

Wild Caught
Ray Swaney Oral History
Date of Interview: July 11, 2000
Location: Sneads Ferry, North Carolina
Length of Interview: 01:49:15
Interviewer: MB – Matthew Barr
Transcriber: NCC

Matthew Barr: Well, Mr. Swaney, now we've got all this preparation done and everything.

Ray Swaney: [laughter]

MB: It's amazing when we're doing interviews, trying to get people to relax, which it's easy from my side of the camera. But with all the stuff, it naturally can be a little nerve-racking. But basically, what I'm trying to do in this documentary – and I'm the first to admit I know very little about fishing, so I'm learning. But I guess what attracted me to the story was getting to know Sneads Ferry over the years because I stayed – I have to say my maybe ex-wife, I don't know what's happening on that one. But anyway, she and her family had use of a condo, which is where we're staying over in North Topsail Beach. That's how I got to know Sneads Ferry, starting with a shrimp festival last year. Met Bernice Guthrie and Murray.

RS: She saw me.

MB: We just interviewed them. I was telling Ray we interviewed them this morning. Then after the interview [laughter] Murray let us lay –

RS: You're talking about her husband?

MB: Yes.

Male Speaker: Yes.

RS: He's a smart dude.

MS: [laughter]

RS: When you talk about the Civil War to him, he can tell you all about it.

MB: Very smart.

RS: He's very smart on that stuff.

MB: Well, it's interesting you mentioned that because that's exactly what we ended up talking about, the Civil War.

[laughter]

RS: Civil War?

MB: Yes. Did your father fish?

RS: My father, his dad died when he was three. His dad came up from around Randolph County above Raleigh. His sister married a real old fisherman down here who came from a fishing family. His name was John Lewis. Well, this was his older sister. So, he came down and stayed

with them at times and followed the Lewises around when he wasn't nothing but a youngling. Then in nineteen, he wound up going back up to Duplin County. He farmed some. At one time he was a prison guard. In 1940, we moved right after I was born. Well, I was one-year-old. I was born in January of [19]39. We moved out toward Holly Ridge. They had Camp Davis out there, a little army base. From that, we moved down here, and we farmed a couple farms here. I didn't ever think we were ever getting ahead doing no farming. He would fish and oyster and stuff in the wintertime. Then from that, I went shrimping for the first time when I was eleven. I don't know what it was. I stuck with it. Went to work at the fish house. Probably working at fourteen. Then when I'm sixteen, I went to Jacksonville and did mechanic work and wound up back up down here. So, I fished most of my life.

MB: So, does fishing get in the blood?

RS: I would say it does. Yes, it gets in your blood. It's hard to find anything you're satisfied with once you do it. It's I would say more or less as a way of life. It's not a bad one. Most people I would think probably figures that fishermen are kind of the scum of the world, the lowest people there is. But you have some right good people who are fishermen. A lot of times you talk with the public, and they want to know, "Well, what do you do for a living?" I say I'm a commercial fisherman. "You are a commercial fisherman?" Then they kind of have a tendency to look down at you. But I wouldn't trade my fishing life for any kind of life I've ever had. I've tried it all, and I'd prefer fishing over it all. When you're out on the sea, you're closed to everything. You can really have a lot of time to think about things and how they came about. I think more or less while you're out there and you have all this time to think, you can get a more clear picture in your mind of really how everything happened, the purpose of why it happened. I saw the times that you really could feel the presence of your Heavenly Father there being right on the boat with you. When you feel something like that, it's an experience that you don't ever forget. So, I could say I wouldn't trade my fishing life back for anything I've ever done. I currently work the mechanic work and try to drive trucks. Anything came along, I've done a little bit of it. Always turn around and come back to the ocean like an old sea turtle. [laughter] I'd rather say it gets in your blood, just like you take an old boat, and you stay with it. You get to listen to all the little creeks and things what it makes and the little rackets it makes. It kind of gets like a part of you. Then you weather a lot of bad weather with it. It brings you through it. It kind of gets like it's a part of you. You learn to have a lot of respect for it, and you have a lot of respect for your old boat and stuff too. Because a lot of times if it wasn't for that, you wouldn't come back. I've seen some mighty bad weather on them. Back when I was in my teens, I joined the Navy and pulled three years in that. I've been in some 50, 60-foot seas on them ships and it isn't a prototype, it's something else. Yes, it's some fine time. But like I was telling you here the other day about when he was a little, teeny fellow, he wanted to go fishing with me. I started carrying him on the boat when he wasn't a year and a half old. Then when school was out, he always wanted to go shrimping, so I carried him. It's been like that right on up to last year, wasn't it?

MS: Last summer.

RS: Last summer he came down, him and another boy from Utah. They shrimped with me last summer. First time I've ever seen salt water, I reckon [laughter]. Seen the Atlantic anyhow. I

think he enjoyed it too the way he talked. Well, when everybody's on my boat, I don't do no hollering at nobody, jumping on them. I tell them what I want them to do, and they usually do it. We try to when you stay on those boats out there for a week, two, three weeks at a time, four weeks because everybody is like family. Everybody has got to put up with the other man. You got to be pretty good nature people to do that. A lot of people can't stand it. It's more or less kind of like being in the Navy, I imagine, to a lot of people. We have some of the boys that just stay on the boat all the time. They don't have a home. They come in. We come to the dock and straighten up with them and pay them. What time we're at the dock, they stay on the boat at night. They might go up the street somewhere, but they always come back to the boat and stay. That's just like their home, and they treat it that way.

MB: So, that becomes their home.

RS: Yes.

MB: The boat is their home.

RS: I would say so. That's just like when we're in Florida shrimping. We stay on the boat all the time. We don't go rent no motel rooms doing that. We stay down there and work a month and a month and a half. Then we'll come home for a week. So, when you're away from here, the boat is your home. Sure is.

MB: So, you're going to have to be able to get along with those pretty close quarters on the boat.

RS: Yes. When I hire a fellow, I tell him, "To start with, I don't cuss you. I don't want you cussing nobody on the boat and raising no scene. I expect you to do your work like everybody else does. If you have sticky fingers, then you better let them stay sticky on your stuff not nobody else's. Because everybody on this boat trusts everybody. We don't do no stealing from the other man. We treat everybody like we want them to treat us. That's the way it's going to be. If you walk in and there's \$20 laying on the table, when you walk out, that \$20 better be still laying on that table." We always get along very good. Once in a while you'll find one that's got sticky fingers in one trip, you'll weed him out. When you finish the trip up, you pay him and tell him, "Buddy, I don't need you anymore."

MB: Well, now, when you were working on the generator the other day when we were filming, that Ricky, is that his name?

RS: Yes.

MB: Can you talk a little bit about Ricky? He's been working with you for a long time, hasn't he?

RS: Ricky's been working with me I'd say somewhere around twenty-five, twenty-six years or better than it. In fact, I've been more to a daddy to Ricky than his own daddy had been to him. There were a few things that happened when Ricky was a young boy with his first wife, and he kind of went and worked with me. It's been that way ever since. In fact, I helped him. We got

one boat together now I helped him get. If nothing doesn't happen this summer, I'm going to just give him the whole mess. It'll be his. I reckon me and him seen some bad waters together. When he first went to work with me, he had never left Sneads Ferry. Before he worked with me a year, I had done and had him from the Virginia line to Brownsville, Texas. We used to do some running by [laughter]. We'd go to places and stuff when I was younger. I'm trying to get away from that.

MB: [laughter] You're talking about bars or something or –

RS: [laughter] No, just running all fishing.

MS: Fishing.

MB: Fishing.

RS: I had never been one for running bars too much.

MB: So, you did fish all the way to Brownsville, Texas?

RS: At times. Slapped to the Mexican border.

MB: Ray, how many boats do you have?

RS: Three, four. No, I got four. I got one that we're reworking. We set it on the hill for three years, and we decided to put it back overboard and the decks and stuff rotted off of it. We'll tear them all out completely and rework it. It's a 50-footer. Well, I'm hoping that I can get back to smaller boats and stay home, where I can just stay here and going to work right out of here and get rid of the bigger ones. Maybe we can get to that.

MB: Well, now like the *Captain Z*, how big a boat is that?

RS: That's a 73 foot. It'll probably measure somewhere around 74 or 75-foot boat. They call it a 73 foot. Everyone that ever measured always measured a little bit more than what they say it is.

MB: That's interesting. So, now that one, the upcoming trip that you're talking about, you'll be going with –

RS: Family goes down with, yes.

MB: Usually, you go down to Florida and the Keys.

RS: I usually go down there every winter. This past winter I didn't make it. We usually leave here the latter part of August versus September and go to Cape Canaveral. We use a rock shrimp there to catch rock shrimp right on that. Sometimes about the week of Thanksgiving, we'll go on down into Keys and work to go. A lot of times we'll stay there until April. Then we'll start

working back this way. Sometimes we'll go up and work off of Apalachicola to Port St. Joe. I've been to panhandle in Florida. Then once in a while, we were going over to Alabama then into Texas. Most of the time, we ever make it to Texas, we just go right on down. Then we'll start working back.

MB: So, you'd sell to the fish houses along the way there.

RS: Yes, we sell right there. Go to the docks and sell everywhere we're at.

MB: So, do you know people at places all along?

RS: Yes. Most of the time we always have one fish house in each place we go to.

MB: So, for people that don't know any of the terminology, a fish house, how would you describe what a fish house is?

RS: Well, that's where all your commercial fishermen bring their catch in and sell it to a dealer. Then the dealer in turn will wash them, pack them, and then they'll ship them out. They'll ship them to the markets and stuff around. Some of them, even just like the boys right down here, these fish houses here, sometimes they'll ship it to Alabama to your shrimp processors. Or if it's fish, they might ship it up to Fulton Fish Market in New York. I reckon everybody makes a decent living off of it some way or another. I would say even to the American steel companies and stuff, makes money off of commercial fishermen because we use a lot of chain shackles on our doors for weight and burn a lot of fuel. That dollar of 60, 70 cents a gallon stuff is kind of high right now. You're used to paying 50, 60 cents a gallon. It jumped to a dollar or something a gallon. It kind of hurts your bill roll. Unless you got something drinking about 200 gallons a day. It cuts down on your catch kind of fast.

MB: You burn about 200 gallons a day?

RS: Yes, we'll burn two hundred a day. So, our generators sometime will run twenty-four hours a day. If we do that, we'll burn two-fifty or better. Might get close to three. But the generator we run runs twenty-four hours a day. Like right now if you shrimp from daylight to dark, you put a good thirteen, fourteen hours in, it doesn't take very long to burn a lot of fuel that way. Some motors burn 11 gallons an hour. It all depends on how hard you turn it. Some of them are going up about 14, 16, 18 gallons an hour. Your bigger boats even goes more than that.

MB: There are a lot of expenses obviously involved with doing this business.

RS: There's a whole lot more expenses. If you came down and just looked the boat over, you'd say, "Man, those fellows are making money." But when you start paying your expenses and stuff, it doesn't leave as much as everybody thinks it does.

MB: Then how does the crew get paid? Do they get paid a piece of the action?

RS: Yes, they get paid a percentage of what the catch is. They're considered self-employed, and

they get a percentage of the action. Everybody knows what he's going to get before he ever goes. If they catch the product, they make the money. If they don't catch enough, they don't make anything. Most of the time the fellow on the boat winds up eating the fuel wheel itself. If they don't catch enough to pay the expenses, the man that owned the boat will cipher the expenses itself.

MB: Because it's his boat.

RS: Yes. Well, if you pull to a federal dock and put on 3,000 gallons of fuel and you run down here and work a couple three days and don't do anything, and you come back and come in, that fellow on that fuel dock is looking for his money. Are you making it or not? So, you're going to pay him. Then you might not even have the same crew when you go back out again. In a case like that, then you had to wind up siphoning the fuel yourself to expenses and hope the next trip will be better.

MB: So, it sounds like some of these have a few similarities to farming in terms of you're dependent on weather and all these different factors. It's a risk involved with not knowing what's going to happen out there.

RS: Right. Well for instance, right now you take your nice marine fishery, see. They put you out here, say, when flounder fish season comes in around Thanksgiving, 1st of December. That's when a lot of times you have a lot of bad weather up here. A lot of the boys' wooden boats are getting old just like mine. They say, "You got X number of days you can fish this week." Then they're pushing you. You shouldn't have X number of days you can work. If you've got an old boat, it should be when the weather gets pretty. If you can make it, make it. Don't push yourself and put your life in danger. We had an old boat up here in Morehead that I think lost four men off of. Sunk the boat and lost it on account of bad weather. Those boys were trying to feed their families. The days had them shut down where they had to go or miss it. When you've got bills pushing you and it's time to put some groceries on the table, you're going if you have to go. If they say, "You don't make it today, you can go give you the days next week." Or if the weather gets right, then that's the way it should be. A man shouldn't have to put his life in danger to try to make his living for him and his family on account of the weather and the days which they say they can go and when they can't go. When it comes down to stuff like that, to me it's like a form of communism telling you when you got to go and when you haven't got to go. That's not the way our constitution was set up.

MB: Yes, I agree. In terms of all these regulations that aren't reasonable that don't take into account the human factor.

RS: Well, for instance, the turtle excluder devices, what we had to drag, the main thing of what this was set up for was for a little turtle called the Kemp ridley turtle, which very few ever come on this coast. But they pushed it so hard, and they got the regular loggerhead sea turtle on the endangered species list. The leatherback turtle, he's on the endangered species list. They got everything on the endangered species list. Most of your Kemp ridley turtles were raised in the Gulf of Mexico. We have to suffer the consequences, but yet the United States let Mexico market way up in the thousands of them every year. When they market them, they send the turtle

meat right into the United States and you can buy it. To me, that's a bunch of junk. I had a fellow come to me about eight years ago. He had permits to group of fish and all this down into some of those countries down in South America in Spanish, French. I can't even think of the name of the places now. Honduras and those places down in there. He had a permit for it. He had one permit for shrimp boat. Him and I were going to the same church. He said, "Would you like to have that shrimping permit I got?" I said, "I don't much believe so. I might think about it. Just give me a few days to think about it." When I went back and got talking with him, I asked him about it. I said, "What can you market there?" He said, "We market everything we catch." I said, "How about a sea turtle?" He said, "We market them too." I said, "You mean to tell me you don't pull no turtle excluder devices down there?" I said, "According to National Marine Fisheries, you all supposed to be pulling them too?" "No, we don't pull them." They're not going to pull them. He said, "Anything we catch and hits the deck of the boat is marketed. We market and sell it." I don't know, I just kind of got interested in it. Then I got to talk with him about it. He kind of informed me that if your boat were laying at a dock and the Marine Fisheries were coming out checking, then you would put TEDs in your net. They had it all figured, where if our nice Marine Fisheries would go down and check their stuff, everybody would pull them. Just soon as they were gone, everybody took them out. [laughter] Just like I got a friend that I was in business in Cape Canaveral. He was telling me that HACCP closed him down. Wasn't it? They went to his fish house. They found some fish bait frozen now, frozen product in his freezer. Because he had it in there with some processed shrimp that was sealed in plastic sacks, put it inside boxes in 50-pound containers, they said the fish bait shouldn't have been in there with it. So, they went and pulled –

MB: So, they found the stuff in the freezer.

RS: Yes. They pulled a switch on his freezer and cut his freezer off. Three days later, they came back. It was all thawed out. They closed him down and said he was handling bad seafood. First one thing and another. Anyhow, he's out of business now. They completely busted him. But I think he had something like 70,000 pounds of a product. If it's froze and everything's packaged, how can one contaminate another? This would be my question. Much less if it was on a different pallet.

MB: So, why do you think they went after him like that?

RS: I don't know. But when they came back three days later, they went to show them the thawed-up stuff. Oh, they had a big kick about it. I don't know, I hear that he's got a lawyer checking in on it and stuff like that. But I came in there one day and was talking to him, and they had just left. He had a lady working there with him. They were telling me some of the stuff, what they had told them, that they couldn't export anything. They wanted him to go in and put stainless steel on his walls. First one thing and another. It had to be right because all your foreign countries were so far ahead of us. Our food more or less what they put it to him and that lady that worked with him, they were putting it to him like all these foreign countries, we couldn't even export anything out of this country into any foreign country because they were so much further ahead of us in their Food and Drug Administration stuff. What we were, we were just like being in grammar grading school against high school. Boy, he was telling me that, it got me hot. I said, "Who was it that told you that?" He said, "That man told me that." I said, "I sure

would have liked to be in here when he told you that. Because I'd have liked to call him a liar." I've been to a lot of foreign countries. I had never been in one where I thought that the Food and Drug Administration was better than what it is in this country. I feel like we got one of the best Food and Drug Administration there is. We're so far ahead of the other foreign countries that it's pathetic. If they're going to ship something into this country, they might have a place where they do very little bit of processing at and where our buyers and stuff would see, and they might let them see it. But when you walk down the streets in a foreign country, you walk by open air market. You see a dog or a cat or something hanging up skinned, and the blow flies blowing him. See a chicken been plucked, hanging up, blow flies, blowing him. They can't tell me that country's ahead of this country in nothing. Nobody will never convince me of that. I've been there, and I've seen it. Every foreign country I've ever been to has been that way.

MB: So, have you been to foreign countries in the Navy years and all of a sudden –

RS: I've been in the Navy years. I've seen some bad stuff in Cuba in 1980. I was involved in that Cuban Flotilla. I can tell you now, I got messed up with it. But if 90 percent of the American people know, if they knew exactly how Castro treated those people there, they'd be over the bridge across that little strait of the gulf down there to get to him. He treated those people bad. I can tell you that. They all were scared to death of him. I brought a woman back, had four younglings, little fellows. They didn't have anything to eat. She went to a little old market down there somewhere or another and stole 3 pounds of rice to feed those younglings with. He gave her a year for each pound of rice. I don't care who it is. If you've got three or four younglings and they get hungry and you don't have the money to buy nothing with, then you are a sorry human being if you don't try to get something. It doesn't make no difference nobody won't give it to you. If you don't steal it and feed those younglings, then you're a sorry human being. Now that's my point of view. That's the way I feel about it. If you can't get it no other way, there isn't no use letting them younglings go hungry. I talked to some of them that could speak a little English. They told me when he first got in power that the way he swung to younglings, said they would be hungry. Said he would ask them, "Do you believe in God?" Said they'd say, "Yes, sir," to him. Said they would tell him, "Then if you believe in God, then you pray for it. Pray to him and tell him that you're hungry, that you want him to feed you." Said he would have the little younglings to kneel down and pray for something to eat. Said that, when they get through praying and everything, said he would look at them and said, "Well, did your Lord feed you? Your Heavenly Father feed you?" They'd say, "No, sir." He'd say, "Well, my name's Castro. Ask me for a sandwich. Look to me." They'd say, "Mr. Castro, I'm hungry." Said he'd turn around and look at one of his aids and say, "Fix this boy a sandwich." Said, "Don't never forget that." So, that's the way he turned everybody from religion to atheists. I don't know. It was something. It was an experience that I wouldn't ever want to do again. But in a case like everything happened like it did, I would do it.

MB: So, you helped get people out of Cuba?

RS: I had two boats at the time of it. I brought five hundred and some of them. But I carried twenty-five people on each one of the boats over there to get their people. They wanted me to go for three days. I said, "No, it'll take longer than that for you to get them." We stayed eleven. I went down the eleventh day, I said, "There isn't no way." I said, "You're not going to get your

people." I said, "If you were going to get them, he would have already had them here." They agreed. I told the ones that were doing the speaking for him, the interpreters, I said, "You just ought to go tell them that we're leaving at 4:00 p.m. Whether you have anybody for us to carry back or not, we're leaving. About 1:30 p.m., they let us come over and called us out on the loudest speaker and told us to go to the certain dock. So, we went. They started loading and running them on the boat. I told them I was leaving at 4:00 p.m. with or without anybody. They loaded our boat. They run them on. When they were running them on the boat, they had tripod machine guns sitting up on top of a building. All the guards and stuff were walking around. The interpreters we had, we had three or four out of the twenty-five could speak good English. They showed us his army. They said, "Do you see that fellow on the right counter?" I said, "Yes." He said, "That's a Russian. That's not a Cuban." Just things like that. I saw a lady come. They marched her on my boat, and I was watching her. She had two little fellows. Evidently, she had really bad legs or something. Because she had them wrapped with some material that looked like this elastic bandage, and she had a milk crate. When they'd move the line up, she would take that milk crate with her. Just as the line stopped, she would sit down, those little younglings trying to climb her. She'd sit down on that crate and then climb up on her. According to the interpreter and stuff, it was the Russians who said he wasn't Cuban. Officer walked up to her, kicked that crate, and told her to get up. She got up. He took the crate, and that left her standing. She couldn't take those younglings. So, they left them holding her hand crying, wanting her to take them in her arms. Boy, I said, I just wouldn't ever do. I'll be glad when I get away from this place. I've done seen all I wanted to see of how they were mistreated. American Indian he said, "No, I'm not." He said, "Therefore you are an immigrant into this country too."

MB: That's right [laughter].

RS: He said, "If you're not American Indian full blooded, then you're an immigrant into this country." He said, "You're just like the Cubans are." He said, "You haven't got no more right here than what they have."

MB: That's true.

RS: The fellows looked at him and said, "Why are you taking up for him?" He said, "Don't." Since that flotilla, there have been some fine construction that went on in Florida and stuff. We have some really good friends. In fact, I had a boy, one of my brother's nephews, his wife's brother's boy, went down and went to work with him. He wound up working with me. He met a girl that came across on that flotilla. He wound up marrying her. He didn't know how his parents were going to accept it, that he was going with her. Boy, he was worried to death about that thing. One night, we were out dragging off Key West. He came up in the fire house and got talking to me about it. He said, "Ray, I believe I'm in love with her." He said, "I got where I think about her all the time." He said, "I can even hardly sleep that I'm not thinking about her and everything." He said, "I don't know what to do about it." He said, "I don't know how my family will accept it." I looked right at him, and I said, "Bud, there isn't but one thing you can do about that." He said, "Why is that?" I said, "You got to choose your own mate." I said, "Your daddy or your mama can't sleep with your mate. You're the one that can." I said, "If she satisfies you, then why should anybody else have any kicks?" He said, "I hadn't ever thought of it that way." We came in over from a trip, and he asked her to marry him. They got what, three?

MB: It's three.

RS: Four nice young ones right now. They had twins. You couldn't look at them and tell them apart. One of them was born, I believe it was one minute before the other one was. He was the first one and he weighed one ounce more than the other one or one pound. I think they're still about the same way, one pound different than him. But both of those boys walk in here right now, you couldn't tell them apart. They're not identical twins and everybody. They've got a cute daughter, just pretty as she can be too. They get along good. As far as I know, his family loves him to death.

MB: That's great. Well, speaking about families, can you talk a little bit about how you met your wife and your children?

RS: [laughter] I met my wife. We were staying down here in a little place called Piru right past the post office that's still down there. I'd just come out of the Navy. Hadn't been out too long. My sister, the one a little younger than I am, she had met my wife. One day she invited her up to the house. She came up. I met her, and I started dating her. I reckon we dated probably three months or so and we wound up getting married. I don't know. We do very little bit of arguing. As far as the arguments and fusses me and her have had, I'd probably count them on my fingers. I'm not an arguing type feller. If I would get mad enough to start arguing, I'm going to do some fighting, and everybody knows that. So, I don't do no arguing. Now, we've been married thirty-three years. We got another thirty-four years. I reckon we've had a really good life together. I couldn't ask for nothing better. We get along good. Raised three really good kids. Never had any problem with them. I got one who married a boy out of Big Pine Key, Florida. Their parents were in the construction business. My other daughter there, Debbie, works out here. We got that little shop going. Her husband – she married a Marine from Youngstown, Ohio. They get along good. They've got three nice young boys. We've got five grand younglings, all of them boys. Haven't got a granddaughter yet. I reckon they'd be left up to him [laughter]. If we don't get one from him, we probably won't have one. That's our boys. I haven't got no complaints about our marriage. I probably could have scrapped the world over, and I wouldn't have never found one just like I found her. Like I said, so far, we get along good. I don't have no complaints. As far as I know, she doesn't.

MB: That's wonderful. Then Ray, Jr. went to Utah State.

RS: All three of my young ones, even the two girls that are named after me. My oldest daughter was named Debby Ray. My youngest daughter is named Tracy Earl [laughter]. When he came along, she named him Earl Ray Swaney, Jr.

MB: Now, when we talked to you before when you were working on the generator down there. We were talking about fishing. Then Ray, Jr's been out obviously a lot of his life fishing.

RS: Yes. He's run the boats before. He ran it for the last two years or so.

MB: But what about the future generations of fishermen in this town? I'll ask you pretty soon

when we do your interview. But in other words, how would you feel about Ray, Jr. becoming a fisherman? Following in your footsteps, I guess is the question I'm really asking.

RS: I wouldn't want him to be a commercial fisherman now because I got too many rules and regulations. A lot of them is bull jumping, it isn't nothing. It's something that everybody could do without. The way I feel about it, I feel like before they pass any kind of commercial fishing laws, even foreign fishing laws, a man should be a commercial fisherman for at least two years and had to make his living that way. Then just like a clamor, if he wants to pass some laws on climbing, before he ever passes any laws on, he should get him a bull rake or ever what means it is to go out in there and do it. That way he will know what would be good for him and what wouldn't be good for him. Like I told some of them here a while back they were asking me about it, what did I feel about it? How did I think about it? I told them, "I hope, and I pray for the people that's passing these laws that's hurting commercial fishing so bad." I hope that one day that the Lord will show lenience on them because they don't know what they're doing. Like I tell them, the Lord picked his disciple and stuff from the fishermen at one time. He's not going to throw his people down. He'll be back to help them again. When everybody thinks that they're gone, then they'll be back. They had a little article somewhere along in the early part of the nineties. I think it was in the *National Geographic* somewhere or another. I had a brother-in-law reading it. He was farming over here on the base. We went up and visited with him one night. He was telling us, he said, "Ray said you need to get out of the commercial fishing industry." I said, "Why's that?" He said, "I was reading the *National Geographics*. Said, "Now according to them, by the year 1996, there won't be no more commercial fishermen." I said, "Well, Ronnie, I don't feel that way." Oh, he said, "According to what they were saying in there, they're going to do away with you a little bit at a time." He said, "What they're going to do is make it so hard on you that everybody will wind up quitting." I said, "Well, where are they going to get the seafood and stuff at?" He said, "I don't know. Imports, I reckon." But the people that's pushing the hardest right now, pushing the sportsman against the commercial man, is Anheuser-Busch and PepsiCo company. They are the two largest importers of seafood in this country. Anheuser Busch was the number one highest donor of money in Florida to stop the gillnet fishing ban down there. PepsiCo was the next and donating money to the sport fishermen against commercial fishing. It's already started up here. According to the paper, they donated something like a hundred thousand dollars, Anheuser-Busch to the sportsman of North Carolina to stop commercial fishing here.

MB: So, they're pitting the –

RS: Putting the sportsman against the commercial man. Anheuser-Busch and PepsiCo have big fish farms and shrimp farms all over the world in different countries where they raise them. They're the ones who put the money there to get it. Then when it comes to size to eat, then they import it back in here. Have you been in any cafes or restaurants anywhere and eaten shrimp that the batter – you could taste the meal kind of strong on them, kind of like it had strong batter? That'll be a freshwater pond raised shrimp. They feed them a meal. The texture of the meal will get into the meat. Then when they batter them, if you were boiling, you would taste that little bit of meal. But when you batter in and fry and meal, then the meal comes out real strong like the batter is strong. People who live on the coast will tell that more so than what people away from to coast. A lot of people away from the coast, they eat it and say, "I'll tell you one thing, that

shrimp was good." People on the coast when they try them, they say, "Man, that batter is strong." But that's what it is. The fresher the water is, the more you can taste the meal in them.

MB: So, there's no comparison between real seafood and farm-raised.

RS: There's no comparison, no. There's no comparison between domestic and this farm stuff.

MB: Or like that salmon, they do.

RS: Yes.

MB: Or the salmon that's been out in all the –

RS: You don't get done whatever they call it. What would be a good word for it? You don't get done it. Galaxy of the taste of the product.

MB: It becomes bland and tasteless.

MS: You can tell the difference. I ate some of it while I was in Utah at the local markets. If you're around seafood, you can tell what's American and what's imported just by pretty much looking at it.

RS: You can tell what's domestic from the other stuff.

MB: This is happening not just with seafood, but all kinds of stuff. So, ultimately, they'll be the importers into the U.S. and make all the money. Once they drive away all the independence, then they can jack their prices up as high as they like. There won't be a thing you can do about it, because all the commercial fishermen could be out of business.

RS: You stop and think about it a little bit. I'd say fifteen, eighteen years ago, there used to be 450,000 farmers here in the United States. I would say roughly they might be 125,000 now. As far as commercial fishing, commercial fishing industry has probably been cut a third from what it was. You got some old diehards that are going to stay right here and grind. They aren't going to let everything beat them. They're going to stay right there getting it right on because a lot of them, that's all they know how to do. I'm not an educated man. The highest I got was ninth grade. Just started and then quit. You ought to be a smart man to figure out that if you cut your food sources, how hard is it going to be to put a country on its knees? Wouldn't be very hard, would it? I'll tell you something else. Now this is something I know for a fact. In 1963, I was in Naples, Italy. We had some drivers, what they called the duty drivers that drove for the officers. They came back to the ship. We had one boy in our division who was a duty driver. Each division assigned a man to be a driver. He came back telling us, "Well, let me tell you something, those gas prices over there are out of the world. I'm glad I don't live over here. I'm having to pay \$1.65 a gallon for gas. Now, this in [19]63. News meters pick up on those gasoline is \$1.65 a gallon in Italy. You could go there. They had gulf pumps, Chevron pumps. All of them said they pumped the imperial gallon for \$1.65 a gallon, \$1.70 a gallon. But at the same time of it, there was 3,020 liras to \$5 American money. So, if you wanted a beer, you paid

150 liras for it, which was something like 27, 28 cents. That was at the Enlisted Men's Club. The other clubs around on the waterfront where the sailors went and drank were the same thing, 150 liras a beer. He had the first class, and he said, "Ray, let's put in for early liberty Sunday and get out of Naples." I said, "We'll go on back up in the hills." I said, "I like to get out and see different parts of the country." I said, "All right." So, at the same time, regular gas here was something like 28 cent a gallon and high test was 30 to 32. So, we went put in for early liberty, and we left the ship by morning, 8:00 a.m. on Sunday. We walked far as we could go. Then we caught some kind of cable car and carried his way up the mountainside and all that. We got up there walking around this little village. We came to a little place that looked like a one stall service station like they had back then. They had Texaco pumps out in front of it. Right on it said imperial gallons. Looked at the price, and it said \$1.65 a gallon. We didn't think no more about it. So, we got to looking at the little old place. We went inside. The one stall where you would've had a grease rack here, didn't have no grease rack. They had a great big barrel in there. They were brewing their own beer and had a little old bar, looked like a high leg bar like we had down here at the shop. You could walk up there and stand. The fellows poured this beer out of this little dry thing to give to you. We drank beer for 3 lira a beer. That's not nothing. Oh, well, it was 8.3 lira about the way we figured it. By that time, we had done spend most of our Italian money. But we had a couple American books on us and asked a fellow that had been running the place about taking the dollar bill and breaking it up into Italian money so we could drink some more beer. He didn't know how to do it. He didn't know how the American money went with the Italian money. So, it wasn't very hard for us to figure that wasn't no \$1.65. That was 165 liras on those tanks. The gas originally would have been something like an imperial gallon, probably 30 cents. We talked about that coming back down the mountain. We done said, isn't no way that bunch down there on the waterfront was taking advantage of everybody. The guy said the exact same price here as it was in the United States. The only thing, it was the imperial gallon they were getting for their high test for imperial, while we were getting for regular gallon. It's not very hard to figure. We use more gas, diesel fuel, anything in any other country. So, this country here is going to be the country that controls the price of the fuel. The money that consumes the most is the one that's done to do it. So, our problem with our gas right now is not over yonder, it's with the companies here. Because all they'd have to do is just shut. Don't buy from them. They'd be begging them to buy it in less than two or three days.

MB: We're getting people to do that. That's happening.

RS: You can't get them to do it anymore.

MB: They're like, we couldn't do it.

RS: A few years back, you could have got them to do it, buy them out.

MB: That's interesting.

RS: That's something a lot of people don't ever think about it. They say, "Well that bunch of Arad, they are charging us so much."

MB: It was a little more convenient to blame someone else.

RS: Right.

MB: Well, so in other words, in a way, well, I guess a big part of the story I'm trying to do with this documentary is the idea of when you're talking about the biblical with fishermen and Jesus and all. It's like there is something.

RS: Tied together.

MB: This is one of our oldest professions on earth, is the farming and fishing. It's a very proud tradition of what you do and other fishermen. I don't think people think about that much because the food's in the supermarket and they can get all that seafood. But they don't think about who has to go out and get it.

RS: But I had a committee here a few years back. They had a lady on it. She was supposed to have been set on that committee to help the commercial fisherman take a steady and kind of help them. Somebody asked her on the TV there one night – I can't remember what that dude's name was – but he asked her about it. She just said right flat, "Why should I care when I get ready for fish? Or why should I care about the farmers and the fishermen?" She was the one appointed to do the job. "Why should I worry about the farmers and the fishermen? When I get ready for some beans or potatoes, I go down to the supermarket and get it. Or if I want some seafood, I go to the meat department in the supermarket and get it." The old boy just shook his head. Said she really didn't even know where it came from. She evidently thought everything came out of the can [laughter].

MB: [laughter] It's pathetic but it's exactly right.

RS: But you can run in some dudes on the TV now if you sat and listened to what they're saying. He just shook his head. Man, that would be something else [laughter].

MB: You've been a resident of Sneads Ferry for many, many years.

RS: Yes, I've been here for probably fifty-five years.

MB: Has it been enjoyable living here in this town?

RS: Yes, the people here are really unique people. Here in the last few years, they just didn't take to out-of-town people too much. You never had to worry about losing nothing. Back when I was a kid, we could leave and go up the country, spend a little while with our families up there. If we spend a night, we didn't have to worry about the livestock and the animals and stuff like that because our neighbors would come over and take care of them. They'd want to know, "Are you going to be gone?" Or you'd say, "Well, we done run up to grandpa's and then might spend a night. Would you watch out for our stuff?" "Yes, sir. We'll watch out for it." We didn't even have to lock the doors or nothing like our boats right on. When me and my wife was married, I reckon when he was a small boy, we never locked no boats. We left everything open the whole time. You might have closed the door, but you didn't lock it. You didn't never miss nothing

until the last few years a lot of people started moving in and stuff, then you started missing stuff. But the people here were kind of like I would say a great big family. If they accepted you, they accepted you. If they didn't accept you, they wouldn't have nothing to do with you. Just plain as that. But it was something else. It was a real nice fishing community and farming community. I reckon a lot of people would say that the people were clannish. They stuck right together. Seemed like if one had any problem, then all of them had the same problem. I remember back when I was a kid, somebody would get really sick in the community. Now if somebody gets sick, it's just family that goes to take care of an immediate family. Back then, the whole community would come over. There would be somebody else to come in all the time helping out. The only way you see that now is through the older heads that's still living, the ones older than I am.

MB: So, it sounds like it has lost some of the closeness in community.

RS: Yes, it's lost a lot of its closeness. I remember when the people around here used to have kind of a big cookout every summer. Everybody around would bring something, and everybody would get together and just have a great, big feast. Through the years they've lost that. I think about one of the last ones they had, some of the boys got a hold of some plaster. The women were making up biscuits, and those boys would put that plaster right into the flour [laughter].

MS: [laughter]

RS: They fixed those biscuits. [laughter] They turned out pretty bad. They were hard, nobody couldn't eat them [laughter].

MS: [laughter] Pretty good.

RS: It was something. They pulled crazy pranks.

MB: Well, I guess the shrimp festival is trying to do that same thing a little bit.

RS: Yes, it's got a little bit going. It's something else. Yes, the boys used to pull pranks on everybody. Had different things they did. I remember one of the older fellows around here had an old boy that fished out of his place and had always kept his skiff right there. They pulled his boat up one night or one day before he came down to go fishing. They took a two by four, and they set it up sideways on his boat a little bit sideways because everywhere when he pushed and they kind of set it sideways on the boat and nailed it through where it wouldn't pull off. That old boy pushed that boat all night and her wanting to go around the circle every time he'd pushed her, she'd run off like a rudder. He'd come back in the next day and told the dude and said, "I tell you, there's something wrong with my motor. What's something wrong with my boat?" He said, "Why is that?" He said, "I couldn't push her straight." "All night long," he said, "I couldn't push her straight." Every time I pushed her, she wanted to run off to the right. They didn't ever tell him that they'd done it. Later, I think they went on there two or three days, they finally pulled the boat up and pulled it back out [laughter].

MB: [laughter] That's terrible.

RS: They used to pull some pranks now. When him and my nephew, Buddy – each a couple of years older than you are – I had Ricky working with us. They were working with us in the summertime. I heard Ricky hollering one day. I go back there, and they had taken a hook and hooked him in the belt in the back and had him jacked up off the deck of the boat and him back there swinging. They were standing over at him tied off to his life.

MS: [laughter]

RS: [laughter] We had him dying.

MB: So, now just a few more questions like the crew people. Are there people around here who basically have made their lives crewing for people?

RS: Yes. You have a lot of that. I don't reckon they ever run a boat. They just work on them as deckhands. I don't know why, but they're satisfied to work on the deck, not run the boat. You have some of them that have got the potential to be a good captain, and they won't run it. They don't want the responsibility of the boat. They'll take the deck.

MB: One other question is watching you and Ricky working on a generator. Well, it's a little bit like farmers, I guess. So, I spent a couple of summers working on farms back in California. You've got to be able to know how to do a lot of different things to be efficient. You have to be able to be a mechanic and electrician. You can't call somebody in every time you got a –

RS: No, you got to be a jack of all trade. The old saying goes, jack of all trade and the master of none. But you got to know a little bit about everything that happens. Me and my nephew, well me and him run around together before he became my nephew. He married one of my nieces to my older sister. Me and him went to Mayport, Florida and rebuilt a 3412 Caterpillar for one of our friends down there, overhauled it for him. We came back, and he told us that he called when he first went out. He said, "My engine's running a little hotter than normal." Well, we said, "Well, it had been rebuilt and everything. It might have a tendency to run just a few degrees hotter but not a whole lot." We asked him how long it had been since he had his keel coolers cleaned. He said six or eight months or something more like that. We said, "Might pay you to clean your keel cooler." So, he called back later and said he had cleaned them but said it was still running a little hot. Finally, I reckon it went on there for about three weeks. He called in one night and he said, "My engine is pumping oil into my radiator." He said, "What do you think it is?" We told him that it couldn't be for one thing. We said, "You've got an oil cooler come hole in it." So, he goes in, and he gets a mechanic down there to check it. He told him, "Oh, no, it's not that oil cooler." So, he took the oil cooler on and supposed to have cleaned it out and had it hydro and everything. He said, "Oh, it's not the oil cooler." He said, "The oil cooler checks good." So, he put it back on, and it still did the same thing. So, he called and wanted to know and said, "I've had that oil cooler checked and everything," he said, "But it's still pumping oil into the radiator. Is there any place else it can come from?" "No, not on the 3412. The only place it can come from is the oil cooler. So, he went back in and had to power pull it off again. That time they found a little pinhole in it. Your oil pressure is greater than your water pressure. So, it'll blow the oil in. You found a little pin hole in it. You changed it out. That was all right.

So, he called and wanted to know and said, "My engine's still running a little hotter than what it's supposed to run." Said, "What do you think it is?" We told him, "It can't be for one thing." "What's that?" If it's just running a few degrees, maybe 10, 15 degrees hotter than normal, then you got a thermostat on one bank of your engine that's bad. Well, he didn't know about that. So, he went down and got some more mechanics, and they done the way. It's not that. So, he got the boys to come down, and they pulled the heads off. Oh, they told them, said it's got to be something wrong with the head gasket or something plugged up somewhere or another. It's the only thing that can be. So, they pulled the heads off of it and changed all the gaskets again, didn't see anything wrong. Put it all back together and done the same thing. So, he called and wanted to know and said, "I've had all that done," and said, "It's still running hot." Well, he said, "Well, did you check the thermostats like we told you to?" "No. Says we can't. Everybody I've talked to says it isn't the thermostats. It's not likely one of those thermostats will go bad." Finally, lastly, he looked at the boys and pulled the heads off and everything. He said, "I want you to check the thermostats." When they checked the thermostat, they found one of them was broke. It wasn't functioning at all. They put the thermostat in and straightened it up. He said it had cost him \$8,000 what he had done to that engine. We rebuilt it for him for 2,500. Caterpillar rebuilt it, been over ten down. He turned around and spent eight down trying to get it straightened out. We'd already told him exactly what to look for. All the mechanics said, "No," said, "It can't be that." When he found it, it was just exactly what we told him it was. He said, "It's cost me \$8,000 to get it fixed what you all been telling me what's wrong with it all the time [laughter]."

MB: How much is a thermostat [laughter]? That's a painful lesson on listening.

RS: On a 3412, it probably cost you \$60 or \$70.

MB: That's a horrible thing. So, even really no engines. But you worked as a mechanic. But you're a self-taught mechanic?

RS: The first thing I ever worked on in my life was daddy's Briggs & Stratton when I was about seven or eight years old. I tore her all to pieces. I put her back together, but she didn't never hit another lick [laughter].

MS: [laughter]

MB: [laughter] But you were already tearing in engines at that age.

RS: Yes, I rebuilt my first diesel, was a 671, when I was sixteen years old. It run for nine years. The second one I rebuilt run for eleven [laughter].

MB: Because when you're out at sea, you've got to be able to deal.

RS: You got to pretty well be able to know what's going on.

MB: Do you carry a lot of spare parts out there?

RS: Not all that many. We carry some.

MB: Some.

RS: But parts has got where they're so expensive and stuff. Now you carry just a few. Like a blower shaft, you might carry one in. You always carry a few extra oil fuel filters. But we try to make it a point not to change no stuff like that when you're in the ocean. We always change that on the hill. That way you've got a place where you can dispose of your oil. Most people feel like commercial fishermen drain it right in the building and pumps it overboard. The reason that I've always made it to practice not to change oil in the ocean or no filters if you had can get away from it, is on the account of if you ever break one of them bolts off. If you had a dock, you could get it fixed. If you're out there, somebody's going to tow you. That's simple as that. Because most time, you won't ever have nothing to get it out with. If you do get it out, you haven't got a spare one to put it back. Like when you change oil and you change your filters, if you ring one of them bolts off, you've had it.

MB: So, you have a vast amount of experience of doing all these different things. Well, this has been an incredible interview. Is there anything else you want to add? You could talk to me plenty I'm sure about all kinds of things.

RS: Well, a lot of people according to your insurance companies and stuff like that, it's got your commercial fishermen rated up there among the top as a hazardous job. But I don't see it that way. I started running my first boat when I was sixteen. I ran the 33-footer for Lonnie Everett when I was sixteen years old, and I've never had an accident. Nobody's never got hurt on my boat. But I don't let them. I don't want nobody to go to my boat with no kind of cloth gloves on and start working around the winch because you could get hung on a piece of cable with just a little spur of the cable. You will never pull that glove out of your hand. It'd pull you on in a winch. If I got somebody with really long hair, I prefer him to put his hair under a hat. I don't want him to wear loose clothing around the winch when they're operating that. If they got a shirt on, I want them to tuck it in their pants. I don't want it loose because if your clothing gets hung up on there, if you're not man enough to tear it off, you can be history much less than anything and pulled several thousand pounds at the top of the water. One little old hundred-pound body is not going to hurt. Not going to slow that down very much. I was boarded by the Coast Guard about eight to ten years ago and they asked me to haul back. I had one boy with really long hair hung way down his back. I said, "Put your hair under your hat." So, he brought it all up and put it under his hat. One of them had his shirt that high and didn't have it buttoned up. We were off Key West. I looked at him, and I said, "Before you go back there, down to that winch, I want you to button that shirt and put it in your pants." The boarding officer is standing there listening to it. They watched us haul back and everything. After they watched us haul back and we dumped everything, we knocked out a gear for them to go ahead and check everything over. They wanted to go down in the hole. We had a freezer on and everything frozen down there. One of them boys looked at Ricky, looked at the boy who was going down there and Buddy said, "When you go down there," he said, "you watch your step and watch where you step because there isn't nothing but ice down there, and it's slick. I don't want you to fall and get hurt." When the boy started to go down the engine room and check it down there, we told him, "Look, the generator we got down there puts out three phases and we got high voltage. Make sure you don't

get, again, none of them motors or nothing." After they finished checking the boat and everything, the boarding officer was a lieutenant, he looked at me and said, "Cap," said, "I wanted to tell you." He said, "It's been a pleasure boarding your boat." He said, "I've never boarded a boat that used as much safety as you use when you're hauling back in your operation." He said, "It's a pleasure to go down in your engine room. You walk down there, and you don't get grease all over you." Now we scrubbed twice a trip, the engine room and everything. I was on my other boat. I wasn't even cold. He said, "It's been a pleasure boarding you." He said, "We got to say that you treated us with the most respect of any boat I've ever boarded." I said, "Well, you're right here. You got a job to do just like we got to do." Said, "No use of us to be butting heads over nothing." He said, "Well, it's been a pleasure boarding you then." Shook hands. They got off the boat and went on back to the ship. But sometimes you don't run into them that way. Most of your enlisting men are more smarter than your officers are. When you have a regular boarding officer come and board you, most of the time you'll find a fellow that's nice. Sometimes you get some of these dudes just what I call boots in there about it. He comes aboard like he's got a little attitude or something. But in a few minutes, most of the time they straighten out. You treat them nice; how can they treat you other than nice.

MB: That's it.

MS: I have a question.

MB: Yes, go ahead.

MS: Maybe this was already answered. But the boat we were on the other day, I was wondering a little bit about the history of that boat. Or did we talk about that?

RS: Well, that boat we were on the other day?

MS: Yes.

MB: The boat or wharf.

RS: Oh, you want to know a little history about that boat?

MS: Yes.

RS: [laughter]

MB: You sure?

MS: Yes.

RS: The fellow that I bought that boat from, that boat had been confiscated. He bought it at an auction. It had been confiscated for hauling drugs, and they caught it. Most of the time, when they take a boat like that, they'll maybe tie it up two or three years. Then they'll put it up on auction and sell it and the dude bought it. I wound up with it from him. But when I first got that

boat, that boat was in bad shape. In fact, sometimes I look at it now, I would have never messed with that boat.

MS: [laughter]

RS: [laughter] I got that boat out of Florida, and it hadn't even left the dock in over six months. I'd say close to a year. When I got it, all the fellow was doing was pumping it out. Ricky got to talking with him about it and he wanted to sell it to him. So, we finally agreed on a price and took it. I went to work on that boat. I reckon I spend \$20,000 on that boat before I ever wet a net with it. But I ran her from Florida up here and put her on the railways in Varnamtown down below Wilmington. The next morning, we pressure washed the bottom and cleaned it. The next morning, we went down there, and some boards fell off the bottom of it. I said, "Man, I've seen a lot of stuff." I've heard of it but that was the first one I've ever had that did that.

MS: Then you reach up and grab on the boards and pull off and just keep riding.

RS: I found one board on there, it was so rotten that the worms and stuff would eat it from the inside. We off in the ocean about 40 miles, and we didn't even know. That board was so rotten, and the worms had eaten it that when I tore it out and I got looking at it, they weren't a 16th inch of board left with paint on it. It was gone. I told Ricky and them, I said, "I can tell you right now, if I'd known this boat would have been in this shape, Ray would have been coming down on a coast. He wouldn't have been running no high seas with it."

MS: [laughter]

RS: But we worked on there and finally got her going. We worked it up until Thanksgiving and vibrating damper went out on front of the B12. I noticed it got to have just a small quiver in it. But I thought maybe it might be something I picked up on a wheel. I run it there about four or five days like that, and it broke the flywheel bolts. Well, I finally got them off, took care of that, put them back in, and got them thick. I left from Oriental. I was working on it over at Oriental. I left Oriental that night at 8:00 p.m. and got here at 10:00 p.m. At 2:00 a.m., the boy was in the bunk sleeping and said he smelled smoke or something. Got up and said everything was smoking there, and the generator quit. It thawed a rod and caught her on the far light to burner her up. That's why she's so black and everything down there, charred. But I had two boys sleeping on my other boat. He ran the ones that were on that one, ran over and woke them up. They went down there, and they put it out. I've thought about it since. I thought you'd probably been better off if you'd went ahead and burned [laughter].

MS: [laughter]

RS: So, I finally got another generator and put that in. It was an Onan. I've learned my deal about those jobs too. It cost me \$2,100 to get her tuned up and everything. It lasted three days, and it went out and broke the crank. So, I've been working on everything. I've touched on that. Buddy is giving me a fit now, I'll tell you that. I've been over that thing. Then when she ran away there the other day, there isn't no telling how hard she was turning.

MB: That was exciting [laughter].

RS: [laughter]

MB: It seemed like a game inside the video camera. It was serious.

RS: [laughter] It messed that governor up. I had to put a whole new governor system on it.

MS: This is the boat that you're going –

RS: [laughter] Yes. We've been going fishing on that.

MS: Rest assured that boat's been completely gone through.

RS: [laughter]

MS: There hasn't been nothing on that thing that hasn't been touched at some time or another.

MB: Wow, it's been completely overhauled. So, it has quite a history to it.

MS: Yes.

RS: Your fellows told me that he pulled I think three or four years for taking it south off Columbia. He told me that was when that boat was eight to ten years old. He said that was the worst boat that he ever went south with and brought it back. That he never added a pump to it. Every one of them, before, he said they always carried a hot head gasoline pump, 2 inches. Somewhere along the trip, he said, "She'd get leaking so bad that I'd wind up having to put a pump on her in rough weather." They'd go down there right on through the Florida straits right on down through Yucatan and all that. They'd get some 20-to-30-foot seeds down there on them. He talked like it. He said, "I was the last one in and never had to put an extra pump on." He said never cranked her. He said, "I had it, but I never cranked it." Said, "She never went taking on no water." He told me he put a runner, I think it was three trips now, before they got them [laughter].

MB: So, it was a tough boat.

RS: That's what he said.

MB: This is an indestructible boat.

RS: That's what he said. He said she was tough [laughter]. He said that's the only thing I got to say. He said, "I tell you one thing," he said, "That was hard prison time [laughter]."

MS: [laughter]

RS: Those boys called themselves the Last Buccaneers.

MB: They did?

RS: Yes.

MB: The ones that go down there and run them boats down there. Said they were the last of the Buccaneers. They thought it was something big running thing down there. Some of those boys, some of them told me they got high as a million bucks a clip. Take one down and bring it back. They made it through. That's hard money for a man that hasn't ever had no money to turn down. I could tell you that.

MB: Well, listen, that's been a great interview. Thank you so much.

MS: Did you talk about that you have more than one vote?

RS: Yes, well I got three.

MS: Right. That's a work thing.

MB: Yes, we covered that.

RS: We got three, yes.

MS: All right, very good.

[end of transcript]