

The University of Southern Mississippi
Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage

Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster–Gulf Coast Fisheries
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Edmond Anthony Boudreaux Jr.

Interviewer: Stephanie Scull-DeArme

Volume 1043

2011

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The University of Southern Mississippi

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An Oral History with Edmond Anthony Boudreaux Jr., Volume 1043

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Biography

Mr. Edmond Anthony Boudreaux Jr. was born in 1949 to Edmond Boudreaux Sr. and Nita Mae Thomas Boudreaux. He is the third of eight children. He is married to Virginia L. Bertucci Boudreaux, and they have three sons, Edmond Boudreaux III, Brandon Boudreaux, and Marcus Boudreaux.

Boudreaux is a 1967 graduate of Notre Dame High School in Biloxi, Mississippi. He was an AT&T service technician from 1973 until 2010, when he retired. At the time of this interview he is the administrative vice president of the Mississippi Coast Historical and Genealogical Society; past president of the Gulf Coast Chapter of the Mississippi Archaeological Association; an acquisition committee member of the Ohr/O'Keefe Museum of Art; an advisory board member of the Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum; a member of the Community Advisory Committee Mississippi State Historical Museum; and a French colonial reenactor since 1992.

He is a writer of the Time Traveler article for the *Biloxi/D'Iberville Press* newspaper. He was awarded the Calvin Brown Award and the Mississippi Governor Commendation for archaeology in 1992. He was the City of Biloxi's Historian of the Year in 1992. On October 27, 2011, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History presented him with a Resolution of Commendation for his leadership in historical causes, his work in support of Mississippi Department of Archives and History programs, and his scholarship on the history of the Gulf Coast.

In August of 2011, his book *The Seafood Capital of the World: Biloxi's Maritime History* was published by The History Press of Charleston, South Carolina.

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AN ORAL HISTORY

with

EDMOND ANTHONY BOUDREAUX JR.

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Edmond Anthony Boudreaux Jr. and is taking place on October 28, 2011. The interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArme. This interview was recorded in two parts on two dates, the second being November 4, 2011.

Scull-DeArme: This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Project of The University of Southern Mississippi, done in conjunction with the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Voices from the Fisheries project. The interview is with Edmond Boudreaux, and it is taking place on October 28, 2011, at about eleven o'clock in the morning in Biloxi, Mississippi. We're at the Biloxi [Maritime and Seafood Industry] Museum. The interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArme. First, I'd like to thank you, Mr. Boudreaux, for taking the time to talk with me today, and I'd like to get some background information about you. So I'm going to ask you for the record, could you state your name, please?

Boudreaux: My name is Edmond Anthony Boudreaux Jr.

Scull-DeArme: And for the record, how do you spell your name? (0:00:53.1)

Boudreaux: B-O-U-D-R-E-A-U-X, and Edmond is E-D-M-O-N-D.

Scull-DeArme: And when were you born?

Boudreaux: I was born April the seventeenth, 1949, in Georgetown, South Carolina.

Scull-DeArme: And would you give us, for the record, your father's name?

Boudreaux: My father was Edmond Anthony Boudreaux Sr., and he was born here in Biloxi.

Scull-DeArme: Do you remember the date?

Boudreaux: He was born April 11, 1921.

Scull-DeArme: OK. Just make sure this is picking us up. The mic is on. And your mother's maiden name?

Boudreaux: My mother was a Thomas. Her name was Nita Mae Thomas.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you spell it?

Boudreaux: T-H-O-M-A-S, and the Nita was N-I-T-A, M-A-E.

Scull-DeArmey: And do you remember the date of her birth?

Boudreaux: She was born on November the [nineteenth]—might have that a little off—in 1919.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. She would be about the age of my parents. I was born in [19]54, so I was a little bit—

Boudreaux: Yeah, you're close.

Scull-DeArmey: —after you. And where did you grow up? (0:02:12.0)

Boudreaux: I grew up on the east end of Biloxi. I was born in 1949. My father, being raised here in Biloxi, made a decision to move the family back to Biloxi. So in 1950, I came back to Biloxi as a baby and was raised on the east end of Biloxi, on Maple Street, on the Point.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Well, what was your childhood like? What do you remember about the Point in those days?

Boudreaux: The biggest thing about being raised on the Point was that was where most of the poor in Biloxi was at that time. Now, we didn't realize we were poor. We didn't go hungry, per se, but we may didn't eat things—for example, I was eighteen years old before I actually ate a steak. So we ate pork; we ate poor men's steak and chicken. And of course, being on the Point and being part of a seafood family, we ate a lot of seafood.

Scull-DeArmey: Is there a difference, now, in the way the seafood appears to you or tastes to you?

Boudreaux: We've lost some of the things in a few areas, but it's things like the stuffed crabs had more crab in them than filling, you know, those type of things. But the economic times sometimes affects how we put things together.

Scull-DeArmey: What was a typical day like for you as a boy?

Boudreaux: Well, of course, we went to school, but after school, we played a lot. My playground was the marshes and bayou on the east end of Biloxi. Unlike most kids who would probably go to a playground, me and my brothers played in that area. We collected snakes and sometimes kept them in cages. And we were very in tune with

nature. If I wanted to contemplate, I would go into those marshes and sit against an oak tree or something and just reflect on things. And we flew kites and stuff in this marsh, marshy area and made our own kites. We didn't have the money to buy a kite, but we could talk the local butcher into giving us butcher paper. We could get canes and make our own box kites and diamond-shaped kites. So we did those things.

Scull-DeArmey: I did that as a child. My father taught me how to make a kite. I haven't thought about that in a long time. What makes an area a marsh? (0:04:43.3)

Boudreaux: Usually this was a tidal marsh, where we had water, would come into the area, and it had a series of bayous. So at high tide, you may have water in some of the sandbars that was in the marshy area. So sometimes the water would come right up into the grasses of the marsh, the high tide would, and then it would go out. So it gave you that open area where there were sandbars that you could play on. Typical to see fiddler crabs, and nutria, and other creatures of the marsh, marsh hens, of course snakes, and a variety. We could see the osprey, the sea eagles as we called them, and the other hawks and birds of prey that existed in those areas, and seeing tons of frogs, fish, and other things just in these marshes and bayous that we could fish for. We'd catch our own fish, clean them and eat them.

Scull-DeArmey: Did you take them home?

Boudreaux: We took them home and—well, I guess we'd do both. Sometimes you decide you want to do a little campfire and cook the fish yourself. Of course, that don't come out too good, but if you clean them and take them home, mama does a lot better job than we did. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Just for the record, could you explain to listeners what a fiddler crab is? (0:06:06.3)

Boudreaux: It was a variety, and that's what's strange. Some will have the single pincers, but they're basically a sand crab. Sometimes they have two small pincers, and it's a land crab; that's another way you can call them. And then some have the very large pincer on one side. So they had just the one with a small one on the other side. So like I said, there was different varieties, but those were two varieties that stuck out in my head the most.

Scull-DeArmey: So maybe they were called fiddler crab because the large pincer was the fiddle?

Boudreaux: Yeah, probably so, probably pretty much so.

Scull-DeArmey: And what about a nutria? What is that? (0:06:48.0)

Boudreaux: It's basically a fur-bearing rat. That's the best way I can describe it. (laughter) But it can be as big as a small beaver. They were accidentally introduced

into Louisiana. Of course, they quickly populated all the Gulf Coast region, and they were trapped for their furs at one time, so. But they just became a nuisance after a while.

Scull-DeArmeY: And marsh hens, what are those? (0:07:22.3)

Boudreaux: It's basically a brown bird with a very long beak that acts similar to a chicken. I guess that's the best way to say. It basically stays on the ground quite a bit, and it goes into these watery areas, and it eats the snails, small fish and other aquatic life that's there. And of course, if they get a hold of one of the fiddler crabs, they'd eat those, too.

Scull-DeArmeY: Did you ever hunt frogs, gig frogs?

Boudreaux: No. We caught some big ones. We never did do that, nor did we try to eat them. But they were play-toys more than they were, I guess you'd say, food to us.

Scull-DeArmeY: What kind of fish did you encounter there?

Boudreaux: A variety of fish, anywhere from speckled trout to white trout to croakers to ground mullet. All were in that marshy area at one time or another. Flounders, redfish, drum, sheepshead. So there was a wide variety because it was a nursery for a lot of the fish. Unfortunately, that particular marshy area is gone. It was turned into an industrial park and filled in, and the city of Biloxi lost a huge estuary there. (0:08:38.8)

Scull-DeArmeY: That's so sad. Is ground mullet what they call Biloxi bacon? (0:08:46.1)

Boudreaux: No. That's actually the pop-eyed mullet. That one you catch with a net, and we did that, too. Right on the bay, you could throw your net and get mullet. So we always had a cast net nearby to also catch the mullet.

Scull-DeArmeY: These other fish were caught on a line?

Boudreaux: These others were caught on a line. You can catch a mullet on a line, but it's difficult. Bread or sometimes marshmallows would entice them to bite, to swallow it because they basically swallow it whole, but you could use a treble hook and just a hand-line. And what you do is when you see a school of mullet, you throw the treble hook into the school of mullet and jerk it back through there, and you'll snag one. Not every time, but you can snag one, and you can get four or five fish by doing that, if you're patient.

Scull-DeArmeY: What's a treble hook? (0:09:34.9)

Boudreaux: A treble hook is basically a three-sided hook. In other words, it has

three barbs on it, coming up from the shank in the middle. So those three barbs give you more of an opportunity to hook a fish. So you end up with a easier catch with a treble hook.

Scull-DeArme y: Three chances instead of one.

Boudreaux: Well, yeah, basically. (laughter)

Scull-DeArme y: OK. How does a cast net work? (0:09:57.4)

Boudreaux: A cast net is basically, it has weights at the bottom, and of course, it's wider at the bottom. It'll open up into what we refer to, the perfect throw, [which] is a silver dollar. But if you laid it out on the floor, you can form a perfect circle with it. And it shrinks as it goes to the top. Then it has bags in it as well. What the purpose of the bag and the weights is that once you throw it over a school of fish, you work it real slow to get it all back into one bunch, and the fish will end up in the pockets. So when you lift it out of the water, the fish are in the net. Sometimes they'll snag in the net, too, with their gills and fins and stuff, so you've pretty well got them. But that's basically the easiest way I can describe a cast net.

Scull-DeArme y: So that was in Back Bay Biloxi you would cast?

Boudreaux: You could use it on Back Bay. You could use it on the beaches. You can get in a skiff or a rowboat or a motorized boat and throw it from the boat, from piers on the islands. Any place where the mullet would run, you could do that.

Scull-DeArme y: Is this a skiff behind us? (photograph of skiff, page 55)

Boudreaux: Yes.

Scull-DeArme y: We'll get a photograph of that later. Is there anything else about growing up that stands out in your head that you'd like to record?

Boudreaux: Well, I think what you're—to give you a kind of background on the family: my great-grandparents from both sides arrived in Biloxi in 1914 to work in the seafood industry. (0:11:29.5) They were recruited. My grandparents would meet here and marry here in 1915, so that gives you roots on my daddy's side of the family and shows our ties because everybody that basically came from Louisiana was probably kin in some way or another at the time, that arrived here. And they also recruited between 1914 and 1930, they recruited additional family members to come over and to join the area here. And you had like Boudreauxs, Broussards, Heberts, Tibodeaux, Desomeaux, Toups, and other family members that came in at one time and lived in the area and became part of the seafood industry.

Scull-DeArme y: Did your father become part of the seafood industry? (0:12:17.5)

Boudreaux: Yeah. As a child, even when he was going to school, they would get up early in the morning and go to the factory until eight o' clock. And at eight o' clock, they'd go to the school, and go to school. Now, he remarked that he smelled of shrimp or oysters or whatever at the time, but the whole class did because everybody that was in there had worked in the factory as well, the kids. There was very few in the class on the east end of Biloxi that did not work in the factory. And they could be some of the factory owner's children, but in many cases the children of the factory owners worked in the factories as well.

Scull-DeArmeY: How long did your school day last?

Boudreaux: Their school day?

Scull-DeArmeY: It's theirs, right. (laughter) It wasn't you. It was your father, right.

Boudreaux: Right. His school day, they started at eight, and they were probably out around two or three. And then they would either go home and do their homework, or possibly even go back to the factory and work a little while longer, and do the homework in the evening, some of them living in what was referred to as the "camps," factory-owned housing, (0:13:27.2) which was basically kind of like row houses, or elongated buildings with more than one tenant in their small-roomed buildings. You might have four rooms in one section of that long building that was a tenant building for one family. And then you had the other families. That was your kitchen, your living room, and probably two bedrooms, if you were lucky.

Scull-DeArmeY: Were they big families, mostly?

Boudreaux: Yeah. Now, my father came from a small family. Most of the families were very large families. My grandmother had fourteen kids in her family. My grandfather had thirteen in their family. My grandfather and grandmother divorced, so there was only four children born to them before they divorced. My father had eight children; his siblings had seven each. So there was very large families on the east end of Biloxi.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. So those [factory]-housing homes held a lot of folks.

Boudreaux: They could; they could in some cases. After a while, people got unattached to the factory or the factory housing, so some of these things were sold as tourist cottages and whatever, not on the Point, or even rented as rooms. And so people started moving into houses. We would move into a house that was a double-shotgun house, and a lot of the shotgun homes were used on the east end of Biloxi, mostly what you saw in the neighborhoods, that are now gone, thanks to [Hurricane] Katrina. But those were the kinds of houses. In fact, the house I grew up in—my Great-uncle Armond was dying with cancer, and the French people got together on the east end of Biloxi and built him a house to die in because he was being evicted from his home that he was renting because he couldn't afford it because he couldn't work.

And the police refused to evict him, which today might not be a common thing to happen. And the French people all got together, built the house, basically a four-room house, and him and my great-aunt moved into it, and that would be the house that later on we would purchase from my great-aunt, and I would grow up in, so. People took care of themselves on the east end of Biloxi, and the Back Bay and other places.

Scull-DeArmey: Strong community.

Boudreaux: And you had two; the Point was one section of the seafood industry. The Back Bay was another section. (0:16:08.9) And then a term we refer to, “across the Bay,” was another section of the seafood industry and seafood families. The older communities of people being on the Gulf Shore or [across the] Bay. And the Back Bay and the Point being Slavonians, Bohemians, Cajuns, and later on the Vietnamese would move into those areas that were basically the seafood industry.

Scull-DeArmey: And across the Bay, did they have a particular ethnic—

Boudreaux: They were mostly descended from French people, colonial French. You had Seymours; you had Sauciers; you had Ladners from the Christian Ladner, who was one of the settlers of the Coast. So you had a lot of influences from the older families over there.

Scull-DeArmey: Did your father talk to you—well, when you were growing up, what was your father doing for a living?

Boudreaux: He had gotten out of the seafood industry, and he had lost his leg in World War II on a ship that was torpedoed, and the Sisters of Mercy taught him how to do accounting. And he went into doing income tax and sales taxes for people. (0:17:28.8) And basically sometimes he was paid with a quart of oysters or a bucket of shrimp or whatever. You know, that was the kind of thing. So he continued to work not only with business people on the Point because what you had at that time, when you’re thinking back, you had a grocery store on about every corner. You had a bakery within four blocks of everything. Then you’d have small cafes and family-owned cafes in different areas. So you ended up with all that stuff being involved in it. [At 0:18:03.1 on the audio, the background noise is from the guests in the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Museum where this interview was conducted.]

Scull-DeArmey: OK. We’ve got a little background noise, but I think we’ll go on unless we need to take a break. We’ll just try to go on for a few minutes. Did your father talk very much to you about what the seafood—you know, like the “voice of the fishery” from your father and your grandfather. (0:18:27.7)

Boudreaux: Both of my great-grandparents, my great-granddad and my granddaddy, were dead shortly after I was born, but I had great-aunts and uncles that all worked in the seafood factories, so we heard tales. Anything from, my great-grandfather was caught in the 1915 storm (0:18:49.1) in the marshes. And what happened there was

the boat, being caught out at sea like that in the marshes, on the edge of the marshes, they had nowhere to go. And this hurricane just came up quickly. So they stuck with the boat, ended up cutting the mast out of the boat so they wouldn't turn over; decided to abandon the boat at some point because it got really severe. They climbed in some oak trees, with snakes and other critters, and spent the time there. Then they realized the boat was not going to be damaged. So they climbed out of the trees, swam to the boat, and on that boat, being in the Louisiana marshes, they ended up picking other people up out of the water that would come up to the boat. And they saved a lot of families. They ended up with a boat full, but all of them survived the storm. Now, there was a lot of people that were killed in the storm, and there was a lot of boats lost. There was over a hundred boats that was turned over in the 1915 storm. Then we'd hear them talk about opening oysters, and how their hands would hurt, (0:20:03.6) the women in particular because they were in the factories. They'd open oysters. They would peel the shrimp. Shrimp-picking was done by hand at that period of time. The Laitram had not been invented. So you end up later on with a difference in the way things are done in the factory as we see today. That's an evolution that took many years to come about.

Scull-DeArmeY: So for them, there was the manual shucking and peeling, but now it's mechanized.

Boudreaux: A lot of mechanism to it. There is still some hands-on stuff that has to happen to remove material and trash fish, and sometimes hulls from the picked shrimp and stuff. So that process still goes in there. So you still have some hands-on in the process.

Scull-DeArmeY: Just for the record, why would opening an oyster make one's hands hurt?

Boudreaux: Well, even though you wore a glove at the time, you would end up, sometimes, the knife slipping off and hitting into the glove, and you'd have damage to the hands from the knife. You'd get cut pretty easily. The oyster itself is a rough item to start with, and it has all kind of grooves and edges and things that can cut you. Even with a glove on, after a while these gloves would basically wear out, and the original gloves were not really great gloves. That's later on; we come up with better material to make the gloves from.

Scull-DeArmeY: How do you use a knife to open an oyster?

Boudreaux: You basically take the oyster with the muscle in the back, and you come in from the lip of the oyster, at the front of the oyster. And you turn and lift the knife into—you stick the knife in between the shells, and then you turn the knife to pry the muscle loose in the back. And then you crack it open like that, basically causing the muscle to give way and destroy it. And then you're able to peel it back and shuck the oyster out of the center.

Scull-DeArmey: What happened to the oyster shells?

Boudreaux: The oyster shells were piled. (laughter) (0:22:17.0) And of course at one time, they were part of the roads in Biloxi. The shell roads of Biloxi were talked about as the “great white ways” in the history books because they’d taken these oyster shells and crushing them and then laying them into the streets, and sometimes not even crushing them, letting the wagons or cars or what-have-you not destroy them in the process of going over them. So they became part of that. Even used in the asphalt down here, you could see the white specks. And we even can go back to the Indians as using the oyster shell in their clay pots (0:22:53.8) because it gave a strength to the pot, by using these little bits of oyster shell in the clay mix.

Scull-DeArmey: So they would crush them.

Boudreaux: They would crush oyster shell and mix it into the paste and then form their pot, and then bake it, basically on open-fire type baking. So you end up with these pots; you can see the white specks all throughout the pots, even though you’ll have a nice red-orange pot, you can see the little specks in it.

Scull-DeArmey: Amazing. Do you have any idea about how many oysters she might have shelled in a day? Or shucked? (0:23:29.6)

Boudreaux: Well, a bucket or the cup, as they called it, would hold probably a good pint of oysters, if not more, maybe even a gallon. And they would take and have to fill that cup up. And they would give credits for how many cups they opened, so the more you opened, the more you got paid. So volumewise, it depended on the individual. I’ve seen some of these ladies who could shuck a sack of oysters in fifteen minutes. Just in no time, have it shucked.

Scull-DeArmey: How many oysters would be in a sack, you think?

Boudreaux: You can usually get a pretty good bit out. I can’t give you a definite on that, but there was definitely a few gallons of oysters in a sack, so.

Scull-DeArmey: Ballpark figure of unshucked oysters in a sack?

Boudreaux: I would say you get at least about five gallons out of a sack. That’s a rough figure, there.

Scull-DeArmey: Wow, yeah. OK. Anything else you remember about seafood, catching seafood, or processing seafood, or eating it that, just like kind of speaking for those who are no longer with us, things that you might have heard from—

Boudreaux: Well, each one had their own—I think each group had their own process of doing things, (0:24:53.2) even though today we may think of just breading a piece of fish and frying it or baking it. You had soups with fish. You had gumbos with fish

in it. You had not only the fried fish and various types of fish. They didn't throw anything, basically, away, that they could use to feed themselves. And they utilized everything. And the shrimp, of course, the boiling of the shrimp was one of the easiest processes, so they would've done more boiling. The frying would come a little later with that process. Of course, when you're canning shrimp in the factories, canned shrimp is what they were trying to process and get moved out and make a profit off of. So that was a boiled shrimp. Fried shrimp, you've got to get the raw shrimp, and like I say, the process comes a little bit later on, and they used more locally than to send the shrimp off.

Scull-DeArmey: So back in those days, probably, there wasn't refrigeration? They were relying on ice, maybe?

Boudreaux: I still call it an icebox today. (laughter) We had an icebox. (0:26:03.6) As a small child I remember the ice coming in, and I remember the big tongs for moving the ice, and ice picks. So the icebox was what you kept for refrigerating everything. Ice processing came in pretty early, but the idea of being able to get it on a constant basis, once they had electricity, they could process ice. They could create refrigeration for the ice. So they were here, and they used different techniques (0:26:34.2) because they didn't line their hulls like they do today with some kind of insulated material. Back then, they would take sawdust, and you'd take the sawdust and put your ice, usually probably the blocks of ice, down in the hold, and you'd cover it with sawdust. And you'd chip away the ice you needed and cover your shrimp, or in the wintertime the oysters would be fine because it's cold anyway. But you could do your shrimp and fish in your hold, and put the ice on top of it. Then you'd take the sawdust and put it over top of that. That insulated the ice and kept it from melting quicker in the summer months.

Scull-DeArmey: It seems like it would build up in the boat. Did they have to take it out?

Boudreaux: As ice melted, you could probably reuse it up to a certain point, pile it back in another pile. And after a point, the sawdust would get nasty, so you probably had to get rid of it, but they probably reused it as much as they could.

Scull-DeArmey: So we had a thriving lumber industry here at one time.

Boudreaux: Yeah. You had that. You had a grit plant on the east end of Biloxi, which took the oyster shells (0:27:40.6) and turned it into grit. Chickens eat the grit to help them form shells [on eggs]. The grit was used in roads, like I said. And also when there were shell roads, the grit factory could help them keep some of the shell roads going. So we had all of the possibilities for stuff like that.

Scull-DeArmey: From lumber, there was plenty of sawdust.

Boudreaux: Plenty of sawdust. You had to have boat builders. The boat builders

needed the lumber, so it was a give/give situation. It's like anything that we see come into an area. When something new comes into an area, there's always that effect that's beyond just what they're doing. (0:28:21.4) It's the number of people coming in. It's how many doctors you need, how many lawyers you need. So this industry came in, and it affected everything. The lumber industry, they needed the lumber, so that was there. Of course boat building in Biloxi (0:28:35.2) has been around from the French period in the 1720s. We have drawings showing them building boats on the beach in Biloxi. So we know that occurred. And the boat-building process hadn't changed that much from the time when the French were here to later on in the 1800s, all the way to the 1900s from the boatbuilding perspective that the tools are the same. The tools of the trade stayed basically the same. They may be reinvented a little bit, but they were basically the same process and the same use.

Scull-DeArme y: What is boatbuilding like today in Biloxi?

Boudreaux: Well, you've got a lot of things that can be pre-cut at factories, where a lot of times they were hewing out their own logs and creating the lumber the way they wanted it, and heating it up and processing it where they could bend it onto the boat, once it's heated and moistened, and then of course, the caulking and everything that went into it. That was all done by people who were skilled in that labor. Today it's a totally different process. And we don't see as many wooden boats. We see a lot of metal- or fiberglass-hulled vessels today.

Scull-DeArme y: So totally different today. Earlier you referred to a Laitram. Can you tell us what that is? (0:29:53.7)

Boudreaux: Laitram is the first, basically, shrimp-picking machine. That was the name of the individuals that came up with it in Louisiana. And those became the picking machines that everybody wanted. Of course, there's other picking machines today by different people, but that was the first picking machines, were the Laitrams.

Scull-DeArme y: Do you have any knowledge or memories of your folks talking about the fishing vessels that would have gone under sail power?

Boudreaux: The one I told you in 1915 my great-granddaddy was on, that was under sail. (0:30:35.6) Around the 1930s, your gasoline engines and your diesels are starting to come into view, so the process is changing. Everything was done by sail. They had to pull the trawl; it wasn't a trawl at that time. They pulled the oyster rakes by sail. They seined for the shrimp using the boats. They'd take the boats, sometimes working together with a couple of schooners, sometimes just using the one schooner. You take a skiff off the schooner, lay your seine out away from the boat, and then basically make a large loop and bring it back to the boat and then start pulling the seine in. And that's how they shrimped and caught huge numbers of shrimp at the time. The oysters under dredge, you either had to do the tonging from a skiff, if you went out there, or on a good windy day you could pull the oyster rakes across the reef when they came into play. But the original way of harvesting oysters was basically

your tongs, tonging oysters, or “cooning” (0:31:39.3) them by hand is another way it was done. That was done in the 1700s. The Indians did that as well, and then you bring it all the way up through to arrival of the Europeans when we see different techniques coming about, and that’s when your tongs probably came about, but cooning by hand was probably done first.

Scull-DeArmey: Cooning? How do you spell that?

Boudreaux: I don’t. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Like raccoon?

Boudreaux: Like raccoon, cooning is what they called it, by hand.

Scull-DeArmey: By hand. OK. We’re going to get to that in a minute. Can you tell us what a seine net is, for the record? (0:32:12.8)

Boudreaux: A seine is basically, it’s a long net with weights on the bottom. And what you can do is you take it away from the shore if you’re going to seine by the shore, and take it straight out. And if you have a —to give an example—like fifty foot of seine, you take it all the way out, straight, and then you start to circle it back into the shoreline. And as you bring it back in, anything that you have encircled in the net is going to be trapped. And that’s what they would do out in the Gulf, in not-real-deep water but in the Mississippi Sound itself, where they could take and lay these things out, and the bottom wasn’t that far, and shrimp were there. And they’d swing it back around to the boat, and then you’d close it up by the boat. And then you’d start shrinking the size of the loop. And once you got that circle shrunk, you could either shovel or net shrimp into the boat, or you could continue to tighten the net and pull the whole net up into the boat with a ball of shrimp.

Scull-DeArmey: I guess I’m kind of imagining the seine net as a long rectangle that might have been rolled up like a paper towel roll?

Boudreaux: It was more like—yeah, I guess a rectangle could be a way to describe it. Yeah. It was rolled up like a towel. That’s what you’d do; you’d roll it up.

Scull-DeArmey: And you unroll it, as you’re circling.

Boudreaux: And unroll it as you’re circling.

Scull-DeArmey: How do you draw it tighter?

Boudreaux: By closing the circle. So you’re picking net up and removing it. If you do it on the shoreline, all you have to do is keep pulling the net in and keep closing the circle till it’s small, and you’ll eventually pull all that you’ve caught up onto the shore.

Scull-DeArmey: That would be manually, right?

Boudreaux: Yeah, manually. Yeah, it's all manual. (laughter) There's no winches or stuff that they were utilizing at the time. That's early on, when there were schooners. With the advent of the winches and the otter-trawls that would come about later on, you end up with a way to, with a motorized boat, you pull the trawl, and you can winch it up, so that makes it a more efficient process of harvesting. In the other processes, you're going to lose a certain amount of the shrimp.

Scull-DeArmey: But a trawl is not the same thing as a seine. A trawl net is—

Boudreaux: A trawl (0:34:30.0) is basically a funnel, being large at the mouth and then going down to what they call a tail. And the tail is where you end up with all the—the shrimp'll end up in that tail. It has what we call doors, basically two wooden platforms that look like a big door, that pull the net open. And then it has a tickler chain that runs between the two doors, and what that does is cause the shrimp or fish or whatever's on the bottom to jump up, and as the net comes through, they jump up and into the net. That's how it's supposed to work. And it does work very efficiently. And these type of nets have been around a long time. The otter-trawl is basically the taking the old technology from the [1600s] and 1700s and then making it more efficient. The French were doing it; the English were doing it. The Spaniards, all of them that had waterfront knew how to do these types of nets, the cast net, the seine. That was all utilized in the [1600s] and 1700s. We can see that from drawings from that period.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Are you uncomfortable? Do you need to get up and stretch?

Boudreaux: I'm good. I'm shifting.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. Oh, there's so much information here. Where do I want to go with it? Can you just kind of—we're going to take—are there any tongs in the museum?

Boudreaux: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmey: We'll take a photograph of them.

Boudreaux: I think they're in a boat over there.

Scull-DeArmey: In case, at some point, this oral interview would get separated from the photographs, though, can you kind of paint us a picture of what tongs are and how you use them to get [oysters]? (0:36:16.3)

Boudreaux: You basically take two pieces of board and very close to—if you hold them up in the air, they'll be about anywhere from six feet to twelve feet long, the boards. And you stick them up in the air, and what you're going to do is at the closest

at the bottom, it acts like a pair of scissors. So you're going to need to drill a hole and put a pin in it. So now you got a pair of scissors that basically you don't have—the long end that you're cutting with, is going to be the end you're going to hold for your hands. On the base of it, you take what's known as metal rakes. And that's where the marine blacksmith comes in; he makes your rakes for you. And the rakes are basically like a yard rake, except they have a wire running basically the length of it, solid wire. Then it has rake teeth like a yard rake at the base of it, so that you can grab the oysters, work them off the bottom, and get them between those scissors at the end of the scissors. And then once you have them in that rake, you can lift the oysters up and put them into the boat.

Scull-DeArmey: You would have to have really long hands and arms, wouldn't you?

Boudreaux: Well, the water depths is what we're talking about. The length depends on the water depth you're working. If you're working in six feet of water, then you want about a twelve-foot set of rakes because you got to realize you're standing in a boat. And if you're five-feet-five-and-a-half-inches, you need those rakes where you can grab them, and six feet of water, you've got six feet in the water, so you have to work them that way. Now physically, it was a hard, hard labor. That's the best way to describe it. It was one of the hardest things one could do.

Scull-DeArmey: I would think so, yeah.

Boudreaux: It was very physically—strength in your arms, your legs, your back, you was using every bit of your strength to do this, labor intense.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah, yeah. The first Mr. Universes were there, I'm sure. A marine blacksmith? (0:38:25.1)

Boudreaux: Yeah. You had people that made these, everything we utilized in the factory. Somebody had to make the trawls, the iron for the trawls, the metal doors. You had the oyster dredges, which are all metal except for the netting in them. (See pages 56, 57, and 58, photographs of oyster dredges in the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum.) So you had to have someone who could manufacture those. A lot of them were designs that were unique to the area, that worked in the area. You had the huge oyster barrels that were all metal that it was used to hoist the oysters off of the schooners. So you had to have that made by a marine blacksmith. So basically we call them marine blacksmiths, but they were just basically blacksmiths that made things that were oriented to the boats, so a correct term, I think, is to refer to them as a marine [blacksmith] because that's all they did, mainly.

Scull-DeArmey: That's all they did? They weren't doing horseshoes.

Boudreaux: No. They could, but they weren't. And they were still in existence when I was growing up. The Hennigs basically using torches and stuff like that, but they're basically your blacksmith with a torch. That's the best way you can describe it.

Anybody that had the welding and stuff and had converted from your basic blacksmithing to your torch operation at that time, or welding operation.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. So is there anything else, any other story that stands out in your head of things your aunts or great-aunts might have told you?

Boudreaux: Even though they worked hard in the factory, they seemed to all be very, very happy with everything in their life as a whole. I didn't find them to be easily depressed individuals or people who looked back with guilt on anything that they had done in their lives. (0:40:29.9) They tended to have a very good attitude, and some of the reasons for that was the attachment to the church. If you go to any of these communities, you're going to find that like, even on the Back Bay, you had St. John's Catholic Church. On the Point, you had St. Michael's Catholic Church, and there was this adhesion to the church, a very huge devotion. The Slavic people, the Bohemians, the Cajuns, even the Vietnamese later on, the church was the bulk of the community, so you end up with all these individuals with a strong bond to the church. And it became their church. They built the churches. They raised the monies through bazaars. They would take seafood, donate seafood to the bazaars. They would prepare the seafood, cook the seafood, and then we'd sell the seafood. And they basically built St. Michael's Church from these bazaars that they did over time. So the connection is they were hardworking people with a high religious attitude.

Scull-DeArmeY: Catholic?

Boudreaux: Mostly Catholic. Over time, you see other groups come in, and you have the Methodists; you have the other Baptists and other religions. Even the Pentecostals were in the area. So we had all of these groups converging in the area, and there didn't seem to be a conflict about who was any particular religion because we all considered our religion part of our social life. Even as I was a kid, anything socially was associated with the church. There was no circus coming to town, or anything of that nature, that we could attend. We'd have bazaars. We'd have functions; we'd have the Blessing of the Fleet. Those things like that became the mainstays of the family. My father and his brother served on the first Blessing of the Fleet, (0:42:29.0) which was twin blessings. You had a blessing that took place in Back Bay in Biloxi. In 1929—I may have that date a little off, but I'm pretty sure it's 1929—St. John's and Sacred Heart Catholic Church combined to have that blessing on Back Bay. And Father Carey was the priest who conducted that blessing. At St. Michael's on the Point, they did it by the factories, and it was Father Hildebrand, was the priest there, who conducted the blessing. And they basically, unlike the blessing today, where basically the shrimp boats line up and come past what we refer to as the blessing boat, back then, the priest went from boat to boat—they were tied at the piers and the factories—and blessed each boat with the families on them. And that's how that first blessing took place. Over time, it evolved into what we know today as the blessing we have today.

Scull-DeArmeY: Well, can you describe the blessing that you have today to kind of

compare-and-contrast those?

Boudreaux: It evolved into a point where it was a holiday for the fishermen. It usually started with the shrimpers going on their boat with all their family and their kin. They go out to the islands, Horn, Ship, Cat Island; spend the day. And then they would be back; if the blessing occurred at one o'clock, they would be back and in line for the one o'clock blessing, have their vessel blessed by the priest or bishop, whoever was doing it. And then they would go to Deer Island and anchor out at Deer Island and some going on the island to enjoy the day's activity on the island, or just eating lunch on the boat. And it became a main social event prior to the shrimpers going and shrimping a season, sometimes not coming home for days on end, till they got a good catch, and sleeping on the boats at night, anchoring out by the islands and getting up the next day and working a full day, returning to the factory with their load. So this was their time. And the Fourth of July also turned into that type of thing too, from time to time, depending on how the season was going. A lot of them would take their boats and go to the islands for the Fourth of July to kind of have a good day of fun.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. When is shrimp season, usually? (0:45:02.7)

Boudreaux: It usually begins in late May. It sometimes opens in May, but it varies because of the fact that they have to check the count of the shrimp today. It's managed a lot better than it was at that time. So it varies, anywhere from May to June, depending on the count of the shrimp and the size of the shrimp.

Scull-DeArmeY: Would you say that's been pretty standard through the years?

Boudreaux: No. In the beginning it wasn't. They basically shrimped until the boats almost sank, but they were catching that larger shrimp. It's a good thing, in a way, to say that they overfished, not that it was a good thing that they overfished, but they overfished the area for a while, and I think they realized that they were overfishing, the factory owners, the workers and everything. And that's why regulations (0:45:50.6) came about to manage it and to control it. Oysters were done at a different time at that period of time. We kind of did things backwards from today, and they basically shrimped a lot of times in the winter and did oysters in the summer. And then they switched it around and basically started doing your shrimp in the summer months and your oysters in the winter months, so things have changed, over time, because of various reasons.

Scull-DeArmeY: But when we had these sailing fishing vessels, there probably were no limits or regulations.

Boudreaux: In 1881, when all the factories first opened, or your beginning of your factories, you end up with no regulations to really speak about. They're still a new industry. They're feeling their way along. They've had an industry in Louisiana. Some of these are veterans, coming over here to open this industry. We had the Dunbars, which were basically a Louisiana family that had started in the industry. You

had the Dukates, who came from the Louisiana area. You had Lopez, that was from Spain. You had Elmer, who was English, and then you had Gorenflo. So these people came in, and they decided to open an industry and took a chance. They were basically grocery men, merchants, and they put up the money and started it. And that evolved into a factory. And of course, at that time, no regulations. They were feeling their way, like I said. They even went to Baltimore to find better techniques because Baltimore had a huge oyster industry, and they went up there to improve their oysters. And they were mainly canning oysters and shrimp and vegetables. (0:47:39.9) They did figs; they did turnips. They did anything they could can in the off-season; they did in the off-season. So you had that, too, and they even had what we referred to as a watermelon fleet, commerce by bringing watermelons, sometimes to New Orleans, sometimes from Louisiana over here. So you had this commerce going on, as well, on these boats, not just the shrimping industry.

Scull-DeArmeY: Right, diversification.

Boudreaux: Yeah.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. When you think about deckhands, (0:48:17.1) say, back in your grandfather's time, you think they would've been mostly family members?

Boudreaux: Well, it depends. I've seen it be family members, and I've seen it be total strangers because just like anybody, some families can get along, and some families can't. (laughter) There's an old saying, "You don't want to work for your daddy or your mama." So a lot of times it was family, it was kin, usually a father and his children. That's where most of my cousins started on the boat, with their daddy, and they ended up with their own boats. They ended up hiring deckhands that they maybe met and sometimes stole from other boatmen because maybe he treated his a little better than you did. So you lost your hand to him because he treated them better. So there's all that intertwining of people that had to learn to work together.

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you recall any time, like, family members of yours talking about how they might have been paid? Were they paid in seafood? Were they paid cash?

Boudreaux: Well, your tokens were the first way you was paid when they first got here, the Cajuns, as well as the Bohemians and the Slavonians. Of course, the token was basically a factory token that had to be redeemed at the factory store, (0:49:43.2) which was a catch-22, which meant that you "owed your soul to the company store," was a true thing to them. And also, your housing, in the beginning, was theirs. That would change over time, not only with workers getting their own homes and being paid in cash, but also with people, ending up buying factories and opening their own factories. People who were boatmen ended up being factory owners over time. And I don't know if I really answered the question, but—

Scull-DeArmeY: That's as good an answer as any. I just wanted to backtrack a little bit to cooning, you said, was done by hand?

Boudreaux: Yeah. That's what they call cooning is. It's an old word, and I don't know the origin of it, but even the French referred to as cooning by hand.

Scull-DeArmey: Well, raccoons probably dug around in the—

Boudreaux: Raccoons did, and the Canadians that came here were very familiar with the raccoons. The French, straight from France, were not, and there is a difference. We have D'Iberville, [pronounced dee-I-ber-ville] or D'Iberville [pronounced dee-ih-ber-ville], which is the correct name, Pierre Le Moyne D'Iberville. (0:51:04.0) He was a Canadian, and we don't think of him as Canadian. We just think of him as somebody from France. But he wasn't from France; he was Canadian, so he was very familiar with the raccoons. And one of the people I know that refer to it as that way is Le Page du Pratz, who was a Frenchman from France, but he had been in the Natchez area for a long period of time. And he makes that reference on a visit to Biloxi, that people died at Biloxi, cooning oysters by hand. So yeah, I guess "like a raccoon" may be the comparison he saw once they got here. And since we've said the thing about the raccoon, we ought to talk about Cat Island, (0:51:44.7) too, because a lot of people think that the French thought the island was named because it had cats on it, and they didn't know what a raccoon was, and that's wrong. The term was chat sauvage; it means cat wild or wild cat because there was no name for a raccoon at that period of time. This would come about; they think the origins is from an Indian name, that we come up with this "raccoon." So it's not a old term. It's a fairly new term when we think about the arrivals of the Europeans. The Europeans were already here when that term, raccoon, would come about.

Scull-DeArmey: Interesting. So I would imagine that cooning for oysters (0:52:27.2) is getting down and digging them out with your hands?

Boudreaux: Digging them. Well, there was two things he, Le Page du Pratz, talked about: the fact that many a individual was found dead on a pile of oysters. Now, what you don't realize they're doing is they're cooning in cold months, so hypothermia is probably what killed them. Now, they didn't know what hypothermia was. They knew it killed you, but they didn't have the term that said, "hypothermia." From being in the water for long periods of time is what they referred to it as, and they died right there, so. Your body temperature gets low enough, you're dead. But there was a starvation going on at the time, and that's what was forcing people to do oysters by hand or to eat roots. Some people died from eating things that were poisonous, not realizing that it was poisonous. And they basically, they said there was a plague going on, but we don't really know if there was a true plague, or whether there was just a lot of things that added to the large number of deaths that occurred here. Probably a combination of plague and other things; things they ate, things they did.

Scull-DeArmey: Right. Well, we probably ought to get on to the questions that NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] submitted, but we're almost out of time on this particular little folder, so I'm going to go ahead and stop.

(end of digital file, 10-28-11 track one of two; beginning of digital file 10-28-11 track two of two)

Scull-DeArmey: OK. So we just took some photographs. And would you explain to us, please, what the Lafitte skiff is? (0:00:15.9) The plat bateau? (See page 55 for a photograph of a Lafitte skiff, or plat bateau, at the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum.)

Boudreaux: Plat bateau, which is basically, “flat boat,” is the translation of it. It’s basically a bayou or a marsh boat, low draft, so that you can pole your way. It’s a poling skiff, is what they refer to it sometimes, too.

Scull-DeArmey: And what is the draft?

Boudreaux: The draft is very shallow, I can’t tell you an exact draft on it, but it’s in inches, maybe a couple, no more than twelve inches, depending on the size of the guy that’s standing in it. And you basically use a pole to move it along through the marshes and bayous in South Louisiana or South Mississippi, so they’re utilized here, too.

Scull-DeArmey: So just for the record, can you define what draft is?

Boudreaux: Draft is basically the amount of weight you have on the boat and how it sits in the water, so the amount of displacement of water from the vessel, so that’s the draft of it.

Scull-DeArmey: And that would, I guess, determine the depth of water that you could go in—

Boudreaux: You could go into. And most of the boats made here, the schooners, the luggers and everything, were made so they could be shallow draft because of the Mississippi Sound being such a shallow area. Grant you, some boats can’t go everywhere, but they could pretty much work the Sound without a lot of problems because of the way they were made.

Scull-DeArmey: And we took a photograph of the skiff, which is behind us, which is over a hundred years old. And can you just tell us a little bit about that one? (see pages 40, 41, and 42 for photographs of hundred-year-old skiff in the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum.) (0:01:47.4)

Boudreaux: I know it sat under somebody’s house for a long time, and it was donated by somebody in Bay St. Louis to the museum. Unfortunately, it was in great condition and went through [Hurricane] Katrina and was blown out of the museum and suffered a lot of damage. It can be restored, but it was in pristine condition before Katrina, unfortunately, but it will once again be in pristine condition.

Scull-DeArme y: I guess it just gathered a little more history when it went through Hurricane Katrina. (laughter)

Boudreaux: Well, it was equipped—we have a small mast in it, where they had a small sail they could utilize, as well as it had oar locks, so you could use it as a rowboat. So you had wind power or manpower to move the skiff along, or pull the skiff along, as they refer to it.

Scull-DeArme y: And we talked about the center keel? (0:02:40.7)

Boudreaux: Yeah. It has a little center keel, so when you put your sail up, you could drop that centerboard below the water, and you can go in a little bit deeper water. And as you went into a shallow area, you could lift that centerboard and move into the shallow area.

Scull-DeArme y: What does a centerboard do for a boat?

Boudreaux: Basically a stabilizer, it sits under the boat. In deeper water, it gives stabilization. In shallow water, it would drag in the sand. So you don't want it to do that, or the mud. So it'd be lifted it up as they enter shallow water, but it stabilized the [boat] from flipping over real easy.

Scull-DeArme y: OK, from flipping over. And then we took a photograph of the dugout [canoe or] pirogue. (see page 51 for a photograph of a pirogue or dugout cypress-tree canoe at the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum.) (0:03:20.9)

Boudreaux: A pirogue or a dugout canoe. Your dugout canoes go all the way back to the Indians, really. When the French came here and some of the other Europeans, they described them as making their pirogues or dugout canoes on the southern shores, mainly. And what they did was they basically took a cypress tree and lit a fire at the base of it till it fell. Removing all the limbs, they then took the log and propped it up and started a controlled fire in the utmost top of the log. And what I mean by a controlled fire, they would burn the wood, and they'd scrape it out, and putting the fire out from time to time, scraping all the charcoal material out. And that was the way they brought the boat down to a workable design. They used oyster shells, and they used the shoulder blades of deers. We see in drawings, with those two items in it, so we know those items were used in the process. And there could have been other tools used in the process, as well. Iberville, when he first gets here, that's Pierre Le Moynes D'Iberville, when he first arrives in Biloxi, he pursues the Indians in their dugout canoe, and he's faster than them because he's in basically a birch-bark canoe, and his men are in a fourteen-man skiff that's got oars. So he's able to overtake them at the shoreline in Ocean Springs, and they abandon their dugout canoes on the shoreline when that occurs. So they're the first to do it. The Cajuns would basically take it a step further and make the process, still using the cypress log, but they would add their own touches to it, which is more modernization to it of seats and other things, and using nails in it to hold it together as it aged and cracked. Whereas the Indians

probably discarded them when they became too leaky. But cypress, if you keep it in the water pretty much, it'll pretty well keep its—so that's the best thing to do with them, is keep them in the water.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. How old you think that is?

Boudreaux: That one's probably about a hundred years old or better.

Scull-DeArmeY: If only it could talk to us.

Boudreaux: It could probably tell us some stories. (laughter) It's been around a very long time. [A portion of the interview not related to the topic has not been transcribed.]

Scull-DeArmeY: Well, going to the NOAA Voices from the Fisheries question bank, we'll start with the first one. What does the seafood industry mean to the people and the culture of the Gulf Coast, do you think? (0:06:21.5)

Boudreaux: It's a heritage; it's everything to us. Everybody's tied to the water here. I don't care if you're a doctor or a lawyer or whatever. You may be a weekend warrior if you're a doctor, what we call a weekend a warrior, who goes out and fishes on the weekends. There's something about living on the Mississippi Sound that ties you to the Sound, whether you work in an industry or not. So that is here, no matter what. And we all enjoy eating our seafood.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. Over the time that you've had to observe, how have fishing and shrimping changed? (0:07:01.5)

Boudreaux: When you say observed, I'm going to use my ancestors, too, to kind of describe some of it because what they told us, what they would do, before the ice, before the things; it was quite a different process. You had to get the seafood in fresh. You sometimes had skiffs and stuff sunk in the water to keep fish alive, to keep shrimp alive, and you could sell your produce, or in this case seafood, from a boat if you kept it alive. Same principle that the bait fishermen use today to keep shrimp alive so you'll have live shrimp to fish with. Then it evolves up during the factory period, we see the evolution of it with the advent of ice and everything that they're able to process and can seafood, so it was a canning industry. (0:07:51.4) And they had to play with the cans because the first time they put shrimp in a can, a tin can, it turned the shrimp black. Edible, but who wants to eat a black shrimp? (laughter) So they had to come out with veneers and cloth liners to put the shrimp in, and that kept it, as long as it didn't contact the can, the shrimp stayed palatable to the eyes, I guess is a way to say. You could look at it, and you could say, "I'm going to eat this." (laughter) So that came in the process. But as time changed, and you had the hand-picking of shrimp, the hand-shucking of oysters, which is basically still done today. That would evolve, some of that, and you see these shrimp-picking machines come about, and they began to process shrimp in a different way. Then you had the freezing. First

frozen with water, now quick-frozen, where it lasts a lot longer, and it's quicker. It's fresher because it's so quickly frozen. So the process has changed completely. That also meant a reduced number of workers in the factories themselves. (0:08:58.1) That's a large volume of individuals that ended up having to go into other areas. Now, the boats probably number about the same. The number of people per boat has been reduced because of the less labor-intensity of it, with the arrival of winches, the arrival of the gasoline engines and diesel engines. And those changed the need of people. A crew of two people, with a captain and a deckhand, can handle a trawl or a dredge very easily today. So it's changed; the evolution of that has changed quite a bit.

Scull-DeArmey: Are you aware of how state and federal regulations have changed? (0:09:43.1)

Boudreaux: Yes. And I think a lot of it's change for the better. Some things push the envelope with the turtle; if there's turtle deaths, sometimes they want to blame the shrimpers a little bit quicker, and maybe the shrimpers are not the party involved. So there's a lot of little, iffy things in there. But on a whole, it was very important the regulations came about because it kept the industry vital in all areas. You have shrimp today because it's managed; you have oysters today because it's managed. If you allow people to just have a free reign, we would have a huge reduction in shrimp, a huge reduction in the oyster industry, and even the fish itself. Everything is dependent on each other, so if we manage it correctly, we'll have it here for not only us, but the generations to come.

Scull-DeArmey: How has the Mississippi Sound and the Gulf of Mexico changed, in your recollection? (0:10:44.2)

Boudreaux: It's changed quite a bit, even historically, even in my recollections because the islands were much larger. I think it's very important that they're looking at the possibility of renewing islands like Ship Island, Cat Island, and Horn Island. (0:11:00.4) Even Petit Bois, in the 1700s, didn't exist. It came about in one of the hurricanes of the 1700s. It created Petit Bois Island. So we had this chain of islands that its importance as a nursery on the inside, the Mississippi Sound, on the north side of these islands; that nursery has been damaged over time because of the loss of the islands. That's *one* of the things. Losses of grasses, from certain type of fishing and shrimping occurs. That's why the regulations and the management is so important, that you keep them out of certain areas and allow these natural grasses and things to renew themselves, and the islands. If we can get the islands renewed, not only would we be protected from hurricanes a lot better than we are today, but we'd also have a resurgence in some of the Sound itself coming more alive, like it was probably when the Europeans arrived.

Scull-DeArmey: OK. And you said that the islands had shrunk? What is making them shrink, do you think?

Boudreaux: Mostly hurricanes. The [Hurricane] Camille cut occurred during, of

course, Hurricane Camille. (0:12:12.4) We had a cut in Deer Island that occurred in [Hurricane] Elena, which kept getting larger and larger. So we have hurricanes that affect different things. The 1700s storms created Petit Bois Island, but you lost a large part of Dauphine Island, since Petit Bois was part of Dauphine Island at one time. So these islands have been reduced, and that affects what's going on in our nursery, the Mississippi Sound. So that's what I mean by that.

Scull-DeArmeY: Would it be accurate to say that the islands actually create the Mississippi Sound, or they create the organic soup that's in the Mississippi Sound?

Boudreaux: Yeah. And there's another equation in there, too, when we talking about the soup.

Scull-DeArmeY: OK. Hold that thought. We got a warning signal, but I already changed the folder so I don't understand why it's running out of time. I don't think it's the battery. Just bear with me. Let's see what happens. Maybe it will start over. We've got twenty seconds to find out. Maybe the count will start over. I just changed the folder, so it should have plenty of room in the new folder, but five, four, three, two, one, zero. OK. Well, we'll—(end of digital file, 10-28-11, track two of two; end of the first part of the interview)

This is the second part an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi. The interview is with Edmond Anthony Boudreaux Jr. and is taking place on November 4, 2011. The interviewer is Stephanie Scull-DeArmeY.

Scull-DeArmeY: This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Project of The University of Southern Mississippi. The interview is with Edmond Boudreaux—it's part two—taking place on November 4, 2011, in Biloxi, Mississippi, at the [Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry] Museum in Biloxi. And again, I'd like to thank you, Edmond, for meeting with us today.

Boudreaux: No problem.

Scull-DeArmeY: We were talking about barrier islands in the Mississippi Sound, and how that helped create a kind of organic soup that's very rich in sea life. (0:00:43.1)

Boudreaux: Yeah. And we got to look way, way back. When you think about it, the pristine sound that the Indians were in and that the French came into the area, was affected by nothing, basically, other than any human intervention at the time. And the islands were very elongated, so there was a lot more of the barrier islands, more *to* them, I guess you could say; not more islands, but more *to* them. One of the examples is in, I think it was 1722 or so, Petit Bois Island was created when one of the storms came through. It might have been 1719 that it was created, and it was part of Dauphine Island. So that cut a big gap. Ship Island was gapped by [Hurricane] Camille, and you had the Camille Cut on it. And all of them have been battered by

storms over the centuries. We even had the Dog Keys, where you had Dog Island, that basically disappeared. One time, they put a casino on it and referred to it as the Isle of Capri. So that was where Dog Island was, here when the French arrived; gone around 1949. It went under the waves for the last time. And keys are shifting sands. And we don't see as many of those shifting islands that would shift in and out, which shows a lot of disintegration of the islands, which I don't know if I said it on the last interview, but it's very important, I think, that they're now talking about renewing those islands because we may see some of these keys, like Handkerchief Shoal and Dog Keys, start coming back somewhat, if the islands were restored somewhere to their pre-French-arrival period, which would be great. I don't know if they're going to go to that extent. The other thing is the organic effect on the Mississippi Sound. And its health has been affected by man throughout the years. Originally, it was thought that if we dumped sewage into the water, that the water would cleanse itself. Of course, hindsight is better than anything, but we now know that that's not true, so that has been pretty much corrected everywhere where I—and I'm not to say that somebody isn't still doing it, but they pretty well monitor that and try and keep that under control, and that does help things, especially with things like the oyster here because the health of the oyster is determined by what impurities do enter into it, since it's probably one of our most sensitive shellfish, or even any type of life that's in the Mississippi Sound. The Mississippi Sound, being a nursery, also affects how any deterioration of that ecosystem hurts it, in particular, in recent times, the BP [British Petroleum] oil spill. (0:03:43.9) I think it can recover itself, but I think we're going to see things that affect it for a long period of time. Another thing was the flooding of the Mississippi River, when they have to open up the spillways (0:03:58.2). It is great to save people in one place, but you're twisted between the two things here: the loss of lives and land off of the rivers and the damage, versus the health of the oysters and other seafood that are just in the Mississippi Sound. In our western section of the Sound right now, the oyster crop has pretty much been depleted, (0:04:24.4) so it's going to have to be managed very well over the next few years for it to return to its pre-2011 opening of the oil spill, so.

Scull-DeArme y: Just to get on the record, why would the opening of the spillway, letting the Mississippi River into the Sound, why would that affect oysters and the health of other fish?

Boudreaux: Oysters can live in brackish water, but they don't do well in freshwater. They're a brackish-to-saltwater mussel or shellfish, and that's the effect you have on it, is that it cannot function in that freshwater environment. And the western part of the Sound was mostly fresh [water] after the opening of the spillways, the Bonnet Carre spillway. Luckily it didn't creep all the way across the Mississippi Sound to the extent that it destroyed the western sections, but—how you say it? The best oyster reefs are in the western section, or the largest ones, so it's going to have an economic impact as well as a ecological impact on everything right now.

Scull-DeArme y: And how could oyster beds be managed so that they would be at their best? (0:05:52.0)

Boudreaux: They're doing a good job with that by, in some ways, returning shell to the oyster reefs. They also bring forms of crushed concrete and other things that allow the oysters to attach themselves. I think our management system is very up on this stuff, and is good. We got to beat these other things, like hurricanes and oil spills and basically nature itself in some cases, when we have to open these spillways. That's the things we got to combat. Most fishermen are willing to work under the law and to keep within the management areas. You have very few, a very small minority, that work against it, in my opinion.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. This seems like a natural time to kind of segue way into [Hurricane] Katrina. How, in your opinion, did [Hurricane] Katrina affect the seafood industry? (0:06:55.9)

Boudreaux: It was devastating. First of all, you have to have harvesters, and you have to have factories. All were gone. If they weren't affected directly by their boats being lost or their homes being lost or the factory being lost, they knew somebody that was kin to them or very close to them that did lose everything. So all were basically placed into unemployment. If the boat did survive, they could harvest and make a limited living, if they wanted to fight the debris fields and damage to the nets. So I think it was kind of a lose/lose situation until we could get everything cleaned up, as best we could. There will continue to be debris in the Gulf, and it'll continue to be pulled up by shrimpers and oystermen over time, and some of it'll continue to wash up on our shores over time. But I think we're now, from that, we're pretty much now to a stable point where that's not going to happen as frequently as it could happen right after the storm. So we're kind of in a good recovery area there. But now we're contending with the oil spill and the freshwater, and of course the economy, too. The economy is a big factor as well. (0:08:23.7)

Scull-DeArmey: High fuel prices.

Boudreaux: High fuel prices, people not coming to tourism, so there's not a big demand on seafood locally in restaurants. All that affects it. The oil spill, people are scared to eat the seafood, a little leery, and you can't blame them. You don't know what the long-term effect is. I myself, I eat it; I feel that it's safe. Anything that pollutes it right now probably is minor, compared to what it was maybe right after the oil spill, and it's cleaning itself up, and I think we're going to see years before it's to its original self. It's not going to ever go back to its completely healthy self. (0:09:14.8) I believe restoration of the barrier islands will help with that, and if we can get a little bit more control on the fertilizers entering the rivers, I think it'll get healthier. To get it back to when the Native Americans [were] here, or when the French first arrived, I don't think we'll ever see that in our lifetime.

Scull-DeArmey: Unfortunate.

Boudreaux: Even when the factories first opened here, they were harvesting so much

seafood before there was good regulations that it was unbelievable. It was not uncommon for a boat to come in with a hundred barrels of shrimp, easy, (0:09:58.8) or so loaded with oysters that the vessel was almost sinking. And we see that in pictures and stuff.

Scull-DeArmeY: Right. But on the other hand, there was nothing competing with the reproduction of those resources. There wasn't an unusual amount of freshwater coming through because there were no controls on the Mississippi River. There weren't oil disasters. And there really weren't even the kinds of everyday items that we have now that would create debris fields out there. You didn't have cars that were going to get washed in there. You didn't have barges.

Boudreaux: No, no. It was smaller. Smaller population, smaller effect on the Mississippi Sound itself, on the seafood, on what was harvested. And that all played an effect. I think it was overfished in the beginning, and they realized it, and management came and settled that part. Now like I said before, I think management is where it needs to be. It's good right now. Even with the fish, we have a limited catch. I think that was a great thing to come about. All that affects how the Sound recovers. But like you said, over time our population has increased. The items have become more high-tech; we have more items, per se. A kid today at Christmastime will probably get anywhere from six to ten items for Christmas, whereas when I was growing up a kid, if you got one item that was really good. You had a good Christmas. And sometimes that item had to be shared with a brother or a sister, like a bike or something like that. So things have changed in that respect because there's more out there. A house that was lost in the 1940s didn't have as much make-up to it as today's houses do. Granted, you making them stronger and brick versus wood and everything. But the cost would've been terrific to them because of the fact that it was all their possessions, whereas it is probably equally the same today when you lose a house; it's hard to recover. So still the recovery was hard, but there wasn't as many items to pollute the Sound.

Scull-DeArmeY: Um-hm. Even chemically, not just speaking in terms of the physical refrigerators and cars and boats that are on the bottom in a shallow body of water that, unless you have like radar or LORAN [long range navigation], you don't know it's there until you hit it. Yeah.

Boudreaux: And that's a good thing that the shrimpers do. A lot of times what they'll do is they'll mark those things, and then they communicate to everybody, and it just goes like down the line. It may be just over the radio airwaves, but they tell everybody, "At point, point on this locator, I've come across a wreck. This wreck is right here." And sometimes they'll even get together, and they'll put some gaffling on it and move it a little bit, so they can get it out of, maybe, main fairways. I can't say they still do that to this day, but I know that for a fact that they did do things like that, move it a little bit into shallower water, so that you can actually get around it. If it can be picked up, they will pick it up. But most of the times, those items are pretty big and can't be picked up. (0:13:38.7) I know behind Deer Island, there used to be a

helicopter that had gone in the drink, so they were able to kind of pull it up into shallower water, so that it didn't interfere with the boats for a while.

Scull-DeArmeY: Amazing.

Boudreaux: Of course, God knows what Katrina did with it.

Scull-DeArmeY: It probably moved it. (laughter)

Boudreaux: And that's another thing. We got a lot of wrecks out there that probably Katrina did move. I know there's a side-wheeler off of Ship Island. They had one burn to the ground, *The Pelican* that was around Lameuse Street in Biloxi, and some of its debris was removed when they built the fisherman's small-craft harbor. We used to have just a small-craft harbor, but then they built the shrimper's section for the shrimp boats, and then when they did that, they did remove a [mid-1800s] 1850s or so; it had sunk right there, *The Pelican*.

Scull-DeArmeY: What is a side-wheeler?

Boudreaux: A side-wheeler is basically a steam-operated—instead of having the wheel in the rear that propels it, it's on the side of the vessel. And a lot of the vessels that went up and down the Mississippi Sound were side-wheelers.

Scull-DeArmeY: Those are the old-fashioned riverboats?

Boudreaux: The old-fashioned riverboats is a good example, but the wheel being on the side, not in the rear.

Scull-DeArmeY: So did the wheel look kind of like at a mill, with the paddles on it?

Boudreaux: It was just like a mill paddle wheel. It was the same principle and probably came about through seeing these things and knowing that if you move water, you can move water in that fashion.

Scull-DeArmeY: And it'll propel you. Yeah.

Boudreaux: And it'll propel you.

Scull-DeArmeY: So what is happening now, actually things that are debris get entered into computers, and they become a part of a map of the bottom of the Mississippi Sound.

Boudreaux: Right.

Scull-DeArmeY: Until the next storm. (laughter)

Boudreaux: Until next storm. And mapping is important. And of course, since Katrina, it probably needs to be remapped to find out if any of these vessels did move. We don't know if they moved or not.

Scull-DeArmeY: What do you think caused the first regulations to come about?
(0:15:53.3)

Boudreaux: Well, one of the first regulations we see that comes about has to do with child labor. That's one of the first ones we see. And then the idea that all of a sudden you were going from a hundred barrels of shrimp one season to maybe fifty barrels the next season, it's kind of like a light bulb going off in your head, and I think the intervention of not only the fishermen and the factory owners and the government had to happen. And you see organizations like the fishermen's organizations being created. Then you see the factory workers creating an organization to try and look at their whole perspective. If your livelihood disappears, if you overfish an area (0:16:39.3) and your livelihood disappears, it's bad for the factory owner; it's bad for the worker; it's bad for the government. So something had to give, and I think that's what pushed it forward.

Scull-DeArmeY: They were getting less catch.

Boudreaux: They were getting less catch, yes.

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you have any idea, like, the number of years it might have taken for the seafood to start being scarce?

Boudreaux: Well, we know they started in 1881. And we know that by the 1940s, we're seeing some depletion in it. So the amount of harvest has gone down, and you can see that. Of course, you have good years and bad years, no matter what, but they were noticing not just a good year/a bad year; you're talking about a really *bad* year, compared to what you had the year before.

Scull-DeArmeY: Which has also been noticed in some other species, like the turtles. There are so many endangered sea turtles. Sea turtles, by the way, are the only species of turtle that can't retract their limbs into their shells.

Boudreaux: Right.

Scull-DeArmeY: Weird little thought that has been planted in my brain. Do you think that when the oil disaster happened, fishermen and fisheries had recovered from Hurricane Katrina by then?

Boudreaux: They weren't completely recovered, but they were getting close. Of course, you had a double-whammy at that point. They were at a point where that was good, but the economy was bad. And then what I meant by the double-whammy, well, here comes the oil spill. Bad, bad time to have an oil spill. Not that there would be a

great time to have it, but it would have been better to have it at a more prosperous time than to have it in the middle of a crisis already. So it was a double-whammy.

Scull-DeArmey: How are some ways that the BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster affected the seafood industry here? (0:18:43.7)

Boudreaux: Well, it's a kind of—I call it—domino effect because first of all, you're going to have, the shrimpers were not harvesting the way they needed to. And then you had the competition, where BP was trying to get people to collect oil for them, put out booms and things to protect things. So that takes into the economy of the seafood industry. And then you had the factory owners, where they weren't getting the produce, so they had to start bringing in from out-of-place. So now you're bringing in from maybe Texas, and you want to keep up at your pace, and you're trying to, and then your fishermen are not being paid because they're not bringing in a harvest. And some are getting money, but BP's not hiring everybody. In fact, you had what I call—there's a term here referred to as a “weekend warrior” when they're talking about shrimpers that go out and just shrimp on the weekend. And it's anything-that-floats kind of thing. And when BP started hiring people, it was kind of like that. Anything that floats was out there trying to make money off of this venture, which had a bad effect on the shrimpers because they weren't the ones being hired in some cases. Some were hired, and some weren't. So that domino effect just went straight on down. It also affects your doctors, your lawyers, everything. The only one that's probably not affected is the undertaker. So it had a domino effect on the whole economy here. Tourists don't come; you lose dollars in the hotel industry.

Scull-DeArmey: Which is a little ironic, because the oil had to travel so far to get to the Mississippi beaches that a lot of it had naturally degraded. And so we were protected, in a way, much more so than Louisiana was. But still, we were branded as being contaminated. So the perception might not have been realistic, but the perception of the tourist was, “I'm not going there because it's dangerous and dirty; it's polluted,” which to some degree it was, just not as much as probably Louisiana was affected. And then there's the dispersant. What did you think when they were—

Boudreaux: Some of your dispersants, (0:21:14.3) it's a catch-22. I think you could have health issues for people, and when I say health issues, maybe not for somebody like me that's in their sixties, but you take somebody that's in their thirties or twenties, down the line we may find issues here from that. We don't know everything that's in the issues. (phone rings; brief interruption)

Scull-DeArmey: Years from now, people will say, “Oh, isn't that quaint, that little ring that was on their phone?” Because they'll probably be getting their rings from the computer chip implanted in their brains. (laughter) It'll make a certain tooth vibrate, and then they'll answer the phone.

Boudreaux: I forgot to put it on vibrate. I meant to do that. (laughter) Sorry about that.

Scull-DeArmey: That's OK. You were saying that the oil dispersant might cause some health issues down the line that aren't immediate.

Boudreaux: Yes. And they could. And like I say, we don't know what will be the long-term effect, like anything. And I think of the Valdez disaster over in California. Some of them guys came down here and worked for BP, and my son worked with them, and they told him that they still got issues over there with various things over the long period of time. Now, grant you, they think that the Sound will heal quicker than that area did, but we're talking about—

Scull-DeArmey: Why? Why would it?

Boudreaux: I don't know, but that's what they keep saying, that it's made so it could heal, but the Pacific didn't heal completely along that shoreline.

Scull-DeArmey: And they have huge waves that you would think would move in and out more fresh [salt]water.

Boudreaux: I know there's a certain flow to the Pacific. It kind of flows from the north to the Americas from like Japan because they talking about the debris now [from tsunami], and then it flows down the coast, and then turns around and goes back.

Scull-DeArmey: I see.

Boudreaux: Some kind of natural flow that's there. The Sound has a different kind of flow, (0:23:27.0) which has changed over time with the barrier islands being lost. We don't have the waves that Florida has, and things of that nature. So you end up with a different type of flow. Of course, being in the deeper water, I think, is what they were saying would help it heal itself, but then again, my understanding now today, is that there is still a large amount of oil sitting there that didn't degrade—

Scull-DeArmey: On the bottom?

Boudreaux: —that they thought degraded, but has not degraded yet. And that all depends on the microorganisms that eat the oil. But do they eat dispersants? We don't know.

Scull-DeArmey: And if we introduce a lot of those little oil-eating organisms into the Gulf to get rid of all that oil, do we upset a balance because we put too many of those oil-eating organisms there?

Boudreaux: And we know that our seas seep oil, which that's why the organisms probably exist to start with, to keep that ecological balance. So they're there constantly, and they do their job. But is this too much for them? I don't know.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. I know there was an article describing research that was being done at The University of Southern Mississippi with those little organisms that eat oil and thinking of them as a way to clean up and kind of control it, but we really don't know what would happen if we put more of them in than occur naturally. We really don't know what would happen.

Boudreaux: No. The long-term effect of that could be something else.

Scull-DeArmey: On our seafood it could, yeah. So it's very difficult to establish cause-and-effect, when you're talking about research. But if you asked anyone if they would like to, say, pick one of those turtles up out of the oil spill and take it home and eat it, I don't think anybody would want to. It just makes sense that—

Boudreaux: Nor the speckled trout that they pulled in that's covered with oil, or if you find, down the line, some disfiguration of some of the creatures that are out there, if you catch a speckled trout that has a extra hump or something in it, people are going to look at that and say, "I ain't eating that." So the delicate balance of the Gulf has been affected, and it's going to take a very long time before we know how it was affected.

Scull-DeArmey: And we really don't know what effect the oil sitting on the bottom will have on the shrimp who live on the bottom. They're bottom-dwellers.

Boudreaux: Right. They're bottom-dwellers.

Scull-DeArmey: So maybe a year out is too soon to really know anything.

Boudreaux: No. We'll find out as the harvest continues.

Scull-DeArmey: Right. Do you have any idea what would happen to our coastline if all the barrier islands were to disappear? (0:26:46.8)

Boudreaux: Well, like Florida, we would, first of all, have a surf. It might be good for the economy, but we're already losing coastline, and that would be more erosion, so you would have additional loss of coastline; may not be drastic at first, but over time, especially with storms being able to come straight up in there, the Sound would deepen. It would have to get deeper waters in different places as [the] wave action eroded it. And then the shoreline would erode, and bays and inlets would be affected, and in some cases, probably erosion to the mouths of these areas that would cause it to deepen the water in some spots. So a long-term effect would naturally—of course, if the climate's warmer, we may see that anyway, so. Just what we're talking about here. And I think over time you could lose twenty miles worth of coastline over a long period of time, so.

Scull-DeArmey: So buy property in Wiggins. (laughter) It's going to be waterfront.

Boudreaux: Yeah. I own property right now that's at the highest elevation in Harrison County. I may have beachfront property down the line; I don't know. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmeY: Right. Would the fact that we have a man-made beach have anything—

Boudreaux: And that's a misconception—I need to let y'all know that—because there was beaches here before they built the seawall. (0:28:25.3) And that was a tourist gambit, where they went ahead and tried to sell the Coast, and that was one of the selling things to draw the tourists. “We're going to say we got this man-made beach, and this is going to bring people here.” The beach was spotty. In some places there was embankments where there was erosion and stuff. Like around Beauvoir and all, you could have seen the little embankments that went down to a small, sand beach. In other areas, there was large, sand beaches. When they built the seawall, they extended it out to the water's edge and constructed the seawall and filled in a lot of area. The lighthouse is a good example; it was on the shoreline, and now it's a good ways inland because of the way they had filled everything in. And originally, the designer of it wanted to have sand beaches, but they originally didn't put them in until one of the storms came along and did erosion underneath these seawalls. So then they decided that they needed to do that next step, [and] they had the sand pumped in. But even after they had left it, there were some areas that still had sand beach, or when you walked off the seawall, you were standing in very shallow waters, (0:29:56.1) maybe just the edge of your foot underwater. So it was a misconception that there was no beaches here, maybe.

Scull-DeArmeY: Interesting.

Boudreaux: The way they sell it.

Scull-DeArmeY: I believed there were no beaches here all my life, until you just told me that.

Boudreaux: Yeah, there was beaches. You may have had sea oats and stuff like that, growing right at the water's edge, but you had that area of beach. (Brief interruption because of background noise. A portion of the interview has not been transcribed at the discretion of the interviewer.)

Boudreaux: Well, the Dog Keys I mentioned, the Dog Island, Isle of Capri later on, was one of those islands of the turtles. They mentioned the turtles because they were gathering turtle eggs. It also was covered with sea oats, and that became a harvest thing for a while by florists, the sea-oats. That's why it's against the law to harvest sea-oats. Combination of that, removal of the sea oats, the effect on the turtle population probably, the ones not returning, and the fact that they had a casino there and had built it, and it burned down by a freak accident after it was unoccupied, and

then a hurricane coming in took the island under the waves, and it's never returned. In fact, the only thing that used to sit out of the water for years was the artesian pipe. (0:34:01.2) And the fishermen used to go, drink fresh water from the artesian pipe that was bubbling out. Now, they say the artesian well still is around the Dog Keys and still can be seen bubbling out of the sand.

Scull-DeArmey: So maybe a good place for oysters?

Boudreaux: Right. But the pipe is rusted below the thing. And at one time, somebody took some piping larger than it and slid it over the top to keep it above the waves. And it did for a while, but then it fell under the waves again, for the last time.

Scull-DeArmey: And so it's just this hidden piece of history.

Boudreaux: History, yeah. The Dog Keys, or, like I said, later called the Isle of Capri because nobody would want to go gambling on Dog Island, (laughter) but the Isle of Capri sounded really intriguing.

Scull-DeArmey: Come down to see what the man-made beaches look like, and then go out to the Isle of Capri on Dog Island. (laughter)

Boudreaux: Dog Island. Well, Dauphin Island was originally Massacre Island. (laughter) Now, how do you get settlers to come to a place called Massacre Island? Well, they changed the name, (laughter) so the French settlers would come and stay.

Scull-DeArmey: There was marketing and branding even then.

Boudreaux: Oh, yes. Yes.

Scull-DeArmey: So we were talking about they had built the seawalls, and then when the storms came in and were undermining the seawalls, they decided to dredge up sand and build—

Boudreaux: Dredge it up, and then Anthony Ragusin used it as a point to advertise the Gulf Coast as “The longest man-made-beach.” And that's when it started getting nicknames like the Riviera of the South. So tourism picks up at that time. Saltwater, healthy, considered healthy; seafood, considered healthy, all these are draws. And that's your initial draws to the area, was the abundance of seafood and the salt-air and water.

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. So two of those took a real hit with the oil disaster, the safety of the seafood and the safety of the saltwater.

Boudreaux: Saltwater, right.

Scull-DeArmey: What were some of the thoughts that were coming through your

head when you learned about the leak, the BP leak? (0:36:15.3)

Boudreaux: Well, it's kind of mixed emotions because at first, they made it sound like it wasn't going to be too bad, so you say, "OK. That's OK; got a spill, but it's going to be under control." Then you realize that they're not being forthright and honest with what they're saying. And then that—excuse the way I say this; it pisses you off. And it pisses everybody off, all along the Gulf Coast because now you're being lied to. So that was a hit, a different kind of hit. Of course, you're looking at it, thinking it's going to last an unbelievable amount of time. Grant you, it lasted longer than you wanted it to. But when it finally ends, you're happy, because, "OK. It is finally over. It's closed up." Now you know it's not over, but it's finally closed up. It's not leaking, but it's over for that part of it. So now, you've got to look forward to the next section. And what's going to happen down the line? How it's going to affect our economy. How it's going to affect our seafood? How is it going to affect my life, my health? That's what comes to the forefront there. So it goes from being anger to being determined to know what is the long-term effect for us. And how is this going to affect us?

Scull-DeArmeY: Are there any answers to those questions for you?

Boudreaux: I think it's all out until—the economy appears to be improving here. (0:37:45.5) We've seen an upswing in people arriving to gamble or to go to the casinos, which also means they're going to eat the seafood, which also means they're going to go to the beaches. So that part is changing a little bit now. It's up from last year, maybe not great yet. They're not up to pre-Katrina or pre-oil-spill points, but it's getting there. So it is returning in that respect. "Out of sight, out of mind," works in many people's minds. If they don't see it and don't hear about it, then it's got to be OK.

Scull-DeArmeY: Denial is a powerful thing. (laughter)

Boudreaux: It's a powerful tool, powerful tool.

Scull-DeArmeY: And I don't mean to say that it's merely denial, either. I think that the passage of time does heal the Gulf Coast.

Boudreaux: It does. And you need to realize that people are very resilient here (0:38:44.1) because from the time the French arrived, they've been caught by these hurricanes. They've been devastated by these hurricanes, but they continue to bounce back. And that's the resilience of the people here, and it's nothing but that. Grant you, some do give up and leave, but the majority of them stay. And they rebuild, and they build it better. So that's been a continual theme from the 1700s until today.

Scull-DeArmeY: I wonder, though, what would've happened if Hurricane Irene had come into the Gulf of Mexico. She was four-hundred miles wide, like Katrina was. And we were just lucky that there was some weather system that pushed it up the

Atlantic coast.

Boudreaux: The good God watches over us sometimes. (laughter) I mean, you never know. I think still, they had back-to-back storms in the past, a not-as-large population, but they had back-to-back storms, and they always came back. And I think that's the key. If you live on the Coast, the saltwater's in your blood. And I mean that literally because breathing that air, it gives you a different state of mind about where you are. And the Gulf always gives you a position. You know where you are when you know where the Gulf is. You take somebody raised on the Coast and put them in Jackson, Mississippi, for example, and they're going to be lost. Grant you, they're going to recover, and they're going to be OK. But every time they get a chance, they're going to run back to the Gulf just to be there for a while.

Scull-DeArmey: I grew up here, and now I live in Hattiesburg. And I'll say to people, "Oh, it's east or west of," some landmark. And they say, "Well, which way is that?" But in my mind, Hardy Street runs parallel to Pass Road, which runs parallel to the beach, so it's easy.

Boudreaux: It's all the same. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmey: Yeah. Plus, when I was on the beach as a kid and I was looking at the sun, I knew where east and west and north and south were, and so I started looking at the sun, and now I can tell what's what from the sun.

Boudreaux: If you're in Gulfport, the sun rose in Biloxi and set in Pass Christian. (laughter) That's the way you looked at it.

Scull-DeArmey: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. Well, let's see. Where should we go from here? What do the waters of the Mississippi Sound look like to you? (0:41:07.9)

Boudreaux: After the storm, after Katrina, even with all the debris in, there was some clarity to the water. The water got what I consider a little clearer. And color, too, it has color to it. Now, grant you, that's a misnomer because the water is basically a reflection of the sky, and I know that. But it had a clarity to it on blue days that looked a little bit different than it did prior to that. Went from kind of, in some cases, a green, to a bluer, a more bluer color. And I still see that today. We returning to more of a greenish tint to the water, in particular when you have a good sunset and a nice blue sky. But in some ways, the clarity of the water is better. I'm just not sure about the health of the water.

Scull-DeArmey: Something that I noticed, Edmond, when I was on the beach after the oil disaster, there was a foam that had a green sheen to it. It was almost like mixing a gunmetal gray with a green. There was this—the foam would stay on the sand, and the foam was that color. And then when the foam had kind of bubbled out, it left this—and I've never seen that before.

Boudreaux: We have a foam. And at different times of the year, you'll get a foam. But it's usually a white foam with a dirty tinge to it because of being close to the shore and all. So because it's a white foam, it picks up the debris. But you do have white foam at different times of the year, but not a green one. (laughter)

Scull-DeArmeY: Yeah. It was a funny color that I'd never seen before. Did you ever see oil out there?

Boudreaux: You could smell it when you got close to the shoreline. (0:43:10.2) And there was a sheen to the Mississippi Sound. I keep wanting to say just the Gulf, but mainly what we're seeing is the Sound. The Sound had that sheen to it. Now, it didn't last for a long period of time because we had shifting tides, blowing winds, and stuff that affected it. And after a time you didn't see that sheen there. Not to say the oil wasn't still there, but the sheen was gone. Of course, that's about the time it was pushing a lot of oil towards Louisiana, the coastline.

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you still see that sheen now?

Boudreaux: No.

Scull-DeArmeY: So that's gone. How is the health of the fisheries that are here, from your perspective? (0:43:53.5)

Boudreaux: They're doing fairly well. I mean, they not up to pre-Katrina. Of course with the economy, the oil spill and the opening of the spillways, you have that domino effect from those things that's keeping it down. But I think, barring any unforeseen next year, I think you'll see a real good season next year. The oysters, of course, will take a little bit more time to recover. But I think the shrimping industry should start seeing some kind of difference next year.

Scull-DeArmeY: I hope so. I hope you're right. Did you know anything about the Vessels of Opportunity program? (0:44:36.0)

Boudreaux: Yeah. One of my in-laws worked for them. My brother-in law worked for them, and my daughter-in-law's daddy worked for them. And they did fairly well. Now, my brother-in-law was basically a sports fisherman and to take out charters, so that was good for them because they were losing money because of that, and he was very upset about the whole situation. In fact, he may still not be eating the seafood because that's how it affected him. But he takes people out to the islands, and they fish. But he worked for them. And then my daughter-in-law's father, he basically is a hunter fisherman as well, and his family worked in seafood like my family for generations. And he got in and helped them. One of his friends had a boat, and he got on the boat as crew. And then next thing I know, they appointed him as a captain because he did a better job than his friend did. So you ended up with these individuals having to assist each other to do that, and they were putting a lot of booms out, and picking up booms and putting them down and stuff along the Coast.

Scull-DeArmeY: So did that work out well for them?

Boudreaux: Yeah. They were getting money where they wouldn't have gotten money from their normal living jobs and stuff. So it did assist them at a time they needed it. They would have rather went the other way, where you had tourist charters or people from up in Mississippi coming down and chartering and stuff, or local charters that they could have made their money off of and benefited from being out in the Gulf and fishing. No one likes to, per se, work when you can play a game of golf or fish. But when you can do it as a living, it's even more fun, I think, to do what you dream of. And that's where these two guys were.

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you know if they had any claims that they turned in?

Boudreaux: Yes. Yes they did.

Scull-DeArmeY: Did that work out well for them?

Boudreaux: Far as I know, they both got their claims paid on time, (0:46:54.0) in a timely manner.

Scull-DeArmeY: Yeah. Well, good. What do you see for the future for the Gulf Coast seafood industry? (0:47:05.2)

Boudreaux: I think the old saying, "The old gray mare ain't what she used to be," is a good way to look at it. We'll never go back to the canning factories that disappeared over time. Canning's gone; quick-freezing is here. Also, you have so much marketing elsewhere, in South America, of seafood and stuff that for a long period time was just a local thing. So you have a lot of competition out there. I think they can make a steady living off of tourism and a certain amount of shipping, and that it'll be healthy, and I think they can grow, but we need a healthy Gulf; we need a healthy economy, and we need a lot of tourism here to generate and to rebuild everything that was a combination of Katrina, oil spill, and the spillway opening, to counter all those negatives that occurred over the last two years.

Scull-DeArmeY: Do you think it's possible that more government regulation and oversight would prevent spills? I hate to call it a spill because it was such a disaster.

Boudreaux: I don't think that they can affect the oversight because you got a government agency having to make a decision there, too. So it's counterproductive to one group, but then productive to the other group. So you have to weigh out the amount of damage, the amount of loss, and what is recoverable, and what is not recoverable. So I think the way it's managed now is the best way to go. You just have to learn that fishermen have been living with these spillways being open for years. (0:48:51.9) They understand what happens, and they understand that if they do open them, "I'm going to have a bad season." It's a way of life. That's the best way to

describe it, and that is the way they look at it. They try to, most of them—and some don't do this, and the ones that don't end up out of the industry. Most of them try to keep their finances into what we call the thirds method: a third for the captain, a third for the crew, and a third for the boat. And by doing that, they manage themselves. And in hard times, they can help themselves exist and survive the bad times, kind of like the farmers had to do, in some cases. The ones that survived were the ones that were able to understand how farming has its good years and its bad years. The same is true with the Gulf. It's another type of harvest, is all it is. It's going to be there one year; it's not going to be there the next.

Scull-DeArmeY: Should we continue to drill for oil in the Gulf of Mexico?

Boudreaux: I think the need of the United States says that we need to. But I also think we're not looking hard enough for alternatives. (0:50:08.8) I think that is something that needs to be looked at. I don't think we should ever totally get dependent on one particular item. A good example of the problems you can get into is what Japan got into in World War II, where they went after everything that they needed because they didn't have it. Grant you, we have oil here, and we need to utilize what we have and not maybe bring in much foreign import because you'll get yourself in a position like Japan did before World War II, where they were dependent on too many things. And then when they thought that it was threatened, they felt that they had to go in and take it. And I would hate to see us in that position, that we get so dependent that we continue to have to fight wars that we don't need to be, for oil, per se. So I think that's something I can agree with, but I think we need stricter management of how the oil is brought in and what safety measures are there, especially when we realize that things like that oil spill can occur. Hurricanes can cause problems. And just the environmental changes itself, the effect on it, we need to keep all that in mind.

Scull-DeArmeY: Well, we're coming to the end. The last question we like to ask is this one. Is there anything that we have not talked about that you would like to put on the record?

Boudreaux: I could sit here and talk all day long, but I can't think of anything. We've covered a lot. I think we've covered some good stuff.

Scull-DeArmeY: Well, thank you so much.

(end of interview)

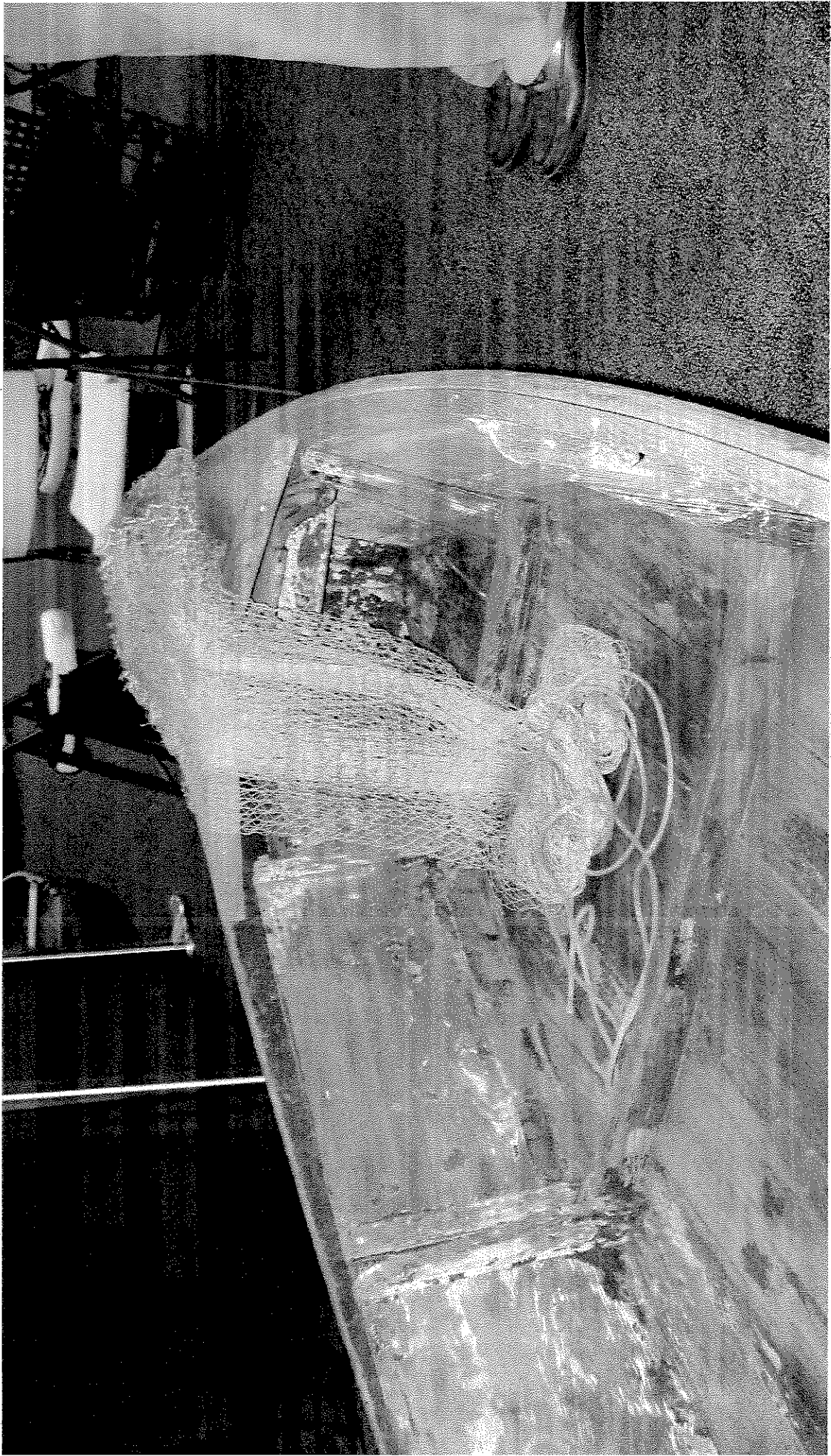
Appendices



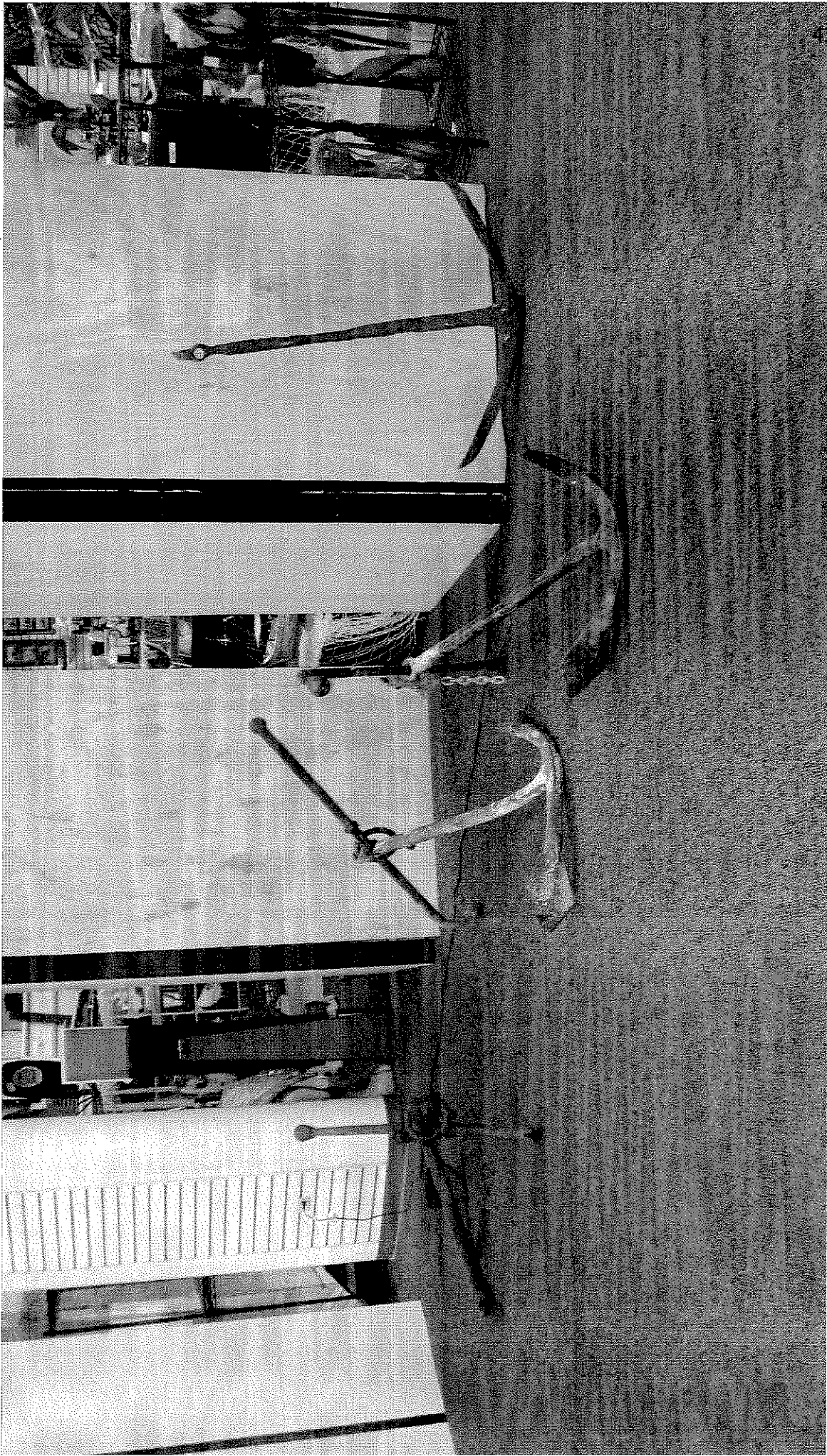
Hundred-year-old skiff, Edmond
Anthony Boudreaux Jr., Biloxi
Maritime and Seafood Industry
Museum



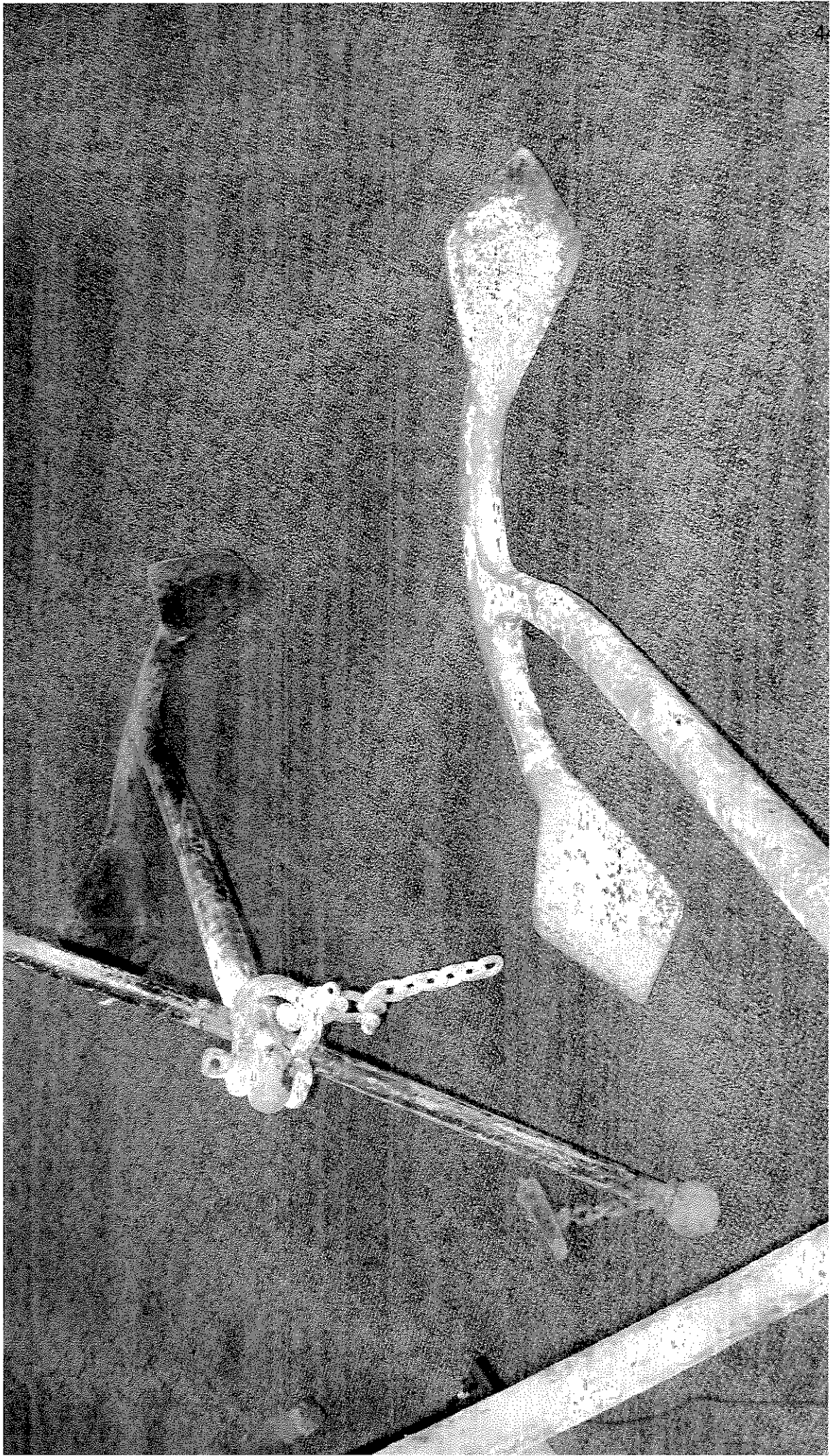
Hundred-year-old skiff, close-up,
Biloxi Maritime and Seafood
Industry Museum



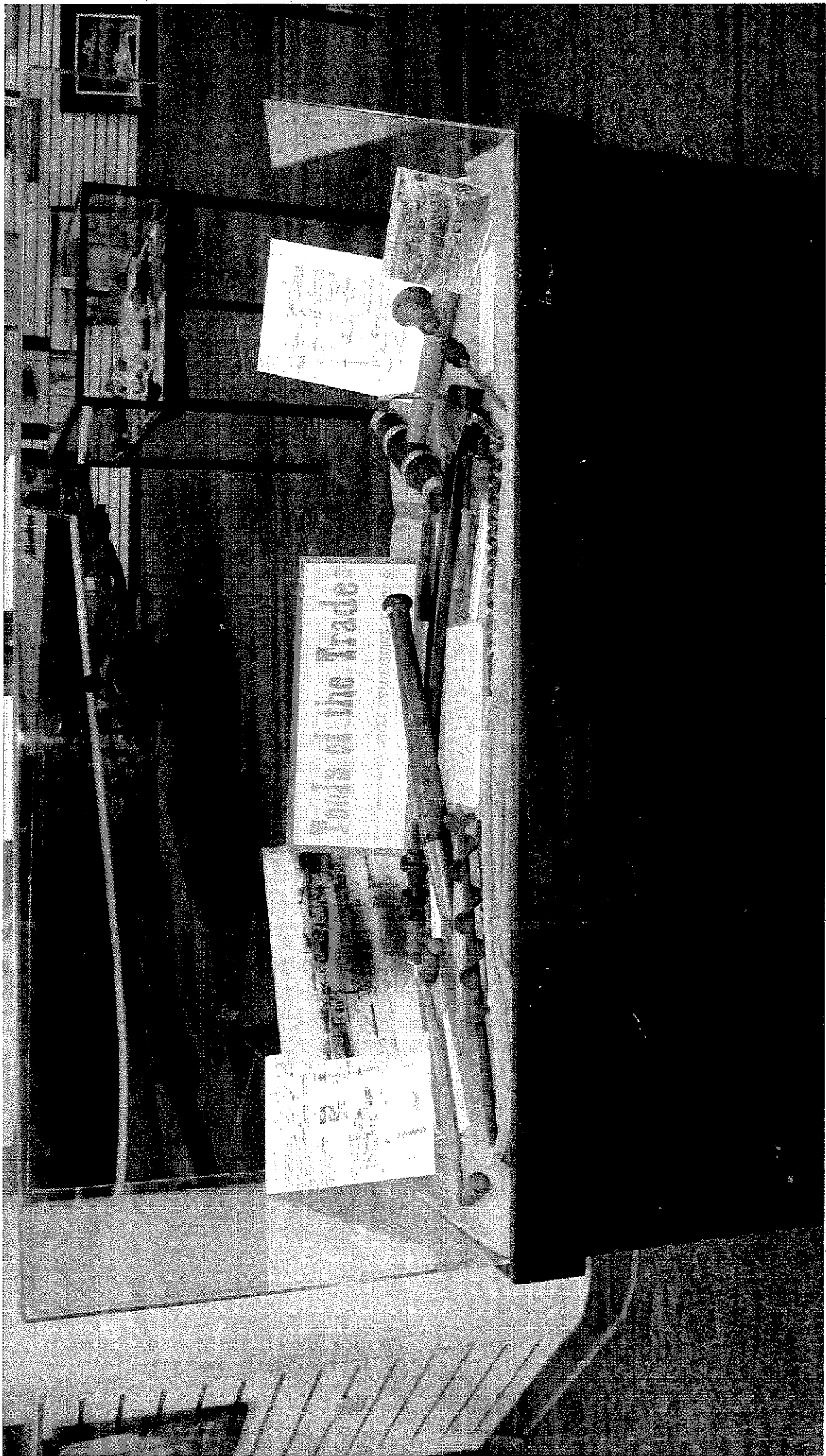
Hundred-year-old skiff, close-up,
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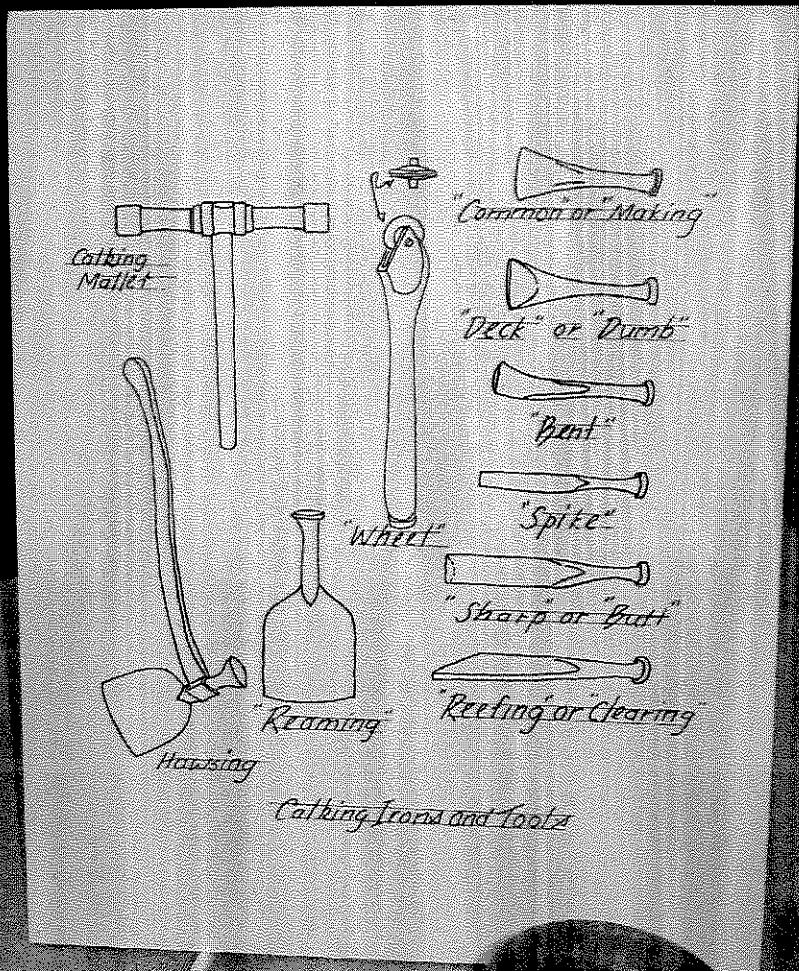
Anchors, Biloxi Maritime and
Seafood Industry Museum



Anchors, close-up, Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum



Boatbuilding tools, Biloxi Maritime
and Seafood Industry Museum



Boatbuilding tools, Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum



Boatbuilding tools, Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum

Tools of the Trade: BOATBUILDING TOOLS

Boatbuilders use a wide variety of tools in the construction and repair of wooden boats. Displayed here is a variety of well-worn tools used by two Biloxi boatbuilders. The collection does not include all of the tools used in this craft, only those individual items most often carried as personal tools. Universally, boat yards are equipped with a variety of heavy-duty tools such as hand saws, planes, shapers, and joiners, as well as dozens of miscellaneous items: blocks, cranes, power trimmers, jacks, mauls, threading machines, vises, clamps, drills, and stores of materials.

WELDED METAL GRIPS
THIS TOOL WAS USED TO REPAIR AND TO BUILD IN WOOD
THESE METAL GRIPS CAN BE SEEN AT BOAT
BUILDING SOCIETY

STANDARD PLY
THIS TOOL WAS USED AND CURRENTLY USED FOR A
MANY OF THE BUILDING TASKS ON PLYWOOD

Boatbuilding tools, Biloxi Maritime
and Seafood Industry Museum



SUGAR DRILL
THIS DEVICE DRILL-FITS A HEAVY-DUTY BRASS
THE CHAIN TIGHTENS WITH EACH TURN OF
CONSTANT PRESSURE

Hand Plane
This hand plane was used to smooth
the hull of the ship. It is made of
iron and wood.

Boatbuilding is
the construction
played a part
by two parts
not here is a
only include
as personal
are these
such as
as well as
crowd's as
machines

Boatbuilding tools, Biloxi Maritime
and Seafood Industry Museum

Boatbuilding tools, Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum

Auger to use...

For hard or knotty wood, or wet & green or boring with grain, use "Single Cutter"

For finer work & planking use "Double Cutter"

For Shaft Logs, long, straight holes and for wet, pitchy timber, use "Barefoot Ship"

For deep holes in tough-grained wood and for plugs in planking, use "Ship with screw"



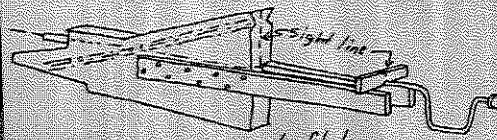
Single Cutter

Double Cutter

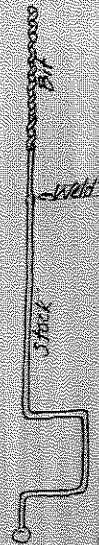
Ship Barefoot



Ship with screw



Jig for boring shaft log



Augers

FLATBLADE DRAWKNIFE

THIS HEAVY DUTY TOOL IS A FAVORITE OF TIMBER WORKERS. ITS HANDLES ARE BENT FOR THE MOST EFFECTIVE PULLING AND LEVERAGE.



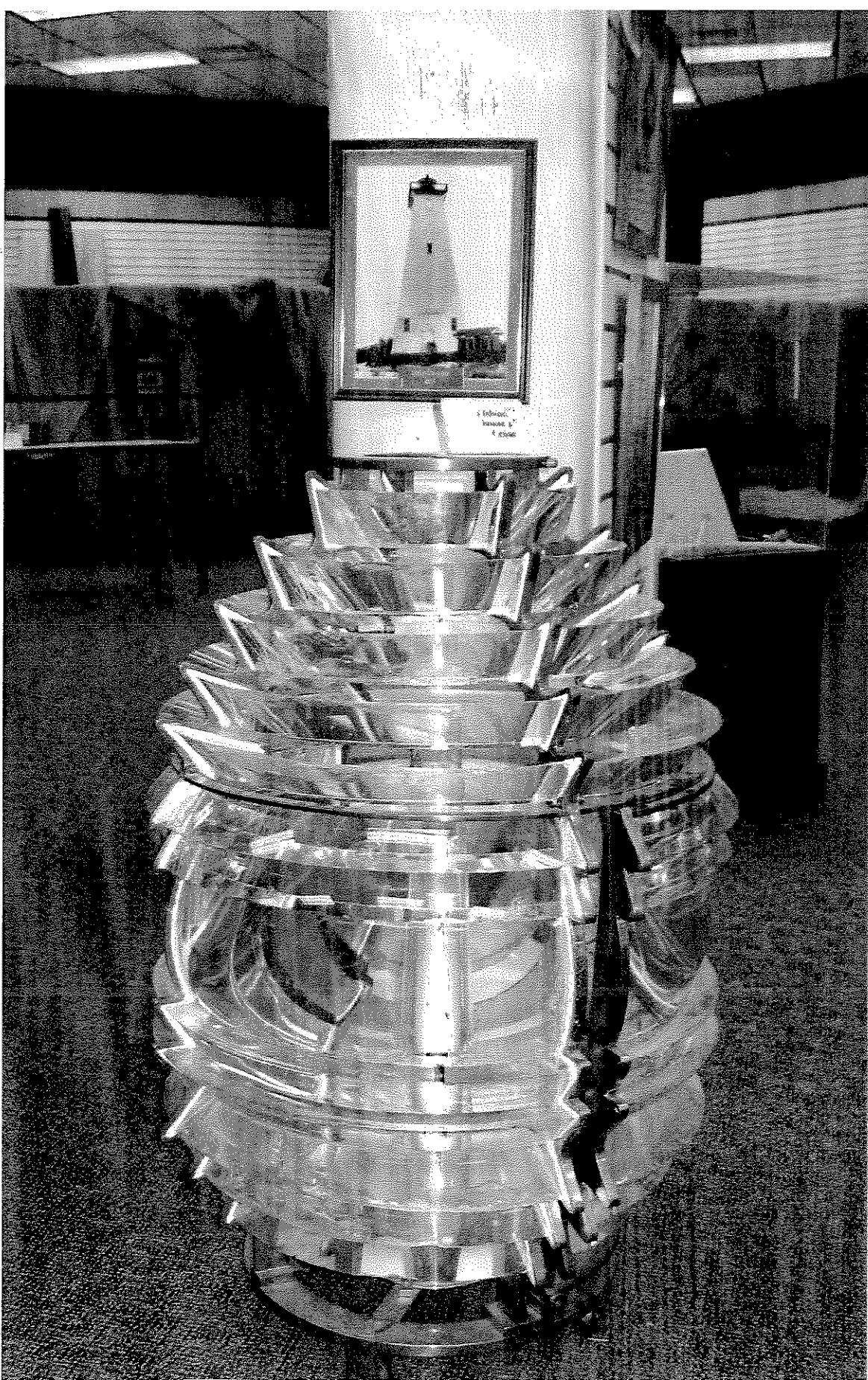
Cypress-tree dugout canoe or pirogue, Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum



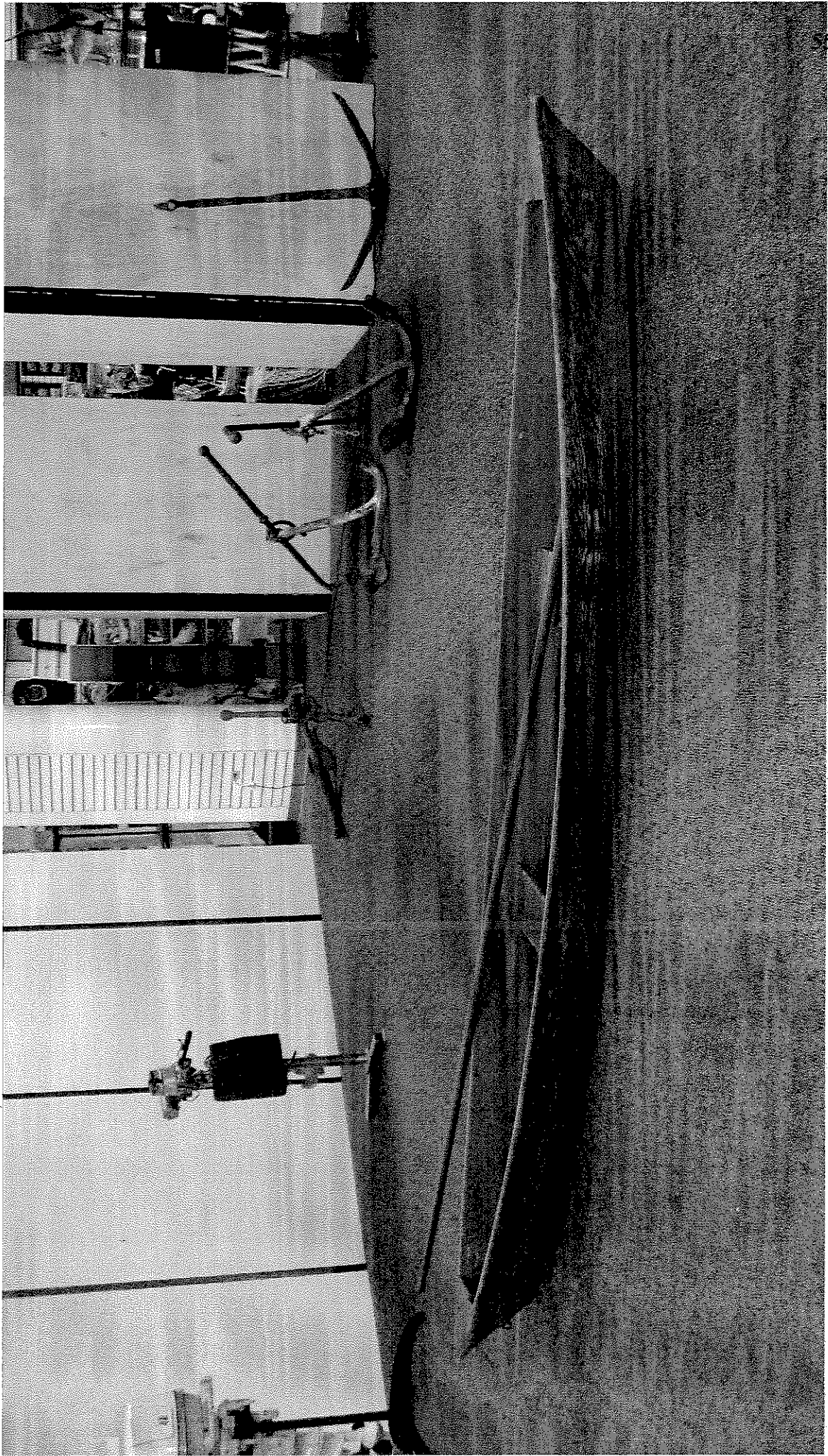
Fresnel Lense from Ship Island
lighthouse, Biloxi Maritime and
Seafood Industry Museum



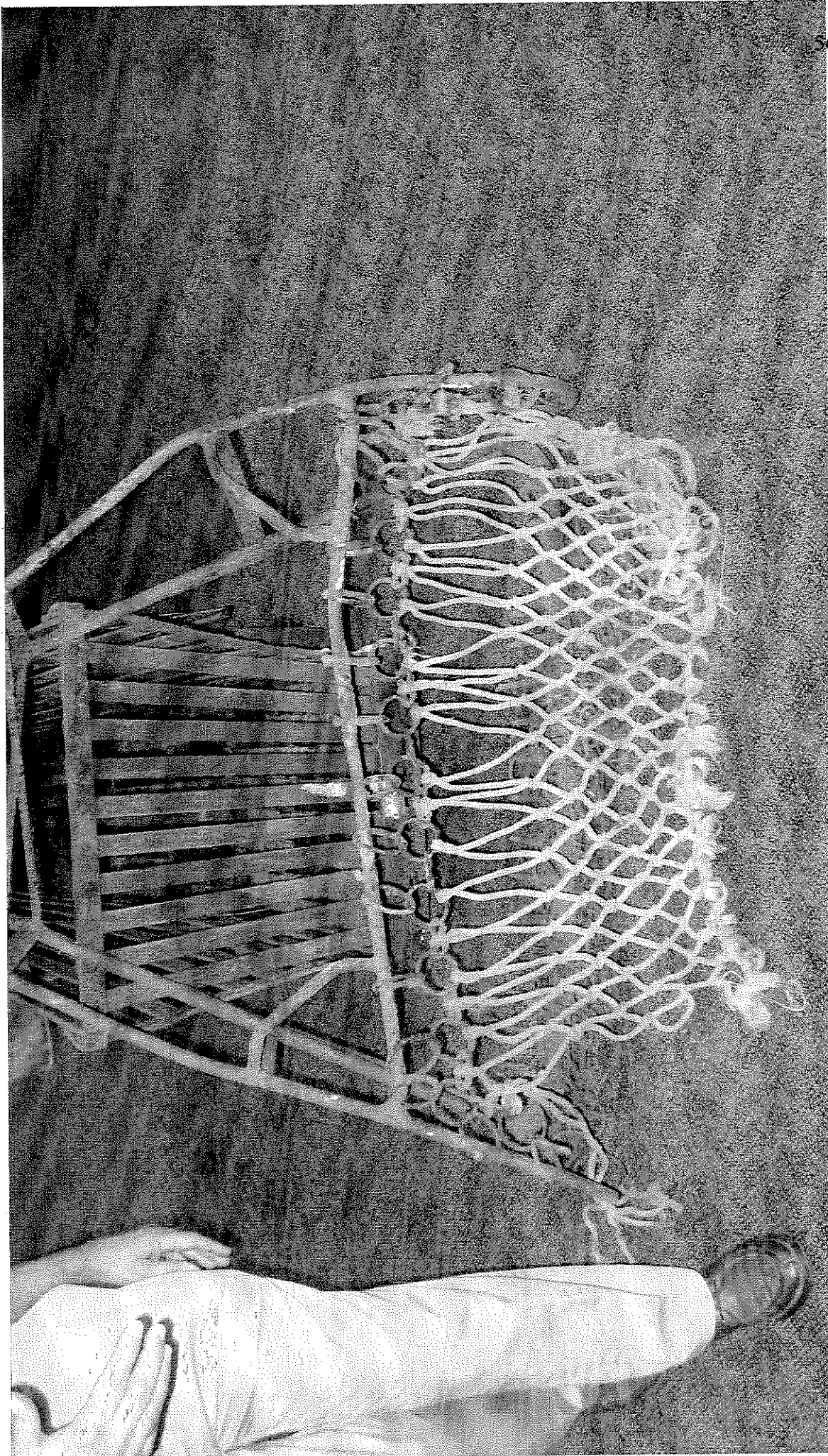
Fresnel Lens from Ship Island
Lighthouse, Biloxi Maritime and
Seafood Industry Museum



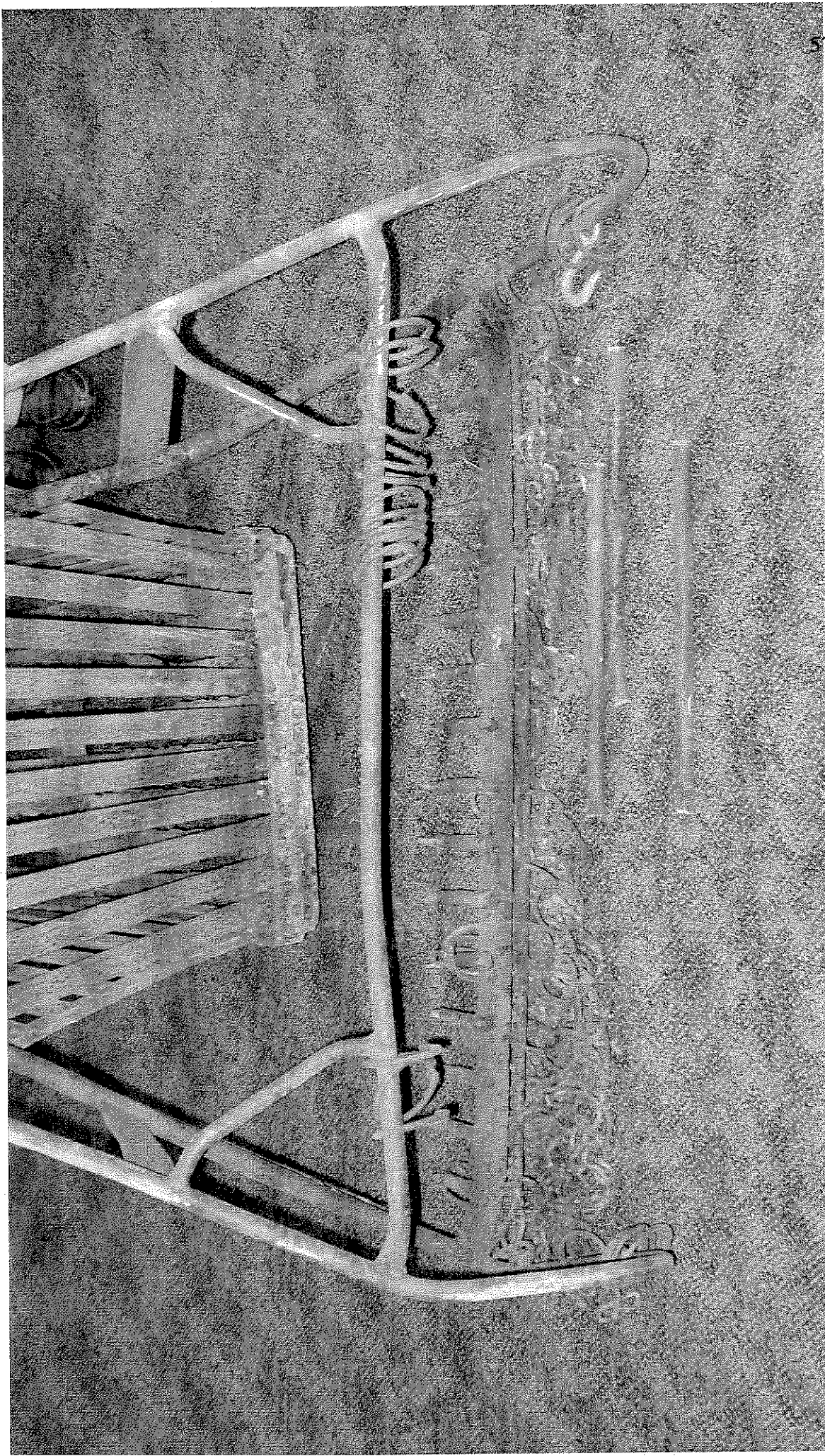
Fresnel Lense from Ship Island lighthouse, Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum



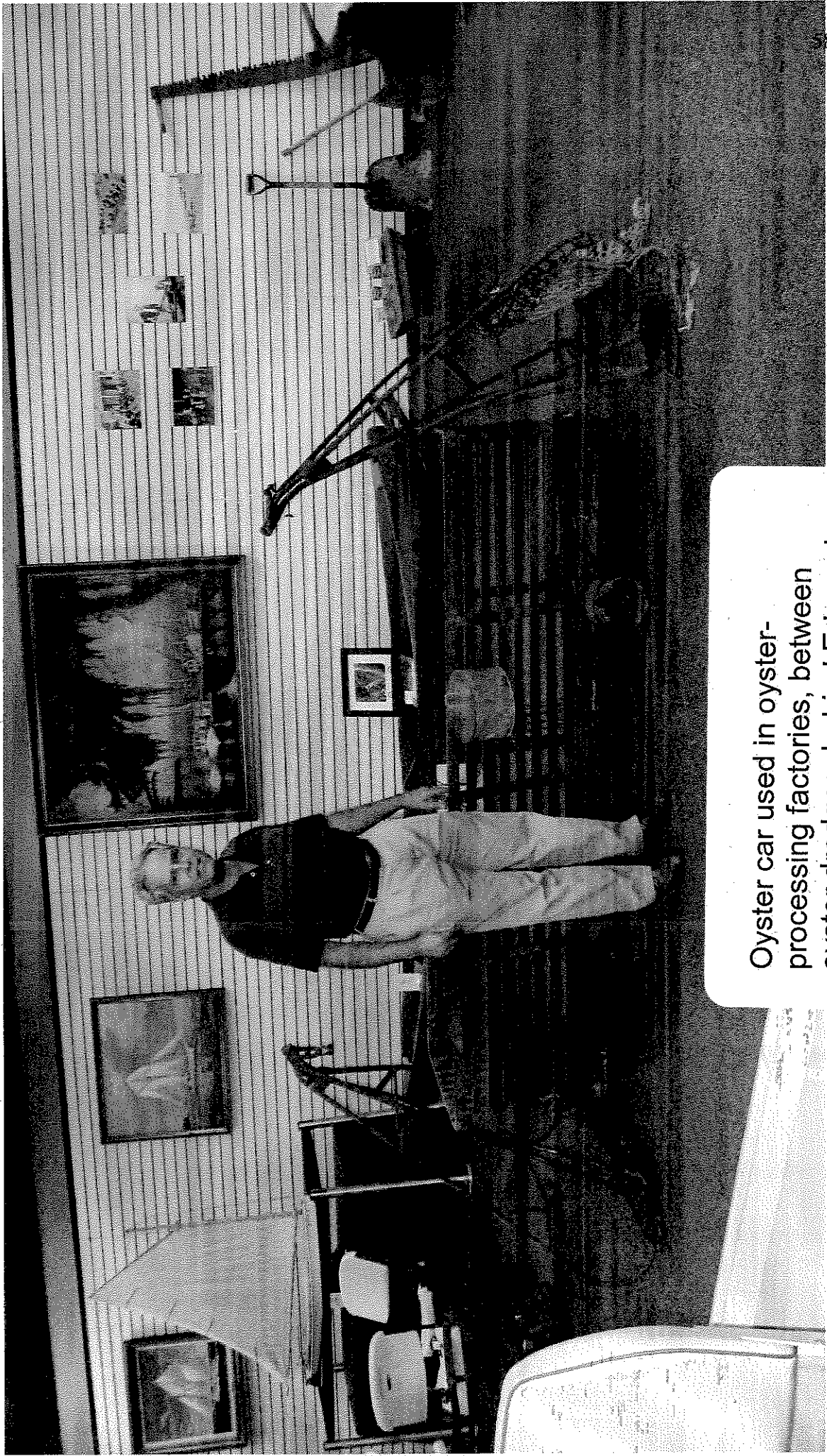
Lafitte skiff or plat bateau, Biloxi
Maritime and Seafood Industry
Museum



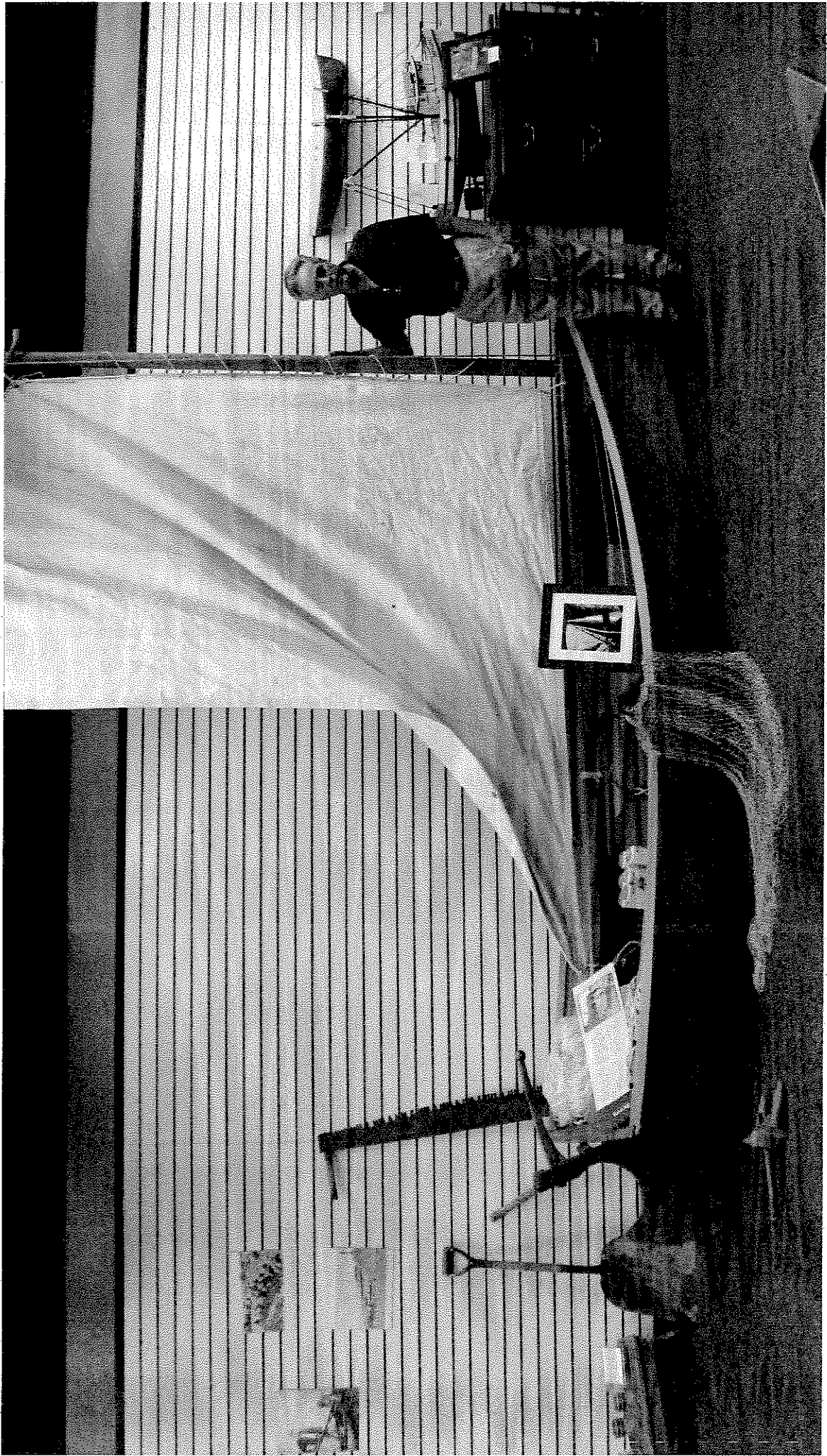
Oyster dredge with net, Biloxi
Maritime and Seafood Industry
Museum



Oyster dredge without net, Biloxi
Maritime and Seafood Industry
Museum



Oyster car used in oyster-processing factories, between Anthony Boudreaux Jr., Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum



Sailboat with cast net, Biloxi
Maritime and Seafood Industry
Museum

Y 16, 2012

A LOOK INTO THE PAST

JOHN FITZHUGH/SUN HERALD

Edmond Boudreaux of the Mississippi Coast Historical Society talks to students from Christian Collegiate Academy at the Mississippi Coast History Week exhibit at the Biloxi Community Center on Wednesday. Boudreaux, dressed in period garb, taught visitors about life on the Coast in the early 1700s. History Week featured presentations from a number of ethnic groups and historical societies on display for three days.