

Karen DeMaria: Main thing is, I have been hired to do this survey, which you know about. You have gotten my letters or you have read the newspaper articles. Main thing I want to do is I will ask some basic background questions, and then we will talk about any changes that you have observed. Basically, take what is on the top of your head first and then go down. Then as we discuss certain subjects, I will ask more questions to kind of keep getting into it. Mainly what I am looking for is to see what people have observed that has changed in the last thirty, forty, fifty years, okay. I have talked to several other people here in the Key West area. You are the first charter boat captain I am talking to. I have talked to commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, and divers and stuff of that sort. Does not seem that – there is not that much that they have noticed down here so far. Trying to see what group has noticed what. Of course, I have not talked to commercial divers except for my husband. Of course, there is always sort of bias when you talk to your own husband [laughter]. We could start here. What is your correct mailing address?

Bill Wickers: 161 Key Haven Road.

KDM: I am trying to make sure I have the right – and occupation is a charter boat captain?

BW: Yes, charter boat.

KDM: How long have you been doing that?

BW: Let's see. It's been about twenty – twenty-four years I guess.

KDM: What did you do before then?

BW: On school. Even when I was teaching school, I taught school for four years. I was also charter fishing them too. So, I was doing that on weekend, going all on vacations.

KDM: Right. For that and he also has the whole summer, I guess too when you are doing that.

BW: That's what they will need to find that I was doing all things. [laughter]

KDM: How long have you lived in the Keys.

BW: All my life, forty-six years.

KDM: How much time do you think you spend on the water over the course of one week?

BW: Not much...

KDM: Was that before your accident?

BW: In an average over the years?

KDM: Yes.

BW: About six days. Five, six days a week, depending on the time of the year.

KDM: You are charter boat fishing, what kind of fishing do you do? Do you do trolling up for the [inaudible]?

BW: We've been trawling here for offshore mostly [inaudible] reef, occasionally wreck fishing. 95 percent of the time we fish in the Atlantic side.

KDM: What would you say is your land points like from Key West to Tortugas or...

BW: I would say from America shoreline across (Gravelight?) will be the main carrier. Even the summer months no more than about twenty-five miles offshore.

KDM: There are three areas in my report that I am looking at. Fishery, water quality, and clarity, and then the communities. What do you feel you have the most knowledge in?

BW: Probably the most would be on the fisheries. But I also do a lot of diving, I used to do a lot of diving.

KDM: How you got all the mixer...

BW: I do, what I've seen.

KDM: When was the last time you got into water diving?

BW: Probably back in August, the whole September.

KDM: And water was warm, right? [laughter] Are you one of those that does not get the tone of water until it is over 80 degrees?

BW: Yes, right. Sometimes on the year, live by the first week of October. That's it for us.

KDM: Yes. I just do it in my phase, I have heard that.

BW: Starts being cold.

KDM: Yes.

BW: Look like it is cold.

KDM: I have gotten sort of that right now. I mean, I could still get into water when its high 70s but slowly I am becoming...

BW: This was from October until at the end of April, we all used to get in the water.

KDM: So, you put in place to say that you dove in the water like once a year in the past twenty something years?

BW: At least that, you need a lot more than that.

KDM: Did you graduate from high school?

BW: College.

KDM: Four-year college? You said that deep water striking fish, you also do reef snapper and grouper fishing but you do not do much on wrecks, correct?

BW: We do wreck fishing also but it's the deep wrecks and the [inaudible] mostly for every deck. And we all [inaudible].

KDM: Right. You go to [inaudible]? Because it's the only one I can –[inaudible] are the only two names I know right there. Have you ever been a volunteer for anything involving the water, like fishery advisory council, Coast Guard Auxiliary, retreat clean ups, I mean, what kind of number...

BW: I volunteered to be president of Charter Boat Association.

KDM: Are you a member of ACA or any of the other organizations?

BW: Probably the [inaudible]. I'll just be on the board of directors.

KDM: Right here, what is the first thing that comes to your mind that you want to tell me, that you have noticed or observed?

BW: In fisheries?

KDM: Let us start with fisheries sure.

BW: I would say that depending on the type of fisheries, you know, there's been some real dramatic changes, primarily in the reed fishery.

KDM: And as in what? Increased fishing?

BW: Quantities of fish, we're having to go further out to catch the reed fish.

KDM: So, you are saying there is less numbers?

BW: Less numbers especially groupers, there is less numbers. The barracudas basically, we have been protecting them ourselves for years, you know, so there is still part a few of them around. But even though seemed to be getting scarce or not really kill them that many but it doesn't seem they have managed. Sometimes we still have to one way down.

KDM: I knew the groupers and snappers I know, you've seen a size difference?

BW: Overall, fewer and fewer large fish.

KDM: And would you say this is something that – was it gradual notice or was it a concern that seem to...

BW: For years I used to catch a lot of real big black groupers especially on the bar, the Ten Thousand bar especially in the month of March. When they reintroduced the fish traps – I have forgotten how many years ago it was. You would see a real dramatic change real fast. The number of groupers just all almost disappeared until the last several years. Now the submarines in the last year and this year the number of black groupers started to comeback. I know they eliminated traps on the Atlantic. I don't know whether that's the only reason but there are more grouper coming back already. They could be because of the size of it limit imposed a few years ago too. But we are noticing an increase have been there for a while. I mean, it didn't get to the point where the groupers are almost like – it's a rare thing. [laughs]

KDM: Yes, I remember groupers sales in a restaurant tabooed at for the grouper family. It felt sort of bad because it is so hard to catch anything.

BW: Yes. It had gone there for some years where they almost disappeared. I mean, they were just getting really, really depleted.

KDM: You said you noticed you were able to catch more large black groupers especially in March. Why March?

BW: March was usually when they spawn.

KDM: Do you know...

BW: The week before the full moon and the week after is when we used to do the bet. That's when we used to fish with (double deep troll?) on the bar and fish for [inaudible].

KDM: What was that Ten Thousand bars?

BW: Ten thousand.

KDM: Ten thousand.

BW: It's the bar that runs parallel degree.

KDM: Was there any particular spot that itself that they aggregated or was it all long bar and stuff.

BW: There were specific areas where they would congregate more and you could catch them

just about anywhere along those bars. There are certain areas where you'd have a better chance.

KDM: Do you know of any other spawning aggregation locations right off hand? I am sure you do.

BW: Any of the more of what?

KDM: Spawning aggregations.

BW: No, other than a couple spots on the bar, I would say. We used to spend a lot of time – even then, I mean talking about an average day in there. Talking about nice-size of grouper but they would be – in a week spend a lot of time to catch on. I mean, it was like that time of the year was not too much going gulf stream anyway. We are in the right charter and I just wanted to have a good time. We would just concentrate on that bar all day, up and down the bar. In a good day you might get either nice fish. The most clear way of ever getting anyone there was probably about fourteen, fifteen grouper. I'm talking about maybe, that's like fifteen, eighteen years ago.

KDM: That was my next question, time span.

BW: I would say roughly fifteen years ago.

KDM: What about way back. You have lived here all your life. Do you remember any of the old stories that your family talked about groupers or about falling aggregations offshore? Do you have any knowledge from old stories that you think might have some validity?

BW: Not in any – not for early spawning in all the groupers. I think the black groupers, I don't know whether they congregated in real big numbers in any one spot. I've never heard of it. Will just be areas that you would take use of a big heavy reef. You know, the columns are reef, that are [inaudible].

KDM: What about jewfish or any of the other...

BW: The jewfish when I was really young. I could say this was when I was probably like anywhere from ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen years old. The end of just to catch jewfish on a regular basis [inaudible]. The most I've ever seen him bring in [inaudible] bringing sixteen and another one bringing about twenty in the gulf stream. They caught them on the [inaudible] zone. You know back then that was a special trip that they take and I believe a lot earlier that they might take long ago to go. I remember when was a kid, they used to, on a regular basis, catch, usually, they come out [inaudible] catch them out. But I would say that from my experience, what ruined the [inaudible] was not probably so much the fishing but [inaudible]. Because I know they used to be when I was growing up. There was an area called the grouper bar where there's a big [inaudible] jewfish.

KDM: My husband was on one of those gear fishing. But he was the one that pushed to have the bandage. He saw the problem. He recognized the problem. He was like yes, the commercial

fishermen that must take the responsibility themselves. But a large portion of what he was saying was the head boat is coming out of Port Myers that had divers on them. You get these divers that their spear had gotten. I think once was a group, policemen group. They are all policemen out there with their spear guns and everything. Each one of them shot one or two jewfish out of the pond. It was like twenty something people on the boat, whatever. Brought them offshore, took pictures and [inaudible]. It was all documented by newspapers and photos and stuff like that.

BW: How many years ago was that?

KDM: About [19]88, [19]87. Because that is when...

BW: The most of them were like California ready.

KDM: Yes. Probably right about the same time because that was a real hard hit one, California.

BW: That was one of the last wrecks that was found. The wrecks that I was talking about like when I was growing up that do really well. Like the modern bag and starve them under bazooka. They used to do really good on the jewfish.

KDM: And now we will do a lot of documenting on spawning of jewfish.

BW: When I was growing up when I was in high school, I used to get a jewfish at least every weekend, sometimes a couple. You know when I used to a lot of spear fishing. It wasn't unusual for us to get a jewfish at 100 pounds or more. As far as what I remember is [inaudible]. We never used to go more than about eighteen to twenty [inaudible]. We used to catch [inaudible]. We used to get them right over here, jewfish basically, jewfish channel. We used to get them right in there.

KDM: I think to your stories that jewfish would come up in some of the little finger crazy stuff in their back drive of the water.

BW: Yes. That will have come up in a little water, weeks to get them right out there. When I was in high school, we used to get jewfish. Most of the time I would just leave [inaudible] when we got here to jewfish base and start diving in the channel and work our way up. There were all the shrills of the (bay keys?), and they come out through the countless channel. That would be a normal trip. Then if we wanted to make a really long trip, we go down off of key bar and that was a real long one back then. But usually, if we are a word that's always a guarantee. We get at least one jewfish down there. There is a lot of real big pawn standers of —.

KDM: Are you jewfish come back since it's been a moratorium.

BW: I have seen sense in the moratorium. So, I had not seen a jewfish probably in almost four or five years. I had not learned it very much. But this summer, I saw I think the first jewfish I've seen in quite a while. We went out of one day and saw two in one day, smaller ones, 30, 40 pounds. That just seemed to show you that especially this is an area that I hadn't seen them in

five, ten years.

KDM: How about Nassau groupers?

BW: I've never ever seen very many Nassaus, very seldom. That was a very rare grouper back then. Well, you get them once in a while but not [inaudible].

KDM: How about the other groupers?

BW: There's more since the minimum size of the groupers, there's more red groupers around now that I've seen probably since I was a kid. Because what it is is with that 20-inches red grouper. But when they pounce at 20-inch, when we were diving in the summer, I was amazed that everyone had seen red groupers. I have seen more of them now than I used to. That's all because of the weather I assume.

KDM: Let me give you this sheet here. It's a list of different fish, it's the main list. It was not that people threw it out for over ten years just to use it to look down the list and then see if anything sparks your memory or intrigues. I know first thing up there is going to be a striking fish I think.

BW: Kingfish. Micro ones are huge change. When the king fish show up here, just before Christmas on an average. Once in a while, you get scattered fish but that's with huge schools. We used to have schools of kings. They used to be off of [inaudible]. Sometimes the schools were so big. I've seen someone had said, "What determines the quantity of kings normally was how cold the weather was." The colder the weather, the more fish. The more schools are congregated down there because they come down both coasts. They sum up here. We used to just absolutely catch kingfish all day long.

KDM: You're saying the colder the weather for here in the Keys or the State of Florida. The whole...

BW: Because if it's cold there, it's cold everywhere else. But the coldest one was when we could catch the most fish. We used to get – the patterns of them were totally disrupted when they started netting them which was about 1980. It was when they started to net them real heavy. I've been talking about 1980, say right around 1980. The kingfish were mostly netted by local boats which was about a dozen of them. They were mostly up until then the motorboats never netted them on the Atlantic side because the fish were in the deeper water. If they tried to net them up use it at looser nets in the fall because of the [inaudible] bottom. They always netted usually on the platform, and they used to get kings out there. We never really fished on the gulf very much. Then something that really dramatically changed was like they made some changes in the law. But up until then, the numbers that were off of the St. Petersburg area that really had followed us down here because they had their own fish. Then I guess they must have totally just about destroyed their fishery up that way. These boats started to come down here. In the first year that we had any big number of net boats was in 1980 and [19]81. We ended up seventy–six boats of the year.

KDM: Some other areas, right?

BW: I was President of the charter association at the time and we bought full [inaudible] telling people about the state legislation, tell them what they were doing. We start off a lot of public concern basically because of all the controversy that was going on as far as the [inaudible] commission was. I remember calling (Joe Allen?) and he said to me, "It's been our own understanding since I got to talk to this one and that one." [inaudible] commercial fishermen. They said there's no problem in the Keys. You see they had accepted him on the (county?) from the depths [inaudible]. I want a lot of the conversation. So, it might be the first one, like you say but it will be the last. So, in charter association we want full page ads. [laughter] He called me, "What the hell are you doing there?"

KDM: [laughter] It works.

BW: So, he went one-eighty on that issue. He's still saying there was no problem. Obviously, there's a problem and we don't have the solution. So, doing a nice politician that he tries to please everybody. He came on and supported the fisher's division.

KDM: What about the [inaudible]? I mean, did you see much of them out there?

BW: We had. When the kingfish were here you had tons of everybody. I mean, you had the [inaudible] commercial fisherman. You had the charter boat. Then you had the light type of (jiggers?). They used everybody to be on this special all day long. There was an update for everybody. It wasn't until they started netting them that they just sort of like disrupted everything. I saw a fishery that we could go out on an average day catch anywhere from three hundred to as much as five hundred pounds or six hundred pounds on an average trip. They're almost down to where the whole month of February, you wouldn't catch three hundred pounds fish total. We do that on average every day.

KDM: That is like right before Christmas until?

BW: Usually, the latest we would use to get our kings would be about the first week of March, and then they'd start moving out depending on how cold the weather was. They started to warm up earlier and the fish will leave home early.

KDM: Can I sense the matters have been here since I got here since the early [19]80s. What have you seen then?

BW: What I've seen is that we had several disasters here. We didn't catch hardly any kings at all until Fisheries Commission, which I had testified on, they developed, they adopted the two fish bag, which basically gave the kingfish a sanctuary which was stable orders, okay? They kept the net boats at least that they couldn't manage certain areas. But it took a long time before we started noticing any major changes. We went through several years where the kingfishes never came back. What's really strange is that the pattern of the fish has changed. Because where we used to get the use tools in the Atlantic, we've never really seen that come back. We get the fish has broken up into small parts. There are ways to get more tools. When you could



go for, like fifteen minutes or more before you stop marking the fish. Twenty miles at school is enormous and it's covered a lot of areas. I haven't seen that come back. But what we have seen in the last, I'd say three years, four years is that the fishery has started to come back part of December and early January but they don't last as long. But still in the Atlantic side that we have in the gulf. So, we never used to harvest fish in the gulf side. Years ago, we would occasionally of water, and we can do a specific spot in like the commercial guys with all those fish. Most times we never used to fish in the gulf. But in the last three years, especially with the color grouper bar area, we caught a lot kingfish and they're real big fish. But the differences that they in the gulf, you don't see the huge mass of schools that we use to and they're congregated. It's like the fish are scattered and they're all over the place. I mean, you can start catching them right from the [inaudible] and put your lines on and just keep trolling and pick up the one here and one there. That's like the fish had changed their toll.

KDM: Have you changed you technique fishing for them?

BW: No.

KDM: The tools, or the bait or whatever.

BW: No. We're still using value and see which is basically on a [inaudible]. It's such that the fish themselves don't – the mass of schools. Now, I've been told by some of the commercial fishermen that the mass of schools. You know where they usually (fuzzle?). They're supposedly out of the bay but they're outside of our range. That's just what I've been told.

KDM: Gulf side?

BW: Yes, gulf side, 40 miles, 60 miles. We have areas that they have congregated heavily in the gulf but they're more scattered. I mean, it's not like you just [inaudible] kingfish and just work that one. Usually it's more of a scattered area, much more scattered.

KDM: What about before 1980s? Did you ever notice the sort of pattern with the kingfish or are they always...

BW: Before the 80s it was regular pattern of – they would normally show up right off the east in dry rocks or even off the Southeast channel usually about two weeks before Christmas.

KDM: But every year since you were a kid, there was a huge school?

BW: Basically. The only time that you wouldn't have a quantity of kingfish in the winter months is if you had an unusually hot winter. It was the weather. So, I mean, even twenty-seven years ago, I've seen times when we didn't catch kingfish in the winter, but it was strictly because there was a hot winter. The fish just didn't come as far South.

KDM: I grew up fishing, cooking fish.

BW: But if it was really cold in the country like at 78, I think they had the coldest winter history

or something, in a hundred years. Well, there was so many kingfish here in 1978. That it was unbelievable. I mean, you could start fishing on top of Eastern dry rocks and just head west and you'd never get a fish or whatever. It's just school after school we've run into. It's just amazing. But it was [19]78 was when we had all those fish congregate. [19]79 was, I believe was another group. But it was the year of [19]79 or [19]80 when those net folks started. One year, what happened was the net folks came down, but they came down late. They heard about all the fish. But they missed the good part. But they screwed it up, but they got here. It was only like they screwed up the last couple, about six weeks or a month. The following year, they were here waiting. In other words, when they knew those fish are going to be here, and they were here like middle of January and by 1st of February. They were [inaudible].

KDM: I heard that some of the [inaudible] and the first netters came down, threatened the netters and cut their nets.

BW: They throw anchors in their nets. So, two boats that reap them apart. It was a [inaudible] company that started it. The locals were guest nets. They bought them real heavy.

KDM: That some of the same people who destroyed this other nets next year had nets on their boats.

BW: While they finally they could stop. [inaudible] anything good to stop it. They didn't get any support from a legislature or anybody who listen to them. It just started going down and that was in the early [19]70s. They were fine when they first started. It was a problem. I'm not sure if [inaudible] used those first nets. I know when we have that massive influx is what destroy your view. I was asked and I remember in Marine Fisheries Commission, I was testifying and I was asked a question something about a scientific proof for something or needed proof. In other words, just because there's fish weren't where I want, they had [inaudible] that how can I blame them on the net boats. I said, "Well, I'm not a scientist. I am a charter boat fisher master but I do have a college degree." I said, "It wasn't on the fisheries. But I think that I have enough common sense that if I go year after year to an area and I always catch kingfish at a certain time of the year, and then all of a sudden somebody comes in – when the reef itself seems a bit cloudy, seems to be on the increased in my mind.

KDM: Do you think it's more with the weather, falling on weather at time of the year or you think.

BW: I'll tell you this, hot water. Generally, hot water retains more silt than cold one. If you have a lot of cold weather, it's very difficult to make water get cloudy. That just doesn't hold silt. That's something that I'm going to say. I've seen it used to be when you could have [inaudible]. and if you blow hard that it will be really cold, the water just doesn't...

KDM: But then like a day or so, it would come back down.

BW: The water played right up. It could be something to do you know because we've really had a cold winter for almost ten years. So, I do know that the numbering is just like the we fish, like when we fish for sale fish, we switch the colour change. Normally you would like in the winter

months a lot of time you get the colour change. It would be right off the edge of the bar, 120 feet of water. But mostly, it would be more or less in the spring that would get certain times and things start coming together to get that. But now, even lights through the winter months a lot of time for the colour changes out there [inaudible]. They are all cold water seem to stay and sometimes up to 200 feet.

KDM: Color change, define that.

BW: Color change is when there's greenish water out in the gulf. The muddy water comes out and touches the clean water in the gulf stream.

KDM: Kind of the blue and the green.

BW: It seems like there is more days when you would have a distinct colour change that there used to be. A lot of times the blue water would be right up on top of the reef. The clean, clear crystal water would be right over the reef. How have we seen it many times when the gulf stream water and the current itself would come inside the reef. Actually, [inaudible] full of traps there.

KDM: Do you think there's been a change that that greenish dirty water is now further out more...

BW: On an average day. it seems like more days.

KDM: Do you think there has been a change in the amount of time that the stream comes in because over the reef, do you see this often? Is there any form of pattern of that at all you think?

BW: The gulf stream, we've been in the last several years, the stream is still there. On an average, it seems to be – I would think they'd like it's a little further offshore. We get a lot of counter currents. In other words when you pass the reef, even twenty-five, thirty years ago, we still have counter current. It's just the amount of time. Sometimes it seems like maybe just because reasons that sticks in your mind,. But the times when you have a real strong westerly current where the current is running to the west. It seems to be a lot more numerous.

KDM: On the reef?

BW: Well on the edge of the stream. You know, from the bar out. That could be just a...

KDM: Could be all kinds of stuff, [inaudible].

BW: The westerly current seems to be. I know we would make comments that my [inaudible] and wait for the current to change. This is where the best fish leads [inaudible].

KDM: I guess we're trying to wrap up here. Is there anything else that we haven't really touched on that you would like to tell me? Then sort of maybe make a final statement. What is the main thing you want me to walk out of here with as far as you are concerned?

BW: I would say that I would agree with like I said earlier that there's been certain species of fish. I think we touched on kingfish, grouper and snapper and then had a dramatic drop end. On the plus side I see these fish starting to come back. I'll assume it's because of bad limits, size limits. Starting to see some promise. We've seen more kingfish in the last three years than we had in the previous ten years.

KDM: Is the charter fishing the same in Key West as it is in (Almaya?) and Key Largo and Marathon?

BW: I think it's all different here because here, we have further west. There are gulfstream fishing like the sail fishing and all. Everyone left out and they disappeared. So, we get more variety of fishing. We're heavily dependent on the reef [inaudible], things of that nature. One fishery has developed in the last three years here but we did [inaudible] That's something that we never used to see and now that's become quite a thing to develop. They started using techniques like they do off from the east coast, up in New Jersey and all that. [inaudible] But it seems like the migratory pattern changed because we used to hardly see an opportunity here. Now, it's not unusual every fall [inaudible].

KDM: Yes. It changed [inaudible]. Is there anything else?

BW: In general, I would say that to me, I've seen somewhat of a deterioration of the water. I believe whatever problems there is in the water, it's probably been accelerated from the heat that we had in the last ten years. That the Trolley and problems developing that they honour peace, and we haven't had a normal water signal so long that I think that it sorts of like accelerates the process. It's probably the same reason what's happened before it's probably. They added [inaudible]. that you see somebody more [inaudible]. Just as I told you earlier, I had never had problems with 78 during that winter I had never even seen them reach [inaudible] what it was. I have seen it now from the point I saw of them this past summer. There's pluses and minuses just like I told you. There's some of them because of the protection. There are articles that I see more of now than I did thirty years ago. On the other hand, there's other corals that I see a definite decline in problems.

KDM: Feels like the big, big refill in corals are the ones you are seeing now.

BW: Yes, they are the ones that am seeing. That does point why certain reefs like they just don't seem to be as much low in coral water.

KDM: Do you know of any location of any freshwater springs?

BW: Water springs?

KDM: Or the algae beds?

BW: Well, even 37 years ago we used to get blooms of this long green filament stuffed in gold that would be so thick that I mean it could cover your face as a mask.

KDM: When was that like in the summertime or in the wintertime?

BW: There would be flowers dotting on it so summer spring, so it would have to be some time there.

KDM: Was it in the water itself?

BW: Yes, just constantly, it would get it covers the bottom it covers everything and it would bloom again. See, it was there again this summer. That's the starting time, it just blooms. So, I don't know you know that's something that probably always been normal.

KDM: Some of the handlers of old liners I talked to said they used to always get certain time of the year they would get a green filamentous algae on their leader when fishing.

BW: You get so much while you are catching fish. It covers and you know it's like when it's blooming. Like if you are looking for crawfish out in the gulfs, you have to take and push it out of the way.

KDM: Will it like smother the area so it kills what was underneath it or?

BW: I have never seen it kill the before it just covers it like really but it doesn't seem to kill anything.

KDM: Okay. That kind of helps to give me an idea of what kind it is. I can actually sit down to the name I have heard several people talk about these long green filamentous algae.

BW: Yes. I really don't remember ever seeing it in the Atlantic Ocean. I always remember seeing it in the year would have important. Didn't seem last year was a real long time ago. I don't recall lasting forever. I don't know what is called.

KDM: I am not sure either.

BW: It has affected me all over the ankle.

KDM: But they cannot fire me?

BW: It's greenish.

KDM: It is like hair.

BW: I can't remember seeing it in the Atlantic Island. I can't really recall the same stranger that would pull right through like a northwest channel. I don't really remember seeing anything on the Atlantic side.

KDM: And you notice any difference from sea.

BW: Not consistent that I could say.

KDM: What about mangrove areas?

BW: I would say that the mangrove is one of the things that I've known as to around the mangrove areas. Down here. This is a more borrowed sound that I've ever seen in my entire life. I don't know whether it's because we're going to get so bad a bit more depending on what, but there are wild birds, more wildlife on the island now than at any time thirty–seven years ago.

KDM: Different species of birds.

BW: The big herrings and cormorants.

KDM: Have someone that come. There are no cormorants around the.

BW: There were more herrings. There's white and there's blue herrings, is what they call them?

KDM: Blues or whatever, yes.

BW: Then another thing they got off here. There's more – used to be called (racken key?). At 61 that's when I got married. Even though this was called racken key and this whole backlight with this household that used to be all night reef and with the live years that was the last part that they developed, and it was all mangrove back then. All those years I used to come back here, we learnt how to drown. We used to come back here at night force around. Never ever did I ever see a racoon, never. Now after several months in backyard [inaudible].

KDM: There is no real predator down there for me. The only predator. Real predator for racoons down here is us.

BW: Well, that's where I think the difference is. Actually, back when I was growing up, there were people that used to go shoot coons and stuff probably because of the protections and all. There are definitely more racoons around.

KDM: They also like the snakes too. Which results in maybe more snakes around. Small racoons [inaudible].

BW: We've got a few live snakes in the...

KDM: There will not be. [inaudible].

BW: When I was young here they used to have this one guy I remember talking to out there was – this one place, I forgot where it was, this guy was telling us that when he cleared poly on the brush, [inaudible].

KDM: We have got one. My husband caught doing some mitigation work. I had planned out some entries. We had to go back and never gave water until the trees took root. While on the sea wall back at. My husband left checking after. He knows he grew up in the woods of Jacksonville and he still do a lot of hunting when he became the second of the sort. Where they are telling people to go hunting barefoot [laughter]. Like Michael, he does when he goes in the Everglades. It is the favourite type of hunting. Yes, Michael is a big hunter. Where he got this rattlesnake, killed it and skinned it and everything. The skin of that snake is so much wider than rattlesnake skins that we have from Jacksonville. It was beautiful. It is a beautiful skin.

BW: This big snake was [inaudible]. It's a restaurant in Marina.

KDM: (Daggerkey?)

BW: (Daggerkey?). Used to be on that road there. Somewhere in that area. Where it was like went to a dead end. What was the old U.S. Highway and went to a dead end which was like the top area. We were out there and scooter in front end. This other guy was on a scooter. He had just left. He ran over the snake that was crossing the road. Yell after yell he probably had twenty-two or something. The snake had run into the trash. He had killed it but he just like or something. He kept saying the snake is right there. It's right there. The snake had taken the colour of the grass. I was almost standing on the goddamn thing before I saw it and realized how close I was luckily the thing had been stunned you know. Then they were trying to shoot a video on it. Just a video will fall from his head. This other guy came along with a 22, and he shot it three times and killed it. When they got him out was a huge snake. I was amazed. The snake had not been stunned I mean, I would have been a dead corpse [inaudible].

KDM: Still sobering or something [laughter].

BW: I was only eleven. I was approaching twelve, thirteen years old. I still remember that big snake but I pulled him out.

[end of transcript]