

**Hayden Reno and Andy “Rocky” Rakocy
Fatboy’s Restaurant—Manchac, LA**

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Date: May 13, 2014

Location: In back of Fatboy’s Restaurant - Manchac, LA

Interviewer: Sara Roahen

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: two hours, four minutes

Project: Middendorf’s and Manchac

00:00:02

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is Wednesday, May 13, 2014, and I'm in Manchac, Louisiana with Mr. Hayden Reno and Rocky Rakocy. And let's get started. I'm going to ask you both to introduce yourselves by saying hello and telling me your--your full name and what you do for a living.

00:00:29

Hayden Reno: My name is Hayden E. Reno, and I commercial fish and crab—catfish, shrimp, all that.

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Rocky Rakocy: My name is Andy Rakocy and they call me Rocky Rakocy. They hung that on me when I was a baby. I don't know why. But anyhow, I'm a commercial fisherman, crabbing, and catfish, and used to trap when we had something to trap, but that's kind of over with.

00:00:55

SR: Okay, thanks. Did you say Andy?

00:00:58

RR: Uh-hm.

00:01:00

SR: Is that your full name, Andy, or is it Andrew?

00:01:02

RR: My name is actually Andy, after my grandpa, Andy Francis.

00:01:04

SR: So--so I'll get back to more general stuff, but that's interesting to me that there's not much to trap around here anymore. What did you trap, and what's not available anymore?

00:01:18

RR: We used to trap nutria, muskrat, mink, otter, coon. And then it was mainly nutria and they kind of disappeared probably due to hurricanes and alligators. That's their favorite food.

Hurricanes killed a lot of them.

00:01:35

SR: Well that's—

00:01:35

RR: They had a bounty on them, too. People hunted for—they put a bounty on them and you just had to cut the tail off.

00:01:43

SR: That's interesting. I--I sort of had the impression—I mean, an uneducated impression—that they were still kind of populating like crazy around Louisiana.

00:01:53

RR: Not in this little area around Manchac. There's hardly none left. But mainly hurricanes, and then the—I would say between the hurricanes and alligators. Man ain't hurt them.

00:02:06

HR: Yeah, that's some—there's some places down South that's still got a lot of nutria. I don't know why there's certain areas that's got it because we used to have nutria coming out of the woodwork in the swamps around here. But for some reason the hurricanes—. But there's hurricanes down below and they still got nutrias down there. So that's questions we'll never be able to answer. You got to have a biologist or something, so—.

00:02:29

SR: What about those other animals? Are they in shorter supply also?

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RR: Well, years ago—you know, in my lifetime—everybody used to trap in this area and they always had fur come back the next year and you'd do pretty decent or something, you know. But then like the prices went to the fur buyer when they had all the animal rights people come up and--and kind of squash the fur industry. And people quit. It looked like the fur disappeared

when they quit, but I still say the alligators— too many alligators. Well, they got a control on that a little bit maybe, but—

00:03:06

HR: The muskrat was here way before the nutria arrived.

00:03:09

RR: Right.

00:03:09

HR: And the muskrat had mounds they built to live in because I think they was kind of immune to—I don't think they was a wintertime animal too much. But when the nutria came in, they— nutria just destroyed their house that they made, the mound, and I think--I think the nutria is what knocked the muskrat out. Don't you think, Rocky?

00:03:35

RR: Yeah.

00:03:37

HR: Because they couldn't live without their mounds, and the nutria was like a big--big varmint like, and they made their nest on top, and it was like a rat's nest, and the muskrats went underneath like—sort of like a beaver and made their nest. And they went up and they had a

warm den up underneath there. And I think the nutria just tore it up and knocked them out, because that's when the muskrat disappeared, after the nutria rat took over.

00:04:05

The nutria rat came in from where was it?

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RR: I think they—somebody was raising them and, yeah, and somebody brought them over here to experiment something and they supposed to have got loose in one of the hurricanes in the early '60s. Before that they didn't have nutrias here, until say the early '60s maybe—late '50s. And then they really got thick. At times they was--they was plentiful. And they had a good-a good fur market for them, you know, and then it kind of just all disappeared. Which, that will never come back, I don't think.

00:04:36

And the other animals, the coon and the mink—they used to have crawfish in the swamp, and then saltwater kind of done away with that. And then that was one of their main foods, and they was mink and coons. That's what the people went after, my grandfather and them, years ago down here. Hayden's grandpa and daddy and them, they trapped. But mink, coon, and muskrat. And then the nutrias come in and that other stuff kind of just went away. They still have coon. I mean, but that's—the fur markets went to nothing. There's no more fur buyers. They all—I mean like I said, the animal rights people, whatever kind of—

00:05:12

HR: Artificial furs and all that, you know; artificial rabbits and all that, and farm-raised—. But that--that's so much cheaper, to make the imitation.

00:05:22

RR: One of the main things going on down here in Manchac, too, in the wintertime was trapping. It was a pretty big deal.

00:05:28

HR: It was seasonal. You had wintertime and you'd trap, and then in the summertime—I mean the spring and the fall you was crabbing, fish, and stuff like that. But that was—most of the fishermen and people that made the living off the land, that was year-round. They had something to do all year round, so—.

00:05:46

SR: Let me ask you about one thing you said, Rocky, which was that the swamps used to be freshwater. What swamp are you referring to that's around here? Where is that?

00:05:57

RR: Well it was more—I said “fresh”; it wasn't always exactly fresh, but it was more fresh I would say than now. All--all around this area. You used to have crawfish, and now they're kind of—now this year—. It just depends on how the rain and another couple things that come into play. They closed that MRGO [Mississippi River Gulf Outlet] three years ago, and I think that probably affects some of it. But everything goes by, you know, more or less weather and the

amount of rain we get. If they open the [Bonnet Carre] Spillway; if they don't. And everything plays a part.

00:06:28

SR: So there aren't really—there isn't much crawfishing right around here right now?

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RR: No, not too much no more.

00:06:34

HR: Used to you'd catch all the crawfish you wanted in ditches, everywhere in the swamp. Where there was a place you could put a net in the water, thirty, forty—well, say forty years back—you can catch all the crawfish you wanted. I remember back in the--in the '70s we used to have the big seafood market on the end, and we used to buy crawfish for like five cents a pound and sell them for ten, twelve cents a pound. But that was like in the '70s, not too long—. But the market—and they didn't ship crabs and crawfish out of the country back then. It was like a local market and it—but they had more crawfish and people would catch their own crawfish and—

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RR: People didn't eat the crawfish back then like they do now. You know, they go crazy over craw—. Back then when I was a kid you never—you had different little places, but now every little store is boiled crawfish. And actually the crabs, too. Before they started shipping them to Baltimore, we didn't have the market for the crabs that—like now you can go catch them and

bring them to the market and back up there six days a week, but back then you was limited—
market.

00:07:45

SR: But you did eat crawfish?

00:07:46

RR: Oh yeah. We always ate some, yeah.

00:07:49

SR: Always boiled?

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HR: Yeah, that's the only way you should—

00:07:52

RR: Stew. Stew. I mean, you know.

00:07:54

HR: Mostly boiled. They used to make the crawfish stews and bisque and all that, you know.

Not too often because that's hard work. It takes a lot of time. Boiling them is the easy thing.

Crabs and crawfish and all.

00:08:08

SR: Let me ask you: Could you just clarify when you said, that you had the seafood market over there where you had the crawfish. What--what market are you talking about?

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RR: Yeah, we had—the old fellow Dennis Rottman opened up—

00:08:23

HR: That's Miss Beauty's daddy.

00:08:25

RR: Yeah, that's the first seafood market I think they—. I don't know about the first, but that was like in the early 1930s when this old fellow—

00:08:32

HR: Well they had—I think they had one—I heard my mom talk about they had little fish markets across the bridge, but that was the main market down there on the corner.

00:08:41

SR: Rottman's?

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RR: When he started he was shipping seafood by trains.

00:08:45

HR: By train.

00:08:46

RR: They had a--they had a train depot right in back—right on the track right there.

00:08:50

HR: See, back then everybody—Manchac was actually built on catfish mainly because [*Phone Rings*] they didn't know how to pond-fish back then, you know. We're talking about a long time ago.

00:09:03

It wasn't—the competition was more—for seafood markets and all—. Like I said, we had it in the early 1970s. We took it over from the Rottmans, Dennis Rottman, and we had a semi-truck that we had a route all the way to Jackson, Mississippi, and we used to load it up once a week with fish, shrimp, oysters, all kind of seafood. And we had stops and it took us two days to get to Jackson, Mississippi with the truck.

00:09:33

RR: That's what they said.

00:09:35

HR: To get to all the little places that used—the restaurants and all, everything—used to take us two days: one day going up and delivering all the seafood all the way to Jackson, and then come back. So the competition, there wasn't any. Now you got every little curb market, every supermarket selling seafood in it and all. So people didn't have to—they don't have to—. And then they got the wholesale dealers everywhere. So you know, people who own businesses and stuff, it didn't have to—nowadays they don't have to go but next door down the block to get their seafood.

00:10:12

Years ago when we're talking about if they had—and people in Mississippi and all, and they didn't have access to seafood so we came to them or they had to come to us and it was easy for them to wait for us to deliver. So we had the place down there in--in the early '70s up to the mid-'80s or something like that. We got out of it and now we're down here. But the seafood business is different now than what it was back then. Like I say, it's--it's a hard competitive business, seafood. Seafood is everywhere, so it's almost where you got your own kind of like customers and stuff that you distribute to and got a retail place where they come get it, and just make a little living out of it, you know.

00:11:00

SR: I'm trying to figure out—so, I understand that it's a more competitive market now, but I also, when I talk to fishermen in Louisiana, hear that are less people fishing. So how does that work? If there are less people fishing, how is it more competitive?

00:11:19

HR: Well, there are less people fishing, but they still got—what you think, Rocky? One hundred times more than they had in the '70s, though.

00:11:26

RR: They got way better equipment, and like we used to only have maybe 200 pots or something like that, and now some of them got way more than that, a couple thousand maybe. You know, there is less people, but I'd say probably more equipment in the water and better equipment. Like shrimp and everything. They got everything, you know—

00:11:47

HR: Less people, but they spread out all over. You know, all over down in the Venice area and all; every piece of body of water that you've got, and you got people crabbing and fishing down there, yeah.

00:11:59

RR: Yeah, they—and equipment is so much better. They just got smarter. I mean, people—you learn—. Like we started out with crab nets, and my daddy and them, we started with crab nets and got a few crab pots and then used to tie them to the poles out here, and that took time and just—it just grew. Well, you live and learn but—.

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SR: Can you describe to me, for the record, what a pot is?

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RR: Crab trap?

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SR: It's a trap?

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RR: Well, they call them pots. Just wire traps; four funnels. We used to have two funnels and it used to have to—they used to be galvanized, and now they're plastic-coated. They used to last a certain amount of time and now they last longer. But you still lose them; they still go bad. They used to cost \$2.25 and now they cost \$30. [*Laughs*]

00:12:48

SR: Okay, so we—I got ahead of myself here, but that was all really interesting. Let me back up and ask you: Would you mind telling me your birthdates? Rocky?

00:12:58

RR: Mine is June 17, 1954.

00:13:00

HR: August 26, 1957.

00:13:04

SR: Okay, thanks. And can you tell—can you tell me, like kind of specifically, what you do for a living now? Like how you spend most of your days? I mean, I know you said “fishermen,” but do you—Rocky, do you [*Laughs* crab primarily right now, or—?

00:13:26

RR: Well, I crab like from March to October and November, and then I catfish in the wintertime mostly now. When the crabbing plays out or the weather gets too cold and ain't hardly no crabs, for me, I mean, I go catfishing.

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SR: And—

00:13:45

RR: It depends on the weather. Yeah, I've crabbled all the way to January, but I mean sometimes I quit in October. It just depends. You know, we used to have them warm winters, and now they been cold. It just—weather means a lot in everything.

00:13:55

SR: So back when you were hunting—well, trapping and hunting—in the winter, you didn't do the catfish thing so much?

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RR: Not all the time. They got a season on them. Trapping season used to be from—well, it was—years ago I think it was November the 20th, and then they moved it up to December the 1st, the season. And now it goes from December, when they had the bounty on it—well, you can still trap for the fur, but I mean it's worthless. So--so people hunted over here, hunted it for the tails, and it went all the way into April. But it—basically, December, January, and February—trapping season.

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SR: Okay. And where do you crab and fish catfish?

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RR: Lake Maurepas and Lake Pontchartrain.

00:14:44

SR: And who is your customer?

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RR: I sell some to the shippers. I sell some to Reno's here. I sell some to Ponchatoula or sell some to Middendorf's. They buy some fish and crabs from me, soft-shells.

00:15:01

SR: Okay, thanks. Hayden, I can't quite get a handle on exactly what you do for work because it seems like you have a lot going on here.

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HR: Yeah, well, it's kind of duplicated with Rocky with the fishing. You know, fish and crab season. But I kind of stick with that. I mean my--my family has been in the seafood business with the retail business and selling it to the public and all, and I've been in that in my early days and still fished and all that. But mostly I do a lot of fishing and crabbing now, and--and my family is still in the seafood business with the retail and seafood and sell it fresh and everything. But I kind of—I'm just kind in limbo with just doing the fishing part of it, you know, so—. But kind of duplicated to Rocky with the fishing, and we kind of got the same kind of pattern with the times and the fishing and the—you know, fishing is better at times and crabbing is better at times, so we kind of not copy each other, but we just hit the fish when the fish is hitting good and the crabs when the crabs are going good. So I'm the same.

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RR: Before we get there, one thing I want to say about the catfish. Years ago, before Katrina [in 2005], we used to be able to go out and with a trout line—we fish a trout line. They got some of them fish with nets, but I don't fool with them, but—. I mean, I don't fool with a net. But we used to be able to go out at night in the evening time in the summer and fish all summer in Lake Maurepas. You had to go in the evening and go back in the morning. But now since Katrina, the seacats and the sharks come up in here and—anyhow, we call them seacats, but they get to the bait before the catfish so it makes it kind of hard. If they get too thick you just can't catfish. I mean they—you get one of them on every hook and they basically are worthless.

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SR: Okay, so I have a few questions about that. First of all, can you explain for the record what a trout line is versus other ways of fishing catfish?

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RR: Well, a trout line is just a long line with drops on it every ten foot, and weights and floats, and that's the way we catfish other than net fish, which I don't—. I don't do that, but they do have some net fishermen, hoop net fishermen.

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SR: And what do you use as bait on the line?

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RR: Well, that's another thing. That's one of the bigger parts of fishing, is bait. Sometimes it's real—harder to catch the bait than it is the fish. But we use eel, mullet, shad. Whatever we can catch here natural is the best bait. Frozen bait and artificial bait is no good.

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SR: And how do you catch that, and where do you go?

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RR: Mainly with cast nets and a troll, or then—basically cast net.

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SR: Do you eat any of that bait, like the eel and stuff?

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RR: I've ate it, but I don't—I'm not crazy about it.

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SR: Do you like it?

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HR: No. I mean, no. I mean, the eel I've ate eel but—. You know, that's--that's a delicacy in some parts of this world and all that, Chinese and all, but I don't think—. I mean, we catch it in eel traps and all for fish bait, but we got too much other seafood—catfish and crabs and all—this other good seafood we got. I mean, eel is okay, but we just don't—we don't go out of our way to eat that part. It's--it's hard to get the meat out of them, skin them and all that, and cut them up. It's not a lot in them, you know, so—. But they're not--they're not bad to eat. But that's not something that is so good it's a delicacy.

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SR: What--what happened with Katrina that caused, now, the sharks and the seacats—I don't know what that is, but—to come up this far?

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HR: Well just a big—the big intrusion of saltwater flood. I mean, it was such a powerful storm; kind of changed a little bit—. I don't know; it looks like once they got in here and started coming in here—. Now, years ago they used to have them too and then they kind of—we had a little lull there and it wasn't no sharks or nothing for quite a few years. And now they come back. I mean—.

00:19:16

SR: Hmm, it's the salt—it's the—. No, that's okay. But it's mostly in the change in the salinity of the water, they can survive up here?

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RR: Right, and it does vary. I mean one year might be worse than the next, you know.

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SR: What is a seacat?

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RR: It's a type of catfish. I mean, it's saltwater cat. They're good to eat but they don't have no market for it. I mean, you got to trim them up, but they're good. They're not no bad fish in the water out there, but I mean they—it's not a market. They used to, years ago they had a market for them. But not now that I know of.

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SR: Are they real big?

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RR: No. They don't get but about maybe three, four pounds. And maybe five, a big one. You know, they're not—no, they don't get as big as a catfish. We catch catfish twenty, thirty, forty pounds. The blue cat and the tabby cat or the yellow cat—

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SR: What kind of shark comes this way?

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RR: Well they got—what they call them, Hayden?

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HR: Bull sharks get big. They get ten, twelve—

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RR: They got those little sand sharks and them other—what's them? Something I don't know; they're real aggressive. They're talking about them. That must be them bulls, huh?

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HR: The bull sharks are the ones that—that's the ones that's giving everybody problems around here because they--they go after your fish that's caught on a trout line.

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RR: They cut your line.

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HR: They'll cut your lines up and cut your fish off and all, and it makes it impossible to fish in the areas where they're at because you can't keep your lines together.

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Your lines are made out of nylon, small nylon lines. And when they go after the bait or the fish that's on the line to eat them, they—their teeth can just touch a line and just cut it, you know, and it makes it impossible. And they're in the area, which they've been in here since Katrina. Now this year it looks like they kind of backed off a little bit. It might be a little change with the wintertime that we had.

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RR: Right, different year.

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HR: Freshwater.

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RR: Warm water.

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HR: It could—it might be the year that they kind of stay away from here. But the problem is we heard that once the bull shark comes in and they--they get adapted to the freshwater real good, you heard about the bull sharks all over the—back in the history of going up in the rivers and stuff like that. But they adapt to it. But the little ones, once they have little ones, they born their little ones in the--up the rivers and stuff. And what we've heard, they'll come back. The little ones will come back and they're kind of territorial and come back. But hopefully they won't come back in. They've kind of disappeared this year—keep them away so—. But the hurricanes, when they get that big wave of water coming in, the surge, it pushes all that stuff in here. And I guess after Hurricane Katrina they kind of stayed in with the water, you know, and they got territorial. So hopefully they'll get out of here and give us a break.

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SR: Are they good eating?

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HR: I've heard they was but there's--there's laws, and they regulate the taking of sharks, so there's only certain times of year and certain sharks that you can take. They got to be a certain size and you got to fish for sharks. You got to have big wire leaders and stuff like that to fish for sharks because they'll--they'll cut your lines and all. So nobody really fishes them around this area to even see, and there's no market for them. I don't think you can sell them commercially so—. Nobody really fools with the sharks. You know, certain times of year you can catch them in size and all, so nobody fools with them.

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SR: Is it frustrating to have so many things in the water that you're not allowed to fish commercially?

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HR: Well, it's getting like that, you know, the regulations and laws, because of being over-fished and stuff like that. We were just talking about that, Rocky and I, a while ago, that there's so many fishermen out there that is making a living. And just like the crabs, we was talking about that. They're talking about regulating crab pots with bigger rings so you can let bigger crabs out—you call them rings. They're talking about dropping the--the amount of crab traps that you can fish and stuff, so over-fishing is a big problem because it--it creates laws and different kinds of laws and regulations that you got to go abide by, you know. And then it's getting rougher and rougher with the expensive fishing and the equipment and everything and, you know, lack of catching and—. You can't—it's getting harder and harder.

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I wouldn't—the way it is these days, I wouldn't suggest any—. And it's almost impossible for anybody to get in it because of the cost. And I wouldn't suggest any young people get into fishing anymore because it's not—it's a hard, hard business to be a fisherman, and it's a costly business. That's why, if you talk to people, they're not getting into it—seafood and shrimping. And--and more people getting out than in. It's your old people that's been in it for forty or fifty years that's staying in it because they don't have any other way to go. But it's--it's getting tougher and tougher, and you don't have a lot of people getting into the fishing business.

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SR: What about, I saw your son [“Little Hayden”], I believe, working at--at your dad’s place [Reno’s Seafood]. Does he also fish?

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HR: He fishes a little bit and he works over there with them. He does it in and out; you know, he works with the business and all. But like--like we say, it’s hard to make a living in the seafood and all these days. But he’s in his thirties, and he’s been doing it since he was a kid. But like I say, it—I got another son and he’s nineteen and he’s actually a boat mechanic and works rigging boats and stuff. So if it was up to me I wouldn’t have any of them getting into the seafood fishing business. It’s too much—it’s a dangerous business and it’s a costly business and it’s not a lot of rewards to it, especially these days with the way seafood is with the crabs. And we have a lot of problems with crabs going—you know, the amount of crabs they’re catching. It’s not a lot into it anymore. It’s--it’s talk all over with fishermen that it’s getting harder and harder.

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SR: Do you tell your sons not go into it?

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HR: Well, I don’t encourage them but I don’t discourage them. You know, it’s up to them what they do. But if they ask me I would tell them to find them a good job somewhere instead of being a fisherman. If--if there’s not any seafood left, which I don’t know how hard that question is to

answer, but if there's not any seafood left and there's not going to be a place to sell them either, you know—you can't get it, you can't sell it, and you can't make any money.

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So the way I see it these days, it's--it's like I say, it's tough and it's not getting any--it's not getting easier for anybody to get into the business. So I might be kind of skeptical, but I just don't see anybody young getting in it because of its cost. It costs you a lot of money for boats and equipment and to keep going and keep all that equipment up. And you got to have money. If you got enough money to get in the seafood business, you really don't need to get in—you got money. You don't need to get into it. You better save your money and do something else and put it in something that's more profitable.

00:26:49

SR: Do you agree with what you heard Hayden say?

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RR: Right, yeah, it would be—you know, I got two sons. Neither one of them is in that business and I'm not sorry for it. They--they all done it. I mean they done it when they was kids. They love it. They done it and fooled around with it, worked here, worked different places with me and everything. They like it. But as far as supporting a family, hey, it would never be hardly—. I got away with it all these years. I'm just lucky I guess. *[Laughs]*

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SR: Well, that is sort of my question. You agree that it's not a good business to go into, and yet you're making it work, huh? You're staying in it?

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RR: Yeah, well, I just always liked it. I mean you got to really love it, and if you don't like it because [*Phone Rings*]—

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SR: Okay, we'll let you get that.

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HR: Well, you're talking about being established for forty years of your life. Fishing, some people think that you can just buy a crab pot or something and go throw it in the water and you're fishing. But that's not the case. You know what times of the year up to the weeks and the year and the months, certain things you got to do and your knowledge of being a fisherman for forty, fifty years. It comes--kind of comes easy as far as knowledge, where you go, where you go catch bait, what kind of bait, tide ranges, dealing with that and what time of the day you bait up and stuff like that; your lines and stuff.

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So young people that's getting into it has a lot to learn about seafood to get to the point where you can make a decent living. And people like Rocky and I that's got a lot of knowledge, it's hard for us to make it. Somebody that doesn't know what they're doing, it's going to be ten times harder. And that's why I was saying your weather conditions, getting out and making sure

that you watch every weather all day long to make sure that you don't get caught in a storm or something in bad weather and you drown out there or something—an accident. Because it's dangerous. And that's what we—

00:29:00

RR: We done had friends drowned out there. I mean, and I hate to say it, but just because you think you know the lake, it don't mean you ain't going to drown, because it's dangerous. And one slip: that's your butt. *[Laughs]*

00:29:12

HR: It's a lot more like—like I was telling her—that you want to put a crab pot out in the water and going to run it. It's not all about that. It's about knowledge and knowing what to do and when to do it and how to do it. It takes a lot of years of--of learning.

00:29:29

RR: Both of us was raised—our families come down the Pass before they had a road here. We was raised in it, and that's all I ever wanted to do and that's all I done. But I mean, we was both raised up, you know from little bitty kids with your daddy in the swamp, in the lake. That's what you done. It was just natural to me. And I just like it. And they said if you like your job you never work a day in your life. *[Laughs]*

00:29:53

SR: Does that feel true to you?

00:29:53

RR: Oh yeah. Really I can honestly say that, because I enjoy crabbing. I mean it don't—don't get me wrong. It gets hard and it gets aggravating and it gets—you know, the money is not that great. But I mean it's still got the good times that you enjoy so much doing what you're doing.

00:30:11

SR: What about it do you enjoy?

00:30:13

RR: All of it. *[Laughs]* Just, I don't know. It's just—just nothing. The day goes by. You run out of time. I mean other—I hadn't been on a job but about six weeks of my life, and I hated them.

00:30:29

SR: Wait, what? A different job that wasn't fishing, you mean?

00:30:30

RR: I worked at the plant one time. I got in my head that I had—I went to the plant one time with some guys and I didn't like it at all. I'm not saying—I imagine it's great. Some of them do really good, but I mean I—

00:30:40

HR: You couldn't catch a crab in the plant or fish, so you had to get out. *[Laughs]*

00:30:43

RR: Actually, truthfully, it's enjoyable if you like that. I mean it ain't like—it ain't like I got to be eighteen years old and say, "I'm going fishing." I mean we was raised up from the time you could walk and play underneath the house in the swamp, you know.

00:30:59

SR: Well, let's talk about that because that was going to be one of my earliest questions, is: Where were y'all born and where did you grow up?

00:31:09

RR: I was born in—well, they brought me out of the hospital in New Orleans, but I was born right here next door right here in Manchac, and that's where I grew up.

00:31:16

SR: Okay, and you were telling me that your father wasn't from here and your mother was—or, how does that story go?

00:31:23

RR: Right. Dad and his—my dad and his daddy—actually, his mother left. They was in Ohio, and I don't know; some reason my grandpa split up with my grandmother and left his son, my dad, with him. And he was a--a master mechanic. He was actually a genius. He done everybody's gun work down here and he was—. Anyhow, he could do what he wanted. But they

started traveling to New Orleans. They said they wanted to go to New Orleans. And they stopped in Manchac and they had a restaurant here by Middendorf's called Bill Williams, and they had two old people there they met and they--they just liked it. They lived there. They lived in the trailer. My grandpa built a boat and they lived on a boat. Then he met my mother, which was from here and she lived down Pass, and in Manchac, and they got together. So that's how that happened.

00:32:16

SR: Why did they pick New Orleans to come to, do you know, from Ohio?

00:32:19

RR: I don't know. That was in—I would say that was in early '40s. I don't know. They was just traveling. I don't know why. They never told me that.

00:32:30

SR: And so your--your dad was from Ohio. Not exactly a fishing community?

00:32:36

RR: Well, they did fish though. They used to—he told me they went up to—my grandpa was, you know, he liked fishing and he liked boats and they built boats and they used to go to Lake Erie and had a camp. But I mean, no, there wasn't this type of fishing or this type—. But when they adapted down here, come down here and got to meet the people and liked—kind of fell in—they just started getting along with that kind of—. But my daddy also drove a school bus for

Manchac for thirty years, but he also always fished and crabbed on the side. And my Mama, we had—I had a fish market at one time and we sold bait and crabs out underneath the shed. And we sold live crabs, you know.

00:33:14

SR: Where and when was that fish market?

00:33:15

RR: I had that from—it was right next door here to Middendorf's. I think I opened that in '83 and me and my wife ran it for about ten, twelve—. Then my mama kept it a little later, and I still sold some stuff out there, and then finally just doing the fishing on my own.

00:33:36

SR: What year did you close that up, do you know?

00:33:39

RR: I can't remember right now. Well, my mama tried to keep it open. She'd just fool around in there. She loved all that stuff so much and the people and sold bait up until probably maybe 1990 or something, maybe. She was old; she was going at it when she was ninety-two years old, just sitting—*[Laughs]*.

00:34:01

SR: What was it called?

00:34:03

RR: Andy's Seafood.

00:34:06

SR: So your mother was from Manchac?

00:34:09

RR: Yeah. She came to Manchac down the Pass, which—the South Pass. They lived down there when she was three years old, and that was in 1917.

00:34:19

SR: What does that mean, South Pass?

00:34:21

RR: Well that's the pass from Lake Maurepas to Lake Pontchartrain.

00:34:26

SR: So how do you get there? Is there a road?

00:34:28

HR: A boat—

00:34:30

SR: A boat. I know the Pass is water, but to get to a house from here.

00:34:36

HR: You got to go by boat.

00:34:36

RR: Yeah, this is—yeah. They got a lot of big camps. Years ago, you know, we didn't have electricity down there. We had a camp down there. When my mom and I lived down there they lived on houseboats, and Hayden's family too. They all was raised down there; they all lived—a lot of them lived on houseboats. It was actually before this—the original Highway 51 is right here, you know. Not the other one; this one.

00:35:05

SR: Right outside.

00:35:05

RR: Right outside. That's the original Highway 51. Before that they just had the railroad tracks. The rail, and had a big depot and a big—. And they had a settlement route, but Manchac was pretty much booming even then. A lot of people.

00:35:25

SR: But that wasn't in your lifetime, right, the train depot?

00:35:28

RR: They had a depot back there when I was a kid, but it wasn't a big one. They had a bigger one before I was born. But actually I remember—it's hard to believe, but actually I don't know; I was maybe four or five years old. The train stopped and me and Mama got on it and went to New Orleans and spent the day and come back on the train. They let us off—that was one time.

[Laughs] But they used to pick up the mail, too, by train. They had a--a pole out there. Miss Middendorf had it. She had the post office, when it started. She was our next-door neighbor, and they had an arm. They'd hang a bag of mail on it and that train wouldn't even slow down. It had a hook. It just grabbed that in the evening and they'd throw a bag off. Or in the same time they'd throw the bag off. The mail come by train.

00:36:17

SR: So Miss Middendorf owned that post office?

00:36:21

RR: Well she—no. Well, she actually, it was at her house but she was the postmaster after she got out—after her son took the restaurant over.

00:36:32

SR: What did you do the one time you took the train into New Orleans?

00:36:36

RR: I think we just went down there for the day around Canal Street and maybe walked around and ate maybe and come home. That's—I don't remember much. That was—we were small.

00:36:46

SR: And Hayden, you were born here?

00:36:49

HR: Well, no. My family was living in Bucktown on the other side of the lake. But a lot of my family was still in here. My grandpa, which he would be 130-something years-old if he would be living now, was associated with some of—you know, he was a fisherman and all down here, too. And he--he was moving—when he was younger he had raised his family like Rocky with a houseboat and stuff and fished and different things down on the Pass here and all. But by the time that I was born, my grandpa was kind of old. Matter of fact, he died a year after I was born. But he was living in Bucktown, which I don't know if you know where Bucktown is at.

00:37:35

SR: But you can—can you tell me, for the record, where Bucktown is?

00:37:39

HR: Well it's right on the south of Lake--on Lake Pontchartrain. The south part of it right off of Bonabel Boulevard. But that's—I mean as far as landmarks I don't know, but it's right there. I mean there's a big—I think there's a Bonabel boat launch that has been there forever and close

around—. Well it's, I don't know exactly from the lake, but it's on the south side of Lake Pontchartrain.

00:38:11

SR: And when you were young there, it was kind of a fishing village also, right?

00:38:14

HR: Oh yeah. It's still--it's still a lot of fishermen that go out of there, Bucktown. That's an old town from way back in the--in the old days. They started it as a fishing town.

00:38:25

RR: What they call the canal is the Bucktown Canal that goes up there where they use to house shrimp boats and crab and everything. That's at the—I think that's where they just built that new lighthouse out there, huh?

00:38:36

HR: I said Bonnabel, but that's another part of—that's not too far from it, but Bonnabel is a different part. It's close to it, but Bucktown is on the south side over there somewhere about the middle on this side—probably on this side of the causeway. Or is it the other side?

00:38:51

RR: Other side. East-southeast corner.

00:38:56

SR: So you lived there until about what age?

00:38:59

HR: Well, I was born around there, and then I think in-between we moved to Manchac when I was about six years old. That's when I started living in Manchac on the other side of the bridge, on the south side.

00:39:17

SR: Did y'all know each other as kids?

00:39:19

HR: Yeah, as a matter of fact.

00:39:22

RR: Yeah.

00:39:22

HR: I remember when I was about eight or nine we come over here and I bought a little mini-bike from him. And I liked to have committed suicide on that thing. That's one of them suicide mini-bikes with a foot pedal as the gas and all, but yeah. I mean we knew each other all the way through. Not--not real good, but we was on one side of the bridge, which is another parish, and back then the--the bridge was the line to the parishes. And this side was one parish. And they

went to school over there, and we went to school in another school in a different parish over there.

00:39:55

SR: What was the parish on the other side?

00:39:57

HR: St. John Parish, and this was Tangipahoa.

00:40:00

HR: They used to have a lot of kids down here. They had a lot of people that lived here. Well another thing I wanted—I was thinking--trying to think of some things—. We had to have the interstate, but when it come through here it really affected this place, too, because I mean people just don't get off like they used to. You know, that came through in I think around '75, '76 when the interstate come through, and it really kind of—. Businesses kind of—it really didn't affect, probably didn't affect, Middendorf's as much as it did our little businesses, you know.

00:40:36

SR: Because when the highway was a little bit closer and traffic wasn't going as fast, people would stop more often. Is that why?

00:40:44

RR: I would say so, yeah. If they don't have a reason to get off, they're not getting off. You know what I'm saying?

00:40:53

HR: Or like we was talking a while ago, the--the competition is fierce now. Everywhere you go. In fact, when we we're talking about in the '70s, there was a business in every building they had down here. See, the bait, the sno-ball stand, anything you can think of was on this strip right here.

00:41:10

RR: Three--three different people had—well, y'all had gas across the bridge. They had gas at Rottman's. They had gas at Sykes Grocery. Three places had gas, and now you don't have but one place that has gas and it's hard to get to.

00:41:24

HR: They don't even—

00:41:25

SR: That's for boats?

00:41:27

HR: No, for vehicles and boats. We used—they used to have it on the road and—

00:41:30

RR: Right, but I mean basically back then it's for boats. I mean now they don't have—you know, people is always running out of gas coming through here.

00:41:38

SR: I've seen that.

00:41:38

RR: It's a long stretch from LaPlace to—to Ponchatoula is like close to thirty miles probably, and you just get all messed up and can't find a way. *[Laughs]*

00:41:50

SR: Yeah, I don't see many kids around here. I don't—

00:41:53

RR: There's not many anymore. I think the school bus comes down here for like maybe—. Well at Owl Bayou, actually at our bayou right up here about a couple miles, they got more people that live up there on camps—well, they're homes. But then in Manchac itself anymore, I mean—

00:42:09

HR: I don't think there's any kids from the other side. Now they've merged. If they live on the other side they can go to Tangipahoa Parish schools because they merged over here to one bus.

00:42:19

RR: That bus still comes down here because—but I don't think she—I don't ever see her with maybe one or two kids. There might be a couple at Owl Bayou. Huh? Yeah, that's true: they got to have four new kids, kind of new—. Yeah, I forgot about that. They don't have many, and the bus used to be loaded and they might have thirty or forty kids—fifty maybe.

00:42:35

SR: So you went to school in Ponchatoula, and where did you go to school on the other side of the bridge?

00:42:39

HR: LaPlace and Reserve on that side of St. John Parish. It was--it was a grammar school in LaPlace, and then the next town, Reserve, Louisiana, had the high school. So back then it wasn't—the population wasn't big in these towns, so now there's schools all over the place. There's populations like that.

00:43:01

RR: My mama, lived down there; they didn't have—they didn't go to school. They didn't—she didn't go to school a day in her life. Her brother either.

00:43:08

SR: What did they do?

00:43:10

RR: They taught their selves how to read and write and figured—my uncle could figure anything, build anything. Just taught their selves.

00:43:16

HR: The laws was different back in them old days, you know. Now if you didn't go to school—

00:43:20

RR: Mama would be 100 this year, and she didn't go to school a day.

00:43:23

SR: Could she read?

00:43:24

RR: Oh yeah. Write, too. Wrote everything down.

00:43:30

SR: So, I want to ask: Can you tell me your parents' names, Rocky?

00:43:35

RR: My daddy's name was Andrew William Rakocy, and my mother's name was Virginia Mae—she was a Saltzman—Rakocy. She was actually married first to Hayden's uncle at one time when they were young down the Pass. She was married to Joe Reno, and then later on she—

that's when she met my dad, after. They was divorced for years before she married my daddy. But they lived down the pass as young--young people, when they were young, you know.

00:44:04

SR: And your parents' names?

00:44:05

HR: Frank A. Reno and Margaret Anne Reno.

00:44:10

SR: And what about your grandfather, who you mentioned? What's his name?

00:44:13

HR: Charles. I can't think of his middle name, but Charles Reno. I think he was born in 1884 or something like that.

00:44:24

SR: So you all have kids. Do they live here in Manchac? Have they decided to stay?

00:44:31

HR: Actually, no. Not mine. But there really wasn't any place to live down here. I mean, there was one family when we was growing up, and we only had one house with my mom and dad. So when we grew up there really wasn't anyplace—this stretch of, on here—Manchac is not a big

place, and there's not a lot of land that you can buy anything. So it wasn't anyplace to--to expand and build houses or anything down here. So the business is here and we had—I had to move to Ponchatoula ,which is about nine miles up, ten miles up, because there wasn't much to buy or build around. So there's only a little section of land in Manchac on this strip and they use it for business purposes, most of it. So, no, my kids wasn't. But I was born and raised here until I got married and there wasn't any place to build anything. So I had to move to Ponchatoula, too.

00:45:42

SR: When you were—I mean earlier, you know, when it was more populated—were there more places to live, or—?

00:45:49

HR: No, no places to live. There was just more families in Manchac that had quite a few kids and stuff like that. Each family that had businesses had a bunch of kids, it seemed like. Two or three or four kids in each family. A lot of kids in each family.

00:46:05

SR: What about—well, do you live here in Manchac?

00:46:08

RR: Actually, I don't live here. I still have my old home over here, which I just remodeled and we use it to stay here some, but about fifteen years ago I moved to Ponchatoula because my mother—. Well we was—I had one house that got burnt down—nutria hides. [*Laughs*] Dried

them; we used—I had them on the back porch and the fan—something happened. But anyhow, I lost one little home.

00:46:31

SR: In Manchac?

00:46:34

RR: In Manchac. And then lived with my mama down here in the old home for a while, and then we moved to Ponchatoula. And after—never did turn loose my old home, which remodeled here and fortunately to get it raised now because it got flooded about three times. But I was fortunate enough to get it raised and remodeled and still use it.

00:46:56

SR: So how did your house burn down? You were stretching nutria hides?

00:47:01

RR: Well, you had to stretch the hides and dry them. You wouldn't have to, but you got a little bit more money for it and we used to do that. And I had a little back shed, and I don't know what went off. I had nothing but a fan, but I know it's what caused the fire and it caught—. We wasn't home.

00:47:19

SR: Oh, shoot. I lost my train of thought.

00:47:25

RR: They had several house fires through Manchac throughout the years. They had a big house where Hayden and them is now that had burnt one time, and that was—y'all was living there, huh? No.

00:47:34

HR: We didn't move in—

00:47:38

SR: Miss Wanda and Miss Lois were telling me about how—. These are women who work at Middendorf's now, and I interviewed them last week about how they started a fire department.

00:47:49

HR: Yeah.

00:47:51

SR: It's very industrious down here.

00:47:55

HR: Well, the public was generous back then. They--they funded all that, but—

00:48:02

RR: Well years ago—I was around—I was in on the starting something—was in around some of it and belonged to it for—. But anyhow, years ago the fire—if you had a fire, you used to have to come from Ponchatoula, which is about ten, eleven miles. And you know by the time we got the call and by the time we got down here and by the time we done this, you know, it was a little bit—. But anyhow, we got the Manchac thing going there and it's—.

00:48:27

SR: Yeah.

00:48:29

HR: Every community had to have some kind of fire protection because all these old houses were wooden back then and the faster you could get to it the better, you know, before it burned all the way. So back then it was—it wasn't a real expensive thing to get a fire department started like it was today, so—. They had a lot of money back then and the government and all that; they had politicians backing us up and everything. So it--it came across pretty—. Plus, the interstate, there's a lot of accidents on the interstate and that's close and they needed fire departments for rescue and for--for wrecks that people get—. You know, not only fires but the—to go up on the interstate and--and rescue people. It didn't have to be a fire, but the fire department was involved with that too. So it--it made sense to do it, so it come across pretty good with the idea of putting a little one-truck fire station here, so—.

00:49:29

SR: So you have a fire station and you have a sheriff. At Middendorf's, I guess, they have a sheriff.

00:49:35

HR: I guess that's what you'd call it. Is he down there?

00:49:41

RR: Yeah, he's basically just for—basically just for them though, I think. I think Horst pays some of it, and maybe the Parish might, but I think—I mean it ain't like he's a full-fledged sheriff.

00:49:53

SR: Right. Not for the whole town?

00:49:54

HR: I'd be in jail if he was. *[Laughs]*

00:49:58

SR: What about—I remembered what I was going to ask you earlier with my train of thought. So, where do you keep your boats? Where do you go in and out of the water?

00:50:05

HR: We got a place that's designated for fishermen that's been here forever, but when they built the interstate they built the road back there and designated it just for fishermen because it's a fishing community from way back. And there is a canal over there where we got little boat sheds and stuff that we keep our boats—that's kind of like supposedly on State property that they designated and built a road, shell road, for us back there where we keep the boats on the backside there.

00:50:39

SR: In the same place? Y'all are in the same place?

00:50:42

RR: Yeah, we're all within a couple hundred yards of each other.

00:50:44

SR: So y'all are competitors?

00:50:46

HR: Not really, no. Not--not with each other, no. No, not really.

00:50:51

RR: No, we get along good, and that's the way it should be as far as I'm concerned, you know.

If--if you can work together, it's a lot better than fighting. *[Laughs]*

00:51:00

HR: In this kind of business, though, you can't be competitive. I mean you can--you can try to top each other as far as your catch and all, but we don't do that. If there's so much room out there, with the catch, and when you--you got yourself established and you got your sales for fish, and we can just about sell everything we can catch without a problem, you know. So it's not really—between us, it's not competitive. It's trying to make a living is all we're doing, and we work together and catch bait and try to share bait with each other when one catches—

00:51:34

RR: Not too many people fish anymore like we do really because, well, the one thing is is the labor involved. And there's not a whole lot of money in it, but if you do—you can do all right. You know it's--it's something, like I say, if you like to do it, it's not as costly as crabbing. It's just a little bit different. But most of the old—there used to be a whole bunch of old trout line fishermen down here. That's what all of them done, and they all are about gone.

00:52:04

SR: How do you decide where you fish and crab?

00:52:10

HR: Well, I mean that's a seasonal thing where fish move from one lake to another—the other lake at certain times of year. And we know—we're not going to give you all our secrets away, but—

00:52:23

SR: Well I—

00:52:24

HR: —we follow the fish because they move in and out during spawning season, and the catfish move in and—

00:52:32

RR: And a lot of time it's a help to have somebody else out there because if you're out there by yourself you can't go—you might not be catching nothing here and the man go over there five miles and tear them up. So I mean it's hard to—I wouldn't want it all to myself because you—. You know what I'm saying?

00:52:46

SR: Kind of.

00:52:47

RR: It kind of helps to have a couple people that you're friends with go out there, and if you're not catching something or you can't find the bait, maybe he can or he knows something. It just, it always was like that; kind of a lot of old guys done that, you know. It's trying to see what's going on. You go over there, you go try them over here, and if you don't hit them there you might hit them over here. So, that's basically is how it works.

00:53:08

SR: Sharing knowledge?

00:53:09

RR: Sure, you always—

00:53:12

HR: Well, it's not knowledge. It's just luck when you're catching bait. If I got you—if we got you over here and I'm over here and another one is over there, somebody is probably going to catch the bait. Sometimes—a lot of times—it's just one of us catching bait and lucky to catch it, so we share the bait and everything and fish the same way. We might be--we might be five miles apart fishing and the fish might be a little thick in one place and we tell each other—

00:53:37

RR: Ain't no two years the same, either, really. I mean every—the weather plays such a big part. Like this past year was one of the worst winters we had, coldest for the longest, and it just plays a big part in fishing, crabbing, everything.

00:53:51

SR: Was that good for you or bad for you, the cold?

00:53:55

RR: It wasn't good. No, it's not good for fishing.

00:53:59

SR: What if—I mean, does it ever happen that you go out and you--you know where you want to put your trout lines or your crab pots and somebody else already, like, took that spot? Does that happen?

00:54:10

HR: Well, you always got people who just want to drop in and think they—. They're kind of ignorant in a way, thinking they're going to make big money going fishing and crabbing and all that kind of stuff. And you always get somebody that is coming in and trying it and putting a line, but it's not exactly in the—I mean they might be in your vicinity, but they're not right—you can always find a place to put a line. But we've seen them come and go. I mean, they come in and they think they're going to make big money fishing, and it's always me and Rocky left fishing lines and all when it comes down to it, you know.

00:54:51

So there's always somebody coming in and--and putting close to you and something, and sometimes when you put your line there first, though, and they come in after and they put it on top of you, you got to tell them, "Look, you're right on top of me. You got to move out the way." You know, move somewhere else because you're right on top of—. You put it on top of me and I can't fish my line, you know. So sometimes that happens, but not too often.

00:55:17

SR: But when you go out, are you—you're alone in your boat, I'm assuming?

00:55:22

HR: Well, crabbing--crabbing is different. You can—

00:55:24

RR: Sometimes I bring somebody with me crabbing, but with fishing mostly all the time I'm alone—and most of the time crabbing. If I can afford to get a little help, sometimes I do.

00:55:34

SR: It's very solitary.

00:55:36

RR: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:55:38

HR: Yeah, crabbing is—you got a little bigger boat to crab with than you do to fish lines. You got a small boat so you can't afford the weight-wise and the—you know, taking up room and all in your little boat, the fishing lines. You can't—you very seldom want to do it.

00:55:53

SR: But I imagine this is just a profession for someone who likes to be alone a lot.

00:55:57

HR: That’s true. That’s true.

00:56:01

RR: Talking to yourself. [*Laughs*]

00:56:03

HR: When you answer yourself, then you really got problems.

00:56:05

RR: “What the hell am I doing?” [*Laughs*]

00:56:08

HR: Yeah, well, I know what I’m doing but—. [*Laughs*]

00:56:10

SR: Do you listen to the radio, or—?

00:56:12

RR: I do.

00:56:14

HR: He do.

00:56:15

RR: I bring a radio with me a lot of times. Yeah, I do.

00:56:17

SR: What do you listen to?

00:56:18

RR: Huh?

00:56:19

SR: What do you listen to?

00:56:21

RR: *[Unintelligible]* *[Laughs]*

00:56:23

SR: I don't know who that is.

00:56:24

HR: We had old fisherman down here; he died a few years ago, but that's why I don't listen to a radio. I seen how he ended up. *[Laughs]* No, he was all right. I'm just kidding.

00:56:37

SR: He got in trouble out there? You don't listen to a radio at all?

00:56:40

HR: I always wanted to bring one. I always did, but I never did. I just never did bring a radio, but I always wanted to. I just never did because I—like I say, Rocky has one, and that old guy we used to have down here, he's the last—one of the last fishermen besides us—and he used to listen to a radio. But it could be better than listening to yourself out there, I can tell you, because it is an all-day deal sometimes, going out fishing and all. Listening to yourself all the time, talking to yourself, is not too good.

00:57:15

SR: And if you do get into trouble, it's just you.

00:57:19

HR: Oh yeah, yeah. We've been—

00:57:20

RR: Well we got cell phones now, but years ago we didn't have no cell phone. I mean you just waited out there until one of your buddies come along or you let somebody at home know—you know, I'm supposed to be home at 11:00 or 1:00 or whatever, and hopefully they'll come get you.

00:57:32

SR: But do they always work out there, the cell phones?

00:57:35

RR: Pretty much. You get a little bad spot here and there, but it's pretty much. You get—sometimes you lose [the signal]. Of course mine don't work on the bank. *[Laughs]*

00:57:46

HR: You can get in trouble out there in a rough sea out there. The kind of trouble that you can get in, a cell phone or nothing is going to help you, you know. I mean you—in the wintertime, if you fall—

00:57:55

RR: Wintertime is the thing this time. Summertime, you know, you can hang on out there all day if you [have a] life jacket or whatever. But in the winter, I mean a life jacket is just going to help them find you because you don't last too long in that cold water.

00:58:08

HR: Over the years we've had—you can count on two hands how many fishermen, trout line fishermen, died out there in the wintertime, drowned, because once you fall off the boat, that cold, cold water, as cold as it is—

00:58:20

RR: Thirty minutes maybe.

00:58:20

HR: Fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, you're gone.

00:58:23

SR: Have y'all ever fallen off the boat?

00:58:25

HR: Not that I remember.

00:58:26

RR: I fell halfway out one time. [*Laughs*]

00:58:30

SR: I—

00:58:30

HR: I got throwed out a few times. [*Laughs*]

00:58:35

SR: Really, thinking about it, I start—my heart starts racing. One time someone took me on a boat to Lake Maurepas, and it wasn't even a bad day according to him. It was a fisherman, and

after like ten minutes I said, “Can we turn around and go back?” I mean it--it’s like being on the sea.

00:58:54

HR: Yeah, that’s what I’m saying. We--we go out sometimes six, seven miles out in the lake out there in a small boat, and in the wintertime you can get—all of a sudden winds come up and have three, four-foot seas out there.

00:59:09

RR: That’s—with catfish, you can't fish out of too big of a boat. You got—I mean you’re limited. You can't—sixteen, eighteen-foot boat is the biggest boat you can have because you just can't handle the lines out of a twenty-five-foot boat like crabbing. And you just, I mean that puts another thing on your small boat.

00:59:25

HR: When you got all your equipment and then you do catch a load of fish, sometimes you don’t have but that much free wall on the side of your boat, and then if it gets rough on you, you got—. So it’s a--it’s a big task, up against a rough lake.

00:59:41

RR: But it happens.

00:59:42

HR: Sometimes winds come up without any prediction or anything else from the weather people. It just does, you know. And it gets rough.

00:59:49

SR: I'll just say, for the record, you made--you made a hand gesture of about maybe like six inches.

00:59:55

HR: Yeah. I mean I've seen it many days like that where you don't have much—the boats—that much side is out of the water. [*Gestures*]

01:00:03

SR: Why--why can't you use a big boat?

01:00:07

RR: Because you just can't handle a line. You can't pull a big boat on a trout line like that. I mean twenty foot at the maximum. I use a sixteen and Hayden has a sixteen, eighteen—sixteen feet. You just can't—you can't pull a—the wind. You can't handle a trout line out of a big boat.

01:00:24

HR: A trout line is smaller than your cord on your [microphone]. That's how small it is, and you--you got your lines tied off on each one.

01:00:31

RR: Big boats just don't work on it.

01:00:32

HR: And if the wind is pushing you, the bigger the boat you would almost sometimes break your line, and then your line would slide and you'd cut your hands up. So your smaller boat, you can handle it. You can hold onto the line and hold your boat at the same time and run down—

01:00:47

RR: You got to pull yourself by hand down the line. Which, you naturally want to go with the wind. The wind takes you—there ain't too many days there ain't no wind. You got a few days, you know, that's calm, but most of the time—

01:00:58

HR: When it's too bad, you can't go out.

01:00:59

RR: Most of the time in the winter it's blowing.

01:01:01

SR: Where do you follow the weather? You know, like where we follow it, the Weather Channel and stuff?

01:01:08

HR: Just watch the weather, the local weather channels and stuff.

01:01:11

RR: You get lucky, they might hit one day out of a week. [*Laughs*]

01:01:16

HR: You watch it and you kind of--you kind of are looking at it and making the decision yourself. The radar, where the rain is and storms and stuff, and how much time—. We've been out there ahead of storms where when we got back in, we was in right—made it just in time out of storms and stuff, taking chances. You know, the crab show way out in the Bering Sea, what do they call that, "Deadliest Catch?" If you watch that, that's mini-me and him. That's all it is. It's no different. Any big body of water—and Lake Pontchartrain is one of the most treacherous lakes out in the country because it's a shallow lake and it gets rough quick, you know, and if you watch the "Deadliest Catch" or them shows, it's just a big boat and a bigger sea, and we're a little boat in a little lake that—it's no different, you know.

01:02:03

RR: About the same. It ain't no different.

01:02:06

HR: We've been into some rough seas like that, too. Not twenty, thirty-foot, but to our small boat, four-foot is like twenty-foot seas to them big boats.

01:02:15

SR: Are your families home worrying about you, or are they used to it?

01:02:18

HR: Well, they got their insurance policies. [*Laughs*] You know, they might worry about us coming home one day, but they're not too much worried about us.

01:02:27

SR: Now what about when you get in with your catch? I mean, I know if you take it to--to Reno's Seafood, you can just drive it over here. Or--or you said that you sell some to—Rocky, you said that you sell sometimes to Middendorf's. But if you're selling to a wholesaler or something, what do you—what's the mechanics of that? Do you drive it somewhere? Do you do all that, or does somebody come to the dock?

01:02:53

RR: Crabbing, they got—I sell some across the bridge. Right across the bridge over there at Mike Robin's, and that's crabbing. They got a dock that buys crabs.

01:03:03

SR: Where? On the other side of the bridge?

01:03:04

RR: Yeah, they got one here too. But other than that, fishing, we have to clean it and fillet it ourselves mostly and dress it. Crabbing, you just back up there and unload them. Fish is totally different.

01:03:19

SR: Where do you do that, the cleaning and filleting?

01:03:23

RR: Different areas. Hayden has his market here and I have—

01:03:26

HR: I've got a Board of Health approved place that we do it, yeah, next to the—.

01:03:34

RR: Right.

01:03:34

HR: Years ago they used to have places, and we was one of them down here.

01:03:38

RR: They would buy rough fish.

01:03:40

HR: Rough fish.

01:03:41

RR: Called them “rough,” and that meant live or un-cleaned. But nobody buys that no more. We got to do them ourselves.

01:03:48

SR: And way earlier in our conversation you mentioned that a lot of the crabs from around here are getting sent to Baltimore. What did you mean by that?

01:03:58

RR: Well they do. They ship them. They ship—mostly all crabs go up there now.

01:04:05

HR: It’s a big demand for crabs up North. They eat crabs like we eat potato chips down here. They--they’re crazy about crabs.

01:04:12

RR: They have the same crab we do, and they got a shortage. And they got a season up there that they don’t have nothing—they don’t let them fish. And that’s why they—. But they truck them now. Years ago they used to fly them, before 9/11 [September 11, 2001]. But something happened after that and the price—. They got trucks and they meet halfway up, like halfway up in North Carolina or South Carolina and they switch trucks.

01:04:34

SR: They eat more crab up there than we do?

01:04:37

RR: I don't know if they do.

01:04:37

HR: They must.

01:04:38

RR: But it seems like it because if you—they're big on crab cakes and they make all kind of stuff out of crab that. But some reason—the Chesapeake Bay and all that was big crabs, and there was a lot of crab, but they shut that down because I guess they cleaned it out or something, you know because of the—. But there's a big demand, and people eat crabs and they pay big money for crabs up there. And that's why—

01:05:06

HR: That's what sets the price on our crab: up there really. We wouldn't get the money down here that we get if it wasn't shipping up there.

01:05:14

SR: So you get more money if you ship your crabs up there?

01:05:18

RR: Well that's what sets the price. That basically, I would say, sets the price down here, you know.

01:05:27

HR: We go by what the crab buyers here, or factories, that buy crabs. Whatever they--whatever they can do for us, that's what we sell them for. We don't have—we really don't have a choice.

01:05:36

RR: We're really on the tail end of crabbing. Up in Lake Maurepas, that's about the end. I mean down further south you go, you know, they got more crabbing and more water. But at Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Maurepas, it's kind of getting up to the end of it up in here.

01:05:50

SR: Do you—what do you see as the future, in your lifetime of crabbing and fishing, in this area? Status quo? Do you think that you can keep doing it like this for as long as you want, or do you see it getting fished out, like--like maybe in the Chesapeake Bay? Or, what do you see?

01:06:11

HR: I think crab's got a problem in the near future with being fished out. It's already starting to have a problem with it. The crab population is going down further and further, for what reasons nobody—. That's something people who are doing that research and biologists and all that—.

But I mean there's no crabs like there used to be ten years ago. That's—yeah, and there's a shortage of crabs all the way down the line. So if it keeps going like that, and if they don't do anything, yeah, there's going to be a big problem. And like I say, the expense of fishing, the equipment, you got to make money to—in order to—to keep up with your livelihood. And the price of crabs this year went up so high, it's been—what—\$1 or \$2 more than it's ever been in history?

01:07:03

RR: Right, right.

01:07:05

SR: What is it?

01:07:05

HR: Well, it was—. What is it now, Rocky, \$4?

01:07:10

RR: Four dollars. Or some places might be a little more than \$4, and the most they ever got for it was like \$3 or \$3.50. But now it went to \$4.50 here, and down South they were getting \$5.25 a pound, which was way more than ever. Shortage, I guess. Supply and demand. I mean, up there they—just, it shows what they can pay for them and they must—

01:07:34

HR: Well, if you got the Chesapeake Bay and them lakes up there that doesn't have any crabs, and we got—you know, they still got the demand for them, even more now than ever because the crabs aren't there. So, yeah, we're going to have problems in the future with everything. The elements that the crabs got to go through, like oil spills and—

01:07:52

RR: Yeah, we don't really know. That still ain't ruled out, that the oil spill—because it couldn't have done anything any good. No way.

01:07:58

SR: Yeah. I wanted to ask you how that affected your--your work. And I know that it's really hard to tell how it affected the seafood because it's still a little bit too early, but—

01:08:09

RR: They tell you one thing, but who knows. It's--it had to hurt some things. It's no way it helped anything except they give us a little money. **[Laughs]** Probably could have gotten more; probably should have gotten more.

01:08:24

SR: Say that again.

01:08:25

HR: Paid us off to shut-up. You know, that's all it was. But something that, like the oil spill, the effects of that might be ten years down the road before you really see it, you know. And that's the problem with--with the seafood situation we got with the crabs and all. Definitely we're getting a shortage of crabs down here; it's going down. And, like I say, with all the elements that we got to deal with the crabs, and the prices and the shortages and all that—. That's what I was saying about any young people who wants to get in it, I wouldn't suggest for them to get in it, you know, because they couldn't afford to get it in the first place if they had to come out of their pockets with it. It cost money.

01:09:06

Probably if you wanted to get into the crabbing to make a living, it would cost you— what, Rocky—\$50,000, \$70,000 to get—

01:09:13

RR: At least.

01:09:14

HR: —to start off?

01:09:15

RR: At least, and maybe more.

01:09:18

HR: Leasing a boat.

01:09:18

RR: Small time. I mean, an outboard motor costs you \$20,000.

01:09:25

HR: Yeah, the boat itself would cost you \$40,000, \$50,000. And then another \$15,000 to \$18,000, \$20,000 for the equipment, the pots and all. So you just don't—

01:09:34

RR: Overcome that. And then you got to—we used to be able to run the same trap every day. I mean every—you know, go the next day and run the same line of traps. Now you got to at least let them sit like a week or you won't be catching nothing. You'll go back the next day, it's nothing. And you let them sit a couple days and maybe one might get in there. Or, you know, we used to be able to go back the next--the next morning and do fair, do good. Now you got to let them sit a week. Eight, ten days, better yet.

01:10:02

SR: After the oil spill—

01:10:04

RR: I don't mind working once a week, but [*Laughs*] the pay ain't that good.

01:10:11

SR: After the oil spill, were you out of work for a while, or did you have to stop fishing around here?

01:10:17

RR: No, it didn't really shut us down.

01:10:20

HR: It didn't really affect us all the way in Lake Maurepas, here close. It really affected the—all the way up to the south end of Lake Pontchartrain. But I mean, some of the places—all through it kind of affected a lot of people, you know, but they still trickled on and caught a few things to make a living. Of course, BP was paying a lot of people off. They were putting a lot of people to work.

01:10:51

RR: Tell you the truth, I can't say nothing. They took care of us to a certain extent, and some people done real well with it you know.

01:10:59

HR: They came and stepped in with all commercial fishermen and helped them out the first year or two after the spill, so—. And then it kind of got back where they went back to fishing and they shut a lot of waters down, too. They closed a lot of waters, like the oysters. They shut them down for a year or two, and of course they paid them off. But after a couple of years they kind of got the waters back opened up and the people went back—the fishermen went back to fishing and

all. So it kind of leveled back off. And like I say, the last--the last year—and this year—it's been kind of terrible for crabbing and all. We don't know why. I mean, we don't know if it's because of the oil spill or other conditions or whatever. But how long has it been, since 2010? It's been four years later and things are getting a little worse with the catches and all, so—.

01:11:54

SR: What about the quality of the flavor? Has that changed at all?

01:11:56

HR: Everything is still the same. It's all good.

01:12:02

SR: Hayden, can you tell me: What do you—can you tell me about the work that you do with the university?

01:12:07

HR: Well, it's a research station down on the water and they do all kind of—. I'm the maintenance guy that—and I take care of all the buildings and the boats we got, and I do boat captaining and I take people out on the boats and stuff like that because that's the only way to get to it, is by boat. And they got a place for me to live down there. I got a little place. I've been on this job for twenty-six years now. And I've been living down there. Of course, after Hurricane Katrina knocked the buildings out, so we had to get in and repair it and all.

01:12:46

We just do all kind of research, and we got educational programs that we take school kids, grammar school and high school kids, and have a little tour, field trips for them, and show them the water and anything—. They dip net and get stuff out of the ditches and canals and stuff, and little fish and crawfish, and all kind of little species. It's just an educational deal plus research. But I do all—I take care of all the maintenance and do boat trips, and captain and maintenance on the boats and stuff like that.

01:13:22

SR: And that's on Lake Maurepas?

01:13:24

HR: That's on the Pass Manchac between Lake Maurepas and Pontchartrain.

01:13:30

SR: So you have like a camp there where you can stay?

01:13:34

HR: Yeah, they--they supply a little house for me to stay in as a security, and to keep an eye on everything.

01:13:42

SR: So—

01:13:43

HR: We got a lot of people that stay there overnight, and I'm kind of like the guy that—in case of emergency or something. Boat ride, bring them back.

01:13:52

RR: Kind of original—that original station there was built, what? That must be 100 years old. That was an old rich man. My mama and them was down there when they—I think they might have heard—Daddy might have been building—. It was built as a hunting lodge. Edward G. Schlieder built that in probably, what—?

01:14:13

HR: I think it was finished in 1908.

01:14:15

RR: That was his hunting camp. He was an old rich man out of New Orleans, and he come out and that was his hunting lodge. And then after years, they had some people from Hammond leased it and they let them hunt; had the hunting right then, and I think around—because I was a caretaker one year and they turned it over to Southeastern in around '74, and then they made the research station where Hayden is at. Then they—here a couple years ago, they raised it and it looks really good. They've really done a—that's an old, old place.

01:14:50

SR: You can only get there by boat, huh?

01:14:51

RR: Oh yeah.

01:14:53

SR: How often do you stay there?

01:14:56

HR: I live—we live down there. That’s where I live mostly, yeah. I’ve been down there for—like I say, Hurricane Katrina knocked it out for a few years, and FEMA did all the restoration on it for the buildings and all, so it was a few years that I was out and I couldn’t stay there. But we’re back there now. But I stayed—I started living there in, I think, ’88, 1988 or something, and I’ve been down there since then.

01:15:25

SR: That must be so peaceful.

01:15:27

HR: It is in some ways. No different—there’s nowhere you can go these days without a lot of boat traffic, and you know in the wintertime it’s kind of dormant down—I mean it’s dead down there. You know, there’s not much traffic. But when it warms up, there’s just like everywhere you can get, there’s a lot of recreational boaters, sportsmen, and all. It’s--it’s a lot of traffic on the water. It’s not like it was 100 years ago where you see a boat once a week or something like that.

So it's a lot of--a lot of people running around. It's not like you don't see anybody or nothing like that, you know. There's all kinds of people.

01:16:08

SR: What kind of research happens? Like research on fish or on wild—?

01:16:11

HR: Oh, yeah. They do anything. They do tree restoration where they try to get the cypress trees back. And there's alligator research and any kind of research. Mud samples, water samples, the clams, all kind of fish, crabs. They done done it all down there. Any kind of research you can think of that they can get out of the water. Water quality. Anything, anything in the water. It's a marine station, and they got it all right here. Everything that's happening. Just like the oil spill and everything, it was—they was monitoring that and doing all kinds of—anything that comes up, they did. You know, they take care of it and do the research on it.

01:16:58

SR: I'm going to pause it for a second while he gets the phone because I am going to—. [*Phone Rings*]

01:17:01

[End HR & RR Interview1]

[Begin HR & RR Interview 2]

00:00:01

Sara Roahen: Sorry, I'm back. We had a little break with Hayden Reno and Rocky Rakocy, and yeah, we're talking about, again, how they're aren't a lot of young people going into this. Very expensive. And Rocky, you were--you were saying something that had been running through my head earlier. There's a lot of--there's a lot to it--hunting, trapping and fishing--that you don't see. You don't just go out and get some grabs, come back, and your day is over.

00:00:31

RR: You got to keep up with just equipment. If you don't, you're not going to do it. And it's always something to do with repair. And crab pots go bad. You got to clean them; you got to repair fishing lines. You got to go redo or be making a new one. And everything wears out. It don't none of it last forever. You know, and everything goes up. Every time you go to a fishing supply store, it goes up--\$1 here and \$1 there. Crab pots go up. I mean, if you keep on pecking at it [*Laughs*]—

00:01:07

HR: Seafood goes up a little bit, but your catches are going down. So when you catch a lot of seafood, if the prices go up, you do good. But just because the price of seafood goes up, it doesn't mean a lot. If you're not—I mean if you're catching a lot of seafood and the price is \$3; the next year your catch goes in half and it only goes up \$1, you're losing money. You're losing—you've made more money when you had a little more seafood and they was \$3 than you do when your catch goes in half and they go up \$1 on you. I mean it's not a—it's not a leveling—you're not in control of your prices and what you catch. You got to catch what you

catch and get what you can get. And like I was saying a while ago, if it wouldn't be for liking the seafood and it's in your blood, once you do something all your life it's—it's kind of you don't have too much choice. But the enjoyment is just to get out in that water on good days; not the bad days where it's rough and nasty. But it's the nice days where you can enjoy it and you smell fresh air and you're out there by yourself and you enjoy that part of it.

00:02:21

And you're catching. It's like hunters that go out deer hunting and kill a big trophy buck. Well every fish we catch, we enjoy catching that fish because it's almost like a trophy to us. We enjoy doing the crabs too. So it's enjoyment that keeps us. Plus it's in our blood and we just know it, and it's easy to us to do it. But it's hard work and it's a lot to it, you know. So that part of it sometimes—I'm sure Rocky is the same way, [thinking] that, "What the hell are we doing in this deal? We ought to be quitting it and doing something else or just enjoying ourselves instead of killing ourselves." Because it's a lot of work.

00:02:57

SR: I imagine—I don't know; I don't want to put words in your mouth—that it's also satisfying to be able to just feed yourself from your work.

00:03:05

HR: Yeah, because you don't have to—. To feed yourself, you--you don't have to do it as hard as we do it to make money at it. If you're just doing it to eat, it's nothing to it. You know, to catch a few fish to eat, because you can't eat that much. But to do it for a living, it's a lot. It's a lot.

00:03:25

And people don't realize it. Just like that guy on that alligator show standing up in that boat saying, "If you think you can do it, well come on down." You know, and there's been a lot of them over the years that have tried, and it's alligators and fishing and crabbing. There's been a lot of them try it. And they walked away from it. And, like I say, me and Rocky and guys like us—and there's a few other ones that's—not many—that's been doing it for forty years—that probably four or five, six, eight, ten a year around this area come in and do it. But you see who is still here. The only ones that's still here.

00:03:59

You think that a lot of people got into that business that seen how hard it was and seen how much money they made. They couldn't feed their families, so they got back out of it.

00:04:11

SR: Would you say that you two are the only two fishermen in Manchac right now?

00:04:17

HR: Well not the only two crabbers, but we kind of are the last of the Mohicans in the way we do things—fishing and crabbing. There's a few crabbers, but not crabber *and* fishermen, catfish lines and stuff like that. Catfish lines are kind of like the old—the Neanderthal way of doing things, you know. That's back, way back—trout lines and stuff the way we do. Nowadays the big thing is hoop nets and stuff like that that's easy. Not easy, but you put a hoop net out and you come back a week later and that's full of fish.

00:04:53

We do it in the ways that it's just like fishing with a rod and reel, you know. You catch a fish, but we do it—we got to do it—put a lot of hooks out to catch it the way we do it. But it's a lot of time and a lot of time involved with trout line fishing.

00:05:09

SR: Who taught you how to do that? Was it your parents?

00:05:12

RR: Yeah. I started with my daddy, and then I got older and friends of mine—you know, you'd pick up something here and there and learn something here; always trying to learn something a little bit better. But I started with my dad when I was a little bitty kid, and then been around just guys down here, fooled with them all my life and just different people, friends of mine, and started out. You just—. It's basically the same. We done it—we do a few things different now that's better than we used to do years ago, you know. They got a couple little things. You learn as you go, like with anything else. Tried to learn something, better ways, but it's basically the same as it was. The fish, they haven't changed their habits really. It's basically just the environment has changed. But the—what they do and the way you catch them is about the same.

00:06:06

SR: Is that—where did you—. Did you learn from your dad. fishing?

00:06:10

HR: Yeah. All our families—my family has been in that—like I say, my uncles and my grandfather and all, they been--they fished like that the same way. I got uncles I seen in pictures from back in the '40s and all running trout lines, old pictures and stuff. But it's just trout line fishing, and certain areas and certain places, you just got to know how to adjust your lines and how much—you know, how deep to fish and all kinds of things; how to adjust them in stumps and stuff like that and where to go certain times of the year, and--and what kind of bait is good at certain times. It's a lot of knowledge. To us, it's kind of like getting out of the bed in the morning or something like that, but it's not something that somebody can just come in there and just go put a trout line out. I've seen people come put trout lines out half a mile away from you and keep asking you how you do this, how do you do that. Because we catch fish.

00:07:11

I mean, it's not everybody can do it and catch fish. It's not that easy.

00:07:19

SR: What do you attach them to?

00:07:21

HR: We got poles and the water is not real deep. Sometimes eight, ten foot deep, so we put poles out and tie the lines to the poles like stakes—whatever.

00:07:32

Sara Roahen: Hayden, different subject, but can you tell me about Fatboy's?

00:07:39

HR: Yeah, that's—my dad and them was always in the—they had a restaurant down here in the '70s. And my wife had this place here in—I guess it was in the late '70s as a little po-boy [shop] and little place to eat. And I think in the late '70s and the '80s the economy went down to—it got bad, worse than it is now, and this part of the country was like a ghost town. Everybody was going up North working and stuff. And so she closed it down or she rented it out and a couple people tried it there and it didn't work out. But in the—up to about five years ago, before the economy went down again, we was in the process of remodeling and getting it back open, and then right before she opened up the bottom dropped out in the economy again. But she opened back up and she's doing pretty good, selling seafood, the cooked seafood, and fried fish and stuff like that. She does pretty good now. It's working out.

00:08:49

SR: Okay. Can you tell me your wife's name?

00:08:51

HR: Debbie. Debbie Reno.

00:08:54

SR: And she runs this restaurant, Fatboy's?

00:08:57

HR: Yeah, she runs it. Yeah. I don't really have too much to do with it. You know, that's her little deal and she's been doing it on and off. She worked with my family with the restaurant back in the days, and then worked over here in the seafood selling the seafood and all, and we decided on trying to open that little place up again a couple years ago. She's been there, I think it's going on her fourth year, and she's been doing all right.

00:09:25

SR: Does Debbie do the cooking?

00:09:27

HR: She does it, and she's got a little helper in there that helps her, but she does most all of it. It's not a big place. It's not a big, big business, so two or three of them can handle it, you know. But it's—she's holding on and does pretty good.

00:09:41

SR: When is it opened?

00:09:43

HR: [Interviewer's note: Hayden lists a bunch of days, all of which are incorrect. I've deleted them for clarity.] No, she's closed on Wednesday and Thursday. All the other days she's open. Wednesday and Thursday she's closed.

00:10:02

SR: Sorry I'm missing it today. I'll have to come back.

00:10:03

HR: Yeah, come back. She'll cook you up some good fish.

00:10:07

SR: Is it--is it helpful to have another huge restaurant next door, or is that—does that hurt?

00:10:14

HR: Well, Middendorf's actually is a drawing card for Manchac. If it wouldn't be for Middendorf's—unless you had another restaurant then—but Middendorf's draws a lot of people in this little town. It's well known; it's got a lot of history to Middendorf's, and he does good and he brings a lot of people into Manchac. Like I said, if it wouldn't be for him, if it wouldn't be for him or somebody like him with something bringing people off the interstate—. It's not only off the interstate, though. It's an established business that people come from all over to eat down there. And it's like the fresh seafood that my parents over there and all sell over there, a lot of people stop in to eat over at Middendorf's and come and stop in and buy some fresh seafood to bring home with them.

00:11:06

So Middendorf's is a drawing card. It brings a lot of people in.

00:11:10

SR: Was it always like that in your lifetime, or—? I mean—

00:11:13

HR: Middendorf's was always a popular name, because I remember when we was young, people would—. In the same way, we used to have the seafood market right next door to it by the water. And that was the same thing: people that would come eat at Middendorf's, after they were finished eating they would come get fresh seafood over there. So it's been like that. But before the interstate—like we was talking, the old highway there—was a lot of business no matter what because all the traffic from going north to south and south to north or whatever, it was easy access for them to stop and get seafood. And plus, like we was talking about, the--the competition. There wasn't a lot of seafood places for people to buy seafood fresh.

00:12:02

RR: Yeah, we had—you know, when I had the place—well, I actually had three fish markets here, huh?

00:12:09

HR: Yeah.

00:12:10

RR: And on Saturdays we'd come in with crabs in the morning and there'd be people driving up and down the road just waiting for somebody to have a couple bushels, you know. They knew they could get something somewhere. You know, upward—between three and four places.

00:12:24

HR: People would like to drive down here to--to see the lake and they'd stop by the lake and eat and they'd look out in the lake and all this. It's different than going to a curb market by your house on the high land where you don't see anything. But people used to bring their kids and all on weekends and come to drive to Manchac, and then they'd go over to stop by the water and sometimes they would put in a little rod and reel and fish.

00:12:48

RR: They had the old highway bridge, which actually after it was closed was an asphalt low bridge and it had a drawbridge. But it—when they closed that for the—we called it a new road, with the high bridge, they left it and people would go out there and fish and crab off of it and have a good time. And there'd be 100 people out there maybe on both sides of the Pass. And then somebody started burning it. They'd go out there and light a fire, and it burnt little by little until it's all gone. But it was actually like a pier, like they built over by Slidell. People would go out and on it.

00:13:21

SR: They burnt—what did they burn?

00:13:23

RR: They burnt it. Well, I don't know if they didn't know no better. Some of it was accidentally, and then I don't know if some of it was on purpose. But it was actually built out of asphalt and creosote, and when that thing caught on fire, I mean it was no way to put it out. And

it burnt section by section. But there used to be 100 people out there that would set crab nets off the bridge and fish nets and whatever and fishing, and that's all gone. That was actually in the '60s and '70s, and it caught on fire a couple times. And it was—it would get put out and it would burn little by little, and eventually it burned all on both sides. But it went all the way out into the Pass, to the middle of the Pass.

00:14:04

SR: Hmm.

00:14:05

HR: Yeah, people our age, Rocky and I, we still get people that come down that's in their 60s and 70s and talk about how they used to come down with their dads and come down in Manchac and fish off the bridge and fish and everything, and go to Middendorf's and buy seafood from us. We still got people trickling in from way back. But you know, it used to be a popular place down here. I mean you--you know from this point north, you didn't have water or--or lakes or anything to talk about. Mississippi and all that.

00:14:38

So we got a lot of people coming from up North that used to come down here that used to come and bring their kids to eat and fish a little bit and crab and stuff, and a lot of childhood memories that people still come in and talk about, so. It was a popular place, Manchac. It was the first place—you didn't have to go to Venice or Grand Isle and all that to go fishing. Back then they had a lot of seafood right here. Fishing, rod and reels, and crabs and everything that—they didn't have to go far, you know. They could stop right here and do a lot of that and eat, and they

had little kind of businesses and sno-balls and everything you could think of in Manchac. It was almost like an amusement deal down here. There was a lot down in this little stretch right here.

00:15:27

SR: Well, it still—I mean, it’s still a little bit like that I guess.

00:15:30

HR: It’s no different. There’s no—there’s not all the old buildings that used to be here and stuff. The stretch of property right here that you see to the end of the road, that’s where you—like I say, you go to an amusement park and they got every kind of little stand right there like that. That’s the way this little place used to be. Every building had some kind of business in it—seafood or sno-balls, all kinds of restaurants. It was big. But since the interstate opened, it took all our—. And plus, like I say, the competitor--the competition and everything on every corner of everywhere you go, that took a lot away from Manchac. The people won't know and they don't want to drive thirty miles or forty miles when they can go two blocks away from their house to get seafood and stuff. They just don't know.

00:16:17

SR: So now there’s Middendorf’s, there’s Fatboy’s, there’s Reno’s Seafood Market—

00:16:24

HR: That’s it as far as little businesses. As--as far as crab factories and stuff like that, there’s a couple of places on the other side of the bridge. Barrooms—.

00:16:36

RR: What Hayden and them had, well they had [a business] which is Gator's [now]. They had a little store inside there and—

00:16:44

HR: Grocery store and stuff that—

00:16:47

RR: —they had—Miss Lois [a waitress at Middendorf's], her mother-in-law and father-in-law had a grocery for years. They had anything you wanted in there, you know, for a little grocery store. And they had gas too.

00:17:00

SR: But now there's no grocery store here, huh? You have to go to Ponchatoula?

00:17:04

HR: Yeah, Ponchatoula. That's what is so bad about—like I say, about competition. If you wanted to open up a grocery store or something, a small place, you know people--people don't want to buy. They penny pinch. And you can't blame them, but—

00:17:19

RR: You can't justify it.

00:17:20

HR: You know, they're not going to come to buy a couple canned goods. They might come and buy a couple things if they're desperate, but most people that come down here, for modern conveniences and all they go to a big grocery store and buy it cheap. Just like gas. If you see a gas station over here and they see one a half a block away and one of them is \$.02 cheaper, you're going to have a line over here where it's cheaper, you know. And that's the same way with everything, and that's talking about competition. Back in the day, we was one of the fish markets, and a couple fish markets down here where you can buy fresh seafood. You couldn't get them in these supermarkets and little curb markets and all. You had to come down here until people started getting smart and opening up seafood places and selling seafood--seafood everywhere.

00:18:10

That kind of knocked us out of the bleachers here. It kind of reversed where people didn't have to ride twenty miles or thirty miles to get their seafood. They were right there and they can get it there. So that—at one time we was the top places, the only place you can get it, so the people enjoyed driving. Now it's just the opposite. They don't have to come down here, so it's not a big deal to them.

00:18:34

SR: What is the clientele for Fatboy's primarily? Is it local?

00:18:38

HR: Well, in a situation like that when you're serving cooked food, and like fried fish and all, quality makes a difference. Because I found out, and Rocky can tell you, that just because you fried fish or cooked seafood or anything, it doesn't mean it's good. And if you know good seafood—just like Middendorf's. If you got good seafood and they got a good product, people will come to you. You don't—you know, fresh seafood is different in a way. You're selling all kind of fresh seafood and everybody is selling fresh or boiled or something. And if it's decent—you know, you're buying it to cook yourself—so as long as it's decent fresh seafood, they'll buy it anywhere. But I've been all around, too, and a good restaurant with fair prices that gives you a good quantity of food on your plate that's really good, people will come to you. I mean it's not wall-to-wall and standing room only in there; she's got a good little business where she makes a decent living. And that's supposedly what I see: some good food, and she gives you a good quantity of food.

00:19:52

SR: Is it mostly local people?

00:19:54

HR: Yeah, mostly local. Well, no. No, she's got a lot of—I say local within thirty or forty miles. On this part of it, the interstate helps a little bit because you get a lot of people traveling that jump off. They're starving to death or they know of Middendorf's. They think Middendorf's is opened seven days a week, and she's opened, and they come down to eat at Middendorf's and they wind up stopping here and they like the food and so they tell people. It's a lot of word-of-

mouth advertisement that helps her, you know. So she's doing pretty good, by not advertising and a little hole in the wall like you would say.

00:20:36

SR: When y'all were growing up, did you eat at the restaurants that were down here?

00:20:41

HR: Not too much. No, not too much. We didn't. I didn't. Rocky, I don't know if Rocky did or not, but we had seafood coming out our ears, and we cooked it ourselves. And we was in the business and all, you know, so sometimes we did. We didn't eat in it, but we ordered food from it and got it to go.

00:21:02

RR: Yeah, I never forget. My grandpa used to go down there every Saturday night, it seemed like. They'd just go down and get a couple beers, you know, and he'd come home with the chicken box. And they had the best chicken. Boy, it was good. But mostly [take]out. Very seldom went in. But we'd get some of that, order out once in a while.

00:21:19

SR: You're talking about Middendorf's?

00:21:20

RR: Uh-huh.

00:21:22

SR: It was fried chicken?

00:21:23

RR: Yeah, it was good. Dollar and a quarter, half a chicken. *[Laughs]* He'd give me the leg.

[Laughs]

00:21:37

SR: They were known for that, I think.

00:21:37

RR: Huh?

00:21:38

SR: I think they were known for their chicken at a certain—.

00:21:39

RR: Well, they had—you know they was always known for the thin catfish. That's what they're famous for. It's good. It was good.

00:21:49

HR: Things was cheap back then, you know. I mean it was cheap. The gas was cheap. Everything was cheap, and Manchac was rolling back in the early '70s. The '70s was a—

00:22:00

RR: They always had a good business down there. My mama and his mama worked together down there for years. That was probably in the late '40s.

00:22:10

Sara Roahen: They worked at Middendorfs?

00:22:12

RR: Uh-huh. My mama did work there twice for Miss Middendorf. And then Miss Pat Midland run it for 20 years, leased it or something. She done well there.

00:22:24

SR: What did she do there?

00:22:25

RR: Same thing. Just—oh, my mama?

00:22:29

SR: Yeah.

00:22:29

RR: Oh, waitress.

00:22:32

HR: About all you can do when you—Middendorf's—either cook or waitress. One of the two.

00:22:36

RR: It was good down there.

00:22:38

SR: Oh, I didn't realize that your mom worked there.

00:22:41

RR: Yeah.

00:22:43

SR: She must have come home with sore feet.

00:22:44

RR: Before I was born. That was before I was born.

00:22:49

SR: And your mom worked there, too Hayden?

00:22:49

HR: Right, right. Like I said, they worked together down there. My mama, I think, is going to be ninety-one, and she's still living. But yeah, she worked. She told me she worked in—I think before World War I or II. She worked putting planes together in the World War II or I or something. Whatever she was—she was a riveter. Back then they was recruiting women and everything else to work in factories and stuff, and she said she was putting planes together back in the—.

00:23:24

SR: She was a Rosie the Riveter?

00:23:25

HR: Yeah, putting—

00:23:28

RR: New Orleans, huh?

00:23:29

HR: I guess so, yeah. But then she was working at—that's been way before my time, though. She worked at Middendorf's over there, but she was waitressing at Middendorf's.

00:23:37

SR: Before you were born?

00:23:37

HR: Oh yeah, yeah, way before. Like he said, in the early '40s or something. Early '40s, late '40s.

00:23:44

SR: Can you tell me—I know I talked to your dad about this, but I'm not sure we got the dates correctly. What was the restaurant that your family had?

00:23:52

HR: We took that—I think it was in the mid-'70s when we had that restaurant down at the end down here, right next to Middendorf's. Competitive with Middendorf's. But it was in the mid-'70s—'74 or something like that. But we didn't have it long. I'm thinking '73, '74 until about in the early '80s.

00:24:25

RR: The bridge got knocked out, I thought, in—

00:24:28

HR: Seventy-seven, '78.

00:24:28

RR: —right around there, yeah. It knocked the main bridge out—barges. Oh yeah.

00:24:34

HR: Before the interstate was—

00:24:34

RR: They were just coming through with the interstate and a barge hit the drawbridge, hit the middle of the highway bridge, and they didn't have--they didn't have guards all the way through. They only had them around the one section there, and they [*Gestures*]—

00:24:49

HR: Full of shells. The barge was full of shells. The tug boat was pushing two barges or three barges, and a strong wind with a strong end tide, and they wasn't no barricades all inside the highway bridge. The barges would go underneath the bridge there. And he lost it and was going to the—and the big barge full of shells was so heavy that when he hit the pylons underneath it, it just knocked the pylons out and the bridge come down and had an eighteen-wheeler on it and come down.

00:25:24

RR: There was an eighteen-wheeler, slammed down laying on the barge. The man never even got killed. One truck--one truck went over. That was it.

00:25:32

HR: I was standing there watching it when it happened in '76, '77, yeah.

00:25:37

RR: I was laying on the floor and I heard it.

00:25:41

HR: I looked up. I looked up and there was like—it looked like an atomic bomb or something, just smoke—you wouldn't believe—with the concrete. The concrete itself, when it busted up it just left a cloud of smoke coming up. And I didn't know what happened. I was looking out there and everybody was starting to scramble. And I said, "Man, I don't know which way to run or what." But after it kind of cleared out, you could see the barge and the sections of bridge going, and then I heard squealing, cars almost getting—

00:26:07

RR: Work time when everybody was—it was around five o'clock, because it was—. Like I said, you could hear squealing and brakes. Only one truck. They thought several went over, but only one went over.

00:26:18

SR: Was it—were there fatalities?

00:26:21

RR: One. The man in the eighteen-wheeler. They got pictures of it over here in the barroom. They got a picture of the 18-wheeler. Rode the slab down and laying on the barge.

00:26:33

SR: They have pictures of it at Middendorf's?

00:26:34

RR: They might have it at Middendorf's. I think they got them over there at the Beacon. They got the one at the Beacon, I know.

00:26:42

HR: *[Unintelligible]* with the truck—.

00:26:44

RR: And that driver, I think he only got a broke leg.

00:26:47

SR: Wow. So then, okay. I'm trying to figure out which bridge that was. Did they rebuild it?

00:26:53

HR: Right here. If you ride across you can see the two sections are different than the bridge itself. That's the ones they replaced. The original high bridge. Not the interstate, the twin span; it's the single one right here, right in front of Middendorf's.

00:27:10

SR: What year was that?

00:27:12

HR: I think that was around '77.

00:27:14

SR: So you had the restaurant then?

00:27:15

HR: Yeah, we had the restaurant.

00:27:17

RR: Then they had to carry across. They had—guys going to work would leave their cars over here and jump on a boat and go across and get in another car instead of having to drive all the way to them plants.

00:27:27

HR: There was no way to get from north to south then because the interstate wasn't hooked up then. They were still building it, and this was the only bridge that was open—highway. So you'd have to go around [*Train in Background*] the causeway to get to New Orleans, or around Sorrento or Gonzalez and all that way and come around. Yeah, we had a big thirty-some-foot

boat we had and we started carrying them in the wee-hours of the morning, all the workers. We had the restaurant and they would eat breakfast at our restaurant and then we'd charter them across and they would leave vehicles on the other side of the bridge and they would park over here and we'd ferry them and bring them by boat and drop them off over there and they'd get in their vehicles and go to work. Because a lot of these guys were working in the plants and all. And they would have to go all the way around in the morning in that traffic at the causeway, or this way it would take them an hour and a half more. So they would come here and we'd bring them over there. They would lose a few minutes but they'd get to work.

00:28:32

Then after a while they got so busy that the State or Parish put a crew boat in, and they was ferrying the people across back and forth.

00:28:42

SR: How long did that last? How long did it take them to—?

00:28:43

HR: About a year or two. A couple years.

00:28:45

RR: It took them a while. What happened, it was kind of—for the good part, they already had the rigs, some of the rigs sitting there coming across with the new interstate and they just moved over and repaired that. Or, you know, it kind of helped.

00:29:00

HR: Yeah, they were building the interstate with the equipment and everything. So it might have been six months or a year or something. It was a while. It wasn't overnight when they—. You know, they had the order the pre-fab, the sections and all and pylons. They had to drill new pylons down and—.

00:29:18

RR: That's when they used to dredge both lakes. That's when they hauled the clam shells—the shells—and that's what knocked it down. He was coming in with shells. They might have done sunk. I don't know. I can't remember.

00:29:31

HR: It was coming—

00:29:32

RR: He had shells on that barge, I believe. Some—

00:29:34

HR: Yeah, he was full of shells.

00:29:36

RR: And he was coming in so he wouldn't have been bringing them out of Lake Maurepas. I don't know. They must have been hauling them over there to work on some road or something, I guess.

00:29:47

SR: But that barge—no one on the barge got hurt, huh?

00:29:50

HR: Oh, uh-uh. The tugboat captain was in the back way far away from it. I don't know if they—I can't—

00:29:57

RR: I can't remember if it was one barge or two. I don't know if he was pushing two barges or one.

00:30:01

HR: But some kind of situation with the boat captain. Either he was drinking or something—something. I forgot.

00:30:10

SR: Wow, that is dramatic.

00:30:12

HR: That was a long time ago.

00:30:12

RR: It was a big deal, now.

00:30:13

SR: Yeah.

00:30:15

HR: Yeah, it was all over the news and everything, countrywide. It was a big deal because when it happened they had divers and all diving for survivors and all kind of stuff, and it was—yeah, it was a big deal down here for a while.

00:30:30

SR: What was the name of your family's restaurant?

00:30:33

HR: I think it—was it Reno's? I can't remember what—I think it was Reno's Seafood Restaurant. [Interviewer's note: Hayden's father, Dunk, told me the restaurant was called Dunk's.]

00:30:41

SR: And that must have been like right up against Middendorf's almost?

00:30:45

RR: That was the old fish market.

00:30:45

HR: Yeah, yeah, the old fish market. It was--it was part on where the new part of the restaurant is close to the water. Some of--some of that restaurant is over the top of the old foundation where the restaurant was there. Because we had a seafood market where the big, screened place is now. We had a seafood market right almost in the same spot that is now. And we had a restaurant alongside of that, so it was—. Part of the restaurant that they got—down to the new part where the bar is now, and the new part, is where our restaurant was right there.

00:31:28

SR: And eventually the Middendorf's ownership bought that land, I guess.

00:31:33

HR: Right. I think Beauty, the one you're going to interview, her family owned—that was her dad that owned that seafood market, but we rented it from them or was leasing it from them.

00:31:43

SR: Oh okay, Beauty Gueldner, yeah. Hopefully I'll be talking with her.

00:31:47

HR: Her dad, Dennis Rottman—that was her—. Dennis Rottman that was the original owner of that whole section right there.

SR: So we just heard the train go by. How many times a day does that happen?

00:32:00

HR: Six or seven times a day. Different—we got the Amtrak and freight trains.

00:32:05

RR: Day and night. Day and night.

00:32:07

HR: That used to put us asleep in the same place that we're talking about, the restaurant. My bedroom was—. I don't know if you remember it, but that old house we stayed in.

00:32:15

RR: Yeah, oh yeah.

00:32:18

HR: I'm telling you, it was from here—. The trains would pass from here to that back door right there. And it would look—it would rock that house like a cradle. I couldn't wait until it come—a train come that put me to sleep. Nine, ten o'clock at night it would put me to sleep because it

would rock--it would rock the house. I'm telling you, it was from here to there, from the—that's how close it was.

00:32:38

RR: They actually had a water tank when I was a kid right here. The train would stop and fill up with water when they was running steam.

00:32:46

SR: Really?

00:32:46

RR: Yeah, a big water tank. Huh? Big water tank right there.

00:32:51

SR: Huh. Now, this might be an ignorant question, but who operates the drawbridge? Or how does that work?

00:33:00

RR: Well, it's an electronic one now. They used to have a man out there. They used to have a bridge tender that would have—. Well, the old bridge used to--used to swing. It didn't go up. This new one here is, you know—. But they actually had a bridge tender on the new one too. Until now it's all handled—

00:33:15

HR: All electronic.

00:33:17

RR: —electronic. But they used to have a man that had to stay out there.

00:33:21

SR: And it always works? [*Laughs*]

00:33:24

RR: Sometimes they have a little bit of trouble with it. But I mean basically, yeah.

00:33:27

HR: Except, you know, if you're a train engineer on your train—sees that bridge is—you know, they kind of watch and they got communications with everything. If that bridge is stuck up, a train is not going to—. They got all kinds of information computers and all, showing that it's up and they're not going to run—

00:33:49

RR: Miss Middendorf's sister—that was before I was born, and mama and them told me the highway bridge used to have a drawbridge, too, that swung. And she went through it and drowned when it was open.

00:34:02

SR: Miss Middendorf's sister, huh?

00:34:04

RR: Uh-hm.

00:34:06

SR: Huh. [*Phone Rings*] This isn't the safest place [*Laughs*].

00:34:09

RR: Huh?

00:34:10

SR: Living on the water, there's some—. I'm close to wrapping this up. There are a couple more questions I don't want to forget. One was, Karen Pfeifer of Middendorf's has a book that you gave her: "Manchac Cookbook." Did someone in your family write that, or what is the history of that cookbook? Do you know?

00:34:30

RR: Well, Miss Bernice Reno made that. She actually made it; she done a really good job, really good, and really good pictures and done a lot of work. She actually made it, I think, the first one—she come out with two or three, what would you call that? Two or three different—?

00:34:47

SR: Editions.

00:34:48

RR: Editions. And she made it when we was getting the fire department started, and she—I think all the--most of the profits went to the fire department. That's when she came up—Miss Bernice Reno made that.

00:35:02

SR: Is that—

00:35:05

RR: Hayden's uncle's wife. Bernice was your aunt?

00:35:08

HR: Cousin.

00:35:09

RR: Cousin. But she actually come out with it, and it's really good. A lot of the history, and everybody that's in that recipe—everybody that ever lived or anybody that ever lived or had kin people or whatever in Manchac has got a recipe in there from way back, if you notice. But everybody that's named in there is from Manchac or been around here or kin to somebody like that.

00:35:34

SR: How did you have that cookbook?

00:35:35

RR: Huh?

00:35:35

SR: How did you have that cookbook? Was it in your family or—?

00:35:38

RR: Oh yeah, well we had them. We had them. You know, there was plenty available and my mama used to sell them for her when we had the fish market. She was selling them for her and we just had several and I gave Horst one.

00:35:49

SR: Yeah, it's a great cookbook. I was wondering the history of that.

00:35:51

RR: She got a couple more of them out, too, but that's--that's the only one I could find.

00:35:55

HR: She's been dead for ten, twelve, fifteen years.

00:36:04

SR: Okay. And I also wanted to ask what were—how were you affected by Hurricane Isaac? I know a lot of places, a lot of homes, here flooded.

00:36:16

HR: Yeah, we flooded here about fourteen inches.

00:36:19

RR: Our worst hurricane. I mean, the highest water that we ever had. Probably two foot higher than Ike. Ike was the highest before Isaac here in this area, and Isaac was by far the highest water. The whole house got flooded and we had major—. You know, everybody down here got flooded. And nobody was elevated then. Everybody got flooded here.

00:36:49

SR: Nobody was elevated because you hadn't really had that many floods here before, huh?

00:36:52

RR: Well we had a couple, you know, but we went for a long span there with no floods and then it looked like every time you turned around we had hurricanes. Two back-to-back, Katrina and Rita—Isaac. Whatever. I got them mixed up, but it was--it was a mess. *[Laughs]*

00:37:14

SR: Could you keep fishing or crabbing?

00:37:16

RR: Shut everything down. I mean, you'd get—you'd lose traps, you'd lose—. Well, I don't think we was fishing at the time, but crabbing was all your traps get lost, buried up, messed up. And then the buyers can't operate. And then a lot of times—

00:37:33

HR: About a week or so with no electricity at all. We--we did not have any, so—.

00:37:38

RR: Cleaning up.

00:37:39

HR: Cleaning up and mud everywhere and—

00:37:41

RR: Me and Hayden—. Now Isaac, matter of fact, me and Hayden was back here by the canal where we keep our boats that morning and I said, “Well,” I said, “This ain't going to be nothing.” I said [*Laughs*]--I said, “We ain't going to get nothing out of this, and we're going to get lucky.” That evening we was back there up to over our chest. [*Laughs*]

00:37:57

SR: By your boats?

00:37:58

RR: Oh yeah. It just—I mean, when it came here this time, it just—it ain't never done that before. That's because they put all them walls up down there in New Orleans and closed this off, and of course it shoves all the water over here on us. And that's—and all the conditions was right for it to put it on us, but all that still shoves the water over this way. You can't—you're just moving the water. You're not getting rid of it.

00:38:25

SR: And did you—how do you protect your boats, then? You take them out of the water?

00:38:27

RR: Well, if we can, yeah. We'll pick them up on a trailer and bring them uptown or wherever.

00:38:35

HR: Yeah, everybody picks their boats up. But we learned that we can't go by any predictions of a light storm or something that's not going to affect us. We--we've taken—nowadays we take it like it's going to be the worst storm ever, even if they say it's not. Just so—

00:38:54

RR: Yeah, I mean it was bad. Water, we had never dreamed it would get that high. I mean, you could ride down the middle of the road in a boat. It was what up in here? In height, right here

actually where we're sitting at Hayden's place, right here is the highest place in Manchac. This is the last thing to go under. By looking at it you can't tell, but it is. You are the last one to go under right here for some—. I mean, it's just built up over the years or whatever.

00:39:21

HR: And we had it about halfway up them blocks up in here. Which doesn't look like it's that high if you look at the water levels in the lake from when you're standing out there. It looked like it could get over the roofs, and that's what—some things I don't understand, how high they predict that water to get, but it still didn't get too much over the roads up until Isaac. But it looked like it would come over our roofs every time a hurricane would come, the way the water levels are out there.

00:39:49

SR: There are some sort of walls built here now or something, huh?

00:39:52

HR: But they're not much for keeping water out. It's wave action that--that we're looking at.

00:40:00

SR: All right, you guys have given me a lot of time. I just have two more questions for each of you, and one—the first is: What do you see as the future of Manchac?

00:40:10

HR: Well, if they keep on leveeing everything around all our lakes and down below in Mississippi and the Gulf Coast and all, I think just during the storms we're going to have more water come in higher than what we had in Isaac, I think. And if you're--if you're not above the—built up any more—. Like these buildings here, if they're on the ground they're going to wind up losing them. There's not going to be anything built on the ground. But anything built on stilts, in other words, is all right unless we get some kind of crazy hurricane with the winds that will blow us away.

00:40:59

But other than the storms coming in with more water, it's going to affect us. We can--we can overcome the water if we're built right. It's just the seafood that we got, the crabs. Manchac will always be here for somebody to live. I mean, if I couldn't fish here and I was retired I'd build me a place to live, you know. And you'd always have a little something out in the lake to do something. But as far as commercial and the business part of it, if they don't do something—

00:41:31

RR: Commercially it's kind of going down except for crabbing. Fishing, me and him, ain't too many people commercially catfish no more. But I mean as far as sports and what you call recreational, it's—you can go to that boat launch in good weather and there could be 300 cars there, you know. They got people out there. They got camps. Building new camps all the time; building them right and they're going to survive. They're going to be all right. You know, if it's built right and up to code. And more recreational stuff, boat riding, fishing—they got a lot of people that come down here fishing.

00:42:08

SR: Well that's good. It sounds like there is a future for Manchac.

00:42:11

HR: Well—

00:42:11

SR: Just a different future.

00:42:12

HR: Different future. The--the seafood industry and commercial living and everything might be hard, but as far as the sports—you know, sportsmen—

00:42:25

RR: More popular probably than ever.

00:42:29

HR: Just the commercial part of it, to make a living, might be going out if they don't do anything about it—or they can and they can't or whatever. But Manchac will always be here. As long as there's a highway coming through here, Manchac will be here. And there will always be something to do, but making a big living with the commercial seafood and all that might be-- might be getting close to over if something don't happen, because it's harder and harder to make a living. And you got to be able to make some money to--to live these days, so you know it all

depends on what you got left in the lakes out here. But it doesn't look good for the commercial seafood, the fishermen and all, to make a living.

00:43:09

But Manchac and Middendorf's here—

00:43:11

RR: Yeah, he's done a lot for us. They've made a lot of improvements.

00:43:17

HR: As long as Middendorf's is here, they'll always—he'll always draw people here. You know, and there will always be a little bit of the gravy dripping off for us to get some of it some kind of way. *[Laughs]*

00:43:28

RR: Yeah. *[Laughs]*

00:43:32

HR: We won't starve to death.

00:43:33

SR: There will always be some catfish to eat anyway. And then the last question is—and you know we've touched on this—but if you could just sort of summarize what is the most

challenging part of the profession you've chosen and what is the most fulfilling part of the profession you've chosen? He's passing it off to Hayden first.

00:43:56

HR: The challenging part is just keeping up with everything. We got to keep--keep catching enough seafood to make a living and keeping up with inflation that it's almost impossible to keep up. With the amount of seafood and stuff that we catch, we just can't keep up with the inflation, is one of the biggest problems, because the seafood is going down and we can't get enough to catch to make a living. That's the challenging part. The rewarding part is to get out on the water on pretty days, and the cool days that's here, and doing things out around Manchac that's enjoying just like a sport fisherman or something; just going out and--and doing something at your leisure time, that you're not fighting the elements to make a living at it, you know. And that's the most enjoying part. We catch seafood and all because we like doing it. You know, crabs and fish and all, it's enjoyment. That's the part I enjoy.

00:44:59

RR: Yeah, it's definitely not all about the money because it ain't like we're getting rich. But it's like I say, he's getting there on it: being able to get out there and do what you like to do, and basically when—. You get to do, say yeah, yeah, you're going fishing and doing what you want, but you don't get paid unless you produce something. You got to—somebody has got to—

00:45:21

HR: Some people like to buy a boat and just go riding in a boat and not fishing or nothing. Not bait a hook. They buy a boat and they go out in the lake and that's what they like. You know, and some people come out to fish with a little flat boat and they--they enjoy it. Well, we're the same way. We like the water. We enjoy the water.

00:45:38

RR: We enjoy it. You know, you get out there and make a little money and--and have a good day or a bad day, whatever it may be. But when you—everybody likes to get a good day and--and make a good catch or fair catch. It ain't like you got to sink the boat, but you got to do something.

00:45:55

HR: So far we've been lucky. We've been enjoying it and we're making a living and we try not to think about the end of it coming. You know if we do—if we do dry up and not able to catch any seafood to make a living, so when that day comes we'll kind of play it by ear and deal with it then. So—.

00:46:17

RR: My grandpa said, he said he hated to punch a clock, and I ain't never had to do it yet.

[Laughs]

00:46:22

Sara Roahen: Those six weeks at the plant maybe—.

00:46:25

RR: Oh boy, yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:46:28

Sara Roahen: All right, well, I can't thank you guys enough for giving me your time and your stories. I really appreciate it.

00:46:33

RR: Thank you.

00:46:33

HR: Good luck.

00:46:35

SR: Thanks.

00:46:36

[End Hayden Reno & Rocky Rakocy Interview 2]