

Robert Hoy Interview

January 2011

Interviewers: Carl Brasseaux, Don Davis

Carl Brasseaux: Okay.

Don Davis: Put it on the floor. (Inaudible)

C: I think we're good.

D: Press record...

C: Testing. Are you getting feedback on your headphones?

D: But I'm not hearing anything on the headset, but I'm hearing it down there. Right?

C: Try again? Let's see. Line...

D: Now we got it. Thank you. We're ready.

C: Okay. Well this is Carl Brasseaux, and Don Davis is with me, and we're here on the morning of February – I'm sorry, January 19, 2011 with Robert Hoy in Metairie. And Mr. Hoy, we want to thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us today. Um, as I indicated earlier, what we're interested in doing is recording for future generations the history of the Louisiana wetlands and the participation of various groups has have become invisible basically to present generations and scholars. Um, we'd like to begin by simply getting your permission to record this. These materials – recorded materials – are going to go into collections at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette as well as in Baton Rouge, and at the Sea Grant Regional and national offices in Baton Rouge and Washington, DC. Um, what um, these materials will be used for, we can't really envision at this point. We hope that they'll be used in books, maybe even in documentaries in years to come. Naturally, there's no remuneration for anyone. (laughs) You know, in this kind of business, so there go the millions. But um, we would like to get your permission to use these for future researchers.

Robert Hoy: Sure, whatever. Whatever it can be worth.

D: Now, you just mentioned to us that you were familiar with the Quan Sun Company.

R: Yes.

D: How are you familiar with that?

R: Um, my father and his partner actually operated the company.

D: Okay. And what was your father's name and his partner's name?

R: My father's name was Chin Dai Hoy Sr. and his partner is um - senior moment.

D: Junior moment.

R: Yeah. No, I'm not a junior. But um, it was um, geez. I can't remember his name. Um, I'll think of it later.

D: Okay.

C: But when was the partnership established? Do you remember?

R: Actually it was a corporation to start with. Um, but the number of um, of people that owned stock in the company, and as time went on, people either went back to China or they passed away. And eventually, it boiled down to two people, and these two people, um, essentially operated the corporation as a partnership. And um...

C: Now was your father a native of New Orleans or was he an immigrant?

R: No, he was an immigrant – he came from China many years ago.

D: About what time?

R: Um, (laughs) he actually came over twice. So um, I don't know - very early 1900s?

C: Why Louisiana? I know that there had been a Chinese presence here after the Civil War with people working in the sugar fields. Um, was there any connection with earlier family members who had come over?

R: Um, it's my understanding, and I'm not real sure of all this, but it's my understanding that he had an uncle or something that was here already and um, they were um, involved in the setting up this stuff with the shrimp drying business. Apparently they recognized the fact that there was a great deal of resources down here for doing that sort of thing. And so a number of people came over to sort of establish this business.

C: Did they come over as family groups, or just young men...

R: Just usually just young men that came over. Um, very rarely wives – in fact I don't even know any of them that brought their wives. They would come and get established, and some of them would go back and get wives and then come back.

D: Did they always come through San Francisco?

R: Um, yeah, I think so. As far as I know, that was the major...

D: I grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. And there were shrimp drying platforms. I don't remember them, but I've seen images.

R: In San Francisco?

D: Yes. These were not – these were not elevated above the marsh. They were on the hill side, and they were drying them in the same techniques. So there was a shrimp drying tradition in the early 1900s in San Francisco and we find it here. Did your family have shrimp drying platforms?

R: Yes, they were associated with a number of them. There were quite a few of them down in the marshes at the time that I knew of them. Of course they're all washed away now. I think the only one that might have a presence still is Manila Village. Um, I – the last I heard there was one shack left or something there. But other than that, um, if you go down there – the last time that I saw, there were just piles that were still in the water where the platforms stood at one time.

D: Do you remember the names of any of these platforms other than Manila Village?

Um, yeah, there was the (Elin Chi?). There was Bayou (Willow?), Bayou Rigo, um Basa Basa I think was another one. Um, I don't really recall all of them. There were a number of them down there.

D: Now, when – did you pick up the – did your family pick up dried shrimp and do you remember if they used sails or were they using gas boats?

R: When I was growing up, they had um, diesel powered boats. They had – was it the – there was a kind of ferry boat they called the *America*, I think was the name of it. And they had a captain, and he would go around to the platforms and pick up the stuff – I think and then bring it back to the city, which they essentially repackaged it and sent it off.

D: Did they – were they picking up shrimp in barrels? Or were they in a bag?

R: That I really don't know – I never really observed them doing this. The reason I knew the *America* was - we used to catch it to go down there to go fishing. (laughs)

D: Okay.

R: But it was a nice size boat, but you know, it wasn't sail.

D: Okay. Alright.

C: Now, your family was involved in wholesaling of bulk required to the product?

R: In essence yes. He was on St. Louis Street. Of course you can't do any drying or anything down there. Um, so they did – they brought it in to St. Louis Street property, and they did a cleaning process in the back and then packaged, essentially.

C: How was it cleaned?

R: Um, they used a blower and they hand-picked the other stuff – the big stuff up, and it um, when I was going down there, they were no longer using barrels. They were using crates that they made wooden boxes. And um, they would pack these up and ship them out in wooden boxes. But um, they did have a couple of old barrels sitting around, so we were familiar with that.

C: Where were the principal clients? Principal markets for that?

R: China, mostly at that time. People in the United States were not that familiar with dried shrimp until you had um, large populations of Orientals, um, in the cities here like in New York, San Francisco, those areas. They may had markets there – Chicago is another one.

C: What parts of China? What were the main...

R: Mostly southern China. The (Quintong?) area. Because that's where most of them...

C: Is that where your family is from? Southern China?

R: Yeah, that's the people that came here from China in those days, they were from the southern portion of China.

C: Okay. Were they involved in the shrimp industry before him?

R: I don't know. I have no idea.

D: Were the boxes made at 525 St. Louis? Or were they from a vendor who brought them?

R: Oh, they were from a vendor who brought them in. And as I said, at that time they were wooden boxes.

D: Yes.

R: Of course that got too expensive, so they finally went to the cartons.

D: And how long was the family in shrimp drying industry?

R: I guess, well, my father was in it all of his life.

D: And did you inherit that? Or did he...

R: Um, not really.

D: Okay. Alright.

R: Um, Chin Hong – that was his partner. He um, as time went on, he – they sort of got old. They couldn't really operate the business that well, and my father passed away, and that's kind of when I got into it. But um...

C: About then was that?

R: Um, (laughs) I think it was in the eighties or something like that.

D: Okay. So the company was perhaps a hundred years old by then?

R: Possibly. I don't know the exact time of when it was organized.

D: But well over fifty years old.

R: Oh yeah.

D: Okay. That works. That works. Now, when you shipped to China, you – would you ship directly from New Orleans, or go by train to say, San Francisco, and then go to China?

I don't know the original way that they did it, um – by the time I got into it, you could no longer ship to China. Um, but there were sending to Hawaii and places like that, and the way they did that in those days, was to um, to ship it to San Francisco and send it off on a boat – a steamer. And then later on, as modern times came along, they shipped it by air. It was just direct.

D: Air freight.

R: Yeah.

C: What about Central America?

R: Um, as far as I know, they didn't have much down in Central America. At one time deal with Cuba. They did send stuff to Cuba – but of course that got cut off after a while.

C: Right - because we had heard that some dried shrimp companies were shipping to Central America. Um, the banana companies were buying it for their work force.

R: Oh. I wasn't aware of that.

D: And then Blum and Bergeron for example, had on site a barrel maker because they were shipping barrels. In fact, the Green Dragon logo – that's on top of the barrels. We certainly know that um, the barrel was imported. One of the things that's hard for us to get a handle on is the supply chain. Um, if you have a shrimp drying platform, somebody had to build it. Most of these were built in inaccessible places. They had to come timbered, probably cypress that had to be brought in. the shrimp were boiled. Your father represents a period when they didn't have natural gas. They didn't have diesel, so they were using wood. We know that each platform used five chords of wood a day. That's – that's a...

C: So it's a logistical nightmare, basically.

R: Yeah. Oh yeah.

D: And so when we ask the question about sailboats, some of this was sailed. And so we're – we ask these questions, like did you make the boxes? Because our interest is – where did the boxes come from? Were they made locally? Well that adds to the local economy. And really these questions have never been asked. We're always interested in how product moves, because if you think about it, we have a product produced in Louisiana that's sold in (Chintong?) China. And in some cases, before World War II, maybe before World War I. We know that through Blum and Bergeron, we think it was that early. Um, it's a really important industry, and so all of your discussion just helps us even how minor it may be. Um, one of the things that we're interested in – did you ever get involved in producing the little um, shrimp in a small cellophane envelope – card shrimp?

R: Oh yeah. Um, the company did that..

C: Was that mostly for the Louisiana market, or - because I'm from rural south Louisiana, and every Lent, um, you know, people were using them to make stews.

R: Yeah. Gumbo.

D: Oh yes.

R: Yeah, the company was into that. In fact, when I was operating the company, we had some of that going on. Which we had a little bit more modern facility. But um...

C: How many people worked in the workforce at the location down on St. Louis Street? When you were up and running and you were processing.

R: It kind of varied, but um, as far as the card shrimp were concerned, now they had two or three people on that, and then they would bring in four or five people more for when they were cleaning the shrimp than packaging it. But other than that, that was about it.

D: When you – when you had the business, were you shipping – how did you – if I'm a grocery store in Chinatown, San Francisco, and I sent you an order, would my order be ten pounds? Thirty pounds? Fifty pounds? A hundred pounds

R: Usually it was around fifty pounds in bulk.

D: That answers a question, because in 2008, or 2009, my wife and I went to New York on holiday, but I went to Chinatown, and through Louis Blum, I knew where there was one person selling Louisiana dried shrimp. And it was in this huge container, and that answers a question. I also – because my roots are in California, I know of a grocer in San Francisco. He also was selling it, but they wouldn't tell me the size.

(laughs)

D: Why, I don't know. And it was selling for thirty dollars a pound in San Francisco...

R: Wow. (laughs)

D: ...and just short of twenty nine dollars a pound in New York.

R: How recent was this?

D: Um, two years ago.

R: Wow.

D: Um...

R: We should've been selling higher.

C: Yeah. (laughs)

D: So it's a um, I was surprised – very – and my sister-in-law loves dried shrimp, so I paid thirty dollars for a pound of dried shrimp, and I didn't care because it was something Carl and I were trying to understand. Um, it still has a viable market. It also currently has a market in the Hispanic population in border communities.

C: Um, did you have brokers? You know, in some of these places like New York and San Francisco?

R: Um, I think the company did not have a broker in New York or Chicago or San Francisco – well they did have one in San Francisco, and they had one in um, in Hawaii, the ones that I knew of. Um, other than that, I don't really – they had one in Cuba when they were operating there, because we met them once before Castro.

D: Yes.

R: Um, but um, but they were very nice.

D: Now did you ever wholesale under any other label besides Kwan Sun?

R: Yeah, there was a – a Gulf Food Products Company is what they actually operated under when I was familiar with....

D: Uh huh.

R: Kwan Sun Company was sort of the shell company. They operated under Gulf Food Products, which was the partnership – two men involved, but they also had one that they called LOG Brand. The reason for that – well my understanding – was that (Kao Ogi?) Brand was sold in Hawaii, and they wanted two brokers there for some reason or another – maybe for competition. So one of them was selling Gulf Food Products, and one was selling (Kao Ogi?), but they were coming out from the same pot.

D: Now would you have any of those labels, or any of the paper goods from that period - anything at all?

R: I don't know of any off hand – the boxes – we wouldn't keep the boxes around. Well, I might have a Gulf Food box lying around. But I'm not sure.

D: Okay.

R: You never know what's in the attic.

D: Yeah, they wouldn't let me in the attic at St. Louis Avenue because I figured there had to be some up there. Those are the things that are very hard for us to get a handle on. Just like the Green Dragon Shrimp. Um, Carl's university put out an announcement through their alumni paper that we were doing this oral history. We get a call from a former helicopter pilot who wanted to come visit with us. He thought he had something we might be interested in. We meet him in Lafayette, and he hands us this roll tube. He says, I think you might enjoy this. I want you to have this. I think it's important – it's just been in basically the attic. Apparently his family had a camp that they used near whatever the Kwan Sun platform was, and as a child, they played there. And we unrolled, and there are six of these labels in there.

C: Which they're beginning to disintegrate. It's not in pristine condition like yours.

D: And the thing is, we were ecstatic because the hardest thing to do is find paper goods – they tell you about what you're talking about. So if you have an old box, we want to photograph it. If you have letterhead, we want to scan it. Because it gives us a real visual clue to what you're

talking about, sir. So when we found that, we were giddy as when I was three years old opening Christmas presents, because you don't find that.

R: Right.

D: Um, even maps of the property or hand drawings. Um, Mr. Chin Bo Wing – he hand drew for me the boats that were used. And so I have that – well all that now is at ULL. But it was amazing. And he spent an enormous amount of time explaining how this worked. One of the things we're interested in – do you remember if your family dried fish as well as shrimp?

R: Yes, they did.

C: What kinds of fish – do you know?

R: Generally trout – speckled trout is what they preferred, which for some reason or another – what they would do is they would catch the fish. They would gut it, pack it with salt inside the fish and pack it on the outside the fish, and they would stick them in a barrel and put a great big weight on top of it.

C: To dry them.

R: No, well, it became a brine solution underneath it, and this was a preservative for the fish, but you had to press it down to squeeze all the fluids out I guess. And um, then after a while, then they would take them out and then they would dry. Um, and they were - apparently they were pretty well preserved because people would use that – eat that.

C: This is for the Chinese market?

R: Yes. Yeah, it's a pretty smelly operation. (laughs)

D: (laughs)

R: It's a pretty smelly food too.

D: Well we were told by a Mr. Boquet that's still running – it's not a platform he's using.

R: It's a shrimp drying.

D: Shrimp drying, yes. He showed us that he remembers as a boy walking out on the platforms, and that they were run by what he called Manila men. And that for their market, they liked the shrimp to have a little odor. And that intrigued us because to us, we don't want an odor. But to that – to their market, they had to have a little bit of an odor, which we had not heard before. So the idea that it has a little odor falls right in line with Mr. Boquet told us.

R: There's no problem with having an odor.

D: (laughs)

D: Well as a child, did you play at 525 St. Louis?

R: We used to go down there occasionally. We didn't spend a great deal of time down there but we would go down there on occasion. Um, we did spend some time on the platforms when we'd go fishing. So I became familiar with it at that time because just by-product. We weren't interested in shrimp. We were interested in fishing.

D: How many people would be at a platform at that time, you know, working it?

R: I have no idea. We were quite a few, because they had to do it all by hand. In those days, you had to spread the um, the shrimp out after it was boiled - they had to spread it out over a platform, and they had to make sure that if it started to rain, they could cover it real quickly, so they had a lot of people around to do that. And they had to turn the stuff every so often with rakes and that sort of thing.

D: Did people live at the platform? Or did they live on boats, or was there...

R: No, they - the platforms had associated with it some small buildings that they used for transient workers I guess. A few workers there, and also the fishermen would live there too sometimes. And they usually had a little market that was associated with it - like a grocery store so that people could go in there and buy whatever they needed.

C: Now were there entire families there? I know that in the late nineteenth century there were in certain platforms.

R: Yeah, some were - some small families I guess were living down in those areas. But by the time we got there, there weren't too many of those left.

D: Now since there were families, do you know if any of them had a post office? Now there was a post...

R: There was a post office in Manila Village.

D: Okay. Alright. Now that's gone through lots of owners. It was the Fischer Company, and then I lost track of it. Of course the Fischer was a senator. He was actually a Fischer High School that Carl and I have seen in Lafitte. Did your family have a close working relationship with the Manila Village?

R: Um, Manila Village was owned by Chin Hong Bo - no, no a Chin Bo Wing.

D: Yes.

R: He was my uncle.

D: Okay. Alright.

R: He was my father's cousin.

D: Alright. Also from (Quanton?).

R: Yes. Probably the same village probably.

D: Yeah. Yeah. Now you went out there to fish – just basically to enjoy outing.

R: Just recreation.

D: Okay. Now do you have any brothers and sisters that did the same thing?

R: I have two brothers. The one that's closest to me is only about a year older than me. We used to go down at the same time fishing. Um, my oldest brother actually, um, moved to San Francisco and was to school there. My father felt he should learn Chinese. There was no place here that you could learn that sort of thing, so he sent him out there for that purpose, and he, he went through high school out in San Francisco, so we weren't associated that closely with him during that period of us going fishing down there.

C: Just out of curiosity, did he stay in San Francisco or did he come home?

R: No, actually he came back here, and then eventually he went back to California but southern California.

D: Yeah, one of the employees for Louis Blum um, worked the platforms – apparently moved to New York. And I actually went locate him for the grocery he owned and the site has been turned into a church. He named one of his sons Louisiana, and one son Terrebonne.

R: (laughs)

D: And did so because the shrimp drying industry, as an immigrant, provided him the first form of employment. And he eventually left Louisiana, and Carl asks a good question – because many people who were Chinese ancestry came here and then moved to a place where you could learn Chinese, and it would be in San Francisco, New York, Boston, Montreal...

C: Yeah, there was a more viable community where the language was still spoken.

R: Yeah. Sure.

C: In fact, that was one of the things I wanted to ask you, and at some point when we're done with the dried shrimp industry, about the Chinese community here in New Orleans. Because aside from one or two small publications I can think of, the Chinese community here is largely forgotten by Louisiana historians and geographers.

D: Yeah. That's an im— if you don't mind just chatting about it, I grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. My father worked in San Francisco – he worked on the docks. And from about age nine to sixteen, about every other weekend, I was just left on my own in San Francisco. So I'd take the cable car to Chinatown, and I would just roam the streets, and it was perfectly safe. And I worked with Chinese, and it was always interesting to me that they said at that time – go to Chinatown and see things made in Japan, because we're an embargo. And therefore, I have a real interest, and I learned where most of the good restaurants were because I was a young child – I just wanted to look. And yet, we know of only a – Harry Le may have been able to provide some background because his family was in – still is in the restaurant trade. But if you don't mind just commenting about the Chinese population in...

C: Yeah, well just that the Sicilians are coming in around the same time as many of the Chinese immigrants here. And basically, the model for their - because they've been studied much more extensively – with them, they tended to settle together in an area that quickly dispersed to the suburbs. And I was wondering if that's a model of what happened with the Chinese. Because we know there was a small Chinatown in New Orleans about 1900.

R: Chinatown here was only like two stores or something like that – and um, how it said that the people – the Chinese that came here did not remain within that location – they spread out to the different areas. They didn't just congregate into...

C: That's what happened with the Italians – right.

R: But they – I guess they're um, point of meeting was the Chinese church – Presbyterian church that was established here, and so most of the people used that as sort social gathering as well as presumably for the religion.

C: Now where was that?

R: Well, it started off on um, let's see. Um, when I got associated with it, it was on Roman Street. And um, but there was a place before that, and I can't remember exactly where it was – but if you go back in the history of it, I can't say where it was – Liberty Street or South Liberty Street. But it moved to Roman Street. And then it moved to um, Bienville, um, after some temporary homes it moved to Bienville Street. And um, eventually, that neighborhood became unviable and so they moved up to Kenner um, on West Esplanade Avenue. And it's um, it's currently still in operation.

D: Well that's like the Greek Orthodox – you rarely hear about the Greek Orthodox, but they have a very large church.

R: Oh yeah.

D: Off of Bayou St. John.

R: Robert E. Lee Boulevard.

D: Yeah. And again, it's one way that we can get some understanding of migration and what happens. Um, now did your family always live in Metairie, or did you move here from...

R: We actually lived in New Orleans proper in sort of the central portion of the city um, between Canal and Tulane Avenue. There are some small areas in there that were livable. But eventually we moved to um, Lakeview. We lived on Canal Boulevard actually, until everybody passed away and we sold the property and of course everybody had already dispersed. My two brothers both lived in California, and so they – they're no longer um, in this area.

D: They're not part of the Who Dat Nation.

R: That's right.

D: (laughs)

R: That's right. They're not here.

D: Now did you go to school in um, you did not go to San Francisco.

R: No.

D: So you went to just public or private school?

R: Public school. Um, I went to Warren Easton. Um, when I finished there and went to Tulane, and um, and service and all of that stuff. So it's fairly common stuff.

D: Did Rose go to Tulane as well?

R: She went to Newcomb – when it was still Newcomb.

D: Newcomb - yes – yes. Wow. And as the family evolved in the shrimp drying business, you saw a lot of change. Um, and if you don't mind talking about the change you remember, and it could be something so simple as you know, rather than hand-picking, you used a blower. Those things are important in how this industry evolved with technology.

R: Well, the biggest change that I saw was that they were no longer able to sun dry the stuff, which was a practical process – it didn't take a lot of energy.

D: Yes.

R: But now they have to dry them in these dryers artificially, and um, it took them a while to get settled down on how much they should dry them in that process and how quickly they should dry them. They went through some growing pains with that because when they initially started that, they um, they dried them on the outside too fast, and what would happen is the moisture would stay on the inside of the shrimp. So after about a week, the inside moisture would go out, and everything turned bad. And it took them a while to settle on exactly how to do that. I don't know if they've still got it down yet. But I'm not involved in that, so I don't worry too much.

D: (laughs)

R: But um, that was – it was quite a problem, and as far as drying is concerned, um, after you dry it, you have to do the cleaning process, and um, ever since I've known it, they've always used these blowers to blow the husks away. And of course, they used the beaters to beat the shells off. So the process was that they would boil the shrimp and dry the shrimp either through the sun or artificial drying, and then they would beat the shrimp to beat the husks and the shells off of them. And then they would blow it so that the – blowing process would blow all the shells away, and presumably the shrimp would just fall down and be fairly clean, and then they would run a hand picking process to take the um, the large stuff out– they might end up with fish and all sorts of things in it. So um, and then they would just pack them.

C: What about the shells? I know some – the Blum's have found a market for the meal – the ground shells? Did you market that as well?

R: A little bit. Yeah, we didn't do a great deal of – Blum was in a better position to do that because the platforms were all around him, and what he would do is when they'd beat the shrimp – have you ever seen a beater?

C: Yeah.

R: Well the shells and stuff would fall down underneath it. And so he just had men go and shovel it out and they would use that as fertilizer or fish food or whatever. So he had a ready market for that. We had a little bit of it, but not great deal – it wasn't a prime sort of thing for us. He had to move a lot of product to make anything out of it.

D: Oh yes. Yes. And they're still in the business.

R: Yeah. They're still there.

D: And um, they've kept a lot of records and been very good to Carl and I. It was Louis's dad that made a listing of the platforms he remembers. And that listing is at eighty. We think it goes to a hundred because they, you know, they came and went - every hurricane they were gone. And so you know, they came and went, and we suspect that collectively there may have been over a hundred. And we really suspect that not all, most of them had Chinese working on every platform.

C: And what's amazing to me is that they kept rebuilding them after these catastrophic storms, and often many people were drowned, you know, during the storms.

R: Sure. It's amazing that they still have pilings down there.

D: Well in some ways, the term you're hearing now is resiliency. In some ways, the platform entrepreneurs and their employees were exceedingly resilient because even though they may have lost a loved one, they went right back in. And they didn't even hesitate. Boom - they were right back in it. And we like to tell people that the platforms were making more money than the governor of the State of Louisiana. And people do the same thing - we just don't tell them that it wasn't until Huey Long was well, appointed - elected governor that the governor even had a salary. We just don't tell people that prior to 1928 the governor never had a salary, so everybody made more money than the governor.

R: Oh. Alright.

D: But it's a viable industry, and we're real fascinated to try to understand.

R: Well I'm not sure how viable it's going to be for a lot of people. It's kind of going away I think.

D: Well you know, that happens with lots of industries.

R: To lose the marshlands, we're losing nursery grounds.

D: Yes. Exactly. Exactly, and one reason we're here today, is that if that happens, at least we have one story that thirty years, forty years from now, somebody will be able to understand.

R: I was very surprised to hear that they had them in San Francisco.

D: There were in Marin County.

R: Yeah. Did they have a lot of shrimp there?

D: Yes. They're not - you would probably call them sea bob. They were the small, seven-barb. Um, but it was really - it was a very large industry. And in fact, there is a California park called

China Camp. And China Camp was one of these um, shrimp drying operations – very ephemeral – it's all gone. It's um, archaeological artifact. But we have some photography that's just magnificent. And the boat type is like the traditional Chinese (junk?). But when you look at um, the aft, the tiller, the tiller looks an awful lot like what we find on the sailing lugger, yet Carl and I never found any reference to Chinese ship rights – boat builders. And with the, the population we suspect is in the wetlands, it would not be unrealistic to say that some of these folks made their own boats but we have no record of it. But your instincts tell you that if you have some downtime, you're from (Quintong?), you're associated with water, there's some spare lumber around...

C: You're living out on the water, it's a...

D: That you may in fact have built your own boats because we see some design elements that look like they could've come from China but have no way of proving it.

R: That's interesting.

D: It is. Yes.

R: Why did the um, the industry die out there if the...

D: I think that the property became so valuable that it just wasn't viable to use it for shrimp drying. You know, it's Marin County.

R: Yeah.

D: Um, I just think that by the beginnings of, well before World War I – before World War II – pardon me, the property was starting to escalate in value. And they had another source – Louisiana. But nobody has written, that I've seen, about the evolution of shrimp drying in San Francisco Bay. Um, it's a – it's an interesting story. There are some accounts written in the late 1800s, early 1900s. Um, but neither one of us has gone and seen UC Berkeley's system and sorted through their – they have some exonerated archives. I suspect that you know, they couldn't compete with Louisiana market would be my guess. Once you got rail service in San Francisco, everything changed. Because rail service allowed you to move barrels very competitively and you were producing probably more in a day than these platforms produced in three days, and when you do the numbers – it just got overwhelmed. And my guess is it all came from Louisiana. But they were there. Some of the design elements are very similar – we're particularly intrigued with the boats – not the sails. The sails were...

C: The platforms themselves, though, are very much like the ones used here. The waves...

R: Yeah.

D: Yep. Exactly. So it's um, it's a neat connectivity. Um, and it - my guess is the Louisianans just took over the market. And it's still a viable market to Louis Blum.

R: Yeah.

C: And apparently to merchants in California and New York at thirty dollars a pound.

D: Yes. Yes. Yep. Um,

C: I don't know, Don.

D: I'm mentally – I think you've answered our concerns and questions. You've been very helpful.

R: Like I said, I don't know very much.

D: Oh, trust me.

C: We don't.

D: Trust me, no, we just really appreciate you taking the time chatting with us.

C: Because as we said earlier, if you don't share your memories, then the experiences basically will be lost as far as historians are concerned because they'll be no records for them to turn to.

D: Or even your own children. We've been asked by um, a businessman if we could just sit and chat with him – because his children and grandchildren – certainly his grandchildren – have no idea how he got into this business. And he just wants – he has twenty one grandchildren? And he just wants to make sure.

R: Big family.

D: Yeah, seven children. He just wants to make sure his grandchildren have an idea what their Paw Paw did. I think that's kind of nice.

R: Yeah. It is.

C: Well thank you!

D: Yes indeed.

R: You're quite welcome.

D: Yes, and our surprise turned out to not be a surprise.

(laughs)