

AL 180

Interviewee: Win Boggs

Interviewer: Marieke Heemskerk

Date: April 15, 1994

H: I am in Hawthorne. It is April 15, 1994. My name is Marieke Heemskerk. This is an oral history interview on environmental issues with Win Boggs, owner of a fish camp at Lake Lachloosa. Can you tell me first who you are, what your name is, and when and where you were born?

B: My name is Win Boggs. I was born in 1925 in Atlanta, Georgia. I spent twenty-five years in the service. I retired in 1967. I moved to Tampa, Florida in 1969. In 1982, my son and I bought a lot on this lake to have a place to fish. We came from Tampa because at that time (ten years ago), Orange Lake and Lake Lochloosa were rated as two of the top fishing lakes in the state of Florida. Also, we liked Lake Lochloosa because it was one of the few wilderness areas.

H: This is called Lochloosa?

B: Lochloosa, yes. It is an Indian name. We liked it because there were not a lot of people on this lake. There are few houses here. There are no agricultural operations around the lake. There is swamp all around the north, and it is state-owned land. There was only one house per five acres, so we knew that there was no possibility of an exploding population around the lake. We did not have to worry about water skiers, swimmers, or sailboats; it was strictly a fishing lake. That is what we were looking for.

H: Were you married then?

B: Huh?

H: Did your wife come with you here?

B: I will get to that in a few minutes.

H: Okay. I am sorry for interrupting.

B: My son plays baseball, professional baseball. We bought a lot up here on this lake, like I say, in 1982. We planned to build a cabin on it, so that we would have a place to come fish. He and I both love to fish. In 1986, we decided to go ahead and build the house that year, so that we would have to fish that fall while he finished playing ball. In June 1986, my wife was killed in an automobile accident in Tampa. I built the house that fall, up here. In December of 1986, after we had the house finished, we came up to fish. We decided to buy this fish camp. We built the house right up the lake from here. So we decided that we would buy this fish camp and rebuild it, and I would just stay up here.

H: So this is your fish camp?

B: Mine and my sons, yes. We have got right at one million dollars invested here, in money.

H: What is the name of the fish camp?

B: Yankee Landing.

H: How do you spell that?

B: Yankee – like “Damn Yankees,” you know? You murder damn yankees [laughter].

H: I am getting the American spelling anyway.

B: So, we bought the fish camp, and started rebuilding it. We built and remodeled all the cabins. We redid all the sewage and electrical systems.

H: You did it all by yourself?

B: I hired people to help me. We built this rec-room, added it on here, and remodeled that bait shop and tackle shop over there. This was in 1987. Business was real good. Fishing was real good on the lake. Water levels were up. Then in 1989, all of a sudden the water level dropped – early 1989. It stayed down, and did not come back up. Even when we had rainfall, it did not come back up.

H: Do you know any reason for this?

B: Yes, we know the reason. We did some exploring. At that time, Newnan's Lake (we have a chain of lakes here) fed Orange Lake. Orange Lake is lower in elevation than this lake is, so the water from here flows into Orange Lake.

H: Yes.

B: When Orange Lake is down, it draws water out of this lake. When Orange Lake is up, then this lake comes up too. In 1989, Newnan's Lake was overflowing – it was out of its banks, and we were real low. We were about three feet below normal. I could not understand why Orange Lake was not coming up. Orange Lake has to come up before we come up because of the fact that it is lower than we are. I very strongly suspected that the water was being diverted instead of coming into Orange Lake through Camp's Canal. I went over and checked and there was no water coming into Orange Lake from the north end of the lake bed. I got into Payne's Prairie, and I found that they

had installed four large culverts. Water was flowing from Camp's Canal into the prairie. The prairie was full of water.

H: What did they install? You said that in Payne's Prairie there were four large —?

B: Culverts, big metal pipes with water flowing through them. There is a dike around the eastern and southern end of the prairie. The dike had been breached, and a culvert put in so that the water would flow into the prairie. I called the people over at Payne's Prairie. At that time, it was a Tuesday in April. On Thursday, they were going to open up the dam over there. When they opened up the dam, they denied that they do that anymore.

H: But you had seen it yourself?

B: Yes. I told them, "I was just in there this morning, and I saw your culvert with the water flowing through it. Don't tell me you are not putting in water." Then they got indignant, and they said, "That is posted property, you are not supposed to be in there. How did you get in there?" All this jazz. I called Martin, who has been the state representative from Hawthorne for twenty-six years, and told him what was happening. He called Tallahassee. The next morning, they ordered (somebody in Tallahassee did) them to close their gates over at Payne's Prairie. So, Orange Lake immediately started rising. It came up three feet. Then we came up about three feet. On August 19, they opened their culverts and started diverting water again.

H: Was it forbidden?

B: Huh?

H: Was it forbidden for them to do that?

B: Well, I am going to tell you something. All this garbage you hear about this being a free country is garbage. This is not a free country. You do not own property in this country; you rent it from the state. They tell you what you can do with it, and what you cannot do with it. Gainesville has an overabundance of so "environmentalists." Most of them cannot even spell the word.

H: [Laughter.]

B: We are classified as anti-environmentalists because of the fact that we are a special interest group. Okay? People that use the lake, people that fish the lake, and people that hunt are people that the [environmentalists] are against. They are totally against fishing and hunting. They like to go out and watch birds, and do whatever they do. I do not know what they do. Anyway, I have hunted and fished all my life. I do not kill anything if I do not eat it. I just kill what I eat,

or what I give to my neighbors. As far as fishing is concerned, the most fun is catching the fish. Most of them we release right back. You catch them again later on. Some people love to fish, and some people do not. I can understand that. We suspected that since the lake came back up and started going back down again, we began to wonder if maybe the sinkhole was not leaking too. Orange Lake has a sinkhole there, on the southwest corner over there. In 1957, that sinkhole opened up and drained Orange Lake. It went down to nothing. It just disappeared. It all went down the hole.

H: The same as with Payne's Prairie? Or was that on Payne's Prairie?

B: No, it is south of Payne's Prairie. This lake dropped down. I did research, and found the paperwork where they dammed up the outlet to Orange Lake and put a weir in. In 1962, they finally filled up the sinkhole. They filled it up with old car bodies, gas tanks, and they dumped everything they could find to fill this hole up. According to the records, the hole was about 100 feet deep, and 100 feet across at the top.

H: So in this hole, there is a whole bunch of garbage and so on?

B: Yes, anything they could find to plug the hole up with, they just plugged it up. St. Johns Water Management District kept telling us that the reason the lakes were low was because we were in a drought, or low rainfall. When the rain comes, the lake will fill up. Every idiot know that if you put a plug in a bathtub and turn the water on, it will fill up. If you pull the plug out, the water is going to go down the tubes. You can run water all day long, and it is still going out. It is not going to stay there. Then I researched rainfall data and lake level data for the past thirty years, all the way back to 1962. I charted it, lake level highs and lows, and rain fall level every year. I found that from 1962 until 1989, the lake dropped below fifty-six feet below sea level only once. The normal level for these lakes is 57.6 feet above sea level. I found that during that thirty year period that only once did the lake drop below fifty-six feet above sea level. That was in 1972, when they had three straight years. They had forty-five inches of rain, and thirty-nine inches of rain. The year they had the thirty-eight inches of rain, the lake dropped down to a little over fifty-four feet above sea level.

H: Is this really little rain?

B: Yes. The normal rainfall for this area is 52.8. That is the normal rainfall. During that period that we are talking about here, 1989 through 1992, we were getting fifty-one or fifty-two inches of rain every year. The lake was staying down. It would not come back up.

H: How was the level of the lake here?

B: It fluctuated between fifty-four and fifty-six feet, from a low of fifty-four, fifty-six, and back down again. During that period from 1962 through 1989, it had fluctuated from fifty-six to sixty. It never got below fifty-six feet and as high as sixty feet. In 1972, when it dropped down to fifty-four feet, the following year they had only forty-eight inches of rain, and it came back up to fifty-eight feet. We took three year periods and five year periods all the way through this period of time and checked the rainfall against the lake level. We found that the lakes maintained their levels through this period of time. Another thing--these lakes will not support a fishery when they get down in the fifty-four foot range because there is not enough water or oxygen to support the fish that live in the lake. These lakes have to stay at fifty-six foot or above in order for the fish to live in them or stay. This has been our argument. To me this is an environmental argument, and about an environmental argument. St. Johns does not do it. They are not managing these lakes as fishing lakes. These lakes have been designated as fish management lakes. They should be managed by the Fish and Game Commission. They are the ones that are charged with the responsibility of managing fisheries. In the bureaucratic maze that we have developed in the state of Florida, there are so many agencies in charge that nobody knows who is really responsible for anything. If something goes wrong, nobody knows. If you want to do something, everybody can tell you that you cannot do it. Anyway, to make a long story short, we have been fighting and arguing with these people to get the lake levels up and keep them up. We decided there was no way that we were going to keep Payne's Prairie protecting the water. They set up an arbitrary figure that Payne's Prairie was going to get 45 percent, and 55 percent was going to go to Orange Lake. Although there are no measurements or anything like that. They just leave the culverts open and the water flows. When there is a lot of water coming through, some comes to Orange Lake. When there is not much coming through, it goes into Payne's Prairie. More goes into Payne's Prairie.

H: What did you want? Did you want all the water to come to the lakes?

B: No, no. We decided that it was not possible to do that. There are some people that want that. Rightfully, for twenty-seven years all the water from Camps Canal came into Orange Lake. Back in 1964 when those culverts were put in, let me tell you what happened there. I have researched this and found this out. Back in 1964, a \_\_\_\_\_ Fish and Game Commission decided that if they had water in Payne's Prairie, it would make a nice duck habitat. So he got a drag line in there and cut a hole in the dike so that the water would flow into Payne's Prairie.

H: Who did that?

B: The Fish and Game. Then all of a sudden, when the water started going down

on Orange Lake, they found out what had happened. They got in touch with the representative, who at that time was from Jacksonville. He came over, looked at it, and saw what they had done. He ordered them to close it. Then they reached an agreement that they would put some culverts in, so that anytime that the water level in Orange Lake was above fifty-six feet above sea level, the water would flow into Payne's Prairie. If it was below fifty-six feet, no water would flow into Payne's Prairie. In other words, the bottom of the canal is down here, so what they did was put the culverts through up here. So that when the water level came up real high, some would flow in. When it dropped down, none would flow. That is how it was for twenty-seven years. Then the people over at Payne's Prairie, without any permitting, without any investigation, and without any research all of a sudden decided they wanted more water. So they go in, and they lower those culverts down to a lower level so that they can take water all the time.

H: Did they do without asking Tallahassee first?

B: One agency and another agency. See the thing about it is that the agency that is responsible here for the lakes at that time was the Department of Natural Resources. They own Payne's Prairie. They also own this lake, Orange Lake, and Newnan's Lake. They contacted water management people over here and said we want to do this, we need the water. They said okay, go ahead. They did not worry about the lakes, consequences, or anything else. They did not check to see what would happen. They did not do anything. They just did it. With state government being like it is, we figured there is no way that you are going to stop that. Then we got to checking on the sinkhole. We went to Senator Kirkpatrick, and he ordered the Water Management District to go over and check to see if the sinkhole was leaking. They went over there, and put divers down. They came back up and said, "Yes, it is leaking six cubic feet per second. It is not enough to make any difference in the lake." We knew that was a lie from the word go. We got some other people over at the University to check to see how much water was going down. They went over and set up barriers at an angle where the water goes into the sinkhole area. They left a ten foot opening in the middle, and put flow meters in there. They determined that the amount of water going down that sinkhole was in excess of thirty-seven cubic feet a second. Now this is something like six million gallons a day, or sixty million gallons a day. I have all the figures up there, but I cannot remember all this stuff. When you equate it out into acre feet, which they measure lakes in, that is a three foot drop in Orange Lake every year going down that sinkhole.

H: That is a lot.

B: That is a lot of water for 8,000 acres of water. They are losing that much water down the sinkhole every year. Plus for this area, you lose on an average of

approximately two foot a year to evaporation. Better than five feet a year is being lost. When you have got less rainfall than that coming in, it does not take long to figure out sooner or later it is going to dry up. We said, "Look. We also went through the University library over there and found that in 1962 that a geologist from the U.S. Soil Conservation Department had checked all of Orange Lake, done test borings on the bottom, and found that there was only one area in the whole lake that was leaking." That was the one area where the sinkhole was. There was an outcropping of Ocala limestone there in that one stop, and water was going through that limestone. He recommended that it be diked off, and that they should build a horseshoe shaped dike around it to isolate the hole from the lake to protect the lake.

H: Is that possible?

B: Sure. At that time, it probably would have cost no more than \$50,000 to do it. They started to do it. They started to build a dike around it. Along came a hurricane right after they started and washed it down the hole. So they said they hell with this, and decided to fill it up. He says in his study and report, "Filling the sinkhole will only be a temporary measure; it eventually will start leaking again. The only way to protect the lake will be to dike it off." Based on all of this, we went back and it was our contention to let Payne's Prairie take part of that water going in. If the sinkhole can stop the loss, then the lake will stabilize. If we hold three feet a year of water not going down the sinkhole, with the rainfall we will stay at a healthy level. We have been trying to get the state to do this. The county commission agrees with us; they want it done. They are our local politicians. The Water Management District only wants to study. They made a five year study and we waited. They got through with the five year study, and they recommended to let the lake \_\_\_\_ turn over and turn into marshes. This is not a satisfactory answer. They make all kinds of excuses for not doing anything. They have taxing authority over there. They tax us, and we have to pay them taxes. They take our tax money over there, but they never give us anything back. They spend it in other places.

H: So they were opposed to the idea, but they just do not give any meaning?

B: They cannot come up with a valid reason for not doing it, other than the fact that if they do this, it might create a sinkhole somewhere else, if you isolate this one. I said, "Look, they plugged it up thirty years ago, and the world did not come to an end. The sky did not fall. No other sinkholes opened up. What makes you think that if it is done again and done right that another sinkhole will open up." They said, "Well, it could possibly happen. We do not know about sinkholes." I said, "My God! They plug sinkholes every day in Florida." Just two years ago, we had one open up on I-75. All of a sudden the big hole opened up. Whew! Within twenty-four hours, they had that sinkhole plugged. Around Lakeland and

Winterhaven, where they have a lot of phosphate mines, they have sinkholes open up all the time down there. They plug them up. They have had houses fall in the thing, and they fill them up. These people are worried about this. Anyway, they will not do anything.

H: Are they still studying about it?

B: Oh, they study. They study all the time. They are professional studiers. That is all they do. They will not make a decision on anything. They just study, study, study. They will never have enough information to do anything because it is just not their nature.

H: There is no other company you can turn to for the sinkhole?

B: No. We are investigating now, and think about looking into \_\_\_\_\_. Those people were voted into existence by the people in the state thirty years ago to the Water Management District. If they can be voted in, they can be voted out. All over the state, everybody is having trouble with these people. They have taxing authority, but they are not elected – they are appointed by the Governor, the board. A couple of years ago, they owned an airplane that they could fly around in. All of a sudden, they decided that was not good enough, so they went out and bought another airplane for one-half a million dollars. Then they had two airplanes to fly around in, plus pilots to fly them, mechanics to maintain them, and hangers to store them in. This is what we are paying them for, the taxpayers. There was so much Cain raised about that, so hell they got rid of their big airplane. They sold it, and got rid of it because everybody was raising Cain. There are four Water Management Districts in the state of Florida; there is one in the Panhandle, the St. Johns Water Management District, the South Water Management District, the South Florida Water Management District, and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Everybody was having trouble with them; it was the same thing. All of the lakes had gone to pot all over the state. Fishing had gone to pot all over the state. There was an economic impact study done on this area back in the 1980s at the University of Florida. I have a copy of it. These three lakes brought in approximately ten million dollars plus a year into the local economy from out of state fishermen coming here to fish. Now it is down to under one million. This has happened in seven years.

H: It is because of the drop in the water?

B: It is because the lower water. Now another thing we have in the state of Florida is the outrageous weed called hydrilla. It is a submerged weed that grows under water. They put this weed in fish tanks because it is pretty in aquariums. It is real pretty, nice and green, grows underwater, and the fish swim around in it. It looks good. It comes from South America, South Africa, and Southeast Asia.

They brought it in here, these aquarium people, to put it in aquariums. Over the years, people dumped their aquariums out. This stuff has taken root, and taken over all the water bodies in the state of Florida. This lake here, ten years ago had three hundred acres of hydrilla in it. Now we have over five thousand. In the last ten years they have spent over six million dollars spraying chemicals on it trying to kill it.

H: Is that not bad for the animals that live in the lake, if you throw in chemicals?

B: Environmentalists do not seem to think so. I have been trying to for four years to get them to put the carp in there to eat the grass. They have hybrid carp that have been developed that other states and some areas of this state are using. They are a lot less expensive than chemicals. The chemicals that they use cost twelve hundred dollars a gallon.

H: Is carp a kind of a fish?

B: Yes, it is a fish, but it eats vegetation. They grow up to about thirty or thirty-five pounds. They are big fish, like this. They get real big.

H: Would they be a problem for the other fish in the lake?

B: No, they will not create any problems for the other fish. I have researched this. I have talked to biologist in Texas. I have talked to biologist in Arkansas. I have talked to biologist in Missouri. I have talked to biologist in Louisiana. I have talked to biologist in Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina that are using carp. The state of Florida says, "You cannot use carp; it will kill the lake." All of these other states are using them, and they are not killing their lakes. They are cleaning out their lakes without using chemicals at a tenth of the price. In fact, they are \_\_\_\_\_ to do it. They say, "Oh when those carps eat all the hydrilla, then they are going to eat all the native vegetation." Hell, they have killed almost all the native vegetation with their damn chemical, not to mention the muck. The chemical does not kill the root of the hydrilla; it only kills the growing stem. When they spray, the stem falls off, they float around, they get all balled up, the wind blows, they wash up, then they die, and settle to the bottom. It creates a black muck. I can take you out there and show you. We have three or four feet of it all around the docks out here. It is just a black, slimy, muck on the bottom of the lake. The bottom of this lake is naturally sand and gravel, hard sand and gravel. The dead vegetation down there, from dead hydrilla from spraying the chemicals every year, has built up this muck on the bottom of the lake. This destroys the fish habitat. They cannot spawn in it; they will not spawn in it. They cannot find a bed down there in that muck. So they just do not spawn. They skip a year and do not spawn. Now where the hell are the environmentalists that are raising so much hell about oh do not touch the

sinkhole, do not harm Payne's Prairie. But they do not give a crap about the lakes being destroyed, the fisheries being destroyed, and the people that enjoy using the lakes. I own people back here. My taxes on this property is \$150 per lakefront foot because I live on the lake. The taxes are higher on the lake than for people that do not live on the lake. People like to live on the water, and it is premium, so people pay higher taxes for it. That is fine; I do not mind that. These other people that live on the lakes that do not care (the so called environmentalists) that are fighting doing anything say, "Well that is just too bad." They have a closed mind.

H: Did you ever set up a protest? For example, when people start spraying, did you and other people that live on the lake come out and try to stop them?

B: No. We tried to do everything legally. We had gone to the newspapers. We formed the Lake Property Owners Association. We tried to get politicians to do something, but the politicians hands are tied because they fooled around and gave these idiots legislating authority over here at the Water Management District. They gave them legislating authority so nobody can tell them what to do. They can do anything they want to do, and nobody can stop them. What we are investigating now is the possibility of starting a statewide movement to get enough signatures to force the state to put it on the ballot, so that the people can vote them out of existence, and put the water back under the counties which the water is in. Let the counties manage their water. If they have too much water, they can sell it to other counties that do not have enough. That is what started all this mess. I lived in Tampa when it all started twenty odd years ago. Some of these high growth counties were running out of water. It was going over to adjoining counties, drilling wells, and pumping water down into the other counties. All of a sudden, the other counties that were losing water said, "Look, we are growing too. We have got to put a stop to this." So they stopped these other high growth counties from taking their water. They came up with this bright idea of setting up a system that was out of the political realm of these districts that would control water. They would say who could have water and who could not have water. This is pure and simply socialistic; that is what it is. They took it away from the people that paid the taxes. Now we cannot control the use of the water or the resources that are within the areas that we are paying taxes in. It is given to a bunch of people that do not even have to run for election or report to anybody. They take over and do as they please. Whatever they think, they tell us what we need. We are just supposed to sit here and take it. I am not advocating anything at all that would be detrimental to the environment, nothing at all.

H: I have been to the meeting that was here three weeks ago at Orange Lake. There were some people that said if Payne's Prairie does not get any water anymore, you kill animals there. They also said if you stabilize the water level in

the lake, it is best for the lake because the fish need the fluctuation. What do you think about it?

B: Were you at that last meeting we had over there?

H: Not the last one, the one before that.

B: There are two groups. We formed Save Our Lakes Association three years ago. People on Orange Lake were fighting St. Johns to stop the diversion. We told them look. We sort of split. They went their way, we went our way. We concentrated on the sinkhole. They went and hired a lawyer, and filed suit to stop the diversion of water over there. They did not want the prairie to have any water at all. I tried to explain to them that if we stop the loss at the sinkhole, water going into the prairie would not hurt anything. It would not hurt these lakes. There was plenty of water for everybody if it was used, managed.

H: You could not convince them?

B: They wanted to hire a lawyer and I said, "Fine, you hire your lawyer. You go your way, and we will go ours." I do not think it is right that Payne's Prairie arbitrarily took the water in there. They scream, "We have got all these animals over here and all this wildlife over here that has to have water." They have got an overabundance of alligators over there. They have got an overabundance of snakes over there. They have got some wading birds. They do not have any ospreys, or any eagles because they do not have fish. These birds feed on fish. We have about twelve or fifteen pairs of bald eagles that nest around this lake here. We used to have a lot osprey come in here every year. They have declined in numbers. They are not here. They usually come in the spring. I would count as many as fifty ospreys flying around at a time three or four years ago. With all this hydrilla that came up, they could not catch fish because they could not see the fish for the weeds in the lake. So they just went someplace else. Luckily, birds have wings. If they cannot eat here, they crank up their wings and go somewhere else to eat. I am sure you have heard of this William Bartram, some guy from Europe that came through here about 350 years ago and what he saw. They are trying to determine now what he saw and reconstruct it. If you look up definitions \_\_\_\_\_. We went back in the University library and found maps of this area dated back as far 1837. Those maps show a line connecting Newnan's Lake straight down to Orange Lake, and Lochloosa Lake with a line connecting it to a creek. The area that is now Payne's Prairie was listed as Alachua Prairie. You look up prairie up in the dictionary and it is rolling grassland with scattered trees. It does not say a blasted thing about it being a swamp, marsh, or an everglade. They quit calling it a prairie then, after I pointed that out to them. They quit calling it prairie. Then they started calling it a marsh ecosystem that they were trying to reproduce. Well, you look up marsh

in the dictionary and see what it tells you – wet ground with grass and trees growing on it. It is not really a marsh. Look up everglade. It is land covered with water with grasses growing out of it. That is an everglade. That is what we had down in south Florida. They are trying to build an everglades up here, that is pure and simply what they are doing. That is something that never has been. If they want to go back to nature, like they say, there is no way they can go back to the way it was. Some of these environmentalist say, "Oh, let us go back to the way it was thirty, forty, or fifty years ago." You cannot do that. Let me tell you why. You would have to determine what the population was forty or fifty years ago against what it is now. Take all those people and move them out. Cap all of these wells that have been drilled in the past thirty, forty, or fifty years that has been taking water out of the aquifer. Another fact that figures in here is hurricanes. History shows that years ago that Florida had almost one or two hurricanes come through every year. It would dump a whole bunch of rain. We have not had a hurricane in the state of Florida in over ten years, except for this one that went across south Florida last year. They did not get hardly any rain out of that, just a lot of wind.

H: Excuse me, is it possible to close the door.

B: No, they might need me. There are a lot of things that factor into the situation. There has been a lot of changes made. A lot of these changes that have been made are not environmentally correct, according to \_\_\_\_\_. I have talked to one biologist who tells me one things, and I have talked to another biologist who tells me something entirely different. They do not agree among themselves. It is true; I have a special interest in these lakes because we had money invested here. If people do not come back and start using the lakes, I do not have enough land to grow turnips or raise enough turnips to pay taxes on the property.

H: When you started here, how many people came here a year?

B: The first two years we were here, we grossed about \$150,000 a year. We had a lot of people from up north the first two years that came here every year. They would stay anywhere from one week to a month. They would fish. When they left, they would make reservations for the next year, and come back the next year. We had all of our cabins full.

H: How many cabins do you have?

B: We have six cabins, and I have thirty-five RV spaces. During the months of December, January, February, March, April, and May, we would stay completely full all the time. All the boats were rented, and all the cabins were rented. These people would come down with money. They would buy bait, shiners, shrimp, mullet, food, gasoline, ice, beer, cokes; they would spend a lot of money.

The fish they would catch, they would take back home with them. They would freeze them, put them in boxes of ice, and take them home with them. They had fish. People from Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio – these are the people that used to come down here. They do not come anymore. They go other places now. Since the lake is filled up with hydrilla and the water levels have dropped, they quit catching fish when they would come.

H: Did you do anything to replace the fish if a lot was caught, or did it stay naturally on a good fish level?

B: It will unless you ruin the habitat that the fish lives in. They have allowed the habitat to be ruined in these lakes by the prolonged period of low water (three or four years); fish quit spawning. Plus the muck that is on the bottom of the lake from the spraying of the hydrilla has destroyed the spawning areas. There has not been a speckled perch caught out here in two years. I can show you pictures here. There has not been a large bass. We have not had a bass caught over eight pounds out of this lake in the past four years. The first two year we were here, there was hardly a month that went by that somebody did not catch a ten or twelve pound bass.

H: Ah, that is impressive.

B: There is swamp around the lakes. When the water level comes up and goes into the swamp, the fish go into the swamp. They spawn. The fishermen cannot get to them to overfish them. The lake and the fish population rejuvenates itself. You do not have to come back every year and dump fish in there to make sure you have got fish. It perpetuates itself as long as it is managed properly. The state is not managing the lake properly, and that is what is boils down to pure and simply. The bottom line is that they are not managing the lake properly. They have allowed the lakes down and stay down too long by a combination of transferring water and allowing the water to go down the sinkhole without doing something about the sinkhole, which could and should be done. Another thing about hydrilla is that hydrilla grows real fast. It is a real fast growing plant. It thrives on sunlight. It has to have sunlight to survive. The low water level increases the growth of hydrilla. One thing is working against the other. During that three or four year period that the water levels dropped down and stayed down, the hydrilla exploded all over the lake. It just filled it up. It looks like a hay field out there, all topped out. You could not run a boat through it. It would burn up the motor. People quit fishing.

[End side A1]

H: Repeat what you said about the politics here, and what your opinion was about it. That was sort of interesting.

- B: We have too many professional politicians here in this country now. It starts at the national level, and now it is all the way down to the city and county level. It is a joke. These people used to run for elections to serve the people. They do not serve the people anymore; they serve themselves and the special interest groups, the people who have got the money that can afford to keep them in office in order to exploit the rest of the people in the situation. Unfortunately, that is what is happening now. People are staying in office too long. Once they get entrenched in office, they are not responsive to the people anymore, at least the majority of them. There are still some that are not, but the majority of them are. I have just about lost all respect for most of these people. The only time they will talk to you is when they are running for election. They will promise you anything in the world, everything – like this turkey we have got for a president right now. He promised everybody everything, and there is no way he could do everything he told everybody he would do. People are so dumb they could not see that. He is going to bankrupt the country if he gets all this stuff done he is trying to do. Forty years ago in this country, my father-in-law was chairman of the county commissioners in a county up in Georgia. For thirty years he was chairman of the county commissioners. He got paid thirty dollars a month for being on the commission. The county commission here gets \$36,000 a year to sit up there on the commission. It is ridiculous. They are professional politicians; that is all they are. He was a good politician, but he was a crook. He took care of people. He did everything he could to help people in the county. If people had a problem they came to him, and he took care of the problem. People do not take care of peoples problems anymore, unless they have a lot of money they want to pay the politicians to take care of it for them. That is the way that most of them operate, unfortunately.
- H: Can you explain how the Save the Lake Association is represented? Do you choose or elect a representative?
- B: It started out with probably half a dozen people trying to figure out how to solve the problem.
- H: And those were from different lakes also?
- B: Yes, from right around here. People that knew each other sat down and started talking.
- H: You were in it from the beginning?
- B: Yes, I was in it from the start. We started out with a half a dozen people at one of the fellows houses. We started going over there once or twice a week. We would sit down at night and trying to figure out the best way to get something done about the lakes before they cease to exist. So we formed the Save Our

Lakes Association. We talked to other people and other people started joining up. Now we have 125 to 130 people that have joined. We meet once a month. We try to keep everybody up to date on everything that has been done during that month as to what we have done and what has happened because everybody obviously does not know everything that goes on, so we try to keep everybody else abreast of what is happening. Politicians count noses; that is their vote to them. They are not people, they are just votes. If you have got a lot of people, they will listen to you. If you do not have a lot of people, they just ignore you. Regardless of what the problem is, they just ignore you. They do not care. We are still trying to get more people. This is another ploy that is used and is being used by \_\_\_\_\_. This is the third cash force that has been appointed at the political level to study the problem. I have been going to these meetings now for four years, every week. For the past four years, I have been going to meetings on these lakes.

H: Do you ever lose your temper there?

B: Yes, I lose my temper, all the time. I lose my temper, believe me I do. I get to the point that I cannot even be civil with people. It embarrasses me. For a while, I just quit going because I was embarrassing myself. When these people make these outrageous, ridiculous statements, I jump right down their throat. I just quit going. They got me back into it again. So I am going again. But this is the third task force I have set on. The first one was set up by the county commission to study the problem and try to get something done. That went on for a year. Then St. Johns just sort of ran it off up into the swamp and let it die. That is when Fish and Game set up a task force to try and resolve the problem. We met for a year. I was on that one, and we met for a year. We came up with a recommendation to isolate the sinkhole in order to hold the water in the lake. We let Payne's Prairie take their water over there, and leave the dam down here as it is, which St. Johns wants to tear out. The dam really has no effect one way or the other because of the way the situation has evolved over the year. When they built 301 across this end of Orange Lake down there, first they built a railroad across there. They closed off most of that end of the lake. Right behind it, they built 301 down there. They left one small bridge there with all the water channeled through it. That is all filled in there for about a mile from there back to the lake. That is all filled in, and it is growing up with trees. The lake is just shrinking inside. Orange Lake, at one time, was around 15,000 acres of water. Now it is down to about 8,000 acres of water. It is just getting smaller all the time. This lake here was around 6,000 acres of water. Now it is down to around 5,000. It has lost about 1,000 acres. The shoreline is encroaching and coming in.

H: Do you notice that you have to walk further to get into the lake?

B: Yes.

H: What is your position now in the commission?

B: I am the president of Save Our Lakes Association.

H: Are you the president?

B: Yes.

H: Do you have a lot of meeting where state representatives come or people from the Water Management District come?

B: Yes, we meet with people all the time. We go to county commission meetings. We talk to commissioners. The commissioners have been very cooperative. They have tried to do everything they could do; their hands are tied. We have been to Tallahassee. We tried to see the governor, of course he did not have time to see us. We have talked to other state agencies up there. They are very polite and everything, but nothing ever happened. They say, "Oh that seems to be a real problem. We will see what we can do about it." Nothing ever happens. It all comes back to St. Johns Water Management District. St. Johns Water Management District is determined that they are not going to do anything to help these lakes.

H: Is there any possibility that if other people take seats in the St. Johns Water Commission that things are going to happen?

B: What?

H: You said that these people from the St. Johns Water Commission are appointed.

B: They are appointed by the governor, yes.

H: Is there any possibility that if other people are appointed that things will change?

B: It could be – if we get a governor that has got some sense. If we get Ander Crenshaw elected governor, I think we stand a chance of getting people appointed to some of these boards that would serve the people that they are supposed to be representing. That is about the only hope that I see.

H: How much time do you spend in organizing all this?

B: Oh my God.

H: A lot.

B: I could show you my telephone bill. I have been fighting this situation with these lakes. I have averaged, with telephone calls, letter writing, and research, probably two days a week. That is what time I have spent.

H: That is a lot.

B: At least two days a week of my time is spent.

H: When is the Save Our Lakes Association set up? When did you start it?

B: Two years ago this month we formed it.

H: Do you also see some positive results that you have reached? At least some things?

B: I cannot see really that we have made a lot of the people aware of the situation. We have got a new task force set up that is designed to drag out two years into the future before any decisions are made to study the situation.

H: Does that really help?

B: We know what the problem is. We know what it will take to solve the problem. When I say we, I am not talking about only myself, but also hundreds of other people as well. Politicians know. Learned people know. The people at the University agree with us. The people out at IFAS agree with our. Those people are biologist and fish biologist, the same as these idiots over here are supposed to be. They say, "Yes. The lakes never will regain their popularity or availability to produce fish until the sinkhole is isolated." St. Johns says, "Oh, we have got to study for two more years before we decide." What if it goes dry? They say, "Well if it looks like it is going dry, we will do something." Let me tell you something. If they decided today that they were going to isolate the sinkhole and that they were going to put carp in these lakes, it would be a minimum of two years before it would get done because of the way wheels turn awful slow. Once that it is done, it would probably be another two or three years before the fishing would come back. So we are talking about five years down the road from now. Last year, we lost \$40,000 here. That is what we had to put into this business last year just to pay the bills. We lost \$40,000. You cannot stay in business and keep doing that.

H: What is the next step you want to take now?

B: Well, like I say, we are exploring the idea right now of contacting other organizations throughout the state and trying to set up a network. We are just exploring the possibility of setting up a network throughout the state to get a petition drive started to force the state to put on the ballot to eliminate the Water

Management Districts – to vote them out of existence and change the whole system. The system that they have now is not responsive to the people. It is not doing any good. In fact, it is doing more harm than good. I am not a scientist. I am not a biologist. I am not what you would call an educated person.

H: I think you really did a lot of studying, and that you know a lot about this, especially with this issue of the lake.

B: I have been on this lake for seven years. Every day for seven years, I have been here. I have learned a lot about this lake. I have research I can show you. I have at least five filing cabinets full of research on this lake. My wife just gives me holy hell. I have got so much stuff up there. I am in the process of trying to straighten it all out. I have got so much stuff that it is almost impossible to keep up with. I have talked to people until I am blue in the face. When these people tell me something, I am talking about the scientists over here, and they say, oh this cannot happen, that cannot happen, that will happen, or this will happen, then I contact another scientist from another location in the same field. I talk to him or her. I have caught these people in so many lies over at St. Johns Water Management District (the staff over there) until I am \_\_\_\_\_. This is my personal opinion. It is nothing but stalling tactics. What their reasoning is, I cannot figure out. They are determined to destroy these lakes. They are obviously determined to destroy these lakes.

H: Do you have any positive view about the lake?

B: Huh?

H: If you see the lake in ten years, do you think that it will be restored?

B: Probably not in my lifetime.

H: Why?

B: I am sixty-seven years old.

H: You have lots of years left.

B: What?

H: You could have lots of years left.

B: Oh baby, I am wore out. I am telling you I am wore out. I get more tired every day.

H: It is probably the \_\_\_\_\_.

B: I hope that these lakes can be restored. Hopefully my son can get his investment that he has in it back eventually.

H: Does your son put a lot of time in it also?

B: Not as much as he would like. He is up here a lot during October, November, December, and January. In February he goes back to baseball again. He is gone. He lives in New York from the first of April until October.

H: Which team does he play on?

B: The New York Yankees. He played with Boston for ten years. Last year, he went over and signed with the Yankees. So he has got maybe another two or three years to play baseball. He is thirty-six years old now. So he has another two or three years to play baseball. All he does when he is not playing baseball is hunt and fish.

H: So he wants to live here also.

B: He wants to live here. He loves to fish, and he loves the place. He spends all the time up here he can during the off season.

H: Do you still go out fishing a lot?

B: Me?

H: Yes.

B: Not as much as I would like to. I probably go out fishing four or five times a year. We have got people here that live here and fish every day. I just have too many other things [to do]. It is a matter of priorities. Every day I get problems here. Good God almighty – every day I have problems that I have got to take care of. My oldest son is an air traffic controller at the Tampa airport. He is in charge of the fun and sun flying that they have right now. He is charge of the one in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin during July. He spends about a month over there, and another month up there. I just got back this morning. I was down there yesterday with him. I went down yesterday morning and came back this morning. I watched air shows, and flew a little bit. I felt guilty the whole time I was there because I had problems up here. That is the reason I was sweating when you came in because I had to move some trailers to get them out of the way.

H: What are your basic tasks here? What do you do here on the camp all day?

What is the typical day on a fishcamp?

B: We launch a few boats. We sell a little bit of bait. We sell a little bit of ice. We sell a little bit of tackle. I collect rent.

H: Do you start really early?

B: At 6:00 a.m.

H: That is early.

B: Until 6:00 p.m. The shoreline has been stopped up. We have to unstop the shoreline. If somebody blows a breaker, we have to check that out and replace the breaker. If the washing machine will not work, we have to go fix the washing machine. It is just one thing after another all the time. On our rental boats, if the motor quits we have to repair the motor. If the boat leaks, we have to fix the boat.

H: It is lots of work.

B: All the time.

H: Do you like to eat fish?

B: I love fish. I do a little bluegill fishing during the summer. When my son is here during the winter, I fish with him three or four times. That is about all I can handle anymore.

H: Which is your favorite?

B: Fish?

H: Yes.

B: I like to fish the bluegill. I like to watch the cork float in the water. I like most all kinds of fish. I like saltwater fishing and offshore fishing.

H: So you have two sons?

B: Yes, I have two sons.

H: And your youngest son wants to take over the place?

B: No, he is allergic to work. He does not work. He likes to stay up here all the time when he retires or quits playing ball. He will stay up here all the time. He has a house on the lake up here that we built. He come up and stays in it.

He has a lot of his friends come up, and they fish, tell lies, and have fun.

H: He is not so much involved with the political work that you are doing?

B: No. He provides the money. He thinks that is enough.

H: Well you need it to do it.

B: I was in the service twenty-four years. I retired, and I am retired now. I draw social security. I do not make any money out of this at all.

H: Did you buy this as soon as you retired?

B: No. I worked. I was in construction work, and I traveled. We bought this place seven years ago, and I have been retired twenty. When my wife was killed down in Tampa, we decided to buy this place and I would stay up here and run it. I have been up here ever since. I have rebuilt the whole place. I built all of this like I say. I remodeled all the cabinets. We have redone all the sewer lines and all the electrical. We built a new dock.

H: If you do not see the lake changing, do you think about selling the place?

B: Yes, we have thought about it. We have thought seriously about it. If the situation does not improve in the foreseeable future, we will probably count our loses and go someplace else.

H: That is really bad.

B: Yes, it is pathetic.

H: I really hope for you that everything is going to work out for you. I hope that your petition works.

B: It has been a challenge in the past. I really felt like that it was not all the complicated and that it would not be difficult to resolve it. Believe me, they can wear you down. They can just wear you down. It is like beating your head against the wall. Sooner or later, you say what they hell. You are not getting anywhere, and it is just stupid. Just back off and leave.

H: Do you come from a fishing family?

B: Yes. Not really. My father fished and hunted all of his life. Of course, I fished and hunted with him. When my kids came along, they fished and hunted with me.

H: So your interest in fishing is definitely from your background.

B: Oh, yes. I always enjoyed fishing and hunting. I grew up during the depression, and we had to fish and hunt to eat back in the 1930s. I was a young kid then. I was only seven or eight years old. I had to run ten rabbit boxes every morning before I went to school to get rabbits to eat. We had a thirty acre farm.

H: Where was it?

B: Up in Georgia.

H: Which town?

B: Outside of Atlanta. We moved into Atlanta in the late 1930s. We sold the farm, and moved into Atlanta. I went to high school there. I ran away from home and joined the Marine Corp when I was sixteen, when the war started. I joined the Marine Corp, and stayed in the Marine Corp for four years in the Pacific. I came back. At the end of the war, I got married. I got out of the service. When the Korean War started, I went back into the service. I just stayed in then until I retired in 1967. I moved to Tampa in 1969. We have lived down here ever since.

H: It was a very interesting story that you told me. I really hope it works out better in the coming years.

B: I hope so.

H: At least maybe they will do something.

B: Maybe we can find a way to get around it. I do not know.

H: Thanks a lot for the interview. I became much wiser about the lake.