

Edmond Mouton

LDWF New Iberia - Second Interview

Carl: Okay, well I think we are in business. We are back in New Iberia with a Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries office to interview Edmond Mouton for the second time. Ed, before we get started, once again we have to deal with all the legal niceties and get your permission to record this and make it available for researchers.

Edmond: Yes, you have my permission

C: Right, when I was up here scanning images a few weeks back you mentioned that, I think it was back when you first started working here that encountering some of the old folks, some of the older trappers out in the field whose first language was French. It may have been monolingual French, that speaking French with them really opened the doors for you with them and that established an element of trust and

E: Yeah, well it's in the early days when you would go out and visit with some of these trappers, whether to see what they were doing, where they were trapping, or what have you, a lot of them would kind of feel you out initially and ask where you're from, what's your name, where you were born, so and so forth and a lot of times they would ask if you speak French. And you know I would come back *Oui, je parle un peu français* and that would just basically open the door because they felt like you weren't an American for one which a lot of times they called people outside of this area Americans. And so they kind of let you in their lifestyle I guess if you will and really be opened up with stories and what exactly they were doing. Because a lot of time when you speak to some of the older gentlemen, they were a little guarded in what they would tell you. Not so much that they felt you were there to find out exactly what you were doing but they just didn't like you to know exactly what they were doing. But once you did open up that language barrier, you seem to get a lot more information out of them and it was a lot of times very interesting. I mean they would tell you for example in some areas of Terrebonne Marsh they would tell you what it used to look like back maybe in the 1950s or late 40s. Because some of those gentlemen that trap on Terrebonne, in Terrebonne on Continental Land and Fur, there is one gentleman who is 80 something years old and he runs 175 leg hold traps every day.

C: Still today?

E: Still today for catching nutria. He is actually enrolled in the nutria control program. His name is Willy Williams.

C: Hmm, well we will need to try and get with him.

E: He's a very interesting man. Again he's another one who if you spoke to in French you could get a lot of stories out of him.

C: Willy Williams

E: And a lot of times, you know as the conversation goes, which I'm sure you are well aware of that, you start getting into half French half English dialogs, but that's just the way it is

C: Right

E: but you do find out a lot about what things used to be like and some of them talk about hay day and trapping and how much money they used to make and a lot of the trappers, the older trappers basically trap now just because they enjoy it so much cause they really don't make a whole lot of money doing it. It's just the lifestyle they are used to and this is the time of year to do it so they just enjoy it. Enjoy that activity.

C: Do you have any, based on those conversations, do you have any idea what the typical income would have been for the trappers back in the hay day?

E: No I don't but if you look at the, for example in the 1977-78 season which I think is the peak where especially for nutria which was. Nutria was one of the most important furs back then as far as amount of harvest and price and demand and in that time frame 77-78, they were harvesting close to two million nutria at an average price of about \$9 and that was average price. So for a number 1 they may have gotten a few more dollars and then a lower quality pelt, a few less dollars. They got paid quite a bit for muskrat, I'd actually have to go look up the prices but relative to today's economics and dollars, a lot of them did pretty well and that's why they did haul the whole family out there to the trapper's camp and to the marsh because in the few months of the trapping season, they supplemented a lot of their income with that effort.

C: Well it's one of those areas, gray areas that is difficult to get a handle on, especially for the earlier periods since so much of that is cash based.

E: And that's one interesting point you make, cash based is that when, when we decided to implement the nutria control program where we were going to concentrate on the removal of nutria, they were going to get paid an incentive payment for every tail that they turned in. Started at \$4 and after the 2005-2006 season which was after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita we increased it to \$5. But in the early days of the nutria control program, which the first trapping season was 2002-2003 there was some concern about the trappers receiving a check because they were so used to a cash based business and that when we told them when they bring in their tales, we would count them, they would sign a voucher and in a week or so to ten days they would receive a check in the mail. Well many of them were very reluctant to do that because they were so used to getting cash back on a daily basis like they did for their fur but through time they kind of realized that they would get a check and they wouldn't come in as often to turn their tales in whereas initially they would come every week, no matter how many they had. So that was kind of interesting to see that you know they were still stuck on that cash business, which you can't blame them, you know it's a lot of work and you know they were so used to getting paid cash by the dealers and the buyers.

Don: Do you remember when women also went out into the marsh and worked or do you have stories about women?

E: No, that's kind of before my time but I've seen in pictures where you've seen the guy's wife out there working with him. I have seen some of the older trappers for example there is a gentleman that traps, he's really not one of the older trappers but there is a gentleman that traps at the Atchafalaya Delta and he brings his wife and his daughter with him out on his run. I've seen another older gentlemen around Mandalay that would bring his wife with him trapping. Also actually he would shrimp during the summer time and his wife would help him on the shrimp boat.

D: Where do they live?

E: They live in the Houma area.

D: Okay

E: He would basically shrimp during the summer and the early fall and then trap during the winter time. But that was a little bit before my time, but I know that it did, it was fairly common in a lot of areas that the wife would go out with him to the camp.

C: I realize it wasn't common but Don and I have actually seen single women going out.

E: Well there is a few women that actually participate in the nutria control program. There is a woman down in Pointe aux Chenes who enrolls in the program. She also harvests alligators during the alligator season so it's strictly not all males. There are some females involved in the program.

D: Could you get her name to us?

E: I could look and see

D: Please? It doesn't have to be immediately.

C: Do you have a feeling, I mean are we talking about a couple dozen, I mean a handful?

E: Well not that many now, I suspect historically there were quite a few more that went out there because a lot of the chores of the woman wasn't actually to be out in the marsh with the trapper. It was tending to the furs that were back at the camp drying. For example they would hang them or stretch them or you know if the sun was just right, they would have them out there drying. If the weather would be not suitable for drying fur they would have to haul them back in. And then kind of take care of her husband and feeding him and such but I think a lot of their duty was that and you kind of see evidence of that in some of the older pictures. You see the women and children turning muskrat furs that are on stretchers and doing a lot of the chores that were at the camp itself.

C: We had talked a little bit in various conversations about the Artisan wells that existed on Marsh Island and I know in the first interview you talked about the map that Dwight Brasseaux

E: Yes, that's correct

C: had written for you but, I don't think in the first interview I got from you the local lure about what happen to the wells and why they eventually went out.

E: Well they had several wells around the island, several of them were associated with areas where they trapper camps. There was one in the southwest end of the island where they would bring cattle from the west, from the Cheniere au Tigre and that area and they would barge them across the southwest pass and they would pasture them on that southwest end of the island which was fairly high and they had an artisan well there as well to water cattle. In the late 50s and 60s from what I understand, reading through some of the reports, the annual reports, when oil and gas activity started in Marsh Island. Well they started dredging canals, drilling, there were 2D-seismic associated with that and with 2D seismic they would sink down charges and most of the impact from the charges from the seismic activity collapsed those structures where the artesian wells were and unfortunately most of them quit functioning and I think that was more towards the early, the late 50s early 60s is when that activity occurred.

C: So did the cattle drives stop at that point?

E: The cattle drives, I'm not exactly sure when, I know they were fairly active up until the 50s and maybe early 60s. I know at one time Dr. Shaw Breck in his early days at LSU had set up some cattle exclosures to look at the impacts of cattle grazing on the marsh at Marsh Island. In fact some of the posts are still out there, or what's left of them and was trying to demonstrate, you know, that in some areas they may have had some impacts, where in others they weren't as impacted.

D: Was the southwestern end of the island leased to a cowboy or a family?

E: Well they had, they had several families. I know one was a Broussard and if you look on the Deed of Donation you can see the various families that were associated with different parts of the Marsh Island and a lot of that cattle grazing was from those families that probably were from west of here like Cheniere au Tigre area, maybe even as far as Pecan Island, I'm not really sure but in Abbeville area and they would graze cattle in the marsh and subsequently bring them over to Marsh Island. I think it was several families actually that was involved in that practice. I don't exactly know which ones and for how long but I know at one time they actually had a brick camp out in that area on the beach ridge where they would stay periodically, you know to watch over the cattle.

C: A brick camp

E: A brick camp. In fact I have brick in my office from that camp. It was a cattleman's camp, I've never seen a picture of it but

C: No verbal descriptions of it that you remember?

E: No, and it could have been the pilings were brick and the actual cabin was Cypress so I've gotten different reports. Dwight has mentioned they did have a cattleman's camp and it was somewhere on that higher end of the beach ridge but that's about all he knew about it.

D: Hm, brick camp

C: But brick piers do make sense

E: It had brick piers, now whether the rest of it, or how much of it was brick and how much was Cypress I don't know but

D: Sure

E: But in the article, there is an article in the Lifestyle's magazine that Tom Hymel had did that mentioned something about that camp over there that he had spoken with one of those older gentlemen and he had made mention of that.

D: Do you remember anything or have you any reference to the Orange Cameron Land Company and their activities?

E: No sir, I don't. I read about it in some of the Wildlife and Fisheries Annual Reports and the amount of trapping that went on over there and they had these huge fur drying structures out in the marsh. I guess they might have been shared by a couple trappers or so in that general area but I know it was a large operation back then.

C: Is there, looking back in the reports and in your own personal experience, with the continuous development of canals through of the prime trapping areas, what was the initial impact of all of that? I mean what was the response in the trapping?

E: Well initially a lot of the traînasses were dug for access for muskrat trappers almost before nutria actually showed up on the scene because muskrat trapping, the trapper was actually out there walking amongst the muskrat houses and

C: right

E: they would dig even some by shovel these small traînasses where they could push pole their pirogue in some of these areas to gain access. I know in one of the early letters from McIlhenny when they visited Marsh Island in the late 20s, there was some concern about the number of canals that were being built in that area that they eventually be detrimental to that ecosystem and to that marsh and looking at Marsh Island today I think in some areas it might have been. Probably more so the oil and gas canals versus the smaller traînasses.

C: Right, that's what I'm getting at. You've got this transitional period that initially you've got the traînasses snaking through the marsh and then eventually you've got barge mounted draglines coming through there and opening it up. That's what I'm talking about that phase and I just wondered if you had either through conversations with the older trappers or looking through some of the reports, there had to be a transitional phase in there were they are initially being impacted by the new canals and

E: Well they were and some of the pictures document that where initially you see small narrow traînasses where you can barely fit a pirogue down and the trapper may have just push poled down there, you know even some of the small paths they might have walked eventually turned into small traînasses. And they came out with these marsh ditching machines which was basically almost a side mounted cutter which would go through those areas and actually go through a traînasse and open it up

even wider and that was so you could get a little bit larger boat like the size of an old mud boat or something down that canal. And as technology advanced, you got larger and larger boats that were going back in the marsh and eventually coupled with that was oil and gas exploration where they dug larger canals through a lot of these areas so it really, it really impacted the hydrology of some of these marshes. Especially, specifically Marsh Island is a good example and I know historically some of the older gentlemen will tell you that there was a lot more walkable marsh if you will at Marsh Island historically before they had all these canals as compared to what they have now.

C: But was there a response directly from the trappers themselves as they recognized that things are changing, the hydrology is changing. I mean is that just something they kept to themselves or is it something they

E: I mean honestly I really don't know. I know that, you know, as times, as they had more and more trappers I think access became more of an issue. And it was more an access issue.

C: So they were more concerned about access than the fact that there are changes to hydrology and

E: Right, I think so. I think they, some of them did notice that it was impacting some of those areas but compared to the impacts of the larger canals, I think it wasn't near as detrimental.

D: Yeah, the term often used in what we do is traditional ecological knowledge which means that the locals have better knowledge than the biologist and I know that I have interviewed trappers who would say they built a little dam, put a little dam.

E: Mmhm

D: Now they didn't understand salt - freshwater differences but they knew that little dam protects saltwater going into their little marsh.

E: Correct

D: Now I've interviewed a number of people that did that, but that's when the roots were truly a pirogue trail. They weren't dug by a mud boat or a traînasse machine; they were dug by a crooked shovel.

E: Right

D: Have you heard of trappers who were that conscious that they built these little dams

E: Yeah, I mean there is still remnants of some of them out in the marsh. Um you know they basically, like you mentioned the bent shovel was a shovel basically shaped like a hoe and they would take a shovel and actually bend it and he didn't bend it and that's how they dug through some of those areas because really. In some of those areas to push a small pirogue it wasn't much of all a ditch at all and so they, I don't think those traînasses impacted those marshes that much whereas when you got the traînassing machine or they even came in with what they call a marsh plow. It was like a huge plow they pulled with a marsh buggy to dig a much wider, straighter ditch for example. And I know they were conscious though of protecting some of the, and some of those dams were also built to maintain water

levels in their marsh so access would be a little easier because they knew during the winter time if the tide North wind would go out and they had this small dam adjacent to this small artery which they used their traînasse that if they could hold water

D: Keep it navigable

E: Keep it navigable for them at low water events.

D: Now I'm familiar with three types of traînasse digging equipment: a crooked or bent shovel,

E: Correct

D: Some might call it traînasse machine that on the bow has 2 rotating blades

E: Correct, that's what I was mentioning earlier

D: counterclockwise

E: it's like a mud boat with a bush hog mounted horizontally

C: horizontally

D: and then a mud boat which was just brute force.

E: Right, right

D: I tell everybody if they could put a hemi in that son of gun they would and just plow a trail

E: And you see, you know even to this day, which they've moved kind of away from the traditional mud boat if you will but you know they would dig these traînasses wider and deeper with the traînasse machine and prior to the hunting season, trapping season, or the alligator season they would go in there with a large mud boat to run those trails to open them up because once they got everything churned up, the tide would actually work those channels and they would deepen again and depending on the hydrology regime of that marsh, some would maybe stay open more so than others.

D: Now with reality TV show Swamp People, have you seen an increase in the number of recreational alligator hunters? I know I live in Minnesota and I'm coming to Louisiana to kill an alligator.

E: Well there's been, Noel Kinler actually runs the alligator program for this section, division, but because of those shows, it does encourage people to call and ask how they can come down here and hunt alligators. It's similar when, for example, they do shows on the nutria control program for example. They'll show someone in an airboat with a driver or ride around a fresh floating marsh for example and the nutria are so abundant they may look like cattle on the prairie, and you'll have somebody out there shooting them with a .22 or some activity similar to that versus trapping and they think that is readily available here and want to come do that. They think it's actually a guide service for that. Relative to the alligators, there are a lot of people that actually take people out on alligator hunts if they are properly licensed, they pay a fee like you would for example to go on a fishing trip or any other sporting event

D: sure

E: but shows like that do drum up an interest in those activities but at the same token, sometimes they generate a lot of false information about how the program actually operates, unfortunately.

D: Yeah, again we deal with David Richard a lot. I think he runs the Grey Estate property.

E: Right, I know

D: and he said, "Don, I had to take two generals out." (laughter) They had been up in Fort Polk, saw and got a call and he a fellow there that guides and he had everything. Turned out they were wonderful gentlemen, perfect but I don't think that way because I don't watch TV thinking I can go do it and I just had to ask.

E: Well it generates a lot of calls because a lot of people look at it as something once in a life time activity they come down here and do.

D: Good point

E: And possibly end up with a pair of alligator boots or alligator belt, some souvenir from south Louisiana

C: I suspect there is probably more interest in state than out of state though

D: I don't have any trouble with that

C: Just a gut feeling

D: I don't have any trouble with that. One of the things that Carl and I are really intrigued with is kind of the value added. You know we've always produced a pelt, then it had to go to Europe, then it came back to New York, then it was manufactured into a high end product, and sold on an international market with people not realizing that there is a family that caught, leg trap or whatever the original animal. Are you seeing any of that kind of value added staying home?

E: Well regarding the fur, most of the fur that we produce in Louisiana is sold at auction and a lot of it ends up in China. Most of that fur is manufactured by the Chinese into products, whether it is coats, hats, liners, fashion accessories. I mean there are some that go to Europe as well, but a large percentage does go to China and in turn a lot of those goods that are manufactured in China end up in Eastern Europe and Russia.

D: Really?

E: As far as the fur is concerned.

D: Now when did the Chinese get really involved?

E: I would say probably in the late 90s is when they really started coming to Louisiana looking to purchase fur and the reason a lot of those Chinese buyers didn't just buy fur. They also processed it,

tanned it, and they also manufactured products. So a lot of those companies that were interested in fur from Louisiana basically did the whole nine yards. They took the raw product and turned it into a saleable piece of merchandise whether it be a hat or a coat and a lot of that went to the Russian economy and also to Eastern Europe.

C: Well it's strange, Russia is not buying the furs directly but they are letting the Chinese be the middleman and

E: Correct, historically before things crashed in the late 70s, early 80s there was a lot fur going to Russia and Eastern Europe but when the rule-able in the USSR collapsed, they didn't have the finances to be able to purchase and manufacture the fur and the Chinese kind of took over and that was somewhere in the 90s where they started to process more fur in China versus

D: What about the European market?

E: Now there is some that goes to the European market through other markers for example, there is probably not that much that goes directly there. Most recently fur is being used in fashions more as trim and it's kind of coming back into fashion slowly. But it is mostly being used as trim and in the fashion industry in the United States and some of that is coming from Europe.

D: Now one of the photographs we found here and they were actually bagging pelts. We have also found one on the Vermillion Land Company's archives where they were actually almost a bale.

C: Right, actually it was a bale

D: in the back of a Model-T, I think, right

C: That had been converted into a flat bed, the back end

D: Now we talk about, okay we are looking in the 30s, were we still going to auction with these furs in the 30s or were we package them in this burlap bag and taking them directly to somebody now? I'm trying to figure out why we are putting them bales and bags.

E: Well a lot of the early trappers basically, especially when it was muskrat, there are some old photographs. There is one in here of some trappers leaving Marsh Island in a small outboard with a real small little outboard motor and it's two guys with a bunch of burlap sacks full of dried muskrat pelts and they are probably in there loose and when they bring them back to either the dealer or buyer, that's when they bale them up

D: Got it

E: because there the trappers actually pulling them off the drying rack and they are putting them in the sacks and that's just the

C: So it's actually the buyer who is creating the bale after they have been graded and bought

E: After they have been graded because once they are strapped into a bale, they really, you'd have to cut the bale open to re-grade them so they are usually brought in loose, they are graded, and then they are put in bales according to their grade or there may be multi-grades

D: Makes perfect sense

C: Easy transportation

E: Well a lot of the trappers back then processed all their fur. I mean you could see there is some pictures. The one I showed you that gentleman out at his camp where he showed the different stretching mechanisms he had for nutria. They used, they had boards initially and then they came out with this wire stretcher that was a little bit more portable, not as bulky. But they would actually flesh the pelt and they would dry it. And once it was dry, it would be ready to bring into a dealer to sell and be graded. Whereas now days most of the fur, very few trappers process the fur. They bring the whole animal green on the hoof to the dealer and the dealer takes care of skinning the animal, processing the fur, drying the fur, and preserving the fur for market. So very little is done

D: Hm, and there are only three of those gentlemen left?

E: Yes, there are three of those gentlemen left in Louisiana at present. There is a Mr. Jimmy Gallaspy who's up in Mansfield, Louisiana. He has a business called R P Trapping. There is a gentleman, Danny Perry of Perry Fur. His father was a fur buyer. He's up in Oakdale. And there is Tab Pitre who is in Galliano and his father was a fur dealer as well. And some of those individuals, for example Tab, he also may buy alligators during the wild alligator harvest season. So they will actually process fur during the trapping season and they will also process alligators during the wild alligator season.

D: So there is still a market out there for some fur.

E: Yes, in fact you know they do buy most all eleven species that are trapped in Louisiana, in particular some of the probably more profitable are otter, and they do get orders for nutria, mink. There is a demand for muskrat but unfortunately there is not many muskrat trappers left these days. And the difference being to trap muskrat you actually have to go out and walk the marsh and trap in the vicinity of the muskrat mounds versus riding up and down a waterway trapping nutria for example with leg hold traps. It's kind of different, a little more work.

C: Now the mink, is that farm raised?

E: No, the mink is wild and there is some. And the raccoon it just depends on the harvest and if the market gets off sometimes. Like for example, last winter was fairly warm up north so there was a big flood of raccoons so it wasn't that profitable but that is one of the more common furs as well. And of course you have red fox, gray fox, bobcat, and um a few others. Otter is probably the one that's worth the most, pricewise in the market right now. And it's followed by bobcat, and then the other furs depend on demand.

D: Otter, I'm told is pretty mean and they will actually bite their foot off to get out of the leg hold trap.

E: Mmhm

D: So you almost have to put two traps if

E: Well they will use leg-hold traps and they also use what they call a body gripping trap, which is actually a killing trap.

D: Okay, alright

E: I mean they do get caught in both but for otter they tend to use, it's called a Conibear is the brand name but its common name is a body gripping trap.

D: Cause I've only seen a few otter in the marsh and swamp. They hide.

E: Well they travel like in small packs and but there is quite a few. We'll get probably maybe anywhere from 1500 to 2000 in the annual fur report for example that are harvested and that all depends on price. And the price over the last few years has ranged from \$35 to \$120 so it just depends on the demand of the fur for otter.

D: Now what about for alligator skins? I always thought the alligator skins were tanned in North or South Carolina and then they tended to go to Europe. But now I understand they go to Singapore?

E: Well, there's different, you have really two alligator markets and Noel would probably be a better person to discuss this than me. But for example there was a while back when the alligator hides were shipped from Louisiana to Europe to be tanned and one of the companies was RTL which is Roggwiller. In fact actually since have a business in Lafayette on Pinhook where the old fry plant used to be. Because what was happening is that skin was leaving Louisiana, rolled up in salt, being shipped to France, tanned over there and then shipped back to the United States tanned and then turned around and shipped possibly to Italy or France or somewhere to be made into some type of product, whether it was a purse, a pair of boots, a belt, a wallet, or what have you. So Roggwiller decided that it ... to them to move to Louisiana and open up a tannery. They buy wild hides which are more desirable because they sell by the belly width centimeter, so obviously the larger the gator, the bigger the belly you have and those larger gators are used to make larger products like boots and briefcases and ladies' purses and what have you. And the other part of the alligator market is the alligator farming. Where there is several large scale alligator farms in Louisiana where they actually go out into the marsh in the mid-summertime, harvest the eggs, bring them to their farm in regulated conditions. They hatch out those eggs and then they grow up that hatchling to about a 4-ft alligator. They can do that in about 12 months' time. And once that 4-ft alligator is of market size which is around 4-ft, that's the economic threshold. They will slaughter the animal and they will sell some meat and those hides will get shipped off. Some stay here to be tanned, some get shipped to Singapore, just depends on the individual farmer and his relationship with a tanner and most of the farm raised alligator hides go to the watch strap market.

D: Really?

E: And luxury watches and a lot of that is because on a 4-ft gator you have certain centimeter belly width side which is appropriate for the watch strap market.

C: Do you have any idea what percentage now is being tanned and refashioned into bags or whatever for the consumer market? I mean are we talking about a significant portion of it being processed here?

E: The vast majority of whatever wild gator is harvested or whatever farm gator is market, is harvested is going to some product.

C: Right but what I mean, what I was asking is how much of that additional processing after the harvest is being done here? How much of it is still being sent overseas? Do you have a handle on that?

E: I really don't know. It just depends. For example the watch straps are made overseas by companies like Swatch and Hermes and those type companies. Some of the other, a lot of the other alligator products are made in Italy like Louis Vuitton for example. Those manufacturers. I'm sure there are some, there is actually a gentleman in Houma, Dane Ledet who is an alligator farmer. He actually has some of his hides made into some of his own products that he sells: boots and belts and wallets. There is also another gentleman in Lafayette Mark Staton that has products made that he sells in Lafayette. And also at RTL if you look in the newspaper you see they sell the products that they manufacture as well with the hides they tan here. Now whether those items are actually manufactured here in Louisiana or somewhere else, that I don't know of. But I mean the tanning process is very secretive. All the tanners have their own little secrets. It's just like the fur tanning business, same thing. It is kind of like the secret of Coca Cola if you will. It's something they just don't readily give out. So they all have their different process because an alligator hide when it's first tanned in this milk stage which is basically white and then subsequent to that they can come in and color it with any color of the rainbow and put any type of finish whether it is glossy, matte, or what have you on there. And then some of them depending, they may skin them for horned backs where they would actually skin for the back of the alligator versus the belly and that is where you get those horn-backed boots and those type products that they make with the hides.

D: Well I ran into a product the other day. I've got a friend who loves to cook and we were over at Hackberry and we had to go and buy gator leg and there were actually packaged gator legs. I've had alligator but I've never had gator leg. And apparently it is a pretty good business. What are we looking at? Do we BBQ these?

E: Well there is many parts to the alligator that's sold, you know there is the body meat, there is the tail meat, there's the meat in the jowls, and then there is the leg meat. So depending on whose processing, how it is processed or packaged if you will, you could get a mixture of some of that or you could get just tail meat, it just depends on how

D: All I know is he went pheasant hunting in Nebraska and he brought from Houston gator legs and after he cooked them he was invited back for next year provided he brings more alligator legs.

E: Yeah you know, some of that is also marketing ploys. I mean

D: Okay

E: there is quite a bit of alligator meat and Noel again would know the numbers better than myself that is produced not only from the wild harvest, you know. The wild harvest they harvest roughly 30,000 alligators a year and alligator farms at any one time you may have 700,000 alligators on farms in Louisiana so talking about a lot of animals that, a lot of hides that are produced in the industry.

D: Yeah it looks like the number of alligator farms hover around 100, it can go down, it can go up

E: Well it depends what's the trend now, it that the farms are getting larger and larger to a certain extent. There is you know few larger than others but there is not near what they had back in the '70s, late '70s when they first started alligator farming. It is kind of similar to catfish farming. When catfish farming first came out, they had a whole lot of individuals in that type business and eventually it got dwindled down to the people that really worked hard at it and tried to succeed.

D: Alright

C: I have one last question for you, just a sound bite about traditional knowledge about the, the knowledge about the environment held by the old folks who live in the, you talked about the ones who live in the swamp because they love it. Can you just give us a sound bite about that?

E: Well, most of, most of those older gentlemen that are out there trapping kind of consider the wetlands as their office if you will. I've heard them say that. They just, there is a gentleman that's in Mr. Sterling Fryou who lives in Burwick and he's 80 something years old and he still traps. He traps for Continental Land and Fur. He's in the nutria control program. He fishes mullet, he runs hoop nets, he does just a variety, he lives basically in the outdoors. A lot of those gentlemen I think the reason some of them get to the ripe old age of 80 something years old is because they are out there every day working hard. And another example is Mr. Willy Williams. You know, the gentleman runs 175 leg-hold traps in a day and to be quite honest with you I'm not sure I could do that every day on a daily basis. So I think they realize that you know a lot of their hard work pays off. It keeps them in good shape, they enjoy the outdoors. I think they respect the outdoors a lot more than people think because they are out there in it, they're living it. They are trying to protect the resources they depend on, some type of renewable resource, whether it is fish, crabs, fur, alligators, what have you. And they are probably the first ones that can tell you if something is going wrong out there. You know if they see problems with you know the marsh deteriorating or impacts of saltwater, you know a lot of them can tell you what this area used to look like and what it looks like now and they have, some of them have a pretty good idea of what caused it because they have been out there for such a long time. So I think it is a good resource that's disappearing rapidly.

C: Well thank you Ed, this is perfect

D: This is marvelous, thank you, really thank you

E: Well, I don't know how much I have given

D: The traditional ecological knowledge is