

Interviewees: Esperanza Woodring (EW:) with Ralph Woodring (RW:)  
and Earl \_\_\_\_\_ (E:)

Interviewers: Bob Edic (BE:) and Karen \_\_\_\_\_ (K:)

Date: April 17, 1990

BE:[This is an interview with] Ms. Esperanza Woodring on April 17, 1990. What I would like to do first, if you do not mind, is ask you some questions about your family. We are trying to trace a tradition here, and we want to make sure we are talking to somebody that has that tradition in their lineage.

EW:Well, I do not know whether I can tell you a whole lot, but I will try to do my best.

BE:OK.

RW:I will say that if you would give her some background on where you are trying to go for sure as to what you are trying to get at, it makes a hell of a lot of difference on what kind of answers you get. If she knows where you are going, it definitely makes it easier to [answer].

BE:First of all, I am trying to make a kinship chart up [that shows] how you relate to the **Colemans** and the **Darnas** and all of that [group] and how all of these outer-island people from Boca Grande, Cayo Costa, [and] down to here [are linked].

EW:The age problem is a blank. I did not keep up with all of those ages.

BE:We do not need to know all of that stuff.

EW:Well, the Colemans are related [to me] through marriage. They married some of my mother's family.

BE:We will start out this way. What was your husband's name?

EW:Sam Woodring.

BE:And what was your maiden name?

EW:Alman.

BE:Where was your family from?

EW:They are from everywhere. My grandfather came from Canary Island. My grandmother, I guess, was from Mexico. My dad, was from Spain, I think. See, in those days the only way they [could] get from one country to another [was to] stack up and run away. After they would leave their country, why, they could not throw them overboard, so they had to take them wherever they were going.

BE:How many brothers and sisters did you have?

EW:I had seven sisters and five brothers that were alive. One died. My mother had thirteen children all together. So now there are only four girls left and one boy. The rest of them have all passed away. Originally, my grandparents were all from Cayo Costa.

BE:So Sophie was Louis's mother, [and] that was . . .

EW:My aunt.

BE:That was your aunt.

EW:Yes. My mother and her were sisters.

BE:What was your mother's name?

EW:Rosie.

BE:And that is how you are related to Richard Coleman?

EW:Yes. See, Richard's mother, Nona, was Aunt Sophie's daughter.

So that made her and I first cousins.

BE:What was your father's name?

EW:Manuel.

BE:Can you trace your father's or your mother's lineage?

EW:No, when I was a kid I did not pay enough attention to that kind of stuff. When it was too late, I was sorry I did not.

I was born on Cayo Costa. That is where my grandparents started out.

BE:What year was that?

EW:[In] 1901.

BE:How about Sam? How many brothers and sisters did he have?

EW:Let me see. He had Anna, Carl, Alva, Flora, and Harrison.

[There were] five: two girls and three boys, I guess.

BE:Were they all from Cayo Costa?

EW:Oh, no. Grandpa Woodring came from Pennsylvania. He got married there, I guess. He used to be a blacksmith. He went from town to town fixing the wagon wheels and stuff like that. He was in the Civil War, I guess.

BE:Do you know Sam's father's or mother's name?

EW:Well, the mother was named Anna, and the father was Samuel.

BE:Another Sam.

EW:Yes.

BE:And how many children did you have?

EW:Two ornery sons.

BE:And their names would be?

EW:Ralph Woodring and Preston Woodring. Preston is the oldest.

BE:Do they both live on Sanibel?

EW:Ralph does. Preston just moved away.

BE:Are they involved in the fishing industry or were they?

EW:No. Preston was in the service [for] twenty-five years, and then he retired and came to Sanibel and used to work at the water department. Ralph is a shrimper and a sportsman. He keeps that bait box down there. That is his business.

BE:How many children does Ralph have?

EW:Five: four boys and a girl.

BE:How about Preston?

EW:He has two girls and two boys.

BE:Do all of Ralph's children reside here?

EW:No, they are all scattered around. Two live in Fort Myers and one is in North Carolina. This one here is in Georgia. And the girl, Julie, is in Tennessee. So they are scattered all around.

BE:So would you say everybody from your family, from Manuel and Rosie on down to Ralph, has been in the fishing business around here?

EW:Yes, more or less.

BE:And mostly right on the barrier islands out here between Cayo Costa and Sanibel.

EW:My grandfather used to have what they call a fishing camp. He had one on Captiva and one on Sanibel down there by the lighthouse. In run season, [as] they used to call it, he used to have these great big nets. I guess he used to have about twenty men to pull this huge net. They used to take

the mullet and cut the roe out and salt it and then they would sell it to Cuba or any place you could find a market.

BE:What was your grandfather's name?

EW:**Taravial**.

BE:Oh, Taravial Padilla. So Manuel's father was Taravial Padilla?

EW:No. My grandfather was Taravial Padilla. That was my mother's father.

BE:Your mother's father. Rosie's. That is right. And Rosie was Taravial's [daughter].

EW:Yes. Do not get it mixed up. [laughter]

BE:No. Well, I am going to give you a copy of this when I get done, and you can go over it and tell me where I mixed it up.

EW:All right.

BE:I am bound to mix it up sometime. See, I have already done this with Richard Coleman. Taravial's sons were John, Tony, Bevo, Falo, and Rosie.

EW:And Sophie. Sophie was Richard's grandmother. See, his mother was Sophie's daughter.

BE:Now Sophie was married to a Darna and she was married to a Rodriguez and to Toledo.

EW:[She married] Toledo first. Then he died and she married Darna, I guess.

BE: Sophie's daughter was Nona?

EW:Yes. That is Richard's mother.

BE:Did you know Arthur Coleman or Walker Coleman?

EW:Oh, yes. They used to come over here to the island and go rabbit hunting. They killed all kinds of rabbits.

BE:So there was Walker Coleman, Dolly Coleman, Shelly Coleman, and Orlando Coleman.

EW:And Eugene Coleman.

BE:And Gene Coleman. He died when he was twenty-one years old.

EW:Eugene? No! He is alive. He is a plumber in Punta Gorda.

BE:No, I do not think he could be alive because he would be too old. This Gene was Nona's age.

EW:Ralph and Gene Coleman and James Coleman used to be real good friends, were they not?

RW:You are talking about the prior generation.

BE:Yes, I think that is right. That Gene Coleman must have been named after him by Shelly or Dolly.

EW:That is ahead of me. I guess that was the old lady's husband.

RW:James's daddy was named Gene.

EW:I guess.

BE:Did you know any of the people that lived on the south side of Cayo Costa [like] old man Faulkner?

EW:Yes, I knew him, but I do not know his background.

BE:He was a beekeeper, I hear.

EW:Yes, he had bees.

BE:He had three wives.

EW:Yes, more or less.

BE:It is strange that on Cayo Costa (I mean, it is a small island) Sophie had three husbands on the north side. Of course, in those days you outlived a lot of husbands. Down

at the other end, old man Faulkner [had three wives]. Now, he did not fish or anything, did he?

EW:No. He just lived off of what he could get off of the bees.

I guess he had a little garden that he probably grew a few vegetables [in].

BE:Well, I think you did a pretty good job [answering my kinship questions]. You have got one, two, three, four generations right there.

EW:Well, there are five generations in our family now.

BE:So there are five. Ralph's children and Preston's children are married now?

EW:Yes. Preston's daughter has a son. See, it is me, Preston, Preston's daughter, and then she has got a son and he has a son. So I guess there is five. However, we do not ever see them.

BE:How many grandchildren do you have?

EW:Nine.

BE:You have nine grandchildren and how many great-grandchildren?

EW:I would have to count. Let me see. How many grandchildren do you have? [laughter] You do not know? Let me see. Lee has got two; Julie has got three [and] that is five. Wayne has got one and Shane has got one [and] that is seven. That is his grandchildren.

RW:Malia had three, and one is deceased. So that would be a total of nine living.

BE:Well, it sure looks like you are part of the pioneer fishing folks from around here.

EW:Well, I will tell you about my grandfather. He used to have a fishing camp down here near the lighthouse. There used to be a deep well, and all the fishermen and boatmen that came along there would go to that well to get water. They had these wooden barrels [down the sides], and they would rot and cave in. So somebody would come along and put a new one in there. Years and years, until they developed that down there, that well was down there, and they called it Taravial Well. I could have killed them when they went and filled it in with sand and dirt. Of course, you know that was an old well, and there is lots of background to it because that is what the fishermen depended on [for] their water.

BE:When did Taravial come to Sanibel?

EW:Well, he did not live on Sanibel. He just had his fishing camp there.

BE:He lived on Cayo Costa?

EW:Mostly. Or lower Captiva. See, these fish used to come in in schools, and they would take these huge big nets and rope them in.

BE:Yes. Were they gill nets or seine nets?

EW:Seines.

BE:Were they stop nets?

EW:No, just seines--a great big heavy, long, and real deep seine.

BE:Were they flax or cotton?

EW:Cotton. Oh, there was no such thing as flax in those days.

BE:Did they not make the stop nets out of flax, or was that before flax nets?

EW:No. Most of them were cotton, and they took and put them in tar to preserve them.

BE:Was that so the crabs would not eat through the nets?

EW:They did [anyway] but not quite as bad.

BE:What kind of fish do you think was the most economically important species to you?

EW:Mullet. Probably they were easier caught in the nets, and I do not know if there were more of them, but I presume there were.

BE:Were they caught in the winter when they were spawning?

EW:Yes. It would last about three months out of the year.

BE:So that would be . . .

EW:November, December, and January.

BE:What other type of fish did you fish for after the mullet spawned?

EW:I do not think they bothered about it. [They] probably [fished] enough to eat, but I do not think they did [much fishing]. They probably made what they could in those three months, and then they survived with whatever they could rake and scrape out of the water: clams, oysters, and they ate a lot of fish. Probably [they also hunted] birds, [too], and maybe they killed a deer once in a while or something like that. But they survived entirely off of the land.

BE:Nobody pompano fished then?

EW:No, [they] never heard of it.

BE:How about redfish and trout?

EW:I do not think they fooled with those either--at least I know my grandfather did not. Now, my father did. He had a gill net. He used to mullet fish in season. Then when the season was over, he used to catch trout or redbfish or whatever would sell at the market.

BE:Could you catch redbfish in the cotton nets, or would they bust them up?

EW:Oh, no. He used to catch a lot of redbfish in the nets.

BE:Was there a market for them?

EW:Yes.

BE:What fish did you eat the most?

EW:Mullet. You can take a fisherman, and he has got all kinds of fish in his boat. If he is going to eat well once in a while he might change, but most of the time what do you think he would take home to eat? Mullet.

BE:You can cook that more different ways and do more with it than any other fish, do you think?

EW:Well, I would not say that so much. Maybe it is easier to clean.

BE:So would you say that mullet was your favorite fish if you had a choice of which one to eat?

EW:Well, no, not particularly. I like most any kind but a snook. I do not like snook.

BE:Do you eat redbfish and trout?

EW:Oh, yes.

BE:Have you fished yourself?

EW:I used to, but I do not anymore.

BE:What kind of fishing did you do?

EW:Well, I used to take fishing parties out, mostly.

BE:You were a fishing guide?

EW:Yes. Well, I used to try to fish, too, in between times. I used to net fish. I had my own net and boat.

BE:You used a pole skiff?

EW:Yes.

BE:With a cotton net?

EW:At first. Then we started using flax. Then [we] eventually [switched to] nylon, and I do not like nylon very much.

BE:Did you hang the nets in?

EW:Oh, yes. Sure. We did all of our own work. [If] you were a fisherman, you had to know how to do a little bit of everything.

BE:That is for sure. Do you remember anybody tying nets themselves--not just hanging them in but tying the nets?

EW:You mean hanging them in?

BE:No, tying the nets.

EW:Oh, I used to make cast nets but not gill nets. There is too much work for those.

BE:Did the netting material come from the Punta Gorda Fishery?

EW:Well, we ordered most of ours from New York from a company. The name of them was W. A. Auger in New York. I still have some of their advertisements.

BE:I would like to take a picture of some of those advertisements. So how many nets did you own to mullet fish with?

EW:Well, at one time we had some sheds down there that we used to keep our nets in that we did not use. We would have about three different sizes. We would have one for trout, one for the mullet, and we had one for mullet when they were in the roe season. And then we had one for after they spawned. It took a smaller mesh. We generally always had three nets.

BE:So in the summertime, what size net would you start off with for mullet?

EW:About an inch-and-quarter [mesh].

BE:So that is an inch-and-a-quarter stretch. That would be a three inch net?

EW:Yes, about that. Then when we were going to use it for the roe season, as they called it when they were spawning, it would be a larger net. That would be about . . . Oh, I do not remember exactly, but it would be a much larger mesh.

BE:Four or four-and-a-quarter-[inch mesh].

EW:The little fish would go through, and we would just catch the mother mullet, which was an awful thing to do.

BE:Well, the reason we are interested in the nets and everything is that we have been excavating the old Indian mounds out here on the keys. We are finding net-making equipment in the Indian mounds that is 5,000 years old.

EW:Yes, that I cannot believe. I would love to see one of those things.

BE:Well, we just happened to bring some of the stuff here, and Karen would be glad to show them to you. We might get some idea of what the Indians were doing with it.

EW:This guy that used to work for Ralph was telling me about that stuff, but I did not believe him.

K:What do you think about these for paddles? You know how you use a paddle to tie the cord around to mend the nets?

EW:Oh, yes.

K:Do you think these would work for something like that? They are real old, so they are a little rough on the edges now.

EW:Yes, that is from a bone.

K:Yes, it is from a large sea turtle.

BE:What did you make your paddles out of?

EW:Wood.

BE:You carved them out of wood?

EW:Yes. The needles, too.

K:We have some wooden ones, too, that are preserved.

EW:Really?

K:Yes. But the ones I have here are just bone and shell.

EW:What did you do with all of that paraphernalia that she put in that crate?

RW:It is over at the house. I forgot to bring it. I will go get it.

EW:Have you still got it?

RW:Oh, yes.

EW:Well, don't you dare let that get away from you.

RW:Yes, dear.

EW:That is an antique. All that stuff your dad made.

BE:It seems to me that the dimensions of that are the same as the other things.

EW:Let me show you the needles that we used to make. I do not think I have a meshing board.

BE:These come out. If you put the modern paddles that you get in a net-making kit right along side of them, they come out to be a three-inch or three-and-a-half or four or four-and-a-quarter.

RW:Four-and-a-quarter is about the max on the standard stuff, yes.

BE:I guess the fish still have the same size heads now as they had then, so you had to get that right if you were targeting fish specifically to catch.

K:What do you think about these, Ralph? Do you think they would work well?

RW:Oh, yes.

K:What about these that are short? Are they long enough to still be able to [use]?

RW:Yes. [With a] small mesh you do not need as long a board.

K:That is all shell turtle. Is that not pretty?

RW:See, as long as you have got enough room to hold \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

K:These are made out of the big lightning \_\_\_\_\_. These are nicer.

EW:Now, his dad made that out of red mangrove root.

BE:Somebody has been working there, too.

EW:Well, I was going to make a net for the spring, but I gave up on it.

BE:That would be a nice picture right there.

EW:You can buy them for much cheaper than you can make them anymore.

K:How is that for a match? Not bad. What was this made out of?

EW:That is made out of red mangrove root.

BE:Red mangrove. And this looks like a different kind of wood. I do not know.

EW:Yes, that is made out of red mangrove. I do not know why [he used] the red mangrove. I guess [he used it] because he thought it preserved or kept better.

RW:Well, it is relatively soft when it is green, and then it hardens up real good so that the twine does not wear on it after you have made enough of them.

BE:We have not found this yet, have we?

K:No.

BE:We are looking for the shuttles and stuff, but we have not found them in the Indian sites or we do not know what we are looking at yet.

EW:You have not found a needle like this yet?

BE:We have found great big deer-bone pins that could be part of the needle and the wood has rotted away.

EW:Well, in some cases, instead of doing all of this, they just take and make something like this on both ends and use that for a needle. That is what we used for the minnow nets. You know, they are a real small-mesh [net] like this.

K:Does it have to be long? Could it be a short, squatty pin?

EW:Oh, it could be any size.

K:We do have one of those that is sort of squarish. It has this part and this part on each end.

EW:Well, that is a needle. That whole thing he is carrying [is a needle].

RW:That is a regular shuttle, yes.

EW:[If you are] knitting, like mending clothes or something like that, it would be about that wide. I remember my grandmother--of course, I was quite young then--and she used to say that was what they had to do in her country in her time. They had these little narrow pieces of wood, and they were carved like this, and that is what they used to sew the material with. You know, I guess they would fold it together and then sort of stitch it.

K:Was that in Spain?

EW:No, my grandmother came from Mexico.

BE:Do you have any of those needles with you?

K:No. I was not allowed to bring the wooden things.

EW:Are they made out of wood?

K:Yes.

BE:Do you have any of the bone points?

K:Yes. Could I take a picture of your paddle there?

EW:Sure.

BE:Do you have enough light there? No, that is perfect.

K:Well, I will show you these other things.

EW:Of course, this is just a small one. Sometimes they make these things larger to suit whatever you are going to make.

BE:Right. If it is like them, they are in all sizes.

EW:Yes, all sizes. That is right.

RW:The other thing that you probably should consider, too, is that if you get any amount of time on this stuff at all, you can do it pretty much freehand and come out so that it is relatively close.

BE:You mean you can get a calibrated eye from doing it.

RW:Most all of your mending is done with a smaller needle or smaller shuttle in free hand. You do not use a board when you are mending either a cast net or a gill net. You just eyeball it as you go along, and you freehand even in a big hole. If you had a gill net with a great big hole in it, by the time you get done with it you may have a few that are a little bit off, but you do not really notice it once it is mended up. You do not notice the patch is there unless you really know what you are looking for.

K:Can you use the shuttle itself as a gauge to some extent?

RW:Well, you could, yes. Generally, it is not the right size. But as something just to look at, you could not use it as you were going along, but you could use it to match what you are trying to do. See, if you are mending, you already have a mesh on the other side anyway. So all you do when you pull down is match it up very similar to what the other one is, and then you tie it.

EW:See, when you start a net you just make loops like that. See that? Then you just do that like I started this. Then when you get as far across as you want, then you just slip all of this off and you start all over again.

BE:Well, it seems like the Calusa Indians had a maritime economy, and they were food fishermen, too. During mullet run season, they used gill nets and everything. Our only problem is [that] out of all the fish bones found in the Indian mounds, [there are few mullet bones]. The big shell mounds look like they were eating nothing but shellfish, but when you analyze them it comes down to only about 10 percent of what they were eating was actually shellfish, and 70 percent or so was fish. The fish that they ate the most of was pinfish, pigfish, and catfish. We do not understand quite how that fits in.

RW:[Those fish are] the easiest to catch.

BE:They are the easiest to catch, and after the easy season (like run season on things) you could always supplement your diet.

EW:When the mullet were running, they would be the easiest because they would be in these schools. Now, you are not going to believe this, but they used to come along the edge of that beach there, and the porpoise and big fish would be [in] just schools and schools. My husband Sam used to go out there with a pitchfork. Now, you are not going to believe that, [but] he would catch whatever he wanted to eat the next day with a pitchfork. They would be right up there. I imagine you could have picked them up with your hand because they were so close to the beach. You see, they were running from these other big fish that were on the outside. Every now and then they would get in there and get them a mouthful of whatever they wanted, and the poor old

mullet were trying to get away from them. They were right up [close to the beach], most especially on moonlight nights. You could just see them, you know.

BE:When they podded up, did they head with their right eye to the beach?

EW:Well, I imagine they headed for any place where they thought that they could be protected.

BE:When they ran out the pass, did they go out this pass here when they grouped up?

EW:Oh, yes. Down there at the lighthouse, they used to have a big, long dock out there. They used to go out there with snatch hooks. Do you know what a snatch hook is?

BE:Yes. [A snatch hook is generally a large weighted treble hook. It is dropped in the water and "snatched" quickly in order that it might snag into a passing fish. Ed.]

EW:[They would] just snatch them. They would tear the poor mullet up. You would see the roe streaming down. Well, they stopped that now. You cannot do that anymore. Down there at Blind Pass, across that bridge, they said it would be ridiculous the way they would slaughter the poor mullet. You know, they would just hook it enough that he would flop off, and the roe would be scattered all over. No doubt some of the fish died, I imagine.

BE:Well, if there were that many fish here when you are speaking of, we think there were just as many or more when the Indians were here.

EW:Oh, yes.

BE:But we are having a problem because the mullet bones only represent about 10 percent of all of the fish bones in the mounds. They do not understand why we do not find more mullet.

EW:Well, maybe they were not as easy to catch as these other [fish].

RW:I figure that the women and the kids probably did most of the fishing, and it certainly would have been easier for them to catch the smaller stuff--the catfish and pinfish and stuff.

BE:It could have been that what they were eating they could have [done] like [they do today] on Cayo Costa [and] shipped the mullet out. When they shipped the mullet out, were their heads still on? Were they [simply] split [and gutted]?

EW:No, they cut the heads off of them. Sometimes they would leave the head and just split them right on down and salt them. But mostly, I think, they cut the heads off.

BE:So the fish would be dried and put on racks?

EW:Well, mostly they would put them down in brine. See, they had these great big wooden barrels, and they would brine them down because they keep better that way.

BE:Did they fire them with palmetto fronds before to dry them out, or were they sun dried?

EW:No, they [would] just salt them and then pack them. They would take the mullet and salt it real good, and then they would put them together like this because they would go in the barrels easier. Then they would ship them out. They would go down as far as Key West, and then these boats would

pick it up and take them to Cuba or wherever they could get a market for them, I suppose. In those days it was all sailboats, you know. There was no such a thing as ice.

BE:Right. The people that bought these fish would just come around during run season? I mean, after run season did any Spanish smacks come around to buy the fish?

EW:No. They used to mostly ship their fish from Key West out to Cuba. There was, I imagine, a special boat to come and pick them up every so often.

BE:But the only thing they bought was mullet?

EW:Yes. These smacks used to have these great big huge wells in the middle of the boat, and they used to catch mostly grouper. They used to go way back out in the Gulf and fish for red grouper and black grouper.

BE:And that is how they kept them preserved alive so they could make the trip back to Cuba.

EW:And, of course, if some of the fish died, then they would salt them and hang them up and cure them. They would sell those also.

BE:So the Cuban fishery was interested in mainly mullet and grouper?

EW:Yes.

BE:Well, it seems to be that the mullet fishing tradition had to be learned by the early Spanish and the early pioneers that came here. The Indians who lived here were Seminoles, and they did not know how to fish. The Spanish Indians that were the first here probably had some Calusa mixed in with

them. I have heard that most of the people who actually did the fishing were the Spanish Indians [and] not the rancheros.

EW:I imagine.

BE:Do you remember any Indian fishermen at all?

EW:No. That was ahead of my time, I guess.

BE:All of the fishing was done by the people that lived on Cayo Costa?

EW:Yes.

BE:When they hired a fishing team, where did these people come from?

EW:Well, my grandfather had his own family.

BE:He brought them from the Canary Islands and other places?

EW:No. His son and his son-in-law. Whoever was in the family, that is the ones that worked. Well, once in a while, probably, there was a straggler [who was] looking for work. But they were all local people. I do not think he got any outsiders. You see, they all mostly lived like a family all together in these huge palmetto houses. They could not possibly get outsiders or strangers who they did not know. They would have to know them on account of having his daughters and his wife there. I guess they all ate together and slept in these shacks.

BE:And they lived there all year long? Was there a bigger population on the island during mullet season?

EW:No. I think he was the only one that I know of. Well, there might have been another one or two, but they did not have set fishing camps like he did.

BE:I guess what I do not understand is [how] could they make enough money in three months to not have to do anything for nine months.

EW:Evidently they did because that is what they survived on. Well, they might have done like I said. You know, they ate fish and clams and oysters, and they probably had some hogs. The original hogs on Cayo Costa were from my grandfather. Really, he was the first one that brought them there. They had chickens and ducks and stuff like that.

BE:There were deer out there then also?

EW:Well, there might have been a few deer on the island, but if there were, they would not have killed them.

BE:Did anybody keep the pigs out there, or did they just go and get a hog when they needed one? I mean, did they pen them up and feed them?

EW:No, they just let them run wild.

BE:They are still out there.

EW:Yes. I thought they killed them all.

BE:They have been trying, but there is still a whole bunch of them out there. [interruption] Did you do any hook-and-line fishing?

EW:Well, once in a while I go out. Not now. I have not been in a boat in three months.

BE:Well, that is not bad.

EW:Ha! You do not know how I miss it. That is my boat out there. It is Ralph's boat, but I call it mine. See, all of that stuff is in his name, so he has to repair it and keep it up. [laughter]

BE:So that is the reason. These are some fish hooks here we found in the Indian mounds that the Calusa Indians used. They made a compound hook by taking the center part out of the horse conks, mostly, and they would utilize that groove there with a bone pin. [They would] sort of tie it in there. This one is kind of big. They would bait that up and use them either for fishing lures or for fishing hooks. Also they would tie pins around the middle and use them for throat gorges. [They would] put some bait on it [and] put them out there (a whole bunch of them) on a trot line. There are various pins there. We do not know how they all fit in. They are certainly not all fish hook parts, but a lot of them are. It seems like they would use them for bigger fish like trout or redfish or jacks or sharks or something like that.

K:This one has got a double groove, one on each end, and they were used for a large line sinker. What do you think about those?

EW:Wonderful! I have never seen any of that stuff. See, we have dug in the mounds over there. I have walked in the mud, but we never found anything like this.

K:You can take any of those out. Feel the weight on those.

BE:They put a lot of work into that piece of shell. You would think they would hate to lose it after all that grinding.

EW:That did not mean anything to them. That would be no more than you going out there and taking a spoon to eat.

BE:[It was] something you had to do if you wanted to eat.

EW:Yes. You have to do all of this stuff to survive [and] to be able to live.

K:These are all made out of deer bone--that lower leg bone.

EW:That is wonderful.

BE:Where do you think that Taravial learned to mullet fish? Evidently he did not mullet fish on the Canary Islands.

EW:Oh, no. He was just a young boy when he left there. He stowed away in one of those big boats and came to Cuba. From there, I guess he stowed his way on some other boat to Key West. I think they stayed there for a while. He stayed there for a while until he got his bearing and then I guess he met my grandmother. I do not know how she ever got down there, but I think that is where they got married because my mother was born, I think she said, in Key West. See, when you are a kid you do not listen to all of this. It just goes whisp. Then when it is too late you wished you had listened to a whole lot of that stuff.

BE:As you get older you do not forget any of it, it seems. They say: "Oh, I do not know. Not about family."

EW:They ask me a lot of questions and I wonder where did that come from.

K:Where was I? Ms. Esperanza, did you ever use a technique where you just take a point like this and tie a line in the middle and just bait it up?

EW:No.

K:We think the Indians were doing that a lot, too.

EW:Probably.

K:It is just a real simple thing to make. Do you think that would work? It would act as a toggle. Fish would swallow the whole thing.

EW:I do not see why not [if you] put a big hunk of bait on there.

K:And it would catch in his throat.

EW:They did not have nothing in the markets. They used to have to make everything. Well, we did too when we lived on Cayo Costa. [Do] you know what we used for clothespins? Palmetto stalks. We would cut them about that long and split it. Sometimes they would hold; sometimes they would tear up.

K:That is a great idea.

EW:Then later, you know, they started making a wood clothespin. They are about that long and they have got \_\_\_\_\_. I have got two or three of those.

BE:When they put the big mullet nets out to catch them roe mullet, where they fishing on the beach or in the bay?

EW:Well, mostly they would go around these passes. When the fish would come in, you know, they would have to go pull them in. In those days, those passes, like Redfish Pass and those places, were not as wide as they are now. So when the fish

would come in [they had less room to get through the pass].

They did not have not motors. All of that was done by rowboats. They used to take these boats and bore a hole on the side of the boats and put wooden pins in there. Then they would take rope or whatever they had and tie the oar to the pin to hold the oar so it would not get away. There would probably be, maybe, four or six people. Each one would have an oar. I guess you have seen them rowing that way. Somebody would hold the end of that net, and they would just make a circle around and haul them to the beach.

BE:Was there more than one boat working together?

EW:No, just one. Well, maybe they had two or three boats, but the one big boat had this big net in it. [Do] you know how they pulled the nets out of the boat? They had this great big thing--I think you would call it a wheel, I suppose. It was made out of palmetto stalks or wood or whatever they could find. It was up on the forks like this, see, and then this thing would roll on these forks. That is the way they would put the net in to repair it or put it out or anything.

BE:So then when they put it right back up on there they could dry it right on there.

EW:Yes.

BE:Did they lime it before they put it on?

EW:I do not think they had lime in those days. If they did, I do not remember.

BE:When did they start liming the nets?

EW:Well, I guess my dad had lime for his nets. I do not remember that he did, but I am pretty sure they started [liming their nets].

BE:Did you dye the nets red?

EW:No. I do not think they even had such a thing as dye then.

No, I guess they used everything naturally just like it was.

BE:Did you do any fishing off of the beaches for mackerel or pompano or anything?

EW:Later years the Colemans and the Darnas [did]. I guess my dad had a mackerel net. But they used to go on the outside when they would be spawning in schools, and they would catch them in the nets. But I do not think they ever came close enough to the beach where any man could have caught them.

BE:Did they use their mullet nets to catch mackerel with, or did they have a special net for mackerel?

EW:Well, I imagine they must have had a special mackerel net.

BE:Would that be a deeper net?

EW:I think so, yes. See, they would go out at night and catch these mackerel and bluefish, and then the next day they had to gut all of them--you know, take the insides out of them.

BE:Do you remember when Redfish Pass broke through? I think that was [during] the 1926 hurricane.

EW:Probably. Ask Earl. Do you remember?

E:That sounds like about the right date. There used to be a \_\_\_\_\_ in there, and it washed away.

BE:Do you know Bill Hunter?

E:Yes, I know Bill Hunter. He lives over at \_\_\_\_\_.

BE:I do not know. He lives on Boca Grande now. He used to fish Redfish Pass a lot, though. He says he is the first one that caught redfish out of Redfish Pass, but Bill might just say that.

EW:Well, it is possible.

E:You know what? At the \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, that was \_\_\_\_\_ in there, and lots of people used to go in there and catch redfish and trout. That was a big fishing place before that big pass washed out.

BE:Before it washed out?

E:All of that in there, all of [those] flats in there, used to be a place for redfish and all kinds of fish. You would just go in there and \_\_\_\_\_ it out and all. Of course, it was the wrong time to fish. The fish were in the pass along the outside. You would catch them out there, and after they came in, they would sit there on the reef on the coming-in tide and then you would catch fish on the inside. You did not go outside.

BE:Did you fish for silver mullet at all, or did they [fish for them] on Cayo Costa?

EW:Yes, they used to but not as much as they did for the others. I guess they probably did not have as good a sale for those. But they did not fool with those [silver mullet] to salt them or anything. They were too small.

BE:Did you do any crabbing at all [for] blue crab?

EW:Not me.

BE:[How about] stone crab? Did you eat them when you caught them in the net?

EW:Oh, yes. We ate a lot of them. [laughter] When we moved from Cayo Costa to Dunedin, I used to go crabbing for stone crabs. When the tide was low, we would have the hook. We would go to the mouth of them and hook them up, and we would go peddle them and sell them.

K:Ms. Esperanza, did you ever, by accident, get any of the diving ducks in your net?

BE:Cormorants or mergansers?

EW:Well, we never got them in the net. We caught them with a hook when we was trout fishing.

BE:Oh, yes?

RW:We used to catch them hell divers in the net.

EW:Yes, we used to catch hell divers in the net.

BE:What is a hell diver?

EW:It is a little form of a duck.

RW:No, it is not the \_\_\_\_\_. It is the breed.

EW:I will tell you what I did catch one time. A cormorant had a clam stuck on his bill. He could not get loose from it, and it drowned. I guess he saw the clam was open, you know, and he went in there to get the clam, and the clam just clamped down on him. He had not been dead too long. Then another time we found a cormorant with a trout about that long. He tried to swallow it, and he could not get it up and he could not get it down, and he drowned.

BE:They use them for fishing in the Orient. They put a ring around their neck, tie them up, and let them go down and get a fish. [Then they] shake it out of him [and] put him back down again.

EW:And the one that comes in and does not have a fish, gets a paddling and they throw him back overboard. I saw a movie of that. It was so interesting to watch.

K:I always wondered if the Calusa ever did that with the cormorant. There is no way of knowing.

BE:Well, with all of the small fish, too. So you think the most important areas for fishing on Cayo Costa were the passes?

EW:For mullet in mullet season I am sure that that was true.

BE:And how about out in the harbor?

EW:Well, I think they used to have to have a beach or something to back them up because they had to haul those fish up. See, those mullet did not gill in the net at all. It was a small-mesh net, so they just roped them in like a blanket or something.

BE:It was a stop net?

EW:No, [it was] a seine.

BE:What is the difference between a seine and a stop net?

EW:Well, they use stop nets to go along the edge like on that island over there. Ask Earl. He used to use stop nets. They used to tar them to preserve them so the fish would not stick to them, I guess.

BE:So they were great big long nets.

E:Yes. They were only about thirty \_\_\_\_\_ deep and run along the beach.

EW:They are not that deep because they did not use those in deep water.

E:They run them along the reefs \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ long.

BE:So you would close off a whole bay or something.

E:No, the beach.

EW:No, like an island. They used the island like a background. See that island over there? Well, when the tide is low, all of that goes dry in there underneath those mangroves and things.

BE:So you set the stop net on the high tide and then pull it up [on the low tide]?

E:You pull the seine around them holes, see. That tide will go out, and these fish will come down to that hole.

EW:See, there are little dips in the ground, and there would be a little puddles of water.

E:You would have a bank net, see.

EW:They would get in there with a dip net or a cast net.

BE:Right.

E:You had what you would call a bank net. You pull your bank net up, pull your seine over on it, then you put the fish in the bank net. You clean the seine out. Then you haul your fish out and dump them on the boat.

BE:Did you discard the fish you did not want--the trash fish?

E:We did not have any, hardly. The \_\_\_\_\_ and stuff like that, they died.

WE:Golly, we used to catch a lot of sting rays. Do not tell me  
[any thing different].

E:Sting rays is all. But what I mean is they would die. One of  
these \_\_\_\_\_ was just like \_\_\_\_\_.

BE:How many pounds of fish could you get in a stop net?

E:It is surprising. I would hate to say how many you would get.

BE:All sizes?

E:Oh, yes. Donald \_\_\_\_\_, he came to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ one time. He hauled them to the fish market, and  
they told him not to bring more fish in. They had too many  
fish. So he had to cut them loose. I do not know how many he  
caught.

EW:Sometimes you did not catch anything.

BE:Did you catch a lot of sawfish?

E:No.

EW:Not a lot. Sometimes you would catch the little ones.

E:We used to get a few of them. Recently we do not catch any no  
more. We used to get them up about like that.

BE:Do you think there were more blue crabs back then than there  
are now?

E:Yes, I know it.

EW:I do not know if there was any more, but, boy, there were  
plenty of them.

BE:They caused you a lot of work, did they?

EW:Oh! Sometimes they would get in your net, and they would chew  
it up. They would not just cut around them, you know. They  
would just reach all around. Oh, [it was] some mess! I was

fishing with Jake Darna, [and] he had a fish **lighter** down there they were living in. We used to go fishing together.

It tickled me because he always wanted to get the catching size, you know.

EW:He said, "How could that happen?" [laughter] I said, "Well, good luck happens to me once and a while you know." I laughed. I got a big kick out of that. So it took him two days to mend his net so he could go back fishing.

BE:Did you fish any of the little creeks?

EW:Oh, no. We used to go in there and cast net the creeks.

BE:With a cast net, like Sister's Creek?

EW:I never fished in that country. Most of my fishing has been in this part of the world. We used to go in these creeks and wait for the mullet to come in. They would go inside to go feeding. We would stand on one side, and they would go in there and we would cast net them. Ralph used to do that a lot.

BE:Is where big black mullet come from--the ten-pounders?

EW:Well, I never caught one that weighed ten pounds. That is a fish story. [laughter] Did you [ever catch one that big]?

RW:No.

BE:I know Louis went up in Sister's Creek one night and every mullet he had was over nine pounds. There were about twelve of them in the box. One was twelve pounds.

EW:I will bet you he got way back there in one of them back bays that has been there a hundred years.

RW:I have never seen one that big.

BE:We had it mounted.

EW:**James Coleman** used to tell us about those big mullet.

RW:He talked about back in the sand flats in some of that land-locked area back there that they got that big.

E:You take that right up there, that bowl of sand, they hauled it one time they tell me. They twenty-five- or forty-pound mullet out of there.

BE:That is kind of big mullet--thirty-five or forty pounds.

E:I have been told that by the older people.

EW:That is a fish story. I do not believe that.

E:They went in there and hauled it, and they got thirty-five or forty great big mullet.

EW:I know that some of these places that are land-locked [might have some big ones].

BE:They get trapped in there. There is not many of them in those places.

RW:There cannot be. They cannot survive.

EW:They figure [that those fish got in there when] a bird had caught a mullet that had the roe in it or something, and [the fish] dropped the roe in that [land-locked pool of water]. Maybe [it was] a fish hawk or something like that.

BE:Do you ever catch any sharks in your nets?

EW:Not now. We used to.

BE:What kind were they? Bonnetheads?

EW:I image they were black tipped sharks. They have the black tip on the tail and fin.

BE:Do you eat shark?

EW:Not yet! [laughter] [I eat neither] catfish nor shark.

BE:Why do you figure that nobody eats a shark? I mean, I guess they do now.

EW:Oh, yes. You can go into any market and buy shark now, even the restaurants have got them.

RW:James is crazy about it.

BE:I know Alfonso [Darna] told me one time they cooked up an old shark and grilled it up and gave it to [his brother] Louis [Darna] and told him that it was good. They did not tell him what it was. Louis found out it was a shark, and he still has not taken a fish from Fonso since then.

And catfish too? You have never eaten a catfish or a stingray?

EW:No armadillo, no frog legs, no rattlesnakes, no catfish, no sharks, and no stingray . . . yet, I said!

BE:How about pinfish and pigfish, and some of the little fish?

EW:I have eaten a lot of those.

K:Some are pretty tasty. I have had those. Grunts and pinfish.

EW:I have eaten a lot of pinfish.

RW:Tell him how you used to catch the pinfish with a washpot.

EW:Yes. When we lived in Dunedin on Haily's Key, my Dad used to go grouper fishing. He used to be fishing a net spread out over the water, and when we cleaned fish there would be all kinds of those pin fish come there, you know. I do not know why we did not try to get some kind of line, but my mother had a big pot like this that she used to cook all kinds of stuff. Everything that was in the kitchen she would put in the pot and make a stew or soup out of it. So we took this

pot and mashed up a lot of fiddler crabs and put down there, and the pinfish would go in there, and we would put the lid on them. We did not scale them. We just took the guts out of them and put them in a big pan and put them in the oven and that is what we ate. We thought they were delicious, and we had a lot of fun doing it. She would say, "All I have to say is `clean [up] your mess. Do not leave no mess.'" "

EW:What is this sailor's choice? Is that a pigfish?

RW:No. Well, there are a number of fish they call a sailor's choice. Some people call pinfish a sailor's choice. There is another fish that has a spot on its tail that they call a sailor's choice, and I think that is a true sailor's choice. Also, other fish that we have around here that we call a perch some people call [that] a sailor's choice too. So I think that name has been attached to a number of different fish. But the true sailor's choice, I think, is the one with the spot.

EW:And it is wider than a pinfish.

BE:Do you think that is a good-eating fish?

EW:Oh, yes.

BE:Sailor's choice, I mean that spot, seems to be preferred. I have seen a lot of fishermen who instead of bringing them to the fishhouse still throw them aside for themselves.

K:There is a lot of spot and perch in the Indian middens.

RW:Yes. They are both a light-colored meat. They are not dark meat. Anything with dark meat is strong.

EW:Where do you all find all of this stuff?

K:Well, all around. Many of the islands out here have big mounds.

BE:We worked on Buff Key and took all of the fish bones out of the shell mounds and identified them. And we worked down there on Jocelyn Island and Pine Island.

EW:Did you ever go to Gulf Island?

BE:Gulf Island? Yes.

EW:Did you find any treasures there?

BE:We never found any treasure.

EW:Did you ever find any beads?

BE:Beads here and there, yes.

EW:Let me show you some beads that this kid gave me. I do not believe they came from the Indian mound, but that is what he said.

BE:That would be interesting.

RW:We have been in touch with a couple of people. This one in particular she is talking about has been out raiding the damn mounds before you all got there. He has found a number of different items which they identified and felt were worthwhile to keep. This kind of stuff they do not know what the hell it is. They would never take them anywhere and get them identified.

EW:We used to have a mound down here, but it is all washed away now. There is nothing there but just a few clam shells.

BE:A lot of the sites in the harbor here have been washing in for years. Between the developers and the rising sea levels and

the treasure hunters they are really taking them down pretty good.

RW:Well, the really odd thing is that so much of the stuff we found is a lot of pottery, and you can still find pottery lying around on the beach out here. Until just a few years ago we did not know what the hell it was or what good it was or anything else. I even found one piece one time that had some designs [and] some markings on it, which is rare. You do not find that kind of stuff.

EW:They found some arrowheads down here and quite a few different things.

K:Well these [beads] are definitely Spanish, but I am not familiar with Seminole material much at all. Can I take a photograph and show it around and see if anybody recognizes the type? Would that be alright?

EW:Sure. Just do not take my beads.

K:I will not.

EW:I just do not believe it. They took too commercialized.

BE:The Indians really revere those beads. They would sell their land and give their wives away for beads. I do not know what it was about it, but they were obsessed with them. And some of them did end up in their burials.

RW:Well, that is all they really had.

EW:This girl had a set of beads that were more like glass but they were not perfect. They were oblong and all kinds of shapes. See, that is what I treasure.

BE:That is a nice piece of pottery.

K:This olive jar is Spanish. Did you know that? This is Spanish. This is from an olive jar. They used them for big storage jars. They brought olive oil over.

EW:Well, that came from that mound.

K:From \_\_\_\_\_?

EW:This one down here. I had a lot of those things down there in a bucket, and somebody went and dumped them all out. I do not know what happened to them. Maybe they took them with them. I do not know.

BE:When did you start guiding?

EW:Let me see. In about 1944 or there about. See that is what my husband used to do. He fished in the summertime, and in the wintertime he used to guide. After he passed away I just took over.

BE:So he guided for trout and redbfish? Or tarpon?

EW:No. He took out fishing parties.

BE:What did they fish for mostly?

EW:Anything they could catch. They would go out, say, about 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning and be back in about 1:00. They would have the boat so full of fish they would not know what to do with them. They would throw them overboard. He used to get his parties up here on Tarpon Bay. There used to be a dock down there. He used to get his people from the Matthew's Hotel. The name has been changed since them.

Do you want to see these Indian beads?

K:Yes.

BE:So he commercial fished?

EW:In the summertime.

BE:How about roe season? He fished for mullet in the winter?

EW:Yes. Earl used to be a fisherman and a guide. Now he cannot even catch a fish to eat. [laughter]

BE:Well, that is the next thing that we are leading up to. What do you think is the biggest change in the environment and in the fish that you have seen in your lifetime?

EW:Oh, Lord, do not ask me that! It is unbelievable. There was no time that I could not go out there at the head of the dock and get a mess of fish, clean them, and cook them for dinner that night. I have been out there for three or four days and did not even lose a shrimp. That is unbelievable! I never thought I would see the day that I could not go out on the head of my dock and get a mess of fish.

BE:Why do you think that is?

EW:Too many fishermen. Well, I do not know. That is part of the game, but you know there are a lot of fishermen. Then the red tide kills a lot of them, and they [fishermen in powerboats] go over these flats where the fish lay their little eggs. They churn the mud up and kill the grass roots and stuff like that. That is the reason why all the stuff is deteriorating because they [the fish] do not have enough place to protect themselves.

K:Ms. Esperanza, you are right about that. There has been a study done that shows that 30 percent of the sea grasses has disappeared since 1930. I think you are right on.

EW:And the channels have changed, and they are deeper than they were. There is no place for a fish to live or feed. There is nothing there for him to stay for. They either die or leave. I guess down around the Everglades and that section, probably, the fishing down there is not quite so bad as it is here. But they will take care of it eventually.

BE:Most of the fish around here are migratory? I mean, they come around here different seasons. They come in the fall; they come back in the spring?

EW:Well, I would not say that. I think that if a fish is left alone and the feed is there, I think they stay there unless something comes and disturbs them or scares or the feed disappears. Like you, you are not going to stay where you cannot eat.

BE:No. They have to feed me if they like me!

EW:That is right. That is the way it is with the fish. If you feed them and do not scare them and they are all right, why, they stay there, at least I think. Only maybe when they go to spawn or have sex or something like that. I imagine they must have certain places that they go. I do not know.

BE:Well, the mullet are here when they are in roe, and the trout and the redfish also. Have you ever seen a roe in a grouper?

EW:I do not think I have. Have you?

RW:I do not recall that I have, no. But, again, that is something that people ask me questions about grouper and redfish and snook. It is a rare occasion for some of them.

You do not catch that many fish anymore, and you never remembered looking when you were catching a lot of them. But I do not recall.

BE:I know I have gutted an awful lot of grouper, and I have never seen a roe. That is why I asked the question where do they spawn.

EW:Up there where we call the club house there used to be a great big high oyster rock. It was, oh, as long as this house. We used to go out there back when my husband was alive, and you could see the redfish on top of that thing just laying around. We would go out there to catch a redfish to eat. He would catch one, and if that did not suit him, why, he would throw him back overboard. He would fish until he caught the right size.

BE:Yes, choice.

EW:Sure! He had a choice to pick from. But now with the net fishermen, the tide, and everything else, there is nothing out there now but white sand.

BE:Did you very fish with a monofilament net?

EW:A cast net but not a gill net. No. When I quit fishing the last net I had was made out of flax.

BE:Do you remember any red tide on Cayo Costa?

EW:No.

BE:When is the first red tide you can remember.

EW:I cannot remember the year, but it was after I had moved here. I imagine it was about forty years ago.

BE:After World War II?

EW:Yes. The worst one we ever had was the first one that I ever saw. All along those woods there when the tide was low you could see these red things up in the mangroves. It looked like flowers. It was the mullets' roe. The red roe where the mullet had drifted up there and died, and the roe was still there. Roe is tough. It lasts a long time before it is spoiled.

BE:Even a pelican will not eat it. It is about the only thing a pelican will not eat.

EW:I will tell you one thing. That pelican will not eat a catfish no matter how hungry they are. They will not eat a catfish! Did you know that?

BE:Have you ever heard of poison water?

EW:That is what they used to call red tide you know--poison water. But I do not know. I remember one time, and I did not know what it was all about. I had bought some nice big shiners like this, and I had them in my [bait] well. I was so happy I was going to go there up there around \_\_\_\_\_ They were catching a lot of trout up there, you know. I looked down in the well, and my bait was doing this. I said, "I wonder what in the world is the matter?" So I got a bucket and dipped some water out of the bay and put in there, and you know they all went down to the bottom dead as a door nail. I could not figure out what had happened. I was so disappointed and so mad. I guess I went to the fish house over at St. James, and I got some ice. I went on up there fishing, and there were two or three boats up there.

They were fishing too. They had dead bait I guess. Anyhow one of these guys said, "What kind of bait you got?" I said, "I got dead shiners." He said, "So have I." He said, "What happened?" I said: "I do not know. I had some beautiful bait, and all of a sudden they were down in the bottom of the boat." He said, "You know why I think it is?" I said, "No. I have no idea." He said, "It is that damn poisoned water." I said, "Sure enough." He said: "Yes. It is all over the bay. Same happened to me. I got up before daylight this morning. I caught my bait. I had the lid on the well, and by the time I got out to where I wanted to fish, everyone of them was dead." I said, "Well, I iced mine." He said: "Well, they might bite those. I do not know. But I have not had a bite with dead shiners." I got a few trout, but I did not do as well as I expected.

BE:I have heard a lot of old timers say that somewhere around 1918 or so, right after World War I, there was some poison water, at least over in Cape Hayes and the Placida area. Maybe there was not that much of it out on Cayo Costa around the passes or something. But I definitely got things like that happening further up in the bay.

EW:Well, we had some last year around Captiva [Island] in the Gulf, but it did not come inside. Some of the dead fish floated in, but I do not think we got any of the tide inside.

BE:Do you think that the red tide is responsible for a lot of the fish declining?

EW:Oh, sure. There is no doubt about that.

BE:How about winter kills--cold-water kills? Do you remember any of them?

EW:Yes. It freezes a few of them, but I do not think that is as bad as the red tide. Of course, we had a freeze in December, and there was a lot of fish along the beach here.

BE:I was here for that.

EW:You scooped up a bunch of them, did you not? Mullet?

RW:Yes, I got some mullet.

EW:He kept a whole bunch mullet that were frozen.

K:Ms. Esperanza, how long does it take for the fish to come back after a big red tide?

EW:How long? That is the sixty dollar question! [laughter] I imagine it takes a long, long time.

BE:I hear that they used to have quite a grouper fishing industry right off of Boca Grand Pass during World War II. The red tide hit there around 1947, and they have not come back yet.

RW:No. We used to catch big grouper right off this dock here, and they do not come around anymore either in any size like they used to.

EW:In fact, we used to catch shark off of this dock.

BE:Do you think there are more red tides now? Are they more common now than they were even in the 1940s? Do you think there has been more or less since then?

EW:I really do not know.

BE:Seems like we skip a year and then we get two or three in a year and skip another year.

RW:The first one we had, I would guess, was in the late 1940s, as best as I can remember. That was a real bad one. Of course, since then it has progressed to where almost every year you have some, somewhere. It may not be in the bay here, but somewhere in the St. Pete area it starts and then comes down the Gulf out there. It is definitely more prolific now than it was back then.

EW:Well, these scientists they are so smart and they can figure out everything, but I do not think they know yet what causes all of that. They think they do, and they tell you what they think it is.

BE:I was reading the old newspaper articles when they first came down here in 1950. They said they were going to have it cured in two years.

EW:Yes! [laughter]

BE:They set up Moat Marine Research over there, and they had it all figured out. They said a cure was expected in two years.

EW:I do not think they can do anything about it because it is such a great, big, tremendous area. How are you going to protect all of that stuff?

BE:Have you got any ideas yourself as to what might cause that?

EW:No. I think that it is something that grows in the water-- some kind of allergy or something. I do not know just what it is. They claim that it is in the water all the time, but in certain times it gets so thick that it starts killing the

fish. The water is not poison. It is just the stuff that gets in the fish's gills.

I know about three years ago my sister and I went up there to one of these creeks. We were going to go fishing, and we found this net fisherman out there. He said, "Are y'all looking for fish?" We said yes. He said, "Well, go over there and look on the bottom and you can find all you want." My sister said, "Well who wants dead fish?" He said: "Oh! The red tide hit along that cove there, and a school of trout [got caught]. They are good. I caught a few in the net, but I do not have a dip net or anything." I said, "Well, why do you not jump overboard and dive them up?" He said: "Oh, no. I do not think I want to do that."

So we had a dip net, and we went over there and sure enough there were trout about like that. There must have been a whole school of them that were running from the tide. We had a dip net, and we caught several that were already dying. They would come to the top, and we would dip them. We almost fell overboard. The water was about that deep. I do not know why we did not get overboard and pick them up in our hands.

BE:Who wants to go in that water with the red tide?

EW:Well, I do not think that it will hurt you.

BE:I know people who pick the fish up by the boatload when they are still wiggling and brought them in to the fishhouse and sold them to me. But it does not hurt the fish any. You can still eat them.

EW:That is what they say, but I would not want to eat one.

BE:Of course, they are hard to sell during the red tide. Nobody wants to buy them.

EW:But these fish were in good shape. You can tell a fish if he is bad by his gills. If it is black, leave it alone. But if it is red, it is okay. So we picked the fish up and looked at the gills. If it was alright, we put him in the boat; if it was a little bit tainted, we did not fool with it and we threw it overboard.

BE:Have you ever found any cancers in fish when you clean them, big, rotten boils?

EW:We caught a jewfish one time that had a great big glob of something about like that on one of the edges. You could see the eye of a hook sticking out. Somebody had caught that jewfish, and he had broke the line. That hook was in him. It was just laying in his stomach with all this goo in there. We cut him open, and there was the hook. It was just as clean as it could be, and that thing was eating that hook up. Only the eye was still [there]. You could tell that it had been a good hook.

BE:Did you ever do any scalloping?

EW:Not commercially. We used to get some to eat up on Tarpon Bay at low water. You used to could go up there and pick them up by the washtub full.

BE:Did you dip them?

EW:No. We picked them up with our hands. One bit him [Ralph] one time. He got so mad he squashed that scallop. He was

just a tyke you know. Oh, he was so mad. It made his finger bleed. Boy, he was a mad kid.

BE:There were lots of scallops around? Whenever you wanted them you could go out and dip them up?

EW:Up until the time they built that causeway. That fixed all the scallops in this section.

BE:When was that built? In the 1950s?

RW:In 1962, I think, they opened the damn thing.

BE:Do you think that had a lot to do with the water flow in through here.

EW:Oh, sure. Definitely. Absolutely.

BE:Was it right around the 1960s, the same time as the causeway opened, that the scallops really declined.

EW:In this section of the world.

RW:The state biologists told them it would happen. There was no question in anybody's mind that it was going to happen. A guy named Woodward, I guess it was, worked with the state biologist at the time. He told them flat out.

EW:Well, this whole island is washing away for that matter.

BE:Have you ever eaten any pearl oysters?

EW:Yes. They are delicious.

BE:Do you collect them yourself?

EW:Not anymore. Even they have deteriorated.

RW:They are scarce, too.

BE:Were there lots of them around? I mean, if you were pulling nets and getting pinclams you would know it.

EW:Yes. There used to be a lot of them around.

BE:Did you ever use that **heron** that is in there for anything--  
that **seasilk** that they burrow down in the mud with?

EW:When we lived on Cayo Costa there was an old woman over there.  
They used to call her a witch. She used to take that hair  
and clean it, and then if she had an ear ache or any kind of  
ache, she would put some kind of junk in that hair and put  
it on there. I do not know whether it did any good or not,  
but if you believe in it, I guess it helps. But she swore  
that that was good.

BE:You have never seen anybody twist that up and make line or  
twine or anything out of it? It seems like it would be such  
good stuff to use.

EW:Probably. It is pretty strong you know. You cannot hardly  
break it. We used to take it when we were kids and make  
mustaches out of it. We were just kidding, just messing  
around.

BE:Did you ever eat conchs?

EW:Oh, yes. We used to eat those.

BE:How did you prepare them?

EW:Well, I never made a stew out of them, but I ate some one  
time. We ground up some welts and made a soup or a stew or  
something.

BE:Did you grind them though?

EW:He did. He ground them into little bitsy, tiny pieces.

BE:Do you know how they got them out of the shells?

EW:I guess he busted the shells. My dad used to eat those little  
ones like that. He used to take them and put them over some

coals and cook it, and then he would eat them. He said they were delicious. But I do not know. I thought they would be kind of tough. But I bet if you could ground up some little ones they would be good in a stew or soup. Even if you do not eat the meat, the broth would be good.

I have eaten coquina broth.

BE:Yes. I have had that.

EW:It is delicious. Some of it is kind of sandy. [laughter]

BE:On shell fish, on oysters and clams, what time of the year did you prefer to eat oysters and clams?

EW:Well oysters are not very good [during the summer]. [Oysters are good] only in the wintertime when it is cold. And the clams, we eat them most anytime of the year. We used to. I am afraid to eat a clam now unless I know exactly where they came from. There are so many bugs.

BE:But there is a lot less clams and oysters here?

EW:Oh yes. The tourists are about to wreck the clam beds.

EW:[I do not know if] you can buy those anymore.

BE:They are still making them.

EW:They are?

BE:I think they make them at the fishhouse. We had them. They call them spuds.

EW:I have one that I have had for I do not know how long. I have seen the tourists out there on the mud flat where they see those things. They feel them, and then they just dig them up with that. There would be two or three of them. Everybody would have his own digger.

BE: You know, there is a lot of those old green demi john bottles all over Cayo Costa and Useppa Island and around. Do you know anything about them?

EW: I know we used to have a whole bunch of them, and now we do not even have one.

BE: Were they the five-gallon bottles--the big round green ones?

EW: Well, they were about four gallons. They had wicker on them.

BE: They had straw wrapped around them?

EW: They used to come from Cuba. I have handled a many of those, too. We had a whole bunch of them, and we carried them back here in the bayou and tied them to the mangrove roots with ropes. Of course, we did not have any use for them, and I guess the high tides and the hurricane tides washed them all out.

BE: There are a lot that seem to be floating around the harbor. Do you think that they were used for water bottles after they were emptied?

EW: No. They were only used for what was in them.

BE: What was in them?

EW: Well, there was, I guess, shine. They called it **aguadin**. It came from Cuba.

BE: **Aguadin** was rum?

EW: Yes.

BE: And moonshine would be . . . ?

EW: Well, it was white. Some of them call it lightning.

BE: What was red whiskey? Was that the same thing as **aguadin**?

EW:No. **Aguadin** was white--pure, all white. It would knock your head off if you smelled of it. I do not know how they could drink it. But I have handled a many of those [bottles], I can tell you that much.

BE:When the early settlers on Cayo Costa sold their fish to the Cubans would they get some **aguadin** back and some money?

EW:No. No money. Money? Nobody knew what that was. They just traded back and forth whatever they had.

BE:Would you get any of your fishing supplies or anything--oil for your lanterns or anything?

EW:No. They used to have some kind of [food]. I do not know what it was. I guess it was made out of wheat because it was brown. It was like a flour, and they used to bring a lot of that in. They used that sort of like a dessert. They put sugar and milk in it, and they used that from these Cuban smacks. And they would bring olive oil and knickknacks [and] stuff like that. And they traded some fish or whatever the islands used to have.

BE:Where did you get money from?

EW:Ha! I do not remember seeing any money until I was grown. Arthur Coleman's mother had a little boarding house. She had about five or six fishermen living with her, and they paid her, I think, \$20 a month for room and board. I used to go and help her wash and scrub all day long for twenty-five cents a day. Gosh. I do not know how I lived.

BE:When the Punta Gorda Fish Company started coming into that area, was the fish sold to them?

EW:Well, at that time, the name of the fish company from Punta Gorda was **Shabbick** Brothers. Then later the Punta Gorda Fish Company took it over.

BE:And they had a run-boat that would come around?

EW:We had a run-boat that used to come up there in Tarpon Bay and pick up our fish.

BE:You would have a running account with them for supplies?

EW:Well, if she wanted groceries or shoes or anything, we would just write up an order and send it back on the fish boat. The next boat would bring it down, and they would deduct it out of your pay.

BE:But they would give you some money if you had any coming?

EW:Yes, a little bit. Have you ever heard of Harry **Gooley** who was in Punta Gorda? He was the big shot at the Punta Gorda Fish Company. We always sent our orders and addressed our grocery stuff to him, and he would take care of it. I mean, he was really good. If it was in Punta Gorda, you got it on the next boat. I know him personally. He was a good guy.

BE:How about during the slow season when you were not really catching fish? Could you still run an account with the fish company?

EW:Oh, yes.

BE:And then come run season, they would just take it out of your fish?

EW:Yes. They used to buy nets and boats and everything else for the guys. I imagine when they went out of business they lost a lot of money from debts that these fishermen had

never paid out. In fact, I guess some of them did not want to pay. [laughter] And they used to own a lot of the boats that they used to fish on.

BE:Were you familiar with Gasparilla Village? Do you know anybody over in Gasparilla Village or Perkins [Ranch] Cove over there? It seems like there was an entirely different set of fishermen over there, and a lot of them came from Key West originally. I guess fishermen are about the most independent people there are, do you not think [so]?

EW:Well, I guess so.

RW:Well, there was not a hell of a lot of traveling done, though, even when I was young. To go from here to Cayo Costa was an all-day trip, and that happened maybe once every three or four or five years.

BE:Did you get run off of Cayo Costa in 1910?

EW:By what, the hurricane?

BE:No. I heard they asked everybody to leave Cayo Costa in 1910.

EW:Well, I heard that the government ran some of the families that lived there [off], but I never heard it when I was a kid.

BE:You were still living there?

EW:In 1910, yes. We moved from the **Macadow** place in 1910 to Cayo Costa. That is when they started building there. The families bought lots, and they built houses.

BE:They had the school on Cayo Costa then?

EW:Yes. That is the school I went to.

BE:Then they moved that to Punta Blanca?

EW:I do not know if they moved the house, but they had a schoolhouse on Punta Blanca. I have a picture of that somewhere in there, where the kids are getting in the boat. It is from the news press. That is a valuable piece of material.

BE:It sure is.

EW:I bet there is not anybody else who has got one like it.

BE:When the Punta Blanca school closed, is that when they set up the school on Boca Grande?

EW:Yes.

BE:Everybody from Cayo Costa went to Boca Grande to go to school?

EW:Well, some of them moved to Bokeelia. A lot of the Darnas that went to Bokeelia--Helen Darna, Jake Darna, and I think that Arthur Coleman's wife lived there.

BE:Yes, I talked to Nellie a couple of weeks ago for quite a while.

EW:I have not seen her in ages, but a lot of the Darnas and Colemans [who] lived there at Bokeelia. I think that Boca Grande was too fancy for them.

BE:It seemed like the people that came from Cayo Costa lived on the northern part of Gasparilla Island, and the people from Gasparilla Village and Perkins Cove and Placida lived on the south side. In the middle you had all the old rich from up North. On one small island they seemed to keep the people away from each other. It is not much different today.

RW:Right.

EW:When my grandfather lived on Cayo Costa, I do not think that there was any other family there but just his immediate family and maybe two or three of the men who worked for him. The people who lived there were all related one way or another. I guess he was a hard-boiled old customer. [laughter] He did not like a lot of strangers around.

BE:No. I guess the people on Cayo Costa always were kind of independent, and nobody really knew what they were up to. Even during the Civil War they had problems because they did not pledge any allegiance to anybody. They claimed to be Spanish, and they educated their children [in Cuba]. They said they sent their children back to Cuba to go to school. Of course, they got run off during the Civil War. They ran everybody off of Cayo Costa.

EW:Well, the first teacher that I had was named Captain Peter Nelson. Now, I know that you have heard of him. He was a great old guy, I will tell you.

RW:I am running out of tape here. Do you want to tell me again what your name is and what you are going to do with the information that you have gathered here?

BE:Sure. My name is Bob Edic, and I am an anthropologist for the Florida Museum of Natural History. I am collecting information for the Oral History Department for the University of Florida also. What we are trying to do is recover some of the oral history that only the senior pioneer people in this area possess. [We want] to archive it so that we have that information for the future. We

really do not plan to do any newspaper articles or anything like that from the information.

EW:Where is that?

BE:It is in Gainesville, the Florida Museum of Natural History.

EW:You are not going to put anything in the paper about your work?

BE:We do not do newspaper articles to speak of.

EW:Well, I think you ought to put a write-up about [it]. You know, you do not exactly go into details but say that you have been looking around trying to get some information from [local people].

BE:We do, in general.

RW:That is when he gets interviewed. Somebody comes and interviews him and finds out what he has learned, and then they put it in a paper.

BE:I try to stay pretty low key on what I tell people out of people's families.

EW:They should put something in the paper different that all of this killing and raping and all. I do not even look at the news anymore.

BE:There is a lot of important information there, and it directly relates to how the Indians fished out here. It helps us recognize different artifacts when we see them too. This is a list of some of the people [I have interviewed]. I am sure that you know a whole lot of them on there that I have either worked with or plan on working with. These are the questions that I am really interested in and what we talked

about there. We are trying to get some of that information together.

EW:Well, we thank you.

BE:What we are planning on doing as part of the Lee County Year of the Indian Project is to get just a little bit of this information together to put into the school system so that the kids in school can understand how the pioneer fishermen had to deal with some of the same problems that the Indians did and how they managed to do it without taking the last fish out of the resource. The amazing thing is that the Indians fished here for 6,000 years, and when they got wiped out here, all the things that they caught and the environment that they fished in is still here. All the same fish and same species [are still here today].

EW:It is amazing to me [how] all of that stuff has kept all these years.

BE:In the last fifty years or so, things are really starting to be depleted. I would not want to project what is going to happen in the next fifty years. Supposedly, when you buy a fishing license, a third of that money goes into hiring new Marine Patrol [officers] to make sure you have a fishing license, a third of the money goes into studying the environment and the fish, and the other third of the money is supposed to go for restocking programs. Do you think there is any chance of restocking the fish back into the environment?

EW:I am afraid not. They waited too long to clamp down on the rules and the regulations, I think. I do not know. Maybe I am wrong. That is like the old saying goes: They locked the barn after the horse or cow or whatever got away. That is the way with the fishing industry. After it is all deteriorated and gone, now they are trying to do something about it. But I do not know. It is going to take years and years and a lot of work to ever get it back. The worse part of it is the people who catch the fish would not eat a fish on a bet. They will take it and kill it, take pictures of it or show it, and then they throw it in the garbage or something.

BE:Do you think that all of the laws that have been made favor the sport fishermen over the commercial fishermen?

EW:Oh, sure. That is why they are protecting the fish. They do not care anything about the fishermen.

BE:Why do you think that is?

EW:I do not know. They just do not think a fisherman has got any background, I guess. I do not know. Everybody thinks [that]. "Why, are you a fisherman? Why? What do you do besides fish?"

BE:They should not have to do much else. I mean, they did it here for 6,000 years.

EW:My stepson was sick, and somebody went down to Bailey's Grocery Store years ago. They were asking if they would take a donation up to send him to the hospital. He [the stepson] did not have anything to do with it [nor did] the

family. It was just an outsider. So they went to this guy--old Ernest Bailey, you know--and he said: "Why, Sam Woodring? Why, he is just a common fisherman. Why should we help him?" I said: "I wish I had been there. I would have told him off." That is the attitude. "A fisherman? Why, he is degraded. He is not anything!"

BE:All of the litigation, rules, and regulation make it kind of hard to make a living off of commercial fishing anymore, does it not?

EW:You are telling me! When you stop to think about all of what they have to pay for those boats and nets. Oh!

BE:Fonso says he is going to have to hire a lawyer to go fishing with him because he dose not know what he can keep and what size net he can use or anything. [laughter]

EW:[laughter] Well, there is a lot to that, I will tell you.

RW:That is true. But, see, there is a lot of people fishing either part time or full time that are not from the old school. They are people that come in here from other places. They really do not give a damn about the environment or anything else. All they are looking to do is make a living.

BE:And they outnumber you ten-to-one or a hundred-to-one.

RW:They sure do, and a lot of them are part-timers, you know. They will be firemen or policemen or whatever. They get three days off every now and then. They can afford to have a net and boat that does not work except for that period of time. They go when the tides are best and everything and

catch as many fish as they can, and the rest of the time they have got a steady income anyway. If it does not work out, why, they do not have to fish except when everything is at its peak. They knock hell out of things too.

EW:Earl said something that I have never heard before. He says that you are not supposed to cast-net over the weekend.

E:You are not supposed to catch mullet over the weekend. Have you heard that?

BE:Yes.

EW:Is that a law now?

RW:[You are not] supposed to catch mullet over the weekend.

Commercial fisherman [are not supposed to catch them] either, for that matter. They did that for themselves. In other words, they do not want to fish on the weekends, so they fixed it so you and I cannot fish on weekends either.

BE:I heard the logic behind that was that all of those weekenders [were catching the fish]. The only time they get a chance to fish was when they are not working their other job on the weekend.

E:Yes, I will go with that.

BE:So by closing it for Saturday and Sunday it keeps them out of the way of the commercial fishermen. How does the weather know? How come every time there is a northeaster it comes on Friday night? [laughter] I mean, is that not what happened all of this year?

RW:Yes. You have got a lot of that nonsense.

EW:Well, it is just like you having to have a fish license if you fish. Well, I have not ever seen a boat come in here and inspect any of these boats out in here. I know some of them must be fishing. They are not all running. How are they going to get by with all of that?

BE:The people that make up all of these rules and regulations, are they fishing-oriented people? Do they know anything about fishing or fishermen?

RW:Well, some. They have got this Marine Fisheries Commission that projects most of this stuff or comes up with the rules and then passes them on to the legislature to make them into law. You know, they have got a couple of guys on it that have been boat captains or whatever and who do some sport fishing or whatever. But the problem there is just like anything else: It gets political. OK. [For instance], you go down to the city hall, and you have got something coming up. The people who are either dead set for it or dead set against are the ones who are there raising hell about it, and the people in the middle really do not care. So you do not really get a true picture of what is needed or wanted most of the time. So they just go with the flow. Whoever shouts the loudest is the one that gets the help, and by no means [is it that] you have got the right formula for helping or saving or trying to help the fishing industry. It is a real hard question because you just flat do not know. First off, you do not what causes it to go this way. I mean you can blame it on one thing, or you can blame it

on a hundred different things. Probably either one way or the other would still be right.

So then they try to correct it. One thing they said was so bad over here was the damn fogging for mosquitos. [Doing it] over marshes and places really crippled everything up, and I think that probably has a great bearing on it.

But the other thing I read once somewhere--and I have never been able to find the article again (I thought it was in the *National Geographic* magazine)--was that the rain and freshwater comes down off of the highlands down into the sandflats and then on to the saltwater, creating a thin skim of fresh water on top of the salt [water]. [That mixture in the estuary] is about 1,000 times more prolific as far as the growth of shrimp and small microscopic stuff than any other place. Even out here it is nothing compared to that because you need that temperature and you need that thin mix of fresh and salt. You do not have that anymore.

You know, back here they screwed up Big \_\_\_\_\_. Most of the other islands up here never had any amount of it until you get to Cayo Costa, [which] had some of it. Of course, they are working on that now, whittling it up.

So if you do not have an area that is properly designed by nature to promote the growth of the stuff, that fouls it up. But, again, that would tie in with the thing about the mosquito control, too. Because that is where they were actually fogging. Anything that was alive there [was killed]. Of course, it is microscopic and very subject to damage from

any kind of spraying or outside influence. Probably that one thing had more to do with knocking hell out of the seafood so fast.

You know, within ten years' time it is totally unbelievable how much it has gone downhill. It has not been quite ten years ago that things were [much better. Things were] not like they were twenty years ago, certainly. But you still could go most anywhere and catch a mess of fish to eat. At this point, we are hard pressed to catch the damn mullet.

You know, I have got the bait box up there. We keep mullet up there all the time--fresh mullet for the tarpon fisherman or whatever. You can catch anywhere from fifty to one hundred at a time. Generally, we can catch that many right around the beach here. Now Earl and I have to go and just fram hell out of the area to come up with a hundred head of mullet. It is like that with most anything--trout, redfish, snook, or whatever. You see a few here and there from time to time.

BE:Do you think that the invention of the glass [monofilament] net took more fish?

RW:Oh, it has had some effect. But, again, I would say that is one of the factors. But, you know, what the hell. If the fish are not here, they are not going to catch them anyway.

BE:If you have got 100 boats running around out there scattering them up all of the time, [that hurts the fish, too].

RW:Yes, anything you can think of. The causeway thing definitely has had some effect. The different nets [also have had an

effect]. The one thing that I say they ought to outlaw [is] the damn outboard boats--period. They say if you want to run your net out, you run it out with a damn pole like you used to. That would eliminate all of these assholes, I call them, because they would not be fishing. They would not fish! They are going to do it the easy way. Most of these guys do not have a pole in their boat at all. They have got a little rowing oar. If they have to pole more that ten feet, they either drift or they stay. They just do not go.

So they would never make it. I mean, I can remember the time being in the boat when she pole the damn net out with a long poling oar, and I guarantee you that you did not fool [around]. You knew that there were fish there and that there had to be plenty of them. Otherwise it just was not worth it. Like they are having the problems over here with the sanctuary. That is the thing I told them flat out.

"You outlaw that outboard motor in that area, and that is going to end that problem."

BE:Right. In the grass flats, you cannot have all of them ass-grinders back there just tearing the grass up.

RW:This does not say that you cannot go fishing. This does not say whether you are a commercial fisherman or who you are. You still could go do your thing, but you just cannot do it [with a motor]. Like up in Virginia they still have got sailboats up there to do the oyster fishing.

BE:That is right. If you want to do an oyster, you get a sailboat built.

RW:You better believe it. Just like back in the old days. I firmly believe that would make a big difference. It does not make any difference what the net is, who the guy is, how big his boat or net is. Anything he thinks he can handle, fine. Go to it. But you have got to pole it out. It is going to eliminate the outboard motors.

The other thing that I think that has had a great effect is the wake of the boats back in all of the mangrove areas. Used to be we would go back anywhere back here and come up with a mess of oysters. [They were] what they called coon oysters, but they got big enough that you could eat them. Mom, for years, would go back with a skiff and cut the roots off with all of the oysters clumped on and roast them down here and use that as a means of income [selling them to] the tourists. Hell, you cannot find enough oysters back there now to eat. You have got a skiff load of roots, but that is all you have. The shells are there, but there is not much on them.

BE:Do you think the closed season on mullet helped? When they used to have the closed season in the middle of roe season, do you think that helped at all?

RW:Oh, yes. There is no doubt about that. Of course, the reason that went out, you know, is when they did the thing with the snook--took the snook off of the commercial market--to appease the commercial fishermen, they just took the closed season [on mullet] out. Well, all that did was bring

quickly about the time when there would not be enough mullet to catch either. So I really think it is dumb.

BE:Do you think they will let more fish get out in the Gulf to spawn?

RW:Absolutely.

BE:A lot of old fishermen surprise me. I mean, when you talk about litigating their livelihood, [they] say the worst thing they did was lift their closed season.

RW:Oh, yes. Absolutely. Everybody depended on it. I mean, they had a closed season on mullet, they had a closed season on trout, and you know when that time came you were going to do something else. Earl and I were talking the other day. He said that is the time you went ahead and took care of your boats and nets and whatever business you had (you were going on vacation, if you had any money) or whatever. That is the time you did it. You knew it was coming every year, and you just planned for it. Nobody starved to death. That would be the time when the fish company would carry you if you had to do that.

EW:And now you know what they do when the mullet are running? They take and catch the mullet and cut the roe out. They get a good price for that, but then they kill the fish.

BE:They throw the mullet back in.

E:It is \$1.85 [per pound] this season for roe.

BE:For red roe?

E:Yes.

RW:They get \$15 or \$20 a pound [for it] in Japan.

BE:Right. When did they start just fishing for the roe?

RW:Well, it has been a long time. I would say that back in the 1940s they did. I can remember when I was a kid hearing-- particularly where what we called "down south," south of us in the Everglades area down there--that the mullet were thick enough that they could actually do that and make money then. Of course, I do not think the roe went overseas back then. Nevertheless, there has always been a demand for the roe and a hell of a lot more than [for] mullet. Mullet were anywhere from six to eight or ten cents a pound at the max, and the roe was probably two or three times that much. So it has been going on for a long time.

EW:I was talking to a guy, and he said that they had been flying over some area. He said the bottom was just white. He said to the pilot: "What is all of that down there? Is that fish? The guy looked down, and he said: "Hell yes! Some guy loaded down with mullet and cut the roe out and threw the fish back overboard." He said they landed right on the bottom where they had cut the roe out of the mullet and threw the mullet back out. If you kill the fish, you might as well [sell the entire thing].

BE:I do not know. I can eat a roe here and there.

RW:Have you ever heard of those big runs of mullet? Are you familiar with that?

BE:Oh, yes.

RW:If you have not [experienced it] it does not mean anything to tell about it. It is just like how thick the mosquitos used to be. You tell people, and they just do not believe you.

BE:I have seen some pretty big pods of mullet come around Cape Haze.

EW:We used to have schools come in here when they were spawning, and in about five years I have not seen a school of mullet come in this bay.

RW:We do not see mullet in here in years. I mean, there used to be small pods would come by here [during the] daytime, nighttime, or something. You just flat do not see them. They just do not come around here anymore--no size, no shape, and no color.

BE:And the silver mullet either. I do not quite understand that. The silver mullet never was exploited or gone after like the black mullet.

RW:Well, I think that proves the other point: It is not just the fishermen or the fishing industry that has put them down.

BE:That is right. It is pretty complex, and it is a little bit of everything and a lot of a few things. Probably mostly water and grass flats [being ruined].

RW:That is why there is no quick fix. You cannot say a closed season is going to do it or all these damn rules and regulations are going to do it.

K:I think a lot of it is the agricultural runoff coming out of the woods.

RW:That probably is as important at this time [as anything else and that is] to stop the damn fogging. The agricultural runoff is probably just as important or more so at this point. But, again, that is something that will have to be proven.

K:And urban runoff. All of these developments and all of the drainfields.

BE:Yes, it is the canals and everything.

E:The silver mullet is \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. You catch them and catch lots of them for bait. \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ bait-- fishing bait, grouper bait, you know. And you take the roe out of them this time of year.

BE:Well, I would like to ask you to sign a release form here so I can give this to the University, and they will make you a copy of everything I said and mail it back to you. Plus, I will take my fishing information out of there and make a copy and mail you that back.

EW:All right. Have you got a pen?

BE:I sure do. We think this information is really important, and they put a lot of work in it at the University, listening to it, and transcribing it. But they will not put any work into it at all if I do not have your signature.

RW:What are they going to do with it eventually? Where are we going with it?

BE:They will take the original tape, seal it in an envelope, and archive it.

[End of interview]