

Cory Weyant: Yes, basically. I was born in Oceanside. I lived here for thirty years. I'm thirty years old. I lived in that house for seventeen to twenty years. I guess I'm basically live on the canal.

Nancy Solomon: How about your dad? Where was he born?

CW: Oceanside, I believe. My father is a captain. He runs boat between Florida and New York. He brings yachts to transit to spot as well. As a matter of fact, in the past, [inaudible]. He always worked on the boat. I guess I got into it when I was a kid. I just kept telling him that I worked at bait stations and this and that. That's what I enjoy doing.

NS: Do you remember the first time you went out with him? What that was like?

CW: What? Fishing?

NS: Yes.

CW: As a little kid, they threw me in the river to teach me how to swim. [laughter] My Uncle George, "Hey, you don't know how to swim?" Boom. There you go walk in the water." We used to catch a lot more fish than we do now.

NS: Pollution, I would say.

CW: I guess now you got so many boats running around a hundred miles an hour. Like you said, remember in the marsh this one I have shown you?

NS: Yes.

CW: How that cut used to be little, it just disappeared. In about twenty years, with all the boats running out of here, I don't know, maybe I'll be out of business. There might not be enough left to catch or we're going to die as (easy leaves?).

NS: Pretty much all these sportsmen are taking a lot of things.

CW: Well, no, it's controlled. Everybody pumped in this end and that end. Then it's going to only take so much. It's like the same with the ocean, pumping and crap, and the garbage barge have been running around for how long. I think [laughter] like a year and they don't know where to put it. "Where we're going to put it?" "Bring it back where we got it from. It's been riding up and down."

NS: What kind of fishing did you used to do with your dad? Mostly bay fishing?

CW: Yes. When I was a kid, first time I worked on the dragger, I worked right here on the *St. Peter*. I worked here when I was seventeen, eighteen, nineteen until I was about twenty-one. Then I ran a fish market where I got into the smoked fish with that.

NS: Which fish market did you work for?

CW: I ran a little fish market in Point Lookout, the Jones Inlet Fish Market.

NS: Somebody own it?

CW: Yes, Bruce Larson. That's big packing dock, wherever the packing dock will stop. When I first worked there, that packing dock was a little dumpy dock. A couple of boats within the fish market was little, tiny market. Now the markets gigantic. [laughter] We have five people working. When I worked there, at one counter, I'd see a little old lady come in. They had an old scale. They'd come in and buy fishes, little, tiny market. Then now it's ten years down the line and things are all fiberglass, gigantic [laughter] palace. I guess sell them the smoked fish. I go, "How are you doing?" [inaudible]

NS: Can I throw this someplace?

CW: Yes, pick a [inaudible].

NS: [laughter] We enjoy those. [inaudible] for anything in that.

CW: Yes, sure. We saved the guts for my pals. They're yelling at me. [laughter] "Where's the grub?"

NS: [laughter]

CW: Fresh eel gut.

NS: Your dad pretty much teach you most...

CW: No.

NS: Who taught you what you learned now?

CW: If you lived on Woodcleft Canal all your life, you basically learn yourself. You know what I'm saying?

NS: Yes. There is usually like one or two people that...

CW: You learned from this. Like I said, I worked on this dragger here. That man taught me a lot. I worked on the party boats. The guy has Capt. Lou now. Michael Danon?

NS: Yes.

CW: He has five Capt. Lou's now. I used to fish with the original Capt. Lou with the old man. [laughter] Michael, we were mate. He was just going out for a ride. Then Michael became the mate. So, we get off the boat. Now, look he owns all five of them. So, just [inaudible] in that

account. I worked for [inaudible] beach station down the end. I worked here from when I was like twelve until when I was seventeen. So, I was always around fish. Basically, I go into Manhattan trying to get a job there.

NS: [laughter]

CW: I wouldn't know where to start. "Resumé, what's that? [laughter] I worked on this dragger. I worked on that party boat. We're fishing and the bag has smoked fish."

NS: Did you ever want to work in the side?

CW: Are you kidding?

NS: I am just asking.

CW: I ran a fish market for three years and that was that. "Get out of here." [laughter] That was crazy. Nine to five, five to six days a week, no good. So, right now, well, look, we got up at 6:00 a.m. I'm going to do this, watch smokehouse go, finish that, go in there. Work on traps to do something. I'm not going to go crazy. I'll go down and see who needs what. I'll go down if you guys need eels by the weekend. I'll get yours going around. Just keep the smoke going. What else you're going to do?

NS: Do you know pretty much all the people around here?

CW: Oh, yes, everybody in this block. Like I said, I lived here most. Every place I lived here when I was kid, it wasn't as many traffic. Now, it says they changed the name of the block ten years ago, "Nautical Mile." Everything on the block is nautical all of a sudden. [laughter] The block has been here [inaudible] but now everything is nautical. They sell more and more of these fiberglass boats where they're going to put nautical. Everything is nautical. I used to live on a [inaudible] when I was a kid. Go up and down. There's my father right there.

Male Speaker: I'll catch you later.

CW: All right, dad. I'll be there.

NS: Was your grandfather born around here?

CW: Yes. One great dad lived on Long Beach Avenue. He used to run an oil tanker. He used to run a big oil barge and stuff. They used to call him "Snuffy."

NS: How come?

CW: I don't know.

NS: What is your nickname?

CW: My nickname, "Horsefoot."

NS: Why?

CW: The name of my boat.

NS: I know.

CW: Well, that's the pick one. *Horsefoot* on my [inaudible].

NS: Did you name it *Horsefoot*?

CW: Yes.

NS: How come?

CW: Because horsefeet is something that I need to go eeling.

NS: So, that stands for a horseshoe crabs?

CW: Right. That's another name for horseshoe crab, horsefoot.

NS: Horsefoot.

CW: My grandfather used to go there when I was kid. I didn't know him too much. He died when I was young. We used to go over there and he make a fist and he stick the quarters in it. Then he have his beer with this egg in it. He lived to eighty-seven. I guess he was doing all right then.

NS: [laughter] Maybe a little bit longer. [laughter]

CW: Maybe, who the hell knows? Nobody know when it was.

NS: How far back does your family go around these parts?

CW: Fifty years.

NS: Who is the first one to come to the states?

CW: My father's side of the family lived in Oceanside. They had the biggest farm in Oceanside when I was a kid. It's still over there, walking with big piece of property. I met my great-grandmother, Palma.

NS: She was there. Wow.

CW: She lived there. She's not round no more.

NS: Obviously.

CW: My great-grandmother lived until ninety-seven. So, I guess it had to start somewhere around that.

NS: Was she born here? Do you know?

CW: No.

NS: She was born in Germany?

CW: Yes. They came over. They were farmers.

NS: That late?

CW: Yes?

NS: That late?

CW: Oh, they're farmers.

NS: Probably about 1880. A hundred years ago?

CW: I don't think it would go that far. Maybe like the [19]20s, like that maybe.

NS: They are still farming?

CW: No, they're not farming now.

NS: No, they were farming then?

CW: Yes. My father said when he was a kid, they used to have chicken coops. They were farming back then. In the [19]50s even, they're still farming. Then he got into fishing and all that, my father. His dad was always on the water too.

NS: They used to catch eels or is that...

CW: I don't know. [laughter] I never really asked him. But he used to go commercial fishing, rod and reel. My father used [inaudible] here across the street. My father used to do a lot of rod and reel commercials, sport fishing and stuff like sharks and tunas and stuff like that.

NS: What is your dad's name?

CW: Huh?

NS: What is your dad's name?

CW: Bill Weyant. He's got his captain's license. Like I said, he drives boats. I go with him once in a while, maybe I made twenty trips. He's done over 300 trips up and down the coast here to Florida with people's yachts, the fancy yachts. They don't know how to drive into Florida. [laughter]

NS: They do not know how to drive [inaudible] probably.

CW: Yes. Well, no, they know how to drive it when they get it. But the guys who own the yachts, they don't have time to drive it all the way down to coast. It takes seven to ten days. It's nice. I love it. I love making trips [laughter] on a guy's yacht for ten days. Sure, and you get paid for it too. [laughter]

NS: Do you like doing this instead of working on the dragger?

CW: No, I like working on dragger in the winter. I like doing this also. But this will slow down. It's my busy time right now. This will slow down. Eeling will slow down. I'll take all my traps out. It peaks up again in September. It slows down for the summer. It's too hot, too much [inaudible], and they will pop. So, then I'll go dragging. I'm going to run into that little black one across the street. The more yellow, I'll run that for the summer or as long as I feel it. Yes, I like dragging too.

NS: That seems to be kind of difference though, a bay man and then...

CW: Well, see I can do both because I know about both. Tony works on the drag. I mean, if they don't go fishing, they'll make no money. I work with them all winter, right? If you can't fish in this weather, you got to be able to do a little bit of everything just to keep you are going. You go green crabbing, you go eeling, smoked. A little bit of everything else. You can go do a little fluking in the summer, (whitefishing?) in the winter, smoking. As long as it all comes out in the wash. [laughter] That's life, isn't it?

NS: [laughter] Pretty picture, right? [laughter]

CW: Yes, sure.

NS: Do you hear about some of the things that can happen if you are on the bay or in the ocean?

CW: What do you mean?

NS: Do something make you laugh or makes you scared?

CW: There's always something that's going to make you scared the first time when you're almost sinking you get thrown overboard. I mean, that makes you think.

NS: Did that happen to you?

CW: Sure. I've been thrown out of the boat two, three times. I tell you the one time I almost slipped out of boat, I went right out and brought a [inaudible] coat and three flares.

NS: [laughter]

CW: In the winter when I go out, I wear like a life jacket. It's a full jacket. It has light foam in it. I keep three flares right there.

NS: [laughter] Do you remember one time when you did not think you are going to make it?

CW: Yes. We start yelling at the Lord's name and paddling backwards to get home. [laughter] I can duck hunt since I'm about sixteen. I go out all the time. I went out on a little boat. Back in 1975, I saved two Nassau County cops. It made the front page of [inaudible]. [laughter] You get a lot of knuckleheads come out inexperience. They go out. They don't know.

NS: When you first started getting into the boats did anybody help you or did they kind of let you fend for yourself?

CW: Fend for your own. Me and my buddy have no rules. My friend, Mike Jones, the fish [inaudible] the block. I know him since I'm two, right? So, he lived over here. There were no houses. So, we used to make rafts like Styrofoam raft and just roll across to the island just to see what was over there with the [inaudible].

NS: [laughter]

CW: Then we used to find like a dinghy with a hole in it. We patched it up. We used his mother's fiberglass curtains one time to patch up a boat.

NS: [laughter]

CW: We used to row all over the bay because we didn't have a motor. So, we row here, we row there, and then finally you get a little boat with a motor, move around more. Finally, you can get a decent boat once you start to work.

NS: You said you made a gunboat back there?

CW: Yes. I made that when I was eighteen. That's twelve years old. I rebuilt every part on it three times already.

NS: [laughter]

CW: Blew the bottom out at the front we hit a lot of...

NS: What is it made of?

CW: Plywood.

NS: Marine plywood or regular...

CW: No, regular exterior plywood.

NS: [laughter]

CW: I just slapped a lot of fiberglass over it and paint. Matter of fact, my big boat when it comes out of the water, I got to paint that bottom of that. [inaudible] to get up in the railway.

NS: Somebody showed you how to make it with the ribs and the planking?

CW: Not really. I don't know. I had a pretty good conception of what a boat was supposed to look like. The shop teacher showed us how to make...

NS: The shop teacher? [laughter]

CW: Well, he didn't show us how to make a boat. He was freaking out. We came in, "Oh, this is what it's going to look like." We just made like big templates of cardboard and laid it down on plywood and cut it. Then slapped it together and put the ribs in it. I'm no expert, but it floats like heaven and runs real good. [laughter]

NS: Shop teachers. I do not know. I could not do that. [laughter]

CW: No, he only showed us how to make all the joints, for the ribs and stuff like that. That was my project for years. So, we still got it. It still floats. It's twelve years ago. It's a pretty good boat.

NS: How about the gunning boat that you used? Did you make that?

CW: That's it.

NS: No. No, the one we are riding.

CW: No, I didn't make that. That was Shaefer built. A guy named George Shaefer, that his name is. He lives in Oceanside somewhere. That is a boat. The man knows what he's doing. The boat cost about \$3,500 before fiberglass is put on it. It's about a \$5,000 boat. I had a big black Garvey before that. I got it off with some guy that was down on his luck for \$1500. So, it's good boat. We go through one to two motors this season. It is my old *Betsy* over there, I think it blew up.

NS: Do you ever get stuck when you go duck hunting?

CW: Stuck constantly. You're always stuck, just got to be prepared. Motors breakdown, wind comes out of the north, you got to the anchor up. I've walked home before. You got the



motorboat always running. You can get to the park or you can always get home.

NS: [laughter]

CW: I mean, the tides going out, the winds going over here, use your common sense and just go with it. Don't block it, go with it unless you had enough fuel. Just always make a point of landing. Get that quarter out of your pocket to make a phone call, "Come and get the boat." No problem. I've come home in reverse with the boat we were just in before. That thing breaks. I am not outboard mechanic. First, I come home in reverse. I come home with the eel spear, pushed a big pole I got the boat. Some people stop and help you but the majority go right by you. But then again, I stop and pull the knuckleheads off the mosh. [inaudible]. I love it. Moon tide when all the waters all over the meadows. I don't know what [inaudible].

NS: Then they hit ground. [laughter]

CW: "Oh, you stuck. Oh, geez." I don't know. It looks like it's going to cost you at least a hundred.

NS: [laughter]

CW: The hell, you can afford a yacht like that, you can give me \$100.

NS: [laughter] When did you start duck hunting?

CW: Well, my dad took me out when I was about fourteen. He just took me. He was never really into it. He just took me out and showed me how to shoot a gun as a duck. So, I got interested. Like I said, when we first started fooling with dinghies was when I was fifteen when I can get my license. When I was six, get my license, forget it. I was never home.

NS: [laughter]

CW: We lived there. My mom's, "Where are you going?" The worst the weather, the better it is. You know the saying, "Good weather for ducks when it's raining?"

NS: [laughter]

CW: That is no joke. I go out to (Ramson's?) pond out here. That island that's across [inaudible]?

NS: Yes?

CW: That's one of my favorite little hotspots because it's got a nice little pond in the back. I set up a little blind. I take a little boat over there with my decoys and set them all up.

NS: You make your own decoys?

CW: A few of them. A matter of fact, you know Carmine Marinnacio?

NS: Yes.

CW: His son, Bobby calls me.

NS: Yes.

CW: Bobby is going to [whistles]. But he sits there and calls. A matter of fact, he used to go [inaudible].

NS: That is why he lives over there. [laughter]

CW: Lives by himself. They usually don't take too long once you get the hang of it. If you took a regular knife and went like that and went like that. That's why I do it all with a razor knife, one step at a time.

NS: I haven't had this fun in ages. [laughter] Have you been smoking eels before you did it as a business?

CW: Like I said, I just fooling around with it over down my uncle's *Marina*, Frank's *Marina*. I just used to fool around. Like when I ran a fish market, I just tried it a little more and seen that I could sell them. Then I got into trap with them and make more and more traps. As a matter of fact, every year I try to make more. With all my traps, I fished about seventy right now. Probably next year I hope we have ninety. The year after or maybe by the time I'm forty, I'll have two thousand all over the bay.

NS: If you do not die from exhaustion. [laughter]

CW: Whatever. So, it takes an extra hour.

NS: [laughter] Maybe an extra week.

CW: An extra day. Do what you have today, you have tomorrow. Look, now I'm done until Friday. I'll let them fish two days. I always let them fish over the weekend. Never pull on Saturday or Sunday. Because if you're going to pull in traps in front someone's...

NS: There are so many boats. Yes.

CW: I just go like this, just go over today, and go "Okay, here you go," and hand it to him because if they see you... [laughter]

NS: It is okay. I probably get everything else. I am going to make stuff.

CW: If they see you pulling it, it's just like it's history. That's what happened with that one this morning. I guarantee that's not even there. There are so many people drift through that. It's my

own fault, stupidity actually. When I could have went right around the corner of that cut, nobody would have touched it.

NS: It looks easy when you do it. But is it hard to first learn how to handle these things?

CW: Right. I guess once you got it down halfway. Like anything else, it takes a little practice. That's all.

NS: Did somebody show like how to clean and how to flip them?

CW: Like I said, when I first used to doing it, I used to use just a regular knife and take me year and a day just to do it. It took me only what twenty minutes?

NS: Yes.

CW: Until we take...

NS: You kept cutting up the eel, I guess, with a sharp knife.

CW: Yes.

NS: You are going to use a blunt one.

CW: I guess you go like this, you go – now with a razor knife, you go, whoosh, right down it and throw it a pile. I can do a hundred pounds at a time. It used to take me to do twenty.

NS: [laughter]

CW: Right there is about forty-five pounds.

NS: Did somebody teach you that or did you just kind of like if somebody else and...

CW: No, just a matter of trial and error. Before I got it down path, I used to burn them off a lot. Leave the smokehouse too long, come back, and find a massive mess of burnt eels on the floor before I learn to put a safety rack in it, so they didn't lose them. You learn from your mistakes like anything else.

NS: What other kinds of things did you have to learn in order to do this right.

CW: You read a couple of books on smoking.

NS: [laughter]

CW: How to use them. I know you got to use fruitwoods. I used to talk to a guy named Dick Abbott, which is one of the old timers. He used to run [inaudible]. This guy was around for ages. Old Dick, he lived in a boat. He used to run a fishing boat. He used to use an old garbage

can to smoke, you know what I mean?

NS: Yes.

CW: He used to use a garbage can. He'll tell you, "Oh, yes. You use this, you use that." After a while, you're just doing it, you learn by the color, the texture. If it looks right, if it's dry. Does it split open? Does it smell right? Stuff like that.

NS: Why the fruitwood?

CW: Because fruitwood is a hardwood. It throws out a nice scent. It makes them smell good. Yes, I [inaudible] where I can go. No problem.

NS: Do you go chop the fruitwood somewhere or...

CW: I have a friend that's in the tree business.

NS: Yes?

CW: A couple of friends that where in the tree business. They just come over here. This little apple and cherry right here. So, apple, cherry, peach, hickory, mulberry...

NS: All the stuff on the island?

CW: Yes. A lot of hardwoods are in here. Hickory is a little hard to get. But I do all kinds of things. I do turkeys and ducks and venison and pork. Basically, I try to stick to the fish. But when people ask you to do a turkey for them or something...

NS: Mostly friends?

CW: Yes. Keep it down to a minimum. You don't want to get crazy. If I get the other one online, it'd be like political over here.

NS: [laughter]

CW: How to play online.

NS: You were talking about in the summertime the jacking for eels?

CW: Yes.

NS: What is that? [laughter]

CW: Well, they do a lot of jacking now. We used to go with old Coleman lanterns and you'd push around. People still do it that way. They go around and they catch blue claw crabs or snake eel with an old spear. You pushed around. When we're kids, that's how we used to do it.

But now we've generated a little motor. You'd motor around with a light. You see the eel and you stick them with the spear. Like that big spear and head for the [inaudible]

NS: Yes. You take one of those long spears?

CW: Right. We used it like an ice pick, so it doesn't miss the eel.

NS: How big are those?

CW: What's that?

NS: The ice pick?

CW: Regular ice picks then you put the spear handle and you make it as long as you want. Like twelve-foot like that. You just go along. A lot of guys catch slams now with the eels and all kind of stuff.

NS: How come they call it jacking?

CW: I guess basically we got to use the lights.

NS: (Jacqueline?)?

CW: Yes, (Jacqueline?). I don't know. Maybe that is the reason originally if you look it up. [laughter] I don't know. It's always been jacking. We go out jacking, that's that.

NS: When did you start building your own traps?

CW: Your own what?

NS: Your own traps.

CW: About five years ago.

NS: Is that what you are calling traps?

CW: Yes, eel traps or eel pot. I just decided that I had enough of the fish market and said I can go out and make my own living in the bay. You know?

NS: Yes.

CW: It's a lot easy. It's so much less aggravating. I don't have to get up and go to work at 6:00 a.m. I catch the tide when I got to catch the tide. If I need money, I'll go fishing. [inaudible] The salt gets all the water off.

NS: Your brine, did you come up with that recipe yourself?

CW: Yes. Brown sugar and salt. I use about three pounds of salt to two pounds of brown sugar to ten gallons of water with ice. When it's pretty cold in summertime, I put a block ice right in as long as it's nice and hot. It chills them down. You soak in that. It's the salt which has to cure them and dry it out. I want to go and try to work on traps or whatever.

NS: Okay. I need to know everything there is to know about eel.

CW: Because if you asked me a question and you asked me again, it's...

NS: I know it gets annoying. [laughter]

CW: You might not get the same answer the first time. [laughter]

NS: Like every folklore's nightmare. Basically, all the brines, the technique for smoking, all these is pretty similar?

CW: Yes. You got to have to salt it. The salt is always there. Now, people don't like things that are salty tasting, so I use brown sugar in it. It fights the taste. So, it gives it a little bit more color. Then the taste, it isn't as salty. Salt will always be there. But the brown sugar sort of like counteracts it, you know?

NS: Yes. If you are making it for yourself, would you leave out the brown sugar? Is that something that you...

CW: No. I always left it in there. I don't know. It's something I fooled around what it seems to work out the best.

NS: What does the salt do?

CW: It cures the meat. They used to cook the fish with a lot of salt with salt brine fish before they had refrigeration. Because this stuff will stay at a relatively cool temperature for a long time.

NS: Do you know in this area when people first started smoking fish? This been going on for a long time?

CW: No, I'm actually it. There's been guys before my time. But there's nobody around that just got brought up to bring, "Hey, I'm going to raise a smokehouse or whatever." It's just not done.

NS: So, how did you decide to do this? You talked about money. Are there other reasons?

CW: No, I just did it because I enjoyed it. How can you not enjoy just watching the smoke come out the stack and do my fishing, that's it. Like you asked me today, when I came in with the eels and I was all done, you said, "What are you going to do next?" "I'm going to go over and sit on that third barstool and watch the smoke come out of that stack.

NS: [laughter]

CW: That was no joke. That's exactly what I was going to do. When it gets like this and I like to smoke until the sun goes down. Temperature and smoke past a hundred degrees and the doors open, that's no good, too hot. So, I just got into it because we were buying it in the fish market I used to run. I said, "Wow, I could do that." That's why I talked to a couple of old timers about it, this guy, that guy.

NS: Who did you talk to?

CW: Dick Abbott, he's not around no more. Elwood Verity and a couple of just different guys. They did it in a garbage cans. There's another guy that smokes. He's still there, Bruce [inaudible] in Oceanside. His father used to build it. He's still there. I know him. I don't know. I just got on the kicking. People seemed to like my stuff anyhow.

NS: Good reason to keep doing it?

CW: Yes. If they keep buying, I'll keep doing it.

NS: Do you think you would stop if they...

CW: If people didn't buy this stuff, why bother doing it?

NS: Yes.

CW: But they come to my door and knock on my door. I like when I get the old German people, "Yes, you got some eels?" [laughter]. "Yes, yes." "Come on over, how many pounds you want?"

NS: One of the things I noticed before I even met you was all the stuff in front of your house.

CW: The doors?

NS: The lighthouse.

CW: Yes. Well, the lighthouse, that's been here since I'm a little kid and used to be in this yard. I lived in that house for eighteen years. So, it used to be here. We used to fool around with it when I was a kid and play with it. I guess they had it lit up one time. So, when I moved in this house, it was still here. I painted it up a little. I put a light on top of it. It looks appropriate. We got the rocks, the lights, and a set of troll doors up in front. All of a sudden, this block was nautical. [laughter] I've been living here all my life, now everything is nautical.

NS: Where did you get the doors from?

CW: I got them from the dragger. I got them all from my dragger. That's my old set. That's my

new set, right there. Look how I take care of it.

NS: [laughter]

CW: I got to pick them up and paint them with oil. Like an oil over there, drawing him out, paint them with oil.

NS: Not going to use them for decoration? Use them.

CW: It was supposed 500 block if I'm going to use them. Because that one has a time. As a matter of facts, as soon as he's gone to smokehouse then I got to start filet mignon and this bluefish.

NS: Yes.

CW: Yes. [inaudible]

NS: What does C-ash mean? [laughter]

CW: When you want to make a check, make it out to C-ash, cash.

NS: Oh, okay. I thought this is a nautical term I should...

CW: Yes, nautical term, cash. That's a very nautical term.

NS: You said that you used to have a bay house?

CW: I had a couple of.

NS: Yes?

CW: Because they're only like a loan.

NS: Yes.

CW: It will be good for a year or two. We had one we built it up pretty good. Then the guy that held the lease, he told me he is going to tear it down. So, we had to tear it down. That's the one I got pictures up on the wall with all the fellows in the house. They showed you, didn't they?

NS: Yes. How did you get to use their house?

CW: Just a matter of somebody you know, just talking to them. Like with Lenny, he had a house too. When I was a kid, that's when we first got to go on them. Lenny come out of [inaudible]. I used to come out of Freeport. I go with my [inaudible]. He go with his and [inaudible]. We go down and our mothers say, "Oh, where you guys going?" "We're going down to bay house." They wouldn't see us for a week at a time.



NS: [laughter]

CW: It was like our own little world. We were only fifteen years old. That's not too long ago. I'm only thirty-three. Fifteen years ago is [19]70s, [19]65, fooling around the bay. Imagine what it was like in the [19]40s. That's when they used to pay us, used to [inaudible] in the [19]40s and [19]30s.

NS: What happens when you go out?

CW: Neglect it. The politicians come out and they're polluting the marsh. But they've been there before all this pollution should come out. I want to talk about polluting the marsh pit about all these yachts with their excessive weights and their freaking cap. It's all political bullshit. They're polluting the marsh. They've been there for years. If one of these guys broke down in the middle of the winter, where they're going to go dig themselves a hole?

NS: Yes.

CW: You can go in there. There's always a wood burning stove. There's always food in the cabinet. I go out in the winter, we go hunting. It's the best time in the year. There's nobody around. It's quite my favorite time of the year. I got pictures I could show you.

NS: Will you go out with friends or...

CW: I could show you tons of books. We used to have beach parties down the beach, two hundred, three hundred kids when I was in the fraternity.

NS: Would your father go with you or was it more your friends?

CW: More friends. My father used to take me to an old bay house that was near the one that we had when I was a kid. Another man had it. That's when it was a lot. When I was about ten years old, there were all triple, maybe quadruple of what there is now. Then it just one by one by one. As they got neglected, they tore them down.

NS: Are there still pretty much within the same family?

CW: Yes. That's the only way that is left. Like the one bay house is my friend [inaudible]. The one next to them is his grandfather's, so that's why they still have them.

NS: Are they usually people who lived in this area?

CW: Yes.

NS: Would you know everyone when you would go out there?

CW: Yes, you get to know them after a while. You know who is who and what house is what.

You don't mess with this guy's house and stay away from that. They used to get vandalized so much. It's ridiculous. Not too bad nowadays now. Well, we're all going to go out on the bay, so everybody keeps an eye on everybody else's stuff.

NS: What kinds of things when you were growing up would you do that thing?

CW: Hunt.

NS: Duck hunting?

CW: Duck hunting. That is my favorite. The winter is the best time of year because there's no boats. We get the wood burn and cherry ridge and sit around it. Just get up. Next moment, I don't want to go out and hunt.

NS: Would you eat the duck?

CW: Yes, sure. I smoke them and I eat them and I do all kinds of little things to it.

NS: Even when you were that young.

CW: Well, you didn't know no better.

NS: Did somebody show you how to...

CW: Prepare it?

NS: Yes.

CW: Oh, sure. Wink's father is (Leon Carman?). He was the good one for the duck recipes back then. Wink here come up with a couple of recipes here to make your head spin. He comes out with that kind of stuff on Wink.

NS: What kinds of things did you use to make?

CW: Basically, everybody has their own ways with duck to turn things up. Stuffed a duck with some apples or something. We burned them up. We did all kinds of things.

NS: When you would go out there if it was not that kind of season, what other kinds [inaudible]?

CW: We've gone to houses just a place to relax. I was just down one before I went down and stopped, and my friends were there. I'm going to take you out there. We would sit down, making barbecue, some shish kebab, just relaxing on a docking location off the front dock. You want to dive into the water. Summertime is great. If there's nobody around, that's all right. But when you got so many knuckleheads charging around the bay at fifty miles an hour, that's no fun anymore.

NS: I know that when I was in camp late at night, we would tell stories that in a different...

CW: Yes, that's common practice.

NS: What kinds of stories that you tell?

CW: You just keep talking about the time when you're hunting here and the birds are poor. In the wintertime, it's good. When everybody is down, they get drunk and we're playing cards until 3:00 a.m., stuff like that. Then you get bullshitting about, "Oh, yes. I killed this and you killed that and then you guys missed." There's always one guy you pick on, you sit there and, "Oh, you couldn't hit the boy in the ass with a fricking shovel and all that."

NS: Was that the same person you would do this with?

CW: Well, basically, whoever is duty get it. [

NS: laughter]

CW: Whoever is duty.

NS: Democratic. [laughter]

CW: Actually, whoever didn't do good shooting that day like [inaudible] brother, Fred when it was his first time. Nobody had the gun loaded, we're setting up the decoys and a flock of geese goes overhead. Everybody has gone, "Fred, shoot them, shoot them. Right over there, shoot them." He didn't have his gun loaded.

NS: [laughter]

CW: Right over his head. So, we let him have it for weeks.

NS: Did that ever happen to you?

CW: We've all had our best little experience out there with some knucklehead. I was hunting out my favorite blind and I'm [inaudible] by myself. I like all by myself a lot. All of a sudden, here's this guy walking around outside of my blind, birds [inaudible] and all. I'm like, "Oh, man, why don't you come in here and sit down instead of walking around like [inaudible] out there with his orange suit on." I'm like, "Oh, man." So, I finally get him sit down and he starts talking with me, "Blah, blah, blah, " there. I'm not paying attention. I looked up and there's a flock of geese right in front of us because we weren't paying attention. I'm like, "Oh, man. Look at this. This guy over here picked up the wrong gun instead of Betsy. I got this gun called Betsy.

NS: How do you name your guns? [laughter]

CW: How do you name your guns?

NS: Yes.

CW: Well.

NS: I did not know you named the gun. [laughter]

CW: Davy Crockett had his gun was named Betsy. That was his old Kentucky long rifle. Well, I'll show you a gun that makes Kentucky long rifle look like a short one.

NS: [laughter]

CW: I could put it under my arm and stand up, that's how long this gun.

NS: [laughter]

CW: That's my cannons. That's my anti-aircraft gun.

NS: Did you get it from somebody?

CW: No, I bought it. It's an old gun but I bought it a long time ago. That's my Betsy. That's how I call it. When my friends are all done shooting, I said, "Are you guys done yet?" They go, "Well, you can't even touch it." I go, "Watch this, boom." It reaches a lot further than this.

NS: How about the decoys? I know you said that you had made a couple.

CW: Yes. I don't recall but you know one of the guy that was opening the clams the other day by [inaudible].

NS: Yes, I know.

CW: He carves, but yes.

NS: But you learn to carve?

CW: I'm not efficient at it. I fooled around with it. Basically, I got enough projects to work on besides common decoys. Wintertime, I got to build my eel traps and stuff. As a matter of fact, I got 608 finished yet. I haven't had a chance.

NS: Well, on the subject of eel traps, you have said that you have tried a couple of different ways of making them?

CW: Sure. You got to try all types of different designs. Everybody has their own theory about what's better and what's this, what's that? I don't know. I tried a few different designs.

NS: What did some of them want to try?

CW: Well, you got double funnel pot. You got a triple funnel pot, which I learned to make from Elwood Verity. He was one of the best and the oldest name [unintelligible 00:46:32] around here. He catches the hell out of eels. So, I think the man knew what he was doing. I basically used his design and that works throughout the best. Everybody has their own thing. We used a double funnel pot. We used triple funnel pot.

NS: What is the advantage of the triple funnel?

CW: Triple funnel, the way you look at it is if one funnel got clogged up, say by a spider crab, it wouldn't stop fishing than where a double funnel pot would. So, triple funnel pot would keep fishing, that would be the advantage of that. It's like another entrance for him to come in. Then they all come in and have a little party.

NS: Now, the ones you are using the day we went out are mostly double funnel.

CW: The bigger ones with triple funnel. The first picture you took there, that was a triple. The last shot she would take at the end of the day, that was from my old [inaudible] pot. That was my first experimental job.

NS: [laughter] Those are double funnels?

CW: Double funnels. I don't even like them.

NS: How come?

CW: They don't fish as good. You got certain ones that fish beautiful. Then you got ones that you don't fish with them at all.

NS: You have been in this long enough. Do you think you know why?

CW: Yes, I'm going to be a doctor or a lawyer. [laughter]

NS: Why did it work better than the others?

CW: I thought you meant why I was going to still stay in the business?

NS: No. [laughter]

CW: Why they work better than the others?

NS: Yes.

CW: It's more accessible. It's like anything else. If you have a building with three doors on it, you can get it a lot easier than the one with one door, right?

NS: Easier.

CW: It's a little more accessible. It's like a condo in an apartment building [unintelligible 00:48:20] what are you going to want to move into? [laughter]

NS: What are they made out of?

CW: We use pine frames. Then we use sixteen-gauge half by one wire and stainless-steel hog rings to put them together and plastic on the ends and oak lath on the top, galvanized bolts, and galvanized nails. A lot of work. You can sit down and take me the way I do it. It takes a while and I can build them pretty good though still it can pop out maybe three a day. But that's what when somebody steals from you. I put my brand right on top of it. When somebody steals it from you, it sort of bothers you because you know how hard you work on the building.

NS: What were some of the reasons you use different kinds of woods?

CW: For which?

NS: For the pots. Like you said, with oak and pine.

CW: The pine is cheap and that's good for the frame, so what you should call it. The oak holds it together more and it doesn't [inaudible] stick to the top.

NS: Do you think that the design you come up with now is pretty much in your favor?

CW: Yes. Feel like the elite. This one is working, you know what I mean? He started with [inaudible] Corvette.

NS: [laughter]

CW: It started with the [inaudible]. You've slapped it together. We wear this and that. Then we went through Model T. Then we moved up to a Buick and now we're on a Corvette. So, I think we'll stick with that. The trap I got now is top of the heap. It had [inaudible] yet.

NS: Do you think you will ever buy any more of those pots that you bought? [laughter]

CW: No. No, [laughter] I won't buy no more now. Matter of fact, I've been sent a few of them on orange buoys lately.

NS: [laughter]

CW: They [unintelligible 00:50:26]. I can put them out there on the cinderblock like that two-pot line we lost.

NS: Yes, most likely lost.

CW: I found one of them. They cut the one off but what the cost? I put them all out the orange

floats. It probably never touched it, right Miguel?

NS: Yes.

Male Speaker: Yes.

CW: Right in front of your face to probably never touch them. I used a couple of high-rise float.

NS: I catch you further than that.

CW: Now, he is horseshoe crab today. Yes, female a hundred percent.

NS: Why the female?

CW: Because they got the eggs now.

NS: It is only good for ones with the eggs?

CW: Yes, basically. We used that in skimmer clams. You know what's a skimmer is?

NS: Yes, the ones that get out in the ocean.

CW: Right.

NS: Once they were shocking down and...

CW: Right. Danny catches some debate. Some guys catch them for food, Doxsee Clam, where I was trying to tell you about the other day with [inaudible]. They catch them for food. Thinking of Doxsee clam chowder and Howard Johnson's Clam Strips and all that.

NS: Yes.

CW: That's where you get them. Miguel, well, you got a better floats hanging around? You got any floats hanging around. Is that what you were saying? Little bitty ones for the green crab traps I use like [inaudible].

NS: Did it take you a while to figure out what kinds of baits to use or...

CW: No. My father used to do it.

NS: Is that when the old trap with you?

CW: Yes, basically.

NS: Ever tried anything else to see.

CW: Sure. [inaudible] every day. In some parts, we can use the clam. Then they'll do better than the guy who used an architect to gear up on the clams and using the clams. You're going to catch the goals. The goals are not worth the [inaudible].

NS: What other kinds of things did you have to learn in order to do this well?

CW: What? Smoke fish or catch the eels out?

NS: Yes, the whole business?

CW: I don't know. Just once you got to know the bay door, you figure it out year after year a little bit. You get things down the path a little better every year. I don't forget where I'd put them no more, stuff like that. Every year, you learn a new trick. Maybe in twenty years, I'll be good at it. Maybe.

NS: You pretty much spent some time it takes to become serious around here.

CW: Yes. Serious, I don't know. Professional is when you make money at it, right?

NS: Yes, kind of.

CW: But then you got professional and you got professional-professional. Man, it's going to make a lot of money at it. So, I'm not at that point yet. But I'm looking at all kinds of burners in the fire. I'm working on ten projects at once. But what they're going to do?

[end of transcript]