped count this year and they've had in quite a few years.

Interviewer: Really.



Danny Ratfield: But what it tells me is we've had the salinity, we had two places to bring good water into the bay and goes around, it goes that way. So now it's closed back up, nature closed it back up.

Interviewer: Okay.

Danny Ratfield: But this what's going on right here. You see it out today. So low tide, but that should be green looking.

Interviewer 1: Yeah. You can see where the color changes like that.

Danny Ratfield: Yeah.

Interviewer 1: Lot to see on the bridge.

Danny Ratfield: See that when I was a kid now, this whole beach down to the right with the grass fed was 10 times as heavy as they are now but marine biologist [00:38:00] and all which is common sense. They tell you because of the darkness of the water, it doesn't let sun come in which you sea grass is need Sun is kind of blade grad.

But when I grew up, we used to get scallops down there just as many as it had to buy. But since its dark water that has the habitat is went down, down, down. And so the more we get the fresh water into this bay, I'm going to do something.

So she breach got there but the more we get this outflow of water right here, what saved the bay water comes in and for the biggest part does like this, goes flushing back out down and there's been some studies done to prove this. Now if we have a big high river and a bunch of stuff and this footprint coming out of here, get stay down like this, like in this going this way.

If we were to get set no West or West I would say in the fall year we get the front, it can push this water and up here in the head of the bay. This is land that we have, what we call ball kid, it starts right here and goes around like this. This is from six foot to ankle deep water, all out here. This is where the habitat for so much is there, the trout really beautiful there is not many bays like it but if you shove this water up in there less sunlight, less salinity. [00:40:00]

Interviewer: Okay.

Danny Ratfield: We don't need this, we need to figure out a way that navigation can happen but water stay where water needs to go. They're having tremendous issue with too much salt water here, they've lost all their water beds. The predators that feed on waters proliferate when the water solid, so much stuff who's to pull in the river when river flush, remember we got this southeast wind prevailing over here, it pushes this water and history it come out here and didn't pass right here.

And this called West pass, a lack of water coming out of here from the tides and the pressure this prevailing southeast wind, when the river was high within billions of gallons of water now that's being lost not counting what they're drank and irrigating up in Georgia and Alabama, but just a natural water that we should be getting here is being soft hold off in different places and not coming here when it comes out the river, this water does just like we

were talking about here, there's fresh water, it would come out, the wind southeast it would go across the beds, lies off the bed not two foot under water four, five. But that helps keep the boars and crabs and sea pads and the different things that consume more of that, there is two different habitats.

And the oysters, lack of oysters is telling you that that's what's going on. [00:42:00] They're having success raising oysters there now but they're elevating the oysters all for the seabed and they got them in containers to keep the predators away from them. So that as part of this overall opportunity is here.

Interviewer: I'm just knowing some of the details here, some of it is done.

Danny Ratfield: Right, here is another situation. If it's on this map, there's a cut somewhere right in here was dug in the 60s. Its called sacks cut. When water does come out into this bay, very limited now because you got to remember backing up, coming up here. A lot of it, the pressure. But what goes on here for oysters passed here goes out the pass, how oyster work, so many days from time it becomes waterborne, this guy that attach or if you whatever percentages fat you lose there, go out and go to chances of either coming back in goes to ties basically going down.

So that's all I got to say about the red tide. But the key all is, to me fishery, health of fishery and health whether it's recreational, commercial, habitat, pure and simple. And with that said, whether it's a sewage runoff or sewage not treated properly, nutrient level creates more heat, different things due to the color of it. So there's a lot of things that could be done. And I'm advocate of trying to bring attention [00:44:00] to that. I flew for 30 years now as part of my, I've had a lot of war, a lot of hats. But I had almost 30 years of watching the tide come and go, I flew about 30 years, I probably spent 70% or 60% of my time flying from here to there daily.

And then I also spent time all the way around Florida, spent time in keys, all down to Everglades, up the Eastern Seaboard all the way to the Georgia, Florida line. So and when you talk to any fisherman, they are some tell their experiences.

And it's like anything else. He talk to whatever it is. If his experiences define his knowledge and so you combine the marine biologist and so much as though everybody is pretty well agreeing on, so much of this. So hope somebody hear this and encourage somebody take a look at this. And there's some movements going on now more and more trying to bring attention to this. But St. Joe Bay has declined. I'd say St. Joe Bay has declined 40% as to what remembered in the 80s, early 80s began.

Interviewer: You mean the habitat or fisheries or what specifically?

Danny Ratfield: I think about habitat, water quality, no one's shallower of water, sea bottom is, the [00:46:00] more noises, shallow bays and the more activity boat run in high speed boats. City creates noise, lights, the shower, the water lights on ports, it takes a habitat away from creatures because they live on a day and night cycle.

But when you go to big cities and then glow a light right here, you should be in one of the darkest places on this coast. Right now, I'm going outside. Now we've had the storm, lights are down about from Mexico Beach is down about 70%.

But the glow of the light and of course the total people have pushed in horizontal light is wasted. I don't care in Nevada but there is more and more attention to that trying to put hood and that is nature needs dark. But when you get a city that creates an unnatural situation and fish and thing to do the best to just do it. But if you take this part is taking their habitat away.

Interviewer: So that 2018 about how long did that red water last in this area? And you had said this is a point. Right? I just want to make note, you said in 2018 that at red water came all the way to here. Right?

Danny Ratfield: Well 2018 you got to remember we had a Hurricane in last October, 2018.

Interviewer: Right.

Danny Ratfield: And so my timeline is full storm and I think of summer, I believe it is summer of 18, but this is observations and people make the [00:48:00]news and not at it's things like that are reluctant to lot of times, the tourist industry have locked into.

Interviewer: So basically three Michael, this one, this one.

Interviewer 1: And you said something really interesting that I wanted to ask you about you said that it comes in an incubator in bay.

Danny Ratfield: Well you studied Red Tide and it takes high nutrient levels. So and the more, it let's put it like this, if you were steeping it like tea, the more less movement, really the multiple but once it takes off, it creates its own environment. And I'm sure there's a massive it moves down the Gulf. You can smell it. It stings.

Interviewer: Yes, we can.

Danny Ratfield: it doesn't only affect visible sea creatures but pretty sure it killed plankton and other things.

Interviewer: Do you remember any big years prior to 2018? Are there any years that stick in your memories big red tide years or?

Danny Ratfield: Every year consistently. We've had red tide here now for the last five or six years seven eight, pretty consistent, I mean we've had some pretty big fish keels. If we were to check the news out there, you probably find it pretty consistent to the last 10, 15 years.

Sometime you here, lot of times you smell it and you will never do, you never see fish on the beach but lot of times it has to do when do I think it but these people have trouble breathing from it and that [00:50:00] kind of stuff but that's just. And you know I don't know in reported history, if they were going forward as our past would they have found somebody complaining about red tide in 1800 possible in a natural setting. If I was going guess where it would be, I would say it have been somewhere down the run off there everybody that toward Fort Myers that area. But and so it can happen naturally but man has definitely change this currents.

Interviewer: And can you talk a little bit about how your business practices either from the water quality or red tide issues more specifically have you ever change your business practices or fishing?

Danny Ratfield: We don't change the business practices, but if you got red tide and your business curve goes down, people just don't come. And there with me always waiting calling of the water in the ocean is to point that people they're going to seek the water but if they go to it enough times and you get discouraged, they're going seek somewhere else on the coast are changed. So we haven't got to the point that I'm saying that it is destroying the recreational, but it's impacting I mean go to south forward and look what they experience. They had no bag limit now, a lot of fish down around where Fort Meyers down under and they reduce in the base didn't do it. So end of story man needs to attack the pond. The governor we got now saying he seems to try and create [00:52:00] to vanities, to study it, knew it. In the past, it is basically just hope go by and cleanup and make excuses forward and then showed back up a month later, then it's [indiscernible] [00:52:17] but we got 18 million people in Florida, there peeing in the water. They're fertilized in their yards and it's running into the coastal areas of Florida. And if you have [indiscernible] [00:52:33] there's a pretty well they hold the water, unless you live in a landlocked lake or something finds its way into water system. There's a lock... Florida is a hydraulic lock in Florida. There's up well into water offshore and we would also go destined often the edge of what we call a canyon. This is a natural phenomenon but there's when you have a lot of rain, rivers are high. There's this place in water bowl up, out and go. You will come upon and you will see gin clear water and there's this water cut inland water coming up bowling up out there.

Interviewer: From like a submarine kind of spraying on thing.

Danny Ratfield: And it done always wrong all the time but in a different situation.

Interviewer: But you can see that, you can see from the surface.

Danny Ratfield: Yeah, yeah you can.

Interviewer: Do you have a lot of friend's office in here?

Danny Ratfield: I don't know that many of them but I know that particular one witness it. It is not unheard of.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Danny Ratfield: But there's a lot of algal that it is not all alga bloom I'm first to say it. But...

Interviewer: So where do you want to see this area [00:54:00] going in future like, what your? What would you like to see happen for the fishery, for the tourism, for just the habitat?

Danny Ratfield: I think one first thing, man wanted to do, he was to go back and look and trying to use a model of what before man dug canals here, dug this. I'm not about I'm not saying way. Don't need to be living going forward, but there's got to happy [indiscernible] [00:54:35] when a man does something, there's an effect it'll have either there or collectively down range from on this coast. We know that hardened beaches on a sandy beach. We know that the currents sand beach absorbs more of wave action than hard mall we've got a good

example from Tampa were they have been fighting now for red tide how long trying to keep a road, if you go there now, it goes out into the base. I don't know you're before a month, not they go into golf. Man's trying to find nature. With that said what backs the equation. Look and see how nature created it, see what you can do to preserve that or restore that as best you can to get the results, the yield that it had delivering. If you don't, then you need to be happy with less [00:56:00] this canal here is a great thing, it was built for the paper company to bring off and they tied the intercostal, intercostal were done 1915. It would built all the strength of we're going through the war and they were building forgive World War I ended but they needed a safe place moving thing on it, to move cargo. Inland protected not have to get into golf coming. They will come in submarines they would expose of course World War II it paid off but with that that, then this RCW was going from Apalachicola all way around Brownsville, Texas. And in some places it followed natural just deep in places. But with it all said for this part of the world, this intercostal. So it goes all the way through there, it goes through Galveston Bay behind West end. This is kind of natural whether they deepen the channel. Then it goes back through here, safer through go into there in the Mobile bay going around and then it goes. Okay this is New Orleans. This is Mobile bay comes in the Mobile bay Dauphin Island comes through Mississippi South. This is has less impact on natural drainage in here, but it had a heck of an impact sea connected this bay top pass to bay to West Bay, East Bay, St. Joe Bay, Appalachia Bay. And what was [00:58:00] here before? So we've had 100 and just count is 2018, 1915 this 2000 like 130 years of water drainage that has traditionally been there has been impacted for 130 years. So many times nature can be pretty tough, and it's starts out good but well 130 years. So it's hard to always understand at what point does what man has done get to a point that it has its total impact and I think we're closing in only. We've lost the hospital industry in Atlantic costal. The man has done they made dams all the way up the Atlantic costal and this costal the land they took and bought from the farmers they want. How do you do? So everybody gets find a happy medium. Chances are you don't have to be have last right resources natural in order to have man's convenience but we're not doing even winning, we're not even come close to manage it. So the pendulum started swinging in 1915, 103 years later. I think it is pretty well, it can get worst only. If you go Apalachicola bay most of it turned into sandy bottom tremendous resource is not this ecosystem on that side of Cape. No other place in the world quite like it. And it's still a beautiful, beautiful place, but it is in trouble. [01:00:00] Now we're in trouble this canal. And so how and what you can do? Well, for this a lot Mr. Joe got navigation you know convenient, wide open 24/7. But over there locks everywhere, lake Apalachicola lock on both sides. They trying to manage that water table, water level not table. But... and then the outflow going into the all the water when the rivers high it comes down here. This fresh water you see going into bay if this was blocked out like the Good Lord made it. That force you see it would be trying to go to Apalachicola. Now the water is going up here, all this ground where we've had it here is a where water would park and hold like this they start to dry up to make farm land. So we are still happy to me? Well said I say retain it. Find you a natural low spots that you can't edge out anymore hull and try to let that water they retained to ditch system whatever before it runs into [indiscernible] [01:01:26]. And then over here at Panama City. They need to be pushing hard to do the same thing what's running into East Bay and St. Andrew Bay, West Bay because if they don't this red water is going to fill this beach up that multi, I don't know what to say billions up now already destined tourist industry is going to be is and we [01:02:00] talk about it essential.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit more about and you talk about the history of your families fishing operations here. How it's changed and maybe it would have been sort of big drivers of change over time?

Danny Ratfield: Well, now, the course times change and the population demands fishing industry coming down to Florida, again we clearly are they produced with and usual way. And in the early years, most of it was within 100 miles of where they produced and there this railways and different things. Then product were shifted to New York different places. Earlier than that this whole fishing industry were done about *[indiscernible]* [01:02:57] forward wagon. You have people come here on wagons, a lot of these roads here were wagon trails and they would trade a lot of time wagon come down with cured hams and this, that and the other and they go back and sold them all. In fact, my great grandfather arrived here at least that's what he came here about eight years before he moved inland here on this Easter Bay La Trappe Creek but he would do evaporate more for salt to take back home procure their stuff. So he came every winter has spent the winter here after about nine years he called his family they came on the ox cart, but how it's impacted fisheries is such as a good example. We used to build commercial fishing boats here converted into [01:04:00] Marina. My father had four boys. How did it impact us? We're talking to my father. We talked two generations well. We grew up. My dad was you tell anybody? He said, kept on working. What kind of work did you do? He says, work I never work. You said, wait a minute. You got in boats and all I know you spend hours. He said I don't never looked at as work. I love it. But what he did? Of course it was, but it wasn't he didn't deal with it lot. He enjoyed what I did. So we followed too. We took what he had said to seed goal and he was an innovator. He was one of a kind. I can't he didn't know what that word meant. And he fished from one end of the state to the other. This young fellow, we fish with him I'm on boat young kid, we had Christmas is on the boat in the Florida Keys. Commercial fishing and crew go home for Christmas weekend. We could settle two weeks down there. He would fish Spanish mackerel in the marine time. We down there about three and half months. Normally in the winter months, fishing here was pretty well dormant. Winds too rough. Really too rough, too consistently fish offshore. It's not fish. And a lot of his family would basically hunker down for the winter. Do a little bit of fishing in there by using stuff, as that overall, just kind of make [01:06:00] due and hold on to spring. My dad always went south in that weather. He was adventure. A family man, god fearing man come home on full Moon. In those days it was fishing night for the biggest part we fish about 15, 18 days 20 maybe come home for 10 Moon got big. And we fish on dark edge of the moon up to and so he normally come home about every three weeks. And, of course, a long way mom went downstate. I went to school in Keys and I was in sixth grade, eighth grade. My brothers, I was youngest of four. And there's opportunity grew and different ones up we got older.

We had added boat, another boat and one brother, older brother. He got off the boats and the business grew full enough. He began to handle the fish house and boats and head to head. Somebody to see fish taking care of and sell them. Just another part of the industry. And from that we had two other brothers that were high learners very professional fishermen, have fish boat and I did well, I did good but as opportunity grew and then the airplane showed up to look for fish. Well, I could look more in hour. I could look about 80, 100 miles coast with it Circle or now in hour we can take boat hold from sunup sundown. So I started flying plus, I've work in land getting [01:08:00] the fish out I mean, we did it with our own hands. There was nobody just Mr. Solo himself. Well four of us, we all worked as a family and we grew the business in this opportunity. We had our mentor, our father. We didn't have father looked to work can is and not doing we can't. But we all work together improve our business. And we grew our fishery is one of the largest in the Southeast. So with that, we got in added we sold way, did things, we sold some of the chains try to break into that did very good. Maybe should have start with it. But we had seven main items that we produced and bought outside

of what we call crawfish, shrimp, clams stuff like that mackerel but we as Florida begin to grow and get bigger and bigger and bigger and the overall perception of Florida become forever we had people would come to Florida and want to dance with local. After a while, I'm using this is a term, they got to be more than it was us. And they began to have their own dances and love them all some of my best friends are right to this day we are people that were not retired. And then way went through the days of way. We're up against a big money and a lot of propaganda about fisheries. We worked hard to be in the fisheries to on a balance and substandard yield. We knew that there was enough fish if it was managed right for everybody to participate, [01:10:00] and also people that couldn't afford boat to go catch them, which is a majority of people to have an affordable source of seafood. But we love that well. We didn't have the money to find it. We tried our best. We formed our little groups and we had our little signs. We had our hair tied but now I remember they formed deal and they passed in the Constitution made amendments in the Constitution. The outlaw of fishery then had its little beginning. At the beginning of the history whether it was Indian and now overnight. And so with that we first thing that I saw in my dad was he handled it better. I didn't probably I had old brother. He was good. We all, we've reached in, we found we took basically one of the sayings, my brother Gene use to say, you got lemons, make lemonade. So we began to see what we could do. Ironically, we'd already been producing a lot of baked fish, both for the commercial industry and recreational. So as the tourism grew and the count grew. We were able to begin to focus only the bright side of the fishing industry. And that's basically the only thing that sailed fisheries, this family together, it's going from and pulling over 100, 200 people at one time to probably 33 boats [01:12:00] well 34, we trying to sale one and time are changing. We've had some impact with a net amendment that drove us off shore. Good lord bless this company as Fishery side. There were some areas geographically that was outside of the limit. The problem was basically said, we just push him off shore. They still exist. We'll have all this. This would be reserved area. It'll be for conservation. We'll all fishing that now offshore [indiscernible] [01:12:41] oil. Problem was about 90% where we used to catch with inside or the limit, which was nine nautical miles lot of it 3, 4 some of it. But that's all history that's going but consequence a lot of things changing. We got out of boat building business probably should win in the building. We had a boat of beautiful boat 62 by 24. I had a lounge of wooden vessel with fiberglass. We probably should have went into yacht, traveler yacht it would made a great one, but we kind of begin to regress a little bit. One reason I'm here. My son was unable to go into fishery. There were no opportunity as way everything was falling. Consequent to that but being near the water and still in the water business. And now I get to deal with folks would enjoy, share with them and tell and so [01:14:00] we been drinking lemonade moving forward. But there is, there's other issues with our water, not only this runoff, but we've got other issues maybe it's connected to some of this with our overall. We don't we see some problems with our deeper waters as far as? We don't know if it's a cycle change or what, but there seems to be some changes. We all went through VP and some of that stuff. That's something and come and gone. The biggest thing that we fear about what VP did. Was this person. Now we feel like if they are all had been gathered up it's not hard to gather it up. We know it look bad on sandy beach, but you can't get it out. But this person we've seen a lot of numbers happened after a year 30 years after. And so the jury's still out there but we're moving forward but happy to have an opportunity. So

Interviewer: Thank you very much for all your insights. Really this is really this is much different perspective, we've been getting so this is amazing.

Danny Ratfield: Yeah, I want to say that with bottom line, I've tried to touch a lot of areas but the thing that I want to leave you with is thank the word bridge, we got all these situations. How can we bridge to end up with the best possible thing we can do? [01:16:00] And if everybody has a stake in it and the best better good for generations to come and the ones that are here too. But I think if we make some adjustment, believe at much of anything in the world I think some adjustments will have a huge dividend and it'll be fairly fast. You'll see some improvements close into making the adjustment. Remember, we had 103 years ICW draining doing tying all the sand. Divert in this 37, so whether 37 and 18 or how many years that is? 70 or some. So that's manmade he did this. So how can, we kind round it off to make it you won't get from there to there. So nowadays, you dig a big old channel you don't think about and that was where it used to be. But now we've got all these years to reflect on what has happened. So let's be smart, observed and be smart to it to the point. So how we bridge this situation? That all parties could be happy. For an industry lot won't stop them give them a long approach to come on. We'll have hardly any traffic here, but so we did some developments some become industry. Well positioned a lot such a way, there's plenty of makeup room to get to be locked in. And with that, you see this bay clean. You'll get gin clear, [01:18:00] the only time they will getting muddy is when old porgies get out there digging and our habitat and then there's other things we could do our habitat here. Just I'll look at that bay and this coastline I would like to call. So they're just magnificent national park anywhere in the world. These Grand Canyon wherever we just need to figure out a way all parties could be good stewards of it and this water and I think we'll get some good out. We get in a hurry.

Interviewer: That's a big question. How do we find that balance?

Danny Ratfield: Yeah, well, you know, I think if everybody gets their heads together and they go into it, consider pushing one groups and then more of us that we're going to push you right on out. And hereby say, how can we best bridge this? So everybody's still got a stake in? I don't know, I think a lot of times I'm with my family. We kind of put it on the table. We wouldn't treat ourselves go out and eat. Well one wants to go over here and then there's two kind of likes steak and I kind of step back. But then I got to thinking, Well, if I go with him, I think they got a steak on that menu, I go steak there. And so with that, we always going to have a good time. Lot of time.

Interviewer: Compromise.

Danny Ratfield: Well, any more questions? I'll be glad. I hope I haven't talked too long.

Interviewer: No, This was great we appreciate your time.

Danny Ratfield: This is been our family I'm tell about. This is a great grandfather. And that's his Ben uncle and [01:20:00] his family. Great. This uncle, two uncle. My grandfather. This is uncle Bob and its uncle Bird. That my grandfather. He was a fisherman. That's all they ever did and you know as kid barefooted. Not because we four I mean today standards about them. But you didn't get shoes or kids just kid. But you got a little over seeing and saying [indiscernible] [01:20:31] but my grandfather was politically correct noticed uncle Bob dressed as a Confederate soldier. Uncle Bird is union man. And I have already I guess some of them in jail. See that. They live between here. That picture. You go to Panama City. Go through [indiscernible] [01:20:57]. Don't forget all that it's right there. Two war ship.



Interviewer: Wow. Wow. Amazing.

Danny Ratfield: That's one of the sailboat my grandfather had. And here is a boat I was telling you about is boat that there. And here is our airplane that I flew it for years, war up too.

Interviewer: Wow. Just incredible collection of pictures you have here. A little history museum right here in your office. I love this scale. That's really cool.

Danny Ratfield: That's, another weighing scale within our fish field, same way top. That picture came for some people on it, my dad knew them and I knew one of the man in that picture he was an old man. That's a turner we were neighbors. This picture here is Lake House.

Interviewer: Who's over there?

Danny Ratfield: That's where I live. [01:22:00]

Interviewer: You live in that place.

Danny Ratfield: Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow. That's amazing.

Danny Ratfield: I started it, we hold it and store it, when I was 18. Here is 16 years later, we moved in.

Interviewer: That's amazing.

Interviewer: I always wanted to live in a lake house.

Danny Ratfield: That was you go back toward Guatemala there is a community called *[indiscernible]* [01:22:25] that was the first house there. And nearest neighbor they were able to build.

Interviewer: Amazing. This was really great. That's the area we haven't visit yet?

Danny Ratfield: Well, as you go on this area in Apalachicola, Florida is like a handgun if ever noticed? That's the trigger where we are. And but you go around of course Apalachicola is river port. In the days a lot of cotton come down here. The old city this is called Port St Joe before in 1838. This was called St. Joseph. It was built as a shipping port men out of industries out at Apalachicola and one of the first railroads in south went from lake Wimico down to I think it's 13 mile along the lake Wimico. They brought cotton down the river at Apalachicola. It's not only but then you go back here. They're trying to get too deep water. Apalachicola had put them on barges [01:24:00] on water and take them down to Carterville right there. Load ships. They are kind of like twin cities. They were built one they were both connected. Are you out from this area, Florida?

Interviewer: No, I'm not.

Interviewer: No, I'm from Jasper I've lived in Florida for 12 years now.

Danny Ratfield: Well I will tell you one thing you have to remember. Two things, you've heard too little history things. You've heard of the USS Constitution they call it Ironsides. Sometimes check it out. You came in this bay in the 30s and the school kids gathered up pennies all over America. They donated that rebuilt it and they towed it from Boston all way different ports and they come to here, they couldn't go into here and they brought it into this port because its deepest natural port anchored it right out there. And my daddy was a young fella. His daddy they shuttled people. I forward --. My mother was like 12 years old. She lived inland 25 mile, 50. What about 25 mile. 30? They bust him down and school kids got go board. Well, next door my mom and dad didn't know each other later on. They married, but the Constitution never lost a battle. And there's an old guy talking to him. Talking to Mr. Bailey, I was telling his journey, I was asking this, you remember, yeah son. Yeah, she laid out that I was getting old as all information. I said, Yeah. I said, you know that I've somehow been onboard that boat in Boston. Yeah. And I said, yeah, he say. I went onboard one time. [01:26:00] And I said, you know, I read that boat. That boat never had battleship never lost a battle. He said, Son, that's not right. Yes, you did. And I said, No, Mr. Bailey. It never lost a battle. He said, let go. He said, I'll tell you this. They lost a battle St. Joe Bay and I said, what? He said, Yeah. He said, we had a big square dance in town. And people must come from all over this is in 30s. Then he said, they let half the crew one night and half the next time. He said, they come ashore wearing all those they were in the period uniform with big what bell bottoms and all the local girl, women dancing. We said, we've got a big fight and he said, they lost that battle. The other thing in Apalachicola. I'll leave you is the every time you have a cold drink. Battled some much that's where [*indiscernible*] [01:27:05].

Interviewer: We I heard about, we heard about that yesterday.

Danny Ratfield: There is the Mayor. Well you need more welcome.

Interviewer: Thank you. We love that so much.