

Jerry and Ramona Alfonso Interview

Interviewers: Don Davis and Carl Brasseaux

Ramona: It's hot out there.

Jerry: It's August. Well I say that, but it's already September, I din't know where the year went.

R: I don't know. They say the older you get, the faster it goes, and that's the truth.

Carl: My grandpaw used to tell me that all the time and it is true.

Ramona: and it's the slower you get too.

J: The teal teal are going to up in 4 or 5 days, over here. And I want to go hunting.

D: Do you hunt all 60 days?

J: No, it's only 7 days just this season. The other season is for 40 days.

D: okay. Alright.

J: The big season.

D: Alright. Well let us introduce ourselves, and we'll tell you what we're interested in.

J: Okay.

D: My name is Don Davis. I've retired.

J: Don Davis, are you related to Jimmy Davis?

D: No. and I don't sing "You are my Sunshine". I got to retire from LSU for a weekend and I went back to work, but only one day a week, and Carl is at the University of LA at Lafayette

C: Also retired.

D: And we don't really have an agenda, we've already done that. What we decided after Katrina and Rita, and this is a book that we both put together. It deals with coastal LA and putting this together, we understood that there was an awful lot of stories that have not been captured, or as Carl has said many times, "the most important information you could have provided us is right here between the 2 years. And not everything's been written, so what we're trying to do...

C: And unlike most people, we understand that the people who live here are the real experts. So that's why we're here, is to sit at your feet and learn from you.

J: Y'all ready?

D: Well almost. We have a procedural matter. We have to make the lawyers happy.

J: Lemme tell you, I was raised in the marshes.

R: Well let them do what they got to do, then we'll start.

D: Yeah, because we can't use this information or else you say it's okay to use it. And we're glad you brought your wife.

J: Well I 'm glad I brought her too. She can straighten me out on some things.

D: The thing is, we never hear the females' story. So let's get our procedural things done first.

R: Well, I never grew up down there.

D: That's alright, there's stories you know.

C: But first thing, we are taking all of these recordings and we are putting them at LSU, at the University in Lafayette, and at Louisiana Sea Grant, so that they can be used.

J: I just look over there and skin an alligator and cook it.

C: Well, there ya go. What we are doing is putting the materials out there, so that people can study the marshes now and in the future. So what we'd like to do is.. both of you to get your permission to put these materials at those places, and to make them available to people who want to study the coast, and the people who live here.

D: And give us your name. Date of birth, and permission to do that. We'll start with the male first.

J: Well what, when you're ready.

D: Right now, we're ready.

J: My name is Jerry Alfonso, I was born in 1932, October 24th, and I was born in the Depression, and ughh well I didn't know nothing about it, I was a little boy, a little baby. It was hard.

D: Do we have your permission to..

J: Yeahhhh. You can do what you want with it.

D: Alright. Now one minute.

R: Ramona Alfonso, and it's R A M O N A. And I was born March 20th 1944.

D: I am one year older than you are.

R: And I'm retired too.

D: Yes. I tell everyone that I'm tired and that I get to be re-tired. Now Mr. Alfonso, tell us your story.

J: Well, I don' t know where to start. Well imma start when I was a kid.

D: good.

J: My daddy used to take me out to a camp. And the camp he used to take me out to.. you know how them westerns with the old old shacks they stay in? That's what we were staying in, but they had cracks in it, so they had to put toilet paper all the way around.

R: And weren't they on the islands?

J: No, it was on posters I had.

D: Did the paper keep the wind out in the winter?

J: No. Ohhh yeah, I put the toilet paper all around. And put it around and put some more around. And then they had little cats, that would take our paper.. At night they used to crawl up and put it on the roof ,and uhhh my daddy used to put it on the roof, and when he laughed it over like that, he put tar. He take, they had a little can of tar. He put some tar on there and stuck it. Well the rain couldn't get in, and the cat would bed like this. In a A-frame. You could see all the ractors and everything heading home. Not gonna see it anytime.

C: Now this was a tracking cam?

J: Yeah and we stayed there 3.5 months. Well, as I got older. I stayed there, and uhhh, when I got a little older, I guess about 9 or 10 years old. My brother was a year younger than me. Vernin. And we had about 10 traps. We used to go trapping, by the end of the canal, by a bayou and all that. So one day we went, and we set traps, we was catching rats, and we had a board, a little board to put in the ground to step on the trap to be able to set them. We couldn't set them without our hands full, we were too young. And one trap, was put in a hole, and the chain was stuck in the ring in the trap, so I went down the hole with my hand. I grabbed the springer to grab the trap, because if you pull too hard and get the trap caught on your foot, it might break his foot off. Ya see, and then go off on the baby, so... and it was a cottonmouth about that big around. Cottonmouth Moccasin. It was caught right there by the neck, that's why it didn't bite me. It was caught by the neck. He had his mouth open. So then, we started running to the camp, to let mom no, in Spanish. We got a gongo. A gongo is a cottonmouth. Mom tried to understand. She understood that a gongo bit us. She didn't know what to do. We come to the camp, and she's going to kill it, kill right now, so we kill it. We went back and set the trap it was in. Everyday, we will still remember that. And I grew up like that, and I got older, my daddy got more proud, more proud, and more proud.

C: How many traps did she have there running?

J: My daddy was 250, and I was running 250. As I got older, my brothers were not trapping like me. They weren't good trappers, I was. They never had that many traps. My daddy used to give me the biggest piece of land, those traps are better for our corporation. Docking them ughhhh people.

D: Right?

J: Alright. I was trapping, and I had 200 traps like this, and one like that, I put 'em around like that, and I have 50 traps in the middle. And when you trap, you pull it in. You got traps let's say from here to the middle of this building, and then you trap from trap to trap. And then from trap to trap, you start catching the little ones, you move in. You move in, you move in, you move in and get to where your catching big ones. And when you move in plenty, then your trap is coming to one point, so you move them together and you got to pick some of them up, cus you got too many cus they were in your smaller. Ya see, cus you move it in. But at times in winter, all your traps are in the middle. And we figure that out before we put the trap, how long is it going to stay. My daddy did that before me, you know? I learned that from him. ??

D: Now how many of your family memebbers went to the camp?

J: oh, ughh my grandpaw, Willy. ?? and nenay, Aunt Camella, and ughh Uncle Jose, Georgia, Avantra, and his wife named Marie, and ughh there was camping in the Bayou, called Bayou Cypre, Cyper Dive. Cypre is Cypress. Bayou cypre, is Cypress Bayou. They had a camp worn in, in the turn, they had a camp on their side. And my daddy used to take us over there, and ?, i had a 20 gage shotgun, cracked barrel. ??, and everytime we went over there, my granda would give me a box of shells. During the war, I don't know where he got the shells from. But he'd always give me that box of shells. 25 shells, he knew I liked it. I enjoyed going to the camp, I enjoyed seeing him, cus I loved my grandfather. Both grandfathers were good shooters, and my grandfather on my daddy's side.. they had nobody, nobody, nobody that I see that could shoot better than him. Nobody. When they shoot a snipe one hand behind his back, bop, not gunna miss it. One hand behind his back, now I don't know why he would do that, but he would always did do that with snipes. Now with ducks, he's lead them in close, and call 'em and call 'em, he get them together and bop, 3 in one shot. Bop, 2 in the other shot. He always did, just like my daddy, bring back more ducks than shells that were shot. All was dead. My grandpa said, when you shoot a duck, when you shoot 2 ducks, in one shot, you save one shell. You know why they tell me that, you know. He says what you working on. At first I was hunting and then my daddy bought me a double barrel shot gun, yeah.. no, yeah, a double barrel shotgun. It was a Parker. That's a good gun. I had that. I had it for years. I hunted with it, my daddy hunted with it, my brother hunted with it. It never misfired. I went hunting with that. and my daddy hunted with me, and when my daddy hunted, we used to find the ducks, look for them, and when he'd see a school, a lot of ducks in one spot, the next morning he was right there. He had to drag the pirogue, sometimes a long way, and kill the ducks, then he had all them ducks to drag in the pirogue back and that was a lot of weight. And they're settling, that's all we had to do. You see, we had one month we could trap the seagulls? and shrimp the seagulls?, we had one month.

C: Now you'd shoot 'em for people in your New Orleans?

J: What's that?

C: Were they doing any hunting for the people in New Orleans? You talked about..

J: No. We're selling them. We're selling to people down there. From New Orleans, they're coming to get it.

D: Okay.

J: What we used to do, we used to take them like this.. and pluck the feathers from right here. From leg to leg, and pluck right there and gut em. Spin it like that, and gut them. Take their heart, gizzard, and liver out, and everything and guts, and wash them real good, and we tie 2 together like this and hang 'em up on a clothes-line and let 'em drip. And if it was cold, we didn't have to put them on ice. Now if it was hot, we had to put em on ice. We'd call em up, and they'd come down the bayou right away. They'd come right away and buy em. They used to give us uhhh for the Mallis??. They used to give us 2.5 a pair. For the pink tail, \$2 a pair. For the green duck, \$1.75 a pair. For a spoon bill, teal duck, and Dogris, a \$1 a pair. And for the Weezen??. a \$1.50 a pound. Cus a Weezen?? is as big as a grey duck is, and a Weezen?? has a small built, but he's big, he's a grey duck.

R: Tell 'em what y'all used to do at the camp at night. Play the harmonica, learn it, self-taught.

J: My daddy used to play the harmonica, oh he could play. He couldn't write his name, but he could play that harmonica, I mean make it talk. And then, him and my cousin, I think it was Richard Alfonso, we used to call him Salapio, that's what we.. everybody called him that. And uhhh, they went to town, to New Orleans, and my daddy he was drinking, so they went and bought a guitar. My daddy was walking around, I don't know what store they had been to, and he was banging on the guitar and singing, my daddy could sing. And he would sing, and people got around him like that. And so now they say he's good now. He's good, he's good, he can really sing. And the people got around him like that. My daddy

knew some songs because he heard them on the radio, and he learned them. He used to like Ernest Duff. That was his name.

D: Ernest

J: And Jimmy Rodgers. Jimmy Rodgers was the first country and western singer that I know of, that I heard about. And they're yodeling you know?

D: Right.

J: And my daddy used to yodel too. And he sang at the camp.

D: Now he learned all those songs from listening to the radio?

J: All he did was listen to the radio. And he would sit at the camp and we'd all get around him like that. He'd hit that dang thing, and we all enjoyed it, you know, watching him. We'd rather watch him than turn on the radio. So, it'd be about 10 o'clock at night when we had to go back to bed. One day, we were up for Halloween night to clean the camp out. Halloween, before the winter time, we wanted to clean the camp. And poppa said, well y'all go to bed, and we went to bed and at 3 o'clock that morning, I got up, and I stepped on a snake. I stepped on his head. And the body was hitting my leg. And I said Poppa, I used to call him Poppa, Poppa, I'm stepping on a snake. "Don't get off of it, stay like that." He went and lit the lamp, a kerosene lamp, he went and got mamma's scrubbing brush, that big. He said take your feet off. Bop bop bop bop. He killed the snake, he says "I'm sorry".

R: Tell em about the time when you and your first wife, and Cookie and her husband.

J: Oh yeah. Ya see, that was years later, my mamma said. I was married and I had 2 kids, and mamma said well Jerry, we don't have enough land for you all, for your trap. You better ask Mr. Adam if he can give you some land to trap. I said well, I was thinking about my brother in law, cus we used to shoot together in the army you know... and his name was Gene, Gene Inglada, cus my wife was named Verma Inglada, his sister. She was older than him. She was the oldest one in the family. Well, I said, "Mr. Adam, I

think you should lend me some land to trap, cus Momma said they ain't got enough land over there." And he said "Well".. he told me where to go. ???. So we went there, but I could only by Canoli Bayou. No. The forty upper canal off of Canoli Bayou on the left side, when it gets to the pipeline there it'll point there. So as they are walking in, I'm walking out. My strategy goes like that. ???. And I said Mr. Adam, I'd like to have a little piece of land for Gene to trap too, my brother in law. "He knows how to trap?" I said aww yeah. Gene traps behind the house ???. I said aw yeah he know how to trap, but Gene was a good worker. I knew he could do it. He said alright, so he gave me some land. Gene got another piece, he had to go by boat, a little boat that he had. We were putting up wallpaper at the camp. Wallpaper that would kinda have a ?? , you know? At the camp. To make it look good. And she said Jerry ..

R: Cookie.

J: Cookie. I've seen her today.

R: His cousin, his sister in law.

J: She said, "Jerry they got a lump in the wallpaper." I said "put a tack in it." She said, "I put a tack in it, but it moved." I said "put another tack in it." And the snake comes out under the wallpaper. (laughter) About 6 feet long, it was uhhh a rat snake. It wasn't a mean snake. I t wasn't a bad snake. But if you jam 'em it'll bite you. He went under the camp, and I took the shot gun and I went into the camp like that and I've seen part of him I said "powww." Cut that piece off the snake. okay, the snake went in the hole and I couldn't get it, so we had an outdoor toilet. We have an outdoor toilet with 2 holes, I see it with 2 holes One hole there and one hole there. Okay, we built it like that. Had a hole in the ground you know? And uhhh, well, Verma went to tell me goodmorning, she said, "Jerry, that got a snake in the toilet." I said where he's at? She said he's on top the seat. And there was a snack there, shot, with a piece of his tail cut off. And I went there, and I took the hatchet, and I hit him in the head with the hatchet, cut the head off, and swept the snake and head and everything into the toilet. I said, he can't bite you now. He's in the toilet, he got his head cut off. Don't worry about him. okay, I trapped a long day, 40 of the canals, and along with 40 other canals and a marsh. I ain't never seen cotton mouth like they had there, never in my life, never never never seen cotton mouths like they have there. They're huge. I killed the one that was in front of me, but the one on the side of me, I never did kill them cus I ain't, I won't be able to run my track. And the one in front of me, I'd kill him and throw him on the side. Well, I used to skin, when I get out unloading my back , I skin. You skin a musk rat and you throw the corcus away in the pond, the lil pond they had alligators there and if not, you throw it out there and the birds will eat it. None went to waste. Okay? So, I've done that. That was a precious spot the skin. I had 3 or 4 spots like that. So, I'm sitting there and I felt something right by my backside there. They had a wasp?? that morning. And I was

sitting there, it looked like I had warmed the nest up, and there was a cotton mouth coming out around the side of me. He was, he was kind of frozen like you know? So I took the knife, ... I cut his head.. I had to go over it like that.

R: It was pretty dangerous out there.

D: Oh yes!

J: Lemme tell you. The closest time I almost got bitten Charlie Alsonso was there, we call him Charlika. Well, he comes there and ughh, he asked Mr. Adams for some land, and Mr. Adam's gave him some land. Alright? Well he never had many rats though. We trapped, we had, and I think the highest ones, the highest day was 84, then it kept going down down down. They never had many rats. So he picked up the trap and left. And I told Mr. Adams, Can I go where Charlie does work? And he said yeah you can go trap there. I carried 50 canes with me from my bag, canes you know? And Jane's carrying 50. I said Jane, do you want me to stick my 50 first, or do you want to stick your 50 first? "No, you stick your 50 first." And we're going from here to about the middle of the room sticking the cane, sticking the cane. And the bundle got loose, you know? I put some canes out, so the bundle got loose, so I put a bundle from my arm, and tightened the rope again, the little string. And I threw it on a cottonmouth and I didn't know. When I grabbed the bundle of cane, and I pulled on the string, the cotton mouth went and grabbed that cane there and the poison went all over my hand, I mean, it was like like a milk. It was clear with white spots, like a milk, all over my hand. I said dang, and I killed him. And we kept on putting canes out. So I went, and I got some mud, out of a muskrat hole, and I washed my hands cus we could smell that. Then I got the clay mud way down there and I washed my hands everytime I came back, I apparently could smell it. It's a smell that I ain't never smelled before. If you smell that, then you won't forget it. We stuck all the canes, then we went to the camp. I washed my hands with soap, real good to get that smell off. My wife had perfume, I put perfume on my hand to get the smell off. You know how I got the smell off? Gasoline. I put gasoline on, adn gasoline gets right in the core right away. I put gasoline on it, and washed my hands with gasoline for a while, then I washed it with soap, cus gasoline burns you, if you leave it like that. That got the smell off. That's the closest I have come, that much and he would've bitten me, that much more. A half inch and he'd have gotten me. And he wasn't that big, he was about that big, but they poisonous. It wasn't a male, it was a female. You see a male, his jaw is black and a female's is kind of brownish. But when you're coming, when you're walking, when you get to him, he's got his mouth open. His white mouth. If it wasn't for his white mouth, you wouldn't see him. But his white mouth is like that open, looking right at you like all the way, it's open like that. He' won't bite you. You could put your foot right there, and he ain't going to bite you. Bu if you touch a grass, and the grass touches him, then it'll bite you, cus it thinks that you touched it. A cotton mouth is bad. They are going to look like a rattle snake, a rattle snake where you can reach, he's gonna get you. And they have copper head, them little copper heads, we call em ground rattlers. Copper heds, they are bad too. And they

have plenty of them. But they are the color of leaves. When I was trapping, they'd get in our traps and mix with all that. They are the color of the leaves, you got to watch that. They role up like this,curk up like this, a little role like that. And if you get close to them, they'll bite you. And they are poisonous.

R: Can I say something?

J: Alright.

R: His mother was the jack of all trades.

J: My Momma could do anything.

R: Women from down here did everything. And my father in law at one time got very ill, and he couldn't run his traps, and they didn't want the animals to rot. My mother in law ran the traps with the rat back on her back. And she got it, she got all of the traps run. And to me she was something, she..., and she was a little bitty thing, she wasn't even 5 feet tall.

J: Let me tell you what happened. My aunt Mosa, her name was Florence, but we used to call her Mosa. She went with Momma, and momma had the rat bag, and they had a mink in the trap. And she hit the mink, they thought she killed it, so she puts it in the trapping bag, and it moved on her. She had it on her shoulders and said Mosa, it's going to bite me. And Mosa said to put it back in the rat bag. And my grandpaw was trapping with my daddy and them. My grandpaw took him and drowned him. And we got back to the camp, and... my mother could do anything, she could flat out the net, if a net was broken in 3 pieces, she'd fix it...

R: She was one of the top ones in repairing a net down there. Crochet. She cooked, she sewed.

J: I broke one one day, and she'd come and spread it out in the yard, and she'd start sewing sewing and sewing and she put it right back together like it was.

R: When they were children, she made their clothes. I don't know how she did it, because she baked bread, she cooked, and she had all kind of other stuff to do with them.

J: Edgar Billgay(??) (enters.) Hello Hello.

E: How are yall?

R: Hi.

E: How you been?

R: Fine and you?

R: Anyway, umm

C: I'm Carl Brasseaux sir.

D: Don Davis, we've met at your house with your sons. Yeah, some time ago. Please sir have a seat.

J: We caught ughh one went to the corner, 13,000 musk rats. 4,600. We caught that day, my grandpaw built me a boat, I had a little money. We was getting 50 pictures 2/10's. I paid for the muskrat, and we had a good \$35.

D: To the land cook?

J: There's a land cook, \$35 is a lot of money, and we was getting 60lbs, and we were getting 30lbs. But we didn't have to buy anything. But we made money. That year, my grandpa gave me a boat. I asked my

granpa, I said "Grandpa, you wanna give me a boat?" He said "what size?" I said I wanted a 24 ft. long and 8 feet wide, at that time that was a big scale you know. So he built, he said "come along, will you help me?" I said yeah. He wrote the number, now he couldn't write his name, but he wrote the number down on a piece of paper saying go to the riverside of the lumbar yard. Tell a n*gger in there not to give you no sap. Well that's who he was, a black man. Tell the black man not to give you no sap. The sap ain't no good you know. It's straw. So i'm looking and i'm looking, I said look, I don't want no sap. And he was trying to take me to sap. So I bought the lumber, some of them had sap. And my grandpa he was better than that. He'd stare at the bottoms and the sides. I had built the boat. Things started to happen and not happen and all that. They built it alright. They have a man named Walter Montrey. He used to have the checker cab company in New Orleans. And his friend, alright? He said, "look, you got a boat, and got a motor to put on it. I got plenty of motors". I said yeah, he brought the motor, and he had a transmission that big. I said Mr. Montrey, I can't use that motor, I got the transmission is too long. So he went and brought a truck transmission. That big, with a ship on top. I put that in there, and I went to Missiatchi(?) on St. Rock, and I had that carpen turned down and everything turned out to cooperate, the sheriff and every thing in there picked right. Got everything down there, brought the strap and put it down there, and I was shrimping, catching shrimp. My uncle gave me a trough. Victor Perez had gave me a trough 35 ft. long. For that trough. Alright, I was catching shrimp, but Larry Gonzales said, "Jerry, I can take that trough and make a balloon trough and you'll catch way more." And he was right. So, he comes home and he starts taking his trough apart here and there, and sewing here and there, got a little dirty weather. He said put chain all the way. Hanging chain like that on the levee line on the bottom line. Aww man I caught some shrimp with that trough. Okay, then my wife shrimped with me. Every morning going out, she had a pillow, she used to lay down and cover with a blanket going out. And the motor had a hot manipole, I used to run it with a hot manipole, but right back at the manipole, I had a half changed pipe where the water used to go in and it just wasn't hot going out the back of the boat. But my wife just stayed right, close to the hot manipole and she was warm you know. We were strolling outside a hunting bank. You know where that's at. And ughh shrimping out there. They had big shrimp. 16.9. (very loud beeping...) That's just an alarm, and I don't know how to turn it off either. (beeping continues while he talks) I caught shrimp with a claw, and I made money. And then I made my money, I wanted to raise it up and make it higher. I told my brother in law, I want to make it 6 inches higher. I want to make the boat higher. And when you make it higher, the boat's like this, when you make it higher, it's going to be wider. You see, the bottom stops, but the deck will be wider. And we done that. And I had a bigger boat then. We shrimp with it, I sat down in the back. One day I was shrimping, so help me God, I was shrimping out there, way out. I didn't see no other boat. And I pick up, in about one hour, I pick up a basket and a half of them big shrimp. I threw it back over. In one hour a pick up another basket, and they got blew to the north west. The weather was getting bad. I said maybe I could make a little drag before the weather gets here. And I made another drag when I was picking up, I got everything on the deck, the weather hit me. And it was raining. I mean rain, I couldn't see, I couldn't see nothing. So I put the boat straight like that to where I wanted to go. Straight like that. God had to be with me. And I head to the high land, right in the middle. I was a long ways out. And I had a small boat, 24 feet long. And they had big waves. And I stayed there, thank God. Well, I shrimped all over and then I trapped, and ughh well my daddy would trap on Manus Canal. And I had to walk. Victor Perez, you remember Victor Perez? I had to cross their land and then my daddy's land to be able to get tto my land where I was trapping.

From Manus canal. So the following year, they moved around to Oak river. That body they call Oak river. They moved to Oak River. And they got a place to call Kadencleaux(?). That's where my grandpaw was born. My daddy's daddy, he was born there. From there to Spanish lake they had 35 families at that time. Well my grandpaw, he trapped with my daddy. My grandpaw, he had land over here in Bayou Sippley(?). They never had many muskrats that come, but my daddy and my uncle still trap them over there. And my daddy helped him out you know. And he helped my daddy too. It was good company. What?

R: Tell em how you used to hunt alligators.

D: Well that's what I was going to ask.

J: Well, the alligators..

R: This is before the season was closed.

J: They didn't have many alligators. You had to go in the marsh. And ughh, well we had a pole. We had a pole, we had the pole like this. And at the end of the pole, it was big and comes to a point like that. And on the other end, we had a hook, we had a steal hook.

C: It was a metal hook?

J: Yeah, and we had nails around it like this, and the hook was latched on the end. Now we drill a hole there and put the part that we put the nails around. And it hooked this way. So, alright, you steer them out of the hole. When you're looking for an alligator, you find a hole, and you go like this with the pole. Go to the north end up to the south end. He ain't gonna be on the east end and the west. He's gonna be on the north end, or south. And I went to the north end and then the south. I went like that and then pull one in. I said poppa, this is the hole.

R: They had air pockets down there, underground. So the alligators would be there.

J: But let me.. That was another time, that was another time. And poppa said look I'm going to jerk like that, and you take the hatchet with the ????? He said now you got to hit him hard and uhhh, he struck like that, and the alligator come out like this, bowww I hit him in the head. ???. Put the hatchet on him. Put him on the bank, finished killing him, and skin him. Put the skin in the bag. Leave the alligator there and the birds and all that would eat it. And uhhh the next time, I don't know if you know Bozons, You know Bozons, Grant Bozons(?). Bozons's daddy Randy, Ranou. We used to call him Ranou, it was his nickname. He was married to my aunt Otella. ??. We were gonna find, and they had a ?? digging master now, and he said over here they got a farm, got 65 little ones in it??. Like that. And they have a trapping bag in the back. My daddy and Randy wee trying to get the alligators, and I was catching the little ones and putting them in the rat bag. Okay and uhhh Ranou said, "Jerry come here. Stand right here by me." And the alligator had, coming out the hole, they had a channel in the ground like that, in the marsh. And he had a channel this way. And the channel on this side, they had the grass, but it was on top the channel, and they never had it, the grass was growing in the water like. And I was standing in the grass though, and poppa would usually say, "Randy, it's comin out." It was 10 ft. and I'm going up, and Ranou said Jerry don't move. I said I'm not moving. He said don't move. I said I'm not moving. he said but your going up and down. Poppa said ooo look at it come out in the middle of the pond. Ranou said he passed under Jerry, and he passed under me. Okay. We look at the alligator. And an alligator goes down this way. That one went down like this. Poppa said you know why he went down frontwards like that? He went to another hole. So the hole wasn't that deep, and we went there. And Randy had a big stump. Randy had the hatchet and I was standing over here. The alligator comes out. He had a snout that wide. ?? he had a stranger stomach. Randy couldn't hit him like that. (laughter). So I see the alligator's snout open up, and I was looking at him. The alligator went back in the hole. He came out and done the same thing. Next time he says Jerry when it comes out again, I'm going to give you the hatchet, and you jump out the hole and imma grab him. So when it come out like that, Randy gives me the hatchet and I jump out. And bring the foot back and grab it like the alligator's snout like that and mouth like that and grab around him like this. Wow wow wow, across the pond, Ranou's blade was doing that, and the alligator he wasn't letting go. The one on the other side of the pond, and they had that duck grass in there and a duck field. Poppa went around there with the pond.. around the pond, he's trying to see where his head of the alligator was, (laughter) and they got the alligator's head and they start hitting it and hitting it and got him out. They finished killing it. Randy had more mud on him than the alligator. (laughter) Randal was like an alligator himself.

D: Now do you remember cutting sometimes it's called a pirogue ditch, sometimes it's called a trenand, sometimes it's ...

J: A trenasa

D: Yeah, how did you do that? How did you build a trenasa?

J: I would ughh... They had one of them things you rake, I rake.

D: Okay.

J: That was like this, it would pull 5 things going down, tank is going down like this, and ughh you stake it like that in mud and your gunna dig and they can give you a shovel too if the ground was hard. But you stick it like that and you pull on it. You pull the mud lumps this way, and the other guy pulls them that way and the lady digs. Some people call it a trenasa(?). But we call it a san.

D: A what?

J: A san, san in Spanish. San, we call it a san in Spanish. Some people call it a trenasa, but we don't call it a trenasa. French people call that a trenasa. We call it a a san. And ughh, digs a ditch to go up to the trapping land we were trapping in. Take the pirogue, and go up to the ditch.

C: Did y'all put something to keep the tidal water from..

J: Well the ditch won't come to the bayou, to the main bayou. You leave it closed there, you don't open that part up. And you leave the pirogue by the ditch there, when you're coming trapping. And the ditch, that way you're water, the water will stay in the ditch. My daddy used to trap in there and leave the ditch too. I used to go through the ditch all the way to the other end of the ditch and start trapping. Nate used to trap on that side, Nate you remember, Nate my brother. Alright, Nate used to trap on that side, Vernon trapped in the back, Jessie trapped right on the side of me, but they wasn't good trappers. They never had many trappers like I was. Vernon was a mechanic at the camp. Vernon fixed the motor and fixed everything. We had a little ughhh we had a little one cylinder acro motor, a little bitty one, with a generator with a belt, and start ughh..

C: Is that the kind with the big fly over here?

J: No. Startred with a little.. start it and charger ughhh the battery were really overrun. Well one day, momma was washing with the wash board, 5 boys, 5 pairs of pants, and my daddy.

R: And 2 cousins.

J: And when it was happening, me and Verny used to twist the clothes you know? Twist it. When momma was washing it, she put it at the top of the rinsers, and me and Verny would collect it and hang it on the line, and happy momma. So one day me and Verny went to the house. She said go see the washing machine. I remember that. Go look under the washer machine and you had a pindle(?) with a timer on it. We took the washer machine to the camp, and we hooked the conveyer belt to the little motor, and we crank it up. Man that washer machine was washing, we'd stir the water out if we get that motor at high speed, and the ringer was woking too. Momma was so happy. She was so happy. We blocked the washer machine, the lake went conmo(?)?. And ughh so we done that. Trying to help my momma out you know.

C: Right. That's brilliant.

J: Cus she needed help. She had no sisters to help her. momma used to bake the best bread you ever ate. She used to.. we had a big potbelly stove. Big like that, and it was high on top where you put the pots and all that, but here you had about 8 cupboards like this. And here you put the wood on the side, and they had an oven in it. Momma used to bake the best bread I ever ate. I mean she used to take the flour, eascake(?), baking powder, and worked up the flour, worked up the dough, worked the dough, worked the dough, work the dough, and put it like that, put a rag over it like that. The pan, put it like that, and let it rise. The next day, she made the best beignets, now people don't make good beignets here. She used to make beignets. They used to swell up like that.

R: They called em torctus.

J: We used to call them torctus. Torctus we used to call them. And the bread used to von-creolia(?). Von-creolia. That's what we called the bread, von-creolia(?). And we used to take that hot bread, cut a slice and put that butter on it, HA. Drink some coffee and eat that, for any slice of bred drink 2 cups of coffee, we'd go til 2 o'clock in the day. (laughter).

R: That coffee the spoon could stay standing up (laughter).

J: Noo no, it's not that strong. Momma used to like it strong, but it wasn't that strong.

D: Now when you were.. explain to us a day in the life of a trapper. I mean you got up, and then what did you do for that day?

J: That day, I went around my traps first thing in the morning.

D: All 250?

J: All 250. Oh no you can't wait, if you leave some of them without running, and the rat's dead in the trap, and the sun hits it, you got a green belly the next day.

D: Okay.

J: And you can't have a green belly on a muskrat, cus they'll pass it for tainted rats. You see? they wasn't bad but they sell em for tainted rats, so we got to run them everyday. And everyday. Rain or shine.

C: Now of those 250 traps, how many would you normally.. how many rats would you normally get in a day?

J: Well, when I set a trap, I go work on my trap, work on my trap, set a trap here, set it where the rat passes. You see, where the rat passes, that's where you got to set it. Set it where the rat passes. Next day, we, if it was a good night like a frost night, calm calm night, the rats come out. Now when the wind blows, the rats don't come out too much. When the wind blows. But when it's calm, rats come out.

R: What was an average?

C: Of the 250, when you would normally make a round?

J: I guess about 150.

C: Of the 250? That many?

J: Yeah. 150 all the time with the hot weather and all you know? Cus with the hot weather, you don't catch as much as you catch with the cold weather. Well we trap, and uhhh Harry Robertson used to sell the canes, cane weeds, he used to cut them and my daddy used to buy cane from him. He said Harold I need some cane, and I don't know how many bundles, 100 of bundles he'd bring.

R: When you came back in from catching the rats, didn't you start skinning them?

J: We skinned them in the marshes, and we skinned them when we get home, to the camp.

C: Now when you say you skinned them in the marsh, you filtered..gathererd them in the marsh?

J: No. No. You skinned, you get the skin. You don't keep the corcus. The meat, you don't keep the meat. You keep the skin. The skin don't weigh much. And you throw the corcus away. You see? And the birds eat it. Or you throw it in the water, in the pond, and the alligators eat it. None went to waste, none went to waste.

D: Now when you got...

R: And then from there then you got to put them through the wrapper and..

J: Aww yeah, we had to, we had to take him, bring him in, I got the rat ringer home yeah. Take him, bring him in and wash him in a number of 3 of them. Wash them real good. And take their bottom lip and their top lip and pull it in the rat ringer, and ring it, and all the excess meat will come out the skin. You pop it like that, and you'll throw him on the side and then you hang him up, and all the part dries.

C: When you hang him up, you turn him inside out?

J: No. no. You hang him up and the club dries, and you got rat stretches made like this. You turn them inside out then, and you put the rat stretcher in it, and you stretch it real good and you hang him up there. And they dry. You see? It takes about 3 days to dry good. Sunny days you know? And then ughh we take em and put em on bunches, 50 to a bunch. ?? and put em in boxes.

R: Tell em where you stored them. Where you keep em 'til you sold em.

J: Well, my daddy wanted, my daddy was keepin em in his room. Him and Momma's room.

R: In their bedroom. (laughs).

D: It must've smelled.

J: It always smelled. One time, momma said, "we gotta go to the island and buy some groceries, buy flour, and we're gonna get bread while we are down there and all." So we went to the island, ended up 5 boys, us we stood at the camp. And Jessie went in momma's room and started digging. He said we want some of that hershey bar. Alright. He gave me 2 squares, he gave Nathan 2 squares. And he's greedy, he took 3 squares. And he gave Vernon 3 squares. Then momma had come from the camp. And we all had a pain in our stomach. I said I have a pain in my stomach mom. Mom said "I cooked red beans and rice, you shouldn't have pains in your stomachs. What y'all ate?" Nothing but the hershey bar you had there. And it was axlax(?). (lots of laughter). It was axlax mom. Mom said no wonder, they made it out to the toilet, and we were going back and forth. We were something. Nathan was, he used to like to drink a little bit, and he used to like to fight. When he goes somewhere, he.. Nathan used to fight. Nathan used to hit hard. He had big arms like that, he used to have arms like a mule. He wasn't that tall, but he was stocky. And he could handle himself, so I said Nathan, let's go in. You're gonna get drunk here, and you're gonna get in a fight. You might get all busted up. He said Jerry, I never get busted up. I said let's

go home, you gotta run your traps tomorrow and all that. Mom said come on home. Momma was the boss. Not Poppa, Momma was the boss. Momma said come home. "You tell momma if she wants me to come home, for her to come and get me." So I went all the way to Karenclo out there for an hour with a big bopple big boat, 2.5 hours to take, I told momma I wanted. I bought a roast beef for all of us, each one of us. I told momma, I said Nathan said that if you want him to come home, for you to come get him. And she was eating the roast beef like that. She said well whatever happens to him, he deserves it. She took the roast beef and just threw it in the yard. She took the roast beef that I bought and she threw it in the yard. I said Lord, look at this. I would've never thought that my momma would do that. And I still think my momma used to like the other boys more it seemed like than me. I caught all the hell. I caught all the hell. I used to go with my daddy when I was a little boy hunting. And I used to go with him and figure it out. I was a little boy, and I could never tell you the day my daddy missed a duck. I could never tell you, never tell you. I've never seen my daddy miss a duck. My daddy was like my grandpaw. He told me, he said look, when you see a flock of ducks coming, 5 or 6, you look at them when they get over and are quiet, when they look, when they get in a bunch and look like one, that's when you shoot. When they get in a bunch, and you can't see through them like that, that's when you shoot. And that's how I learned. But now, You can see that what you did that time, the game warden still won't bother you, you know. You go kill 20, 15 ducks, they won't bother you. You clean 'em and pluck 'em and at the back of the camp, it was cool at the back of the camp, on the ground, under the camp, we used to put them in there, gut them in there and cut em in there , and they'd stay cool.

D: What would you cover them with?

J: What?

D: what would you put on top of them? You said you cut 'em...

J: Put a.. Put a piece of rag on top of them.

D: Okay.

J: And uhhh, like that. (inaudible). We used to eat ducks everyday everyday. Full of those, then you're full of those. One day, me and Nathan was going hunting and Jagger(?) came up behind us, sneaking, sneaking in the land behind us. And they had dear there. I had a buckshot. I had that Belgar(?) shotgun, and I want a gun by Alseetcamp Etipont(??) gun. You know what an Etipont gun is?

D: Yes.

J: Okay. I want one like that. Vername used to like the eticapont gun. Now it's a double barrel. And we're going, tracking 'em dead, tracking 'em dead, tracking 'em dead. And if pooldue look like that, (inaudible). (inaudible) buckshot, I said no, I got 5 buckshots, 5 7.5 shots. Prepare. (inaudible). The pooldos are going to go one handle like that. Bap! Bap! Bap! Bap! Bap! And shot it. Nathan went in the water picking up. He picked up 65. The cripple was, well we don't know how many cripple they had. And I took my belt off. And I passed the belt through the thing like that. And I got the pooldo by the neck. And pull him and pull him and pull him, and squeeze him like that. Nate done the same thing. And we were throwing the.. dragging the pooldos. We had to drag 'em to the pirogue. You see, now we're going to have to kill more deer. And Meme was at the camp, my daddy's momma, Meme. Aww she loved the pool duck. When we'd come back with the pooldo, oooo my children are growing. Then we used to gut the pooldos, and pluck them. And they are hard to pluck. And they are hard, but we pluck em. And when they heard that chek chek chek chek chek, from my daddy to my momma's room. And the geizard, the geizard of pooldos is like that you see. We clean the geizard, see you take it and you clean it on the outside and cut it open, and clean the inside out, and momma used to make a gumbo with that. See that gumbo, ha. And cook a pile of rice, and cook that. Oh that was good. And she used to take duck, she'd roast 'em in a big pot, a big iron pot. She roasted 9 canaw(?) and ughhh well we had Curtis with us, Curtis at the camp, you remember Curtis at the camp Vern? Well Curtis was with us, cus my uncle died, ya see? And my aunt was by herself raising, they had 5 kids. And Curtis was the oldest one. And we had him at the camp, my daddy used to help him mop. Get him some to give to his momma you know? That was my daddy's sister. So we helped him out. And then ughh we had Curtis,

R: Roney.

J: Roney, and Sydnika..Sydnika..Sydney. Sydney ughhh Sydney Moralis, no Sydney ughh Sydney, Sydney Moralis

R: Yeah

J: Moralis, yeah. Sydney Moralis, he had a son named Sydney too, so we had to call him Sydnika. Sydnika. He was the oldest son. Ooo he used to work, he used to trap hard. My daddy had them all. They all worked hard. My daddy gave them money for them to give to their mom and daddy. Chilow, he

wasn't catching many rats. And what he was catching, he was gambling all the money, Boston Jew, and all them people used to come to the island and would sack some money in July with the gambling money. Uncle Nanny, Uncle Nanny, his name was George but they call him Nanny after my aunt Lauren. Well, he had a song on named Blaine, Blaine used to be in the navy. Uncle Nanny was shootin' dice, he used to gamble too shootin dice. (inaudible). They say yeah Blane, shoot the dice. Crap. Crap. Opening the kitchen, and then we hear bop! He got it. (laughter).

R: Back then the families used to stick together and help eachother.

J: Yeah, well, then when Sydney had a rat, he'd lie "I had a rat." Then I went trapping with him. He gave me 40 traps. I was catching 35.. 35, 33 rats everyday. And they had some snap traps and some that I didn't catch I know. And my daddy kept trapping for the company. For Bellecorps Cooperation. Cus they never had enough rats. Now me and Stasha, what I was making there, I was giving to my dad and my momma. Every penny I made, I give it to mydaddy and my mom til the day I got married. Well..

R: Tell 'em how you used to court Verma. This is his first wife.

J: My first wife, I used to ughh

R: Swim down the

J: We had a boat. Dad had a boat (inaudible). Well first when I went see her, She lived across the bayou. My Cadwei(?) used to live a little further up the road. And we went, and she was pushing a little 3 wheel bike with the kids on top you know, playing with the kids. So I come to see this girl and look what she's doing.

R: He told me he used to swim down the bayou too to go visit her.

J: Well let me tell you, well, we went there, I said Verma what you doing? And she kinda liked me. You know she stopped doing what she was doing, so I kept going across the bayou to see her, everything's good. So i was finally taking her to a show, they had a theater down there. We went there so I'm

bringing her back home, took her to the show and I'm bringing her back, and Arthur my cousin, Arthur Perez. August's his brother. He was mad we were going out in the rain. And we were renting a little house from Charley, uhhh I forgot his last name, but anyhow, it was a short drive. I used to take his boat, his crab boat, we used to go across the bayou to see my cousin. So one day, I'm going take the crab boat, and the rope is going under the house like that. I'm pulling on the rope, pulling on the rope. And it'll come up about that much. Pulling on the rope. And Loraine, the rope was tied to the foot of the deck. (laughter). And I'm pulling on the rope. Louise said "Arthur, the room is moving." And Arthur comes out there and he says "Jerry what you doing?" I said man your rope was hooked down there, somewhere. He said it's tied to the foot of my bed, (inaudible).

R: He wanted to say..see who was taking his boat.

J: The kid who was taking his boat across the bayou at night, and when he wanted to go catch crab the nextt day, the boat was on the otherside of the bayou. He couldn't go.

D: Well this is getting real good, we wonder, Mr. Dokeith(?), can we ask him to sit right here please?

R: Sure.

D: We'd like for you to join us, and talk a little bit please, umm we have a couple of things we need to talk over, but the two of you could maybe kibbets a bit? Umm because, there are important stories that you could probably tell us, we want to do this for about 30 more minutes. Umm and then we're going to have to drive back, in my case Baton Rouge, and Carl has to go to Lafayette. First of all, the two of you, you met us once before at your son's house. You were putting up the new building amd you were going dancing, Thursday night. We don't, we don't really have an agenda (phone ringing- Jerry answers)

R: It's off?

D: No.

C: No.

C: I can turn it off

D: No no, we can turn it off.

End.

Jerry and Ramona Alfonso Interview Continued:

Interviewed by Don Davis and Carl Brasseaux

Jerry: The first time they sent it, everyone got on the back of the boat and one got on the motor of the boat. And the one in the motor of the boat, well, (inaudible) they were coming from Plaquemine with the boat. These people were from Texas though (inaudible). They were from Texas. We've got these people on there that were going to Allen, and tried to wipe the.. ughh everything, all the people at the island (inaudible....). Okay, alright, that's what happened. They were there and ughhh when they come around, they had man named Menilia.. Menilia, Menilia, he looked like a.. he looked like a gorilla. (Laughter, inaudible) And let me tell you, they come around the island like that, the way my daddy come, they come around the island like that boat like that, Menilia was trying to, with the pistol, trying to shout up in the air for them to stop. Bop! They shot. And that's how they would shoot. And they shot the machine gun on top was in the house on top, the one on the bottom was in the bay, that far from the road. You see? And that's because they had the people, they were shooting shotguns. Shotgun, shotgun, shotgun.

Ramona: The guns would not in the right positions.

J: Double on buck shots, they were shooting double on buckshots.

Don: Now these were texans?

J: Yes.

R: Mhmm.

J: And when they got to the bayou, they go to Lake Larry, one of 'em, they don't know who it was, shot and cut the gas line.

D: Ahhh.

J: Cut the gas line, in the boat, right before he got to the bayou to go to Lake Larry, the boat stopped and it went to the bank. Alright, (inaudible) with my grandmother's husband, 1st husband, and he went running to the bank, they had one man that wasn't hit, and they had one that was hit, cus the other 2 were dead, and ughh they had one that was hit in the neck but he was still living. The other one that wasn't hit was running through the prairie, and the Porka porcho(?) got a double-barrel shotgun took it apart, and he hit him in the head with the back of the barrel. Wow! He said "You say your good for 50 Spanish men, take this." and he hit him, twice, alright. He died on the way up. When Claud Maro, he was a sheriff okay, they asked him, he asked them, he take and come and get the dead bodies they had at the island. He said yeah. We're all hunters here, we hunting duck and all, we aint killing people to eat. Were killing cus they was trying to kill us. That's what he told him. We're killing them cus they were trying to kill us. So, they got the ughh dead bodies and brought them up.

D: Whatever happened to the boat?

J: I went home. Oh! The boat was by Rick Perez's ughhh by Perez's house. Over there in Plaquemine. Towards the river there. It was forked there like that. On land, it was like that for years. I don't know why that happened to it. It wasn't a big boat.

D: Had a lot of holes in it.

J: Inaudible. And they got in the alligator went there, he had 40 buck shots in his page cus he's down there and they thought they thought they were missing so they kept shooting at him.

R: I just... those people could shoot good and hit a target.

Inaudible.

J: They was all back hunting and trapping, and all that. But he wanted to land and take the land away from the people. Alright, he got the land. He got the land across the bayou. That's the Plaquemine side. That's Plaquemine parish across the bayou from the island. Across the bayou. When you go down there and you pass Lake Larry. Pass it by going by Lake Larry, on the other side is plaquemine parish. Thaty's not St. Bernard parish. Now when you pass the bayou and Lake Larry, on the other side is St. Bernard. But the bayou that goes to Lake Larry right through the channel from the channel to Lake Larry to the left is Plaquemine, to the right is St. Bernard. Perez got that. But he's not there no more. He died too.

D: Well thank you, I think that's a great way to end.

J: I'll tell you what, I'll tell you what. It was ughh, my grandpaw told me, my daddy told me, my 2 grandpaws told me, my daddy told me, my uncle told me, and other people, other people, mhmm.

D: The trappers war.

J: And for the trapping land, they wanted the land to trap. At that time, trapping muskrat that was like oil now. Like oil wells now. Trapping, that's where all the money is at. The money was there. Yeah, my uncle used to go trapping and there were men that used to buy the rats green. You know, raw like that. Buy 'em like that, got 'em like that and my uncle used to take the big ones and cut 'em in half. (laughter). And he packaged 2 pieces for 2 rats. My uncle was something, boy.

R: When the kids were small, he went back to trapping, and he was trapping, and then 2 of our boys would go after school, I'd go bring 'em. I'd come home from work, go bring them down to Scarsdale, drop them off they'd get in their boats and run their traps, then I had to go home and start cooking dinner and do my house work. That was rough. But anyway, in the meantime, when they would come home, and he would bring the boys home. He would wait for them to come in. So anyway, when they would skin the rats and do everything they had to do, they needed to dry 'em. And so anytime it's too damp out, to put 'em out to dry. So he would line

the kids up, with blowdryers, hair blowdryers, and then they'd open the felt and blow in. (laughter, inaudible). And then, he didn't wanna put 'em in the shed because anybody could break in the shed. So what he did was he put 'em n the attic with the central heat. (laughter). I mean when they burped it smelt like rats. Oh it stunk.

J: But when I had a sale going on, I called the I called TC Schmit and a bunch of other buyers from all over, Pontatula and all over, down here too. Ben Russell and ughhh other buyers they had there. I don't remember who.

R: This is when they were still skinning 'em.

J: Harvey Robinson. They'd come put a bid on 'em. When they look at your rats, they bid 'em like that, the green, the little one, the big one, the one that got fur, and the one that don't have too much fur, and all, they don't have to do that, they know what they're going to give you fot it. So they take a little piece of paper and they write what they're going to give you. The other guy don't know. They give you 4 or 5 pieces of paper however many buyers they got, and you look at 'em and the one that pays the most, if you want to sell them, you sell them. I always sell them. And ughh Bruce Gary put that.

Bruce: I used to buy rats I liked.

J: Yeah. Lemme tell you, lemme tell you.

R: They had trucks up and down both sides of our street with people...

J: But lemme tell you, I usually take my muskrat and put 'em on a stretcher, and put a close-pin on each side so the skin wouldn't go up. And Bill Russell said, " man, these are long rats, boy they're big eh?" And ughh I said well, Bill, that's the way I catch 'em. (laughter). I wasn't going to tell 'em what I was doing, there ain't no way I'd tell him what I was doing. Bruce Gary said

"well, I don't know if imma buy your rat." Bill Russell bid Bruce Gary about \$15, they gave me \$4,500. Bill Russell bid Bruce Gary about \$15. (laughter)

R: He had a bid. Bidders coming for his alligators.

J: Oh I had them from all over.

R: And this is when they were skinned okay and wrapped up salt, so anyway, I guess he let the word out and the trucks were lined up and down our street, and they had all kind of men at the house, I took the kids and had to get out. You know? So anyway, come home and they were still working, I mean this is after a long time. So then I left again with the kids, and I come home and everybody was gone, including him. they all went to a bar or.. So anyway, within a matter of, well the next day our neighbors wanted to ask the kids what kind of party there daddy had at the house, and I'm going why, that was number 1. Number 2, by the third day, I did not have one piece of green grass in my front yard from that salt. It killed all the grass in the front yard.

J: But it started coming out, it came out. But lemme tell you,

R: It came back.

J: They had a, they had 2 pieces of ply wood, 2 sheets of ply wood.

R: Oh. And I had Popeye's boxes even in the bathroom, beer bottles back yard, front yard, and every room in the house. They had Popeye boxes. But I couldn't get over Popeye boxes in the bathroom.

J: I had a, they had a, what was I going to tell the people, they wanted to eat, I said go ahead and buy it, buy a box of Popeye's chicken whatever you want.

R: I shoulda got a tip for cleaning up.

J: They would love coming and selling alligator.

D: Well how many alligators were you selling?

J: I was selling 250.

Carl: Oh my God, well that's, yeah!

D: Well yeah, I can understand your problems.

J: I had all the Delacore Cooperation tags you see? At that time, I was working for the Delacore Cooperation, I had all the tags at that time. Okay, well, they had other buyers and other people hunting alligator that they had tags too. And other people and other people. They had (inaudible) and Canon Fox, they all have tags too. And they all come home, I tell them I'm selling the alligator, they say "when you selling the alligator?" I say, "tomorrow." And they all come there, and they had 2 sheets of ply wood like that on horses, on strong horses like that. With a number like that, 1 2 3 4 5, I had 14ft. They had a (inaudible), and they take that. My son is a big man, and his brother in law is a big man. And we take the alligator, we skin it, and when we get home, we spread it out and put salt on it. That much salt on there, and we roll it up, roll it up tight, roll it up tight and put it in the plastic barrel. And role it up tight. Put the little one, the big one. Alright I had 2.5 barrels full, the other guys come and I told this guy here, I told Kim, I said look, you pull on the skin. I told Pauley, Pauley grabbed me by the jaw, the bottom of the jaw, and said you pull on it. Don't worry about what the guys tell you. Cus when you take it out the, when you stretch it out, It looks like this, the skin. You pull it out straight and the pulling on the skin is going kik kik kik kik kik(sounds)." Boy you cracking the skin!" No, you're not cracking the skin. They got a scab on top the skin. That might be, the skin is just stretching, but they got a scab that protects it's skin. And it don't ughhh between the scab and the alligator,

they got a skin you see, and the skin shrinks in the salt, and when you pull it, it's crackless. I said now you pull it, and then you pull and pull, and it will go (inaudible). Imagine if you got 12 feet 6 inches, well you put the 12 feet down there and 6 inches of paper each too.

D: Ahh.

J: Yeah. You add up all the inches and everything, and uhhh they uhhh (inaudible)... That was a crook, the guy's sons who learned from Vern doing 'em. Inaudible. He take the alligator (inaudible). You look at it right here Buckmons, then he threw them aside. Button, a button(?), I say, " what alligator was worth buying for 50 cents, I said look, leave the alligator alone. There ain't no such thing as a button. Aww yeah they got button's, I said no. No, these no, no .no. You see a buckman is under their.. between the skin and the fat for the meat. You cut it, and they got a little bitty bone in their. But it's not in the skin. It's in the bottom of the skin. He was saying button, button, button, button. I said no, you're not here, get get get get get out of here now. (laughter). Inaudible. The other guy started, but man I don't remmber ehy I'm buying 'em. The other guy was uhhh would buy 'em from I don't remember the other man's name.

B: See an alligator with a button, they can't tenderize the skin, Kale when they take him to the scale, they can't make the (Inaudible).. the button is tall.

J: Yes they can, no they can!

B: They put it through this machine here and that's why the belt is not as soft. But when it came, when they say it's got a button, they want to get a button in there, because you get it for nothing.

J: Yeah but that's cheaper, the button, you get it for 50 cents. Inaudible.

R: So he ripped you off?

D: Well it sounds that way.

J: Well sure it is. The button was on the head, on the head, you see the alligator when he's getting on the bank, they see it rubbed on the ground. And when he's getting off the bank, they see it rubbed on the ground. And it makes his skin kinda hard, the inside the skin. You see? That's what they call a (inaudible) right her. Not her not nowhere's else, right here, right there. When he gets to the banks, the big alligator just rubs on the ground. That's when they get super rough, you know? It's just like you like the..

D: Calluses

J: You see, same thing.

R: When he came to business, you didn't tell people it was supposed to be tight. You're no French giver reputation for being tight. Not French, Italien, they have a reputation for being tight. My ex father in law's daddy was Italien and I tell you, he was tight. So anyway, in the meantime, I told Elizabeth you shouldve been a Jewish (Laughter, inaudible).

Unidentified Man: Well I hate to tell you Ramona, but with this Perez background, he does have some subardic ancestors. (laughter)

J: My mom was a Perez. But she's not related to Challan Perez. It's a different Perez.

Unidentified Man: No no, your Perez's are different, they are.

J: My Perezes come from Spain.

Unidentified Man: if your family of Perez came from LaPolima, and Challan's Family came from (inaudible).

J: I don't know where. Unidentified man: Well I know where.

R: He was very backwoods, more or less back woodsey type. I called him scrooge one day. (Multiple people talking at once.. inaudible) They didn't have

what we had, you know holiday celebrations? They worked. And umm, he's still not crazy about Christmas time. I mean he could take it or leave it, but when I say that, it's like we spoke 2 different languages. I'm from New Orleans, but I spent most of my life in Chalmetta. So, it's like 2 different worlds than where I'm from.

D: Do you ever remember what we might call an oyster war between Louisiana and Mississippi?

J: I never heard of that.

Unidentified man 2: There was always a friction between them, between us, but I never did know of a war. Now ughhh I know that a couple Mississippis got killed in Louisiana by coming from the crook from Mississippi to our waters, and stealing in the nighttime.

D: Yeah there was a lot of piracy. And at one time, wild life and fisheries had a patrol boat with a 50 callibur machine gun mounted on the bow to make sure Mississippi oyster men didn't pirate Louisiana leases.

J: I would say that, yeah I would say that.

D: It was continuous.

C: Everybody was unhappy. It was a polite way to put it.

Unidentified man 2: They used to come up from Mississippi from Waveland to where I was grounded in Louisiana, it was only half an hour across the.. it's across the canal and you're in Louisiana water. And they would come over at night time and go steal in our water, and many of 'em got killed, Mississippians got killed in Louisiana water. That's why it's.. that's one good law that came out, no dredging at night. If you dredged at night, you got it, and that's great. Because that's when pirates hit, in the night time. but today like he said, coming out with the gps, the gps don't lie, and a radar don't lie.

J: No.

Unidentified man 2: So they can't do like they use to do.

Unidentified Man: I think that the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, it was a dispute between Mississippi and Louisiana over the boundary and how it fell through Lake Varn and through the south, and I think that really it wasn't resolved until the mid 20th century.

C: Called the Whiskey Boundary. It was staked, and everyday the stakes would move. You know, it's pretty blatant. And in Louisiana, we'd move them back, well guess what, the next night they moved again.

J: You heard about the bow legged bears with the whiskey?

D: No.

J: Well my uncle, my uncle, Johnny Alfonso, Dotty Cramford, my uncle used to haul whiskey from him. He had a boat he used to call a See Dog. And my uncle used to run it out there, about 3 miles in it, (inaudible), at night rode it out, rode it out, rode it out at night and come into the harbor with it. And then they take it and they hide it somewhere's, hide it in the bayou and all over. And when they're getting ready to tell 'em, my uncle used to have a (inaudible), used to have a cadillac. Okay. Inaudible... My aunt Heria that was my uncle's wife. But Jomelle Irene was driving the car going up and had a load of whiskey and ughh they had a cop right there (inaudible). They said man, they got a cop that's going to stop us, we got to do something, and he (inaudible) [screams]. She was hollering and screaming and everything, he said man, take that woman to the doctor (laughter).

R: They were sharp thinkers. Believe me.

C: They were going out to meet boats from Cuba when they would go out? Do you know?

D: When they went to get the whiskey

Unidentified man: At the 3 mile limit

D: At the 3 mile limit, were thosae boats from Cuba?

J: I don't know where they were from. They were ships. I don't know where they're from.

D: From Cuba?

J: Might've come from Cuba. Well let me tell ya, and this man Kucomacka, is he from down here? And ughh he had a (inaudible).. they were kinda crazy like. And Neil was cooker than

daddy. Cooker Neil went to Bayou Sole by Spanish Lake, Florida. They got a little bayou called Bayou Sole. Joe Gravellie has whiskey hidden there, in the bayou. And they knew it, cus my uncle found it when he went hunting. Inaudible. And he went down there and got that whiskey bottle. So, Cooper and his daddy went there with a little boat (inaudible word). [Boat noises]. What a donkey. And he got over there and there was a fat black man there, he said "Who wants some whiskey?" He said I can give you a bottle to drink. I said no, I want to fill this (inaudible) in this boat. Well I can't let you do that. They were going to do it. They were crazy like that. So the black guys started paddling to the front of the house, to Joe Gravalleire's house. Cuco got behind them in the pirogue. Got behind 'em, got behind 'em. When he got by Shell bayou, shot him. BOP! BOP! Twice in the back. 2 buck shots hit him in the hand, where he was paddling. And a black man was in the pirogue taking him all kind of ways. Cuco was trying to gut him and take his guts out that way he wouldn't float so fast. (quick laughter). And he threw him overboard. The old man said, "Well, no (inaudible)," the old man said "you killed him heh?" He said, "Yeah I killed him." He said, "Now we got to kill everybody that comes here." So they had a little boat come through Oak River, and he didn't turn there, he kept on going. And ughh, well, they went home. Cuco told his cousin about it, and his cousin turned him in. Well, they had a man took me to 2 (inaudible). And they was in the court house. They at the court house, they had people there said, "We'd like to know who killed this man?" And ughh "we wanna know if anybody knows." And the 2 got up in the court house, he had a one blade knife "I killed him with this knife, Thi knife I killed him." And you know he was shot you know. (laughter). Okay. Alright, his turn, Cuco and them there, Cuco, Tony, and his daddy went to Angola for 3 years. Okay. They had ughh Cuco's daddy, Neil, was carrying a water to the people that was working. Water bucket to them. His leg, he was about 70 years old and his leg got tired and he couldn't go no more and he said well anybody who wants water, let them come get it here. So Tony went and the man came there right away and said "why are you stopping?" Tony said "wait, he's my daddy, he's old. He can't do that no more." So they put him in the house all the way on top, "Can he shoot?" He said, "yeah he can shoot." He said, "well, give him a gun and run up there and say if anybody jumps that fence, you shoot 'em." He said, " If anybody jumps that fence and you go pick him up, I'll kill him." Alright. So one day, his daddy was there, he heard a shot and went to his daddy, he said "Poppa what happened, who shot you?" H epointed to himself, he shot himself. He shot himself in Angola. So, Cuco and Tony served the time and they come back. Cuco married an Indian woman they call Louisa, Louisa, and she's got a son named (inaudible). She's got 2 boys, it was her boys. And Margaret and another lady (inaudible...). That's Cuco's daughter. Well, they come back and it was kind of rough for 'em. So Cuco moved, lived by the.. and Violet.. by the levee on top. He built a little house up there. He said, "belong to the government (inaudible), if they want you to move, you can build up somewhere's else. Build somewhere's else or you got to pay \$25 a year." So that's how he lived. And he raised his kids up there and then he worked in the slaughter house. In the slaughter house, they were

killing the cows you know, they used to pack through there like that and somebody would have to hit 'em in the head at that time and now. And Cuco was there and ughh they hang the cow up like that and they stick him with a knife and let the blood come out, put his glass there, get a glass of blood and drink it. He said this is healthy, real healthy. (laughter).

D: I'll pass.

J: That's how crazy he was. He wasn't the only one doing that.

D: Oh I'm sure. I'm sure.

Unidentified man: Next time y'all come if y'all want to come take a trip down there, I'm more than glad.

C: Well we'd like to keep the door open to come back and ask you folks some more questions. But yes we would like to go back.

Unidentified Man: And what we are doing now, since we can't ughh... Before we used to get clam shells from Lake Ponchartrain to seed our oyster crowds with. So now like I said, we put rocks.

J: We can't get the clam shells no more.

C: Well, we'd need to do a follow up anyway. But we spoke with you the last time, I think it was 4 months after the oil spill something like that. And It'd be nice to go and see how things have changed.

D: Changed, and you had some pictures of Alluvial City. Then I remember, give us...

Unidentified man: That train that used to run down there years ago, I got pictures of it.

D: Yeah, those are real collection items.

J: That needs to go to the fork of the road.

Unidentified man: Yeah, used to come all the way down home.

J: Aww yeah?

Unidentified man: Used to go by the... used to run all the way to the lighthouse at Lake Von.

J: All be damned.

Unidentified man: But right now, what we're doing we got crusher hat's crushing them big big rocks that they are taking up. We got a crusher that's crushing it to full different grades. And every grade that it makes you know, all fishermen are different. Some of them like a bigger rod than the others. This machine we got down there, it's a mean machine. And you imagine, you put a big rock in it almost as big as this table and they got four outlets on it, and each one of 'em shoot in different grade of rocks. That's what we are shipping out to the oyster grounds right now.

Inaudible.

J: I was wondering how they crushed up ground.

Unidentified man: awww you got it. It's a mean machine.

J: Well I guess so.

Unidentified man: A mean machine.

J: You don't want to get caught in that. (laughter)

C: I sure don't.

D: Well, Carl has to go back to Lafayette, so he's got about 3.5 hours.

Unidentified man: You have a long time too.

D: Yeah well I have to go back to Baton Rouge, that's not too bad. We just thank... and thank you for coming. Please.

J: I can take you down there where they are setting the soft shell crabs up right now.

D: No.

J: Okay, next time y'all come.

D: It's been a long day. I'd just like to do it, but you know, you get to a point you have to say next time.

J: Okay, next time.

D: Please.

Inaudible.

R: Get some coffee before you drive home.

D: He doesn't like coffee.

R: Really? McDonald's has good coffee.

C: I usually drink Diet Coke on the way there.

J: She's my right hand.

C: I could tell.

D: But next time, maybe.

Inaudible.

End.