

Wetland Riders
Claude McCall Oral History
Date of Interview: February 1, 1988
Location: Leeville, Louisiana
Length of Interview: 01:29:29
Interviewer: RF – Robert Fritchey
Transcriber: NCC

Robert Fritchey: A lot of sensitivity. It's going to be all right there. I have to ask you when you first came over.

Claude McCall: I got here from Florida on March 2nd, 1971. It was on my birthday.

RF: No shit.

CM: Yes.

RF: [19]71.

CM: Yes.

RF: Didn't you tell me Fred Shimer came over first?

CM: Yes. He came over, I believe it was about a month before I did, maybe longer, he and Waylen.

RF: He and Waylen just came over to Scout Island.

CM: They came over in the place and building that.

RF: They had some people from Florida over here before them?

CM: It was just Fred. Let's see. We had Waylen of course and Delton. I believe that was about it. Then a few others started coming in. But it wasn't a great, big operation to start off with. It still isn't, of course.

RF: Let's see. You told me you quit high school. You did it going to electronics, didn't you? You quit your senior year.

CM: Yes, halfway. Well, I finished my first semester in my senior year.

RF: Then you moved. How did you get to Florida?

CM: I got tired of snow and ice in North Carolina [laughter] in the wintertime and the heat in Florida. Quit my job, moved out.

RF: You were in radio repair. Is that what you call it?

CM: That was in 1941.

RF: 1941, that's when you moved to Florida.

CM: Yes. I worked at radio up until 1946 and went fishing.

RF: You went down there and started guiding first, didn't you?

CM: Yes. I started in hook-and-line trout fishing commercially. It did really well. But when they started all that dredging and filling and so forth in Tampa Bay and Boca Ciega Bay to the end of that, I had to start guiding because it wasn't enough to –

RF: It wasn't enough to make a living with. Where were you headquartered?

CM: Pass-a-Grille Beach.

RF: Pass-a-Grille.

CM: Pass-a-Grille.

RF: Pass-a-Grille Beach.

CM: P-A-S-S-A-G-R-I-L-L-E.

RF: Pass-a-Grille Beach.

CM: Then it got so bad you couldn't even keep a party happy. The water was just like soup [laughter].

RF: Couldn't keep a what?

CM: Party happy.

RF: It got muddy?

CM: Yes, and stable. Grass started dying out and fishing just played out.

RF: That was from dredging.

CM: Yes.

RF: Filling it in for condominium coming and that kind of stuff.

CM: Boca Ciega Bay used to be a big, wide, open bay with a lot of grass, shallow water with grass in it. When they got through, all that was gone. Even the main channel north and south there was one place where the channel markers for the channel, they stick up through their field projects. They even filled that in. Fill in stuff that the developers – they never even bought.

RF: Filled in the channel.

CM: Yes. Wound up all Boca Ciega Bay. It was just a challenge between the real estate developers running here and [inaudible].

RF: That's what ruined it right there. Didn't you used to boat down there? You told me you lived in the house there.

CM: Yes.

RF: What was the story with that girl? I probably won't put that in the magazine.

CM: I'll kill you if you did.

RF: [laughter] Okay.

CM: She lived with me for four years.

RF: Yes. She lived with you for four years, and then you wanted to bring the boat over here, was it?

CM: No. When I came up here, she said she'd come up to the house. But I wasn't going to throw that thing on up here. So, I just gave it a hard pull.

RF: You took off [laughter].

CM: Took off [laughter].

RF: You were talking about how it was that they had the grassy flats over here in, what, [19]71. That would have been about seventeen years ago. Right down there by the gulf.

CM: Well, all in behind only in West Cameron. Now, West Cameron was longer than it is now for quite aways. Some places twice as far as from here to Waylen's house over there. But just solid grass along the inside of the island there and towards this. That's the end of the island. Grass extended way on out into the bay on the inside of the island, all the way around (McCogy Island?), tall grass. Well, except for the east end of it. The east end of it was something else. The rest of it was grassy bottom.

RF: I wonder what kind of grass that was. Eelgrass?

CM: No. What we call eelgrass, I don't know if that's the real name of it or not.

RF: No, that's it.

CM: Turtlegrass. What I always thought was turtlegrass was broad blade grass.

RF: They had that?

CM: Yes.

RF: Then what? They had that fine stuff.

CM: Fine grass, yes. Now there's several different kinds of that fine grass. This had an extensive root system.

RF: You used to catch fish around that?

CM: What's that?

RF: You used to catch fish around that?

CM: Yes. When that disappeared, that is when the fish thinned out.

RF: Fish thinned out bad after that.

CM: Yes. Now, I never could take cold weather during the wintertime. Delton used to fish that grass on the inside of West Embly. He'd fish in the northern part of Oregon and knock them loose right in the coldest part of the wintertime.

RF: Right in the grass.

CM: Along the edge of the grass.

RF: Along the edge of the grass.

CM: Right on off into deeper water, the edge of the grass. That just hasn't produced anything at all since that grass left.

RF: I wonder if the trawlers killed that grass.

CM: I think they had their share of it. Anything that stirs the water out. There's been a whole lot of dredging over there since then.

RF: Oyster dredging or just canal dredging?

CM: No, canal dredging. They're always changing something and shrimping too. In fact, if grass can't get sunlight, it doesn't grow. It kills it out. Now, it could be that this pollution is helping that too. I don't know.

RF: Made a big difference?

CM: When the grass left, fish thinned out quite a bit. A lot of those places that we used to fish over that way, they just aren't there anymore. All washed out and gone.

RF: You used to make some pretty good licks.

CM: Yes. Of course, even during a really good year you'd have periods where you couldn't catch enough to eat. But the good periods were a whole lot better than they are now.

RF: Yes. They didn't have anybody from over here fishing?

CM: There for several years, me and Delton were the only ones fishing [laughter], yes.

RF: That would have been nice.

CM: Now, Percy Guidry would fish. His son, Percy, Jr., crab bait they'd call him. He'd fish part-time. My son, Terry, would get out there and ride around for a week or so looking for a killing. If he saw something that looked God-awful fancy, he'd make a strike [laughter].

RF: Otherwise, he wouldn't mess with it.

CM: Otherwise, he wouldn't strike. He wouldn't scrap. About a hundred he'd strike [laughter].

RF: Only a hundred?

CM: Yes [laughter].

RF: [laughter] Oh, well.

CM: They were looking for that fifteen hundred to two thousand hit strike. He'd find them once in a while too.

RF: In the summertime?

CM: Anytime of the year.

RF: Is that so?

CM: Yes. Now, late summer back then when we first came out here, late summer, you just couldn't catch any trout. But then in the fall, it picked up as good, old winter and fancy in the spring and early summer.

RF: Well, it's that way now, you can't catch them in July and August.

CM: Oh, last summer you could.

RF: You could?

CM: There was more. Well, it wasn't good, but there was more last summer during those months than I've ever seen here before. It was about as poor as I've seen it in the spring last year. Now, what would make that difference, I don't know.

RF: You found it poor last spring?

CM: Yes.

RF: How do you think it looks this year?

CM: I don't know. It won't matter much.

RF: It won't matter to you?

CM: Yes.

RF: I can't believe you're going to be trout run. You're retired?

CM: If I could fish when I'm fishing. But I bet real money that just as soon as they start coming in, they're going to be shut off.

RF: That's what I'm afraid of.

CM: Now, take a look through these thickets kind of thing.

RF: Not much.

CM: Several people trying to fish.

RF: 14 pounds, 59 pounds.

CM: 61 pounds is the biggest catch.

RF: That's all in Little Lake too probably. Is that what it says?

CM: That's 61 pounds in Little Lake, yes. But the water was brackish and too salty for the fish that came in here.

RF: Was too salty?

CM: Yes. The fish went further back in.

RF: You think so? Like this island or something like that?

CM: Yes.

RF: Lake Salvador, isn't it?

CM: Lake Salvador. I'd say it's got quite a few great fish and trout.

RF: Is that so? But you can't fish trout in Lake Salvador, I don't believe.

CM: Not in there.

RF: They use 6-inch nets. I think you have to have at least a 6-inch mesh. When do they usually start coming in the spring?

CM: It varies with the weather and the salinity. Now, I never kept that on, combination of temperature and salinity. But it does take a combination. I knew that much about it. But you'd have to keep that on it to pinpoint anything.

RF: Water temperature has probably got something to do with it.

CM: It's a combination of –

RF: Lots of things.

CM: – temperature and salinity.

RF: Temperature and salinity.

CM: When the water gets really cold, they want brackish water.

RF: When it gets really cold.

CM: When it gets too cold, they get up in that brackish water, and it kills them. But in the wintertime, now some of them head for the brackish water, some of them head off into the gulf. The trout that is, they split.

RF: They got a couple different populations.

CM: Yes. I don't know whether it's all the same population or slightly different strains or what. But I do know that in the spring, the trout show up along the beaches. Some of them are coming in from offshore, and some of them are coming from inshore.

RF: How do you know that?

CM: Well, it is harder to tell here. But in Florida, those inshore were a dark gold color. Those that came from offshore were black silver.

RF: Silver.

CM: Some of them were almost a black silvery color. They'd go to the bottom. They were all down there. They would mix on the beach and take a day or two for all of them to become the same color.

RF: Is that so?

CM: They'd show up all of a sudden, and you got the mixture. Now, you do get a mixture of colors here, but it's not as pronounced when they first show up in the spring.

RF: I know you can tell those ones that you catch in the fresh water. When you catch them in the freshwater, they're kind of yellow-green.

CM: Down there, there was so much more difference than that because you had some many of those mangrove swamps and so forth. It's tannic acid in the water that turn them dark.

RF: That's what gives them that color?

CM: Yes. Here you don't have a lot of tannic acid in the water.

RF: That's what makes food when you get way up there. Hey, how are you doing?

Male Speaker: A hundred dollars.

RF: You got a hundred dollars' worth of trout?

MS: Just from trout. Plus, it's got fourteen, 106 drum, 60 cents for trout.

CM: Fishing must be getting good.

RF: I guess. How about some garfish? You don't have any garfish somewhere?

MS: Possibly.

RF: [laughter] Yes. What'd you think about that 3.5-inch mesh?

CM: Well, that's what we're supposed to be using though.

RF: That's what we were supposed to use this year. We were supposed to use 3.25 last year.

CM: The law, the way it was written says 3.5.

RF: Oh, well you're right for gillnet. But it was 3.25 for seines, I think.

CM: For trawler net.

RF: For trawler net. Now this year it's across the board. It's 3.5 for everything. Do you think you can make it?

CM: They interpret that as to whether you can catch trout. You have to go to what I call a 3.5. You're going to starve to death with it.

RF: That's a real 3.5. Claude, can I bum a smoke from you? Thanks. You think there's that much of a difference between a 3 and 3.25?

CM: No, not much of a difference. Now for two or three years when I first started fishing, the fish were 3.5. But I couldn't catch enough to eat that way.

RF: How do your fish run with a 3.5?

CM: 2 pounds average.

RF: 2 pounds average. If they made us go to 3.5, what would you think about hanging a nylon?

CM: Well, that's what I was using.

RF: That's what you were using, the six.

CM: Tell you what, 3.5 there you don't catch very small trout. You catch only good trout. The only trout you're going to catch are the small ones.

MS: But you don't catch enough of them. The 3.5 one I tried, oh, about three years back.

MS: The longest one was 3.5.

MS: 14-inch trout, gives them good money.

MS: Oh, yes.

CM: Yes. But what everybody is using is what we call 3.25. Now you can pull on it, you can stretch it to 3.5.

MS: Yes. But when you come measure that, they don't stretch that big. They got a little stick that put there in Maryland.

MS: In Maryland. Do you have an extra \$12.

CM: What kind of stuff you got?

MS: I had to look you up just to make sure.

MS: That's nylon.

RF: Some nylon.

MS: When they get more, they were measured out. They don't put them there.

CM: Well, the last 3.5 nylon I bought, I had to cut it out and get it to work.

RF: No shit. Why?

CM: It wouldn't catch fish under 2 pounds. I'm not kidding.

MS: We got a point and a ball.

MS: No, we'll go take a look at the trout. We'll catch them right now. That's 3.5.

RF: What size is your twine?

MS: Number nine.

RF: Oh, number nine, 3.5.

CM: Well, I was using them. Now, that probably made the difference.

MS: The trout that I'll catch, in my head I'm satisfied with that.

MS: Because sardine cost more than that. The only way we'd catch the smaller ones is when they –

MS: When you put the web in their mouth.

CM: Then they bridled it.

MS: Yes, they'd bridle off.

MS: If they saw that, then I don't have to measure them.

CM: That made the difference, you using number nine instead of number six, I believe. That would make a big difference.

RF: You think it catches like the plastic?

CM: No.

RF: Say fishing on the beach and stuff, they don't want to hit it.

CM: They won't hit it as quick.

MS: You know what, they can't go fish on the beach. Well, they don't want you to go there no more.

CM: Oh, yes, you can fish on it.

MS: The only thing is the red fish you can't fish on the beach.

MS: You close it up on them.

MS: Did they hit?

MS: You close them up. You close it up, pull it.

MS: You've got to pull it together.

CM: The other stuff, you don't have to pull it together.

RF: [laughter]

MS: I don't know.

MS: Well, but they got to let the new fish –

CM: You'll catch more if you do pull it together.

MS: Especially in the summer, yes, man. If you catch a thousand pounds by pulling it, you're going to catch a couple of hundred pounds more and maybe more too. At least a couple of hundred pounds for sure if you close it down.

CM: But then you wear your net out that much faster.

MS: I was raised right here. You know what that is?

MS: Yes.

MS: You know what that thing that he's talking about?

MS: Yes. But at the end of the year, you had your 3,000 pounds. I take my payroll. That's \$2,000 worth of fish more. Your net only cost \$800. It fills you right up.

MS: Every time you go there with nothing like with a bumble bee.

RF: Yes. Shit I pull every ton. I don't care what's in it.

CM: Yes, we were talking just now.

MS: Over there that duck pond and all, I closed it in. I closed that pond.

RF: Redfish and trout are in there.

CM: Yes. We were talking about how I first came out here in [19]71. Then the inside of West Cameron, flat out there and tall grass.

MS: Yes. Deep in shells and trucks. Who was it? Where were they at?

CM: Now I'm talking about the flats out there on this side of the island, lots of grass on it.

RF: That was old grass in [19]71.

CM: Used to catch trout on that old one along.

MS: Well, and seagrass and seaweed.

CM: Now, grass disappeared, and trout disappeared. There's no grass there now. It's just bare sand and nothing.

MS: Well, where we're working right now, you're catching grass, you're catching some stumps, you're catching mud.

MS: You got everything that's no good.

RF: Around the store, I guess, the twenty, forty, sixty-three.

CM: Oh, we'd catch trout in there all winter long. Wintertime now, you can forget that.

MS: Ninety-five for one. Five, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen. One thirteen. Man, let me read that up. Should we pull a little bit more?

MS: They were rough with that whole thing.

CM: Some of those places we used to fish like Bull Island.

MS: Now, that's your picture that's right there.

CM: Oh, Bull Island, that's it.

MS: Oh, you had some project.

CM: Pelican Island. There was one time I had struck Pelican Island, made two strikes. I went and got a couple of hundred pounds of trout on my way out.

MS: Well, you take Pelican Island, they right go across. We used to pile them on the bike.

CM: But anyway, it's gone now.

MS: It had a U like that. But it was coming about like that. You see it was coming just almost

like a horseshoe. It's a bit closer now. I worked onshore there. It had a deep hole in there. When they're catching trout, out of all of the people, we didn't have one smaller than 2.5 pounds in that school. You know how much you would get for that? About 4 cents and 5 cents a pound. That was 5 cents a pound. Anyway, we were doing good.

RF: I was thinking about that, hanging a number nine, 3.5 inch.

CM: I guarantee you they won't get it as quick. You will have to drag it.

RF: You have to drag it. Yes, I was afraid of that. You might catch more big ones too with a nylon net, you think being the –

CM: A nylon will naturally get them off and hold them better than a monofilament. Monofilament is slick. But then the ones that escape through the monofilament will have less slime knocked off of them. They'll be in better shape. Those little ones.

RF: They'd be in better shape when they pass through it. The nylon is going to scrape them off better.

CM: The nylon is harder to clear. The catfish will stick through it and grab to eat it up. Crabs will stick to it. It's hard to clear but it does catch better. If one hits it, he's more likely to stick than he is in the monofilament.

RF: I don't know what to do. I'm trying to find out how they're going to enforce that law. I've been asking everybody, and nobody knows.

CM: You never know from year to year. It'll depend on who they put in as head of the enforcements.

RF: I see.

CM: You might get as they change, the whole outlook change.

RF: Somebody told me they were putting a woman in the head of wildlife and fisheries, you heard that, to replace Jim?

CM: I haven't heard it.

RF: I just heard that this morning. I don't know if that's true or not.

CM: Well, the woman couldn't be any worse than some of the men we're getting there.

RF: How much were you getting when you first came over here for the trout?

CM: We started off at 22 cents.

RF: 22 cents a pound.

CM: But the locals here before Waylen came here, they earned 15 cents, and they didn't want anything under a pound and a half.

RF: Is that so?

CM: Yes.

RF: They were just taking it to New Orleans, I guess.

CM: They were getting a good price for them. Waylen and Fred came in, and they started off at 22 cents. But after a while they started going up when they got markers squaring away.

RF: They probably were sending it back to Florida, didn't they?

CM: Some of these local buyers, man, they were raising hell threatening to run it clean out of the country.

RF: They didn't like that.

CM: No.

RF: They never liked him since [laughter].

CM: I don't know if Swagman is still doing it anymore. But Swagman swore that he'd never buy net fish from him. He'd buy off the sports fishermen.

RF: Is that so?

CM: Yes.

RF: He must be a big sport.

CM: Of course, that was a different Swagman now. The daddy and his sons got it now. I don't know what his policy is.

RF: Is that so? I don't know how it looks. Those guys are getting some stroke, GCCA.

CM: That GCCA is on the ball, and I'm not kidding. Advertising on TV propaganda programs, free TV time.

RF: Free TV time?

CM: Yes. Even they had – I think it was either half or a one-hour program on, sponsored by the GCCA. Fish and Wildlife Service cooperated with them, participated in it. It was strictly

propaganda.

RF: Is that so?

CM: They were mourning about how scarce the fish were all the way through. Every shot they showed was sportsmen pulling trouts in just as fast as they could pull them overboard [laughter].

RF: [laughter] Did he say anything about the netters in there?

CM: Yes.

RF: Is that so?

CM: The Fish and Wildlife Service participated in it.

RF: The Fish and Wildlife, that's federal. Is that what you mean, or Wildlife and Fisheries?

CM: No, I mean Wildlife and Fisheries.

RF: Is that so?

CM: Yes.

RF: Well, see they bought some stuff for those guys for Wildlife and Fisheries. They buy them stuff, donate stuff for them.

CM: Well, I told you they owned the ball, and they got the money to back them up.

RF: Yes, they got money. That comes out of Houston. That's all oil money, I think, that started that thing.

CM: Oil money and they're getting public money too. Because they come on with those programs, and they're advertising. So, they're getting people really stirred up because people believe that propaganda.

RF: Sure, they do. They believe whatever they see on TV. I know, bad situation.

CM: The people get stirred up about that stuff and thoroughly believe that we're the ones that are destroying everything in the country.

RF: How do you counteract that?

CM: Fishermen can't do it. Fishermen don't have the money and the time and the propaganda ability. The fishermen will not stick together.

RF: All right. Too independent.

CM: Too independent.

RF: [laughter] Too independent but they're going to end up losing their independence.

CM: Yes. If you're a fisherman, I've heard of when there was some especially rough legislation coming up. It passes away from fishing, yackety-yackety-yak. I start burning fish camps. I start doing this, that, and the other. Nothing happens.

RF: Nobody ever does anything, no.

CM: They're only talk.

RF: That's right. They sure quit fishing reds in a hurry, didn't they?

CM: Yes. No steady. What gets me is the way that the bulk of the fishermen, the bulk of the industry is that propaganda that is being sponsored by the GCCA.

RF: That the fish are scarce?

CM: Yes. Now, they aren't as plentiful as they used to be, but they'll never be plentiful as they used to be no matter what is done because the bottom has changed too much. Their habitat has changed too much. No matter change they take on them, they'll never be the fish that they used to be. There just isn't the habitat to support it.

RF: Right. Well, it's not rich enough, I guess.

MS: No.

RF: Too much salt water.

CM: Well, there's too many things that could change. You take in Florida way back, oh, it must have been about [19]65, they made a sportsman out of a snook. Well, the last day I got fishing legally, I put 600-and-some-odd pounds in the fish house. I was hook and lining.

RF: Hook and line.

CM: Just like the sportsmen and fishermen. Sportsmen weren't catching any. They didn't know how to fish them. According to the propaganda, then the snook was, you might say extinct. But I was fishing. That last day I fished I spent all the incoming tide that day catching bait. Now I'd go and tide fishes, and I ran out of bait while they were still biting and hid it from him.

RF: [laughter] But they didn't?

CM: No. Now there was a friend of mine who was a chiropractor. I don't know if you met him when he was here to visit me a couple times.

RF: No.

CM: Anyway, I taught him how to fish them. He was going out, and he was catching 4-, 5-, 6-, 700 pounds of snook a day when he was fishing and giving them to me [laughter].

RF: No kidding.

CM: I was getting 12 cents a pound for him. That was good money then.

RF: 12 cents.

CM: Yes. But anyway, they made a sportsman out of him. Anyway, he still loves to fish. Has his own boat and loves to fish. He said it's been six or seven years since he caught one snook [laughter].

RF: Because they don't have any or are they –

CM: There are a few in the area, but so few that he hasn't even caught one in the last six or seven years. He knows how to fish them, and he works at it.

RF: That's because their habitat fell off. I guess all that development stuff like that.

CM: Habitat and boat traffic. Now on snook, boat traffic hurts bad because they'll line up under a dock. When you look through the water and see them just backed up like corn and try to catch them. Just once in a great while that it'll get quiet enough that they'll start feeding. But anything going on, people walking on the dock, boat traffic, and so forth, they'll stay there but you can't get them to bite, no way.

RF: Too shy.

CM: Yes.

RF: I think that might have something to do with the trout too on the beach. You think so?

CM: Well, it hurts quite a bit.

RF: Like the rocks.

CM: It doesn't hurt as much here as it used to hurt down there because the water isn't as clear here. They'll spook, but they'll calm down a whole lot quicker for water that's not that clear. In real clear water, they spook. Takes them longer to calm down and then to start feeding again. So, that's one reason I left Florida. Water clears up here, but nothing at all like it is down there. It's still clear down there.

RF: Well, it was clear around here for a while this winter. You don't know. You probably

weren't out there but man, that water got clear.

CM: Along the beaches?

RF: In the bays, in the lakes, on the inside and all. It was cold. It got crystal clear.

CM: Then at Pass-a-Grille Beach when I first went there, I've seen it for long periods. Now, Pass-a-Grille pass was a half-mile wide, and most of the depth was about 20 feet. I've seen it for long periods where you could see just little pebbles and so forth on the bottom and that much water. It doesn't get that way here.

RF: No. But you'd trawl didn't you, for specs?

CM: No. They used to be an old chum that used to trawl for them down the Everglades for \$10,000. But that played out. Now it's illegal to commercial fish there anyway.

RF: What were you doing fishing with cane poles?

CM: No, I was fishing with a rod and reel.

RF: Casting the bait.

CM: The bait. Shrimp when I couldn't get either a small pin fish or what we call white bait, white mullets, little herring.

RF: Little herring?

CM: Yes.

RF: What did you call them, white mullet?

CM: White bait.

RF: White bait.

CM: Yes.

RF: You put a hook in that and cast it out.

CM: Yes.

RF: You were making your living down there. Started guiding when it got too –

CM: Yes, I guided for four years.

RF: Four years.

CM: It got where it was hard to keep a party happy.

RF: It's not enough fish. Did you make any money guiding?

CM: No, it wasn't that good. Well, the prices were low back then. I was getting 25 for half, 35 for all day. Of course, the extensions came out of there. Of course, in the wintertime I did pretty good because tips were good in the wintertime. Summertime you got a different crowd.

RF: Oh, yes?

CM: Yes.

RF: But you got out-of-towners in the winter, the Yankees or whatever.

CM: Yes. There were a bunch of Jews at that beach even.

RF: Oh, yes?

CM: A lot of Jews were good tippers.

RF: Oh, come on.

CM: Well, they might have been hard to do business with. But when they were out for a good time, they didn't mind spending money.

RF: I'll be darned.

CM: I enjoyed fishing with them.

RF: Well, you were brought up in North Carolina, weren't you, Claude?

CM: Florida. Family moved around quite a bit.

RF: Oh, did they?

CM: Orlando, Florida.

RF: Orlando. I wanted to figure out, you said if you divide a thousand into 1.7 million, what do you get? Shit, I couldn't figure out how to use that thing.

CM: I haven't even tried to use it.

RF: 1,700,000.

CM: I think it's patient.

RF: Say one thousand. 1,700 pounds. Is that right? 1,700 times one thousand. Two, three, four, seven.

CM: I figured it out. I don't remember what the figure was.

RF: That's it. That's 1,700 pounds.

CM: Per fisherman. All right, now I figure this, now a sportsman is allowed – I don't think they cut it now. They'll probably cut it this spring – but he's allowed fifty heads.

RF: Yes, they cut it.

CM: Now, he's allowed a smaller fish than we are. Call it a 3-pound average. That's 150 pounds a week. Now, see how many he's allowed to catch a year. If he only fishes one day a week, fifty-two times that.

RF: Wait. Fifty pounds a week. If he's allowed fifty a day, three-pound average.

CM: Yes. But I'm thinking maybe he only fishes one day a week or fifty-two times that.

RF: One fifty-two times fifty-two. Let's see. That's 7,800 pounds.

CM: Versus how many did you say folks get?

RF: 1,700. They have 180,000 of you guys.

CM: There's over 200,000. But they figured 180 fish in salt water.

RF: Isn't that incredible?

CM: It's ridiculous.

RF: What they come to right away next is that they spend all that much more money.

CM: Well, the commercial fisherman spends all that he makes locally.

RF: He spends everything locally, yes.

CM: He spends all that he spent before he makes it.

RF: [laughter] That's true.

CM: Yes. But you know that.

RF: Yes, I know that. But when they figure it for us, all they figure is the dockside landings,

right? Just the value of the fish when it comes off the boat. That's the only thing they figure for us.

CM: Yes. But look at the fish house workers, the fish companies, the truckers, the restaurants, and the general public that wants fish to eat. That's all part of it.

RF: All that stuff is really run by the profit that they make on the fish that comes off the boat. Is that right?

CM: Yes.

RF: Some way, we should come up with some better figures now.

CM: Well, there is a start.

RF: Yes.

CM: Now, that's figuring that's just one sports fisherman. Now, some of them fish full time.

RF: That's right. The retired guys and stuff.

CM: If he only, say, fishes every day of the week and only catches one day his limit for the whole week, look what he catches. Now, some of them are a whole lot better fishing. Some of them work at it pretty hard.

RF: All right. Yes. That's something to look at.

CM: You figure 180,000 times that one fisherman and see what you come out at [laughter].

RF: My God.

CM: They blame us for killing all the fish.

RF: Oh, wait a minute. I can't. Oh, yes, another three zeros. One, two, three. You get 1 billion over one month [laughter]. Yes, oh, my God.

CM: Well, it has been conceded all along that sportsmen catch a lot more fish than the commercial fishing. Yet nobody really bears down on those figures. I don't know why.

RF: It's got to be done?

CM: Yes.

RF: I'm going to be up there this spring. We're going to get a fight going. You know what I'm trying to do, Claude, I don't know if this is going to work or not. I'm afraid we're going to get a lot of resistance. The sports and say the hunters too, they have two federal taxes. If you buy any

fishing tackle or hunting tackle, they have that tax.

CM: It is used to fight the commercial fishermen [laughter] any tackle we buy, any fishing tackle. A lot of the boats and motors and so forth have that federal tax on it.

RF: Well, that's supposed to go towards the environment. No?

CM: You see how it's been used now, that research that's killing us.

RF: You think so. Yes, it goes towards research for sure. What would you think if we put something like that on a commercial fisherman, like a webbing tax. Then you put a tax, a penny, a pound, or something like that on webbing. Then designate that for habitat restoration.

CM: It wouldn't do any good because we are up against such big money that we can't possibly – there's no way we could make the kind money that GCCA has at its disposal.

RF: I'm not talking about using it to fight him. Just to say that's supposed to go towards the habitat just to make us look better and make us look like we're putting something back.

CM: I don't know whether it'll help or not because the fisherman is not adept at propaganda. He's not any good at all at propaganda.

RF: See, all we really have to do is tell the truth if people would listen.

CM: But all the truth does is just confuse the situation.

RF: [laughter]

CM: Nobody wants the truth.

RF: Can't make any –

CM: Especially politicians. All it boils down to is the impression you make on the politicians, and they do not deal in the truth [laughter].

Female Speaker: There are several people that send them to Egypt.

MS: Now, the game wasn't here. We'll the rest were here.

RF: Yes. See the light is on now. Anything I want in, they'll publish. But you're just talking to commercial fishermen. It's like you say, how you get propaganda, we're just not good at it.

CM: No.

RF: These guys, sure, we can say anything we want. But it's just commercial fishermen reading it, and they already know they're in a bind all over the country.

CM: Yes. We're not unique commercial fishermen. Everywhere you want to look at it, he's in trouble.

RF: He's in trouble. That's right. I don't know. Maybe it's just natural. Maybe they just going to go by the wayside. I don't know. I don't think it's good.

CM: What gets me is now this country eats an awful lot of seafood. If things were handled properly here, there needs to be regulation, but not the kind regulations we got. If it was handled properly, this country could be a net exporter of seafood without hurting any resources.

RF: A net exporter and have fish every year just through good regulation.

CM: Proper management.

RF: Proper management.

CM: But the management that's being used now, all it does is just try to knock the commercial fishermen down. We wind up with almost no domestic production of seafood, all of it imported.

RF: That happened.

CM: That's the way to wind up.

RF: To be totally dependent.

CM: I think it's inevitable.

RF: Inevitable just because the sports want so much.

CM: They want it. They outnumber us. They got the money for political, for propaganda than we can imagine.

RF: I don't know what the hell their problem is exactly though.

CM: Louisiana has had on his automobile license tag, Sportsman's Paradise, for a long time now. When a sportsman is in paradise, they see anybody trying to make a living there, he wants to be an only sport.

RF: [laughter]

CM: I don't think there's a whole lot that the commercial fishermen can or will do about it.

RF: I know they don't want to do anything. See, I'm still working with the OLF. They just hired an organizer. This guy is a national organizer to try and drum up some numbers. He knows how to fight. This guy started a community. You ever hear of ACORN? I forget but it's an acronym

for something. It's an acronym.

CM: I've heard of it, and I don't like it. Like you, I can't come up with what it stands for.

RF: Community – I forget what it means. He works with the truckers. He organized that big trucker strike. Hey, man, what's going on? Meet your new boss, bud.

MS: Hey, man, haven't seen in a while. What you've been doing?

RF: Oh, it's snapper season.

MS: What's the big grind. Now, what you're going to do? Where is the woman?

RF: Which one of you guys is going around with a woman.

MS: That's me. That's Mary.

RF: He's married?

CM: Hey, Ned, I know this thing takes three hours.

RF: Never load a gun inside. I blew a hole right through my dad's gun cabinet one day doing that. Yes, I sure did.

MS: Well, wait, you got to get all that in.

RF: I loaded a 20 gauge inside. I was going to come out the house and shoot some pigeons. When I closed that sucker, the pin hadn't gone in all the way. It went off right through the gun cabinet.

MS: You got hot?

RF: Hot.

MS: [laughter]

CM: I was just a little fellow, and I picked up my daddy's shotgun. He never had kept that thing loaded. Picked it up, showed it to some kids, and I pulled the hammer back and holes inside of the house [laughter]. Lucky, I didn't kill a kid with it.

RF: [laughter] That's right.

CM: I was about 6, 7 years old.

RF: I bet you should.

CM: Oh, God. I moved the calendar over the hole, and it was quite a while before –

RF: [laughter]

CM: Mother was looking at it one day and wondering what that calendar was doing there [laughter]. I called him.

RF: [laughter] Oh, my parents were in the house at the time.

CM: Talking about accidents with guns, the first handgun I ever shot in my life, I was still just a kid. I traded another kid at school, a little, nickel-plated 22 Revolver. Man, I couldn't wait to shoot that thing. I knew if my parents had it, they'd take it away from me, which they should have. So, anyway, I got home with it. I remember I had three shelves, just enough to half load it [laughter]. So, there was a tobacco curing barn about a mile from the house. I couldn't wait to slip away to go that tobacco barn so they wouldn't hear it in a mile [laughter]. I opened the door to that tobacco barn and stuck it inside and pulled the trigger. When I did, the old tobacco barn was made out of logs and was chinked with concrete. Now most of them in that part of the country were chinked with clay [laughter]. But it went straight across the thing, hit that concrete, and bounced back and hit me just above the belly [laughter].

RF: [laughter] Oh, no.

CM: It was in the summertime just before school let out. Pretty warm day. I had on a thin shirt. It raised a great, big blister where it hit. It didn't break the skin though.

RF: Jesus. What caliber was it?

CM: 22.

RF: 22.

CM: 22 short. But I threw that thing away. I didn't even take it home with me.

RF: It scared you?

CM: It scared me.

RF: Gun scare. I hate guns.

CM: Kids that age I was in, [inaudible] get in trouble.

RF: Well, I don't know what else to ask you about the trout down here. I know we went out and caught a few. I got some fairer pictures. My best pictures are in color. They don't come across too well. I got some of you holding some fish in the net. Good pictures. So, they might use those. I got a couple of you in black and white. You might have to fake a shot. I'm going to try and get by with what we've got. I might have to get a couple of trout in the fish house and put

you in a boat there, some buddy's boat and get a good picture of you. Not really happy with any of the pictures but yes, probably got a story there.

CM: You start using some of the stuff I gave you, they'll say, "Who the hell is that radical [laughter]?"

RF: Oh, no, they eat that up. They love that. They love that. No, that's right on what you say. That's exactly what's going on.

CM: Many years until all the seafood in this country will be imported or 99 percent of it. There'll still be a few little hold-outs, but another twenty years maybe.

RF: I'll say that in the story. That'll make them shit. It's true though. I think what you're saying is true. Where else are they going to get it? Oh, well they'll have their fish farms and stuff.

CM: Yes. But it would be a long time before those fish farms would supply even a small percentage of the seafood used in this country.

RF: How about if we get in a war sometime, and we're going to have to import all our food? That won't be too cool.

CM: We'll have to eat steak.

RF: We'll have to eat steak [laughter]. That's what I don't like about all this import, if we ever get in a war.

CM: Well, the balance of payments against us this way is almost as bad as a war if it keeps up.

RF: That's right.

CM: Unless it's brought down.

RF: That's right. It's got to put us in a bind sooner there.

CM: Now, there's room for the sports fishing industry and the commercial industry if it's handled properly. Both need regulation.

RF: They started here now. They do have an allotment for each group. It's ridiculous.

CM: It's a ridiculous allotment. It's based on guesswork.

RF: That's right. That is based on guesswork. At least what I would say, the sports can have this much and commercial side this much?

CM: No, I don't think so. Now, an area that's overfished, they should limit the number of licenses.

RF: Commercial.

CM: Yes. Like they do in Alaska.

RF: All right. Limited entry.

CM: Limited entry. Regulation of net sizes will determine the size of fish you can catch. That 3.25 mesh on trout is about right.

RF: 3.25.

CM: Yes. What they are calling 3.5 now because they pull it tight, and it's almost 3.5. They call it 3. They're letting us use it. On redfish, all you got to do is regulate the mesh size and have a window of the sizes that can be taken. In other words, only between one size and the next size. But I think it's 30-inch limit on redfish now. They could bring that down to 28, and it would make a big difference.

RF: The fish we're dealing with, they're not 28 inches either.

CM: No. Now, you take your needles. You should have seen, now I don't know if they're still doing it or not, but that garbage dumped down towards Grand Dame. Man, they were probably full of reds up there [laughter].

RF: Is that so?

CM: Just stacking them up from that Randall Redfish Rodeo.

RF: That's a sin.

CM: That's a crown.

RF: Well, how do you limit licenses though, Claude, without pissing a lot of people off? How do you limit the number of licenses?

CM: Put a grandfather clause in there. If you had a license a certain length of time, you can still get one. If you let it lapse, you're out of luck. That way they could cut down on a number of fishing.

RF: How about a guy that's fishing? How's he get into it?

CM: He could buy somebody's license like you do in Alaska.

RF: Selling you, okay. I was thinking about trying to get some of these yo-yos out, these guys that work jobs and get this. See, what the sports started doing, they started buying commercial licenses. They'd buy a commercial license. If your state makes them, just certify that they made

say 75 percent of their income commercial fishing.

CM: That would be good.

RF: That's not unconstitutional. That would help.

CM: But the sportsmen would fight it, I think, because their aim is to eliminate.

RF: That's right. I'm supposed to go talk to the GCCA group and tell them about –

CM: Turn on your tape recording and see what I think about it [laughter].

RF: [laughter] Well, I met a guy over at Nicholls. They're building a 27-foot sailing lugger over there like they used to have down here eighty years ago. I went over there. This guy, he works at the library, but he's the head of what they call the Center for Louisiana Traditional Boat Building. The guy is really into boats. He's got an office in the library.

CM: Yes, I wouldn't mind seeing what they're doing on that lugger.

RF: It's pretty.

CM: Have you seen it?

RF: Yes, it's almost all plank. They just have a few planks off, and they have to build a mast.

CM: Where is it at?

RF: It's at Nicholls. Almost maybe at the store. It's over at Nicholls there behind the state. They have a little side building, and they ran out of money. They said they need about five grand just for the sail and the mast. They have a rudder there. They got a big rudder about that big.

CM: How about a door?

RF: Cypress. They got a wooden rudder. They have a box made. They're going to put a centerboard in it.

CM: Their own design or copying some old design.

RF: Yes, it's a copy of an old design. They got an old coon ass above the asses and started off. It's really interesting. Anyway, we started. We were talking boats. As far as he knew, I was just a writer. So, then we're almost finished, and he's, "Tell me what else I'm into," he said. I knew he was a fisherman. He had a couple of stuffed fish and fish paints and stuff. Well, he says, "I'm real active in the GCCA." He's the president over there, Butler. Man, he says, "We're trying to do something about these commercial fishermen." He says, "They're murdering the fish. We're just going to have to take the nets out of the water until spring." He's going on and on and on.

Man, I'm about to blow up. I didn't know if I should tell him I was a fisherman or not.

CM: Throw some of those figures at him.

RF: Well, that's what I'm going to do. This guy, he's reasonable.

CM: Very few people are. Most people have already made up their mind no matter what you say to them, they're the same.

RF: That's right. I know that. That's right. Like, Kurt LaBuff. I mentioned Kurt, and he said, "Oh, yes, Kurt's irrational. You can't talk to Kurt." But he even admitted, he said, "We don't know anything about nets." He said, "We listened to what two or three guys say."

CM: Totally don't know.

RF: Don't know. He said, "In fact, I took out a book today in the library on nets." He says if you could come over there. I'm supposed to go have lunch with him first. Then he said, "If you could just talk to our group and just tell us about nets," he says, "It would be worth it." I don't want him to end up using me, but I think I might be able to do some good.

CM: Well, we dispensed a lot of information through the years up in Baton Rouge committee hearings. Every bit of it was used against us.

RF: Was used against you. That's what I figure. That's what I was afraid of. But shit.

CM: Now, when they have a good shrimp season, they blame it on the weather and water conditions and so forth. Now, poor season, they blame it on the same thing. Fishing, no matter where you are or how well things are handled, you're going to have good years and poor years. That's your cycle. It's your cycle. All that stuff is. All right. When we have a good year, they say we're taking too much, we're destroying everything. When you have a poor year, we've already done it [laughter].

RF: [laughter]

CM: They're used against us. They don't use the figures on the sportsman. They use the figures on the commercial fishermen. The figures of the sportsmen are much, much higher.

RF: When they put out the commercial fishermen, I wonder who they blame then.

CM: They'll be in bad shape.

RF: Be in bad shape [laughter].

CM: Oh, by the way whenever I was still fishing the snook, the last year that we got fishing commercially, I was out – you know where the Skyway bridge is across the Tampa Bay from St. Petersburg over towards the other side of the bay?

RF: Never been.

CM: They had only completed that across there the year before. But anyway, I was out next to the ship channel and diving and just looking around. There was snook there. This was on slight water. You couldn't do much diving there from the channels because of the barrels. I could dive down and about 10 feet below the surface, there was a layer of snook. You'd dive down through them. They'd close in over the top of you, and it's just black.

RF: Come on.

CM: You couldn't see. It blocked out the sunlight. I have yet to catch even one snook around that ship channel where I was.

RF: No kidding.

CM: But at each end of the bridge, that tide started out and running strong, it did hit. If it's quiet, no boat traffic, and so forth, you could shut your motor off and drift down tide, an easy anchor on. Fish back towards or under the bridge, those things would hit just as fast as you get a bait out there. But when a boat would come by, that was it.

RF: Didn't you do some crude tests on the noise that outboards put out? Stick your head under the water or something?

CM: No, I've been diving. You hear outboards going by.

RF: You hear them from a long way?

CM: Well, you could hear the gears whining.

RF: You'd hear the gears.

CM: It was a whine. You wouldn't hear the explosion of the exhaust.

RF: You wouldn't hear the exhaust.

CM: Everybody always blamed it on the exhaust. But you would hear those gears whine.

RF: You think the inboard's quieter underwater?

CM: Some of them if they got a rattle in the shaft, a stuffing box, or rudder anything, puts a lot of noise in the water.

RF: I see. You heard those while you were diving, heard anything?

CM: Not only that, but I rigged one little boat. This was while the trout were still really good

there at Pass-a-Grille Beach. Hook and line you could average, oh, 250 pounds a day there then. That was right after the Second World War. But I rigged a little boat out the land board and really careful with the shaft, and it wouldn't rattle. I couldn't catch trout. The rest of the fishermen around there were knocking them loose. That was in the spring. It was really good.

RF: Trawling.

CM: No. You'd anchor down and cast fish and live bait trying to figure where they'd be. Then I found that every time I moved that rudder and the slate, I got rid of that click, and I started catching trout.

RF: Come on. Every time you moved into boats.

CM: Every time that boat moved, there was that click out of the rudder. Evidently, they didn't like that noise. Now, some noises seemed to attract them, but not that one and not a rattling shaft. Outboards don't attract them. I guarantee you that.

RF: They don't like an outboard, do they?

CM: No.

RF: Got to be dirtier an outboard.

CM: Yes, due to that whole pollution in there.

RF: With that unburnt motor oil?

CM: Yes.

RF: Or just the burnt motor oil, I guess, the exhaust anyway.

CM: There are all kinds of stuff in the exhaust. That's where I see a lot of motor oil.

RF: Pollution wise.

CM: Yes. Two cycles in there. You know that water absorbs a lot of that. How much of it, I don't know.

RF: So, a lot of outboard traffic there, it can really dirty the water.

CM: It got so there at Pass-a-Grille Beach. The water is all muddy, grass disappeared, all that. Just a few years after the Second World War, the traffic got really bad there with sportsmen. Anyway, we find a bunch of trouts and got anchored down and started fishing. You work them up. You weren't casting any farther than from here to the end of the room there from your boats. Just about the time you get them started here, come four or five boats. They'd see you pull a fish, and you had it. They'd come right in on top of you. That'd be the end of it.

RF: Put them right down.

CM: Yes. I remember one of the last bunches of fish I fished there before I left that country. It was in the wintertime. Some of those deeper potholes out on the flats, the fish would settle into there before it got cold. I had pulled about a half a mile to get into this pothole and were about that deep. I couldn't run no motor. I borrowed an outboard just to fish that pothole. The boat I regularly fished with was an inboard. There's no way I could have even got it in there. Anyway, I pulled in there to it, anchored down quietly. It was a foggy morning, cold. Then those trout running pound three quarters to my side, just as fast as I get a bait in the water. Next thing I knew, damnest noise you have heard in your life. It sounded like it was under my boat. It was somebody had pulled in with an aluminum flatboat right alongside me. I hadn't paid him any attention at all. They had an anchor with a chain on it. They just rattled that across the side of their boat.

RF: [laughter]

CM: That was the end of that.

RF: That's stupid [laughter].

CM: It didn't even cross my mind that anybody would bother me.

RF: Somebody knew you, and they said, "Oh, that Claude he knows –"

CM: Nobody knew me.

RF: No?

CM: No. It was foggy. They couldn't have seen the fish. If they figured there was fish in there, they came in to get some of them.

RF: [laughter] That's what they do. They do that down here with the redfish. They're going throw that anchor.

CM: Now, if they waited long enough, those fish would start feeding again. But I wasn't going to wait [laughter]. I got damn out of there. Well, another deal, there was a buddy of mine, there was no way to get him right out the south pass of Pass-a-Grille the grass was disappearing. But there was one little spot of grass about as big as the inside of this room and water about that deep. He had drifted down on it, and there was a bunch of trout on it. He was sitting there pulling trout. It was one of those days where it was a mystic blowing a bit, a mixture of rain and fog and blowing a bit. He figured, "Well, I've got these. Nobody's going to screw me up here." Next thing, he heard a noise, off in the distance, a roaring. He was wondering what the hell it was. Next thing he knew, there were boats coming at him [laughter] full throttle, put water in his boat, just shearing this way and that way to keep from hitting him. He couldn't see the distance in that weather. He said he was there holding on both sides of his boat with his eyes bowed

down [laughter] and just hoping nobody hit him [laughter]. Anyway, they had that Gasparilla Festival there celebrating Pirate Days. They had a so-called treasure hunt where they had clues planted here, there, and yonder. The one that would find this clue you had to give him clues as to where to find the next one. There were about two hundred boats wild-eyed sports trying to find that last place and get the treasure. I don't remember what it was. I think it was a certificate for a new automobile. He was right in the middle of it.

RF: [laughter]

CM: He said that they were actually throwing water in his boat. Not from the wakes, just splashing water in his boat.

RF: He was probably right by the certificate.

CM: No, he was on the way from one to another.

RF: Claude, you don't have any nets you want to get rid of?

CM: Just got rid of them.

RF: Did you really?

CM: Hated the material?

RF: What'd you give him?

CM: Well, I only had one net, and it's worn out, a trout net.

RF: Trout net.

CM: Multifilament.

RF: Now, I heard the guy ended up with one. You got one? Oh, shit.

CM: I got a whole tight one.

RF: I think the guy picked up an old net of yours. He told me he did.

CM: I haven't lost any.

RF: He said that you kept saying the net you fished with. The net you and I fished with, you threw away or something.

CM: Oh, I cut one out.

RF: Cut one out. That's it. You picked that up. I think he's still using that. Where did you get

your webbing for that?

CM: Over at Venice.

RF: You went to Venice?

CM: Yes.

RF: God damn. I know they have the best webbing, man. That's so far.

CM: You better phone before you go get it.

RF: Call them up.

CM: Everybody's skittish about buying webbing because they don't know whether they get to sell or not.

RF: That's right.

CM: Now, the last I knew everybody had that 33-millimeter webbing. It's the light stuff, and it won't last.

RF: I bought some last spring. I hated it. You pull that one time, and it's all torn up. What'd you have? What's the good stuff?

CM: I had the weakest one. Well, about half and half. The good stuff I think it's about 37 millimeters.

RF: 37.

CM: I'm not sure. But it's larger than the 33.

RF: About 8 feet deep.

CM: I like a 30-mesh net.

RF: 30?

CM: Yes. Of course, now I'll have to use a 40-mesh net, it'll catch better. That's harder to have. But it will catch a lot better.

RF: Catch a lot better with all that slack?

CM: Yes.

RF: You pull it too, you think it –

CM: But if you get that light webbing, it won't even if you pull it where you live out.

RF: That's what happened to me. I like to pull. I pull everything.

CM: I like to pull if I think there's anything there. Many a time I've strung it out, beat it down, and start pulling to see if there's trout at the end of it. Go ahead and drag the whole thing. I pull it away and don't see anything; I keep on pulling and take it out.

RF: Well, Terry probably won't fish. Well, he might fish a little bit before the trout.

CM: Well, he tried 3 miles off, and he couldn't even pay expenses. So, they got him shut down until they opened it up again. Just figured he'll do a little fishing.

RF: Do a little trout fishing.

CM: Trout and sheepshead.

RF: They didn't want to pay anything for this sheepshead. Now, we're getting fit in.

CM: The last time I knew it was 20 cents here. I don't know, it might be 15.

RF: Yes, it ought to be at least 20.

CM: But 15, if you catch enough out, and you can make a day's payment. He was getting desperate now.

RF: He is. It was getting late in the winter. Man, this is a bad time. Claude, I'm going to build a skiff if I can get them to put a V8 in there. It's something I can trawl with, but fish a trout too. Maybe fish a drum about 7, 8 feet wide on the bottom.

CM: But don't make a mistake and put an extremely deep tunnel there.

RF: I don't think I'm going to put any tunnel at all.

CM: That's better than an extremely deep one. I favor a shallow tunnel.

RF: 3 inches.

CM: About that and a long –

RF: I'm going inboard. A long tunnel?

CM: Yes. Long and no abrupt turning spin. Slow, smooth turns.

RF: I'm just so scared of a tunnel. Maybe I wasn't going to put any in it.

CM: Well, most people make the mistake of building a deep tunnel. It just doesn't work.

RF: How about rocker? You put any rocker in a boat like that if you want? I want it to go.

CM: I wouldn't.

RF: You wouldn't.

CM: Have the kill straight. The only rocker you got is in the chimes curled up a little.

RF: Up in the front.

CM: Yes. You know the old – I don't think anybody much makes them anymore – but the old semi, the outboards where they're almost flat in the stern and V in the bow. You look at the lines of them, and they're just about right.

RF: It would go?

CM: The fastest little boat I ever had in my life was a six-wood hub with a semi-V, almost flat in the stern, a straight keel straight up to where it started turning up to the stern. A little bit of rocker in the chime. I was carrying two big wheels in the stern with water in them about the weight of the net. The motor was just a little farther than the midships. Me steering it from after the motor. It balanced that just right. That little thing would go.

RF: You were behind the motor?

CM: Yes. Studebaker champion.

RF: Yes. Did you have any tuck in it?

CM: No, there was no tuck in that one.

RF: They do that down here. They say that the wide part and then you tuck it in towards the back. Does that make sense?

CM: If I was going to rig an inboard for net fishing, I would look around and get me a fiberglass automobile.

RF: But you can't get a flatbottom fiberglass.

CM: You can find an old one.

RF: Well like those aluminum skiffs or something like that, a lake skiff.

CM: I didn't want it like that.

RF: I don't know what kind of fiberglass boots you'd get that you could use.

CM: Some of the older rubber amounts. Now Terry's got one that would do. The only thing is he hasn't been able to get papers for it. It's got the right lines on the bottom.

RF: Flat bottom?

CM: Almost flat in the stern and V in the bow. Working from a flat stern to the V. Now that style is going out. Now they're V all the way back.

RF: Yes, I wouldn't want that.

CM: You make an inboard out. It doesn't work.

RF: No, I wouldn't want that. But that tuck, they say that it makes you go faster because the front cuts the water.

CM: Well, the thing is, if it's almost flat in the stern and carry a heavier load back there, they ride a little bit rougher.

RF: If it's not tucked or if it is tucked?

CM: You don't need a tuck if you're going to carry a heavy weight back there.

RF: That's what I mean. If you're going to carry a net, you don't want it tucked. You more or less come straight back.

CM: You want it straight back, yes. You want it back there to carry that weight. That little boat, you could wind it up just a little bit, and it'd get the bow up where you could just move you along in really heavy seas or a heavy chop. If you wind it up, that thing would flat knot and hardly just skimming the surface.

RF: No kidding.

CM: That thing wouldn't have.

RF: It was just right. You wouldn't want to get into laying out a boat and starting a boat or anything like that.

CM: I wouldn't try to do it myself. But I'd give you a lot of advice on it if you want advice. You don't have to take it [laughter].

RF: [laughter] No. Well, you think you and I could get it started if I had a table saw and all or are you –

CM: I wouldn't want to get involved with that really.

RF: All right. Yes, well I'll get somebody.

CM: I'll tell you what to do.

RF: All right. I'll get somebody. You know T. Roy Jeremy? He's been building some boats around here by you. You've seen any boats he built?

CM: I haven't paid much attention.

RF: Yes, I might get him.

CM: He'd been building a few skiffs and so forth.

RF: He built a big ship. Ben Nelson has it now 8 feet on the bottom. Big, wide skiff. The day he put it in the water, I noticed it leaked around at one of the chimes there. He built it really fast. Real fast. I didn't like that. But if you could slow him down there, I think he's got a pretty fair design. I might go with him.

CM: Yes. Real fast putting it –

RF: No, I mean he builds a boat. It's the way he builds. He doesn't take his time to build a boat. He doesn't take his time to build a boat to do it just right like you would do it, see.

CM: You've got to take your time.

RF: Yes, like you or Leroy. He doesn't do it that way. Man, he's in a hurry, and that scares me. Like I said, Richard threw a brand-new boat over in the water, and it leaked. Now, I'll forget about the tuck, and I won't put any rocker either in the back.

CM: If your motor is somewhere near a midship and you're carrying most of your weight in stern, you put a little rocker in there, and you're not doing anything at all.

RF: You're going to squat.

CM: Yes. With something like that, you want it to where it will squat at low speed. Because when you're going across a bay and you're going to chop about like that in a small boat, if you let that down a level, you're going to take water right in over the bow.

RF: Yes. That flatboat I have has a lot of rocker. But that son of a gun, I can go across those lakes and all. That thing takes a heck of a sea.

CM: But it'd be faster if you got rid of that rocker.

RF: It'd be faster. Yes, you're right it would be. Would you be worried about is this side where

to punch the hole for the strut and the rudder? You think you could do that pretty well? You know where to do that?

CM: Yes.

RF: That's the only thing that scares me. The Coon's I don't know if they really know. They just guess.

CM: What kind of rudder are you going to use? A welding up rudder will catch you a cast bronze from there.

RF: Let's make one out of, yes, a piece of stainless shaft and a piece of stainless plate. I'll probably tie that in with a piece of shaft to my strut.

CM: That's going do like what Terry did on that 33-horsepower foot boat he rigged out. The rudder, you weld it up. The plate was too thin, and he finally had to get rid of it.

RF: The plate in his rudder.

CM: Yes. It was all stainless steel. The plate was too thin, and it bent right at the shaft [laughter].

RF: Well, okay, man. What are you doing today?

CM: As little as possible.

RF: As little as possible.

CM: I was figuring on taking a ride out to Grand Island. Just nothing to do, and you came along. That gave me something to do.

RF: [laughter] No, you still got time to take a ride. That's a good idea. You go check out the Fourchon down there where they're building all those condominiums. That's a guy in the GCCA, Bankston. He's a big shot.

CM: They'll be duck and roll. So, I can handle it.

RF: You think so?

CM: Well, they can get from this, but if they got enough money it takes to running the estate.

RF: That'd be something if they did that. I didn't think you could do that anymore.

CM: You can dump radioactive waste into the river up above New Orleans. So, why can't you dump raw sewage here right down next to the gulf?

RF: That's how it works. Let's pay the right man.

CM: Now I saw something on the TV about radioactive build up around the mouth of the river.

RF: Oh, no.

CM: Yes. It was just that one mention of it and nothing since then.

MS: Jesus.

CM: With all the stir there was about that radioactive gypsum, they finally got their permits.

RF: They did?

CM: Yes.

RF: I never heard about that.

CM: Yes, they got them.

RF: Shit, I never heard that. So, they're dumping.

CM: You just missed out on that one. They're dumping now.

RF: I never did. I know a guy who works for that company. I'm going to have to talk to him.

CM: Isn't it two companies?

RF: Freeport- McMoRan is the company.

CM: Yes. But isn't there another one?

RF: I didn't know about the other one.

CM: I was thinking they were two. I know the Freeport-McMoRan.

RF: I'll check that out.

CM: But it's a big money outfit.

RF: That's it.

CM: If you've got the money, you can do anything.

RF: That's it. Well, man, I'm going to –

CM: You want another cigarette maybe?

RF: No, thank you, Claude. I had enough.

CM: That's how it is.

FS: So, they used the highest criteria in these studies, and they found a great abundance of fish. It didn't matter. I think that what they should have done is not done and took that money and gave it to all the poor fishermen who had to quit fishing.

RF: [laughter]

FS: They would have come out a lot better. I felt like they kind of made us look like fools. Said, "Well, let's do this to them now."

[end of transcript]