

Marshall Borel Interview

Interviewer: Paula Ouder, Thomas Hymel

Marshall Borel: He paddled that boat from the Jeanerette Canal, you told me you know about, and tied it up in Jeanerette at the old police station straight across Bayou Teche. And which right now, is out of the banks – you know that. If you not out of the banks, you just soon they were just creating – coming to their own banks.

Thomas Hymel: The more natural....

B: But what I want to know is what they gonna do with ten feet of silt if that water keeps coming up? Tell me. Get me an engineer to tell me.

H: You're gonna have trouble.

B: I can tell you some other stuff too before this. You might want to listen.

H: And we uh...

Paula Ouder: Yeah, we are. Would you mind if we just start off by you telling me your name and your date and place of birth?

B: Marshall Borel. I was born in Jeanerette, Louisiana. I was not delivered by a doctor. I was delivered by a - what they call these ladies? Um...

O: Midwife?

B: Midwives. A colored lady, and born in 1936. I'm now 73 years old.

O: Okay. And you understand that we're here from LSU and we're recording your story, and we would like to – we're gonna type up the notes from it, and we would like to share your story with other people. Is that okay with you if we make printed products or put it on the computer, put it on the internet? We have your permission?

B: That's okay with me.

O: Okay.

B: I'm gonna get as close to the truth as I can give you.

O: Well good.

B: And I know a few people in the business, just I just mentioned Morris Renfrew(?) And Morris (Renfrew) was an engineer. I talked to Morris the other day. He – he's kind of hard to get back to right now. Well heck, Morris is ninety something, you know. And you can understand that.

H: Tell us how you – how you grew up in Jeanerette and about commercial fishing in your life, with your father...

B: In Jeanerette, I was a baby. I mean, all I know about Jeanerette in them days is what the people told me. Because I – I didn't – I couldn't talk or walk, right?

H: Right.

B: So exactly what age I lived this, I'm not sure, but we went – we lived in New Orleans when daddy started Intercoastal Canal. And I do remember I was old enough to remember going to right by the um, animal uh, Audubon Park – we were right close there. We'd ride the trolley car every evening to cool off, and take a round trip ticket. It cost a nickel. Me and Mama would ride the trolley car to cool off. It's so hot, and they didn't have air conditioning in them days. And we uh, we'd come back home, and Daddy stayed – we ate more bananas than I ever seen in my life. Because he would work right there on them docks and they'd drop them off. They don't pick that up. And they gather them up for him and they'd bring them home. Now how long we stayed there? I have no idea, but when we moved, I know they was talking about moving because we moved into Centerville because um, I was having – getting ready to go to school. So she had a – my mother's had some people they're kin to, the Hydel's, that come off my grandma's side, was twins, and they took us in at their place – we had a little bitty trailer, and they were schoolteachers. They was going to put me through first grade. Well, it so happens is I got a something right there missing. I don't believe they put me in first grade in Centerville because Daddy was transferred to Kaplan. And I went to first grade in Kaplan. And they was still digging the Intercoastal Canal and all the tributaries that comes off of it. He was the first man that went under the bridge when they pulled the plug in Baldwin. And that was built on a dry line.

O: What were your parents' names and when were they born?

B: Who's that?

O: Your parents' names and when were they born?

B: Oh, my daddy uh, was Wilson Borel. And my mother's name was Floradora Broussard. And Daddy was born I think in 1916. And Mama was born in 1917. I'm not positive of that.

O: And what was your father's profession?

B: At the time when they got married, he was a fisherman. He fished – he drug crawfish to feed his family at fifty cents a bucket. And that's the tales – I mean he's told us. And my grand – my grandfather was the best bootlegger they had in Louisiana – in this area. And he did not sell that much alcohol. He did not sell it. He traded it. So people would bring him um, corn, beans, cucumbers, carrots, everything you need to cook with, so he made that money with that in food. I don't see nothing wrong with it really. But um, I know where the still's at. I still know where it's at. And I – unless it's um, park that they're building on Lake Fausse Pointe tore it out, it's still there. That foundation is still there.

O: Did he make a lot? You said he didn't sell much, but he made a high volume?

B: Oh yes. He made a lot. Well naturally, some of them bought it, but uh, I know he made enough family to feed his family with. And when we had um, every weekend we was out there to - and they fed their kids over there. They'd cook - my grandma would cook. And we were all together all the time.

O: Did you come from a big family?

B: Uh, no. I was the only child. My father had some brothers and sisters – stepbrothers and sisters. In them days, people didn't live quite as long as they do now. And my grandfather married twice. And the lady that um, they were first married – the first Borel – his um, stepfather when you'd call it, but not part of us really – his first husband. Um, when Mary Elizabeth Ford died with all that property, the graveyard went to them. And um, and Antoine was Borel was her husband. She buried him in the far corner. And uh, then he married my grandmother after that happened I think. I mean I – I'm not positive about that after that happened. And uh, Emma Borel was her name. And he lived till they cut her legs off because she was – I got a picture of her in that book.

O: But you were talking – you said there – you said you grew up around a lot of family. Did you have a lot of cousins, or...

B: Cousins, I got a lot of. All of um, I mean I got a bunch of cousins. I can't even name them no more. I haven't seen some of them in so many years. Um, I don't know. I don't' even know if I'd recognize them.

O: What kinds of things did you do when you were growing up? What did you guys do for work or for fun? What was – what was life like?

B: Well, for fun, I used to have – run lines in Bayou Teche, and I caught enough money – um, fish to pay for my going to the movies, going to the um, ice cream place, and I didn't have to bother nobody for money. I was getting as much money in them days for the few fish I was catching as they paying today - twenty five cents a pound.

O: What kind of fish did you catch?

B: Catfish.

O: Who would buy them from you?

B: They had three fish markets in Jeanerette. One of them stayed in there the longest.

O: So you did trotlines?

B: Yeah, I did fish bush lines.

H: Bush lines.

O: What is that? Describe that for me. I haven't heard that.

B: What?

O: Describe the bush line for me. What is that?

B: You hang it in a tree on a pole. And when that pole and that tree is blowing you know you have a fish on it. And it's got slack in it to where that fish can't hardly break loose.

H: What'd you use for bait?

B: Anything you could find – worms a lot of times. We used to dig the worms up that big. Big worms.

O: Now did you run your lines on the bank, or did you have a boat?

B: No, I had a boat.

O: What kind?

B: I had a little bitty – a little bitty wooden boat about twelve foot long.

O: Okay. Um, at what age did you start doing that?

B: At what age? Eight or nine - as soon as they let me go by myself.

O: Okay. Um, and have you been fishing your whole life?

B: Yes, I've always fished. I didn't get into the uh, quality of fishing like I do to catch what I just showed you in that picture, um, until later in life. That's when I started building nets. My daddy built one net, and that's what them pictures – that net – they stole it from me. Somebody stole it. But that net was set in the wrong place. It was set opposite from where them fish should've been, and I just had something in my mind that them fish were gonna come swim towards that net because they had a little stream of water coming out the woods. And they had – they had to get back in that main bayou because fish swim against the current. And um, and I caught twenty two head in there - that one net.

H: Did you fish with your father when he went out to go and do that, did you go with him?

B: I – I didn't go very much. They didn't let me get in the boat – in the big boat that he had. I fished with him in life after – after, in fact when he had his heart attack at forty seven years old, I took care of him. I mean, I knew he – he wanted to get his social security, and uh, they wouldn't give it to him. So I took care of him. I took him out there fishing – fishing crabs and stuff like that. And that's when we started it off. We started off fishing crabs in the Atchafalaya Basin. We caught crabs in the Atchafalaya Basin where five dozen would weigh sixty five pounds. And we had three restaurants we were furnishing, and we couldn't bring enough in.

H: So these were huge crabs. How did you catch them?

B: On a roller line.

H: What is a roller line?

B: Maybe you're wanting to know too much now.

H: I don't know.

B: Ha ha.

O: We're just trying to capture some details, so I haven't – these are terms I haven't heard, so I'm curious to know.

B: I'm just kidding. A roller line is a line – you put your string on a roller, which they use these um, rollers – wooden rollers that the twine comes on. You could use that – you run a shaft through it. Where it'll turn, and we used um, curtain hooks.

H: Curtain hooks.

B: And you put your bait every so often with a little bitty line that's hanging about that far, about seven, eight inches. And we put that curtain hook on there. And I go ahead of him, and I bait the line, and had chains on the line for it to drop. And when I'd flag him, I dropped that line, he'd start running. He'd run in the other boat. And I continue baiting that line. That line was oh, you know where the GA Cut's at?

H: Yeah.

B: All the way across the GA cut. And um...

H: What'd you bait it for?

B: (inaudible) to the other bar. Between – which is uh, it got silted up so bad, you can't even get there no more. And um, we'd bait it with catfish heads. My daddy's uncle, Jesse Higgins, ran a fish dock, and we'd go over there and we'd get the heads and we wanted them sawed off with no fins. And every head had a crab. He put twenty two crates in that thing one day when I dropped that last weight in the boat.

H: What's the biggest crab you've ever seen?

B: I seen um, they told me they took out some of them - one of the people I was um, selling to, and it weighed – it weighed twenty four pounds - sixteen of them.

H: Big crabs. Were these crabs – these were, so these were crabs that you caught in the Atchafalaya.

B: In the Atchafalaya.

H: Were they all male crabs?

B: Every one of them was male crabs. I didn't have no females then. They stole all my lines. One of them people from Catahoula comes in there, they put traps, they stole all my lines. But they didn't know where one of them was. And that was during that storm – of Hilda. That was the last line we had out, and my Daddy went out there in that storm. I knew it was there and I was working in uh, in um, Morgan City at Lake Palourde putting that road in, but I got off when I got off of work I got tied up in that hurricane traffic. Well I stopped in Calumet, and um, I called Daddy on the phone. And I don't know how I got him, but I got him. And anyway, he was there. He says, "I got a bunch of crabs." He said "I got all

females. Every one is a female.” I said, “Well I ain’t gonna bring that to uh, Lafayette.” I said, “Let me talk to Oscar see if he’ll take them.” And I talked to Oscar Lang, a friend of mine. I said, “You want them?” He said, “How long it’s gonna take you to get back here?” I said, “Fifteen minutes to get back after I get over there – I get there first.” And I said, “I’ll bring them to you.” I got – I don’t know how many crates he had. And um, I got back over there – the truck waited for me, and they all went to California. I think I had seven boxes. And I fussed at my daddy for hours saying, “Why didn’t you go home? You’re gonna get stopped back here. You not gonna be able to get home.” “Oh, I can get there.” So he made it, and I lucked out and I made it, but that old back road was under – under trees, so all of his uncles and stuff after that, they called and they run that fish dock, well they took them away from the levee. They wanted to evacuate. So they left. They come to Jeanerette. They stayed in my dad’s house. I didn’t have a roof on mine, but it quit raining, so we still was able to stay in our house.

O: So the storm blew your roof off?

B: Yeah. But it didn’t hurt my daddy’s house – we were right close together. And they came and stayed with us. We had everybody there. And they wanted to go back – they couldn’t. So when they couldn’t, I said, “Well daddy,” I said, “well why don’t you just let, um, Jesse and them go back in the boat? I’ll let them have the boat.” So they took the boat. We put it down right there in my yard – right at the house, and they went down to Bayou Teche because they was going to lose what was at that fish dock if they wouldn’t have went over there and tended to it. People in those days couldn’t lose nothing. So they – that was that little story that, but they wouldn’t let us out that road. I had a friend that called me – had evacuated Franklin in that same trip. Evacuated Franklin, and he called me from up in North Louisiana somewhere, and um, asked if he could – if he could get into Franklin. I said “No, it’s under Marshall Law.” I said, “They’re stopping people. They won’t let you in there.” He said, “Well I’m coming in.” I said, “There’s no sense in coming. There’s no place to stay.” But I put them up. I put them up in my house and I moved to Daddy’s after the others was gone.

H: What kind of a price did you get for your crabs in those days?

B: We’d get around I think it was about a dollar a pound, it seems to me if I remember correctly, I was getting around sixty, sixty three, sixty four dollars a box. And I had about five dozen in a box. They was big crabs.

H: Yeah, those were big.

B: And all those that went to um, to California, California you got bigger crabs than here, and fuller.

H: How did you um, when you fish crabs, that was at a certain time of the year? Or did you fish crabs all the time?

B: No, this was uh, we’d fish those crabs that we talking about, if in uh, starting September, and they went through a – through October. August or September and went through October. The females moved in at the last – at the last part. And that was in November. But in fact, that year, I’m talking about there, we did quit right after that.

H: How long did you – how many years did you use roller lines?

B: Two years.

H: Two years. Then what happened after that?

B: After they stole them all, I didn't make no more. We built a couple of nets. We tried to see if we could catch a few fish. And um, Daddy – that was his, his game. He didn't mind building nets. But then they didn't have what we had then. They – they netted everything by hand. That's why I can take a ball of line, a needle and a block and I can make you a net.

H: You can – you can...

B: My son thinks he's a fisherman. He – he can't even tie a string.

H: So you made all the nets you used?

B: Yes. I cut webbing though.

H: Okay.

B: I bought the webbing already made, I dipped it, I cut it out, and in fact at the end – that's when I was fishing for myself, it was too slow to do it the long way. So I started figuring a way that I could do it if it got hit by a boat and cut, I could cut that piece of webbing out and put another piece in – tie it to the same loops.

H: How long did a net last?

B: Till somebody stole it or run over it.

H: So it was – was that...

B: Until you have appendicitis attack in the middle of the swamp and can't pick them up no more.

H: Were there a lot of other people fishing in areas that you would plant?

B: There was a lot of guys that was fishing, but I knew all of those. They – most of them were from Jeanerette. Carol Gravois bought his boat and his rig. Because Carol caught good fish and everything I need that – that's his boat back here that I bought.

H: So these guys had reputations and some were better fishermen than others?

B: Um, those fellows were fish – I don't know what they caught. But I know what I caught. And I think I beat them.

O: What kinds of things were you catching?

B: Huh?

O: What kinds of things were you catching in your hoop nets?

B: Catfish. That's what I was after. I – I'd pick up a carp or buffalo every now and then, but uh, I was fishing catfish– my daddy fished for buffalo and carp. And he – he's the only man that – that I know of that ever fished the Lacassine Reserve, that they let him in there. He got him in there purposely so to take the carp and the buffalo out of there. He wasn't allowed to take any catfish or nothing. He didn't care about the catfish anyway. I mean he'd take one or two maybe just for home use, and once in a while they'd – he'd bring in a few sacalait for Mama. But uh, he didn't extend into anything that would hurt him. And they let him fish the Lacassine Reserve.

O: What would they do with the carp?

B: What they did with the carp? At one time, that was the biggest selling fish out there - carp and buffalo. That went to New York. JP Calais ran that dock and he shipped everything North. And the Jews used to use, what they call that? Um, cheesecake? Um, wedding? Um, cheese puff? They'd take that and they'd wrap that fish in that and tie it down and they'd put it in a pot of boiling water. And they would boil it. And then they'd take the cheese puff bag out, throw it away, and make soup with what was in that container, and that's what they would eat. And brother, they'd eat some carp.

O: How did they ship out?

B: I never did it, they would uh, they'd eat it. That's why when they tell you they fixing to have them on the market, they might be good to eat. I got too many good fish to worry about eating the carp.

H: Did they put them on trains in those days to ship them north?

O: Yeah, how did they get them to New York?

B: God knows how they got them there. Um, yeah, well I'm talking about in – they had airlines in them days.

O: What – what time period are we talking about? What year was...

B: What year – you're asking me stuff in here that uh, I – that's seventy years ago. Seventy three years ago. Just about at my age – I was born. I was in the second grade. I mean that – that's not a story that I'm telling. That's something that I've seen.

O: So locals wouldn't eat the carp, but people in New York wanted them.

B: Oh yeah. They wouldn't eat them here. The biggest thing I got was heads. Catfish heads. I had people wanting catfish heads – to eat. I was gonna throw that away or bring it to the bait shop. You know that's the best eating part of the catfish?

H: The head? You eat them?

B: Sure.

O: How do you prepare them?

B: Like a um, t-bone steak without the bone.

H: You just cut them open, put them on a – how do you prepare them?

B: Uh, this is gonna sound funny. I'm talking about a big fish. I'm not talking about no small one. Some of these that you see right here – the heads is gone. You take the head and you go around that eye with a knife, and you cut a circle in the eye all the way around that bone. And you get a piece of meat about that thick and about that big around. And that is the best eating off of that fish.

H: That's like the jaw meat, huh?

B: And it don't have a bone in it.

H: You fry that?

B: You do anything you want. You can broil it, fry it, when I found out what these people were doing with it, they shouldn't have showed me that. That – and that was my specialty. When I wanted to give somebody a specialty, I'd give it to them.

H: Oh.

B: Like my next door neighbor for doing welding for me, I said, I don't want to give you these, Mike, but I'm gonna give them to you anyway.

H: Did you – did you only fish in the Atchafalaya, or did you fish in the marsh also?

B: Oh no, I didn't hardly fish in the Atchafalaya. I got out of there a long time ago. There was too many small fish. I mean I'm talking – you don't believe this maybe, but I put a net in the water when we first started in there, I put a net in the water trying to catch bait, and I couldn't hardly put it in the boat. I filled the front end of that boat clean to the well. I was standing in fish a foot deep. Guess how many good fish I took out of there? And as fast as I could throw the others overboard, I don't believe I killed any of them. I got thirteen fish out of there. And I – and that was about three hundred pounds of fish.

H: This was in the Atchafalaya.

B: Yeah, but they were so small. Now, I've seen people selling this at the docks.

H: What was your favorite fishing area? The most productive area?

B: The most productive area is Bayou Sally. That's where the marsh is at.

H: What size hoop nets did you use? Were they big ones? Tall ones?

B: I – I'm using four footers now. Um, I had four footers, I had two and a half's, and two and a half's – I almost gave them away. And um, I had some three footers.

H: How many nets would you have out at a time?

B: It depends on what – on what condition that I was in. You have to pick them things up and wash them and clean them and re-tar them. And you try to keep enough out that you can put back out. And it's hard to say. I had a – I had two hundred – two hundred and something nets, and I lost a hundred and ten when I got hurt. I know that. And I sold a bunch of little ones that I had.

H: So you would put these nets together at your house with the webbing and...

B: I spent every Father's Day I believe I ever had knitting nets.

H: Did your family work with you with the fishing?

B: My three girls skinned everything I had to skin. My son skinned a few when he felt like it.

H: Did they enjoy this?

B: They got paid money for it. I wasn't their banker though. My mother was the banker. They must've enjoyed it. They did it. And not to lose fish, I come in one day, it was cold though, real cold. And I had the well full. And we didn't – I couldn't find no ice at that time when I got in. I took a hose and I filled up that well, and I froze that water on them fish. They was still kicking. The next day, it was frozen water. I mean I couldn't lose that.

H: Did you eat a lot of fish at home?

B: Not many – if I could beat somebody out of one.

H: So they –

B: I always had fish at home. Always had them.

H: What's your favorite way to eat it?

B: Oh, I like it fried, but I'm not supposed to eat it like that. That's my favorite – fried fish. And you see that's another thing about fish. When you clean the line and you're cleaning them, you got a blood streak in them fish. If you got a blood streak them, you gotta cut that out. You might have to take – if you buy a slab of fish, you got to blood streak it in it about that big. You cut that out after you filet it.

H: How many...

B: Because that gives it a bad taste.

H: How many different kinds of catfish can you catch out there?

B: Um, they had blue cats, they had goujons, which is a yellow cat, and they had eel cats. But we didn't pick up as many eel cats as you picked up in um, basin – and then when they changed to bullheads, you had more um, bullheads out there. That's a funny thing too – the bullhead catfish – their head swells up and that happens only at spawning time. That's the male.

H: Now when you say the bullheads, when the bullheads came, was there a time where here weren't bullheads?

B: Well yeah. There was a time— when they didn't have their heads swell up.

H: Okay.

B: Because I mean – it's the head – it's progression of uh, reproducing.

H: Yeah.

B: That's how you want to say it, you know? Reproductions. I saw balls of fish in this thing here that were that big around. I know this young lady here hadn't seen them – I'm gonna show them until after while when it stops raining.

O: What's the biggest fish ever caught?

B: Sixty five pounds.

H: What kind of fish was it?

B: No wait – not the biggest fish. That garfish I caught was bigger than that. That was a hundred fifty. And the blue cat I caught. And I caught a goujon the same – the same way.

H: Were the – you hear stories of “the big fish don't taste as good as the smaller fish.” Is that true?

B: Um, not really. Not in a sense, that's not true. You gotta know what to do with the big fish. You don't take a thick, thick piece of fish and fry it. If you want to – you butterfly it. If you want to eat your big fish like that. But a small fish – you don't have to butterfly it. That's why – anything smaller though does have a little bit better taste, but uh, I can't find the difference in them.

H: When you – when you first started commercial fishing, did you have a – describe your boat. What kind of boat were you using when you – what kind of motor did you have to get – to go out there.

B: Well when I had was a – my uncle built me a boat in Orange, Texas. That was another one fishing the Sabine River. And um, we were looking for a boat – Daddy talked to him. He said, “Well we'll build you a boat. What you want?” “Just a small bateau.” “Okay.” Daddy asked him, “Well what you want?” “Oh, you know better than that.” He said, “You got some extra crawfish traps over there, you can bring me some of them. I want to fish some crawfish over here.” And um, he built us a cypress hull – all cypress. And we built him thirty crawfish traps, and we made a swap. And Daddy bought a brand new motor. Um, it was a – it was a Johnson I believe. No it was a Mercury – I'm sorry. It was a red Mercury. Excuse me. I've had so many motors. It was a red Mercury and um, it was a thirty horsepower, and I could outrun almost everybody out there with that boat. I tried it in the waves one time and cracked all the ribs, but I got to where I was going. The boat behind me, I don't believe he made it. He wound up in the marsh.

H: So what did you use before you had this cypress boat?

B: Pirogues. Remember we just went on the levee. We – we seined crawfish on the side the levee and stuff like that. We fished um, crabs on the side the levee with my uncle's stuff in Sandy Cove. You know where Sandy Cove's at? We had a trotline across Sandy Cove – my uncle did. And we invited the whole family out there, and we ran that line twice and filled up two 55-gallon drums of crabs.

H: Did you cook them while you were out there?

B: Oh yeah, we cooked them for all these people we had. I mean, I was a child then. I was a young – not a child. I was old enough to do it. But um, I didn't do that for commercial business – we just done that to eat. There was a hundred feet of water there then though. You know what they got now? Thirty. I still want to know where ya'll put that water at.

H: The um, when you fished hoop nets, what other kinds of fishing did you do? Um, did you fish crawfish also? Did you fish crabs with traps or anything like that?

B: I fished crabs and I fished crawfish. I fished shrimp. I seined. I mean, I um, I seined crawfish as well, fished them with drop nets. I made my –

H: How did you seine for crawfish?

B: Huh?

H: Tell me about that. When you seined for crawfish, how was that done? What would you use them, where would you go?

B: I'd use two big black men.

H: Okay.

B: That was a – that was my daddy's hands. And they'd pull the seine, except if they saw a snake.

H: So how long was the seine?

B: And they would pull well – I was guessing at that, it's probably about twenty five or thirty foot. And um, they'd pull that seine right down the levee. Now it's a funny thing. We had to go to (inaudible) to catch any crawfish, and as the years went by, them crawfish moved up to Charenton. But we had to go all the way to (inaudible) to catch them. Daddy would bring the crew out there to seine.

H: How much would you catch?

B: Oh, we – they'd catch eight, ten sacks no problem.

H: Would they sell them?

B: Uh uh. Everybody ate. Everything – everything then, we all ate. I didn't have no problem with that. I'd go out there and run crawfish traps, I caught them crawfish that one year, my father-in-law died. And I didn't – I didn't eat one of them - I mean, sold one of them. We all ate them. I'd bring them to my

uncle's, and they'd make crawfish bisque and everything. And he was a good cook. Excellent cook – he was crippled, but he was a good cook. And we learned – my wife could do it. And um, we ate our seafood. We lived on it. The selling part was when Daddy was going to the docks with it, but we didn't even eat carp and buffalo. We called that trash back in them days.

H: What about – what about gaspergou - you fished for that?

B: Gaspergou, no, um, I didn't fish them, but I didn't throw them away. They would sell at the dock, if you went to the dock. You could get rid of gaspergou, and some people wanted them. But uh, I never did care for gaspergou personally. And um...

H: Tell us about shrimp.

B: Shimping?

H: Shrimping. How you did that.

B: I caught many, many, many shrimp. You want to hear the biggest load I caught? I had a twenty one foot well craft, and I was at Blue Point. And I was trawling there. My son was ahead of me. He was towing Mud Point. He got on the little CB radio and called me. He said, "Daddy, I'm come get them shrimp." He said "Come on over this way." I said "Okay, well I just picked up, Ryan. I got – I got to clean these up. I got three buckets." That's five-gallon buckets. I said "the trough almost full." I said, "As soon as I get them cleaned I'll come over in that direction." So I – so I was trawling in his direction. And um, all of a sudden, he got on me again. He said, "I just picked up – I ain't got nothing. I'm out of them." I said "Okay." So I circled and went back in the other direction and I filled them up. I had all the ice chests in the boat full that I had – eleven chests. I had culled every shrimp. One size to the next. We picked up that – he comes in, we picked up my trawl. Put his motor on my other boat – I have two boats. Put him on the side of me, we both got eight-foot troughs. And he got in the boat, he started picking it up. He said, "Daddy, you got a log." I said, "you sure?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Give me that net." I picked it up like that, it slid. I said, "That – that ain't no log, Ryan. That's no log." I said, "I know what I need you to do. I can pick it up like this, but I ain't going to be able to lift it off the bottom. I know that." I said, "You go in that other boat, you tie it off. Tie off above the bag. Okay?" He tied it off, tied it tight, I said now "Catch me the carp." Threw me the carp, put it into the boat, I said "Come in here now." I said now, "Pull it in." He started pulling it up, I said, "Untie the bag." I said, "Get the net and start dipping." I filled that seven – that eight foot trough completely to the top in my boat. And I never even seen nothing else. Just dipping. Now, we got that. We can't put that in the boat either, so we got to do that with the other trough that's in his boat. After we got that one out, that trough full, then I picked up the trawl. He was able to put the trawl in the boat itself and tie it off. I called Jeanerette when I got to the landing. I said, "Ya'll come help us. We ain't never gonna get these shrimp out of here." I told Ryan, I said, "Go to the dock and get rid of them." I said, "We can't – I can get rid of the ones we got on ice, because we can't handle them. And he went over there and he sold them at the dock, that's when I really knew I was – I had – I was in a mess. I was mad. He got me mad. And I sold them to the dock, and the dock said they'll waiting for me. They'll wait for us to do it. I called my wife, her and her mama came out there and helped us pick the shrimp, but I didn't cull them. I didn't grade them out. We had eleven hundred

pounds - that one drag. They gave me a nickel more a pound for the ones that I graded than the ones that I sold like that. I was able to buy a roll of um, the only roll that I knew was left. I was told that by a fellow that sold webbing – that nylon webbing. But it's made of plastic. You throw it overboard, and it floats. People say, now you ain't gonna catch nothing. I said why? I throw it overboard, dropped them two boards, they said, the boards are floating too! I said, yeah, I know they are. I said, wait. Give me a chance. I dropped them boards. When I dropped the boards off, I went up there in the front, and gave it gas. My two boards sink right down to where they go. And they started pulling. Then when you're ready to pick up, when you pick up, your boards come straight up by themselves. You take the ropes in, all your shrimp is in the back of the – in the trawl. And they don't get out. And they slide right onto the back. It's amazing to see that webbing work. And that's the trawl I use when I went to Grand Isle. The test trawl I had made out of that. And I told you that little story the other day, and when I pulled it one way for fifteen minutes, and pull it back the other way, the same thing. I caught three five-gallon buckets a drag. But I wasn't supposed to pick up nothing. I went home and built me a set of (inaudible) boards that I could pick up. I didn't have to worry about picking up – they floated right to you. You can't pick up something that long, that wide, that thick, I mean, it's the way they're made and the way you tie your chains.

H: What kind of um, when you were out and around Bayou Sally and (inaudible), was there a lot of wildlife there?

B: In them days, they had a lot of wildlife. You had trappers back there. That's why I had friends of mine that was in the trapping business. Which, they lost their business when they stopped buying furs. When they stopped – when they start outlawing the nutria, which they never should've done to start with. You can't imagine the taste of nutria. Could you?

O: I don't think I've ever tried it.

H: How'd you eat it?

B: Do you ever – did you ever eat anything that you never could taste what it was?

O: What do you mean, that I couldn't taste? That didn't have a flavor to it?

B: That had no flavor.

O: Well I tried (inaudible) it had no flavor?

B: It had no flavor.

O: Hmm.

B: Did you ever try something, I'm saying, that you cannot eat? That you can't taste? You say, well what I'm eating this for? What is that? It's a nutria taste, right?

H: Nutria.

B: I'm just trying to give you the word. You take that nutria, and you make it. You cut it up. Take all the bones off of it. You can mix it with – make sausage with it, you mix it with pork. You want to make hamburgers, you mix it with beef. And I'm not talking about buying the cheapest beef you can pick up. You buy a hind quarter and match it with that many pounds of nutria. And there's no way in hell that somebody tells you that that restaurant is selling nutria – that they're selling nutria. All you got to do is look at it. Because if you fry nutria or cook like I'm talking – fixing like I'm talking about, it's gonna be the exact same size as when you put it in on that skillet when it comes out. It will not shrink.

H: So did your family like to eat nutria?

B: Oh yeah. I raised them on nutria. That's all we ate. We ate high on the hog really. You want to put it that way.

H: Where did you get your nutria from?

B: This trapper that I had a friend, would say I caught the biggest otter ever caught at Bayou Sally. And I gave it to the – to the trapper. And you know what? He gave me twenty five dollars for it right off the bat. When he skinned it and stretched it, the buyer came to get it – pick up his furs, and because of that one otter, he raised the price on every one of his furs - on every one of them because of that one otter. You know what he did? He comes back and gives me some more money. I don't remember exactly how much though. But he comes in with some more money. I said, "I'll take any one you bring like that. He's – and I got no use for it." And I caught a lot of otter in my nets that you – I had to throw away.

H: You caught it in the hoop net.

B: Oh yeah.

H: Really?

B: Well they go in there to eat.

O: Oh, they go in there to steal your fish?

B: Yeah. They aint' gonna get out, though.

O: And the otter fur is prize?

B: But uh, that otter was dead, but he just died. Because I knew how long that net had been in the water right there.

H: What about alligators? Would they get in your net?

B: Yep. That ain't the worst one, though.

H: What was the worst?

B: I caught a garfish the length of that net that big around. And he was dead. And you talk about a job to get out.

H: Was he rotten?

B: That was a job to get out of there. He was (inaudible). That's nasty job, that part. That ain't – that's not the fun part.

H: So you – you ate a lot of nutria at your house.

B: Oh yes. I'd eat it right now if they had it. Because they done ruined – they done ruined the trapping business. Wildlife and Fisheries with their outlawing and stuff, done ruined the trapping business. There's no more trappers.

H: What about um, what about garfish? Did you fish garfish?

B: Um, no. I fished garfish just when they went in the nets. I mean, that's – and I fished them on a hook now and then. I caught one day on a rod and reel, weighed sixty five pounds. Now they're fun to catch, but most people throw it away. Of course, I'd skin it, me. The best garfish I ever had, I wanted to throw it away; it was so full of blood. I mean, it was blood. I mean solid blood. I said, that fish ain't gonna be no good. I cut it out, and I – I washed it, and I cooked it, it was the best fish I ever ate.

H: How do you cook garfish?

B: Any kind of way you want. Anything you want. And even eel is good.

H: Tell me about that. Did you catch eels?

B: Oh yeah, them big uh, fish eels?

H: Yeah.

B: I caught about four of them one day, about this long in a crab trap. And I went home and I skinned them. I said I'm gonna try something. I skinned them down – I always brought fish to the plant. I cleaned them up, cut them in rings, come out like a dollar or a quarter in rings. And I fried that up and boy I had a big old plate – I had a lot of them. I brought them to that lab, told them if they want some fish, they got some in the back. Ain't a man turn that down and there ain't a man stop eating till that pan was dry. Do you think they were good? I even tasted one of them. But that's – that's a fish. That's a fish eel, now. That's not that black eel that's in the - that's a green eel. It's about that long.

H: Do you cook?

B: Huh?

H: Do you cook?

B: Oh yeah.

H: You're a good cook?

B: I – I say I am. Because I can eat what I cook.

H: Did you cook at home for your family?

B: I cook sometimes. I used to cook more than I cook now.

H: What would you like to cook? What was your favorite?

B: Oh, we – we used to eat a lot of duck spaghettis, and rabbit spaghetti, and gumbos, stuff like that. Fried fish.

H: How did you um, so you hunted also for rabbits and ducks? Those things?

B: Yep. We had dogs. I had a friend of mine that had some dogs, and we hunted with dogs. We didn't hunt with fire, but one time we hunted – just somebody set a marsh on fire back there, it wasn't here. It was in uh, on the other side of Morgan City. The (inaudible) and we'd gone there with another fellow. And we killed a few rabbits in front the dogs in all that grass, but it was hard. And this guy here that brought us out there, he couldn't shoot anyway. And we went in there, and me and my buddy um, we hunted with dogs. We left the dogs in the boat. Well the dogs didn't like staying in the boat. And they had rabbits all over the place coming out them pines. So we wind up killing – we had twenty five each at the time. That other fellow killed three. He shot three boxes of shells. And we wind up with uh, fifty one. You know how we got that one?

H: How?

B: Our best dog caught it and killed it and brought it to us. Now, that's over the limit, but that's destroying – they destroying all the feed, and its destroying the rabbits that's on fire. There's nothing we can do about the ones that's on fire. And yet, I mean I think that's terrible when people do that. Not saying that we – that's something terrible when we kill them out. They didn't have a chance. They was gonna cook them right to that – right to that bayou. And you go out there with a stick and kill them if you want to.

H: So you make spaghetti and different things with rabbits?

B: Yeah. We cooked stew, rabbit stew, spaghetti's, birds is more for um, for gumbos and stuff. We used – I cooked a dogris gumbo one time. And that's supposed to be a duck that ain't worth a darn. Cut all the breasts off, I had thirty five of them. Cut the breasts off, and I invited a bunch of people to the house. They ate that stuff – I said this is an exotic meal. They couldn't stop till they were finished. They never knew what they ate. People don't know what they eat. And you wouldn't want to see some of the pictures I got from overseas. But if you don't try something, I wouldn't give you anything if I don't eat it myself. If I want - I mean I'll tell you what you're eating. And the beginning, but never – never think I'd you something without – well one lady one time, I was cooking sausage, and it was nutria sausage. And she said, oh no. I'm not – I mean she was very, very faint. She put on makeup to go to bed. And uh, her

name was Melanie. You might know her. And she didn't want to um, eat sausage. She wasn't going to eat that. She was at my cousin's house. Well we had a big cookout, us. And oh, she said that sure looks good. She said well – I finally convinced her to go ahead and try a piece. We gave her a piece of that sausage. She said "I don't ever eat nothing like this." She said, "but I never ate this." She said, "when you're gonna get some more? Where you bought this at?" "I made this, ma'am. I made it myself." "Well when you're gonna make some more?" She ate three pieces of that sausage, and she's a little bitty woman. And she – that's all she did was brag about it. That's where your brain is not functioning. You don't want to taste something because you're scared that it ain't no good. My father-in-law was the same way. He would get sick if he went to the barroom and they told him what he was eating and he didn't know it. And he never got sick at my house. Why? That's up here. That's up here.

H: What about turtles? Did you catch turtles?

B: Mostly everybody eats turtles, but I ain't never – uh, I caught a couple of logger heads that I had live. I told you the story about the one that came alive in the boat.

H: No.

B: Okay. Me and my dad was raising nets at the time. And I was in the (inaudible) Canal back of Franklin. And I caught that turtle and I said dad, I sure hate to throw that turtle overboard. I said, it looks like he just about – he's still good. He looks like he's fresh. And uh, I put him in the well. That turtle comes alive, and it's about that big around. That turtle comes alive in that well, you hadn't heard a noise like that in your life. Catching its breath – that's all it was doing was trying to get air back into his body. And it comes alive in that well. Soon, I had a turtle to eat. I caught some that I had to throw away though, and I hated to do that. I had to cut them out the net. But uh, turtles is hard to save. And I don't fish them on lines. So...

H: Did you ever fish for turtles, like turtle - set nets just for turtles?

B: No, I never tried turtles. I had alligators tear up lines – tear up the fish on the lines, I mean I don't care what size fish. They'd come there and you'd see them teeth marks. I didn't know why. What was causing it is alligators.

H: Were there a lot of alligators in those days?

B: Yes, there was. They still got alligators. They still got them. They're still there.

H: Did you

B: Ain't nobody going to get to them.

H: Did you eat them too?

B: I ate them when they bring them to me, but I'm not that fond of alligator meat. The only thing I like on the alligator is if you cut the feet off, cut the legs off, and got it clean real good, leave the bones in it and everything, and you put it on a barbeque pit and barbeque it. Then I like it.

H: The feet?

B: Yeah, that part of it. The rest of it – I don't care for alligator that much.

O: Now tail meat? You don't care for tail meat?

B: Uh uh. I mean, I'm gonna eat it, yeah. Because I got my daughter that brings it to me all the time, and um, stuff like that. But I – I don't really want it. Now if you bring me a good fried fish, I'll eat it.

O: What about frogs? Ever come across frogs?

B: Yes. I caught frogs when they had frogs.

H: Tell us about...

B: No, I'm gonna tell you this. When I caught frogs, that was before air boats. When they start turning them air boat slews back there, they ruined the frog hunting. They ruined everything with airboats.

H: How did you – how'd you catch frogs? I mean what – how'd you go out and do it with a – you had a – you caught them with a net? With a gig? By hand? What did ya'll use?

B: I used a net that I made – not a net that you'd buy. I built a net with the rim on it, and you can set it – a frog right there, you it over him, and he jumps in and he ain't getting out. There's only one way he's getting out. You're gonna have to take him out because he's gonna get stuck.

H: So this is like the one you said you put it on a pole...

B: It's wide enough, then it narrows down, then it widens again. There's three phases to a frog net.

O: How long would it be from the opening to the bottom?

B: Oh, it's that long – you don't want to go down that far with your arm. Then you seldom lose the frog if you put it on it. I caught uh, by myself I caught sixty five one night in about an hour in a half. I was in a – I was going to New Orleans with that. I skinned all them things the next day, and all that – hauled myself to New Orleans and went to the camp. I brought them and fried frogs for them people. You ain't never seen nothing like that. They never seen nothing when I brought – till I brought twenty something sacks of crawfish over there. And told them – I said, "I got ya'll a couple of sacks of crawfish in the truck." That's when they shut me down in July 20th. The dock shut me down fishing crawfish. A friend of mine is the one running the dock – he said "You're the last man I'm buying – I bought from." He said, "I held on as long as I could." He said "I'm gonna have to ask you to pick up your traps. We're gonna buy whatever you catch." He said, "But your crawfish just started dying when they got to Texas." And that was in July. I remember the exact date. That was the – that was the 19th of July he called me. He said, "You can pick your traps up." And he said, "I'll buy them." I said, "Well instead of that black," I said "I'll tell you what I'll do with you." I said, "Can I get a load of ice with my truck?" He said, "That's all you want?" I said, "If you want a sack of crawfish for it, fine." I said, "I'm going bring them crawfish to New Orleans." And I didn't use onion sacks. I never told ya'll that. I used peat sacks. Big potato sacks. When I put you a sack

of crawfish down, you gotta be able to carry it. No women could carry them. I'll find that the – those sacks holds moisture and will keep your crawfish alive longer.

O: And what kind of sack was it again?

B: Just potato sacks.

H: They were bigger.

B: Just regular potato sacks.

O: Was it burlap or plastic weave?

B: Yeah, the burlap sacks. Now they got one of the sacks that better, but you don't want to buy those. That's hand-knitted nylons. If you want a sack of crawfish for yourself, you put them in there. They got air holes in those.

H: When you went fishing and you were out doing that kind of work, that was a joy for you?

B: Yes. I enjoyed that more than anything else.

O: What did you like about it?

B: Peacefulness of the swamps. When the swamps talk to you, it's – it's a different thing. You don't have to worry about somebody running into you in a car or something. If they in that section you're in, you can get away from them in a hurry. Like I got – I had one game warden – so stupid that he was running down, which he had to know, was a dead end canal. If he's chasing somebody in a dead-end canal, he don't have to run this big motor in this big boat wide open down the bayou. He cut up three of my nets, and after I caught him back there, I said, "What the hell are you looking for?" I said, "This bayou goes to a dead end. You ain't chasing nobody. You – you just boat riding." Because he couldn't find nobody that was that's illegal.

H: So you like being...

B: I mean you don't do that if you're a game warden. If you going to go in that bayou, you're gonna find out first if it goes to a dead end. Because that – if you don't, you're not – you're wasting your time.

O: How much time did you spend on the water every week?

B: Oh, ma'am, that's hard to say. That's hard to say. I had to raise nets two to three times a week. I caught crabs and crawfish traps, stuff like that – that was every, every other day or so. I mean, all the time. It depends on the orders. When the bridge was – when they was building that bridge at uh, Bayou Sally, you know where the bridge is at? That crew was knocking off, and I knew they were knocking off. I got in that morning from graveyards at seven o'clock, and I went and I run my crawfish traps. Before I got home, I stopped at the store, got my beer naturally, (inaudible) I might've drank in the truck, but I didn't drink in the water. And I stopped over there – I asked them. I said, "You guys want some crawfish? I better call my wife first." I said "You got any orders?" She says, "No," she says, "I haven't got

one call for crawfish today.” I said “alright, I’m gonna stop by the – and see if these fellows wanted them.” And I stopped and I told them what I wanted a sack for them, twenty – I wanted twenty two dollars a sack for them. That’s peat sacks. They bought every one of them - forty sacks. They bought every one of them. So I’m not finished that one. So here I go, I get home, now I didn’t sleep because I had worked graveyards the night before. I went out there and I run crawfish traps. Then I go – I parked my boat over there on the plant site where I worked at as (inaudible). I parked over there. I had permission for that. I left the boat there and I come home. I asked the wife, I said, did uh – you got any orders for crawfish? She said I’m, I do, she said, how many you brought? I said, none. She said, the school wants twenty sacks this evening at five o’clock for a crawfish boil. I thought I could probably – you’d catch them. I caught them alright. I turned around and went back. I slept about two hours and I went back over there. Hooked on the boat, hit those same traps again, and I come back with twenty sacks for the school, and they all appreciated it. I had one um, one group of people one time that was having a crawfish boil – one of those colored churches, and um, he came there and said, “We’re kind of out of crawfish right now. What you got?” I told him, he said “Oh, you’re a little bit high.” I said “Yeah. I said I’m just getting what they’re worth.” And uh, I said “you’re guaranteed.” Oh, that’s another thing too. I guaranteed everything. If you find something that wasn’t no good in there, you just bring it back. I’ll make it good. And um, and that – that preacher comes back about ten or fifteen minutes later. He said, “You got any more of them crawfish?” I said “Yeah, I got about six more sacks.” He said, “I want them all.” That’s how fast they buy them when they know what you got. I had – I had some come back one day after I done went through them. And uh, they were white crawfish. Well darn, you can see white crawfish. If you don’t want to eat them, don’t wash them in uh, salt water. And that’s what they pulled. They brought it back. I ain’t never sold even to a neighbor of mine. I talked to him yesterday. I never sold him another – sell him another crawfish the rest of his life. Because now I got a box of crawfish that I gotta tend to, because once you pour that salt water on them, forget it. And you can tell in a hurry. And you’re not cleaning them with salt water anyway.

O: What’s the best way to clean them?

B: Just wash them. What I do – I got a big barrel and I pour the crawfish in there and I just run water in it. When it clears, it’s clean.

O: About how long does that take?

B: Well, your barrel, probably run over for just a little while really. I can’t – that’s hard to say. You gotta watch the water. The water’s gonna be dirty at first, and then it’s gonna be cleared. Then you can stir it down there. And you’re gonna lose a few because they’re gonna pinch one another. You’re gonna have a couple of dead ones possibly. But possibly they’re gonna still be good anyway if they’re fresh. And um, that’s the way you tend to them though. That’s the way I tend to them. And I know one thing. When I had that little – well she had that crawfish place across the street from our house.

O: So do you have to buy seafood now or do you still fish? Do you ever have to buy seafood?

B: Oh no, I can’t get in the boat no more.

O: Do you ever have to buy seafood though?

B: Uh uh.

O: Okay.

B: No, he catches a few shrimp right now, crawfishing, and uh, when he catches some crawfish and get a few they have a boil, and I get enough.

O: Because I was going to ask you – what do you think of most of the seafood out there for sale now? Do you think it's a – what do you think about the quality as compared to what you used to deliver?

B: I would very skeptical of who I'm buying from. Um, they got a fellow in – in Delcambre that I'd buy from. Jimmy Dupre – I named him the other day.

H: I know Jimmy.

B: I would uh, I would buy from Jesse Higgins if he was still fishing. But Jesse I don't think is still fishing. He's a little old, unless one of the boys took his boat. I knew he didn't get rid of the boat. Because that's his lifetime. That's his lifeline because when that water's gonna hit, he's gonna have a place to go. You won't have a place, but he will.

O: What do you think about what the quality of what's out there for sale? Do you think something's been lost, or do you think there's still good seafood out there to buy?

B: There – there should still be, but it ain't gonna last much longer. Without these marshes, it's not gonna be there.

O: Have you – tell me about some of the changes you've seen in the marsh in your lifetime. What's the marsh like now as compared to when you were a boy or...

B: Everybody condemns the oil fields and the pipelines and stuff like that. Well to have those pipelines and oil fields, you gotta dig cuts. I made the best years of my life in oil fields in the pipeline canals. That's all filled up right now. It's all silted up. You can't run pipeline canals no more. I couldn't six years ago. You can't even get in them back canals. They – they done silted up something terrible. I don't – I don't even know if I could ever get back to where I was at, at one time. And I ain't been there since I was fifty seven. That's when I got out the marshes and I never been back. That's when I had that appendix out – just about killed me. I've never been able to lift again.

O: So around here, you've seen marsh built up? Is that what you're saying?

B: Yes, all these marshes done filled up. They filled up with mud, silt. That's happening everywhere. What you're gonna do with that water that's filling up the Intracoastal Canal? What you gonna do with that water that's uh, what I'm trying to say now? Calumet Cut. Calumet Cut used to be ninety feet deep at the mouth. I could not get out the Calumet Cut the last time I went in a Northerner, I crossed out of Hog Bayou and went across there and got almost at the um, at the mill, I had to turn off. The salt mill?

Salt mine? I had to turn in – that’s where my traps were at. I went in there, and I started running my traps. Well the traps start passing me up. I said, well what’s going on? I had my grandson with me. I said, “I don’t see what’s going on here. I guess the tide is rolling too fast.” So I turned around and I said “Just get out of here, OJ.” I couldn’t get back to that bayou. No way could I get back to that bayou to get to that salt mine.

H: No way?

B: No, not in that boat. I couldn’t get that. So I took off to the – to the bay. I figured I was gonna go outside. I almost didn’t get outside. I had hell getting off of them flats. I had hell passing my crab traps up. And I went out there, and I said, well okay. We’ve gotten into a little bit water now. I got on the step. When I got on the step, I said “Okay, we’re gone – I’ll go in from the other end into the Calumet Cut.” Well they got pipe over there that shows the channel. I arrived at that point, and I round it, and there’s one thing that saved us. Well, there’s two things. I could’ve still got to (inaudible) Point. I know all the back bayous back there. I know every one of them. I went to the, to the nearest one they had that was open. I knew that one was gonna be open because them crew boats go in there all the time. That’s the Texaco point line canal. You turn right in it, and you go to Hog Bayou, you turn right, you turn left, and you go through that swamp. You go all the way back, and I got all the way back home through there without no problems, but I could not run to Calumet Cut. You know what caused that? The Corps of Engineers. You know when it was caused? You got any idea? When they built that dam over there on Six-Mile Lake. And they killed that – they killed that part of the lake. I said it when – I said it the day it was built. The day they said they was gonna build it. I said well that’s it for us while we’re duck hunting. I said there are gonna be twenty-foot willow trees in that thing in the first two years. I didn’t miss it by maybe six months.

O: What were they trying to accomplish building that? What were they trying to do?

B: I have no idea what those idiots were trying to do. The only thing I can see they were trying to hold all the water in the Atchafalaya River to keep it to go to Morgan City. And what you want to do that for when you go – you got a 4.6 water in the Atchafalaya in Morgan City right now and that can go through underneath the, the sea wall that’s built over there. Why did you build Avoca Island Locks? Why build it if you’re gonna do that to it? You gotta close it if that channel is too high. Why do it? Why do this? And then the –the backup water takes care of the other side the lake. It goes through uh, Lake Palourde – however you pronounce that, and Stevensville. All that goes underwater if you’re gonna back it all up. All the way into uh, all them other little towns back there.

H: Did your – this is a different question. Did your daughters ever go out in the boat with you?

B: Oh yes.

H: They enjoyed that?

B: Mmhmm. My kids came with me shrimping a lot of times except that one over there. She’d come down there.

H: And your wife – she enjoyed the...

B: My wife was the best fisherman I had on the boat when you took her fishing with a rod and a reel. She set a record in this uh, rodeo over here. Cypremort Point, the one they just set out? She had a – caught a - and she caught this croaker here that went over three pounds. And she was in the books for a long time till they started coming in with them fish from Grand Isle. And that's when I quit even going to the rodeo. But she caught more fish – she hooked one of them big drum one time – kind of felt sorry for her, but I let her fight it in.

O: Now so fishing wasn't your only job. Where did you work? Where was your other job?

B: Oh, I worked for the State of Louisiana on highways. I built a bunch of these highways through here. Um, I was an inspector. I put uh, I did the testing and stuff on any material coming in and how they pack it, putting it in, I was in charge of all of that on most of it. I built that swamp job over there. They were just punishing me on that.

O: How many years – so you worked for the Department of Transportation Development? DOTD?

B: Yeah, uh, engineering department.

O: How long?

B: Twelve and a half years. And I ain't never missed a forty-hour work week. And why I'm saying that is, I mean, I was – I was covered like with sick leave or something like that. I quit on a Tuesday and went to work for Cabot Corporation on a Wednesday. And Saturday and Sunday. And that was on the tenth of September, and by December, I was through paying out all the social security. I had made that much money. I never turned out hours overtime unless I was sick. And that – that's the truth right there. That's a hundred – that's all forty-hour work weeks. I never missed.

H: If you had to do it all over again...

B: I'd do it.

H: You'd do just what you did.

B: I'd do it. Other than working for the State of Louisiana, I might do something else, but my dad right here I mean I can talk about my dad, was – worked with the Corps of Engineers. He worked the bridge at Bayou Beouf – he worked on that. He built this bridge in Lake Charles – the one with the pistol handles on it. I may have told you that. He was on the Avoca Island Locks job for one of the richest tin men in the country. And he built that when that other superintendent dropped that load of cement in the bayou. He gave him the job as a superintendent, and he finished that job for them. I worked over there during the summer. I get mixed up on what year those was, buy anyway I worked over there during the summer. And that man right there that you see – he was called to go to um, what I'm trying to say, um, by the Federal government he was called in for a meeting. And they wanted to send him a plane ticket. My daddy don't fly. He won't fly. He said, "you think you can be able to take me to Birmingham,

Alabama?" I said, "well me and the wife is fixing to get married." I mean we was uh, we was engaged. I said, yeah," we're gonna take a ride with you, Dad." I had to leave the job I was on – I was working for uh, (TLJ?) during the summer, and um, they didn't want me to leave either. And um, I took him over there. And he went to his meeting, and he comes back, and I said "Well what they wanted, Dad?" He said "They wanted me to go build the first nuclear plant in the United States in Paducah, Kentucky." I said, well, I turned him down flat. He said, "What I'm hoping to get is the bridge across Lake Ponchartrain." But he didn't – they missed the bid on that. But had he taken that job, and we had gone with him, which I wouldn't have done, I would probably be way up the ladder now. I don't regret it, though. I still like the state we're living in, but I'm afraid for the next generations to come.

O: Why?

B: They just think they see flood water right now. They just think that. They still got – I'll tell you another little story about the uh, Gulf of Mexico if you want to hear it. You ever been to uh, let me see, the crater in Arizona?

H: Yeah.

B: Huh? You been there? You ever read the documentations? Next time you go there, read the documentations because it's all documented. Do you know how big it is? Do you – you've never been to the crater? Would you – would you be the same if I tell you how big you would look at the bottom of it? About the size of an ant. You wouldn't even know you was (inaudible). It's like being ten thousand feet on top of a mountain. You're looking down and seeing them cars coming, and say what is that coming? What it is, the crater was the second hit by a comet. In the documentations, you know what the first was? The biggest comet that's ever hit the United States? The Gulf of Mexico. He's been to the crater, so he knows what I'm saying. You can see both sides of where the crater starts and ends. You cannot see both sides where the Gulf of Mexico starts and ends. I believe when that comet hit the Gulf of Mexico, it formed Cuba, it formed the peninsula, and it left gaps in it, and it formed all them little islands that's out there. I think it even formed the Bermuda triangle. There's something under the Bermuda Triangle that causes its problems. Now, they said in the documentation, now this was fifteen years, twenty years ago that I went there. That the Gulf of Mexico done came up - the bottom has risen a hundred feet back then. How much you think it is right now? How much siltation you think is in the Gulf of Mexico? There's enough siltation in the Gulf of Mexico right now to create the biggest storms you're going to ever see. The shallower the water, the bigger the waves get. That's the truth. When Audrey hit, that tidal wave came through Cameron, it wiped out Cameron. In fact, when I talked to you about when I stayed in Cameron, um, the first people that was on there was the ones we rented from over there that died. That was just when I had that attack of asthma and I sat by that hot – that stove. Now if you done – If you get this um, this gulf shallower, you're gonna have more water coming because you're not gonna stop the mountains. You're not gonna stop up there. That's gonna keep coming from now on – forever till that mountain's gone. Who realizes that? I don't think none of our politicians realize that at all. I think all they want to do is go out and party and have a good time. You can read it in the paper every day if you want to. They're spending money to go see something and they're staying in high-class motels. Who's paying for that? Tax payers.

H: What uh, yeah, that's probably always gonna be like that. What would you – what would you like to tell people who may see this video of you in twenty years? What was the best part of all of living down in this part of the country for you?

B: The best part?

H: Yeah.

B: Of living down here? Well I had free access to uh; all the seafood I wanted to help out myself feed my family. I wasn't making no money. You're talking about slave labor? I made a hundred and forty five dollars a month. No overtime – even though I worked seven days a week. I didn't get paid overtime for – by the state or nobody. Now I was able to take off the time, which I didn't lose, because I had so much of it I did lose some, I – when I quit, I was able to draw that out as money, but uh, we didn't make overtime at all. We worked seven days a week and didn't make a nickel more. That's hard to raise a family like that.

H: So the..

B: I'll tell you a lot of stuff that might have made it a little bit out of focus, but I'm not gonna mention it. But right now, I know what food stamps is doing to us, and I know how it can kill it.

H: The um, so fishing for you and living off of – off the land was, was really necessary.

B: Oh yes. And everything I sold or cut I still had bills to pay with it. I still could use that as deductions. I could on my income taxes – they never did took that away from me. And I always did that.

H: Do you have any more questions?

O: No, I think that's about it. We covered a lot of ground. Thank you very much.

B: Now you want to know something about them crabs on the marsh stakes? Them crabs – them little crabs will go up there – you were wanting to know the other day where the crabs grow.

H: Yeah.

B: They grow up on them stake – them uh, they come up. They feed on that. I got a – okay, that's a crab. Now when they feed on that, then they start growing. Now they start getting that big, alright. You get them into a crawfish trap, they kill crawfish. That's – and then they stay in the bayous as long as they got water. They gonna stay in them bayous because they got feed there. That's why these people don't know that. That's why I could fish in it. And if they found my traps, I'd cut the ropes off. I can take a trap and throw it overboard with nothing on it and go back and pick it up. I could find it. And I never – I never fished like some of these other fishermen. They fish with one pin down and one pin, and then they pull it up, and put it out again. I didn't do that. I put one stop down tight, one stop down on this end, one line across it. I had two loops in it – I hooked a net on both ends, stretched it, dropped it overboard, had a line on the top to hold it straight. When I caught it in the grab, I just picked it up, rolled it in the boat with the – and open up the uh, gates for them to come out. It's fun. I done that to a MIT graduate. He

come – wanted to go with me fishing, and I threw that grab in that net, and I knew when I picked – when I put my hand on it I knew they had fish in it. I mean I might've not known what kind, what size, but I knew they had fish in it. And he wanted to pick it up. He wanted to do this and do that with it. I go on the front deck and I let him pick it up. When them – they had about six goujons in there – and big ones. When they come up, when that goujon starts swinging that tail, they drowned him in that boat. You should've seen it. That was a comedy. That was a comedy. He put out a gill net for me, and you hang it on the pole pushing it out and he was out in the water. "What I do now?" I say, "You – if you want to, you can slide down the pole and walk back to the boat." Well some of these smart people are just not as smart as they think they are.

H: Do you have to be pretty smart to be a good fisherman?

B: Yeah. I don't know if I gave you enough notes so that you can get that locks built at Delcambre, but if that's not done and that Intercoastal Canal is not closed off at all in – you ain't got nothing. There's nothing left here.

H: I know you're about to (inaudible)

O: Yeah, we're done. I think we're good.

O: (Inaudible)

(Unidentified): Sorry. Ha ha.

B: Oh, ya'll ain't got too hot?

H: Well I know it's – well we..

O: It's summertime and she's cooking. I hate to do that to ya'll, but the machine's gonna pick it up, so...