

Karen DeMaria: Yes, feel free. You were telling me earlier about that. You were telling me earlier about the red sea.

Debbie Carpe: Well, that's what they call it, or red tide, actually. It looks red. It looks like a little filtered – I mean the whole water looks like...

KDM: The suspended part?

DC: Right. All the way across from the top surface of it. Everything's out in the canal. It was like a top like of a fish. They turned into that. Except for the looked downs, they seemed to just – they couldn't breathe. They were up at the top grasping for air. I went around and collected them all. At the time, Coco Plum had a holding place for fish. So, I collected all of them and brought them over there. But that was strange. After that, I noticed...

KDM: When was that?

DC: I was just a little kid.

Denny Layne: How old were you? You were eight?

DC: No. I was twelve, probably.

DL: You're twenty-seven?

DC: Right.

DL: So, that's twenty-three years ago, 1970.

DC: That's right.

KDM: That was good. [laughter]

DL: That's not bad. Summer?

KDM: How long did it last in the summertime?

DC: About three days. I think it was summer. Now, I'm not sure.

DL: Is that when where all the barracudas and all the groupers and all – everything died?

DC: Everything died, yes.

KDM: You were saying about you noticed afterwards?

DC: That they didn't come back in the same numbers into that particular area just like that.

KDM: Basin?

DC: Yes. Bad boy.

[laughter]

DL: I don't know.

KDM: What is your name?

DL: It's (Denny?).

KDM: Denny?

DL: Yes.

KDM: Same last name?

DL: No. It's Layne, L-A-Y-N-E.

KDM: How old are you?

DL: Forty-three.

KDM: What is your mailing address?

DL: P.O. Box 636.

KDM: Here? Where do you live?

DL: On 76 [inaudible] out on (Palm Island?).

KDM: That is neat.

DL: The island is on the other part of the town.

KDM: Yes. [laughter]

DL: If I can get away with it.

KDM: How long have you been in the Keys?

DL: I lived around twenty, twenty-one years.

KDM: Full time?

DL: Yes.

KDM: I guess, who used to own the keys to the marina and the lighthouse?

DC: [inaudible]

DL: That's where she grew up.

KDM: [inaudible] in the Keys area.

DL: Yes.

KDM: Was that at the marina?

DC: Yes.

DL: Yes. The rest of our family...

DC: It was the whole basin exactly, the whole area.

KDM: I am just trying to get some background information.

DC: This is prior to the septic situation going on in there.

DL: [inaudible]

KDM: [inaudible]

DC: [inaudible]

DL: Yes. So, we lived in (maritime?) for fifteen years.

DC: After they put that in, I watched the whole area just cloud over with this gunk that grew on the turtle grass, which they kind of tilt ...

DL: They were growing.

DC: They kind of look like they just sat on it. That was it from that point on, the water quality went on way down.

DL: Exactly. A lot has gone, everything was gone.

DC: My only comment is, I believe that they ought to open these canals up. Just put a pipe and lead them into other places so the water can spill out and clean itself. Because that would help.

DL: When they did the sewage treatment plant in there, before that, the water in the basin kept

going – looked like gin clear. That's where we live. We lived down the boats there.

KDM: What was on the bottom? What was on the water?

DL: Normal bottom.

KDM: Normal, hard bottom?

DL: A combination of hard bottom sand, gravelly – in the basin, it's different spots, different vegetation, a little bit of coral.

KDM: Coral, sponges, sea grasses.

DL: Sponges, sea grasses, stuff like that.

KDM: Was it mainly turtle grass or was it just...

DL: A bunch of turtle grass. Then the other part on the Coco Plum was more like a gravelly bottom where they had dredged that. Then over towards Holiday Inn – the Holiday Inn was like rock, wasn't it?

DC: Yes.

DL: Like a crunchy rock.

DC: Pretty much, yes. [laughter]

DL: Like a coral, you break through it. But it was still coral. Then towards the little bridge was all rocks. [inaudible] Then the little bridge underneath the causeway was all rocks and coral.

DC: Everything I observed at that point in time was we put in concrete docks versus the wood ones. Because there's wood when we bought the place. When we first bought the place, there were fish. I mean, we'd catch groupers this size out of there. It was teeming with things like that. When we put the concrete in, it did stop the fish. It never came back again.

KDM: What was there when you pour into wood?

DL: Wooden pile and riprap.

DC: Yes, wooden and riprap. There were all kinds of things in there. The concrete changed it for good.

Male Speaker: [inaudible]

KDM: Then my husband was flying over, landing in the Tallahassee. They flew over the sewage treatment facility. He left from Key West, and his comment was, "Flying over there, the

settling ponds, the settling ponds were the same color as the water that's in the Bay, and right off the Keys."

MS: [inaudible] You could see that cloudy water. You're talking five feet. You couldn't see the bottom part.

KDM: When did it take you to first notice that?

MS: Well, I've only been down here for five years. But when I first came down here, it was blue as glass out there. The water was crystal clear all the way up [inaudible].

KDM: This was the last couple of years?

DL: The last five or six years, actually, the last year and a half in down here, in Big Pine-Little Torch area, Ramrod area. I'll give you an example. Two years ago, we've got a fourteen-foot hard bottomed inflatable. We use it every day. We run three, four trips a day from (Little Palm?) Island back to the house and stuff like that. Two years ago, we could go once in seven, six, seven months before we cleaned the bottom. I mean, just go on, no muss, no fuss. A month and a half ago, it took me three hours to clean it when we came out of Key West. Now, I had it spotless. Right now, it's so filthy. I'm hurrying to water it down. It's all that damn...

KDM: For three months?

DL: Month and a half, two months.

MS: The bottom of your brake boat. I mean, we –

DL: We cleaned that...

MS: – scraped that off before we left...

DL: Yes.

DC: [inaudible]

KDM: So, how often, normally before?

DC: Weeks.

DL: Before? Once every seven, eight months.

Female Speaker: Are we ready? What are we going to order for breakfast this morning?

MS: Mushroom and bacon.

KDM: Now, that is a huge thing.

DL: Oh, western omelet, that's really good.

KDM: Huh?

DL: That's western omelet?

KDM: I will choose the mushroom. I have figured this is my lunch and breakfast. So, everything until 6:00 p.m. So, once every eight months?

DL: Yes. Now, it's almost every month.

KDM: That just happened in the last?

DL: Last three years. In the last three years, it's just gotten so ridiculous.

KDM: Now, what are you scraping off?

DL: Green slime.

KDM: Is it like (full springers?)?

DL: Yes, just like snow on a Christmas tree. It's green, just all over. It's nasty. It's slimy. Not nice at all.

MS: [inaudible]

DL: Something like that, but the auto-pilot also. I flew as an air pilot for years. Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes ago with flying out of here, you could see everything. You could see rays, sharks, turtles, and all sorts of things in the Gulf just flying to Miami. Now, you could see nothing. There isn't nobody home.

KDM: See, I am trying to figure out when did the thing start happening. Now, I know that here down this area, it has not really – it is just starting.

DL: It's been in the last five or six years since it really started.

KDM: So, apparently, it has been going on a lot longer up the Keys as I am making my way up the Keys for the interviews. What can you tell me that is when you start seeing things happening?

DC: Well, the conch went away.

DL: Yes, totally.

MS: There's no conch out there at all.

DC: There are patches. Although –

DL: They're coming back now, a little bit.

DC: – I was talking to the old man in the Bahamas, and they were telling me the conch will bury themselves for years and not come back up.

DL: Never come up.

DC: That could be what we're experiencing here, because he had seen it happen in the Bahamas. Then they rose back up again, and they had just as many as before, if not more.

KDM: Somebody told me that. That is interesting that you say that.

[talking simultaneously]

DL: So, conchs breed and live in very, very deep water, and then come in. I mean, they live way up in the Gulf Stream, and they breed. Then they only come in to propagate. If I'm understanding it correctly, from what their behaviors are telling us.

MS: Conchs they say, there's not a male or a female conch.

DC: Well, they kind of change.

DL: They change, but there is one – I mean, there is romantic.

KDM: [laughter]

DL: Then they change their minds.

MS: They're bisexual. They can breed whenever they want.

DL: Yes. They're real bisexual.

[laughter]

DL: They do well in Key West. But – let's see.

KDM: Conchs?

DL: I was flying a lot out in here.

MS: [inaudible]

DL: Well, let's see. Will you...

MS: [inaudible]

DL: No. I don't see any of the turtles that I've...

MS: [inaudible]

DL: Two, three years ago, do you remember the turtles around the boat?

DC: Yes. The only thing I really remember way back then was the water become – after the (tree?) coming in, it started to – every year it's a little thicker in there with that kind of white stuff on it in everything.

DL: Yes. This was a leaf, for example. It looks like you haven't dusted your house.

DC: This is what it looks like. I have noticed that it is finally filtered this far up, too. That I'm starting to see it covering the flats and things like that.

DL: Two years ago, I built it in to get an anchor, and it's about three years now.

KDM: In Newfound Harbor?

DL: No, in Key Colony. The stuff was this thick on the vegetation.

DC: Where it used to be white sand.

KDM: Where is it?

DL: No, on top of the vegetation.

DC: It's nothing under the vegetation. It used to be just white sand. Now, it's this muddy –

DL: Yes, nasty.

KDM: Pine, that real pine.

DC: Yes.

KDM: When is the search for this site going?

DC: Gosh. I don't remember the day.

DL: It's much older than that. Oh, boy, spaced – let's see.

DC: Right around the time we met.

DL: Yes.

DC: We were working on until 1979.

DL: [19]78. [19]78, [19]79, something like that. Now I did the sluice gates for Key Colony Beach. I had to clean water on ten thousand gallons per minute or whatever it is for an hour going back out to the Bay. We did the sluice gates on there. I could only work my people in there fifteen to twenty minutes at a time. This is the clean water. This is the treated water just before it goes out. We put in extra gating so it bubbles that will fall over like a waterfall. I could only work my people in there fifteen to twenty minutes at a time. My people gagging, not a nice job. Not that it paid well. [laughter]

KDM: Where is your boat now?

DL: Little Palm Island.

KDM: Newfound Harbor?

DL: Newfound Harbor.

KDM: You said that you started seeing seagrasses now getting covered the same way.

DL: Yes.

DC: Right.

KDM: When did you really notice that?

DC: Well, we've been there for about three years now. So, over the three years' time, I've been watching it getting...

KDM: So, it has been a gradual thing.

DL: Well, we were in Key West for seven months. We were installing a diesel generator. When we came back up this time three months ago, it was really, really up there.

DC: I mean, over the period of time we're gone.

KDM: It has been gradual, but do you think that...

DL: I think the last year has kicked up a bunch. I think it's doubled in the last year.

DC: Yes. I'm noticing that.

DL: I mean, it's just...

DC: We haven't really thought about it, but yes, the barnacle growth and everything.

Everything's kind of kicking up.

KDM: What kind of barnacle growth are you getting?

DL: The little thingy.

KDM: The little tiny white ones?

DL: Yes. The ones that are usually associated with Fort Lauderdale in the rivers, stuff like that. But we used to get the larger barnacles, remember?

DC: Right.

KDM: They come on the boats, too, and everywhere?

DC: Right.

MS: The smell [inaudible]

DL: Yes. I've got at one point, a year and a half ago, every night when I was going out boating in the islands a year ago, whatever. [laughter]

Somewhere I get my times confused. But about a year and a half ago, every night when I come home about 7:30 p.m., 8:00 p.m., there is this god-awful stench on the water in Newfound Harbor. I mean, it was ridiculous. It came down inside the boat. It would last about an hour and a half, two hours, and it kind of go away.

DC: It was like diesel fuel.

DL: It was like diesel fuel.

DC: Fuel oil or something.

DL: Diesel fuel and sewage.

DC: Actually...

MS: [inaudible]

KDM: It was like a methane?

DL: Yes, more like – no, I know now.

[talking simultaneously]

MS: It was sewer.

DC: It was more of a petroleum type.

DL: It was either petroleum or sewage or something treated or something like that. So, I mean, I've been at this for three months. I finally said, "This is ridiculous, man." So, I called the Marine Patrol, and I got ahold of (Manny Lopez?). Manny being the fine, upstanding, young man, that he is, took my statement over the phone. He never came out to talk to me. I called him four times. He said, "Well, I'm going on vacation. But I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that." For over a period of five months, he never, ever came out to check with me.

DC: They never did. It started to go away.

DL: They never did it. It's pretty much gone away now. They never did a thing about it.

KDM: When did that first happening now?

DL: That's a year and a half ago, a year ago last fall, so, a year and a half.

MS: [inaudible] very long. You'll see the waterline, and you'll see the [inaudible] line.

DL: I mean, I've called them in. He's the environmental officer. Now, if I cut a mangrove down, if I put a boulder in the ramp, that's how big he is here. He's going to arrest us one Saturday morning because we were repairing a riprap wall and they've falling in. We were picking the rocks back out of the water to put new ones in. He came in with the whole army, and he got out of the car with his camera and goes, [whistling] "Stop the job." He was going to impound the equipment, fine us \$10,000 a day, and that son-of-a-bitch won't even come out and look what was floating in that water and that stench like shit. [laughter]

I mean, it's absurd.

DC: A lot of it is for design, I mean, they dug these canals down about a foot. But they didn't leave any slope for them in the flats. Then you've got four feet coming in, then you've got fourteen to eighteen feet of water and nowhere for it to go. So, everything that goes in and settles down, it can't get back out. It doesn't flow out like that.

DL: In (American?), they finally reopened the (Palmer?) down the creek. It was a couple of tiles.

MS: [inaudible]

KDM: The company that I worked for did that design.

DL: What company did you for?

KDM: (West Buckley?).

DL: Oh, (West Buckley?).

KDM: Yes. I work part-time for them.

MS: Oh, you're just showing off.

DL: [laughter] You think there is anything...

KDM: Yes, right. [laughter]

MS: The old saying, "If you mess with the water if you don't know anything about it, then remove the boss."

KDM: He can remove people. [laughter]

DL: Well, the politics out here have a lot to do with it. How you deal with people that are in power in the county commission.

KDM: So, it seems.

DC: Well, I like the times when the Key anchorage was in question.

DL: There we go. Remember all the septic tanks, and the (leather boards?)...

DC: The fighting over that. They were saying that they were the cause of the pollution in there.

DL: PCP in the water.

DC: But nobody remembers that far enough that there was a dump out there. Everybody dumped everything from car batteries and transformers and all that. It was out there. I played there as a kid.

DL: Transformers, batteries, car. I (danced?) out there. You know what I'm talking about, over the bridge.

[laughter]

[talking simultaneously]

KDM: It is right before the turn to go to where they are...

[talking simultaneously]

DL: They covered that. They covered it up.

DC: They covered it up.

DL: They've just loaded a couple of dirt in their driveway, and said, "Never mind." They didn't even discover they would do that. They just changed to a different dump site.

DC: Well, they did. They covered it up after they discovered they...

DL: All the people that were yelling and speaking, "Oh, it's not septic tanks, it's leather boards." How come they're leather boards when they're going to put PVC or whatever?

MS: [inaudible] all these illegal dump sites they put in after the September hurricane over off federal land out there. [inaudible]

DL: Yes, Buddy.

KDM: Maybe it is already.

[talking simultaneously]

MS: [inaudible]

KDM: Oh, no. We are already having that (warning sign on mercury?). They are telling people not to eat the large pile of fish pot out in the Everglades because of mercury contamination. The birds are coming up with mercury poisoning.

MS: [inaudible]

DC: It's really scary. I mean, my kids are grazing a lot at sea, and I tell them, "You can't eat the fish you're catching here." I'm not sure.

KDM: We are okay down here, so far.

DL: I don't know. Just in case I catch a mutton snapper in Newfound Harbor, I'll let it go.

DC: Yes.

MS: [inaudible]

DC: I mean, it just doesn't look good in them. The fish don't look as good as they used to. I mean, the ones you catch in close don't have the color that they used to have.

DL: They don't have the right color. They're not the same. They don't look...

KDM: They are duller?

DC: Yes, duller.

DL: Yes, much duller. They don't look the same.

DC: Their eyes aren't near as clear as bright as they would. I mean, there's just a difference that you notice over the years.

KDM: What are you noticing on their scales, anything on the scales, spots or something like that?

[talking simultaneously]

DC: No. Most aren't too bad.

DL: They're a lot slimier.

MS: [inaudible]

KDM: The gray snappers, the mangrove snappers?

MS: Mangrove [inaudible].

DL: Yes.

MS: They're a lot slimier like sawyer and (Charleston?) sea bass.

KDM: Like sawyer and (Charleston?) sea bass?

MS: [inaudible]

DL: You catch a mutton snapper in Newfound Harbor underneath our boulders. It's kind of slimy, and it hasn't got good color. You get one off Fort Jefferson. You get one that's been on ice for three days and comes in the Key West off one of the fishing boats, and he looks better than the one that you just pulled out on the water.

DC: So, I don't like the kids eating them. [laughter]

DL: They're not supposed to look better for being on ice for three days.

KDM: My husband's a commercial fisherman. We fish out of Key West. So, I do not spend much time up here, except I live here. [laughter]

DL: We understand that. It's probably the most prime example. All that bullshit went down, everybody's screaming, "Help", and nobody even accepted the fact. I told Jack London that.

KDM: They have never done anything.

DL: They've never done anything.

KDM: They have never talked about it.

DL: They've never talked about it. They don't.

DC: They send us out – we didn't even hear back or anything.

DL: Except that. They're telling to all, "You've been here a little while."

KDM: [laughter]

DL: "You've been here twenty years." "You've been here longer." "You all leave now."

KDM: [laughter]

DL: My family, our in-laws, (Heinz?) Thompson and the Heim family, they've been here for three hundred years. They've been here. The family's gone. All the commercial fisherman left. My brother-in-law's a tropical fish collector, that's a dying occupation.

MS: [inaudible]

DL: Mickey, yes.

KDM: Yes. [laughter]

DL: My brother-in-law.

MS: They won't allocate money to do anything about it. But they will allocate [inaudible] reserved back at the sanctuary.

DL: But look at our county commissioners. London's been here five years, six years. He's the bloody mayor. I mean, what the hell does he know about the Keys? Look at our planning commission. Where did they get for the land use plans? Where did their first company come from? Omaha. Now, what the hell – and they pay them \$4 million for a damn thing like that. The other one came from New York.

KDM: [laughter]

DL: What the hell do they know about down here? They have no idea, and they didn't talk to anybody. They didn't talk to anybody. Because the local people that have been here twenty years, the ones that live here, the ones that work here, and are trying to make a living here, they don't have time. Because it's so damn hard to live here because of all the idiots that have come down here with money. It used to be they all come down when snow comes.

KDM: I love this kind of tirade. It is great. It gives me a lot more insight on what the people actually think as a part of it.

DL: It's ridiculous. I built (Captain's?) Marina up on (Marathon?). They let us build the shark ponds, the lobster ponds, and all stuff like that. There was no problem back then.

KDM: Back then being? Nineteen what?

DL: Fifteen years ago, when we did the shark pond and stuff like that. There's still living in the damn cage. It took us three days to build it. Wow, there it is. No muss, no fuss. It's functioning. They set targets in it. They've got sharks and every turtle and everything in the world that's living fine. It's a really simple system that isn't real smart. We're pumping the water out of the back and shut, put it in the pods [inaudible] before it's PVC pipe, and goes right back out again. Pumps running all the time, continue circulating the water. But now [inaudible] and the whole bullshit thing went down. Everybody lost all their power, all the people from New Jersey. Other than Wilhelmina...

KDM: I forgot to tell you where I was born.

DL: New Jersey.

KDM: I was born in New York, raised in New Jersey.

DC: I know.

KDM: But I have been in Florida longer than anything. I have been in Florida for sixteen years now.

DL: I'm saying New Jersey because there...

KDM: No. I am the first person to say anything. I mean, who else can afford to buy – I mean, the New Jersey property values are high. They come down here and see houses \$400,000, \$200,000, that is nothing to them. Because they are used to that price.

DC: Then they come down here, and they get real uppity and want to change everything. When I first got here, the electricity went off two, three times a day. Nobody cared.

DL: Oh, we got no water today. Wow, cool, winter break.

DC: [laughter]

DL: I mean, no big deal. You never went across the old seven-mile bridge without at least a six-pack, a gallon of water, and a sandwich.

DC: I mean, that was just the way it was. Then people would come down here and go, "Oh, my, this is a beautiful place. But I can't have my clock going off every day and have to reset it." So, they start bitching because of the taxes.

KDM: When did you start seeing the influx really kind of taking over?

DL: Right about when they started piling stuff when they did the whole piler strange on the main gate.

DC: Probably about fourteen years ago by then to now that it started to really become noticeable where instead of saying, "Come on down." We were going, "We're going to go away."
[laughter]

KDM: We cannot stop now fourteen years ago. It was about when they were doing all that new road construction.

DC: Right. Yes.

DL: Yes. They started the bridges. The place went to shit when they put in the new bridges.

DC: Right. When they made it really easy for people to travel down here.

DL: So, before that, like when you're at the marina, I'll go back to the marina again.

DC: It didn't clear up the congestion. It just made people be able to go through without even seeing anything. All the little long-haul businesses went down to the condominium buildings.

DL: The time-sharing, the time-sharing.

DC: Yes. Time-sharing came in about the same time. They'll throw that in.

DL: The time-sharing places, usually, people come down on vacation, and they have to stay at the (Sea Doll?) or some little video hotel, right? They have to go out to dinner at...

DC: Perry's or whatever.

DL: Not Perry's.

DC: Yes. There wasn't at that time.

DL: Stilts or someplace like that.

KDM: [laughter]

DL: They have been there forever. But they have to go to places like that. They have to rent a boat from Danny in (Virginia?) at the Longhorn Marina, or they have to rent it from somebody else. Time-sharing is when dixie profits.

DC: They have rental boats. They have their own car. They have their own everything. Nobody has to leave that particular area.

DL: Fifteen years ago, so almost every business...

DC: All businesses started really getting hurt.

DL: Fifteen years ago, you went through maritime, every business was a family-ran, small business. Now, it's all corporate. It's all corporations.

MS: [inaudible]

DL: Yes, now it is.

MS: [inaudible]

DL: No.

MS: [inaudible]

DL: Wilhelmina's husband and her – what's the French guy's name? His last name?

MS: [inaudible]

DL: Whatever.

MS: (Boulger?)

DL: (Boulger?). They developed Summerland. Now, if you look at Summerland's canal system, it works.

KDM: Yes, flow-through.

DL: It's a flow-through. It has nice, clean water anytime of the year for fishing, for lobstering. I mean, that's a nice canal system.

DC: It's not getting affected by disaster.

DL: It's not getting affected disasters unlike the other one.

DC: It is. It's not as bad.

Male Speaker: You can just drove up on the seawall.

MS: Just the algae.

DL: Yes. You don't see it.

MS: We don't see it.

DL: You don't see it in Summerland.

MS: You have to go back and venture out.

DL: Yes. Go Ramrod.

DC: Yes. [laughter]

DL: Go Ramrod, go. Now, Ramrod has started to aerate their canals. But that's individual people putting pipes in and pumps in the water through it. Because again, Ramrod goes forty-seven miles back in a Tiki Bar of nowhere, sea oil.

KDM: [laughter]

DL: It doesn't do anything. It's nasty coming there every morning. Occasionally, out of a month, you can see the bottom of the canal two, three days.

KDM: Would you describe that? Describe nasty.

DC: Just covered with that white...

DL: With silk, with that gray-ish...

DC: It looks dusty and old.

KDM: What is the color of the water? What color are you seeing?

DL: Mostly very cloudy.

DC: Cloudy green, I guess would be...

DL: Yes.

MS: [inaudible] You can't see the bottom.

DL: Yes.

DC: We get very few days where you can see the bottom clear. But when you can, you can see that old, dusty look all over. I mean, it's all trash, and it's just like all over the whole – I think it's bad.

MS: [inaudible]

KDM: Just like what you said, Deb.

MS: [inaudible]

KDM: It is sitting on its own methane.

MS: Yes.

KDM: Well, it is like a cycle.

MS: [inaudible]

KDM: Maybe it is not during the (phosphorous?). That is their whole point. But they are a part of a synthesizing cycle. It is about the oxygen and the carbon dioxide.

DL: You need to set up a stick, a ten-twelve-foot stick. Then you go behind (Tred's?) place. Maybe Bahamas have the same problem as we do, the conch tales. Last year, Nassau, a lot of people died, about two hundred got sick from eating conch.

KDM: Really?

DC: What happened was they keep live conch, they keep them on a string right there in the harbor, where they had a sewage spill. I think it's what it was, a sewage spill. The conch was dosing in there, eating from the bottom. That's what poisoned the conch. But it definitely wiped out the industry of selling live conchs from mail boats because everybody got afraid of it.

DL: That's where we made our money. Well, we dive two hundred, 275, three hundred conchs weekly. We leave the boat at 7:30 a.m. or 8:00 a.m., drink a cup of coffee, go out.

KDM: Was that last year, that one?

DC: No. That was three years ago.

DL: No. The conch-kill was last year, yes. It was last winter.

DC: I guess, it's four years now.

DL: Whatever.

DC: Looking back a year again, that's three years prior to that.

DL: But we go get a dollar and thirty apiece of the shell. We leave on the boat 7:30 a.m. We'd go out, and we're back in by noon with 275, three hundred, three-fifty, two-fifty, depending on the weather. Just free-diving, no chains, no nothing, just free-diving. We'd crack a whole in them, and then we'll tie them in a series of five. Throw in the conchs in the (prowl?). So, when the mail boat come in on Friday, and whenever it came in, we have about twelve hundred conchs.

DC: It was a great [inaudible] locked together.

[laughter]

DL: No. We'll take them back out, put them in the small box, put them up on the mail boat. We got twelve hundred. Twelve hundred conchs, okay, fine. Here's my grocery list, here's my fuel drums, here's my gas drums. Pick me up this. Pick me up that. Next week, it comes back, you get all of your receipts. Okay, here you go. Here's just \$700 in cash. Here's your receipts for \$500, whatever.

DC: It was wonderful.

DL: Three months, it comes in a lot of green and red and pink and a combination.

[laughter]

KDM: They had (dirty?) money.

DC: Yes.

KDM: You guys graduated in high school?

DL: I did.

KDM: You did?

DC: I did.

KDM: What grade did you finish?

DC: Tenth but I started eleventh.

DL: She's the brightest girl in Marathon.

DC: [laughter]

DL: She's a product of her parents.

KDM: But that is great reason I asked, that is part of the other thing I learned. A lot of the guys that I have talked to in (Chalk?) Island are tenth graders.

DC: Yes. [laughter]

KDM: That is something like a phenomenon that I – people who have been down here, they are thinking of the whole lifestyle.

DC: Well, I mean, the school really didn't teach you anything. In order to pass a grade, all you had to do was be real good at bribing the teachers.

KDM: You can build those boats though.

DC: I mean, I sent (Trina?), because she had gone to Brazil with us, and she was so smart, by the time she was five years old, she was a world traveler.

DL: She's been all over the place.

DC: I mean, she knew all kinds of things. The teacher was jealous of her.

DL: Yes, literally.

DC: I mean, I kept going in. I had problem after problem with her complaining about this teacher. So, I'd go into the school and say, "Well, that's just the way it is. You're going to have to put up with it." So, right after that I started teaching her average courses and stuff like that. But I went and sent my kids to school – I sent them to school when I go to the Bahamas. That's where they get their...

DL: We sent them to Big Pine Christian for a year.

DC: Yes, I did that.

DL: We have to (spout?) \$500 a month.

DC: They had left where I had sent them.

DL: They can read.

DC: I had the one reading and the other one knowing all his ABCs. He was that much out front, and they were right up there. Jesse did not know his ABCs when he got out of it, and Bear couldn't read anymore. I'm going like, "This is ridiculous."

DL: They had a bad attitude.

DC: Yes. [laughter]

DL: They got a bad attitude. Six months into the Bahamian school, it was, "Yes, sir." "No, sir." "Yes, ma'am." "Yes, ma'am." Time table, to do, to do, to do.

DC: That's right. They could spell. I mean, even the Bahamians don't have a great school system or anything. I mean, they don't teach them this stuff or anything like that.

DL: But they have a good primary, grade school.

DC: I mean, at least they teach them respect, and they teach them the finer things in life. The rest they take it up any ways. If you can teach them to read, write, arithmetic, from that point on...

KDM: They learn by example. Kids learn by example.

DC: Yes.

KDM: Yes, that is how they go by.

DL: It's not a matter of memorizing. It should be it's a matter of knowing where to find it. They kind of research it and how to get it.

DC: That's what I teach them.

DL: Access.

DC: How to access information.

DL: Because nobody can store all this. Nobody knows everything, but you've got to be able to either find it –

KDM: Find it. [laughter]

DL: – or find somebody that knows about it.

KDM: I can tell you I do not know, but I will get back to you.

DL: Yes.

DC: Right.

KDM: That is a very important thing to remember if you do not know first thing.

DC: You don't have to be ignorant if you don't know where to go to pick it up.

DL: They say they go on pretense – there's an old expression, "Ignorance is bliss." That is an absolute fact down here. I mean, I've never been to a place where there's more of it.

DC: [laughter]

DL: That shows up more than here. I'm going to let you know, I went to school in Big Pine. I want to ask you here, "Has anybody ever done a DNA on those (Key deers?)" No. Because if they did a DNA on a (Key deer?), it would be a DNA of a West Virginia white tail or a Michigan white tail or even stupid things. They would find out, "Whoa, it's the same deer." Duh.

DC: I guess, it didn't have much to eat, so it didn't grow big enough.

DL: No groceries.

DC: Because now they're almost as big.

DL: I mean, I've seen deer out there that I'm happy to step out the hood in my car in Michigan, and drive on home with them. I'd be proud.

DC: Right. [laughter]

DL: Fifteen years ago, and [inaudible]. They didn't taste all that good.

DC: Right. [laughter]

DL: But now, I mean, they are huge.

DC: (Lester?) used to trap them.

DL: Cook them up. But now, they're huge. Because people move in to Big Pine, they've got gardens and grass and garbage.

KDM: But those kinds of things, that we are not part of their old diet.

DL: No. But you left them alone again, it's not like they shrink back down. But you take a deer from up north, a young deer from up north, and you bring it down here, you'll only feed them. It's not going to stunt its growth. You take a child and don't feed them well. It's not going to stunt its growth. They'll grow.

KDM: That is part of evolution.

DL: Yes.

KDM: [inaudible] animal, you are going to have to changes, and they adapt to that area –

DC: Right.

KDM: – specifically. So, you are adapted to this...

DL: Do you know where our swamp bunnies came from? Do you know the swamp bunnies?

KDM: Yes, I have.

DC: Do you know where they came from?

DL: Do you know where they came from? This is a true story. (John Eppenshack?), I don't know if you know John.

KDM: John who?

DL: Eppenshack.

DC: Eppenshack.

KDM: No.

DL: I'm going to give you his phone number. Eppenshack.

DC: No. It's not spelled like that, but I don't know how to spell it.

KDM: I will figure that out.

DL: John's number is 872-2287 or 872- 8 – 872-8072.

KDM: How do I know this number?

DL: It's the Fort Johnson. So, people don't know the Fort Johnson. His wife's name's Linda. Now, John has been here forever. He'd grew up in Fort Lauderdale, but he's lived here forever. When his kids were little, this was like twenty-one, twenty-two years ago. His folks lived here for months. Now, they go up to see their folks like once a week, and on the way back, they stop and bring bunnies to get the alligators out. They take three or four little bunnies from that time, and they're sort of flub. Each of them spewed out a bunch of little baby rabbits. Give it to the kids in the back seat to keep the kids quiet. They come back down, they bring their (sugar?) home, and let them go. They did this for over two years. Well, that's where the bunnies came from.

[laughter]

That's a true story.

KDM: How did they get to Boca Chica?

DL: What?

KDM: How did they get to Boca Chica?

DC: I'm sure other people picked up little bunnies because they were so cute.

DL: Yes.

DC: I used to get them off of Pigeon Key. They were wild all over, and I used to collect. I'd go

over there and Bambi would give me one. Then my mom would say, "Oh, you can't keep it." So, I'd let it go.

DL: I'd pick them up on Morgan Street.

DC: No, no. no.

DL: Oh, the marina.

DC: I used to go on Coco Plum actually. [laughter]

DL: A lot of stuff came down here. Coconut trees are not indigenous to the Keys. Half of them, we're looking at, is not indigenous to the Keys. But we're doing a swim platform on the Breezeway Estates on Ramrod. Right now, at the roundhouse [inaudible]. Two years, these people have been fighting for a permit for a swim platform, which everybody – all the neighbors have docks/swim platform, whatever you call it. We got a permit in DCA appeal. We went to the lower court. They appealed it. We went to circuit court. Appealed it. We went to the next highest court. We won. They appealed it. It went to the governor's office, Monday morning – no. Tuesday, Thursday, that was Wednesday – yes, Monday morning.

KDM: Wednesday afternoon. [laughter]

DL: The governor met and said, "Okay. Go ahead and build it." He called our office and said, "We're lifting the ban. You can go ahead and build it." We're being cleared now. It's been [inaudible]. I'm going to have that done by Saturday because it's going to take the DCA five days to get an injunction to stop us and what we built by that time. That is absolutely ludicrous. Like the [inaudible] of controlling [inaudible]. I've got another customer on Marlins Street. The riprap permit is okay.

DC: [inaudible]

DL: The riprap permit is good. The jack goes fifty-foot docks and goes in the middle of the riprap. So, they can park a boat and stuff like this. It's been appealed by the DCA. Because there are channel markers going out to the ocean and go back. So, (Sugaroll?) put channel markers in. Two years ago, the county came up with a rule for open water. If you don't have four feet of water at your dock, you can't have a dock.

DC: DCA rule.

DL: Now, that's a county rule.

DC: Yes. But they came up because the DCA wanted...

DL: No, no, no. The county did that to stop people from putting docks on open ocean, like in the Ramrod and stuff like that, where the shoals come up. Stop the long docks. DCA was, "This is a good deal." You got to have four feet of water to your dock there, then they expanded it.

So, now, if you're on this side of Spanish Bay in the Cajon [inaudible]. You're cool no problem.

KDM: Before we finish up here, is there anything you have not told me that you want to make sure that I know about it, or that was changed or that occurred?

DL: I was going to think about this yesterday. I worked about twelve-hour day yesterday. I can't remember.

KDM: I have this questionnaire here.

DL: You got a questionnaire?

KDM: I used it as a guideline when I was going through the tapes so I could put it in certain areas. Sometimes I do not ask the question, but I can leave this for you and you can look through it. If you'd like, write down and mail it back to me.

DL: I'll give it to Michael. Have you talked to Michael?

KDM: Yes. We can do the same thing. Pass it around, and if there is anything else, get a hold of me or when I meet up with those guys, come sit down and make sure that they bring it up.

DL: Most of this is the attitude of the people that live on the canal. Marathon, fifteen, twenty years ago was a very friendly, nice little town. You could get anything done you wanted to get done. People were nice. Everything was cool. Not the horrible little town. You couldn't get shit done. People were mean and nasty trying to live.

KDM: I got pissed the other by some old, big old man driving a Cadillac, was going to the post office here on Summerland Key. The guy yelled at me because he could not just pull right in and drop off the mail at the mail box. He had to do a little zig zag to try a little bit. No big deal. He still could get around. He was pissed off. He was a bad ass. He could have walked. Who gives a shit?

DL: But the problem is I noticed in the construction world, fifteen years ago, the construction business, the foreman that works for me now, the one that just called. I paid him more money fifteen years ago. I made more money fifteen years ago than I'm making. At least, we'll three, four days a week, go fishing, go diving. I haven't been diving out here other than clean the bottom of my boat. [inaudible] I haven't been [inaudible] six years. A lot of it is because it's so damn hard to live here. You have to pay attention. I got a six-man crew. Two of them live on [inaudible] in Big Pine. Stupid ass trailer, way down, that little dingy-ass place, and they have a hundred bucks a week. I mean, not because they deserve a little there. I mean, just because that's the only place they can live. I can't hire everybody with the same wage because I can't pay enough money for them to live. So, consequently, for labor, I'm working derelict jobs, simply because there's nobody else. I can't guarantee enough work all year round in order to get anybody real down here.

KDM: What you said it makes it really frightening because it goes back to Keys are changing so

much. In forty years, it has been a complete three-sixty. You are losing the heritage. You are losing about the Keys and all.

DL: Heritage, gone. I worked on Stock Island for the last two weeks. I borrowed equipment from (T-Van?). No charge, I met him years ago. I borrowed equipment from T-Van. I worked for Steve Hansel. The bar, the CA [inaudible]

KDM: That is CA. It is hard to get a hold of him.

DL: CA's cool and Debbie, the chick that works with him.

KDM: Who?

DL: Debbie, the fat, blond that works with him. They're nice people to deal with. It's a good step back twenty years. I enjoyed the hell out of it. I ended up liking the job. I mean, it was nice. Because I needed a [inaudible]. I'm a standard Marine down here. It's our [inaudible] to deal with. I did fourteen [inaudible] for Ramon. He's a piece a work.

KDM: [inaudible] talk to his dad?

DL: Oh, Ramon's daddy?

KDM: Yes.

DL: You don't want to talk to Ramon. He's so full of shit.

KDM: Oh, I know him well enough.

DL: You know Ramon?

KDM: But his dad got some good stories.

DL: Some of the men I got down there were pretty cool. The other one is good.

KDM: Peter was really close. They're more best friend. Peter is a great brother, I guess.

DL: Yes. I don't he's good. [inaudible] He is fantastic.

KDM: We have this joke in our houses that if Peter would recommend we do something, we better do it exactly the way Peter says or we will never hear the end of it.

DL: He's probably right.

KDM: Well, that's just hit the whole [inaudible] family. They are all pretty much...

DL: Crazy.

KDM: I learned it off from Betty. Betty was just so amazing.

DL: My boat's a hundred and three years old. I said, "My shaft's torn." [inaudible] He said, "You need to pull the pipe out, repacking it, slide it back in, then put the bag now." We got rip-off, Robbie. He got a Peninsula with a bad attitude, and he got maritime bodyguards, which [inaudible] exchange over the last fifteen years. When Robbie and his old lady got divorced, that place went to shit and a handbag. You can't hold a deal with them. You've got to deal with them. Like, "I'm going to haul you for \$300 to put you back in the water, get two days storage, no late times." You better stand-by when you get the bill [inaudible] unless you got the money.

KDM: [inaudible]

DL: Yes.

KDM: [laughter] I just came from Peninsula. We spent four months at the Peninsula. My husband was out of town, out of the country. So, we got it out of water for safety. He left on October, came back beginning of February. So, I was keeping up five, six months. Then, we finished doing the work on the boat with the bottom because you're holding it up, and let Michael do the work. Every three years, haul it out.

DL: That's what we do about, every three years. This is the third year. I'm trying to decide whether I'm going to Robbie with my big boat. I have a seventy-six foot...

KDM: Doesn't Ramon has the same equipment for hauling?

DL: Ramon didn't buy (TNR?). Ramon bought (Vapor?).

KDM: Yes. He bought off the docks.

DL: Yes. He bought (steel docks?). It's 475 feet of real skinny looking thing. It's \$475,000 worth of steel. Thank you very much. Now, (Walter Joe?) just bought the old marine [inaudible] fix the pier and stuff like that. Then, that old building that (Bernstein?) still owns. He wants \$6,000 a month's rent for that thing, and it's falling down. Don't want to rent it? So, we'll just let it sit there.

KDM: Yes. He does not care what is going on. Bernstein, he is something there.

DL: He's a tough, old rut. Have you heard about Charley Toppino?

KDM: No. Does she have really good information?

DL: When I got here twenty years ago, if you look on the Key's phonebook, the only general contractor, excavating contractor, anybody was Charlie.

KDM: [inaudible] I was wondering...

DL: He's the one that trashed it all.

KDM: That is a good point. [laughter]

DL: He dug almost every bit of fill, every bit of dirt you see in there. Charley's responsible for it. He built Stock Island. He dredged Stock Island. He dredged that land shipped, 30 feet, 40 feet.

KDM: Yes. I do some titles for some properties. We did an audit. We worked with the environmental audits to make sure there was no hazardous waste. We also offered to do tunnel services. It was great because it has gotten to a point where everything was either him or Bernstein. He's looking at the whole area...

DL: It all goes back to them.

KDM: It goes to about the [19]40s.

DL: Yes. [inaudible] The other one – there are a couple families that have been here forever that has a lot to do with it. Have you talked with Wilhelmina? Wilhelmina developed a lot out here. She's been here forever. She's sharp.

KDM: Oh, I know. I know her pretty well. Probably have her towards the end because she would have a lot of stories.

DL: Eppenshack has been here...

KDM: Who?

DL: John, the one with the story, John.

KDM: Yes.

DL: John's been here forever. He's got some great stories. Most of my stories are old smuggling stories, illegal.

KDM: [laughter]

DL: Good stuff.

KDM: That is just it. That is a large part of what is going on down here for what, fifteen, twenty years.

DL: Yes. Running down to the Keys there. [inaudible] I mean, all the guns came out to the bad things – [inaudible] grab some keys.

[phone ringing]

I'm coming, boss. I'm coming. I'm in a meeting. You're out of here. Okay. 1:32 p.m.? We're already called at 1:30 p.m. Chris and Glen are there. We're going to make the delivery by 1:00 p.m. They're done? Okay. They're done. Well, that's even better. Okay. I was there this morning. I told them I needed at least twenty feet in there. Okay. I needed it down, and they said, "Well, we'll just leave it down so he can run the backhoe over it." I said, "Give me some room, Bubba. I got to work in here." I'll get them back if they didn't do it right. Okay. All right. Bye. When will you be back in? 1:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m.? Okay. I got a four in Marathon at 1:30 p.m. just four columns. I got to run up there for four, and I'll be right back. Just four columns they need guidance in working, and I'll be right back. Okay. I'll see you this afternoon here. Bye. Get your checkbook warmed up

KDM: This is for you guys to look at and make notes of. Pass it along to Michael and whoever. It is just a questionnaire. Some of these do not pertain and you cannot answer, no big deal. It is just all these different comments about things we would kind of like to learn about.

[talking simultaneously]

DL: Open the canals, let the water flow. [inaudible] 95 percent of houses I like to build in the last five years are scared out. They're not being built. Because people want to build their house, people want to own the property. We're all the same but you are afraid they can't get a permit. I've got 920-day houses. That means I setup the columns. I wait a hundred and twenty days. They save as much money as they can. Then I get another inspection. Just me, nine of those new. Nobody would build a house yet. They leave us out alone. The supply and demand, we just level it out. The last six, seven years, we're all in default. We got three hundred, four hundred billion [inaudible]. That's because they scared the hell out of everybody. It has nothing to do with what they need. When I became a build contractor thirteen, fourteen years ago, fifteen years ago, there were four in Marathon. From Long Key to – when I left and went to the Bahamas five years ago, there was 286. Three years ago, there were 13,800 contractors in Monroe County. Right now, it's thirteen hundred. They projected another two years to have 250. Supply and demand will do it. People that live here, will live here. The people that aren't came here to try and raise the money.

KDM: We have finished up. [inaudible] This is just the same thing, front and back. This is just to kind of like spark people's memory. Some will look through it and maybe they will remember. They will see the name, "Oh, yes. I know a story or there is something I would like to say about that." Communities, just different areas, fringing Mangrove Island, bold terms that might mean nothing, but who cares. It is the same thing. Here are the different species of shrimps, crabs, sponges, same type of thing.

DL: Can these go together?

KDM: I hope so. To me, I think...

[end of transcript]

