

Karen DeMaria: Now, feel free. You were telling me and Ned about the Red Sea.

Female Speaker: Well, that's what they called it, a red tide actually. It looked red. It was like a little filtered kind. The whole water looked like...

KD: Red suspended particles?

FS: Right. All the way across the top surface of it. Everything died in the canal, anything that looked like a type of a fish that came into that. Except for the lookdowns, they couldn't breathe. They were up at the top just grasping for air. I went around and collected them all. At the time, coconut palm 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...

KD: When was that?

FS: I was a little kid.

Ray Van Houten: How old were you? You were 8?

FS: No. I was 12 probably.

RVH: [inaudible]

FS: Right.

RVH: So, that is twenty-three years ago, 1970.

FS: About right. [laughter] All good. [laughter]

RVH: All good. Not bad. That was for summer?

KD: How long did it last, summertime?

FS: About three days. I think it was summer. [inaudible]

RVH: Definitely all the cooters and all the [inaudible] and all the [inaudible], everything died just completely.

FS: Everything died, yes.

KD: You were saying you noticed afterwards...

FS: That they didn't come back in the same numbers into that particular area and stuff like that.

KD: The same?

FS: Yes. Some bad boy. [laughter]

KD: [laughter]

Male Speaker: I do not know about that.

KD: What's his name?

RVH: It's (Danny?)

KD: Danny? Same last name?

RVH: No. That was [inaudible].

KD: How old are you?

RVH: Thirty-three.

FS: Go get [inaudible].

KD: What is your mailing address?

RVH: P.O. Box 636.

MS: [inaudible]

RVH: Summerland.

KD: Here. Where do you live?

RVH: On a 76-foot schooner off here on Long Island.

KD: I like that. [inaudible]

RVH: Here on the island together part of the time when we can get away with it. [laughter]

FS: Yes. [laughter]

KD: How long have you been in the Keys?

RVH: Right around twenty-one years.

KD: Full time?

RVH: Yes.

KD: I guess who owns the Key Bay Marina? Your family?

FS: My folks.

RVH: Yes, that's where she grew up.

KD: That was Key Colony Beach. Was that Marina?

RVH: Yes. The rest of our...

FS: It was the whole place. It affected this whole area.

KD: Right. Yes. That is why I am just trying to get some background information.

FS: This is prior to the septic which is going in there.

RVH: The sewage treatment plant.

KD: The sewage treatment plant.

RVH: Yes.

KD: You mentioned that on the phone.

RVH: Yes. We lived in Marathon for fifteen years.

FS: Right. After they put that in, I watched the whole area just cloud over with his dump that grew on the turtle grass, this kind of silt.

RVH: Real growth?

FS: Yes, it looked like it just sat on it.

KD: Like this.

FS: Right. That was it. From that point on, the water quality went way down.

RVH: The lobsters were gone, everything was gone.

FS: My only comment is I believe the states ought to open these canals that you just put a pipe and lead them into other places so that the water could spill out and clean itself, because that would help.

RVH: We needed the sewage treatment plant. Before that, the water in the base in the Key Colony looked like gin clear because that's where we lived. We lived on a boat there.

KD: What was that on the bottom? What was in the water?

RVH: Normal bottom.

KD: As in normal, hard bottom?

RVH: No. It was a combination of hard bottom sand, gravel. In the base, there's different spots, every bit of vegetation, a little bit of coral.

KD: Coral, sponges, sea grasses.

RVH: Sponges, sea grasses, stuff like that.

KD: Was it mainly turtle grass or it would be...

RVH: Yes, a lot of turtle grass. There was a bunch of turtle grass. Then the other part marked on the coconut palm was more like a gravelly bottom where they drenched at. Then over towards Holiday Inn was like a crunchy rock with a coral.

FS: Yes, on the bottom. [laughter]

RVH: You break through it, but it was still coral. Towards the little bridge was all rocks as you go to [inaudible]. The little bridge underneath Clouds Way was all rocks. You got coral.

FS: Everything I observed at that point in time was we put in concrete docks [inaudible] when we bought the place. When we first bought the place, there were fish you could catch grouper this size out of there. It was meaningless things like that. When we put the concrete in, it did stop the fish. They didn't ever come back in like that again.

KD: What was in there before, wood?

RVH: It was wooden pile in the riffraff.

FS: Yes. Wooden in the riffraff. There was [inaudible]. There were all kinds of things in there. The concrete changed it. It did.

MS: [inaudible] that kind of stuff was sweeping in. [inaudible] water.

KD: I know my husband was flying over in Tallahassee. They flew over a sewage treatment facility. They went from Key West. Then his comment was flying over the settling pond. Settling ponds were the same color as the water that's in the bay and right off the [inaudible].

MS: Over a year ago, I flew over Tallahassee with a video camera in the water. We flew all the way up to the cape and put it on the [inaudible]. You see that cloudy water. You could not tell if you were 5 feet. You could not see the bottom.

KD: When did you first notice that?

MS: Well, I was not even down here for five years. But when I first came down there and flew the [inaudible] all the way up behind [inaudible]. The damn coral bloom was out there. You could see where those septic tanks grew in. You could see [inaudible].

KD: Was that in the last couple of years?

RVH: No, that's five or six years, the last five or six years. But actually, the last year and a half down here in Big Pine [inaudible] area. I'll give you an example. Two years ago, we've got a 14-foot hard bottom inflatable. We used it every day. We ran three, four trips from Newfound Harbor back to the house and stuff like that. Two years ago, we could go once every six, seven months with twin bottoms. Just go, no muss, no fuss. A month and a half ago, three hours between it, we came out of Key West. Now, I had a spot. Right now, it's filthy with [inaudible] water. It's all that depth at the bottom here.

KD: In three months?

FS: Yes.

RVH: A half and a half.

MS: To the bottom of your [inaudible].

RVH: Cleaned up.

MS: Straightened that up when we went [inaudible].

FS: Right there, we would see it.

KD: So, how often normally before?

RVH: Before, once every seven to eight months.

FS: There's no water and breakfast this morning?

KD: That is a huge thing.

RVH: You asked around, that's great.

KD: Huh?

RVH: [inaudible].

FS: What changed in [inaudible].

KD: Well, change the mushroom because I figured this is my lunch and breakfast. So, everything until 6:00 p.m. So, once every eight months.

RVH: Yes. Now it's almost every month.

KD: That just happened in the last?

RVH: Last two years. In the last two years, it's just gotten worse. It's ridiculous.

KD: Now, what are you scrapping off?

RVH: Green slime.

KD: Is it like little fingers?

RVH: Yes. Just like snow on a Christmas tree. It's green. It's nasty and slimy and not nice at all.

MS: [inaudible] in the bay and the dam water up here for fifteen days. All the same [inaudible] on this side.

RVH: Something like that. But I'm a pilot also. I flew an aircraft for years. Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes ago, we were flying out here. You could see everything. You could see [inaudible] apparently all sorts of things in the gulf, like just flying to Miami, right?

KD: Right.

RVH: You can't see nothing. There isn't nobody home.

KD: I am trying to figure out when did the things start happening? Now, I know that here down in this area, it is just starting.

RVH: It's been the last five or six years that it's just really been...

KD: Right. But apparently, it has been going on a lot longer up the Keys. Now, as I am making my way up the Keys to the interviews, what can you tell me that is – when you started seeing things happening?

FS: The minute the conchs went away.

RVH: Totally. There is no conch up there at all.

FS: Well, yes. There are...

RVH: They are coming back now but a little bit [inaudible].

FS: Although, I was talking to the old men in The Bahamas. They were telling me the conchs would bury themselves for years and not come back up.

RVH: Not ever come up.

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

KD: Somebody told me that. That is so neat that you say that.

RVH: Yes, that is so true.

KD: That is the first time I heard that.

RVH: The conchs breed and live in very, very deep water and then come in. They live way out in the Gulf Stream. They breed. Then they only come in to propagate, if I understand correctly. [inaudible]

MS: The conchs [inaudible].

RVH: Who?

MS: There is either male or female conchs. [inaudible]

FS: Well, they kind of change.

RVH: They change. But there is for a minute, then they change their mind.

FS: [laughter] Right.

MS: Yes. They are bisexual [inaudible].

RVH: Yes, they're real bisexual. [laughter]

FS: [laughter]

RVH: They do well in Key West. But I was flying a lot out here in...

MS: [inaudible]

RVH: Yes, very tough.

MS: [inaudible]

RVH: Let's see. When did we go to [inaudible]? No, I don't see any of the turtles that I got to see [inaudible]. I found out three years ago, you remember the turtles around the boat?

FS: Yes. The only thing I really remember about way back then is the water becoming – the trees started to – just every year, it's a little thicker in there with that white stuff on it.

RVH: Yes, this was the reef, for example, like you had [inaudible] your house.

FS: Right, it's what it looks like.

RVH: Two years ago...

FS: I have noticed that it has finally filtered this far up too. That I'm starting to see it cover the flat things like that.

RVH: Yes. But two years ago, I'd gotten in to get an anchor. It was about [inaudible].

KD: In Newfound Harbor?

RVH: No, in Key Colony.

KD: In Key Colony.

RVH: The stuff was like this thick on the vegetation down below.

FS: Where it used to be white sand.

KD: Where it is...

RVH: No, on top of the vegetation.

FS: Right, on the vegetation. Usually, it's right there. Now, it's the study [inaudible].

RVH: Yes, nasty.

KD: When is that [inaudible] going?

FS: [inaudible] about three?

RVH: No, it's a little older than that. [inaudible]

FS: Right around the time we met.

RVH: Yes. About 1978.

FS: I was working on it. So, [19]79.

RVH: [19]78, [19]79, something like that. Now, I did the sluice gates for Key Colony Beach on



the clean water, on the 10,000 gallons per minute, or whatever it is, per hour, going back out to the [inaudible]. We did the sluice gates. I could only work my people in there, fifteen, twenty minutes at a time. This is the clean water. This is the treated water just before it goes out. You put extra [inaudible]. So, it bubbles on the fall water like a [inaudible] waterfall. I could only let me people in there, fifteen or twenty minutes a time. It's not a nice job, but we were paid well. [laughter] But it was a –

KD: Where is your boat now?

RVH: Newfound Harbor.

KD: Newfound Harbor.

RVH: Newfound Harbor.

KD: You just said that you started seeing sea grasses now getting covered the same way?

RVH: Yes.

KD: When did you really notice that?

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

KD: So, it has been a gradual thing?

RVH: We were in Key West for seven months [inaudible] gates on generator. When we came back up this time three months ago, it was really, really in there.

FS: Over the period of time, it's become...

RVH: That's true.

KD: It has been gradual. But do you think that the last...

RVH: I think the last year has picked up a bunch. I noticed a couple of them last year.

FS: Yes, I'm noticing that. I actually thought about it. But yes, the barnacle growth and everything is kind of picking up.

KD: What kind of barnacle growth are you getting?

RVH: It's a little bitty thing.

FS: Yes.

KD: Little tiny white ones?

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

FS: Right.

KD: They have the stuff on the boats too and everything, right?

RVH: Yes.

MS: That smell, because there was plenty of smell [inaudible].

RVH: Yes. I got one for you. A year and a half ago, every night when I was going out – it was a year ago or whatever. I get my times confused. But about a year and a half ago, every night that I'd come home about 7:30 p.m., 8:00 p.m., there was this god-awful stench on the water in Newfound Harbor. It was ridiculous. It came down inside the boat. It would last an hour and a half, two hours and kind of go away.

FS: It was like diesel fuel.

RVH: Like diesel fuel.

FS: Or fuel oil or something.

RVH: It was like diesel fuel and sewage.

FS: Yes, actually.

MS: [inaudible]

KD: Like methane?

RVH: Yes, it was more like...

KD: Or [inaudible]?

RVH: No, I know that.

FS: We know that kind, but it wasn't. It was more of a petroleum type.

RVH: It was either petroleum or sewage or something treated or something like that. So, this went on for three months. I finally said, "This is ridiculous."

FS: Yes, we reported it.

RVH: So, I called [inaudible]. I got ahold of any [inaudible] a find outstanding young man that he was. Took my statement over the phone. He never came out and talked to me. I called him four times. He said, "Well, I'm going on vacation on this. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that." Over a period of five months, he never, ever came out and checked it. He never did [inaudible].

FS: They never started to do [inaudible].

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

KD: When was that first happening now?

RVH: That's a year and a half ago at fall. Well, a year ago last fall. So, a year and a half.

MS: What were you [inaudible].

RVH: I called him. He's the environmental officer. Now, if I cut a mangrove down, if I put a boulder – that's why I mentioned he was going to arrest us one Saturday morning because we were carrying a [inaudible] that'd fallen in. We were picking the rocks back out of the water and putting the new ones in. He came there with a whole army. He got out the car with the camera going – [inaudible] pounding equipment. The fine is \$10,000 today. When that started, [inaudible] won't even come out and look at what exploded in that water and instead got [inaudible] ship.

FS: Yes. [laughter]

RVH: It's absurd.

FS: But a lot of it is poor design. They've dug these canals down feet. But they didn't leave any flow for them in the class. You've got 4-foot coming in. Then you've got 14- to 18-foot of water and nowhere for it to go. So, everything is coming in –

RVH: Dead water.

FS: – and settles down. It can't get back out. It doesn't flow out like that.

RVH: Well, in Marathon, they finally reopened up the [inaudible] down the creek with a couple of [inaudible].

MS: [inaudible]

KD: The company that I worked for did that at the time, I remember that.

FS: Did they?

RVH: [inaudible]

KD: [inaudible]

RVH: Oh, [inaudible], yes.

KD: Yes, I worked part-time for them.

MS: [inaudible]

RVH: We had a big [inaudible].

FS: Yes, right. [inaudible].

RVH: My mistake.

KD: [laughter]

MS: [inaudible] if you are messing the water and you will not do anything about it, then you are moving [inaudible].

KD: Yes, we are moving people. [laughter]

RVH: The politics down here has a lot to do with it.

MS: It does.

RVH: If you look at the people that are empowering the county commissioner to reappoint...

KD: [inaudible]

FS: Well, I like the time when Big Pine Key anchorage was the question.

RVH: Oh, there you go. Remember all the stuff [inaudible]?

FS: They were fighting over that and saying that they were the cause of all the pollution there.

RVH: Bringing PCP in the water.

FS: But nobody remembers that far enough that there was a dump out there. Everybody dumped everything from car batteries to transformers.

RVH: Transformers, batteries, cars.

FS: I was out there. I played there as a kid.

RVH: I dumped stuff there.

FS: [laughter]

KD: I know that dump. I know where that is.

RVH: You know where that is? Over the [inaudible]?

KD: Yes. It is right before the turn to go to where the [inaudible] are.

RVH: They covered it up.

FS: Yes, they covered it up when they discovered they shouldn't have been doing that.

RVH: They covered it up. They threw a couple loads of dirt in the driveway and said, "Never mind." They didn't even discover they were doing that. [inaudible] a different dumpsite because then...

FS: Right. Well, they did but they covered it up after they discovered they shouldn't have been doing that.

RVH: All the people that were mowing and screaming, "Oh, it's the stuff that [inaudible], the deliverables." Well, have them on the border and put PVC or whatever weird [inaudible].

MS: [inaudible] all these illegal dumpsites that they put in after the hurricane [inaudible] all the federal land out [inaudible] and start bleaching it.

KD: Maybe it is already.

MS: [inaudible]

FS: All down.

KD: We already have [inaudible] mercury. They are telling people not to eat the large quantities of fish caught in the Everglades because of the [inaudible] of birds that are coming up with mercury poisoning.

MS: [inaudible]

FS: Fish really carry [inaudible]. Ray pulled them up at sea. I tell him, "You can't eat the fish you're catching here." I'm not sure.

KD: We are okay down here so far. But I know exactly what you mean.

RVH: I'm used to catching the mutton snapper in Newfound Harbor. I let it go.

MS: That used to be [inaudible]. It used to be [inaudible].

FS: It just doesn't look good enough. The fish don't look as good as they used to. The ones you catch in closed, don't have the color that they used to have.

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

KD: They are duller?

FS: Right.

RVH: Yes, they're so much duller. They don't look the same.

FS: Their eyes aren't near as clear and bright as they were. There are differences you notice over the years.

KD: Are you noticing anything on the scales?

FS: No.

KD: Big, merger spots or something like that?

MS: You will if you first go [inaudible] where you see a lot of snappers on the [inaudible].

KD: That was the great snapper, the mangrove snapper?

MS: Mangrove. [inaudible]

RVH: You catch the mutton snapper in Newfound Harbor. Just underneath our boat, there are none like that. He hasn't got good color. You get one from 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. He looks better than the one that you just pulled out the water.

FS: Right. So, I don't like to put these [inaudible]. [laughter]

RVH: That's not supposed to look better after being on ice for three days.

KD: My husband is a commercial fisherman. We fish out of Key West. I do not spend much time up here except I live here. [laughter]

RVH: We would say that. But that dump thing is probably a prime example. All that bullshit went down. Everybody's screaming and yelling. Nobody even accepted the fact. I told Jack [inaudible] that.

FS: They have never done any statement [inaudible] talked about it.

RVH: They have not even talked about the dumping.

FS: That's right. They sent this out like we didn't even matter or anything.

RVH: Yes, batteries [inaudible]. You've been here twenty years? You've been here long enough. You all leave now.

FS: Right. [laughter]

RVH: Our in-laws, (Hanson Thompson and the Ham? ) family, they've been here for 300 years.

FS: The family from Key West.

RVH: The family's gone now. The commercial fishermen have left. My two brothers-in-law are tropical fish collectors. That's a dying occupation.

MS: [inaudible]

RVH: Mikey, yes, Mikey is my brother-in-law.

MS: They will not allocate money to do anything about it. But they will allocate money [inaudible] or everything else for the government to buy up property down here. So, this goes back into reserve and back in the sanctuary.

RVH: But look at our county commissioners. We got London. London's been here five years, six years. He's the bloody mayor. What the hell does he know about the Keys? We got planning commissioners. Where do they get the land use plans? Where did that first company first come in from? Omaha. What the hell? They paid him \$4 million on some damn thing like that. The other one came from New York. What the hell do they know about down here? They have no idea. They didn't talk to anybody. They didn't talk anybody because the local people that have been here twenty years or have lived here, the ones that work here, 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 have come down here with money. It used to be you all would come down [inaudible].

KD: A lot of people [inaudible]. So, it has been great. You have given me a lot more insight on what the people actually [inaudible] part of it.

RVH: I built Captain Hook's Marina up in Marathon [inaudible] diving. They let us build the shark ponds and the lobster pans and all that kind of stuff like that. That was no problem back then.

KD: Back then being nineteen what?

RVH: Fifteen years ago, back then when we did the shark pond and stuff like that. Those fish go living in those damn things. It took us three days to build it. Wow. There it is. No muss, no fuss. It's functioning. It's got [inaudible], sharks in it. He's got every turtle, and everything in the world that's living, you can find it. Real simple system that was [inaudible]. They were

pumping the water out the back cut, putting it into the ponds, going to a certain level of [inaudible] for 4-inch PVC pipe, and goes right back out again. Pumps running all time, continuous circulating water, [inaudible]. But now with road plumbing three roads. The plumbing worked for Bob Terrence for Seaside Plumbing way back then. It was a nice, calm, bubble system before (Bombardo and Eddy James?). That whole bullshit went down. Everybody lost all their power and all the people from New Jersey. Other than...

MS: Back then [inaudible].

KD: No one will tell you where I was born.

RVH: New Jersey, right?

KD: I was born in New York, raised in New Jersey. But I have been in Florida longer than anything.

FS: I know. [inaudible]

KD: I have been in Florida for sixteen years now.

RVH: I say New Jersey because they're...

KD: No, I am the first person to say the same thing. Who else can afford to buy – New Jersey property values are high. So, they come down here and see a house \$400,000, \$200,000. That is nothing to them because they are used to that price.

RVH: They come to...

FS: Then they come down here. They get really uppity and want to change. When I first got here, the electricity went off two, three times a day. Nobody was scared.

RVH: We got our water day in a while too. It was great. No big deal. You never would've crossed the old 7-mile bridge without at least a six-pack, a gallon of water, and a sandwich.

FS: That was just the way it was.

RVH: That's just the way it was. [inaudible]

FS: 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 pitching very up close [inaudible].

KD: When did you start seeing the inflow really take over?

RVH: Right about the Bombardo stuff when they did all the power [inaudible] on the [inaudible].



FS: About fourteen years ago now that it started to really become noticeable. Where instead of saying, "Come on down," we were going, "Oh, whoa, wait minute. Go away." [laughter]

KD: [inaudible] fifteen years ago. Well, it stopped when they were doing all that new road construction.

FS: Right.

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

FS: Right, when they made it really easy for people to travel down there.

RVH: Before that, like in Marina, [inaudible], I'll go back to the Marina again.

FS: It didn't help with the congestion. It just made people be able to go through without even seeing anything. All the little [inaudible] businesses went down because of [inaudible].

RVH: The timesharing.

FS: Yes, the timesharing came in about the same time this all [inaudible].

RVH: Yes, timesharing killed this place, all this timesharing places. Usually, when people come down on vacation, they have to stay at the Seagull or some little middy old motel. They have to go out to dinner at...

FS: Perry's or whatever.

RVH: Not Perry's. [inaudible] or Scouts or someplace like that. [inaudible] have dinner forever. But if they have to go to places like that, they have to rent a boat from Danny and Regina at the Longhorn Marina, or they have to rent it from somebody else. Timesharing Winn-Dixie profits.

FS: Right. They have their own metal boat. They have their own car. They have their own everything. Nobody had to leave that particular area.

RVH: Fifteen years ago, almost every business.

FS: All the businesses started really getting...

RVH: Fifteen years ago, you went through Marathon, and almost every business was a family-run small business. Now, it's all corporations.

MS: I have been down here many times and [inaudible] landlords.

RVH: Yes, nowadays.

MS: I have probably been there more in a year [inaudible]. They are here now [inaudible].

RVH: Willamina Herman's husband and – what's the French guy's name? His last name?

MS: Will [inaudible].

RVH: Will, whatever.

MS: [inaudible]

RVH: [inaudible] They developed a summer. Now, if you look at some of the canal system, it works.

KD: Yes, they flow through.

RVH: They flow through. They've got some nice, clean water. Any time of the year, there's fish in it, there's lobster in it. That's a nice canal system.

FS: It's not getting affected.

RVH: It's not getting affected.

FS: But it is but it's not as grotesque.

MS: You [inaudible].

RVH: Those are built up on the sea wall.

MS: There are algae.

RVH: Yes, you don't see it.

MS: You do not see it.

RVH: You don't see it [inaudible-].

MS: [inaudible] government said. Go down to [inaudible]. Go back to Herrington.

RVH: Yes, go to Ramrod.

MS: Go to Ramrod. Now, Ramrod started in the area here in the canal.

RVH: But that's individual people putting pipes in and pumps and blowing water to it. Because, again, Ramrod goes 47 miles back into the [inaudible] and nowhere. It doesn't do anything. [inaudible] come in there every morning. Occasionally, out of a month you can see the bottom

of the canal two, three days.

KD: Describe masking.

FS: Just covered with that white...

RVH: With silt, with that greenish.

FS: It looks like being old.

KD: What color is the water? What color are you seeing?

RVH: Mostly a cloudy.

FS: It's a cloudy green, I guess you see.

MS: [inaudible] you cannot see the bottom [inaudible].

FS: We get [inaudible] where you can see the bottom clearly when you can. You can see that old dusty look all over there in this small [inaudible]. It's all over the whole – I think it's that.

MS: It reminds me of walking on the farm or someplace I have not been in a while and going back [inaudible]. They are clear because if you look at the bottom, you realize how much sediment has fallen in there. Then when the water sediments [inaudible]...

KD: That is what she said.

MS: Then you started seeing that green film on the top. There was so much oxygen in there. There's generally all this algae growth but it's got nowhere to go. So, it just sets in and consumes all that.

KD: Well, the fact is that oxygen is a nutrient and nitrogen. Well, it is like it is a cycle.

MS: With tremendous amounts of oxygen that occurs in the earth. Then there's [inaudible].

KD: [inaudible] But they are photosynthesizing, siphoning all the oxygen and carbon dioxide.

RVH: Go get yourself a 10-, 12-foot stick. You go behind Fred's place. The [inaudible] have the same problem that we do.

KD: [inaudible]

RVH: Now, conch kills. Last year in Nassau, a lot of people died and two hundred got sick from conch.

KD: Really?

FS: What happened was they keep live conch. They keep them on a string right there in the harbor. Well, they had a sewage spill. Or I think that's what it was, a sewage spill.

RVH: Yes, a sewage spill.

FS: Well, the conchs were living in there, eating off this bottom, right? That's what poisoned the conch. But it totally wiped out the industry of sending live conch from Melbourne because everybody got afraid of it.

RVH: That's how we made our money. We could dive 200, 275, 300 conchs. We'd leave the boat at 7:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m. in the morning, drink a cup of coffee, go out.

KD: Last year, that was?

RVH: No, that was three years ago.

FS: No, three years ago.

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

FS: But when we were allowed to. I guess it's four years now. I think been a year again and three years prior to that.

RVH: But we'd probably get \$1.30 apiece in the shell. We'd leave with the boat at 7:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m. in the morning. We'd go out and went back in by noon with 275, 300, 350, 250, depending on the weather, depend on what we felt like. Just free diving, no tanks, no nothing, just free diving. We'd crack a hole in them, tie them in a series of five, and throw in the conch and crab. So, when the mail boat would come in on Friday or whenever it came in, we'd have 1,000, 1,200 conchs. We'd come back out.

FS: [inaudible] stackable and it looked together.

KD: [laughter]

RVH: It sticks back out, put them in a small boat, put them up in the mail boat. You've got 1,200 conchs. 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 your receipts. Here you got, here's your 700 in cash. Here's your receipts for 500 and whatever.

RVH: Story was in, three months, green and red and pink, the combination.

KD: They have a pretty bunch.

RVH: It was just some of your...

KD: Did you guys graduate from high school?

RVH: I did.

KD: You did?

FS: I didn't.

KD: What grade did you finish?

FS: 10th, I started 11th.

RVH: She's a product of Marathon Public School system.

FS: Right. [laughter]

RVH: She's a product of [inaudible].

KD: The reason I asked is that is part of the other thing I have learned. A lot of the guys that I have talked to in Stock Island, they are 10th grade. It is a phenomenon of people who have been down here. It because it is a whole lifestyle.

FS: Well, the school really didn't teach you anything. In order to pass a grade, all you had to do is be really good at bribing the teachers.

KD: It still goes on. That is just it.

FS: I sent Trina. Because she was going to Brazil with us and she was so smart. By the time she was 5 years old, she was a little traveler, right?

RVH: She'd been to a load of places.

FS: She knew all kinds of things. The teacher was jealous of her.

RVH: Yes, literally.

FS: 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 put up with it." So, right after that, I started teaching her an average course and stuff like that. But we might have said, "My kid is in school. I send them to school, and I go to The Bahamas." That's where they get their...

RVH: We sent them to be [inaudible] Christian for a year.

FS: I did that.

RVH: It cost us \$500 a month.

FS: They did less.

RVH: Yes, they could read.

FS: I had the one reading and the other one knowing all his ABCs because he was that much younger. They were right up there. Jessie did not know his ABCs when he got back with it and Bear couldn't anymore. I'm going like, this is ridiculous.

RVH: They had a bad energy.

FS: Yes. That's the first day of school. [inaudible]

KD: [inaudible]

RVH: Six months in a biannual school, it was, yes, sir. No, sir. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Timetable.

FS: Right. They could spell. Even The Bohemians don't have a great school system or anything. They don't teach them as fast or anything like that.

RVH: They have a good primary, a grade school.

FS: At least, they're teaching them respect. They're teaching them some of the finer things in life. The rest, they pick up anyway. You can teach them to read, write, and 'arithmetic. From that point on...

KD: They learn by example. Kids learn by example and that is what they go by.

RVH: It's not of memorizing. It's a matter of knowing where to find it and how to research it and how to get the information.

KD: Access.

FS: That's what I teach them how to access information.

RVH: Access all this because nobody can store all the – nobody knows everything. But you got to be able to either find it or I can find somebody that knows about it.

KD: I can tell you, "I do not know, but I will get back to you." That is a very important thing to admit when you do not know something. That is what they acknowledge.

FS: Right. But you don't have to be ignorant on something. If you have nowhere to go, dig it up.

RVH: They go on the pretense that there's no expression, that ignorance is bliss. Well, that is an absolute fact. Down here, I have never been in any place where that shows up more than here. They let you know. Other than the school on Big Pine, nobody has a Key deer. Has anybody ever done a DNA on this Key deer? No, because if they did a DNA on a Key deer, they did a DNA off of West Virginia white-tailed or a Michigan white-tailed or even stupid things, they would find out, whoa, it's the same deer.

FS: It just didn't have as much to eat.

RVH: No groceries.

FS: So, it didn't grow as big. [laughter] Because now they're almost as big and they're a real deer.

RVH: I've seen a deer out here that I'd be happy to strap it over to my car in Michigan and drive on home with him. I'd be proud. Fifteen years ago, the [inaudible] were about as high as the table [inaudible]. They didn't taste all that good.

FS: Right. [laughter]

RVH: But now, they're huge.

FS: Well, [inaudible] used to trap them.

RVH: Cook them up. Now, they're huge because of people moving to Big Pine, they got gardens and grass and garbage.

FS: [inaudible] that were not part of their old diet.

RVH: If you left them alone again, it's not that they'd shrink back down. But if you take a young deer from up north and you bring it down here, you only feed them this, and it's starting to grow. You take a child and feed them well, it's starting to grow. It will grow.

KD: Well, that is part of evolution too, where you separate young animals. You got to have changes as they adapt to that area physically.

RVH: You know where small bunnies came from? You know the small bunnies like sugarloaf?

KD: The sugarloaf bunny?

FS: Yes, right. Do you know where they came from?

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

KD: John who?

RVH: Epincheck.

FS: Epincheck. That's his name.

RVH: I'll give you his phone number. Epincheck, I don't know how to...

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

KD: I will figure that out.

RVH: Big bunny.

KD: Bunny?

RVH: Yes, bunny. John's number is 872-2287 or 872-8072.

KD: Now I know this number.

RVH: It's for Port John's? Some people don't know Port John's. His wife's name is Linda. Now, John has been here forever. He grew up in Fort Lauderdale, but he's lived here forever. When his kids were little, let's say like twenty-two years ago, his folks lived in Fort Myers. Now, they'd go up see their folks once a week. On the way back, they'd stop and grab bunnies off Alligator Alley. They'd take three or four little bunnies [inaudible] and each scoop off of baby rabbits, right? Give them to the kids in the back seat to keep the kids quiet. They come back down. They'd bring them to Sugarloaf and let them go. They did this for over two years.

FS: That's it. [laughter]

KD: That is awesome.

RVH: That's a true story.

KD: How did they get to Boca Chica?

RVH: What?

KD: How did they get to Boca Chica?

FS: Oh, I'm sure other people picked up little bunnies because they were so cute. I used to get them off of [inaudible]. They were wild all over. I used to collect. I'd go over there. Bambi would give me one. Then my mom would say, "Oh, you can't keep it." So, I'd let it go.

RVH: In the market when on [inaudible] at the Marina.

FS: I used to let them go on [inaudible] Marina. [laughter]



RVH: Would cover for me. But a lot of stuff came down to – none of the – coconut trees are not indigenous to here. Half of them shit we're looking at is not indigenous to the Keys. But we're doing a swim platform on Breezeswept on Ramrod right now at the roundhouse on [inaudible]. For two years, these people have been applying for a permit for a swim platform, which all the neighbors have [inaudible] platform, whatever you want to call them. We got permits of these [inaudible] We went through the lower court. We won. They appealed. We went through the circuit court. They appealed it. We went to the next higher court. We won. They appealed it. It went to the governor's office Monday morning. No, it was Thursday, Wednesday. Yes, Monday morning.

KD: Wednesday, yes. [laughter]

FS: [laughter]

RVH: The Governor met and said, "Okay, go ahead and build." They called our office and said, "We're lifting the ban. You can go ahead and build it." They've been cleared now for clearing mangroves [inaudible]. It's been cleared now. It's been all but one. 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 it. So, it will be killed by then. But that's absolutely ludicrous. The fourth person controlling them. I've got another customer on [inaudible] on Marlin Street. The riffraff permit is okay.

KD: [inaudible] if we have to go.

FS: That he's talking to, yes. The name's...

KD: Karen.

FS: Karen?

KD: Yes. Sorry.

RVH: The riffraff permit's good. The 50-foot dock goes in the middle of a riffraff, so they can put a boat and stuff like this. It's been appealed by the DCA because there are no channel markers going out into the ocean or going back. So, Sugarloaf is still changing that to put channel markers. Because three years ago, the county [inaudible] we came up with a rule for open water. You can have 4 feet of water coming out of your dock.

KD: The DCA rule.

RVH: No, that's a county rule. That started from the county.

KD: No, I know. But it came up because DCA wanted to.

RVH: No. County did that to stop people from putting docks on open ocean like at the end of a land line and stuff like that where the shoals come up to stop the long dock. The DCA said, "Oh,

this is a good deal if you got to have 4 feet of water at your dock there." They expanded it.

KD: They expanded it.

RVH: So, now if you're on this side of Spanish Main in Cudjoe, you're out of luck boy. You're going to get appealed. We just had [inaudible].

KD: We are going to finish up here. Is there anything else that you have not told me that you want to make sure that I know about the change that has occurred?

RVH: You asked me to think about this yesterday after you called me. Except I worked about a 12-hour day yesterday. I can't remember.

KD: Well, I can help. I have this questionnaire here.

RVH: You have a questionnaire?

KD: But something that I use as a guideline when I go through the tape, so I can put it in certain areas. Sometimes I sit there, and I ask the questions and everything. But I can leave this for you. You can look through it. If you would like, write down and mail it back to me.

RVH: I'll give it to Michael when you talk to Michael.

KD: We can do the same thing. Pass it around to these guys. If there is anything else, get ahold of me. Or when I meet up with those guys when I come to town, ask them that or make sure that bring it up.

RVH: Most of it is the attitude of the people that live here now. 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. Now, it's a horrible little town. You can't get shit done. People are mean and nasty. They got time lived.

KD: I got some [inaudible] by some big, old man driving a Cadillac at the post office here at Summerland Key. The guy yelled at me because he could not just pull right in to drop off mail in the mailbox. He had to do like a little zigzag because my car was out a little bit. It was no big deal. I still could get her out. He got pissed off. It was like he was bad ass. Get out of the car and walk. Who gives a shit?

RVH: You aren't supposed to be in the truck. But the problem is, I've noticed in the construction business, fifteen years ago in the construction business, department of [inaudible] now it's just called, I paid him more money fifteen years ago. I made more money fifteen years ago than I'm making now. We used to go three, four days a week, go fishing, go diving. I've been diving out here. [inaudible] I haven't been to the [inaudible] for six years in Hawaii. If I want to go diving, I'll go to the Everglades. So much of it is the [inaudible]. A lot of it because it's so hard dam hard to live here. You have to pay attention. I've got a six-man crew. Two of them live at Howard's Haven in Big Pine, that stupid ass tree on the park way down on that path,

that little dingy ass place, a hundred bucks a week. Not because they deserve to live there, just because that's the only place they can live. I can't hire anybody with family because I can't pay enough money for them to live. So, consequently, for labor, I'm working there for months just simply because there's nobody else. I can't guarantee enough work all year round in order to get anybody real down here.

KD: Instead, it would just make it really frightening because it goes back to, the Keys have changed so much in the forty years. It is like it has been a complete 360. You are losing the heritage. You are losing what the keys are all about.

RVH: I worked on Stock Island for the last two weeks. I borrowed equipment from P Van at no charge. I borrowed equipment from P Van who worked for Steve Hansen. [inaudible] for CA [inaudible] with CA.

KD: I know CA.

RVH: CA is cool. I like him.

KD: Hard to get ahold of him.

RVH: CA is cool. Debbie, the chick that works with him.

KD: Who?

RVH: Debbie, the fat blonde that works for him.

KD: I do not know of her.

RVH: They were nice people there. It was like good stepping back twenty years. I enjoyed the hell out of it. I [inaudible] on the job. It was nice because I needed that to go get – the standard marinas down there are very easy to deal with. I did fourteen mornings for Ramona.

KD: They got the damn [inaudible] badge.

RVH: Long fatty?

KD: Yes.

RVH: Yes, you don't want to talk to Ramona. He's so full of shit.

KD: I know Ramona.

RVH: You know Ramona?

KD: I have been thinking about him for a long time. But his dad has got some good stories.

RVH: Yes. Some of them down here aren't very cool. Another one that's cool is Gregg Laddy down in Key West.

KD: Peter is really close, like one of our best friends, Peter Glading. He is like a brother, I guess.

RVH: Yes. But that looks good. If you hear an engine installed or a [inaudible], that old man is just good. He didn't mind. He gives.

KD: We have the joke in our house, if Peter recommends or tells us to do something, we better do it exactly the way Peter says, or we will never hear the end of it.

RVH: It is basically right.

KD: Well, that is just the whole Glading family. They are all pretty much just – they learned it all from daddy.

RVH: Daddy is just amazing. I said, "Great, my boat's 103 years old. My sharp string around not the coupling but the sharp." He said, "Well, let's see." Probably get a bronze pipe in it. He said, "You need full pipe out, repackage the [inaudible], slide it back in. Put it back down." I said, "Can I do it in the water?" He said [inaudible]. You got ripped off, Robbie. You got a peninsula with a bad attitude. You've got Marathon Boatyard which they're the place that's changed over the last fifteen years. When old B and the old lady got divorced, that place was a shit in a handbag. You can't hold a deal in there. You got to deal with that. I'm going to call you for \$300 and put you back in water, get two-day storage, lay times and all that. You better stand by when you get the bill because if you're thinking it's free, it's going to be 12. Your boat weight chipped before time. They aren't going to put you back in the water unless you got money.

KD: That [inaudible] everything that has evolved to make sure their stores triple the price of what they are getting. [laughter] We just came from Peninsula. We spent four months at Peninsula. My husband was upcountry. So, we all went out in the water for safety. He left in October, came back the beginning of February. That ship was [inaudible six months. Then we finished doing the work on the boat with the [inaudible] which you are hauling it out like Mike will do the work. You got to practice every three years hauling it out.

RVH: That's what we hear about every three years. This is the third year. Now, I'm trying to decide whether I'm going to Robin but on the big boat, the 76 feet.

KD: [inaudible] for hauling?

RVH: The Ramone boat came out. The Ramone boat of 75,000.

KD: Yes, he bought the [inaudible].

RVH: They bought [inaudible]. They got 475 feet of real [inaudible]. Paid \$475,000 for

[inaudible], thank you very much. Now, Walter in Georges [inaudible], the old marinas, [inaudible] and stuff like that. In that old building [inaudible] she wants \$6,000 a month rent for that thing. It's falling down. Still want to rent it? We'll just let it sit there.

KD: Bernstein, she is something then.

RVH: She is a tough, old [inaudible]. Have you interviewed Charlie Toppino?

KD: No. You think he would have some really good information?

RVH: Nineteen or twenty years ago, he lived in the Keys. He was the general contractor of anybody, was Charlie.

KD: See, I am doing [inaudible]. So, I am just wondering how much...

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

KD: [laughter] That is a good point.

RVH: He dug almost every bit of fill, every bit of dirt you see. Charlie's responsible for it. He built Stock Island. He dredged Stock Island. He dredged that ship to 30 feet, 40 feet.

KD: Yes, I will do a [inaudible] on that park property. We did an audit. Some day at work, we did the environmental audit to make sure there was no hazardous waste. We also go through and do [inaudible] services. That is great because it got to a point where they kept – because everything was due to scale Bernstein. That we work in a whole area.

RVH: I want to go back. It all goes back to [inaudible] afterwards.

KD: That goes to about the [19]40s because that is when the Walmart planted then it stopped.

RVH: Yes. But the other one – what is the other one? There's another couple of families down there that lived there forever that had a lot to do. I'll talk to Willamina. Willamina has developed a lot of properties. She's been here forever. She's sharp.

KD: I know why. I know her pretty well. Probably came here towards the end because she was having a lot more of a story.

RVH: I think John has been here forever?

KD: Who?

RVH: John. The one [inaudible] John?

KD: Yes.

RVH: John's been here forever. He's got some great stories. Most of my stories are all smuggler stories, illegal or all that good stuff. [laughter]

KD: Well, that is good too. That is a large part of what went on down here for what, fifteen, twenty years?

RVH: Yes. Running guns for the [inaudible]. Running guns for [inaudible]. All the guns came out of the Keys. The [inaudible] You're out here.

KD: Here. This is for you guys to look at and make notes. Pass it along to Michael and whoever, just a quick questionnaire. Some of these do not pertain. You cannot answer, no big deal. It is just all these different comments about things we have learned about.

FS: Just this list.

KD: Yes.

RVH: Open the canals, let the water flow. 95 percent of houses built in the last five years are scared out. They are not being built because people want to build their house – people owned the property forever, bought a property. They had a lot of the same thing. They couldn't get a permit. I've got nine to twenty days [inaudible]. That means I put up a set of [inaudible], I wait 120 days. They save as much money as I can. I get another inspection, nine of those, just me, nine of us. I've got nobody that's going to go build my house. Nobody would build the house yet. Leave us the hell alone. Supply and demand would just level it out. The last six, seven years with all the [inaudible]. Oh, we 300, 400, 560. That's because they scared the hell out of everybody. It has nothing to do with what they need. When I became a contractor fourteen years ago, fifteen years ago, they were four in Marathon from Long Key. 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, there's 1,300. They projected in another three years, there'll be 250. Supply and demand will do it. The people that live here and the people that don't come here to try to raise the money.

KD: Basically, it is the same thing front and back. These are just to spark people's memory to look through it. Maybe they will remember. They will see the name. They go, "Oh, yes, I know the story." Or "Oh, there is something I would like to say about that sense of community." There are just different areas, like fringing, mangrove, little terms that might be nothing, but it's the same thing here. Or you shrimp the crab [inaudible], same type of thing.

RVH: We just can do it again.

KD: I hope so. Can we – I think...

[end of transcript]