

AL 175

Interviewee: Ed and Freddie Tanner

Interviewer: Robin Shtulman

Date: April 4, 1994

S: Today is April 4, 1994, and I am here with Mr. Ed Tanner and Mrs. Freddie Tanner of Cross Creek, Florida. Mr. Tanner, can you spell your name for me?

ET: Well, my full name is Leonard Edwin Tanner. Everybody calls me Ed Tanner.

S: Can you tell me when and where you were born?

ET: I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on Twelfth Street between the Peachtree Streets, on September 25, 1939.

S: How about you, Mrs. Tanner?

FT: I am Freddie Elvera Tanner, and I was born in Brooks County, Georgia, on September 24, 1925. And I lived there until I left and got married and went to California and lived there for eight years, and moved back to Georgia. I was a farmer's wife until 1969, when he passed away. Then in 1972 Ed and I got married, and in 1978 we moved to Cross Creek. These lakes were all I could see because I could go fishing by myself. Now, the water is dried up and we cannot go fishing.

S: Can you just spell for me your maiden name?

FT: Folsom.

S: Thank you. So your first husband was a farmer and you lived in California?

FT: No, in Georgia.

S: In Georgia.

FT: He was in the service when we married, and we lived in California near Castle Air Force Base and Bakersfield for eight years.

S: And how did you get to be so involved with fishing?

FT: I was born on the creek bank. My mother and father fished all their lives. And then I have an older brother who is a fish guide. All my family loves fishing. So when I moved down here and the lakes dried up, I had a bass boat and I did not have power trim and could not get out on the lake. Then in 1982, when the water was so low, we got the pontoon boat with the power trim. Then in 1989,

the lakes dried up; I have not been back out since. We can not get through the creek.

S: Did any of your family members make their living fishing?

FT: No, [but] I have a brother that owned a fish camp at Lake Talgum, Florida. That is out of Tallahassee, and he is a fish guide.

S: And how about you, Mr. Tanner? How did you get involved in fishing?

FT: Well, I fished all my life. I fished with my dad when I was six year old, or younger than that. My father put two fish on one hook, and I have been hooked on fishing ever since. Until I got [to be] eight or nine years old, when I realized what he did, I thought I had caught two fish on one hook. My father was a fisherman, too; he enjoyed the recreation and the sport.

S: So you are both retired now?

ET: Yes.

S: Mr. Tanner, can you tell me what you did before you retired?

ET: Well, in the air force I was in guidance and control systems for guided missiles. I spent two terms in the air force and one in the Marine Corps. When I got out, I went to Detroit to find a decent paying job. I worked for North American Rockwell and I worked for Hydromatic. I got my UAW [United Auto Workers] Industrial Electrician's card, with the UAW as a journeyman, and stayed up there several years.

Then in the riots of 1968, I just did not want any more of Detroit, so I moved back to Atlanta. And Atlanta was just as bad, so I kept going south. Wound up in Macon, Georgia. They were opening a new brewery there, Pabst Brewing Company, and I applied for a job there, and I was the third electrician hired at the brewery. We opened the brewery in 1971 and it is now closed.

But I was working there when my supervisor got me a blind date, and [it has been] twenty-one, twenty-two years with her, and we have been real happy. I have two children in Michigan from a prior marriage. One of them lives in Palatka, the other one still lives in Michigan.

After I was at the brewery for about, I guess, nine years, we came down here on vacation. We saw the lakes; we saw they were unspoiled and how beautiful they were, and we decided that we would just move to Florida. Most people wait until they retire to move to Florida. So we decided we would do it before we retired.

We came down here, stayed here a year, and we built the home.

Then I went to work for Highland Electric. We constructed the Hawthorne Plywood Plant. During the construction of the plant, Georgia Pacific offered me a position as electrical superintendent over at the Chiefland Plywood Mill, so I would go back and forth until this mill was completed. Then I worked over here at this mill as electrical superintendent. Sixty hours a week and one day off was just too many hours, and that is what you had to put in, so I resigned from there and went to work in Tampa, at the Duro Bag manufacturing plant.

S: Also as an electrician?

ET: [As] a maintenance superintendent. In those years I went to school, and I am a certified plant engineer; that is, a CPE. I am with the American Institute of Plant Engineers; I am listed in the international directory with the international plant engineers, from all over the world. I am retired now. I had a five-artery by-pass. I have had nine strokes. In fact I had one on the twenty-third of last month [March 23, 1994]. But I just have to take it easy; I am on blood thinners, and no more stress.

S: No more stress. You seem fine.

ET: Well, sometimes.

S: So tell me again, what year did you both move here?

FT: June of 1978.

S: And what year did you retire?

ET: Three years ago.

FT: Three years ago in March.

ET: What started Save Our Lakes Association, prior to my retiring and when I was still working in Tampa, [was that] I noticed how the lakes were going. My wife was going to the different meetings all around the lakes with Buddy MacKay [Kenneth D. "Buddy" MacKay, Lieutenant Governor of Florida] and the different agencies that were in charge, trying to find out what was happening to our lakes.

About five years ago, I took a week's vacation. I took the whole week visiting all of the businesses around both lakes. I asked them to organize and come to a meeting at Cross Creek. And I got all the businesses to come to the meeting. I got them all together and I asked them to elect a president, a vice-president, and

secretary and form an organization, so that they would have an organization to be able to address the different agencies.

Well, they did that. They elected a president; I did not want to be involved because I was not a business owner. But they did that. They went to the county. The county recognized this large group of businesses. What most agencies do when they are confronted with a large group of citizens [is] they like to establish what they call a task force. They reduce the size [of the large group], and then they have a better chance of controlling the people. When they [the agencies] try to do things, they isolate them into a smaller group and they can control them. But if there are 150 people coming to meetings, it is whatever the people want. And that is exactly what they have done with this Orange Creek Basin Task Force.

S: Was this the advisory council?

ET: They have reduced us to thirteen people of their choosing and instead of the 150 who went to St. Johns Water Management at Palatka with signs and demanded something to be done about these lakes, they have got us down to thirteen people, half for it and half against it. That is where we stand now. We have been meeting for over four months and we have not made the first decision. All we have done is listen to St. Johns Water Management staff.

Now, when we first started this, they called the staff at St. Johns "biologists." But then we put enough pressure on them, now they are all "scientists," because the biologists tend to be strictly for the wetlands and that sort of thing. So now they are all scientists. So we have changed their nomenclature and what they are called.

They dominate the Water Management Board. The Board of Water Management for the State of Florida has five water management [sections]. St. Johns is our local Water Management [entity]. They have ten politically appointed members of that board. They are not responsible to anyone. They have--I am not sure of the length of their appointments--either two or four years. But they vote on how our area is going to be controlled as far as water management. And they strictly do whatever staff tells them. They are [a] staff-dominated rubber stamp. All they do is go up before the Board, [say] the staff recommends this, and [the decision] is automatic.

S: And they are all employed by the Water Management District?

ET: [There are] 637 employees from nineteen counties. Of 637 employees, the average salary at the Water management is around \$ 30,000.

S: Is that high for this area?

ET: Extremely high. When people work for minimum wage and [the] average income probably in this area is around \$8,000, \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year, those are high-paying jobs. Now I know there are some high-paying jobs at the University, but a lot of those people have the degrees and the experience to back them up.

S: At the St. Johns Water Management District, they do not have the degrees?

ET: They do. They cannot get jobs in the public sector. And in my opinion most of them are misfits. And I tell them so and they do not like it. But they dominate the Water Management Board; they have dominated the other two task forces [in existence] prior to Save Our Lakes Association and the advisory council, they dominated those. And whatever the recommendations were made were never followed through.

This has been going on for thirty-seven years, since 1957. It is when the Soil Conservation Service came [United States Soil Conservation Service], and when the lake went dry, [that] the Soil Conservation Service [and] L. O. Roland, a geologist with them, recommended that the sinkhole at Heagy-Burry Park be isolated with a permanent diking system, with gates for the flood control to be opened. They could not come up with the money. They went to the President of the United States and Congress; they had Public Law 566 put on the books, and it is still on the books now. That public law was [enacted] to fix situations like this with federally matched funds. I dug that [up] from the law library, got it all [together]. I presented it to Water Management and Alachua County. So whatever funds are spent on this sinkhole over here, the federal government would match those funds.

S: That law was passed when?

ET: Back in 1957 and it is still on the books. It never was used. Back then, they had to prove to the federal government [that] for every dollar the government spent there would be a dollar gained in revenue in the area. Well, they never did get around to proving that.

S: And that could be privately gained by local businesses?

ET: Local businesses, revenues, taxes, the whole nine yards, all together [could gain]. They were going to spend \$67,000 to isolate the sinkhole. It will approximately cost \$250,000 to isolate it now. The people got so fed up with government agencies back then. They all got together and they plugged the sinkhole and pushed dirt, cars, tanks in it.

FT: School Buses.

ET: Everything they could find. They isolated it with a cap. What has happened now, [is that] the old metal has rusted away. The sides of the sinkhole [consisting] of the Ocala limestone that comes out of that part of the lake has eroded. And the cap is drawing water from the edges. But it is in a little cove. If you come to the meeting tomorrow, we are going to the sinkhole first, at 1:30. But all they have to do is build a dike across it. Then they can put the bottom opening gates to pull the sludge and the dying vegetation from beneath. The spillway over here at [U. S. Route] 301 was put in, in 1961.

FT: 1963

ET: 1963, right; after the lake went dry in 1960. They built a spillway over there to retain our water at drought conditions. And that, along with the temporary thirty-year patch on the sinkhole, kept our lakes at 57.6, and that is the average lake level for our lakes.

S: When you say "57.6" is that feet?

ET: That is feet above sea level. And right now, our lakes are about 56' 5". Normal lake level is 57' 6" above sea level, and it should be fluctuated from that point above and below. The highest the lakes will get will be 60 feet above sea level. At that point the water will recede into the wetlands and kill off the hardwood growth that surrounds the lakes [and] encroaches on the lakes.

Then if it is fluctuated two feet up and down from that 57' 6", normally that is around the cypress ring of the lakes. For the last 200 to 300 years, cypress trees have grown around these lakes, and that is our normal lake level. That is what we are requesting to have our lakes maintained at. The fishery has decreased; there is not enough oxygen in the water. We have lost \$10,500,000 revenue around these two lakes.

FT: \$10,500,000 a year.

ET: Per year; that is just a rough estimate but it is around that area. It is devastated. Every other home you see out here has got a "For sale" sign on it. The only restaurant is closed; all the fish camps are out of business.

FT: The fish guides are out of business.

ET: We have, I would estimate, 500 people around this lake, that derive their living from the lakes, that have not been able to do that in the last five years. You have cat-fishermen; I have neighbors who commercially cat-fish; [there are] people that go out and get bait-fish.

FT: Frogs, turtles.

ET Frogs, turtles. Over at Lochloosa, there is a whole community over there that survives strictly off the lakes. They have nothing else. They had to go to public assistance. If they can make a living, they do not have to do that. The agencies do not realize the economic impact of what has happened to these areas and the people around them. I may be talking too much.

S: No, you are not talking too much at all. I was hoping that both of you could tell me what things were like here when you first moved here, in terms of water levels and the fish and what drew you.

ET: Well, when we came here in 1978, we came down and visited a couple who lived here on the lake. We rented boats; we went out [on the lakes] and saw how beautiful they were. The lakes were about fifty-eight, fifty-nine feet above sea level. They were full. The fishing was tremendous; some of the largest bass in the state of Florida were caught here. Regularly, every day, you would hear of a twelve or fifteen pound "trophy bass" being caught. Since the water has declined, that no longer happens. The spec fishing, the black crappie, was some of the best in the world. If you turn around, you will see a 2-1/2 pounder up on that wall right there. And that is a normal "big" fish caught. My wife has caught one at four pounds. The state record is three pounds, thirteen ounces. She caught it out here in the canal on a broken back rapella. I was working in Tampa; she went over to the store and weighed it on the certified scale. It weighed an even four pounds. She came home and essed it, cleaned it, and ate it.

FT: A \$50,000 fish.

ET: With royalties from the rapella company, and all of that, she would have made \$50,000 or better off that fish, but she enjoyed it.

S: Did it taste good?

FT: Yes; he was so big he turned up in the frying pan. I cooked him whole, just cut his head off and cooked him whole.

ET: She enjoys eating fish. We eat a lot of fish, and a lot of people in the area eat a lot of fish. We are concerned also about the amount of chemicals being used to control aquatic weeds.

S: What kind of chemicals are being used?

ET: They are using sonar and flordane, the only chemicals that are authorized to be used on hydrilla. Flordane, I think, is the real name for it, sonar is the label name. It has a patent; it is costing the tax-payers \$1,200 a gallon. You can buy fancy French perfume cheaper than that.

S: Is the Prairie using that?

ET: Yes. The Prairie is a different situation. When our lakes started going down, people started [asking] where is the water going? We are getting rain, this business that we hear from the Water Management about [there] being droughts [still means] we are not but about 1" or 2" below normal rainfall per year, over the last five years.

The water is disappearing. They cannot account for forty-four cubic feet of water a second. [It is a] deficit in our lakes that they can not account for with evaporation, and everything else. That is how much they have been able to just guess that we are losing. It is actually more water [lost] than that, because they were not counting the water coming from Lake Lochloosa.

We had [that] measured by the University of Florida a couple of months ago, and fifty-four cubic feet a second [of] water [is] coming out of Lochloosa [and] going into [Lake] Orange. There is nothing leaving Orange. So all the water that comes down the Camps Canal that does not go into the Prairie, plus the water from Lochloosa Lake, is disappearing.

We found out that the lakes were going down [and] some people started going upstream. That is when they found that the Department of Parks and Recreation had built a diversion up there, behind seven locked gates, with no trespassing. The only reason they were able to find it [was because] they took an air boat and went in upstream, and they did not get on the posted property. They found this diversion that was built in 1989.

That is approximately where Camps used to have a hydraulic pump that pumped water out of Paynes Prairie into Camps Canal. They applied for a permit to repair that pumping station. With that repair permit they built this huge concrete structure over there, for the diversion. And they lowered it lower than the foot valve on that hydraulic pump. So they can actually take all of the water that comes down Camps Canal and put it into Paynes Prairie. When they take it into Paynes Prairie, they go through a series of dikes, and they have four 48" pipes over there where they are putting the 60 million gallons, that they say they are taking each day, down the sinkhole.

They are mixing the water from sweetwater branch and the stormwater run off out of the city of Gainesville. The amounts vary depending on who you are

talking to. But the most efficient [accurate] amount that I have been able to derive from all the different agencies and everybody is an average of 16 million gallons of water a day [which] comes down from Gainesville, when they total up all the storm water and everything.

Well, they have taken this 60 million gallons of water that normally comes to our lakes, diluting that sewerage, because that sewerage does not meet the minimum requirements of the State of Florida to [allow that sewerage] to [be] put down a sinkhole or disburse[d] into an open area. So Paynes Prairie people, Jim Waterman for one, says that he feels it is necessary to dilute that water, because it is so contaminated, and high in nutrients.

Now, I have been able to get some Environmental Protection Agency reports [which say] the toxicity is much higher than the law allows. They have upgraded the GRU [Gainesville Regional Utilities] water treatment system a couple of years ago, but basically they are [only] taking the lumps and the stink out of it, and still letting all the bad stuff come down. There is a lot of silver, landane, lead; the ammonia count on that branch is three and one half parts per million. That is extremely high. If you have been into any chemistry, you know what ammonia really is. That is coming out of the city of Gainesville.

S: And that is coming down into Orange Lake?

FT: And then into the aquifer, and that is what we are drinking.

ET: Years ago they used to tell us that DDT was not harmful, and bentylate was not harmful. They found out both of those are extremely harmful. Now they tell us that the water we are putting down the sinkhole is not harmful. Well, what is going to happen when, say twenty years from now, we kill a lot of people, or deformed some children, because of the viruses that have been put down into our drinking water. There is no virus-monitoring of that water. The monitoring of that water is done by GRU, the same people who are doing the polluting. And I do not think that they should be the ones to do the monitoring. But they do the monitoring on that water.

Gainesville has outgrown its water system. The water treatment plant for the University of Florida has been maintained and brought up to date. The University of Florida uses a modern, up-to-date water treatment system at Lake Alice, where they have aerators and all of this, [that] the city of Gainesville does not [have].

On the west side of town they are deep well injecting, with three wells, all the effluent sewerage from that treatment plant [to a level] down below our aquifer. [They act] as if it is not going to hurt anything [to inject sewerage] 2,200 to 2,300

feet down. But still it is going to get into the water. You cannot pour something in here and not expect it to get over there.

And they have no water treatment plant here at the Main Street plant. We found that out by trying to find out where our water was going. Then, when I went over to Paynes Prairie to look at what they were doing, I realized that they are just running the water straight through the Prairie, not restoring it, just running it in one end and out the other.

I did notice something else over there [although] I have never been able to prove it. They plant different plats of grass over there, different varieties. And you will see in that grass certain kinds, [of] maybe two kinds of grass, one of them is dead. I think they are doing a lot of herbicide experimenting over there.

S: Have you spoken with anyone to ask about that?

ET: They do not want to talk about that.

FT: They keep their mouth cracked when you ask them.

ET: The chemical companies give a lot of grants to the Parks Department, and forms of equipment--trucks and stuff like that. And I did observe a semi-truck unloading a complete load of chemicals into the Prairie. It was a complete semi-truck load of chemicals; I could not tell what it was because I was not allowed to go up there and see about it.

S: When was that?

ET: This has been seven, eight months ago. I was out there looking at the sinkhole and I saw this semi out there unloading. When I walked down to the sinkhole they were unloading it and when I came back they were still unloading five gallon containers of chemicals. But I suspect that they are using Paynes Prairie, in that isolated area that they do not let people go to, for chemical experiments for the chemical companies. A friend of mine has retired from GRU, and he tells me that the University of Florida was doing bentylate experiments out there in the Prairie.

S: What kind of experiments?

ET: Bentylate. If you have seen the news, it was a chemical that they came out with and they found out that it was harmful to people. They have stopped them [from] using it. This is just lately. There are still a lot of law suits over the bentylate.

FT: We have got a girl friend up in Island Grove [who] is dying from bentylate being

used in a nursery she worked in, on plants.

ET: She is in real bad shape. But there is nothing anyone [can do]. You cannot fight the big companies, the big corporations. But we can make GRU start doing what is right, as far as their sewerage is concerned. They have asked the Parks Department for 400 acres in that north-eastern corner of the Prairie, to put in a water treatment plant. But the Parks Department does not want to give up the land. They have also [made an] application to bring all of sweet-water branch water, bypass the sinkhole, and put it in Camps Canal, and send it to Orange Lake. But the water was so toxic that they could not get the permit.

All of this has been going on in the last five years. And if the people do not wake up, down the line we are going to ruin a lot of things.

S: So what changes have you noticed here, with the water levels going down and people not being able to make their living off [the lakes]? What kind of changes in the wildlife have you seen?

FT: No, there is no change in the wildlife.

ET: We have not noticed any change in the wildlife, except the bald eagle. Bald eagles have been seen scavenging with the buzzards for road kill.

Our lakes [are] in this bad condition with the hydrilla and the aquatic weed growth, and the biggest problem with the hydrilla is the low water. Our water level [should be] brought up to fifty-eight or fifty-nine feet, during January, February, and March. When the pollen and allergy falls on the lakes, and with the tannic acid in our water, the tuba germination period will be retarded, and 50 percent of the tubas will die in the first year, just from lack of light and photosynthesis.

So that is one advantage to fixing the sinkhole over here. You cannot manage a body of water if you have no absolute control over it whatsoever. All we get from St. Johns is look up, pray for rain, and act like a turkey. Because domestic turkey drowns himself in the rain. We are not turkeys, we are not going to walk around and wait for it to rain. We want something done.

Last year Alachua County sent to St. Johns Water Management \$ 6,400,000 in tax revenues, and we have not got anything back for that money. And they have got eighteen other counties that support that monster bureaucracy over there. Something is going to have to be done. We had the Boston Tea Party because England taxed us without representation. The Water Management taxes us without representation. It is against the Constitution of the United States for them to have taxing authority, and not be elected. They are appointed. So, something needs to be done about that taxation without representation.

There is no accountability [for] the Water Management; they do as they please, as long as they want to. The only way to stop some of this waste, mismanagement, lack of management, is for the people to unite together and stand up and demand that policy be changed. And that is what we are trying to do.

S: Can I ask you about the history of the management of this water? My understanding of it is that when the Camps family owned the land about the Prairie...

ET: The Paynes Prairie?

S: Yes, that they wanted to raise cattle, and it was too wet, and so they drained it. Can you tell me what you know about that history, and then about [the time] after the land changed hands?

ET: Well, it is just what I have read about it. [I] spent a lot of hours in your University libraries; they are much better than Alachua County [library]. Originally Paynes Prairie was called Alachua Savannah; on all the old maps it is called Alachua Savannah. [Then] they named it after Paynes, who was an Indian chief; they just honorary-named it for him, changed the name from Alachua Savannah. [But] back when Bartram [William Bartram, American botanist, author] came it was Alachua Savannah.

It has always alternated between a dry meadow and a lake, depending on whether or not the sinkhole is plugged or unplugged. It was plugged up for years, and they even put steamboats on [the lake]. After [the sinkhole] opened up and drained the lake, overnight as you would say, they lost one steamboat and had to dismantle it because they did not watch the water level and it went down, and they could not get [the boat] out.

S: Do you know what year that was?

FT: 1880s.

ET: 1887, I think, if I remember right. I have got articles, from the Academy of Science and every[where] else, I have looked them all up. When this was Spanish--Florida was owned by the Spanish--the King of Spain gave an Arredondo grant [Antonio de Arredondo, recipient of a grant of land consisting of some 269,600 acres in Alachua County, during the second Spanish period] that encompassed the Paynes Prairie, or Alachua Savannah, and gave it to one of Spain's conquerors or people he sent over here to help defer some of the cost of his expeditions.

Most of Alachua County was under the Arredondo grant. It is still under the Arredondo grant. The bottom of Orange Lake is under the Arredondo grant and is part of Alachua County. There has been some discussion of who owns the bottom of the lake and who does not own the bottom; there are some people over there who have titles under the Arredondo grant to bottom portions of the lake. A lot of lawsuits have been filed and unfiled, it is a big mess. But back in the 1920s the Camps, or one of the owners of Alachua Savannah, decided to drain it.

Well, what they did [was] they built a series of dikes so that they could keep the water from flowing into Alachua Savannah from Prairie Creek. And then they made a series of dikes taking the water to the sinkhole, and they tried draining it that way. But when the sinkhole would stop up, they would pump the water out of Camps cattle ranch into what they call Camps Canal. They just cleaned out that area down at the Camps Canal.

Originally, from everything I can read from Bartram, and from some of the old fifteenth century maps, and going back further, Newnan's Lake drains south, through Prairie Creek, into Paynes Prairie; Paynes Prairie on into Orange Lake through Riversticks. Back in the 1920s, when they changed the land and put the dikes in, all of this southern part of Alachua Savannah has all grown up now. Water does not sheet-flow into the lake as it did historically. When they did all this changing and re-diverting the water back to the sinkhole, all of that grew up and they pushed the canal down through Hissol, the water went through and everything is blocked up.

Historically the water came from Newnans Lake to Alachua Savannah and from Alachua Savannah south. Even Bartram talked about the large creeks going south emptying the Savannah. I have quoted that to some of these people who say it never did [happen], but it did--the sandy bottom creeks--and he wrote about all of that.

But they are not trying to restore Paynes Prairie to what it used to be. If you read Bartram and go through the original book and then through the revised version, you will see that what they are doing out there is nothing to what it used to be. If they would quit putting [away] the water that is being diverted down the sinkhole, stop those four pipes up and cover them up, let in enough water to make Alachua Lake like it used to be, and then control the water level in Alachua Lake by opening and closing the diversion gates, there would be enough water for all of us. And if GRU would straighten out their sewerage problems and storm water runoff problems, there would be even that much more water that would sheet-flow across Paynes Prairie into Orange Lake, like it did historically. And that is the way to do it, but it is just not being managed properly.

People went in there and they decided they were going to breach the dike at Prairie Creek to flood Paynes Prairie right after the Parks Department bought it so they would have a duck refuge so that all the big shots with the Fish and Game who are duck hunters could come down here and have a private duck hunting pond.

S: Do you people hunt at Paynes Prairie?

ET: No. But when the Parks Department first bought it in 1970, one of the park rangers breached the dike and flooded Alachua Lake, to make a duck habitat so his bosses, with the Fish and Game, and the Parks Department in Tallahassee, [could] come down here and duck hunt.

S: And was that an unofficial act?

ET: Oh, yes; it was sneaky, in fact.

S: I have not heard anyone mention this as a possibility, but what would you think of having all of the management removed, get rid of the dikes entirely, and allow the rivers and the lakes to go wherever they [used to].

ET: That has been discussed. With the amount of consumptive use permits that the Water Management has issued, with the industries, the fern farmers, and a lot of the things in this central part of Florida, if we go back to nature, we will not have enough water, because they are taking more out than they ought to be. As far as taking all the dikes and spillways out, if they take the spillway out here at [U.S.Route] 301, our lake will go even lower.

Now, it is possible for them to--if they want to--make Paynes Prairie like it was. They need to remove all those dikes, because there [are] hundreds of miles of dikes over there. Remove those [dikes]. But as far as being able to retain water in our lakes, we need to keep this spillway down here. We need to change it to a dam, with bottom opening gates, and turn the lake fluctuations over to the Fish and Game, to manage these as fisheries. And [Fish and Game will continue] to keep them healthy, and to keep them fluctuated, and restore what we are fixing to lose.

If nothing is done, if we let it all go back to nature, it would be the same thing as the government telling us to close all the hospitals, get rid of all the doctors, and let everything go back to nature, and we would be happy. We have made a mess out of this country, and we have got to maintain it, we cannot just neglect it. We have got to have some drought management, and that sort of thing.

There are a lot of people who say [that] the simplest thing to do is [to] turn it back over to nature, but to do that you will have to send all the Yankees back up north,

cap off all their wells, close [Interstate route] I-75, get rid of Disney Land, [World] and [State route] 441, and then we can go back to nature and we can cut off the electricity, and people can start washing with the wash pot, but I do not think people want to go back to nature. [Laughter]

S: I think there are a few people who would like to [go back to nature].

ET: Well, they can. They are very welcome to go out and buy them[selves] five acres of land, build them[selves] a tepee, and go out there and fight mosquitoes and that sort of thing. In fact, I have a friend who did that. But right now he is living in Gainesville, staying close to Alachua General [Hospital], because he has had heart by-passes and he likes modern medicine.

FT: And he is a big lawyer.

ET: And he is a lawyer.

FT: He lived about five years near Micanopy in the woods, in the tepee.

ET: But, you know, that is up to them. But I think people who bought waterfront property, and spent the extra tax money to have it, should be allowed to enjoy it, if [they] do not hurt it.

S: Not to demean your plight, but this is a condition that comes up in all kinds of places where people buy waterfront property, because oceans, and lakes, and rivers are not predictable. I know that this situation is a managed situation, where there is a solution, from your perspective, but do you think that there is any validity to the idea that we cannot control nature and when you build in a particular location you cannot guarantee that things are going to stay that way?

ET: We have gone too far. We cannot put it back into the condition where nature can control itself.

S: So you think management practices have already occurred and now we have to work [maintain] that?

ET: No. The invasion of nature is so vast that it needs to be properly managed now. We can not just throw our hands up and say let us not do anything else and just let it stay the way it is, because it will disappear. These eagles that are having to scavenge with the buzzards, because they can not find [a catch] _____.

It is the same way in Georgia. They decided to bring kudzu into the state of Georgia, to feed the cattle. Now it is covering up everything, homes, houses.

FT: Farms.

ET: The cows like it, they will eat it, but they get so tangled up in it, they can not get out of it, and they die of thirst, because they can not get to the water. We brought the love-bugs in, to get rid of the fruit fly larvae.

S: Where do the love-bugs come from?

ET: They were brought in from South America. Brought in by the University of Florida.

FT: Alachua County is a testing ground for the University of Florida.

ET: I do not know if you realize it or not, but they have turned the beetles loose in these lakes, these hybrid beetles; they turned the hybrid fly loose in these lakes to eat the hydrilla. So man is interfering with [nature]; we do not know what is going to really happen.

But if we do some ground management, if we do some good ecological controls [then we must keep it up]. We have made the laws where people cannot develop waterfront property any more; they cannot build on the shore line, that [building] has to be 300 feet back. You cannot get permits to do anything with septic tanks now. We have got the laws in place, to protect our environment. All we have to do is follow them. But we have to do some proper management of what we have got left. Young people think that if we just let it go, it will preserve itself and come back, but it will not.

It is just like this yard out here, if we did not maintain it, it would deteriorate into nothing but sand. People [are] cutting all the oak trees down because they want to go back to the long leaf pine; well, our nature and our environment will not support that type of growth. The oak trees have been here for 300 to 400 years. Your environment changes annually; the weather has a lot to do with it. Thousands of years ago, this was under water; well, it is not any more. So we have to manage what we have got. If we do not manage what we have got, we can kiss it all good-bye.

They are not stopping the development in Orlando. Disney World can build anything they want to, use as much wet-lands as they want to; they have already got a new deal out where these development people can trade wet-lands for wet-lands. If they want to develop this wet-land they can go buy some somewhere else and give it to the state and say that they can destroy this because they gave the other. It is all a trade-off; it is all big business.

S: You do not think that is a good idea, do you?

ET: Not that, I do not. But that is the way the government does it. They bought some land around these lakes that did not need to be bought. That 10,333 acres that the Water Management just bought under the Carl-program, there is only 300 acres of that [that is] waterfront property. The rest of it is upland pines, with a limit of one house for five acres.

S: What are they going to do with that?

FT: Nothing, ever. There will never anything be done with it.

ET: Nothing. It is set aside for preservation.

S: And they consider that a good idea?

ET: No, what they did [is that they let] Georgia Pacific cut all the timber off of it; they scalped it. They wanted to stop paying taxes on it; they only pay one dollar a year per acre. They scalped it, so they get the state to buy it, so they can take that \$7,400,000 and go up here in Georgia and buy thirty times as much property, to cut the timber off of, and then they will sell it to the state of Georgia. All the development around these cities needs to be spread out. One house for five acres will not be an environmental danger out here.

FT: See, they have taken our density out here, putting one house per five acres, and moved all that density of ours to the other side of Gainesville, around Oaks Mall and all of that, they can build anything they want to. But [not] in Cross Creek.

ET: When the environmentalists and friends of Cross Creek came out here and wanted to make Cross Creek historical, that was fine, but it was the developers who were behind it. They needed more density to build more apartments and condos around Gainesville and due to the comprehensive plan they could not do that. So where we could have out here two homes per acre, they changed it to one home per five acres; they took that density and gave it to the developers around Gainesville, so they can build more closer in there, just outside the city limits, so that HUD would pay the rent on all those condos and apartments. And these landowners who developed them [the condos and apartments] are getting rich. My tax money is paying a lot of the students' of the University rents, under the HUD program. There is a HUD office at the university. And people do not even want to talk about how big HUD is around here. And a lot of those students who drive Mercedes-Benz and BMW [cars] are foreigners. They are drawing food stamps and getting HUD [rent-subsidies] too, and I think something needs to be done about it.

S: I think I can tell you, I have yet to see a Mercedes or a BMW.

ET: Go to the outer edge. My son lived in one of these apartments, right off 34th and just about all of his neighbors were students. And there were some fancy automobiles. Now, [many] were not American students, they [were] from Iran, and Kuwait, and places like that, [who] came over here to get an education and kind of living off our taxpayers.

S: Some of those students who come from those particular countries are extraordinarily wealthy to begin with.

ET: They pay their way.

S: So unless you know that for sure, I would hesitate to make an assumption.

ET: Sometimes ask how many HUD programs are being used around the University. Lots. And those developers who own all that stuff, you never hear about them.

FT: That is right, they want to expand the city limits.

ET: They are the ones who pay for this commissioner, and this representative, and this one and that one, and they all pay under the table, and they get anything they want.

S: Well, tell me about the advisory council, that I went to the meeting with.

ET: OK, the reason the advisory council was formed is because a lot of public minded citizens decided that we needed to do something with our lakes and our water management program. We rented buses; we went over to the meetings, and we demonstrated. The chairman of the Water Management Board talked to me when we were doing that. He asked me what I thought about making an advisory council to recommend to the Water Management as to what they should do. And I told him I thought it was a good idea, because the only thing Water Management does is whatever staff recommends. But if some private citizens, and some people who can see further than the end of their nose and not act like ostriches, can look at this situation and find ways to correct our problems, and restore our eco-system and protect our wild life, and make this a better place to live, then we should do it.

The Governor was going to appoint the members on the advisory council. But the political issue was getting so hot, and [with] the election coming up, he told the Water Management District [members] to appoint them themselves. So the people who wanted to be on the advisory council applied to their local counties. The county commissioners screened the applications and then sent the recommendations to the Water Management. The Water Management chose

the people they wanted, and they tried to divide it up between environmental activists, and property owners, and business owners.

S: And can you tell me who is on the Board?

ET: We have Sid Martin, myself, Laveda Brown, Wallace Wimberly, a citizen, Jerry Harris, he is a fish camp owner at Sportsman's Cove.

FT: And the guy from Ocala, Norm Perry.

ET: Norm Perry, he is a county commissioner. There are two county commissioners on the advisory council, there is a representative from the DEP, there is a representative from the GRU, and there is a representative from the Fish and Game; there is thirteen members all together. There is also a representative from the Sahara Club.

FT: And then there is an environmentalist, Crawford Salomon.

ET: No, Crawford Salomon is a naturalist.

S: By profession, or inclination?

ET: He lived on some boards over there with a top on it for years, before he built a house. I mean, he is a naturalist. He wants everything to go back to nature. But with an engineering background that I have had all my life, I just cannot see that it will work. I see too many flaws in it. Too many things have happened that man has changed or destroyed to let it go back to nature. Now, you are probably a naturalist, I discern that; do you want a ride in the canoe?

S: I just have not made up my mind on this issue yet, which is why I am asking these questions. I was curious about [another matter]; of all the people who represent land owners, do you have pretty much the same opinion, are you in agreement over what should be done?

ET: All of the people in Save Our Lakes Association, the fish guides, the catfish fishermen, the bait fishermen, they all want our lakes to be restored to what they were.

S: To what they were when?

FT: [To what they were] back in 1987. It was in 1989 that they went down, you know.

ET: You see what has happened, the diversion from Paynes Prairie has affected our water level, also the increased flow of the sinkhole from erosion has affected it,

so that is two things that can be corrected. They can change the way they are doing Paynes Prairie by bringing water in [and] dumping it down the sinkhole; they can close off the sinkhole. They can bring the water in and they can keep it.

S: Do they have an environmentally safe method of closing off the sinkhole?

ET: Isolate it. It is already isolated. They can close off these four gates from Paynes Prairie and stop all the water from the Prairie and the diversion from going into the sinkhole. They have got to do something about sweetwater branch and the storm water. They have got to build something to clean that mess up.

FT: Naturalists should be up there jumping up and down, making them do something for the sake of the health [of all].

ET: Sweetwater branch is being pumped over Waldo Road. They diked that all the way from the Main Street plant. They have aimed it to the sinkhole; it is a disposal. And the people do not realize it. The people do not realize [that] every time they flush their toilet they are doing it into the drinking system. And we do not know that much about AIDS. How do we know that there is not AIDS virus going into our drinking water, you know, from that area. Nobody really knows.

I know in my plant in Tampa, they made me put anti-siphon back-flow preventors on all of my water systems down there, including the toilets, in case there is a fire somewhere and [if] someone urinates in a urinal [then] the fire-hoses will not suck that contaminated water back into the fresh water system. That is always a possibility of that. They are real concerned down there about that sort of thing; up here they do not seem to be that concerned.

We just may be developing things that we do not even know we are developing. This sonar, that they use out here, that you wrote down a while ago; Dow Chemical Company that makes it will not let a woman of child-bearing age in or near that area. They dump it in our lakes. We do not know what it [can do]. They have told us that they have done studies on the reproductive cycles of the fish, but they have not shown them to any of us. Do you know who is supposed to have done the studies? The chemical companies. Just like the GRU tests their own water, [so] chemical companies do their own tests. And they tell you it is good for you, [you can] eat it. If it tastes bad, spit it out, that is my opinion.

S: So you are at the Council meeting tomorrow? What will you be deciding?

FT: Why do you think this came out in the paper the day before the meeting?

S: Yes, it has been [there] every week.

ET: The Council is going to do something. We are going to do something; [either] St. Johns Water Management helps us, or we will get rid of them. We will put it on the legislative ballot and we will vote them out.

S: And what would you vote in their place?

ET: County control. Let Alachua County take care of Alachua County; let Marion County take care of Marion County; and do away with this largescale bureaucracy. [You] see, our County, that these two lakes fall in, wants something done.

S: Some of them are in agreement with you?

ET: Definitely. Laveda Brown and all of the County Commissioners [are in agreement].

FT: The County will do it if it thinks Water Management does not. Except for Kate Barnes.

ET: It needs to be done. Economically, socially, and recreationally.

FT: Kate Barnes is not for anything for Cross Creek. She is our County Commissioner but she has nothing to do with Cross Creek.

S: Has she expressed an opinion on the fisheries?

FT: [She] does not have to, you just look around and see that she has done nothing.

ET: We have had problems with Kate Barnes, with the task forces and this and that and the other. She likes the student vote.

FT: And she would have never got in if an officer _____.

ET: Having Ccounty-wide elections we want to change, we wanted District [elections]; only the people in your district vote for your representative. That is the only problem [we have now].

FT: We are not in favor of [county-wide elections]. We wanted to change that and get it in your district only. Because I do not think anybody living within the city limits of Gainesville should tell me what I can do out here on my property. We can not tell them what they do, so people inside the city limits should not be allowed to vote on the County things for the taxpayers out here.

ET: We cannot tell them what they can do. But they should have one Commissioner

at large. Out of the five Commissioners four should be district-voted and one at large, voted by probably the city of Gainesville. But the districts can be pie-shaped, even the residents of Gainesville can vote with the representative in their area. That is the way it should be. But the way it is now, it is county-wide. If all the blacks did not hang together they would not even have a representative, the way it is now.

S: Let me ask you, were either of you politically active in any other issues during the last time?

ET: No. When [you] see the lake going down, that makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck, and you want to do something. And you see the inactivity or the mismanagement [and] something needs to be done. And all we hear for the last fifteen or sixteen years [was to] leave it alone, let it ride. But it is getting worse. I asked the Water Management to do a computer model of Orange Lake, taking the last five years of rainfall and conditions, and putting those five years, [having made] them exact, to the next five years, and [see] what will our lake be like. And on that graph, in 1996, our lake will be down to fifty-one and one-half feet.

S: I think I have that right here. That was Price Robinson's dissertation?

ET: Yes. He did not want to do it. But see what our lakes are going to be? At fifty-four feet we can not go down the creek. There is no access at fifty-four feet from the fish camps or the creek.

S: He has two scenarios here.

ET: He did two computer [charts].

S: One of them goes down to Fifty-two [feet], but then it looks like it stays up for most of the time.

ET: I think one of them is...I do not know what he said on the front.

S: [Do you] want to take a look?

ET: As they are now, that is what is going to happen.

FT: See, there [are] graphs that they do at St. Johns Water Management, and we have got men who do graphs, have been doing it for years--water level and management--I guess for the state, and they do not jive with what has actually been going on over there.

S: So you are saying there is a discrepancy between them?

FT: Yes, very much a [discrepancy].

ET: You can get out of a computer model whatever you put in it.

S: Of course.

ET: It is just like that article you saw [that] Bruce Richie wrote last Friday. If we isolate the sinkhole 100 percent, Water Management says we will lose 4,500 acres of wetlands. That is a lie.

FT: That is ridiculous, they cannot possibly lose that.

ET: What they are doing is [they are] saying our lake is down to 7,500 acres. Normal lake area is 12,000 [acres]. If we raise our water level and cover up the bottom of our lake, we will lose 4,500 acres of wetlands. But what they do not realize is, and they do not accept this, if our lake is at 12,000 acres, the circumference around our lake and the expanse of wetlands is more than what we filled up. The bigger you get the pie, the larger the crust around the edge. And that is the wetlands.

Now they are counting the dry bottom of lake as wetlands, when it should not be counted that way. The water should go up to the cypress ring around the lakes and that is the historical [situation]. All of that water that has covered the bottom of the lake, from the cypress ring down, should be considered lake bottom, not wetlands. And from the cypress ring outward is wetlands. Now it is not wetlands. What is going to happen if this lake stays at 7,500 acres, Orange Lake, the hardwoods are going to encroach on it until all of this will be grown up into pines, hardwoods, and there will be no wetlands, except right around the small area of the lake. If we increase the circumference of the lake, we increase the amount of wetlands.

FT: The County Commissioners of Alachua County, five years ago, did not know that the spillway was built in 1963, on [U. S. Route] 301 by Alachua County.

ET: They did not know it.

S: They did not know a thing about it?

ET: Two years ago, when we started looking for where the water was going and we found the diversion, then we started checking the sinkhole over there, and St. Johns Water Management said there was no sinkhole. There never has been. They knew there was [the sinkhole]. They knew where it was. The more you stir

it, the deeper it gets. And that is what we have been doing, stirring. And the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

S: Who are some of the other key players who are not on the advisory board?

ET: Who are not on it?

S: Yes. People who are not on it.

ET: Winbocks, who is the president of our Save Our Lakes Association, John Rhymes, vice-president of Save Our Lakes Association, then we had Bob Thomas, with the Orange Level group, Wallace Wimberly. He was put on it. There [were] a lot of people who wanted to be on it; I do not know who applied for it, but the only reason I am on it is because I called Tallahassee and told them, damn it, put me on. You know, I demanded to be on it.

FT: Well, he had time; he has been to the library many, many hours, and [he has] done a lot of research. These other people who run fish camps all could not do that.

ET: I have got the time to give it the necessary attention that it needs. I just could not sit still and see someone else be on the council and me not being able to say anything, because I do say what I think.

S: You have also put the time in to get the information. Now, how many fish camps are on one?

FT: Well, there are four here. Three closed at Cross Creek.

ET: But only one in operation.

FT: One in operation; they all closed down.

S: They are closed down, and the people do not live there any more?

FT: They live there, but they do not [operate].

ET: In fact, Cross Creek Lodge has gone into cutting grass and lawn care business. He is going to wait and see what happens. The Cross Creek Fish Camp went bankrupt. They have a caretaker over there, and he is doing the best he can, but he has no funds, electricity is cut off, no phones. Twin Lakes Fish Camp, if it [were] not paid for years ago, and the husband of the current owner is a retired service person, they would have never made it. And there is Boggs's Finway Fish Camp.

FT: Oh, there is another fish camp there besides William Barr. Yes, on Lochloosa there is Wayne Boggs and there [are] six fish camps on [Lake] Orange. There is Jerry Hare's, Maner, Anne and Mike, and that ball-player Johnson.

ET: Celebrity.

FT: That is the Johnson [camp], is it not?

ET: Yes, that is Johnson.

FT: There is at least ten fish camps, I guess, just existing.

S: And they are all losing money?

ET: And what the Water Management suggested doing was to dredge the creek and dredge access, [and] lower the bottom of the lake. That makes real good sense. We are going to lower the bottom of the lake, because the surface of the lake is below norm. So we are going to lower the bottom. We are going to open up more sinkholes.

S: Can you run your boat at all?

ET: Yes.

S: You can, kind of, run your boat.

FT: But there is too much hydrilla out there; we cannot do any fishing. You go twenty feet and you back up ten, to get the hydrilla off your propeller.

ET: Do you see the air boats out here?

S: Do you have an air boat?

FT: No, we have a pontoon boat.

ET: We have a pontoon boat. But anything that sticks a prop down into the water, unless it is 150 to 200 horse, that just horse-powers itself across that stuff, clog[s] up. You stop, you back up. You go forward. You back up and you go forward. It is just not worth ruining a \$5,000 motor just to go out into the lake for a little while.

S: Does anybody use a canoe or a rowboat out here?

ET: A lot of people [do]. They rent canoes at Twin Lakes, and there [are] canoes at

the half-operating fish camp over here, and we have a canoe. A lot of canoers.

FT: But people can go out on the boat that do not really care about their motors.

ET: A lot of people do not like to canoe in these lakes because of alligator infestation. And also, the hydrilla, there have been several people out here who have fallen overboard, and drowned, by entanglement. People who could swim, but they get tangled up in this mess and they cannot move their arms and legs and the more they kick the more tangled up they get. So it is very dangerous.

S: So when you meet tomorrow, what is going to be discussed?

ET: The sinkhole.

S: The sinkhole. And how many more meetings do you have scheduled before you are going to come to some kind of a decision.

ET: The Water Management has hired an engineering firm, for \$9,000, to do a feasibility study, an engineering study, on isolating the sinkhole. They sent that contract out and they let it. The contract has already been let. They have forty-five days to complete that report. So we are giving them the benefit of the doubt, and I am going to recommend that we postpone the final decision on the sinkhole until we get this report back, to see if we can even do it. If we vote to do it, and find out geologically or hydraulically we cannot, it would be just a waste.

S: So do you think there is agreement that isolating the sinkhole is a possibility?

ET: The University of Florida, IFAS [the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences], Dr. Bill Howler, Dr. Ken Langlen with IFAS, Joseph Joyce, Don Canfield, all of them agree that we must isolate the sinkhole. It is a flaw in our lake. It is a hole. If this sinkhole was over near I-75 or [U. S. Route] 441, they would have fixed it last Sunday on overtime.

S: Does the management of the Prairie have any say in what happens to the sinkhole?

ET: No.

S: None at all.

ET: But I have talked to the DEP and they think the sinkhole should be managed.

S: Has anyone spoken of what kind of effect that is going to have on the Prairie? Is that at issue here?

- ET: The issue between the Parks Department and GRU is water quality. GRU said the water is good enough to use in the Prairie. The Parks people say it is too high in nutrients.
- FT: That is the reason all the hardwood and stuff is growing up in the Prairie; it is not like it used to be. In 1946, when we used to come down here on old [U. S. Route] 41, there was nothing but frog bite, blooming frog bite, the prettiest sight.
- ET: If they want the Prairie to be efficient, to help our eco-system, and to filter our water and to take the nutrients out, the need to let the hyacinth go. Let them go all over Paynes Prairie. Hyacinths thrive on nutrients and cattails.
- S: And what do they need to do?
- ET: Quit killing the hyacinths and cattails.
- S: Are they actively [killing them]?
- ET: Yes, they are spraying all the hyacinths, they are spraying the hyacinths in our lakes, they are spraying hydrilla in our lakes, they sprayed all the hyacinths in Paynes Prairie.
- S: Are they purposely killing the hyacinths or is that a by-product of spraying hydrilla?
- ET: No, they are purposely killing them. Some biologist decided that hyacinths were not good.
- FT: See, the hyacinths used to shade the hydrilla. We used to have all the lily pads out there and there was no hydrilla, because the lily pads shade them.
- ET: Have you seen the hyacinths? It is a purple blossom? They are killing them, everywhere. They [hyacinths] do not give us a problem. Yes, they make big roots, but you push them out of the way. Now, if they got to where they cover the lakes, we could understand it.
- FT: Now if they got to where you could not go out and fish, that would do, but if they are just around the edges [of the lake] like they are now, there is no problem with the hyacinths.
- ET: But hyacinths should be in Paynes Prairie. That would be the answer to their nutrient problem, and their filtration. It used to be that way, but they have all been sprayed out.

S: And have you made this suggestion?

ET: Yes.

S: And what is the result?

ET: None.

FT: We have requested it, but they keep spraying.

ET: To go back to nature, we need to disconnect all the toilets in Gainesville, you know, things have got to really change. So if we cannot disconnect all the toilets in Gainesville, what we have to do is clean that water up that goes through them, and use it again. Recycle our water. Water is going to be the most scarce thing in the state of Florida in the next thirty years, as you would ever believe.

We have Tampa, St. Pete, and they want our water, that is under our ground. They want to build a six-foot pipeline from Rainbow Springs in Dunnellon to Tampa, six feet high, and pump all the fresh water. Alright, when we start pumping water to all these cities, then salt water intrusion is going to come up under from the bottom, and we are not going to have any drinking water. What these cities need to do, [and] do it now, build desalination plants. They need to do it, but it is cheaper to take water out of Pinellas County and take it all the way down to Hillsborough County.

FT: We have been going to meetings up at Dunnellon.

ET: Things have got to change. The water has to be managed. We have to recycle everything we can recycle. And sixty million gallons of water that they are diverting from Prairie Creek into Paynes Prairie, then down the sinkhole, is actually a waste of water. I know it goes down into the sinkhole and into the aquifer, but it could be used before we dump it. The water that goes into that sinkhole, or down into that aquifer, should be water that has been reused and cleaned up and then, let it go back.

Our aquifer is a big filter. And if you have ever done anything involving filters, they do stop up. The more trash you put in them, the more often you have to back-flush them or stop them up. There is no way to back-flush our aquifer. We just condemn it.

S: So if things go the way you want them, how are your lives going to change? Are you going to go back to being a fishing guide?

FT: Yes, definitely.

ET: She has 200 people, on call, wanting to go out.

FT: [They] want to go out right now, fishing.

S: Do people come here from all over?

ET: They call from all over. Get your magazine there.

FT: I have had them from Spain, I had thirty Brazilian English [language] teachers come to the University of Florida for six weeks, and I took them out.

ET: She takes tours out and she will show you something now.

FT: I [took people] out for Nabisco's fishing tournament. I saved the bass; I have a 100 gallon tank that I put on my boat, and I released 131 fish, out of 134, live. The reason I had three of them die, is [because] they were gut hooked before they went on my boat. [Paper rustling] This has a seat and air conditioner [installed] in Ocala.

S: That is your boat?

FT: Yes.

S: And where [is this], is this right here?

ET: Lochloosa.

S: This is on Lochloosa.

ET: And this is the lily pads that they are killing. This is one of the last trips she was able to make, because of the low water.

FT: That is me, right there. They [magazine] are not selling in Florida, every state in the union but Florida, so I had Christmas cards that wanted me to take them fishing.

ET: People from all over the United States, TV producers have called us and wanted to do shows.

FT: [They called] from all over, everywhere. As soon as I go on the lake they want to come and do a story of me teaching people how to spec fish.

S: Did you consider having them do a story on what is going on now?

ET: Where is your fish, grandma?

FT: There it is. No, that is not it. I think there is not a picture of it. [Paper rustling]

ET: No, you are referred over to another page somewhere, in the article. She got a four pound fish. Maybe it was in another magazine you had your fish in?

S: Can you just say what magazine this is, and volume and [date]?

FT: Crappie World, volume number two, March, 1990.

S: So it was as recently as 1990 [that] things were going fine.

FT: No, this picture was made before.

ET: They [the lakes] started declining before that. This was the last trip they were able to go out.

FT: 1989 is the last time I was on the lakes.

ET: And this came out after.

S: OK, so this picture was [taken then].

FT: See, the man who made the picture, he is so involved, and he sends articles in, and then it comes out in that order.

S: So you did not have the TV people come out and do a story?

ET: Not yet, no. She has been on TV twice.

FT: I have been on Monroe Campbell in Jacksonville show twice.

ET: That is a half-hour show.

FT: But the TV company that wants to come down is from Wisconsin. And just as soon as I can get out and let them know, they will be here.

S: So they are not interested in doing a story on what is going on?

ET: No, they want to see the lakes when they are perfect.

FT: No, theirs is a fishing show.

ET: They like to encourage people to come fishing, and you do not show them [low] water levels, and docks sticking out of the water, and boat slips with nothing but mud in them; you do not show people that.

FT: These people are waiting in line right now to go out.

ET: Yes, they called us last week. And we have others [calling]. We have one or two phone calls a day from people. We just tell them honestly, the water is too bad, wait until it gets better and we will call you.

S: And how is this affecting your standard of living, not being able to do this?

ET: This is her hobby.

S: You are not making any money off of it really.

ET: She charges so little that it does not even take care of the expenses on the boat. Like these twelve people who went out on this boat paid seventy-five dollars total. And she spent the whole day out there. We furnished the insurance and the gas, all the tackle and everything, so, we do not make anything. She takes old people out who could not go out any other way. She has taken terminally ill cancer patients out with oxygen tanks, to let them fish their last time, and that breaks your heart.

FT: I had a doctor who died three weeks after I took him out. [He died] of Cancer, [he was] from Lake City.

ET: She takes the boy scouts out. We can take people out who cannot go and [have no other way].

FT: I have a group of eighteen year old retarded kids from Gainesville waiting to go out in the middle of April.

ET: A lot of her stuff is free, gratis.

FT: And I do a lot of boy scouts, from Jacksonville, and girl scouts, and Sunday schools. You know on one day I have taken out ninety-two Sunday school kids out.

S: In shifts, I hope?

ET: Yes, one trip only. [Laughter] No, we can only take eighteen people [at one time].

FT: Well, they drove in buses, and as soon as I would unload one they would serve them refreshments, and then I would go with them in the bus and take them, and bring another load. And I have had two Grey Hound big bus loads of people out here. And Nabisco and Publix get together and I have had two or three tournaments for them. And just as soon as I can get out I will have them again. I escort the boats out, I have a PA system, [and I] turn the boats loose to go out every so many seconds, and then I save the fish.

ET: We are environmentally active.

FT: I park over at the park, and they put a chemical in the tank and they have four of these big tanks [that] they set on the bank.

ET: They stage them to us, and then we take them out into deeper water, where there is more oxygen.

FT: We release them where there is more oxygen. At the park the water is not deep enough. And I do volunteer [work] at the boys' ranch [near] Lake City, there at Live Oak. The best of them work through the Sheriff's Department. We do an awful lot of volunteer work.

ET: She is also the Director for the YMCA summer program in this part of the county. At Lochloosa Methodist Church she has five weeks of forty screaming children, from first to sixth grade. But she enjoys it.

S: Well, I would like to ask you if there is anything else you would like to say.

ET: All the environmental groups need to look at what the situation is and determine what can be done, or what can not be done. And all we hear from all the agencies is to not do anything. And we see it [the lake] deteriorating in front of our eyes. We see the silt building up at the bottom of these lakes from all the spray.

FT: At one time Cross Creek used to have sandy bottoms from the spring. Now, you step out and you get bogged up in the muck.

ET: If we can bring the water level up to fifty-seven and one-half feet, and maintain it there, we can safely put some of the grass carp in the lake to help keep the hydrilla. But only a limited amount.

S: Are there any predators that eat the carp?

ET: Gators. Gators eat everything. They eat each other. I do not know, with the

amount of alligators in these lakes, if we can maintain any carp in the lakes. But with no control on the water level, putting x-number of carp per acre, four, five, three, whatever, and the water goes down, then you've got more per acre, and then they eat everything, all the vegetation. So it is too risky, without being able to manage the water levels, to put the carp in here.

FT: They had this carp symposium, at the University of Florida, and they had 167 people [who] flew in from all over the United States.

ET: The consensus of that symposium, on the day we discussed [lakes] Orange and Lochloosa, was [to have] no carp until we can manage the water level, up to the cypress ring. [There must be] a ring of cypress all the way around. The fluctuation of the lakes will be determined by the marks on the trees. Because that is the historical fluctuation. But we have got to get the water up to the ring of trees. And then you fluctuate the lakes according to the historical fluctuations, when you have a healthy lake. The lakes are so low right now that there is not enough oxygen out there to support the fishery. They are all dying. Nobody is catching any specs any more, these crappie. They are catching some little ones, but all the big ones are gone. And bass, they are not like they were. Even the fishing out here in the canal is poor.

FT: In 1982, when I had my little bass boat, and I could not go out for seven months, I stood out here on the bank, and I caught 276 bass, just walking up and down my seawall out here. I have not caught a bass out here this whole spring, because there is something happening to the fish.

[End of the interview]