Greg Linscombe Interview

March 2, 2011

Interviewers: Carl Brasseaux & Don Davis

Part 1

Don Davis: And it became really clear. You know Sherrill

Sagrera?

Greg Linscombe: Yes, I do.

D: I consider Cheryl a friend – a good friend. I asked if I Could borrow his family photo album. And you know Cheryl – if he likes you, he loves you. Sure Don! Here! Take it. So I took it. Very carefully copied everything. And one thing led to another – I'm not a person – if I borrow something to you, I'm not going to put it in the mail. I'm going to hand deliver it and say thank you. He was here, I was there. You know, one of these things. Katrina hits. Well everybody's life disrupted.

Carl Brasseaux: Well I mean, he and his wife lost everything.

G: I know. I know.

D: And suddenly you know, he is focusing on his children are rebuilding. Carl and I were working on a little writing assignment, and we decided we needed to do some oral history. Contact Cheryl – his house was now rebuilt. His nice little elevator was in place.

C: Which he built himself, by the way.

G: Right – he told me that.

D: So we go and we visit, and Cheryl's just telling us about his daddy and where the oysters were out on um, Marsh Island, and what they did as a kid, cattle – it was just going great. His wife walks in, and Carl was chatting a bit. Fortunately Carl is fluid in French – that helps. And I'm sitting there with the whole conversation was coming down. And I reach in my briefcase and I hand his wife her photo album. Now in my business, you never get a chance to give somebody their history back; their family history. A tear came down her eye.

G: It would've been lost.

D: It would've been gone.

C: Exactly.

D: And then it became very clear to us that it was important to interview people if they have photographs or documents, um, and you know, the company sold – I can talk about it freely. Um, LL&E, you know, Burlington, Conoco-Philips, well the original LL&E records are still there. Those are important because when Cheryl Voissin was in charge, and then Leo Sevin at LeTerre, and I…

G: Leroy.

D: Leroy. I did research at Le Terre. When you're telling me that name, I go, "I know it". I can't visualize him, but I know it. And I knew Leroy – I can't visualize him, but I know I met him.

G: Yeah.

D: We're looking through the records just casually. But they had a land guy out every day. Now think of it in terms of history. You have a daily diary that's over fifty years. Where else can we capture that?

G: I came – I came this close to getting Gerald to come over this morning, but he had a bunch of guys – and I haven't talked with him. I told him I was embarrassed calling him out of the past. I hadn't talked with him in years and years and years. And he had some guys coming – he lives on Vice Road south of Houma, and he's got about – he had several hundred trees. He lost some last year from the freeze. I think he's got mainly navel oranges. And he set up fertilizer, and I said I'd be there. And I mentioned your name. He said, I'll talk to him. Just, you'll have to see when I'm available. So any other day, and he could've…

D: Okay.

G: But interesting thing – when I came over, I started with Wildlife and Fisheries in '72. And um, actually, I was trying to get on as a waterfowl biologist to work on southwest Louisiana. That's really what I wanted to do, and things just didn't line up. So I went to work, of all things, handling the lily killers – aquatic weed sprayers, um, and I worked in Baton Rouge. I just finished at LSU, and it was a foot in the door, and I had the crews from um, the Atchafalaya River, the east side of the Atchafalaya River all the way to the Mississippi line. I guess- trying to remember how many crews I had – maybe six or so. Um, we had a repair office in Rosedale where repaired the engines for all the boats where I had a couple of crews that sprayed the basin out of Rosedale. I had a crew in Stephensville or Belle River I guess is where they were, had a couple of crews around Bear Island, which is – do you know where Bear Island is?

D: No.

G: It's kind of north of Maurepas in Livingston I think. They – one or two crews there, and I had a crew at um, Madisonville, and I had a crew at Pearl River. And those guys were just sprayers. And I did that for the better part of one year, and I do ROTC so I got called to go to – I'd already been through basic officer – anyway, I ended up in El Paso for six – it seems like six years, but it was probably three or four months in missile school, and I was very fortunate because by the time I finished that, they were getting rid of officers coming out of Vietnam. They didn't need any officers. They put me in a control group, and I never had too much more dealing with the army after that. But when I came back, a guy walks around the corner one day in Baton Rouge office of Wildlife and Fisheries, and if you knew him, you can imagine. Did you know Ted O'Neal?

D: (laughs)

G: Okay.

D: Do I need to do any more?

G: Okay.

D: (laughs)

G: This guy comes around the corner – white hair, wraparound black sunglasses, kind of like a Hawaiian type shirt on, and white pants and white shoes - big old tall guy. He said I'm looking for Greg Linscomb. I said, you found him. He said, you want to work – I hear you want to work in the marsh. I said, yes sir, I do. and we started talking, and I don't know – I never did know what the connection was. Um, Bill Palmisano worked for him for a while. Bill went back to LSU. Maybe somehow Bill knew me around there and knew that I was interested in the marsh, and so I went to work for Ted, I guess that was probably – I can't tell you now if it was '72 or '73. And there was still a fur division and a refuge division. And that went back and forth and had been Fur and Refuge, and Alan (Ensmere?) came along, and Ted had his little fur thing, and Alan had refuge, and so there were only six employees when I went to work for Ted. And um, one of them was a Brasseaux by the name of Dwight Brasseaux. Do you know that name at all? Dwight had worked on Marsh – no, State Wildlife for a while and then switched over and worked for Ted. Kind of a boat captain in stuff like that. And he knew the marsh – grew up trapping the marsh below um, Boston.

C: That's where Vermillion Parish…

G: Right there. Right there, so that was a great asset – a guy that grew up trapping with his dad trapping muskrats, and there was a guy in north Louisiana that Ted used. He was kind of a trapper up there, and Ted was into a lot of sampling animals for disease work. He worked a lot with people in New Orleans out of um, the school of tropical medicine. I don't know if that's LSU…

D: Tulane.

G: Tulane, okay. He did a lot of stuff. That guy did a lot of trapping up there. And there was a secretary - 400 Royal Street. Let's see, that's one, two, three, four, five. Maybe there was only five of us. I was thinking there were six, but I can't come up with the sixth person. So that was the fur division. That was the fur division, and um, I worked out of Baton Rouge for some reason – I guess because I was there working with aquatic weed control, and they set me up an office there. So I worked there for a number of years, and the alligator season was getting cranked up in southwest – (inaudible) essentially just Cameron parish. So I was – I would leave – my wife was teaching in Port Allen. We lived in Port Allen – a little rent trailer. And I was working in Baton Rouge, but they started sending me on a Monday or Tuesday to Grand Cheniere, and I would stay there till Thursday or Friday. And I did that for a while, and I said hey, look. If ya'll want me to work down there, let me live down there somewhere. So I finally got approval – Ted didn't care where I lived. Ted lived in Abbeville and he'd go down to New Orleans on a Monday and stay down there three or four days, and he could've been anywhere after that. Ted O'Neal, and so I just had to get the upper (Eschelon?) people to get me to move my domical to Vermillion. And I moved it basically to where I live now. I was living at that time in my wife's grandparents house right in Klondike – Davids, and we lived there for a number of years – I guess three or four years, and I was

working the whole coast mainly just trying to get a feel for the trapping industry on the coast, and it was a great time to do it because prices were going up. I mean you had the era of the, of the muskrats in the forties – '45, '46, where it went up to supposedly nine million pelts worth twelve million dollars to these rat trappers across the coast. I don't know if those figures are right, but that's the stuff we have in the comparative take. So that was a phenomenal time. If you go back before that, there are some records that indicated in the, again, comparative tape records, and I'm trying to think of the book. I have a copy at home, and there's a copy in New Iberia, and I think it's – I want to stay Stanley Arthur, Fur Animals of Louisiana, maybe in the thirties. He talked about twenty thousand plus trappers in Louisiana in '24, '25. The rat thing based on information from Ted and historical stuff – Lowery's book where he put the whole thing together – took off in the early 1900s, maybe 1912. The New York market started using the pelts and essentially cutting the belly and the back, which were totally different - kind of silver belly and a dark longer haired back, and those were separate coats. They went in separate directions where the – and so it took off, and I guess the peak of that, and I just know a little of that history. It was in the forties, and that was the days of some of the muskrat wars in St. Bernard and it looked like the muskrats were produced in waves. And a lot of trappers told me this. I don't know if I totally understand that, but they would – they would start producing maybe east of the river, and um, and then kind of a wave of muskrat production coming to Terrebonne. And there were rats in Cameron Parish. In fact, the most valuable rats were always in the Chenier plain. Darker, thicker fur. Same thing with nutria – I spent many years trying to study that. I even got into raising nutria in captivity in New Iberia. The pens are still there, with um, physiologists and feeding trace minerals and stuff to try to figure out – can we do something? Can we do something in southeast to increase the value of the nutria? The rat thing had kind of gone – that was going away in the eighties, but um, so we were – nutria was still booming through the seventies and early eighties, and we wanted to make them more valuable, so I fooled with that a lot. But really back to the historical thing, when I started coming over here, probably in the seventies, I was meeting with three individuals – Herman Crawford, who lived in that house, and his son Dwayne is there now, and is the surface manager. Gerald Voissin at LL&E, and John Woodard was at um, Le Terre, but I was really talking with Leroy Sevin because he handled the trappers. So I went in the marsh probably some with Herman, not as much. I went in the marsh I think more with LL&E because they had way over a hundred trappers. I was – I was talking with Gerald a while ago to see if he could come over for a few minutes, and he

(inaudible – feedback)

G: At the office. He said I think I could find them. They're probably in the safe. Not a lot of photographs, but mainly historical records he kept. So that's a really – and what's valuable – Gerald in seventy two I think. Leroy Sevin's about eighty two. Both of them – I feel certain grew up at a trapping camp trapping with parents, grandparents, so they lived it. I saw it, I experienced a few years of the tail end of it. They lived it. And then they managed these guys later in their lives, so they really had a feel for really what was going on out there. Gerald went with his grandfather, and I think this may have been back in the forties, I guess he had been old enough in 1940 if he's eight years older than I am, or something like that. And his grandfather was working for Steinburg. His grandfather had three hundred plus trapping families that he collected fur from. So I don't know how much information he's got on that. That

probably was Terrebonne and could've been Lafourche as well. So there's a – there a tremendous amount of information that Gerald's got from a small boy going to the camps with his grandfather, or maybe they came out. There was some of both of that.

C: Well we'll try to come back.

G: But he's valuable, and Leroy's going to be valuable too. But anyway, I went out to the camps a lot with – in the seventies, LL&E had patrolled – patrol men. They had some that went – they had property and all in the Mississippi River, and I guess still do – Conoco Phillips now. But they had patrol men in the east. I never went that way very much. I went with the guys that left the Falgoust Canal below Houma and worked back this way, and I'm not sure why. I guess they were more convenient. That's the guys I went with. And they became my teachers. I made alligator night counts with them. The alligator season wasn't open, so they were out there. LL&E had a unique setup. The guy came – the trapper came into the office annually and signed his lease. Then a copy of that lease was taken by these patrol – patrolmen to the camp. And he signed that one on that property. And I suspect that had to do with maintaining ownership. I'm on your property, I acknowledge that, I'm leasing - I'm trapping for you. Because I often wondered why, but one lease in the office, another lease on the property. And I'm sure that there were issues further back about well, my dad or my grandfather always trapped this, you know there were some of those. But I think most of those – there were actually some issues when we were issuing tags down here in probably in the eighties where an individual would come in and say, this piece of property is mine. I want the tags on it. And LL&E said no, this is LL&E's property. And when we had issues like that, we didn't – there were no tags issued. We weren't getting in the middle of that. Because it wasn't about alligator tags. It was about minerals. Well see if you could – you got the alligator tag, well the state recognizes you as ownership, so. But there was a little of that when we first started hunting. And I think we started hunting, on this end of the state, alligators probably in the late seventies. We went statewide – well coastwide in the late seventies. So Terrebonne got back into being issued. We were letting those populations recover. And um, so I spent a lot of time with those patrol guys out there. And I was trying to learn the property and learn about the trappers, so they went – they would visit every camp because they were getting that lease signed and checking with them and seeing what was going on. So man, I really got to visit a lot of people. Some of the camps, in addition to a camp, had a big shrimp boat tied up. And those people were shrimpers slash trappers. Shrimp season, the boat was outside, probably in the bays or even offshore, and then in the winter, they'd bring it in, set it up next to the camp. And there are some pictures of that kind of stuff that I took that were some also taken by photographers that I took out there – freelancers that wanted to go do a story about trappers. And over the years, I've managed – you never get as many as you're promised, but you know, I get some back. And there are some pictures – I'd have to go back through and look for them in New Iberia. There also a few black and whites that were salvaged that dated back to Ted's era. The thing I told you about this – and it just always made me sick. There were a couple of boxes like this – cardboard boxes – that were downstairs at 400 Royal Street. And they were moving this stuff in every Wildlife and Fisheries car they could get. I do not know what happened to those, but I saw them. They were packed. They never made it to my office in Baton Rouge. And you know, so there are some that were in other places, you know, the standard eight by tens or whatever they were. Phenomenal, phenomenal pictures. Um, there may

be somebody, and I don't even know if I can track her down in New Orleans that ended up with some of that stuff that was a friend of Ted's. I don't know if this lady's still alive. I wouldn't even know how to begin to find her. Um, she may have ended up with some of that stuff. But I don't know how physically it got to her. I think some of it really was misplaced in the process, you know, trash over here, pictures – and I said man, I'd take this up and I wish I would've had, but no. These, you say what you want to keep – these guys are moving. And they were hauling New Orleans to Baton Rouge. I taped it up – I put my name on it. I never got those boxes, and Ted couldn't find them, and – so that in itself was – now Ted didn't take a lot of them, but there are some names that ya'll would know – people- I'm trying to think. I think it was Earl somebody. But anyway, I have some pictures in New Iberia. Um, I think some of the ones I have are like camps trapping family on Marsh Island. More than several trapping families. There might've had a school out there on Marsh Island.

D: There was.

G: And so it's a picture of a bunch of – from adult trappers down to some little bitty old kids down in front of a building. You know, and um, I know there were pictures of camps and there were artisan wells on that island for some of those camps had fresh supply running water. But that was tragic that – I don't know what happened to that stuff. It made me sick.

C: Well before we get started, we have to deal with the legal business first to keep the lawyers happy. We just want to get your permission on tape to record this interview. It's going to go into repositories at the university in Lafayette, at LSU, and with Sea Grant. Its purpose is to be made available to researchers who are going to be researching the history of the coast. Naturally, there's no financial compensation to everyone involved.

G: Exactly.

C: But as I said at the beginning of this, our interest is simply preserving the…

G: I understand. And I'll share that interest. I – over the years, I often thought about all the things that Ted O'Neal – and Ted O'Neal did some writing. And of course his book – but out of this much knowledge is this much written down that I'm aware of. And I often thought about, you know, if I had the time, and of course, it was difficult to sit down and – so I got – I soaked up a little bit of it, but not near, you know, what he did not write down and what he knew. I mean he saw some – in fact, it's funny. I tell people this today, and very few people can comprehend what I'm talking about except people my age who worked, like Alan (Ensmere?) would understand it. Ted saw the results of the levee breaking in English Turn. And he saw it just turn in to productive marsh. It's just phenomenal. He started talking about the value of something there. Now he was talking to me about that in the seventies. I'm sure he was talking to other people in the sixties and the fifties. Maybe even in the forties. I think it was productive. When did it break – '27?

D: Yeah, they blew it up in 1927.

G: Okay, well he saw that marsh, and I got the impression that it was productive for a good ten years or more just from that break. It just turned it on, you know. He saw the value of it, and look how long it took. And he – I mean, people in Wildlife and Fisheries talked about it. Ted talked about it, other people talked about it, but you know, how could you possibly ever do that? And I think it was – started working on it. I did some vegetative surveys - did a lot of vegetative surveys across the coast. I'll get to that in a minute. But I did a lot of vegetative surveys in the eighties looking at marsh types, preconstruction, and then post construction I guess. So it was open maybe in the late eighties or something like that. But look how long it took. O'Neal saw it and was discussing it in the forties or fifties, and in the nineties we might've seen it in like a Corps project – forty or fifty years to actually get there. But he saw it, but there weren't many people listening. You know, nor any idea about, conceptually, how did we get from this concept to putting water in here. But um, that was – it was stuff like that that I picked up from Ted, um, more so than stuff that was written down that was just talking with him. Um, but down here I think what I picked up more than anything was the culture, and it was coming to an end probably by the early eighties, because the price of nutria was declining, but I took pictures, and there were pictures around and going out to these camps. There were still a tremendous number of rats produced in the late seventies. I want to say one year, and it was '78 or '79 – there might've been a half million rats, and at one point 8 million nutria in one year. I think the value of the fur in that year was like 25 million. But most of the – most of that was um, nutria. Prices for nutria in Cameron went crazy – went up to - I want to say twelve to fifteen dollars. They were selling muskrats – what they call nose count – they'd throw out the kids. But everything else without grading – muskrats – eleven dollars just nose count. Just throwing them down, and there were pickup trucks bought in Cameron parish from a guy trapping one season. And I'm sure the same thing happened over here, but um, the entire family was involved. There were young boys that I saw going out and there was this one – Gerald told me about this boy, and I cannot think of his name. He looked like to me was about, I don't know, thirteen, fourteen, couldn't have been much older than that – trapping, and you knowhow you get warm days in the winter, and then you get a cold day. And I remember walking with him, and he was trapping and his dad had been killed or died or something. He was kind of supporting. The whole family was out there, but this guy had his own muskrat trapping lease. Or maybe he was on the family's lease. But he was trapping to maintain the family. And Gerald was really impressed with this young boy. And that was a long, long time ago – this boy is a grown man. God knows how old he is today.

C: Were the females still processing the furs?

G: You saw a combination of that. I took pictures of a lot of women processing fur. I was always told by the trapper and by the buyer that the women put up the best nutria. Muskrats were not difficult to put up. You skin them out quickly. You ran them through an old clothes ringer – hand ringer, and the fat came off and the pelt came out the other side. And you just – you didn't have to do a lot of scraping. Flip them, put them on a wire stretcher. Just make sure that you put them outside and a lot of them – a lot of the drying was done outside at these camps, but they did have a fur shed, and had some heat. Nutria was different because it was a lot more difficult to skin. Um, you had to do a lot more cleaning up. You couldn't do much with running it through a ringer, and you had to put it up with the right dimensions, and finish it up, and before they'd sell, you know, they would be flipped with fur inside, and before

they'd sell, a lot of them had a brush coming off the table. Just a rough brush, and before if that guy was coming to your camp to sell, you'd take those – and that brush would stick way out, and you'd take the nutria pelts and you'd do this to fluff up that fur on the inside because they were feeling for the thickness of the fur, and you wanted the best you could get. The dealer, or not dealer but the buyer – the buyer was the guy who dealt directly with the trapper. Most of them were resonant buyers. I was looking at some figures last night, and we had some twenty thousand trappers in Louisiana. I think there were nine hundred to a thousand resonant buyers. That's those guys that dealt directly with the trapper. Probably about seventy dealers – the difference between a buyer and a dealer – the dealer were shipping out of state. He was shipping to – probably most of them were shipping to New York. Some of them may have had connections directly to Europe at that time. I think that came later but I'm not sure about that. Um,

C: Most of these dealers were in New Orleans?

G: There were some - I would say that most of them were. Now there were some exceptions. Ralph (Segrera?) was in Abbeville. He was a dealer. Um, there were Maulers in Houma. They were dealers. Later years, when I was working in the seventies, George Yarborough was in Sicily Island. Huge dealer. Sort of unconventional and it was great for the trappers because it threw the other guys off. He was competition. He had money, and um, I don't know what other – I think he was in the cotton business.

C: Well it makes sense up in Sicily.

D: Yeah.

G: And he got into the fur business. They would take their fur, and I think he bought stuff across north Louisiana - raccoon and fox and cat and all that kind of stuff. But he jumped into the coast, and the year they got so high in the late seventies, George Yarborough was right in the middle of it, and it created great competition. They sold – I knew a guy that worked for him by the name of Jimmy Good. I even went to Canada once with Jimmy Good to – I got involved in marketing. That's another story I can tell you about if you remind me. But um, I was his right hand man, and Jimmy would take the fur and go to Helsinki and put it on the auction block in Helsinki. So the big older established dealers were in New Orleans. Albert (Maradona?) – I'm trying to think of his brother's name, but there were two brothers – the (Maradona?) brothers. Um, Steinberg, and tha'ts the one that popped up in there. There are some others – I'd have to go back and look at some of my records.

D: Did you ever go to the Steinberg camp? Steinberg's had a camp in – hmm. It's either Terrebonne or Lafourche. I know Terrebonne – one of the many.

G: I bet it's Terrebonne. That would be a question for – and I think I heard Gerald Voissin talk about that camp.

D: Now, when you moved to Klondike and was working southwest Louisiana, were there anybody left who remember the Orange Cameron land company Rat Ranch?

G: I've heard the name. Um, the only guys that might be familiar with that today – um, would be first Alan – Alan (Ensmere?) was way ahead of me. Ted O'Neal – Ted was not too much into fur stuff, but he was at Grand Chenier starting in the – gosh I want to say '62 maybe? Something like that. He was a Grand Chenier (inaudible). Um, I would say Alan would be your best bet. I've got to tell you – you reminded me of something else. I have a ledger at my house. My neighbor, um, when I moved from Baton Rouge to Klondike was an old gentleman by the name of Ovais Peltier. A little bitty short guy, and a trapper. And just – and he was retired. By the time he moved there – just a phenomenal individual. He – his dad had a little restaurant/bar in Scott, Louisiana. They would get in a little boat, he and his dad, go down the Vermillion River, I think around Onion Bayou – which is on Vermillion Bay. And they had a camp down there, and they would stay down there till they caught all the crabs they could physically bring back. And um, he'd bring them back, and I guess – I don't know if he sold them in his place of business or sold live crabs or both. I don't know. But Mr. Peltier told me about this. And he said, one time, they forgot to take any food, and they went like, a couple days for sure. And when he got back, he was so hungry, and his mother really fussed at his dad about that little boy. He must've been a little boy – not feeding him anything. He had something, and she had to keep him from eating too fast. She was afraid he was going to get sick. Because it was a long trip in a little putt-putt back all the way back up. But anyway, Ovais – they moved – he had some ties to some property down there again, somewhere in southern Vermillion around Boston. I'm not sure what that was about, but he was there for a while, and his family moved to Johnson Bayou, and it could've been to trap rats. And the family came over – a neighboring family came over and said look, you've gotta leave this house and come to this house. We think there's a storm. Now that wasn't Audrey. This was way before Audrey. I don't know what year that was.

D: Yeah.

G: They moved – they went with them and listened to them. They probably got their buggies or whatever and moved. And when they came back, that house was gone. Wherever this other house was, it saved that entire family. When he was sixteen, Ovais went to Port Arthur and started construction. I guess the oil field was – and I can find out. I can go back and try to figure out when that would've been because my wife would know when he died. He was about ninety two when he died. He lived by us for years. He was a really, really close friend. I mean right next door. His garden came up against my yard. Hey! Can I help you?

(inaudible)

G: No problem.

(inaudible)

Part 2

G: Was in terrible boating accident February 6 – Dwayne Crawford. You don't have to record any of this,if you don't mind.

D: Just a minute. Just a minute.

Part 3

G: Um, so Ovais was working in Port Arthur Construction, and he ended up – because he was a trapper at heart – moving to – I guess he was back and forth. Some Johnson Bayou and he had some ties to Klondike. And I think it was ties to some of our neighbors who were Martins. But anyway, um, he married a schoolteacher. Now Ovais I think had gone to the fourth or fifth grade. And what amazed me – I never did get to know his wife that much. We were around there for a couple years. We just never got to know her – she was sick, and she died. Ovais was there quite a few years after his wife died. But I went in Ovais's house, and there was U.S. News, Time, all of the types of used magazines that you would see in a doctor's office. I had some of them. Ovais had a lot more than I had, and he read them all. And he said, you know, my wife taught me to read. And he knew what was going on in the world as much as anybody anywhere. But here was a man who went like through the fourth or fifth grade and he was a trapper. He ended up living – he and his wife lived at um, Sabine Pass on the Texas side for many, many years. And he managed – I think about ten thousand acres of marsh that belonged to a Broussard family I think from Abbeville. That later became a refuge. And I'm trying to think of the name of that refuge down there. It's a national wildlife refuge. It'll come to me, but there are some interesting tales about Ovais. You know, they raised watermelons and cantaloupe on the beach, and people coming out of Port Arthur on their way to to whatever the first beach down there now that road's closed. I don't think it's there. But there was a beach, not Galveston, but Crystal Beach or something – you could go that way. And he got all the business of everybody going to the beach – you get some cantaloupe and watermelon. And so Ovais sold that to them, and then he trapped. And what amazed me about the man was how much he trapped, and he would leave his house, walk down the back of the ridge for some distance, and head out in the marsh, and rat trappers had their traps in a circle. You'd circle a piece of marsh, and as you trapped, you kind of – you surrounded them and you moved in on them. You moved in, and finally you got that, picked up everything on your cane pole with your traps, and you went to another spot, and you went in a big circle. So you were walking in a big circle running your traps and coming back to the point that you started. But you may have two or three of those circles in a day that you walked to. Between the distance he walked in the marsh and the distance he walked down the ridge, and then back - on his way back home, he walked eight miles every day. Now not all of it was marsh, but I think probably six miles of it was marsh. It was fairly good Chenier plan marsh. Not like this stuff – you know, you float your hat walking in any of this out here. You can't even get out of the boat right here, but it was that mineral based marsh, but it just amazed me because the old man was in good shape for years and years.

C: About how many traps along there?

G: How many traps did he run? Um, boy that was highly variable. I'll look back at a book that I wrote for Wildlife and Fisheries – a little paperback. And I'm sure some of this knowledge came from Ted. It

could've been anywhere from a hundred. They might – some rat trappers might run several hundred a day. Now as you went up, this was – this was this rat trapper changing. And I'll tell you about that. I got some experiences around Vermillion bay where they were still trapping rats, but they had a little boat to go in between those circles. And that evolved with the nutria. But anyway, um, Ovais was also a market hunter, and he told me about that experience, and that was just phenomenal. I guess that was in the twenties. I don't know if they had – I don't know, I'm sure probably he was – it was after they put limits out, and he was, you know, illegal, but I don't' know that for a fact. But he had an old horse. His brother would come to the house – his brother lived at one of the plants, and he had a telephone – one of the oil refineries or something. And there were boats going back and forth between there and Mexico I believe. I don't know if they were bringing oil in and refining it. I'm not sure what this boat was doing, but it had to do with oil activity. And they wanted an order of ducks – pintails and mallards. That's the only thing that you can – that you can use – sell – that's the only thing they wanted. And the brother would drive down and say, I got an order for you. And I think they put them in crocs. I don't know how they preserved them – I got some ideas about that, but I don't think they were refrigerated. I don't know if they were put under something, covered up with grease, and – and if they did that, I often wondered well were they cooked before? I don't think so. I think they were raw. But I'm not clear on that. But Ovais would get an order. He'd go out – they had a horse. Go out, stake the horse out, and he'd go to the pond, he had double barrel, and I guess the ducks would land and land and land, and of course that shotgun shell was precious. So then you'd whistle and he'd shoot two times, and he'd pick up those and haul them back and tie them on the horse. And you might do that two or three times. And you'd lead the horse back to the house, and he and his wife would start processing – cleaning the birds. And then eventually the brother in law or some relative who gave him the order would come pick up the order, take it over, get the money, bring the money back to him. So that in itself was just an amazing tale with him telling be about that. And I don't' know when that was – I guess that was sometime in the twenties. So he did some of that, he trapped rats, sold vegetables, and this old man Broussard – when the time that the neutra thing was getting cranked up with McIlhenny had some nutria. And he brought them over there, and he said, I think we really need to really release these on the property. I think since we were - so – he gave him instructions, because Ovais took care of the property. He managed about eight or ten trappers who trapped on the property. And old man Broussard said, I want you to let these go. You put them where you think the best place is. And when he left, Ovais went out there and shot them all. Didn't let them go, which is the best thing he could've ever done. Later, months later, how did those nutria do? He said, you know, I took them out there, and I haven't seen them since. I don't – you know. They didn't make it.

D: (laughs)

G: They didn't make it. But he brings another batch, and he said, I want to go with you to the marsh. So this time, they were released. And that was probably (feedback) one of the early beginnings of nutria in east Texas. I don't know that for a fact, but I know that Ovais told me about it. So he actually – he actually let some go, and they came out from a – it's the Keith Lake area was a marsh. And if I looked at it on a map – what is the name of that refuge? I can't think of it now – but I will.

D: It's in Texas?

G: It's in Texas.

D: Anahuac?

G: No, it's not that far over. It's not that – Anahuac would be further north. I'll think of it before y'all leave. But um, anyway, I got a ledger that he gave me. Ovais gave me a ledger, and I still have it somewhere. A little book, and it was muskrat. And it went way back. It went back, and it would have the name of the trapper, how many rats he sold – because they would come in and they would sell together. All of his trappers would come in with all these records, and he gave that ledger to me – you know, as a gift because he realized I was really interested in the whole thing. So I picked up a little experience from Ovais, just being a neighbor right there. Um, let me switch back over – over here some things over here that maybe I forgot about. Um, I was talking a little bit about the trappers out there, and I guess in the late – prior to – and I'm going back. This is my personal experience – just records I know. '60, '61, the rats were still on top. Not very valuable – the market was very weak in the fifties and in the sixties. Nutria were introduced in the late thirties – got out, took off first for some reason got spread out – more into Cameron, Lake Arthur, that area, and then later this way. And I did some research, and there were some other research done by this guy with the McIlhenny's. I'm trying to think of his name - a historian. You know who I'm talking about?

C: Shane (Bernard?)

G: Probably. Yeah, I think that's the name. What he was trying to show – went into all the records that McIlhenny had that maybe he wasn't the guy – wasn't the first guy with nutria.

C: It's Shane Bernard.

G: Okay. So from some research I had, and he spent a couple of days with me. Um, there were nutria on the north Shore of Lake Pontchartrain at some point before, and in fact, McIlhenny's nutria could've come from there, or – he went to a nutria ranch somewhere around Delacroix I believe. So his story, which he promoted, seemed a little bit different than what his records indicated. Um, but supposedly all of them were killed that were north of the lake. Madisonville or Mandeville or someplace up there where they had a farm. That's the guy who probably brought them from Argentina. I don't know how they got down. There could've been a connection between that guy and some nutria that were down – where McIlhenny picked them up around Delacroix – there were nutria down there. Maybe some of those escaped. Then I've heard a lot of mixed information. This Mr. Brasseaux that I talked about – Dwight – who had been to McIlhenny's farm saw that the nutria um, right at Avery Island, was under the impression that there were some animals that got out um, in the 1940 flood, but um, I'm not sure that what Bernard came up with was in agreement with that, so there's mixed information there. Anyway, by up until '60, '61, nutria, I mean muskrat was still number one, as far as volume. In '62, it switched over. And that was because of a market developing in Germany where they got interested in nutria. The interest came from Argentina. I went to Argentina twice trying to understand that the nutria connection and the whole thing about marketing, and um, they were using them in Frankfurt and prior to that, there might've been a lot of um, dressing and work with nutria in (inaudible) and you still had a wall. There was some manufacturing there. But when I got involved with it in the eighties, I was dealing with

dealers in Frankfurt. In fact, Rosenburg and Lindhart were very big companies, and they dealt, not exclusively in Louisiana, but to a great deal with Richard Domingue, who just passed away two months ago this last year. He lived just down the road. And Richard bought a lot of the nutria and muskrat in this area. Very unique dealer – he's still got a couple of sons. Um, Timmy Domingue has got an alligator farm down here and stayed with him longer. Archie Domingue, an older son that might remember more – works for Apache and owned the trappers leases - maybe water fowl leases too. Of course they grew up with him grading stuff and Richard was unique. That's another guy – besides the land managers that I came down here to see, I wanted to deal with the – with the dealers, and you know, the dealers were all competitive, and I always wondered about – well what is this guy telling me that's right and wrong? I always felt Richard was fairly honest with me. Certainly he didn't tell me everything – he couldn't. He was in business. It was what he knew that nobody else knew that kept him in the business. And I liked the Maradona's, but I never spent much time with the Maradona's, but I was in their places of business right there on um…

(feedback)

G: Royal.

(feedback)

G: Not Chartres – there's one more.

D: Decatur.

G: Maybe they were on Decatur or St. Peter's. One – Steinberg and Maradona were very close together.

D: Alright – that's Decatur.

G: And you could go up – there were times when I went up on the top floors on their building and they were pressing – had these big presses and packaging muskrat and nutria into these huge bales. It looked like a cotton bale, but it was filled with muskrat and nutria. So I saw some of that. Richard shipped out of here, um, probably baled his stuff here, big burlap bundles, and I remember there was a weight to them, and you had so many nutria, and the number of that count had a lot to do with the quality of what you were sending to them. Because that – assuming they were all cleaned the same, as far as the meat off of the pelt, dried the same, and that represented thickness of the under fur. And some of the nutria were being – in a lot of different ways that you process nutria, was long hair – which wasn't very popular – it kind of looked shaggy. There was a brush cut, where you took the shag out, and those kinds of pelts were still in um, New Iberia. All of that – because I got into that being trying to reestablish a market – unsuccessfully – I had a little few successes, but I couldn't keep it going. Um, and there was something called sheared, and there was something called plucked and sheared. And I learned all of this from Germany and Argentina - went into the largest processing plant in Argentina. I'm trying to think of that guy who had this processing plant. The largest nutria dealer in the world – no doubt, this guy that had this processing plant. And I actually went out into the wild in Argentina trying to understand how these guys could trap regardless of the price. And if you want to later– I'll tell you that, and I understood why

they trapped. And our guys, when the price went down, our production went down. But anyway, um, Richard was very unique in the fact that a lot of these guys through Gibson, and I imagine he did business into Lafourche too, but I knew this area the most. Terrebonne. He would kind of set them up. In other words, “I don’t have enough money.” “I gotta get my groceries.” I gotta go to camp.” I don’t’ have any good traps. Alright, now I’m going to give you some money to get going. Here’s your money for your groceries, and you go buy you some traps. And so they owed him – now I expect that fur to come back to me when you start producing. So it was kind of like in ’67 I went to Alaska. That’s another – that’s another story. But it was the same kind of thing up there. I’ll set you up, help you buy an outboard, you go out and fish salmon. You come back to my canning plant. It was – it was kind of like that. I think it was a good deal because the guys would never have gone. This was a loan that you didn’t have to pay any interest on. Here’s the money – go get what you need. Richard did a lot of that. If that was done by other dealers, I’m unaware of it. Now Gerald might tell you that his grandfather did it. He would know some of that stuff further back, but I saw it with Richard. You know, and there was always the question – well did that guy bring me all the tops, or did he high grade the tops and go around with the best ones and he brought me something else. But Richard um, was a very important asset to the fur industry in this area for many, many years. There were some guys, competitors – there were the Maulers in Houma. I didn’t know them very well. There was a guy by the name of Douglas (Fonsica?) who was over around Raceland. He was a dealer too. Archie can tell you a lot of that history, if you ever want to talk to Archie Domingue, and he works for Apache, and he lives – I guess down the road somewhere. Timmy and his brothers got an alligator farm with his brothers. He may or may not know as much. He’s quite a bit younger. But he – he might know some things as well. So he was a – come in!

Part 4

C: Press it twice, Don. The first time it’ll blink, and then it’ll go solid.

D: Alright, we’re show time.

G: Okay. Um, So, through the seventies and into the early eighties, we had a – probably the peak – the most valuable time modern time. It’s hard to say what the industry was worth because it was supposedly twelve million dollars in the mid forties, and you had these thousands of families, but when I was here in the seventies, you really had about eleven thousand trappers based on the ones that were buying licenses.

D: Yeah.

G: Who knows how accurate that was, and probably fifty percent of them in the seventies and early eighties were not on the coast. So you may have only had five or six thousand on the coast, but I’m sure there were a lot of people out there where the dad had a license and it was two or three boys trapping and they didn’t have a license. I feel certain about that. They had more trappers than what the license sales reflected. In North Louisiana…

C: To what extent, Greg, were families still moving – in this late period, were still moving into the marsh during the trapping season?

G: There were trappers all over um, Terrebonne parish when I started, and I think through the seventies.

C: Right, but I mean the families were still accompanying them?

G: Absolutely. Absolutely. There were some pictures, and I took a guy out there. And there's a booklet where I think that – I don't know if he took the picture or I took the picture, but there's a lady standing over a kid at a table. It's kind of dark because it's in a dark camp. And there's a folder bigger than this though. And it's got the kids name and his homework assignment for about two weeks. And she's looking over his shoulder, and he's doing it. And I ask, I say how's that work? She said, well when my husband takes the fur in, he'll take this folder and the teacher has got another one for him. This is all of his stuff. He turns it in, and she's got one for him for the next two weeks. So they were totally – and based on what I was told, they kept up fairly well in school. You can imagine – how the heck does a kid hang on when he's gone for three – it was November, December, January, and it may have gone – the season changed during the time that I was – there was always extensions. Always extensions. And I tried to get away from that – I said hell, well one dealer wanted an extension. Another dealer who already had a supply and there weren't that many on the market – he didn't want an extension because then the other guy could go and get some, and that would make the – it was supply and demand. So it was – I got all kinds of controversies with extensions. If you had good trapping weather, and if a guy like Gerald Voisin said, I want my guys to keep trapping. We need to take more rats – they're eating up the marsh. Well I wanted to go with an extension. But that didn't mean the dealers wanted that. And it was a lot of heated – because it was all – if I got them and this guys got less, I'm in the driver's seat. So you got into a lot of that over extensions, but we tried to make decisions based on the marsh. If the guys are out there – they want to trip – it's still cold enough and we don't have an early spring, it looks like we're going to keep trapping. Let them go. And eventually I try to get it – and now, it runs through um, the end of March. And that's – that's the nutria – the nutria program where they pay for tails, and I got that going right before I left I guess. That was cranked up in '01 or '02, because I failed their market, and so I said, the damn nutria are eating up the place. We've got to get something, and I – after going to corporate two or three years and showing them some of the damage from aerial surveys and extrapolating by flying around and (inaudible) measuring damage, I said, they're eating up more than ya'll are fixing. And those guys in those agencies didn't want to hear that – wait a munute. I said well, this can be I think an easy fix. I think this'll work. When you had a price, you didn't have any nutria damage. There's no market – there's no price. Let's create a market even though it's just going to be for tails. If they can sell the fur that's fine, but I don't think they can, and if they can't, let's control these things. "Well, why don't we just eradicate them." I said, if there was a red button on my desk and I could push it, I'd be the first one to do that, but I said, that's not in the cards. They're in east Texas, they're in Arkansas, they're all over the state – in Mississippi. Well what are we going to do? And I had all kinds of evaluations. I had a company out of Colorado – in the business of controlling animals. Nuisance control all over the world. And I said I want y'all to do an exhaustive – in fact we had the state government – you've got to get proposals request for proposals. I wanted somebody to do a complete evaluation of what's out there. Is there any evidence that we can do something better than what I think we should do – and it's an

incentive. I don't like to call it a bounty. Bounties have a bad connotation to me. Um, and there are some problems. This is a little bit different because we're going to measure the results of what we're doing with aerial surveys with acreage and we're going to know exactly where they're coming from. It's going to be very controlled, and um, it's worked out great. I mean last year they went over four hundred thousand. I think that was most ever. And the target…

C: Well one of the questions I was going to ask you – how does this number compare to the number being taken out during the trapping – golden era of trapping in the seventies and eighties?

G: Well, it's dramatically less. But – because I told you 1.8 is the peak. But there was no damage. The market started declining during the eighties for lots of reasons. And that's why I ended up going to Argentina and Germany and trying to figure out what we could do – spent a lot of time, and we created something called the Louisiana Fur and Alligator advisory Council. That split off when I was gone – after I left into – alligator people wanted to do their thing, and they didn't want to have anything to do with the fur people, so it split. Which, it was okay. But there was money generated from a couple of sources to try to address problems associated with both of those industries. And I was a liaison between secretary of the department and the council. And I fooled with that thing for twenty years and got involved in marketing, and to a great extent, nationally got involved in trying to defend trapping. We were essentially – we, the United States, Russia, and Canada were the fur producers of the world. I mean Argentina had nutria, but for the most part the big producers were those three. And the Europeans, where the animal rights movement grew up, decided that the leg hold trap was inhumane – barbaric, and they were just going to stop buying fur. And so we negotiated with those characters in Brussels. Most of the time it was in Brussels. A few times Paris, a couple of trips to St. Petersburg, because that was the Russians, a lot of trips to Canada, and between '91 and '97 I was going to Europe four or five times a year for a week or so at a time. And everybody – oh, what a great – what a great – I said, I sat in a room from about nine o'clock in the morning till about seven o'clock at night with people across the table who were nice, but had no concept of trapping or the culture or anything about the United States, and how it's regulated, and they were being pressured by people who thought it was inhumane. And I learned a great deal about the Europeans during that experience. They're paper tigers. They have regulations all across Europe to regulate – I don't know about other things, but I know about trapping. There's nobody to enforce it. There are no wildlife agents in any country. One time I was at a Banquet in Montreal, at a fur, um, god dog what were they called? I went to many of them all over the world – um, it's where the um, furriers show their coats and if you're a retailer, you go there and you look at the models and the coats and you place your orders. And you go back all over the world, and you…

D: Like a fashion show.

G: Yeah, fur – what is it called? It's not a fashion show, but anyway – gosh, it's embarrassing when you can't think of something. I went to Montreal – we ended up hiring a guy from Montreal who worked for the council for many, many years trying to help market all of our furs, but especially nutria. And um, so I got into that end of the business. I learned a great deal about – nothing to do with trapping, but what happened once it left that dealer. I learned a great deal in Argentina, in Montreal, and in Europe –

mainly Frankfurt. But anyway, I also spent a great deal of my time defending trapping with all types of groups, a lot of interviews, news articles. We finally – I finally hired a guy on contract, and I wanted him to create the image of a trapper the way I knew a trapper. He's not inhumane. He's a guy that cares about the marsh. This is the way he makes his living. So this guy was a PR guy for um, what's the Goodwrench? Tire and rubber – Goodyear. Goodyear. He had retired from that. And he was the kind of guy that could get you in the door to a newspaper or to a magazine, and we put the story together. And he and I went across the United States a couple of times, and he knew the right editors to get in. So um, over and over the same story – interviews, taking messages, got all that. And we did that for the better part of six months I guess. I saw nothing. I said, boy was that a waste of my time and a contract with this guy. And then, when stories would come up in later years…

(feedback)

Part 5

C: Twice, Don?

D: Yep, I did.

G: Listen, I flew water fowl - you fly the – you fly eight hours in an airplane and the pilot and you come back and there's nothing on your tape recorder, that's very, very terrible. That's worse, maybe, than this.

D: Yeah, you say words like gosh or gee darn.

G: Yeah. Some of the words that I probably said.

D: And your wife goes, sit down. (laughs)

G: That's right. That's right.

D: You were act –

G: So I can understand all of the backups.

D: You were talking about marketing and how you had learned about marketing and then you had done a six-month tour, and when you got back sometime – apparently you were heading down a road where these stories were starting to appear.

C: Right.

G: Yeah. And so in the eighties when the market really was starting to collapse, um, I was trying to figure out what can we do? And that's when the fur council was formed. Land companies, some legislators, the strength of the formation of the fur council came out of southwest Louisiana – Cameron Parish mainly. Conway LeBleu was very supportive, and some land company people down there. John Paul Crane – I

figure if I couldn't get people like that to buy into it, it wasn't going to go, and it was created legislatively. And that's always something. You go in the legislature, and you don't know what you're going to come out with, but it turned out that it was a good thing, and there was some money to do things. And they said, look, let's do something. Let's try to reestablish this thing. You know, we had an industry worth millions of dollars, and now we've got no market. What's going on? Why don't we have a market? And I said, I don't know. But I was trying to find out. So I got on a plane one time when I first started, and flew to Montreal – to the fur fair. The fur fair! The Montreal Fur Fair – the largest in the world – where they bag a little gym bag with some tanned pelts in it. I went to there – clueless about what this is all about. Maybe three hundred booths on two or three stories in the convention center. And everything that you would have at a fur fair. The manufacturers showing their coats with the models, serving, you know, a cocktail or something. All of the people who served those people. Button people, tanners, um, you know, just like in any kind of convention, you've got somebody selling something, but you have all of the service people that are associated with that industry. People selling sawdust to tanners who tumble that in there. I mean that's how – that's how extensive it was. Also, people that sold furs – the big dealers in the world were there. This guy I ran into had a magazine called the Redbook. A guy by the name of Michael Consiglio. A few years older than me, and just people all over in his booth, surrounding, couldn't get to him. But I picked up the book and I started reading it. And I said, this guy knows a lot about the fur industry in the world. And what he did was he wrote articles – he didn't write them – he had a staff of thirty five people who wrote articles. And um, he sold the magazine with advertising, or he advertised the retailers, the button people, the furriers, everybody in the world that was a North American version, and an international version, so he had all of these addresses. So this guy – he knew the fur industry in the world. And his dad had done it, and he kind of picked it up. And we became close friends for twenty years. I don't think he has a contract anymore, and the Redbook went away, and a lot of things changed. But at one time, Consiglio was trying to help market. He was more successful with furs other than nutria. Nutria was a strange deal to deal with because it was controlled by Argentina because they had the largest supply in the world. And um, that made it very difficult to compete with them. They just had like a big storage house, and um, we were the – we were the spillover. In other words, if there was a tremendous demand for nutria for some reason in Europe, and Argentina had a bad year, the price would go up here. But Argentina traps during our summer, so we were kind of – we were off by half a year. The fur show would be happening now, in the next couple of months. Well we were already finished. Everything – in other words, they were taking their orders to start manufacturing. It was hard for us to get our fur into that cycle. Argentina had an advantage because they were trapping during the summer, so by the time the fur show came around, they had these volumes of stuff. Some of it was tan – big tanneries down there. Argentina had a law – although they were always black markets – where when you shipped fur, and it was predominately nutria, they had a few fox and some other things, but it was nutria. If you shipped out raw, you paid a tremendous royal – not royalty, but a tax. The more you did to it, manufacturing wise, your tax went down. Trying to keep business at home. It was – it was great. But I was told there were probably hundreds of thousands that went across, um, the Parana – to um, what's right north of the Parana river?

C: Uruguay?

G: Is it Uruguay? Is that the country right – went into what is – I'm trying to think of the town right there.

C: Montevideo?

G: Montevideo Black market of stuff going over there raw. So anyway, they had a lot of advantages. They kind of controlled the world market, and I learned that – it took me a while to learn it, but I finally learned it. Um, we tried to help our dealers, and our dealers were dying off. When I got here, these guys were old. Richard Domingue was a young one. And probably when he died, he was in his eighties. So that tells you a little bit – but those guys were key to the success of the – of the fur industry because they set on in New Orleans or in cold storage in New Orleans – they set on millions and millions of dollars of fur. And they didn't sell it like boom, and it was gone. They sold it to dealers in Europe and New York – maybe a broker through New York and across into Germany a little at a time. And they hope by the time they got around the November, they were clean. So they had lots and lots of money wrapped up in it. Most of them had probably gone belly up once or twice in life. And they stayed in the business. The family money was in the business. When those guys started dying out, their sons and daughters were doctors or lawyers or something. They weren't fur people. So we lost that ability to have those big pockets – millions and millions of dollars that somebody would speculate and have in cold storage or up in a warehouse in the middle of the French Quarter and they had the connections, and they sold it. And so that – that went by the wayside. So we became more dependent on trying to find somebody that would come over here. We lost our dealer base. Our buyers didn't have any money. Our buyers were the local guys. You know, they bought with money from the dealer. That was as much of an impact as market changes in the world. The loss of that, that um, ability to buy and hold, and you're dealing with millions and millions of dollars, and we lost that. The things that changed in Europe, I found out after trips over there, with talking with these dealers, um, in the eighties, late seventies early eighties, they went through seven years of above average temperatures. The nutria fit in as an everyday coat. The women in Europe – and I'd walk around on the streets of Frankfurt with these guys – they were showing me what was going on. And Frankfurt was a manufacturing base, and then stuff went all over Europe for consumption. And some back into North America as well. But there was a lot of manufacturing in Quebec City and in Montreal and in Toronto - huge tanning manufacturing. Not so much nutria – they didn't know nutria. I had to kind of teach them to try to get them interested in nutria, but nutria was going to dress either in Argentina or in Frankfurt. That was the nutria dressing centers of the world. And expertise was only there. The Italians were good, then because of prices with labor, we saw companies out of Frankfurt starting to move into a place like the Pacific realm. With the expertise that came out of Frankfurt, a guy that knew how to do it, and he moved over there to try to bring down the labor cost. Trying to salvage the industry some, and that worked for a while, but it eventually there were other problems. And I was telling you some of those problems. Seven mild years – mild winters in a row. A saturation of the market of women in their forties to fifty. They all had a fur coat. Leather became more fashionable for the younger woman – more versatile. You didn't have to have cold weather. And animal rights. A lot of people think that animal rights did it in. I don't think so. did it hurt? Absolutely. That's what I was trying to address in North America with all these trips and the fact that we got to trap nutria. Trapping can be done in a humane method. But what's more important

than that is trying to explain to the public that a nutria that was trapped, he died the easy way. That was a lucky guy. The other guy either starved or he was chopped in half by an alligator, or he died of disease. So this campaign of educating the public was to try to counter animal rights in the United States, and that was a, a battle, and during the eighties, the public was clueless. They knew nothing about why you had to control animal populations. It was not only fur bearers, but we got attacked because of that trap closing on the leg – that was why we were the target. And the fact that a fur bearer was furry, cuddly – like a dog or a cat. And so that was a tremendous – that was a tremendous challenge.

C: Don't let us stop you, Greg. We're just trying to deal with the feedback issue.

G: So by the late eighties, I flew a lot. Um, across the coast for a lot of different reasons. Mainly vegetative…

(feedback)

G: …in '88, I did another on in '97, and I did my last one in 2001. So I was flying the coast.

C: Did you ever fly with Palmosano?

G: Not much.

D: Okay.

G: Palmosano, Shawbrink – Ted O'Neal and Larry McNeese flew the '68 survey.

D: Yes.

G: That was about two or three years before I showed up on the scene. But I did all the ones after that up until 2001. And in fact, evolved – when I was doing the flying, Shawbrink was still the brains as far as identifying vegetation from the air. Anywhere from on the ground to ten or fifteen feet hovering with the grass blowing and still able to tell you what the dominant vegetation was. I was involved in arranging from helicopter, keeping us on lines, tilling the pilot where we were or where we needed to go, navigating, and we went from aerial photographs to GPS. I made that switch in the late eighties, where I had a laptop and GPS so that - I had lines drawn, and I could stay right on, and I actually had sampling points where I could tell Shawbrink, okay, coming up – fly us over here – okay start slowing down – okay go into a hover now. So that was my end of the thing, and then taking all the data and getting it into a map, and later it became digital maps where you don't ever see a paper map anymore. It's online somewhere. So when the process of – and I flew a lot on contract for the Corps. In Terrebonne they were talking about different projects – extending the Avoca Island Levee. They talked about that in the eighties. I flew transects across Terrebonne, mainly across this property. That's why I was somewhat familiar with Continental because I flew so much. There were a lot of different projects. So I flew for the Corps. I did some flying for um, Jean Lafitte Park. They started having nutria problems. They wanted me to survey the property. So we started flying vegetative surveys in the late eighties. Land companies started saying hey, we're seeing these big muddy spots – just a big round muddy spot on the property that's just solid mud. And we're thinking, could that be nutria? We've got lots of nutria. We're not

trapping what we should be trapping. And we're wondering whether they're really eating the marsh up. So we started flying with very limited funding. I think it was like '88. And I realized what was going on. I just flew, I think, just part of Terrebonne, and I said my God. They're eating the place up. And so – then we got more funding, still not from (inaudible). Bitmap – I talked Bitmap into some money. And that was the first pretty – they paid to fly bitmap. And I could tell – these things were having an impact. And some of them looked like they were going from mud to, with tidal action, open ponds. And they're probably not ever coming back. So I built my case, got to (Quipera?), and um, and that's how we got into the control program, which took years because it didn't start until 2000, 2001. So all during the nineties, late eighties, I'm out there on the road trying to reestablish a market. And we had some – we had some positive things and we had some setbacks, but again, very complicated. The whole fur market in the world was changing. Mink, ranch mink, was the benchmark of the price of furs. Um, you had the animal rights and you had all the other factors in Europe affecting, not just nutria, the whole fur market. You had – you had these old sources of purchasing power in Louisiana elsewhere, but mainly in Louisiana disappearing. So the entire – the entire fur industry in the world was in a state of flux. It was changing forever. I didn't realize at the time, but – because there had been ups and downs. They said, oh they'll come back. But it wasn't ever going to come back. It would never be the same. There were too many things going on throughout the world. Dressed large tanneries and factories that were in Montreal, when I was there, do not exist today. We're talking about huge plants with forty and fifty people. Ladies sewing coats. Tanneries with maybe fifty or sixty people tanning. Hundreds of thousands of pelts. They're not in business today. That all changed during the eighties and nineties. For all of – a lot of reasons that I don't understand. Labor, markets, fashion, um, many things. But that was – that was what I realized was affecting our market. All of those factors. And then it was very difficult to you know, I could maybe go and try to find a dealer who wanted some nutria, but it was much bigger than that, and we did that. For a while the market bumped back up in '95 for a while, the market bumped back up in '95, and it was people in China who had learned to handle nutria. They weren't very good, but some of the capabilities of dressing skins was coming out of Germany, and they were marketing into – I can't remember where it was, but um, they run a little "mom and pop". Oh, and there was some plucking and shearing going on where this family would leave, maybe with fifty skins – a family in China, and hand pluck the guard hairs out of the nutria to where you got the under fur and do it for pennies. They would go back to a manufacturing base in China, and they were selling coats into Russia – and hats. But that became a problem when the Russians said, no we want you to pay a tax for bringing that stuff in. so you'd have a bumper year, and then you'd have a crummy year. And they started tightening up on the borders. That was my experience with marketing, and I could go on and talk to you for hours and hours and hours about that. Um what happened as far as education of the public, which was another challenge at the fur council took on, I think we made headway. I wasn't the only one in the business. My connection to Canada was that there were no other states like Louisiana. Louisiana was unique. We had more in common from a trapping standpoint with guys in Canada. You had guys – they weren't in a mud boat or pirogue. They were in a snowmobile or behind dogs. But they were making their living trapping, so that was the connection. Canadians came down here and visited us. We went to Canada, and from a standpoint of both trying to survive, there was a union kind of between, and the concept of the Fur and Alligator Advisory Council was something that I learned that there was a fur council in Canada and they were there to try to maintain their industry. And that's where the concept came from. It wasn't

something that popped out of my head. I said, the Canadians are doing this. We can't do it near to the extent they were doing it, because they were tied in with auctions. Money came in from auctions all over the world. They got a percentage. North Bay was a huge auction company. They'd tap into that, so they had money to advertise, to educate. The deal with the Europeans, which I mentioned to you '91 to '97, was an attempt to – the Europeans said well we want you to get rid of the leg hold trap. And Louisiana more than any other state – certainly more than Canadians – could not get rid of the leg hold trap. Because we trapped rats, we trapped nutria, and there were lots of problems with instant killing traps. For one of the things, if you had a warm day and a dead animal, by the time you'd get out there, the fur was slipping. You know, and it was things like that that no one in Europe – the Europeans, the Canadians and the Russians had some advantages on us because they were trapping in very, very cold conditions. So even though they caught an animal by the leg hold, by the time they came back by, he was frozen. So they went more to killing traps that would strike - the animal would travel through, strike - the Canadians were trying to defend trapping.

(feedback)

G: Which is now that I went to many times, but they were testing killing traps. On the other hand, what are we going to do in the United States?

(feedback)

G: …was very important all across the northeast. Never thought about places like New York – I don't think New York City – there's a whole bunch of New York up there they had a phenomenal number of beaver trappers, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin – the lake states where you'd think beaver would be. So trapping was important to those people. They had some killing traps. When you got out west and you got into the southeast, they were trapping - predominantly raccoon was number one. There were some muskrats in certain places across the northeast and the east. Pretty much all the leg holds. And then the long legged animals – fox, bobcat, and coyote – all leg holds. So the United States says – we have to have lake holds. We will work to improve the humane-ness of leg holds. And make the most humane trap that we can. But we've got to hang on to them. So the negotiations that were going on with the Europeans were to try to educate those people as to why you have to control animal populations, because they were clueless. I was talking with nuclear scientists and sociologists. They were on this other board. I wasn't talking to the biologists who manage the animal populations. They were acting to pressure within the European Union. These were all people within the EU having to do something about the inhumane barbarians in North America and Canada and in Russia. Russia finally signed the treaty. Canada signed the treaty that they were going to do these things, and in the United States we were very certain that first of all, as a resident of wildlife, I would go into these meetings representing all of the states – one time I had a guy from New York that went with me some when I was kind of burning out. He burned out, went by the wayside, and I can tell you, but I was in there with something called a trade rep. it's not exactly the trade department – it's a united states trade representative. They get involved with any kinds of deals where you got an issue, and you may take it to the WT – World Trade – something. And if you're doing something wrong in one country, you can take this issue and they will place some kind of um, tax or something. You're going to be penalized if you're doing something that is not legal

internationally. So they were going to – they were going to – our concern was that they were going to block all the fur from the United States going into Europe and that was the gateway. Even though these were the animal rights people, at the time, was were – we were selling all of our fur, so we couldn't have – so we worked back and forth. What we essentially did in the United States – we did not trust the federal government to negotiate anything for us. Not the US. Fish and Wildlife Service. And I've got good friends that I've worked with all my life – not the guys here, but the Washington level, would never have trusted them in negotiation with trapping with Louisiana or any other state. They were resonant wildlife. We control those. There's not going to be any trading, so we called it best management practices, and what the United States ended up signing was a – god, I should know that - an agreed minute. Y'all can figure out what that is, but it's not a treaty. It's an agreement between parties and countries that we, the United States, through the states, will work to improve the humaneness of trapping with best management practices. We got money from the USDA, and we tested traps - fairly detailed testing. The efficiency of the traps, injuries with x-rays. That's looking at it – this went on for years. Spent lots and lots of money. And this wasn't just a Louisiana thing. It was nationwide. I was involved with that thing for years. And they came up with the most appropriate trap from a humane and from an efficiency standpoint that is used on raccoon in the southeast, or coyotes in the northwest, or bobcat in the southwest. You know, so that's what grew out of this thing with the Europeans, and it bought us time and they never – they never closed the market to us. So that's how – that was what that was all about. That wasn't marketing – that was trying to address the animal rights movement, and somebody challenging to threatening to stop our movement of furs into Europe. And I think what happened as a result – when we got into realizing how much impact and nutria we were having, the press picked it up locally. And then it was associated press. And then all of these contacts that I had made years before popped up. And I learned well hell, they had a file on that. Linscomb came in and talked about it, so they pulled it up, and boom, boom, boom. We started getting excellent coverage of the tie between coastal erosion and nutria damage. And it – and it helped support. And that's still – that still goes on. We got into this thing where Astro Marine Fisheries – a strange group – but they wanted to try to market meat. And they said, would you be willing to try this? So I said, yeah, it's going to be an uphill battle. Will I try it? Is it going to solve the problem? Don't think so. Could it aid in some way? Slight chance it might be successful. But I wanted – I wanted an incentive pay, and that's what we finally got. But we went with the marketing thing, worked with chefs in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, and it was successful. People ate it. I went to wine tasting nutria deals in New Orleans, and you know, five different dishes, and maybe one or two percent of the people when they said what it was couldn't go there. It was a rat. But ninety eight percent ate it and said it's delicious. I said, well I've been making sausage like I make venison sausage out of nutria for years and years and years. So I know it's – I know it's good. The problem was, I learned in that deal, that we even put sausage in Winn Dixie during the football season for um…

D: Tailgating?

G: Tailgating. It went like crazy. But I found out that in the supermarket business, there is shelf space. And if you got some stuff there, I've got to compete – first of all, I don't have a product that is seasonal. And it's not crawfish – it's nutria. So I can't compete for shelf space. There are too many other products

out there. The thing that hurt it in the restaurant business was that they wanted it – we had LSU Food Science people went through all kinds of – they had contracts, vacuum packing, processing the stuff, making sausage that went through all this with a variety of people. And it was all positive, but you get it up to what looked like a cleaned rabbit. It – from that point into a really fancy dish on the part of the – of the chef, there's a lot of preparation. There's a lot of bones. You've got to do a lot of – they said, we don't want that. We want it ready to go like pretty much like a piece of meat. And it was a lot of meat on the back strap that you would have to do some additional work. That hurt it from a restaurant standpoint. As far as serving it in dishes, they said that it's great. They put it on the menus – experimental. All positive, no negative feedback. But it was seasonal. We couldn't find the person to go from the vacuum packed, cleaned carcass to the way the chef wanted it, particularly because it was seasonal, and for products like sausage it was seasonal and we could not compete for shelf space. So there's still – they're still um, on Wildlife and Fisheries on nutria.com, there's probably still recipes, and it's fantastic. We never could make that jump. Um, there were some people that got interested in going into countries – very poor countries to try to take a large volume of meat – high protein, low fat – it beats out, from a standpoint of healthy, it's in there close to fish because their fat is not – it's not mixed into the – it's very healthy meat. And we did all kinds of stuff with that, and as I suspected, although we gave it our best shot, that wasn't going to do it. You know, it wasn't going to do it. There were always – oh nutria. You know, the big – it tastes great, but I think of those big orange teeth. So that hurt you some, but that was not what stopped it. It would've taken off. Everybody that ate it – the bulk of the people liked it. You just couldn't overcome those other obstacles, so the tail program came along. And that was a success, although the dealers were not happy with me because they thought, well maybe we can still sell furs. And I said look, and there's some real good figures if you go online. I don't have one of those, but the justification I put together shows that – and you ask where did the magic number come from for what you wanted to harvest. There was no damage from '62 to '82. No land companies said – oh, nutria are eating up the place. You might have a few nutria get in the sugarcane or eat a few cypress trees, but in the eighties when that went down, and the magic number, looking across the large time span, it looked like four hundred thousand. Once we dropped below four hundred thousand, things started happening. We had problems. And we had a couple of storms that got into some cane land down around (Clovele?) – one of them down there did hundred thousand or more dollars worth of damage, and more problems in cane. We're starting to see all this, and that's where the four hundred thousand – I just looked at it on a graph. Above this, no problems, and below this, you started having problems. Now I think it was kind of a – it wasn't a one-time effect. It was that we were going many years taking, you know, a few, and before the program, I think they took twenty thousand nutria in a place that we had taken almost two million. Now, do we have the densities that we had historically? That question has been asked of me a lot. No, we don't. Could some of that be coastal erosion and salinity changes? In my opinion, yes. Something happened southwest that I believe was related to some very severe freezes in the eighties on (inaudible) corporation property. The Merentole basin. They got hit hard, and you'd find maybe fifty animals piled up on a spot in a room like this on a little island, and they were dying. You know, their tail was rotting off. They had been exposed to fifteen degrees for two or three days. That happened in '82 and it happened in '89. So I saw two of those events. That hammered them. Could be that that hit them hard – nutria – alligator populations in southwest coming up higher than anybody alive that's ever seen. We have more alligators than probably – I mean before

white man was here, maybe we had more. I don't know with the limiting factors, it's the question we always ask. But that's one theory that I have. Knocked down hard by severe freezes and high water in the Mermetole Basin – they hit at the same time. No place to get out of the water. You couldn't eat food under the water or it's frozen. And then populations that didn't happen in this marsh. Continental land and in Terrebonne in general may have the highest densities left. There were also some very high densities out east of (Kanarvin?) and across areas in Lafourche. But if you had to pick one spot that had remaining high nutria populations, it would be this property right here. And I thought about it a lot – why? A third of more of it is floating. In the – prior to'62, it was floating but it was about this thick. I mean you could walk on it. A lot of things happened. There are a lot of theories. Gagliano – what did Gagliano say? Um, faulting, deep faulting maybe. Um, Charles Sassard at LSU says the nutria – I can buy that. I saw it start changing after the '73 flood when we almost lost the old river control structure. And as the Atchafalaya, well actually Delta spill, the water level is coming up on all this. It's backwater. So it's like putting a washrag in the part of the – the drain on the tub. You still got it running. You've got the water running. It eventually starts filling up. You get much higher water levels, and you see all that black area in there - in the sixties, you didn't see that – it was all solid. It wasn't very good for – it looked more like this. And of course this is the Atchafalaya, and this stuff is more intact because you still have sediment from the river, and it makes it up to about here. Once you get over in here, this is now thin mat floats. And when I saw thin mat, a dog can't walk on it. I'm talking about just a floating mat that you can stick your arm through. If you step out of the boat, you hope that it'll stop right in here. It may not, but you'd hit the mud. And that'll probably hold you – the organics in here are as much as fifty feet deep.

D: Wow.

G: Unconsolidated organics. I looked at borings taken by different people. So all of that goes into the changes. So when people say, do we have as many nutria as they had when O'Neal – O'Neal said they peaked out – he made this statement. I have it in one of the books that I wrote. They peaked out in the sixties with twenty million nutria on the coast. I don't know if we ever had twenty million nutria. It's hard to believe. The other thing that I couldn't figure out is how could we take two million and control the population? Now we didn't take two million most years. Hard to understand, and that was all brought out in this document that was developed on contract for Wildlife and Fisheries by a company out of um, Colorado Springs – not Colorado Springs. Um, some place in Colorado called Genesis. The guy that owns the company is originally from around, um, Breaux Bridge or somewhere out there - a Poche. And he's involved in controlling animals and developing herbicides and pesticides and all kinds of chemicals, and they – they wrote the document to justify whether there was a way that eradicate or better way to control or in fact do this thing that Lindscomb is suggesting, an incentive payment. We had to have something like that that was a little bit of suspect that I – being an old fur guy – trying to save the industry. I just wanted an incentive payment to keep the guys going, and I said, well yeah, I would like to see them, but that's not what this is about. I told you that if I had a red button on my desk and it said end of the nutria, I'd push it. Well those guys would've all been history anyway. The rats went down for a number of reasons. Some of it appears to be associated with nutria, but I saw rat populations in this country, I saw them on the western shore of Vermillion Bay around Audubon. It was a McIlhenny

marsh, and it was eight hundred acres. Now I'm pushing – you better not quote me on this one. But they caught – I can't – God. I've got it written down somewhere, but it was something like six thousand nutria, and I forgot how many thousands – many more thousands of rats off of eight hundred aces. So they were together. So don't tell me they can't be together. Now did they eat up the marsh? Absolutely. Absolutely. But I guess what always sticks in my mind – how much of what was changing changed because of practices maybe with people not burning? Rats were in (inaudible) only – now it's not that anymore, but it will always be – they were in three corner grass. When the nutria came along, they didn't want to burn. They'd historically burn. Rats wouldn't leave because they lived in a house. So we each have leases next to each other. We all burn. You burn in September, October when you get good, dry conditions. You open up the marsh – you could see the trails. And wiregrass doesn't grow in the winter, but (inaudible) comes on strong. That's where the rat explosion – this is a theory – this is O'Neal's theory – came on in Cameron parish burning marsh for cattle. They burned the marsh. It turned into muskrats. They were killing them with pitchforks in early 1900s. Maybe they got two cents, or I don't know what they got for them – not much money. But then they took off, the market developed, so there were these millions of acres of three corner. I saw some of that in the seventies, but how much of that was created by controlled burning? I think a lot of it. Because you set back succession. The nutria came along. He didn't have a house. He might be in a burrow or he might be on a platform. If I burned and you didn't burn right before the trapping season, I pushed all my nutria on you! And on you on the other side of me. So wait, I'm not going to burn so quick. I want to trap a little bit. That may have changed the habitat conditions three corner for, for the rat. It's one theory. But the highest densities of nutria in brackish marsh were in the same habitat. Now this stuff up here wasn't three corner grass. This was fresh marsh. All this stuff out here. And then nutria – the highest densities of nutria occurred in fresh marsh. The next best was brackish. The highest densities of rats are always in brackish three corner wiregrass marsh. A little bit further down, we get a little bit of salt mixing with fresh. That's where they were when I go there. I mean they were down, historically, before you had nutria in the early – this is all solid marsh that you could – it was probably Panicum, and I had been told that there were high densities of muskrats in Panicum marshes. In southwest, there were huge expanses in the entire Mermental basin of cut grass. Not cut grass – saw grass like you have in the everglades. That started dying out I think in the sixties. Some old biologists were taking old maritime documents and they wrote a couple of papers, and there were theories about nutria, viruses, a bunch of things. So this part is…

(feedback)

G: A lot.

(feedback)

G: …that are not well documented. Now, we document everything, but there was not a lot of documentation and stuff when I got there in the seventies. There were some – there was Ted O'Neal on what he knew and Alan (Ensmere?) and other guys, but as far as the first coast – Ted O'Neal did a vegetative map – it's in his book. His book was 1945, and he did that map in that time, and I did my first one and I was looking at Ted's. And here I am in a helicopter. Ted was in a little camp boat, and they dropped him off in one of these bayous and said, okay, you go around this next bayou. I'm going to try

to make it down there before dark. And I looked at the maps, and I said, I don't' believe this. They were so accurate. And he did his over a course of a couple of years. It was just – I can't believe it that this man I walking – he was a track – he ran track for LSU.

D: Yeah.

G: A big old tall guy, but he said, I'm doing this with a helicopter with aerial photographs. Ted O'Neal did it from a houseboat walking. Now he couldn't have walked this stuff today. The stuff that he was walking – you could walk.

D: Yeah.

G: In the forties, so what I'm telling you is all these changes with muskrat and nutria and coastal erosion – that all fit into the formula of what we have today – whatever you think we have. We took, on this property last year, '09 – not this trapping season that's ending up – we took almost sixty thousand nutria tails. The first year, I think the continental trappers took fifty seven thousand. So we still had a lot of nutria. Um, I'd have to go back in records to see, and I've never looked at them. They're probably somewhere in Metairie or maybe in a file cabinet here. How many nutria were trapped when the season took off – how many nutria came off of here. I don't know - I don't have a clue, really. And I may have those records somewhere in New Iberia because I worked a lot with guys like Herman Crawford. Crawford started working on a property in '58 – the old man. Not Dwayne. He was living out on the western end in that elevated house, and he built this house in '62 or '63 I think.

D: Now what about alligator off the property?

G: Well, we went through the closure, and I think it closed in the sixties. That's all recorded. I suspect you had a lot of alligators being taken long after that.

D: Oh yes.

G: And um, one of the things that I remember Ted Joana telling me when we started the season, they started trying to figure out – okay. How can we start to try harvesting alligators and not annihilating them? That's kind of what had happened. They weren't annihilated, but they were hunting year-round, they were hunted at night. No controls. So in the sixties they shut it down, and for about ten years Rockefeller - they were trying to figure out, well what is it about alligators we don't understand? A lot of telemetry, a lot of understanding um, you know, that you have breeding, and the female moves into an isolated place, does her thing, and that you could hunt probably mainly more in open water areas in September, and you're going to catch mainly males and leave the nesting females alone. And um, so they built up enough data to support a very regulated, tightly controlled – probably the most intensively managed wildlife resource in the world. Now if there's any harvest of elephants for ivory, which is very controversial, or cats in Africa – something like that. They may have taken some of the techniques developed for alligator. But the alligator was so controlled when they cranked back up in the seventies– and that's when I went to work, and I ended up starting over in Cameron and Vermillion with the first – the first seasons. Um, just very complex. And today, it's all computerized, and you know, essentially on

the nest counts when they're flying the surveys. Now they're making a – they're bumping the button on the laptop and saying you counted a nests here. So their ability to see what's going on – and of course they extrapolate this out to the marsh types to parishes – to population numbers, and that's how they come up with the quota. So it evolved dramatically from '72 to what it is today, and then farming came around. There weren't very many farms today. It's a multi-million dollar business – I would guess fifty million, although they went through some hard times in '08 in the economy. They didn't pick up – didn't pick up any on this property or no almost no eggs anywhere on the coast in '09. Um, but it's – we've got some very large farmers now. Very, very big operations – I'd say fifteen of them are huge. Um, we pick up anywhere from thirty to forty thousand eggs. We don't – the alligator farmer picks up eggs on this property. He's located up north of Lafayette around Washington. Um, and incubates, and so from a landowner standpoint, the eggs – selling the eggs is probably a bigger part of their income today than the skins. The skins, you harvest thirty to thirty four thousand coast-wide. And they average about seven feet – Continental probably harvests about two thousand in a typical year. And that's a quota given to us by Wildlife and Fisheries. Hard to know what went on prior to '62 or between '62 and '72. I would think not much because you had. You had Herman patrolling the property. Numbers were down very low, but I remember Ted and Joana telling me when they started making night counts, and they started flying nest surveys – they saw more nests in the southeast than they expected. And he said he probably misconstrued the impact of hunting. The populations in southeast that he thought – and Ted was from New Orleans, so he grew up hunting in there out in the New Orleans area in not Ship Island, but some of those islands out there because no one would go out there. So he and his brother hunted out there. The populations were never as low as Wildlife and Fisheries thought they were. Even here, and the reason was because of the ability of people, although it was improving all the time, those first old hunters, you know, they hunted at night, and you can only get – you can go a lot more places with air boats and with surface drives than with all of the equipment that you have today than you could back in the real day of the poacher. And an old agent – James Nunez that was an agent with the days of the alligator poachers when the season was close in the sixties on up until they reopened. He lived right here in Creole. And I spent a few nights out with James trying to understand what that was all about. Um, just dedicated to – I was so – he wanted to catch him as bad as the guy wanted to hunt. And it was – I don't want to say a game – it was a very serious game. But it was, well the poacher would get a little bit faster boat. I mean you could jump across a levee and get going this way, and then James would get a little bit faster boat. And it was a constant battle, and he got to where he knew everyone. He knew where they were likely to go. And as he told me one time after he retired, he said, there's nobody out there doing that anymore. He said, when I'm patrolling the refuge, patrolling now, I'm running into people selling drugs. He said, they can sell drugs. They're not going to go out and sit in the mosquitoes like that old hunter that I used to catch and try to kill an alligator? They're not going to do that. Those guys are dead. He said, I'm almost dead and they *are* dead. They're gone. Those old guys are gone. Now that's not to say that they don't have people running up and down the bayou and shining a deer or something like that. But the real – the real serious guy, at least in his opinion is gone, and I think he was probably right. It's so controlled now – it's so different between Cameron and here. The – to get into the marsh, you almost have to go by somebody's property if you're coming in from the Grand Chenier ridge. So control there of the property was much easier. And that's why they started over there – they felt like they never impacted the populations over there like they did here. But what I think controlled them here was the

isolation. The remoteness. When we leave this dock, if I want to run this property, is a hundred and um, twenty seven thousand acres. Let me show you a map. I'll show you how big it is, and I'll show you the (inaudible). This um, we're right up here. It's about ten miles – this is about twenty four miles. It goes all the way up to the river, down to the mouth. We leave here, and I want to go to this part of the property – it's an hour and fifteen minutes. And I'm in a boat that goes about forty, or faster.

D: Wow.

G: So it's – it's big – so all of those guys operating on the property have – they got camps. We have camps on the property. We have waterfowl. Um, lease camps. You have trappers. We're one of the few companies that I know of that still has a sizable number of trappers. We have between fifty five and sixty. Most of the others in evolving from La Terre, Teneco, Castek, Apache, the number of trappers went down. They really went down dramatically from when I was first on LL&E to Burlington to Conoco-Phillips. And Burlington leased out huge tracts – thirty thousand, and they said, - they did this a number of years ago, and they said okay, you've got everything. You take care of everything. Large tracts, sizable amounts of money, um, and it – and it eliminated a lot of these smaller trappers. You weren't dealing anymore with um, an LL&E we had one guy handling – God knows how many – a hundred, hundred and fifty trappers. That's all gone by the wayside. Now you might have a guy with thirty thousand acres. See he's got everything – he's got deer, alligators, trapping – so he may or may not go find somebody to trap his marsh. That changed things a lot. Continental is owned by um, you know, a group of um, a hundred and fifty heirs that came from the original guys that ended up with this. So it's never changed, and Herman Crawford is probably to blame – and then Dwayne – for a lot of that change. He was very much entrenched in the value of the trapper to help control the property. The trapper here still has most of the rights. It's not rights – it's a privilege. He has a privilege to hunt deer, a privilege to hunt hogs, rabbits, the waterfowl they see has – he hunts waterfowl only. Now he can fish on this property and he can frog, but he can't hunt anything else. That's still a privilege of the trapper. And the trapper was a key to controlling the property. You've got sixty guys out there that are your eyes and ears. The camps came along after that, and probably the majority of those camps – we don't have – maybe two or three. The majority of the camps are for waterfowl leasees, and some for the trapper. Some trappers come and go, but those were…

C: So were those occupied only seasonally?

G: Well some of the waterfowl, um, leasees may come out during the summer if they've got a generator and they've got an air conditioner. If they want to go fish at the camp, you've got some of that. The trappers are not out there as much. Once you get past this – now they may go out to the camp to go to the camp – to get away from the house or to go run some crab traps or…

D: Sure.

G: …or something like that. Then they're back out there in August getting ready for the alligator season. Then they're out there – the ones that stay. Now you see with alligators, it evolved. You're bringing a whole animal in. when this thing started in the seventies, everybody skinned. Now, you sell a whole carcass. So even though they're at the camp, they're – they got rid of a lot of their work. They're

bringing a whole dead animal in the boat, and going to a Richard Domingue or a Timmy Domingue or guys flying around Morgan City and dropping off an entire carcass, and you've got a processor there, and all of that meat is being used, and then the skin is being cleaned up and it goes to someone else. The cost of the processing is largely paid by the value of the meat. I'm a – I'm a skin dealer. You're a processor. We work out some kind of deal. You get all the meat. That partially pays for the cost of you getting that skin prepared for me. And salted and cleaned and then it goes into coat storage or it goes somewhere in the world to be tanned. So that changed. That changed from the way it was in the seventies. And when it – in the seventies, they might have stayed at the camp more during the season. They had a few barrels out there. They'd skin, salt them or put them in brine, and they'd put them in the barrels and at the end of the season, they brought everything in just like the trapping days, and they – and they sold them all at one time. Now they sell them daily on the hoof, so to speak. Another interesting thing about how just things come to mind – we have quite a few black trappers, and it has something to do – when I first started coming down here, there were families, and a lot of them were black. And they skinned nutria and then they sold the skins to a Richard Domingue or something. See you drive by one of these roads in the seventies, and then be a pile of nutria out in the front yard. They would be – I have pictures. I don't know where they are. That high – just a mountain of dead nutria. And the trappers would sell them on the hoof. That was called "on the hoof", and then these families would skin, scrape, process, maybe dry – or if they weren't dry they were sold green. Green means not put on a stretcher, and then sold to a guy like Richard Domingue or a dealer. And there were three or four places along – along this stretch of bayou black that I remember seeing nutria processors. So we um, this is some unique things about continental. The fact that I never saw any African American trappers anywhere in Louisiana north or south except right on this stretch of highway and on Continental. Now they might have been on some other land companies too, but I just knew Continental. There was a goup of them that lived on Avoca Island, which is up on the northwest corner. You get to it by ferry. And I don't know if those families are still there. Um, but there were some families there that trapped and kind of took care of that island. There was also rice farming on that island.

D: Now does Continental own Avoca Island?

G: No.

D: Okay. Because I thought Avoca was…

G: No. Avoca is a completely separate piece of property. It eventually…

D: Because I thought it was owned by the Whitney…

G: There's some ties. There's some ties..

D: To the Whitney Bank, and…

G: Yeah. Avoca is on our northwest corner. We're on one side of Bayou Chene – CHENE. They're on the other side, and they kind of surround Avoca Lake. Which the lake was a big pump-off for whatever it

was. I guess cotton. And then they lost the levees, and it subsided, and now you've got Avoca lake. And the mill – the pumping plant stack is still visible through the trees on the south end of the lake.

D: Yeah, Carl and I took a helicopter trek.

G: So ya'll saw…

D: …and saw that. It's pretty impressive.

G: It's very impressive. I've been through it on the ground – walked around on the old building that's left there. It's pretty impressive

D: I want to come back to some thing you said about the alligators making a comeback.

G: Yes.

D: You think you could ever see a season being two months as opposed to one?

G: I don't' think so. We're still – we are still harvesting um, probably the most adults we can. And the future is going to be interesting. Um, if you look at the alligator population as a pyramid, and half of the population – now I'm just – you'll have to talk to Noah or Ken about that who worked with me for years, but now he's the alligator guy. Um, I think half of what you have on the ground at any time are the hatchlings or the hat – well you don't have any hatchlings on the ground. But if before they picked up the eggs, that made up maybe half the populations – those little guys eight inches long. You had less three-footers. You had less four-footers. You had less five. And you had very few twelves out there. And that's mortality - natural mortality. Well we started picking up the bulk of those eggs, and the percentage it had to go back to the property has varied through the years, but it's gone down. And it was only a guess based on life tables that are still – well what can they pick up? How much do we have to put back? So it's a question of how many of the eggs make it to be say four feet long, for example? How many are lost? For a while, it was seventeen percent. I think now they're down to about fourteen or thirteen percent. And of course, the farmers like that percentage to go down. You know, because they're having to raise, if they pick up a hundred, then they've got to raise fourteen and feed them up to four feet long, and bring them back and release them back on the property. So there's questions – you know, when you're a Wildlife and Fisheries guy and you're trying to ensure the future of the wild population, you want to make sure that that percentage is high enough. If you're a farmer, you'd like that percentage to be as low as possible. And it has changed several times quicker than we have been able to – WE – I'm not with Wildlife and Fisheries. Wildlife and Fisheries has been able to evaluate, is that the right number? You can't figure it one – it might take ten, fifteen years to know if you're putting it back. The market is changing. Um, we have farmers now that were selling in the last ten years, a three to three and a half foot skin all one strap. There's a demand for an unblemished six and seven. They never could raise that because if you kept them in much above four feet in these pens that they're in, they just, they damage each other. And your growth rate changes, so you're feeding a whole bunch more food to get that extra length. So now, what we've seen in the last few years from a wild standpoint, and it's a great concern to people interested in the wild population, not a demand for – in

the wild, you generally – you average seven feet. If you know what you're doing when you're fishing, you may catch some sixes – you wouldn't catch very many fives because it's always a few you're going to catch. And for a while, people used to think well you pick up your bait higher. That doesn't work at all. In fact, to catch the big one, you may want to put your bait lower, but you want a big hook and a big bait. If you've got a big enough hook and bait, that little guy can't swallow it so he's not going to get caught. So what we've seen in the last couple of years is reluctance on the part of the industry by wild skins, not much interest in fives and sixes. Farmers are now also attempting to raise animals in that larger category. Maybe eventually going to – and some of them may already be doing it – I think some are. One animal and one trough. So they have got animals – now it's not going to be damaged, and they can present to the market a perfect seven-footer. Certainly fives, they can do that, and six is so – that foreign market, it looks like it's starting to impact the marketing of the lower end of wild skins. So how do you handle that? Big question mark – don't know. But we can't shift at this point based on the best biology that we have. We could not take more large animals. That's your breeding populations.

(feedback)

G: A lot of these animals out there when they're four feet long coming back from the farms, and you see more alligators. And there is an upward trend in nesting. The number of nests – and you've got some dips like storms – after Rita and Ike and all that you get the – or drought conditions are terrible. But the long-time trend is still up. So the population is expanding, but do we know how many more adults we can take, which is what you take in the wild harvest essentially. If you're going to have a problem selling fives and sixes, you're going to want to average seven and up. Well that's that part of that population that there's less of. So I can't imagine increasing that harvest. And the problem is, if you want to take more of the small ones – there's a bonus tag program - they've done away with it because it doesn't work well – to try to raise taking fives. Because those are ones that are going to die at a higher rate. They're down there – you're going to have a high natural mortality between a five-footer and a nine-footer or an eight-footer. A lot of mortality. A lot of – so you can harvest more of those and have very little impact because they're going to die anyway. But that's where the farmers are producing several hundred thousand perfect. And if they're not number ones, they can't sell them. When the economy went down, the first thing that happened is – rather than saying we want ninety percent number ones, they said we want a hundred percent number ones. Don't send us anything if there's a blemish. And it's funny how fashion is. To me, I don't have an alligator wallet, but if I had one and it had a scar across one side where that alligator got bit by another one in the wild, preferably for me, or got hit by a prop, that would – that's part of that natural thing is part of the beauty to me. That's not what they want for a watch strap. That's not what they want for a little clutch – a ladies clutch. They want something to me that looks like it was manufactured. It just so happens that it was manufactured by an animal that was grown on a farm that was perfect.

D: Yeah. Carl and I interviewed Mark Staton.

G: Yeah. Yeah.

D: That was a good interview. Very good – we're only half done, but it was interesting to see his operation.

G: Well at some point, you may want to go talk to the people in Lafayette – the tanner RTL. Because they're tied back to Europe and they would understand that – talk to Noel Kindler at Wildlife and Fisheries, and that's 373-0032. And Noel would be a good guy. I worked with Noel most of my career. He's probably about seven or eight years younger than I am, but he is the alligator program manager. And he knows the industry, and one of the things that was talked about at an alligator council meeting last week in Baton Rouge was – they're facing some issues overseas not related to alligators, but scary nonetheless with animal rights people, that remind me of how our things started with the fur – very scary. And to the point where – is it Swatch that is –

D: Yeah.

G: Swatch Group came over and met with them, and because most of the farming end of the market is – you think - how many of these can you sell? Apparently a lot of them – and you think, well once you buy a five thousand dollar watch and you've got one on there, you're probably going to have it several years. But a woman's watch – you get that and you go back and you have different colors – you know, you have beige and pink and – you know, that's the fashion thing.

D: It's different than what we're used to.

G: Exactly. It's another world, but you can sell a lot of them – a heck of a lot of them. But anyway, these guys came over because of some bad videos. And I saw one of them or two of them came out of somewhere on the Pacific realm, and it was for some kind of water lizard – I think it was one of these channels originally in maybe German. They were showing Germany, and there were some questions – now the reality of it, I don't know enough about what they were doing or not doing – but it looked like there were some animals that were perhaps not being killed in the most humane ways possible, and they weren't alligators or crocs – they were water monitors or lizards or something. And then more recently, there had been something that came out, another one, that had to do with inhumane conditions, and it was, you know, that thing can start over here, and all of a sudden – and those people in Europe are smart enough to say look – we've got to address this. They're over there, and they're buying leather. We've got to see what's going on in Louisiana where we buy these things. So there's a big effort underway to try to counter that with – I mean with people at the LSU Vet School, to check the conditions with the best management practice – guidelines for killing, and I think they're okay in Louisiana. But still, you better make sure…

D: You have to – well it's all globalization.

G: That's right – you document it. It's funny how what we dealt with on trapping, you never thought the alligator, because the alligator is not too lovable. It's kind of like a snake, you know. So people don't – but there are animal rights people out there that oppose consumptive use of any animal – I don't care whether we're talking about a cow. I don't care whether we're talking about zoos or pets. The wackos are out there, and they never go away. They just could never get entrenched with the alligator because

of the general public. An alligator? Who cares? Now a cuddly little muskrat or a nutria or a fox or a raccoon, you know, that looks like my dog or my cat. But that's an issue, and we always – I mean when I flew for an alligator council, we were constantly trying to build our market strength from Louisiana on – let's see what was it called – there's three or four things. One of them was um, legal, sustainable, and something about quality. It was three or four things, and the fact that we had the most complex and sophisticated tagging system in the world, that the alligator hunter puts it on the skin and that thing is followed through until it is tanned and cut up – into the factory. So it was – you could convince the industry that they were getting a product that wasn't on the black market. This was a defensible – and it was really important in Europe to defend this because the alligator had been listed on the endangered species list. The feds were way behind Louisiana in trying to – oh my god, it's the end of the world. And then when we came back and went open the season, the federal government said, oh, well they're endangered! You can't open the season! They were ten years behind – clueless. We closed hunting on refuges before the Fish and Wildlife service closed it on their national refuges in Louisiana. Louisiana was more restrictive, and you don't think of that normally. Louisiana took action before the fish and wildlife service did. But then, as the case for habit, we figured out how to manage them and want to crank it back up – all the way up. We can't crank it back up, you know. My god, they're endangered. So we had to overcome that, and we're still overcoming that with branches of fish and wildlife service. And we fought that – you could go into Atlanta, Los Angeles – they could talk about visitors coming back in – 'don't buy these products.' And they show stuff like elephant ivory and walrus tusk and they have illegal crocs and things that they would put in there that was not clear to a customer. You would think, well don't buy alligator. Don't go to Japan or Singapore or um, Italy and buy alligator. It's illegal. So we'd say, that's not right. That's very misleading. Well, there are endangered products in there. Yeah, but not alligator. You know, it's the most we've ever had. It's the best program of sustainability, but you have your – you have your problems still in the United States within your own…

(feedback)

G: We spent a lot of money trying to educate people in zoos, educate Fish and Wildlife Service people, the animal rights people – some of them will come over to your side with some products – the legitimate ones. But the ones who gain the most money, they're in it to make money. You make money by generating concern, and you crank up money, and you make some money, and you go do something. Now I'm not saying that these people are not sincere.

D: No.

But they don't know. And they don't care to know – it was that way with trapping, and it will be that with – you know, the alligator – when we develop the market, it got the best protection it could ever have. We have the most alligator we've – maybe too many. Some people think too many, you know, but um, here we have a market – an international market. We have product that was eaten or flooded that's now – the eggs are – you know, it was a bust or boom. A lot of the eggs were lost in the wild before the farmers utilized that resource to the tune to maybe three to five hundred thousand a year. And you've got a problem with that? Well yeah. Some people do have a problem with that. So now they're facing – so you got some marketing things going on, you're just trying to come out of the – the guy that picks up

here did not pick up in ‘08. And you talked to all of those big farmers after the economy just went – I said, what are ya'll doing? He said, I'm just cleaning my farm. I'm not going to pick up any eggs. I have to get rid of some of these things because I can't afford to – I mean some of them had a hundred thousand dollars worth of groceries coming in per month to feed these alligators. A hundred thousand. So the way they stayed in business – they're selling – they got money coming in all of a sudden. This end says, don't send me any. I don't want any. Then, they started finally when things grew a little bit, sending stuff out – and I remember a number of them – one of them right down the road said Greg, I never did this in my life. I said what do you mean? He said, I sent out twenty thousand skins on consignment to a guy. Now I know him, I trust him, but I never did anything like that in my life. But he said, I had to quit feeding them. I had to kill them. What do I do after I kill them? I mean I could keep them in cold storage for a while, I would send them that guy – he's going to crust hand them when he gets an order, depending on the color they want, and they will finish tanning them and hopefully he's going to pay me. But he said, I want to try to keep my people, so I only have enough money to maybe pay my laborer, cut down on the number of alligators I got, and not pick up any eggs and hold on to try to – to try to make it over. That's what they went through in ’08 and ’09. It – I think he started like in November of ’08 going into that time of the season – is that what…

C: No, it was October when the economy went into freefall.

G: Well, see that is the biggest time of year for sale of retail products – buying gifts in Europe for you know, watches – whatever. Whatever the stuff is. Nothing moved. So by the time they're getting ready, coming around – price is falling. Then it finally got to the point - I guess in ’09, they said, we don't want any. We didn't hunt. We didn't hunt this property in ’09. Nobody wanted any skins. I mean you'd think a – and then in ’08, thirty something dollars a foot to these trappers. Thirty some a foot – times two thousand, you know. And we don't take much percentage. There's a bunch of money that these guys – these trappers – did without. Just a dramatic change – so you know, the life of the trapper has changed a lot – I guess if you went back and you looked at it, it was like this all through the forties and fifties and sixties, and then it took off in the seventies and it was pretty good all through for about – well from ’62 to ’82 in nutria, it just got better and better. And in the seventies the whole market for all fur, even north Louisiana, was fantastic. And then it was good, but it started – something started happening in the eighties, and it was like this in the nineties. Now the alligator market was getting better. The fur market was declining, and um, and we don't have much of a fur market now. There's a little bit of a market for stuff in North Louisiana. Probably a pretty good price for otter the last few years. That may be worth thirty. Um, but mink and raccoon wouldn't be much – wouldn't be of much value I don't think. So what's keeping them along is the guys who have nutria. And the alligator season, but I imagine last year, well they got thirty two in ’08 or thirty four. In ’09 they didn't hunt. This past year we left it up to the trapper because it was still terrible, but some market looked at what the potential was. They said eh, thirteen, fifteen dollars a foot – and I said, I'd like to see them hunt. So Dwayne went through – called every one of our trappers – your call. We won't hold it against you if you don't hunt. We'd like to see you hunt, but – so the guys that had just a few tags said eh, I'm not going to hunt. The guys who had more tags and a bigger piece of property – most of them hunted. I imagine 85 to 90 percent of our guys. They probably averaged to thirteen, fifteen, somewhere. So it's kind of where we are today. What next year – we'll –

I'm hoping the market will improve, but you know, a lot of it has to do with what happens in the Middle East. What happens with gas. What happens with the economy. All of those are going to effect recovery, and the recovery effects what these guys living along this ridge are going to get for their product.

D: Yeah, it's interesting. If you go look at the price of an alligator belt…

G: It never changes.

D: No it doesn't! In fact, if it goes anywhere, it goes up.

G: Absolutely. It never changes.

D" And yet, when you're down here listening, you say wait, how come? Apparently there is a mystique about alligator that carries on – apparently to infinity, because they never go down.

G: I'll give you an example. We were trying to develop – in fact they're working on it again – a market for the low end. You know, um, a fur – you can – even though dealers would downgrade it, they had a cut. That's BS, because I watched them make coats. You can take – I mean when you have a drop mink coat or a mink pelt is this high, and you want it to go all the way down. Well you do something called dropping. And you take that skin and you open it up like this, and you cut strips out of that mink that are about that wide. And when you come back to start putting it together, you drop them, so you end up with something that was this wide, and this long. Now it's this wide and this long. It's the length from your shoulders out. So it's all cut up, and when you sew it back together with a machine – so any kind of little damage to the skin, yeah that's a damage. But is it a big deal? No. well the trapper doesn't know that. You know, the trapper didn't know that. And the buyer didn't know that, and the dealer wasn't sure, but it was downgraded. Now with alligator, it's a different ballgame because they're cutting slices, and those things coming out of the flanks and the belly, you know, you're a cut is a – or a blemish of any kind – is a big deal. Is it as big a deal as they make it? Who knows. That's a very difficult thing to talk about – grading, quality of skins, damage – very difficult. But um, it's still used – it's still used against you. And when you have a turndown in the market, that grading is tougher. But you're exactly right. The product never changes. It goes up. And I guess that's like a farmer will get less for some product because if you go to the store, you're never going to pay for any of that thing you bought off the shelf – that price goes – it does not go down. Well, milk might go down.

C: True. Producers were never shown any…

D: Yeah, I mean, do you know David Richard?

G: Very well.

D: Alright. He humbled me one day. And if you know David, it was not a pleasant experience.

G: I know it. He's been there with me.

D: And he said, we won't use the expletives, but he implied, you've been on the wetlands all your life and you don't have any pair of cowboy boots that are made of alligator? I went the next day – the next

day – I bought me a pair of alligator boots. I saw him, and did this. Good buy! I couldn't even come close today to buy those, because the price I got it – it was fair. Now, it's off the charts!

G: When I was trying to market them and get manufacturing in Mexico, um, I would say seven to eight hundred dollars. And we were competing with ostrich. And I went into Mexico to a place down there – a town where I was trying to get them cranked up on alligator – I went down there several times to shoe fairs with alligator, god doggit – I can't think of the name of it. It's not far from um, Leon. Leon is the place – huge manufacturing base. And so we were going in and out, and that's where I got a real idea of the price. Now I don't know what it would be in a retail place today. I'd say seven or eight hundred – you get it for a lot less than that.

D: No.

G: I don't think it would be a lot more than that today. But the western thing with alligator at one time, blowing and going. It was red hot. It's still there, but it's not the big thing. That marketing is all – has all changed too. I don't know where they will tell you for wild skins that there's a lot of wild skins and crust tan, in Europe sitting there. There's some size, and I think it's about a seven, that you make ladies handbags. And you can get so many out of them – a seven, you think my god, that's a lot of leather, and a seven-foot is this wide! You know, when you straighten it out – of course the head comes off and the tail comes off, and you're dealing – and really you don't do anything with the back, so it's the flanks. So when you start taking all that into consideration, it's not that much. But those purses are unbelievable in cost. It just – it just – unimaginable. Some rock star had a, like motorcycle jacket that I saw at a fur fair one time, and I don't know, they said it was Michael Jackson or somebody, but I saw one. It was a nice black leather – it was alligator. Forty thousand dollars for a jacket. And I had been told that a briefcase could be seven or eight or nine thousand for a regular sized briefcase.

D: Oh.

G: A lot of the women's purses were five to six thousand. I'm talking about not a big purse – now bigger than a clutch, but you know, that size handbag – belts, probably, let me see. Two fifty to three fifty? Depending on the manufacturer.

D: Easy! That's without the belt buckle.

G: Oh yes, that's without the belt buckle.

D: Without the belt buckle. You put the belt buckle, you'd better hold on!

G: So it is a high – oh, I know where I was going with this story. I got spun off. We wanted to find a market for these damaged skins that come in as seconds. Well we don't really want that. And actually had a little bit of opposition from the high end people to mess with that. They did not want a second level of product with alligator – no, no. Alligator is the diamond of the classic leather – classic skin. Now we may have overcome some of that trying to explain to those people, look – wild skins, there are going to be some that have damage, you know? They're not all number ones. That's the real world out there. The farmer may be able to give you some, and absorb these low ends or destroy them or something

with them. But you can't do that in the wild. And if you don't support the wild with all of the variation in the wild, the wild is where the eggs come from. There's no one that's been successful in putting alligators in captivity. Now there's a few doing it, but they haven't been very successful. I still don't understand why, but if you pick up these alligators and put them in big pens, and try to get them to nest, there's a few people doing that, but by and large, you have fertility problems with the eggs. There's just all kinds of problems, and they don't do well together. Crocs on the other hand are colonial. They come up out of the rivers in Africa and Australia and they go into the sand like turtles and they lay in a colony. So they can accept crowding. Alligators – no. So the bigger you try to grow them, or you put them in big pens together, you've got problems. And I think that's why I don't see anything right now that indicates that the wild resource is not critical to the farm industry. And in fact, we have sold it to conservation organizations that alligators bring money back to the local community, into the land company. When they pick up eggs, there's money that comes into Continental and we sell those eggs. There's a little that comes from the skins, but the people who harvest and the people who pick up and all of that benefits coastal restoration. It's money for us to do a little project on our property, but more importantly, it benefits the community because you've got the guy trapping, you've got a guy helping him, you've got a guy he buys ice from, he's buying bait from somebody. Somebody's working on his outboard. There are some guys that are skinning for the guys that process. There's a tremendous number of people involved when you have an alligator season. There's more people involved in the wild harvest than will ever be involved….

(feedback)

G: Harvesting a lot more – a lot more leather, but we have built the case for conservation around the wild population. And it – and it's true. You have to have the wild population. And that always was a little bit uncomfortable because the farm population never go off in marketing, create problems for the, for the wild. Who knows? Who knows? That's an unknown. Right now, up to this point, sevens, eights, nines, tens, elevens – you don't get too many nines. Well you get a lot of nines, but not too many elevens and twelves. And they're so big – they've been out there so long, they're really beat up. You know, they've been chomped on and hit by boats. But to me, they're the really classic skins. But it's not what the market wants. The market wants that perfect six or seven without a blemish.

C: Don, if that clock up there is correct, we've been going at this for three hours.

D: And our man has a one o'clock appointment. The only thing I want to say Greg, we want to come back. Can we?

G: Sure. It may be here, it may be – but I think I'm talked out, to be honest.