

Wild Caught
Faye and Leroy Dixon Oral History
Date of Interview: Unknown
Location: Sneads Ferry, North Carolina
Length of Interview: 50:16
Interviewer: MB – Matthew Barr
Transcriber: NCC

Matthew Barr: Okay. Just so we have it on tape because my notes get a little screwy here and there, can you just say your names? That way we can also check the audio.

Faye Dixon: Faye Dixon.

MB: Faye Dixon.

Leroy Dixon: Leroy Dixon.

MB: Okay. That's really good. That's really good.

FD: [laughter] Did we pass?

MB: Okay. Faye and Leroy, we've been filming today, you guys making the crab pots. You've been making crab pots for many, many years. It's a very important part of the industry here. You're the main builders of crab pots in this Sneads Ferry area. Just to start off in a little bit, Faye, can you just tell us a little bit about growing up in Sneads Ferry, a real fishing town. What that's been like, and what – how you feel about your town. Just to start us off a little bit. We talked before about this –

Male Speaker: You're looking up, Matt.

MB: What?

MS: Just one second.

MB: That was impressive. I was just saying, what do you want for dinner? You want a cheeseburger, or you want a [inaudible]? [laughter]

FD: [laughter]

MS: There is a clock also, Matt, but we'll let that go.

FD: Well, we can't stop that, Matt. Well, we could, but then he'd have to redo it.

MB: No. Don't worry about the clock. That should be part of the signal. Okay. So, Faye, talk about growing up in Sneads Ferry, what it was like. You both will be looking at me.

FD: Yes. I'm just trying to remember. [laughter]

MB: Well, I mean, [inaudible] today. Okay. I know a little nice place to start. When you mentioned to me in your church that you were gathering some money for, well, obviously – but the idea of community here is really strong. Talk about that a little bit. People are in need, you're helping out, and all of that.

FD: All right. Well, it's like an extended family, a large extended family. When one gets out,

down and out, or hurt, the other one's always there to help. When you go anywhere, you always run into people that you know. They're always willing to stop and talk. It's not like you're just passing by with strangers. Anytime that you need anything, you can call somebody. Because there's always someone around that you know that you grew up with to talk with. It's really good. It's a close-knit community. A lot of love for each other, and a lot of help as you're needing it.

MB: Did you grow up in a fishing family?

FD: Yes. My father was a commercial fisherman. Sometimes he crabbed, which – he also blacks bass fished. He was a charter boat captain for years and years and years, but he did really well there.

MB: So, what was it like growing up in a fishing family?

FD: At times, it's really good materially, because you have right much. But at times, it's real slow. I can remember at times when Christmases, we were really bad off, we might get one thing because it was bad season. But there was always a lot of love, so that made up for it. But it was hard in a lot of ways too because of the seasonal aspect. So, we ate a lot of fish and stuff. But we always had plenty. It's just that there were times when it was leaner, but there were always a lot of friends to be able to talk to you. We could always walk around the Ferry without worrying about getting hurt, even at night. We could play outside till after dark. We didn't have to lock our doors. It was not like it is now, it's changed. It's not as bad as, I don't believe, it's in the cities. But now, we do have to lock doors. The children, we don't allow to walk around at night by themselves like we used to. So, it was really nice growing up here.

MB: Do you have brothers and sisters?

FD: Two brothers, both of them are very much older than me. One, seventeen years old, and the other was ten. My older brother fish for a little while, then he went into the fire department on the base. He was the chief of the Lejeune Fire Department. He's retired now. My other brother, he was a shrimper. He shrimped for years and years. Now, he's retired due to illness. But he spent a lot of his years out on the river. He had a big 80-foot, shrimp trawler, the *Captain Timmy*. But he enjoyed it. He raised his family that way. A lot of times they went out with him and stayed, and they had all the facilities out there. They stayed weeks at a time when they could. They really enjoyed it.

MB: So, having grown up in the city, San Francisco, I grew up right near there, of course, there's a lot fishing out in California. It was different. But, of course, I didn't really know anybody directly who was a fisherman, but I think it's different. I think a lot of people really have no idea of what – I guess it's part of what I'm trying to do in the documentary, and for myself too. I'm learning, reading a lot of books, obviously, talking to people like you that have grown up in this world. But I guess it's very hard work to be efficient. I mean, your father would have to get up very early.

FD: Really early. So, most of the time, he got up at three 3:00 a.m. Then sometimes it was long

days till after dark. Sometimes it was half a day. Because since he was a charter boat captain, sometimes he didn't have the half a day. But the ones that are out there black bass fishing and stuff, they were longer hours. So, when he was doing that, it was long hours.

LD: A lot of times, when you're a fisherman, or a crabber, or something like, I guess when the weather is so rough, sometimes on that water, and the wind is blowing so hard, you can't go out. You lose that day. You've lost that money. So, that takes away from your family that week.

MB: Yes, that's very true. I mean, I know that last time I was down here, Johnny Wayne had to replace his outboard motor. Until he had that motor going, there was no money coming in.

LD: That's right. That's it.

FD: Big expenses. They don't have little expenses. It's big expenses. [coughs] Excuse me.

MB: That's different from my job where I get paid every month. I complain like everybody else, it's not enough, of course. However, every month, there's that paycheck that covers my dental, my health, the retirement, social security, blah, blah, blah. So, that's very different from when you're out in a private business, so to speak. I mean, the fisherman there, when you think about it, maybe some of the last independent businesspeople in this country. We're not completely, but we're kind of like farmers. We're somewhat similar. There were fishermen farmers here, right?

FD: [affirmative]

MB: I mean, [inaudible] did you know some of them, not necessarily in your family, but people who had farms sometimes, or a part of the year, and –

FD: Yes, I think we did.

LD: Well, a lot of times, you can take a farmer or something, if they have a drought. It's too dry, they are not going to do anything. One year, it's too dry, the next year, it may be too wet in the ground and everything. So, if they don't step in, some kind of funds or something to help them, and they're hurting. I mean, they've got nothing to fall back on.

FD: I think our business depends a lot on the commercial fishermen –

LD: That's it. That's right.

FD: – whether they're catching too. Our business is the same as commercial fishermen in a lot of ways. Because if they're not catching, then we're not selling. So, our business is largely dependent on what they're catching.

MB: Well, talk to us about what your business is. I mean, we've been filming it, but just so we can start to talk about what you guys do.

FD: We sell commercial fishing supplies. But we make the fish traps, and the crab traps, eel traps, shrimp traps, and many other traps. You want to tell about it?

LD: What's that?

FD: About the traps.

LD: Just however they want it made and everything. One might want it a little bit – the top, one might want it a different way or something with a different partition in there or something like that, maybe a different color or throat. In other words, when they get their crab in their pots or anything, they can tell where their pots are. If they lose one of their pots, or if somebody happened to steal one of them or something, they'll have that special throat in there, and that special color, like a red, or green, or yellow, or whatever. When he sees that pot, he'll know that pot is his.

MB: So, how –

LD: – in other words.

MB: Excuse me. How did you guys learn how to make crab pots?

LD: When I was working with the bus company up in Jacksonville, I worked for them for about twelve –

FD: Twenty-two.

LD: Twenty-two years, something like that.

FD: [laughter]

LD: I then did part time with my wife's dad, and he taught me how to do it. I started from there.

MB: Oh, so now your father –

FD: My father was a crabber like I told you. He decided that he wanted to do his own traps. So, he designed his own little trap that wouldn't roll in the currents. It's a little bit shorter, and it's a lot better for not rolling in the currents. He decided he wanted to make his own, so he started making them. Then, of course, some of the other fishermen liked his, so they wanted some. So, he'd make them for them. So, he decided that he'd teach us, and he taught us how to build them. When he couldn't do it any longer, we bought him out, and then I decided to make it a company. So, we went ahead and started working on them, and selling them to the commercial fishermen, and to the stores. We also wholesale to the stores.

MB: So, how long ago did you start the company up?

FD: In 1981, that's when we started.

MB: Can you make that a sentence? Can you make that a complete sentence?

FD: A complete sentence.

MB: No, I'm just – see, for me, in that way, I don't need to put the question there. I should rephrase the question.

FD: Okay. Well, we started the company up in 1981. Before that, we were just helping him to build some here and there. But we started the company back in 1981.

MB: We have been filming you guys this morning, and I've been here before that. It seems like it's pretty complex to build a crab pots. They have all these different design features. It's quite a piece of work.

FD: It can be. [laughter]

MB: So, as you're able to customize the crab pot to –

LD: However, how they want it, the way they want it, or that they want the partition raised up in the pot, or just normal, however how they want it. Or they want a different type of bait pod in it, or a smaller bait pod, or whatever, it's up to them.

MB: So, the crab pots they used around Sneads vary and might be different from ones used in other areas?

FD: They are a lot of times. Because a different area, they seem to tend to use one specific type of trap, and it varies from region to region. Here, they prefer the one that my father designed, the shorter non-rolling one. Whereas, up in the (Pamlico?), they liked the little taller with a raised-up divider. So, the different areas, it does make a difference to what they use.

MB: That's interesting. So, your father taught you. I guess as part of the theme of documentaries is just, kind of, generational, father to daughter, father to son. How do you guys feel about in general, are many of the young people in this town going into commercial fishing, you think? Of course, we just saw this guy over here. He's from Jacksonville. So, I guess –

[laughter]

But do you think – I guess this brings up the bigger question of the future of commercial fishing. But what are some of your opinions about all that?

LD: I think that some of the older men that's now doing fishing, or crabbing, I think their children will come up and follow them in their footsteps to a certain extent because they get it in their blood. I knew a guy one time, he had a good office job, college education, everything. Sat behind the desk every day, had a suit on, tie, and he wasn't happy because he was closed in. He wasn't out in the open. Because they're out in the open and everything, they don't like to be

closed up. They don't like to be shut in, they like to be out. He quit his job, bought him a boat, and went on the water.

FD: I don't think there's just many now that's going to follow in the footsteps. It seems to be dying off somewhat. I think a good number of the children think that they are going to have to go to college, which is nothing wrong with that. I'm not saying that. But they think they have to go to college and get education in order to get a good paying job. They see people – which I think is very wrong, which really upsets me, looking down upon the – as they think lowly – fishermen. But there's not a more noble, finer occupation to me than a commercial fisherman. I don't understand why they wouldn't want to carry on with this. Maybe I should look at it a little deeper, but I don't understand it. But I see a lot of times the children not picking it up. Now, there are some, of course, that are. But I think the majority of them are not. Now, our daughter, we have taught her, and she does know how to build the traps. I hope – and from all that we see – that she may carry on the tradition. But well, a lot of the ones that I grew up with, their children do not carry on the tradition of crabbing or fishing, and it bothers me.

MB: Why do you think they're not doing that?

FD: I think because they've seen so many rules and regulations change, that it's hard for them to be able to do the fishing like they want to. Because they've got so many new rules and regulations that they didn't used to have. It's so much more complicated to have to keep up with their paperwork is what they tell me. There are so many things that they have to do, and so many things, rules that they have to follow, and so it's harder for them. Two, I think it's that a lot of them don't think of it as the kind of occupation that people look up to. I don't see it in a lot of the kids, which is sad to me.

MB: Do you think it's partially because in our culture, working with your hands is somehow not good or working that hard? I mean, that's some hard work.

FD: It may be. That may have something to do with it, I don't know. Maybe this is a generalization, but it seems like the older people tend to have been brought up to work harder. So, they're not afraid of hard work, to where the younger generation does not seem to want to do as much of the harder manual labor. So, you may be right, that may have something to do with it. I don't really know. What do you think?

LD: Well, so many of the younger people, it's just like when they get a public job, they want the paycheck, but they don't want to do the work. When a person can't do the job, to me that's the time the boss man will tell him hit the road and get somebody in there that will do the job, that can do the work. Because when a person got you hired, you expect them to give you a good day's work for the money that you're paying them. They know that money that they're going to get when the job starts with. So, they shouldn't be complaining about what they're getting paid for because they know what they're getting paid before they go to work. If they work, if they improve, then they'll get a raise. If they deserve a raise, I think it'd be passed on to them. But if they might not, they will try to build their self up and do a better job, they're not going to get no more money.

MB: I think these days, they're expecting more money without doing the work.

LD: Well, a lot of them do, that's the trouble now. They want the money, but they don't want to put the time in it, in other words, to work.

MB: Well, like watching Johnny and some of the other people, like that's some serious work.

LD: Well, he works hard for his living, a crabber, or a fisher, either one. They have done a very hard job.

FD: But it pays off.

LD: It pays off. But it's still they've got a hard job too. They've got a hard life.

FD: Well, it doesn't only pay off in monetary things. When you look at the overall picture, they've got the freedom. They get to see the sun rise, and the sun set. They're out there and no one is telling them what to do. They have the freedom to do and be as they want to be. So, isn't it worth more to be able to be free to be you than all the monetary rewards? They make a fairly decent living too, but I think the other extra benefit still worth a lot to me.

MB: Yes. There's no way to put a price tag on what it means to be your own person and not answerable to some big corporation or whatever, some boss who is above all layers of bureaucracy and all that. That's what Johnny said when I interviewed him the first time. There's no way that he would want to trade that in for – that's the only thing he's ever done too.

FD: Right. That is. That is. Even though I'm not really fond of having to stay inside and be there all day long, and not be able to get out like they do, still we have the freedom to do as somewhat as we want to do. By being able to build the traps, we don't have to have someone telling us what to do. So, to me, that means a lot too.

LD: That's like being, sort of, your own boss man. You don't have a –

FD: Almost. [laughter]

LD: Somebody standing over you all the time telling you what to do and everything. You can sort of –

FD: The crabbers do tell us what to do sometimes. [laughter]

LD: Yes. But sure, as far as that goes. But I mean, that's different in a way. It's not the same thing. In other words, you're working like you're working on a public job or something.

MB: Oh, yeah, I know all about that because I work for the state. There are all kinds of layers to that campus in terms of who you have to answer to and all that. They evaluate you all the time. It puts the pressure on you.

FD: I think that's what these nonconformists, like myself, are all about. They don't like anyone evaluating you or telling you when to come to work and when to leave. I think we're maybe an independent breed, maybe, I think so. I've always thought I was. I do not like to be put in a little box so as to speak. [laughter] So, kind of a nonconformist, I think.

MB: Right. Kind of the last in the American Independence. We see that in different people. Some other jobs like truckers who are out there, they have the freedom of the road, whatever. When I was interviewing Ray Swaney Sr. a couple of nights ago when he was saying how he feel a presence of God sometimes out on the water. I was really struck by that. You think about the beginnings of what the big questions about why we're here and feeling the presence of God and all that. It's a spiritual thing as much as – and how can you measure that? You'd be out there in the fresh air is a lot better than being in some office somewhere. That's pretty much healthier.

LD: Well, that's nature. I mean, it's just –

FD: What God had created.

LD: – Mother Nature. It's different.

MB: Well, you fellows work really hard too. Talk about a typical week here at the J&D Crab Pot Co. Take us through a week. What time do you guys –

LD: Well, a lot of times, I may get up sometimes like 6:00 a.m., and had to go over and maybe cut some wire that morning. Come back home, eat my breakfast, and then get ready and go back to work that day.

FD: We work sometimes –

LD: That's right.

FD: – up until 10:00 p.m., 11:00 p.m. It's according on the day, really, about six days a week.

LD: So, that's according to what we what we got, how many customers during the day or whatever. So, when like, I'm working on the pod or something, and a customer comes up, I go ahead and wait on him and everything. She'll continue to work on, maybe a pot or something. I'll catch up with her when I get a chance to catch back up with her.

FD: He tries. [laughter]

MB: Well, so you guys work six days a week?

FD: Most of the time.

LD: Well, that's it, about six days a week. Usually, we used to work, six days a week, most of the time.

FD: Then in the winter, we cut back on our hours because it gets slow in the winter. Starting around November till January, it gets a little slower. So, we can cut back. Then we probably work four or five days a week, usually. So, we get a little time off then. [laughter]

MB: But you have pretty tough schedule, really.

LD: Oh, yeah. But the name of the game, you got to get it while it's going. If you don't you, you miss out on it.

MB: So, typically, how many crab pots would you make in a day?

FD: Around forty.

LD: Well, if you really push yourself, you might do forty.

FD: Yes, probably.

LD: But then you're pushing yourself, just really pushing yourself, that is if you put a good pot out. You might not put a good pot out, you might put more than that out. But I believe in putting a good pot out when I put one out. I want to see the customer when he comes – when he picks that pot up, and when he can look at me and say, "That's a good pot. I like it." It's like I told somebody else one time, "You sell a man a bad pot that don't look good, he's not [inaudible] come back and buy another one. But if you sell him a good pot, he's going to come back and buy another pot." The only way he'll come back is if he has to come back to get one. I like to put something out good when I put it out, and make sure it's up to standard.

FD: That'll last just as long as it will.

LD: That's right. That's it.

FD: We can't control the wire, but we can control how it's put together.

LD: The wire companies, whatever the way I get the wire when it's shipped to us, we have to work with it unless it's been up too bad or something like that, that I can't cut it on my table when I cut the wire straight across. Maybe like if it comes out, the wire is supposed to be, let's say, 2-foot wide, 24 inches. Well, sometimes you might get some that's 23.5, 23. Then that's not going to work because you can't put a rebar, a weight, or iron on the bottom of that pot to where it's going to fit right. Because that rebar is for a 2-foot pot, or to work 24 inches. In other words, you can't pull that pot out enough to fit that rebar.

MB: So, then you have to send it back to them?

LD: You have to send it back to them, and say, "Look, I can't work with this." A lot of times, if you can get the ticket number of the wire, you can call into the wire company and tell them. There's a certain machine that's causing that wire to be stretched like that. They can check it out and then correct it.

MB: So, lots of things involved with all this. It's more complicated than it looks there.

FD: Yes, it is. It can be. [laughter] It's a daily challenge and you never know what's going to happen, or what they're going to come up with. People come to you with some strange kind of traps, they want you to build all the time.

MB: So, how many different variations are there?

LD: I would hate to say but –

FD: Unlimited wouldn't you say? [[laughter]

LD: Yes. There's quite a few of them. They just want them – I want them in different ways. One might want the bait pot upside down, and the other one might want it straight down. One might want the bait pot up to the top, in other words, like a fish pot, and the other one went on the bottom. It's according to whichever way you might have to put the opening of the pot. Most of the time a fish pot – fish bait pot is open at both ends so you can open it at either end that you want to. Where a crab pot, they pot is closed in where the fish can't get the bait out the top, in other words.

MB: Well, let's talk about some of the crabbers. We can start with Johnny Wayne Midgett. Now, you know him for all his life, right?

FD: Practically, yes. He's a very good crabber from all we've ever seen. He's a real hard-working man. So, he's been really good family man, a good person all the way around. He really knows what he's doing. All the other crabbers that we talked with admire him, respect him. They talk about his honesty and his integrity. So, he's well thought of in the community.

LD: He's the type of person who will bend over backwards to try to help you. If he thought you needed his shirt off his back, he gave it to you, I believe. That's the type of person Johnny is, which I like in Johnny. Johnny is a good man, I'll say that.

FD: He took it after his father. His father is also a really nice man and a very good man. His father has always been a good commercial fisherman.

LD: He's always been a hard worker. He believes, in other words when it's there, to go after it. You take some of these that are said it's crabbing, that could have a pretty day to go out. A lot of time, they'd rather not go out to go crabbing. They were staying at the dock or something. Then somebody else can go out, and they'll have a good catch. Then at the end of the week, they wonder why they don't have no money.

FD: The ones that stayed at the dock.

LD: The ones that stayed at the dock, they wonder why you don't have no money. Well, I'd love to tell them why they don't have enough money if they'd asked me. I could tell them why they

don't have no money.

FD: [laughter]

LD: It's just like anything else. If you're going to have anything, you've got to be willing to work for it. Me and my wife work for everything we've got. I had nobody to die and leave me any money, and I didn't inherit no money. I worked for it, my own power, sweat. I worked for it.

FD: Still working for it.

LD: That's right.

FD: [laughter]

LD: That's what God's Word says, "Get delivered by the sweat of your brow." That's what it says, that's in the Bible. A man that doesn't work –

FD: Has to work six days a week, and the seventh belongs to Him.

LD: That's it.

FD: [laughter]

LD: Bible says, work six days, and the seventh day belongs to Him. That's the day we're supposed to worship Him. In other words, go to church, worship Him and – like our family is the church.

MB: So, this is a religious community. I know both of you are very involved in your church. Talk a little bit about that, Sunday school –

LD: Well, we go to the Pentecost, Pentecostal Holiness Church here in Sneads Ferry. Brother John Norris is our pastor.

FD: Who is a commercial fisherman.

LD: He's a commercial fisherman also, like my wife said. I'm the superintendent of Sunday school, and one of the deacons sitting on the board now. I'm really into church. I've something I really like. I like it a lot. Because the Lord really worked a miracle for me when I was just a child. I used to have seizures when I was a little boy, and epilepsy. I had the worst type that you could even imagine, the worst type. The one that you really just chewed your tongue, in other words, or something when you first start having them. I went a long time having them like six days a week, seven days a week. It always hits me at night. I was prayed for, I don't know how many different times when I went to tent meeting, went to revivals. One night, I just told mom I heard of man that came to town, Brother, (Sam Weston?) was his name. I told my mom after the service, I said, "I want to go and be prayed for." I went out. When he laid his hands on me and

prayed for me. After that, I had one light [inaudible] and never had another one since that day, never. God heal me up.

FD: We've been the recipient of –

LD: Never had another one.

FD: Been the recipient of many miracles. I teach Sunday school. I teach the primary which is such a joy in my life. These kids, they can ask some of the most interesting questions, some that I've never even thought of. [laughter] They keep me younger. They're so eager to learn, and I enjoy them so much. We really enjoy going to Sunday school and church. I'm in the women's group, we like to help in the community. If someone needs help, we like to help. My daughter and I like to cook on the holidays for the ones that doesn't have anything. We enjoy that. That's more of a blessing to us than anything. We had the best Christmas this year that we've ever had. We went down to the church fellowship hall, and we cooked for the ones in the community that need it. We served – what was it? Twenty-eight –

LD: Something like that.

FD: No, I believe so. Somewhere like that out of the community – I mean, out of the church and the community. We had the best time serving, and being able to fellowship, and to intermingle, and just visit with all the people. It was the best Christmas we've ever had, I believe, to be able to share it with others. We really enjoyed it. But our Christian work, and our Sunday school class, and our women's ministry, and other things that he does is very much a part of this community. Because a lot of the ones around the fishermen and their families are members of different churches. It's really an intermingle that we all work well together. I think it crosses the denominational boundaries, I think. Everyone works no matter which church you choose. I think we all work together well. I enjoy my Sunday school children.

LD: I'd go back. You were talking about while ago about religion and everything. God's word says, "Seek ye the Kingdom of Heaven first and all other things shall be added unto us as we need it." Now, I'm not talking about a new Cadillac sitting out there in the yard, or Rolls Royce, or something like that. I'm talking about the things that he knows –

FD: What if you need it?

LD: – that he knows his people, in other words, need, that he will provide for us in some way, shape, and form. We might not know where it's coming from, but it will come somewhere later. I believe that. It's just like if you take a person that owes you money or something, maybe you get to that certain point, you don't have no money, you don't know what you're going to do. The Lord can lay it upon that person's heart say, "Look, this man, he needs that money that you owe him. Why don't you go to him and give this man that money? He's got a family this week. He's got to buy groceries and stuff for." I believe God can lay things upon a person's heart like that and talk with him. I truly do.

FD: It's kind of like –

LD: I feel that way.

FD: It's kind of like our pastor told a story about somebody he knows. He had a bill come in due, and he didn't have any money, and he was going out clamming. He couldn't find any clams, hardly found any. He said then when he prayed, and said he felt this feeling inside of him, heard this voice within himself to go back to a certain spot that he'd passed by thinking there was none there. When he went back and he stopped, he picked up clam after clam after clam until he finally got his amount. When he went in, he had exactly the amount to pay his bill.

LD: Exactly what he needs.

FD: [laughter] He says the Lord supplied it. He supplied it with the clams, which I thought was very interesting that He can use anything to help us with our needs. But I think that the thing of nature and spirituality, kind of, blends with the fishermen and their families, and the ones of us that are into it. We might not be the ones that goes out on the water but since we're basically the part of it by making their supplies, that, I think, it blends all together to make one nice mix of spirits.

LD: A lot of people they're saying, "God is dead." Their god may be dead, but my God is very much alive. You can have certain things that you serve as your god, it can be automobile. You can take more than automobile and do your god. It's anything that you put before God, that's what's God to you. In other words. God says, "Put Him first because he's a jealous God." In other words, He's going to be first or he's not going to be at all. That's it.

MB: So, it's a powerful sense of community, spiritual always in this town.

FD: Right. Kind of ours explaining it as a large extended family. It is a very close-knit community, I think. It's where I would always want to be. I love it here. I don't think I'd want to live anywhere else. [laughter]

MB: So, you're not going to New York City?

LD: No.

FD: Not tomorrow. [laughter]

LD: I hadn't lost anything in New York, so I don't think I need to go to New York.

MB: It's funny speaking about New York City. I was talking with Johnny when we interviewed him last night, for the second time. It's kind of amazing when you think about some of his crabs are being at the full fish market right like two days, or a day, or later. He pulls them from the ocean, from the water, and before you know it somebody is eating it in a restaurant in New York City.

LD: I'll say that's what right now, the crabs and everything now here, they're catching good now

right here. I think like last year, they had plenty of different places where they had to ship them. They didn't really need the crabs at that time. So, catching as many crabs we're catching here now, they're shipping the crabs from here up north somewhere. In other words, they don't have to crabs this year up there that they had last year. So, in other words, when they've got plenty of crabs up there, it hurts the crab market down here because they can't be shipped out of here to up there. This year, the price is still holding up so far so good, and the guys can make a little bit more money by doing that.

MB: Right. Well, but has Sneads Ferry changed much or is it changing much these days?

LD: It has to a certain extent, I think. The population in Sneads Ferry is growing more all the time, and we have a lot of military here. Also, the marine base is right here, right close here. A lot of marines settle in Sneads Ferry, like Jacksonville because they're a bit close to their home base and everything. But other than that, just you might get one once in a while that might say they want to come down here, move down here.

FD: You would have to ask that question, wouldn't you? [laughter] It opened up the can of worms.

MB: Well, go ahead. That's why I asked it.

FD: It is growing more than I want it to. I prefer the old-timey ways, the old Sneads Ferry. Now, change is good, but too many people spoil the pie, so to speak. I will be just as happy if a whole lot of people didn't come down this way.

MB: Because it's going to change. I mean, there are some changes. [inaudible]

LD: Definitely.

MB: I mean, it's happening in Greensboro. I've been there six years. Greensboro is growing quickly. You got more cars. Everywhere you look, there's a strip mall.

FD: When you're from different places, you're bringing in different ways with you. We're used to our own ways, our Sneads Ferry ways. I prefer it left the way it was. I wished that the people that have been from here from a long time could hold on to their land and not sell it off. I wish they had enough.

LD: I'm laying off to hold on to ours, it's what we got here. I'm laying off to hold on to it. I don't want nobody to move right in here, side and back me in.

FD: They went down at the landing too.

LD: Right. Like I told my wife, I said that – I said, "Honey, when I pass away." I said, "It's fine by me if you put me right back down the backside of the field. That's fine with me. It don't make no difference."

FD: The development on the beach, it's hard for me to understand why they let them build the in the North Topsail like they did in some of the other areas. The natural beauty that as a child when I was growing up, we used to come over, and my father, and my mother, and my friends, we used to come over to the beach. We could walk for miles and not see anything. Maybe a fishing pier once in a while. No one to look at you and say, did move off from their property as they like to now, sometimes. It was just so much nicer. You could go and have your picnic. You could go and sit on the beach. You could fish. You weren't having to fight the people, not literally, but figuratively. It was a lot nicer then to me than it is now. It would have been better to me if it had not have developed. But I know growth is [laughter] something that's going to happen, so we have to accept it. But I like the old ways better.

LD: These people that's got money. It's like I said, I think some of them got more money than have brains.

FD: Oh, my. [laughter]

LD: They go around building condominiums right down that beach. When the first hurricane comes, a lot of time it wipes them out. The insurance company pays it off, and then they go back and build it right back again. I think after it ever happens once or twice, they should tell him right there, "No more, that's it. You're not building back." That's my belief about it. Because also, it's hurting fish and everything. Them septic tanks and everything that go with whatever outside that beach. When that hurricane comes in there and washes that water all up in there and everything, washes the top of those sewage line – the tops off and everything, them septic tanks, all that mess wash right back out in the ocean. It can't be good for the fish and everything.

MB: We were driving up pass Surf City in North [inaudible]. This has built up here, and maybe more and more homes on the intercoastal. They are just packed in there.

FD: You go over to places like Emerald Isle. We went over, we had a delivery to make on the 4th of July, [laughter] unfortunately. Let's see. We went on the day before when it was the third. It was so bad we had to wait and wait and wait to get out onto the road. If one nice gentleman hadn't let us, I think we would have waited on, we wouldn't be home yet. [laughter]

LD: We've been sitting there for a while.

FD: Maybe not quite –

LD: Some people had enough courtesy about themselves that the motion you on out when they see you sitting there and it's hot. You've hot got your windows rolled down, no air conditioner, nothing going. When I'm pulling that 16-foot trailer behind me, something like that, you don't run the air condition too much, not in the summertime like that from all the heat and everything. He just happened to just motion me on out, come on out and get into line of traffic. Because if he hadn't, I'd have been sitting there probably, maybe ten or fifteen more minutes before I could have gone out there or something. Because once the traffic starts coming over there at Emerald Isle, especially on the weekends, the tourists and everything. There's zoom, zoom, zoom, just like that.

FD: I'm hoping ours never gets like that. [laughter] That was my point that is to bring up Emerald Isle. I remember when it wasn't nearly like that. Now, it's not a pleasure to go over there like it used to be. I'm just hoping that our beach doesn't get that bad.

LD: But they were wanting for the Sneads Fair, they want to do it like Jacksonville or whatever it was.

FD: Annex?

LD: Yes, and –

FD: Where they would go annex as far as Sneads Ferry into the beach, I think, which –

LD: It hadn't happened yet. I'm hoping that it won't really happen. Because when that does that, then they got that much more power to do things than what they've got now, and they know it.

MB: It's almost like in a way, two different worlds. The worlds of the people with the fancy boats and these condos and everything, and the world, like right here of working people.

MS: I might have to shut down before we get our battery dead.

MB: Okay.

LD: I'm talking about more like New York.

FD: Northern. [laughter]

LD: [inaudible] come back that way.

MB:
The taco sauce makers.

LD: That's it right there.

[laughter]

MB: I think that's what where people will be by 80 in general, from my understanding.

LD: Well, see most of them, when they come down here, financial, they're, sort of, they got enough money and everything to go ahead and set up their thing like they want.

FD: They make more than we do.

LD: They make –

MB: Or they come out retired out of New York or something.

LD: Because it's so much higher up there.

FD: Land, I know it's a lot higher, isn't it?

LD: The same way with anything like that.

MB: Yes, everything is. California too, unfortunately.

LD: Oh, I'm sure.

MB: It's unbelievable. You can get maybe average home price in Los Angeles, probably the average might be for 400,000 on the average price. In Santa Barbara it's over a half million dollars. The cheapest home you could buy, I'm talking about like an old two-bedroom, fixer up might be \$400,000.

LD: Man.

FD: You have to make an awful lot to be able to live there.

MB: I don't know where these people get the money, I really don't. I mean, that's why in San Francisco now, they're building apartments for schoolteachers. They can't afford to live there. They can't even afford to pay rent there.

FD: [laughter]

MB: We'll have to tear this down. So, we'll wrap this up pretty quick. Are we –

MS: All right. Speak.

MB: Well, here I am staying in condo, but I agree. I mean, of course, these are issues that face everywhere in this country, the growth versus the old ways. But I think Sneads Ferry is a particularly strong thing because it is such a traditional way of life. That's what I'm going to try to get across in this film, it's a way of life. It's more than a job. It's is a way of life, fishing. You know way better than I do, you came from a fishing family. It has its difficulties like farming does in terms of feast, or famine, the weather dependency. You don't know how good it's going to be. It's out of your hands a lot of the stuff. It's also very dangerous, right?

FD: Very dangerous.

LD: It's very dangerous when especially there's lightning or something out there on that water and everything. A bad storm comes up or something, you out there, you can't make it back in before the storm is over because you don't know how rough it's going to get.

FD: I don't think there's too many of us that doesn't know someone that's drowned. It is hard,

especially if your loved one goes out there. Many a time that my father, when the hurricanes would come, he would have to go out and stay on the boat during the storms. We didn't know whether he would come back or not.

LD: So, "Keep it off the dock" are the words your daddy would take and keep his boat running that night. Keep his boat off the dock because the water would come up so high.

FD: At times he'd have to leave the dock, and it would be some of the other ones that hadn't come in, the fishermen that hadn't got in during the storm. He would have to go out with his boat to bring them in. I've seen a lot of danger. A lot of times, I've wondered and worried. As I had said on one other time, he's been struck by lightning three times. Each time, I didn't know – they'd radio back in and tell us he'd been hit. We didn't know how badly he was hurt.

LD: Doctor might visit one night, one day out there.

FD: So, it was always a challenge, we never knew. I think it is still the same because we're always hearing about someone that's drown and it's sad. It's sad that it's – the family is under that. But still, I think it's worth it all. There are too many rewards. I think it's just a way of life that's very rewarding. You have to take the bad with the good like in everything else.

LD: Life goes on. You take every day at the time. That's all you can do.

MB: But you never know what's going to happen out there.

LD: That's true. You never know.

FD: That's true. Well, there's a lot more good than there is bad. So, you go on and you face each day, and it's a new day. You look for the good. I always look for the good. I don't ever like the pessimistic side. I don't like to borrow the trouble. If you do, it'll find you. So, you look for the good, and usually the good will find you. So, I like the fishing. I like the community. I like the sense of family. I like the sense of love and peace that you get, and companionship. It's all mixed into one. It's a nice sense of community in Sneads Ferry.

MB: Well, I can't think of a better wrap up statement than that. Anything else you guys want to add to this wonderful interview?

FD: No, except we appreciate the fact that you're doing the documentary, and to tell about the life and the times of the commercial fishermen in Sneads Ferry, and what it means. It seems to be one of the last frontiers. I'm afraid that that if we don't hold on tight, it is a dying one. I think that some of the things that the different ones do by hand, like in our business is the – they seem to be dying out to a certain degree, the manual labor, and it's all going to machines or computers. So, I think we should try to hold on to the traditional ways of doing things, if we can.

MB: Absolutely. Okay. Good. Thanks.

FD: [laughter] You're welcome.

LD: You're welcome.

FD: Now, I can go get my little fan.

[laughter]

MB: I'm going to turn the refrigerator on.

[end of transcript]