

HENRY TINDELL
Crabber – Eastpoint, FL

* * *

Date: March 24, 2006
Location: Mr. Tindell's Crab House – Eastpoint, FL
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 1 hour, 30 minutes
Project: Florida's Forgotten Coast

[Begin Henry Tindell]

0:00:00.2

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans for the Southern Foodways Alliance on Friday, March 24th 2006, and I'm in Eastpoint, Florida, with Mr. Henry Tindell, a crabber here. Would you mind saying your name, please, sir, for the record?

0:00:15.9

Henry Tindell: Henry Tindell.

0:00:17.8

AE: And your birth date also, if you don't mind?

0:00:20.0

HT: July 17th '45 [1945].

0:00:23.5

AE: Are you a native of Eastpoint?

0:00:25.3

HT: No; I was born in Alabama.

0:00:29.3

AE: Okay; what part?

0:00:30.3

HT: Just a little south of Dothan.

0:00:32.4

AE: Okay; that's not too far up the road from here.

0:00:34.7

HT: No; about a 100-some miles.

0:00:36.6

AE: Did your family move here, or did you come here to work?

0:00:38.1

HT: Yeah; well whenever I was in high school I had an aunt that lived down here. I come down here whenever I was in the eleventh grade. I come down here and spent Christmas the year before, and I enjoyed it. I mean it—it was real simple. Everybody done the same thing; it wasn't you know—the work, everybody worked the bay and I just liked it. And I knew I had to do something when I got out of high school, and I didn't know what I wanted to do and I said [to myself] Well, that's what I want to do. So I came down and I married a girl that was raised here. I started working the bay. And I worked in the oyster house one year where they shucked oysters, and then I oystered for years. And then I started hard-crabbing and then I hard-crabbed for years. Then they started soft-shell crabbing and people came down from Virginia that said they done a lot of it in Virginia, and I got into soft-shell crabbing, and I've been doing it for I don't know—just how many years I've been soft-shell crabbing, probably twenty-five years or so. But I've worked on the bay—I started on the bay in I think it was [nineteen] sixty-three, and I worked on the bay ever since. It's been—used to they would close the bay down for oystering during the summertime, and you'd have to get a job for three months doing something. I worked on construction work during the summer and worked at a service station during the summer. You just picked up whatever kind of job you could for the three months but went right back to the bay as quick as it opened. For the last several years they hadn't closed it, so it's year-round and just worked the bay.

0:02:35.6

AE: So when you first came down here and started working the oyster house and all that, did you just take to life here pretty quick or was there some adjustment to it?

0:02:44.2

HT: Yeah; it was—I just liked it, you know. Most places off the water you have in a community you have all different stages of work. In other words, you have what you call the day hand that's out there working at a low wage, and then you have somebody that's, you know, working a little higher wage and all. Here, everybody made the same; it was just according to how hard you wanted to work. So whether you had a doctor's degree or whether you didn't finish high school that had nothing to do with it. It was—was you willing to get up and go to work in the morning and put in a day's work and come home? And I like that. Everybody was equal. And—and I really liked that; it wasn't whether you come from a family that was able to send you to college and you go on and you know get all of this or whether you come from a poor family where you couldn't—you know you had an opportunity to get the education and all and to get the finer jobs; everybody was equal.

0:03:57.6

AE: And the bay provides for you, if you go do it.

0:03:59.0

HT: And the bay provided for everybody; that's—it's changing, you know. It's not like that anymore to that extent, but it was back then. And—and it was the only place that I had ever been that I had ever seen or ever heard of that it was like that—that everybody was on equal ground, you know. It all depended on whether you was willing to get up and go to work or not. And it just appealed to me because I felt like I could work as well as anybody else, you know, at whatever, you know, and—and it just appealed to me. And I knew when I got out of school up—up in the—where I lived, where I was raised it was kind of the farmland and it was still hard work, still depended on a lot whether you owned a bunch of land or, you know, or whether you didn't—or what you were going to do or either you was going to have to go to town and get a construction job or something like that and—and I—that just didn't appeal to me at all. And I don't know; it was just something about it down here that—that I liked.

0:05:21.1

AE: What was the oyster house that you got your first job at [called]?

0:05:23.7

HT: The first job I worked at was at a—there was a guy from Virginia down here named Elridge Massey; he run Massey's Seafood, and he had an oyster house and a crab house. And I actually worked there the summer before my senior year in school. I graduated from Carrabelle

[High School in Carrabelle, Florida]. I came down here and graduated at Carrabelle. But I worked between my senior year and my eleventh and twelfth grade year that summer; I worked down in [an] oyster house, crab house. Back then they didn't have any bay oysters, but they shipped in oysters from Louisiana and they shucked Louisiana oysters and picked crabs. There were several crab houses here in those days—but no crab houses in Franklin County; and not one closer than Southport and Panama City, Florida, or over in Panacea today. But back in those days there were probably four or five crab houses here on Eastpoint alone. And a lot of people crabbed; they picked crabs in the summertime because of the oysters. The bay was shut down for oysters. But everything has changed, so you—you wouldn't believe it how it was back then.

0:06:46.5

AE: Well that's what I'm hearing.

0:06:48.5

HT: You know it—it was total different back then and—well all the younger people have—well they smart in a way by the way it's changing they—they're beginning to get out of the bay. They're going onto school; they're going and getting jobs because it's changing and it's not going to last. When you start seeing a lot of buildings—see back in those days, St. George Island there was one building on St. George Island; there was a ferry that run across and you could catch a ferry and run across the island. You could go coon hunting on the island or something like that; there was nothing over there. There wasn't the people. I mean there—there were—wasn't a whole

lot of people so there was no coming to come to Eastpoint unless you just liked the laid back life and get up whatever time of day you wanted to get up and go to work. You could go before daylight or you could go at dinnertime if you want to; nobody tells you when to go or when to come in. It all depended on you; you had to have desire yourself to—to get up and go to work. The amount of days you worked and all of that strictly depended on you. I remember way back in those days a lot of people down here, which I—I never hunted—but a lot of them worked hard until hunting season came in and they probably wouldn't work two days a week during hunting season. They stayed in the woods to hunt. When hunting season was over they went right back to work and worked seven days a week; it was just up to them and I just liked that. I mean you know it—and there aren't many places that you can make a living and do it on your own on your terms and somebody not telling you you've got to be here at a certain time and no, you can't have tomorrow off if you need it you know. You've got to take—you can take any day you wanted or you could work seven days a week, you know and—.

0:09:01.3

AE: But with that independence also comes things like no health insurance and stuff like that.

0:09:06.6

HT: Oh, yes. Yeah, all of that was on you. Everything depended on you, which I still like that. I still like it better because, I don't know; it's just an independence. I've always been willing to get

up and go to work just like the job I'm doing today in—in soft-shell crabbing. This job is seven days a week, and it's every three hours day in and out.

0:09:45.6

AE: So tell me about this building here because this is pretty new, isn't it?

0:09:48.1

HT: It got tore down last year. I was in that old building over there.

0:09:53.8

AE: That cinderblock building?

0:09:54.2

HT: Yeah; and the hurricane [Dennis] tore it down, and I built this—this year; this is the first year I've been in here.

0:10:03.2

AE: And this—this soft-shell season is about to really start up this month, is that right?

0:10:08.5

HT: Yeah; it—it usually starts—runs March, April, and May—the main part of it. I mean, you can shed them all year but those are the three months it's the heaviest. I mean, if you're going to do anything, you're going to make any money you're going to do it in those three months and then the rest of the year you—you know, you just pretty much get by but if you're going to really make any money, you've got to make it in those three months.

0:10:34.0

AE: Did you build this place yourself?

0:10:35.9

HT: No, Larry Hatfield built it for me. Well I—done part of it but I didn't have time; I was working on crab traps and all, trying to get them ready. It was—I didn't want to built it too early because at least I wanted to get in it before another storm tore it down. And I don't even remember the storm, the name of the storm that tore it down but it was earlier. It was before the ones in Alabama and Texas.

0:11:08.0

AE: Dennis from last July?

0:11:10.3

HT: Yeah, I believe it was. And I didn't do anything. I just waited; I said [to myself] Well after the storm season is over and it gets into the fall of the year and it gets cool where I knew the storms was pretty much over I'll try to get something started. Maybe I can at least get a spring in, but you never know. I've been in that old building over there for many a year and never—never nothing like that you know. I mean it—it come up and washed out some on the back wall; we'd repair it or something like that but this time it come all the way across [Highway] 98 and took everything. It was water; it wasn't wind. We didn't have that much wind but the water got so high. Most water I had ever seen and I talked to a lot of them that lived here that's older than I am that said they had never seen that much water.

0:12:05.8

AE: Well tell me about your setup here and how all this works for the soft-shells.

0:12:11.5

HT: Well soft-shell crabbing is—is it's just a blue crab you catch that's fixing to molt and become soft. You have to—you run traps or—out there; some people calls them pots. You bait them with male crabs and the females will go to the male crabs for protection when they're

shedding. So before they start shedding or getting close to shedding they'll go in the trap with the male crab. The male crab will pick her up and tote her and that's the way we catch the peelers, the female peelers to come in. Now the male crab peelers, they're different. They hunting for someplace to hide and they'll go into any kind of an old dark trap or grassy trap or something like that better, you know. They're just wanting to hide because when they shed within four hours they're hard again. So when you—whenever I bring them in here I have to come down—well I usually come down every evening. It's according to how many I've got in here to go through to how early I get down and then I separate them according to stage I think they're going to be in close to shedding. This front vat here is what I call my shedding vat. That's one they shed out of at night. And I—all the crabs I put in there usually will shed during that next night. If not early the next morning they'll shed, so whenever I come down every evening I go through and make sure I get all that should go in there—in there and then it's just back and forth all night and all day. You have to check them. If you pack them and are selling them live—not freezing them it's about every three hours. If you're—if you're freezing them or you could pick them completely—everything is shed when you come down you could do it every four hours but the ones that's really just shedding won't live any length of time so you have to leave him in the water for—it needs to be shedded at least an hour before you take him out to pack him to ship him for him to stay alive. So that cuts your time down and you have to come every three hours and—.

0:14:45.0

AE: What are you looking for when you're—you know they're going to be shedding?

0:14:49.8

HT: When on the back of a—the back fin of a crab a female crab they'll have a—a red right around the edge of that back fin. See it in the sun?

0:15:06.6

AE: Uh-hmm, yes, sir. A red kind of line.

0:15:07.6

HT: They'll—they'll start having a red line and this v-flap—we call it a v-flap—females got a v-shape when—when it's going to shed if it's ever going to shed again. A grown one will have a round one. Now this one will have a round one when it sheds but it gets that color—gets that pink color in it. One that's not close to shedding it's a different color and it will have a v-flap. Any female that is going to shed is going to have a v-flap. If they've got that round flap that's—they're grown and they're not going to shed anymore. Now see that one is getting well a little color in it, not near—near as bright red, the—the line in his back flipper back there you will see it's just a light pink—not very much.

0:16:08.7

AE: Seems to be a subtle difference to me. [*Laughs*]

0:16:12.0

HT: But if you sit—notice how that male crab is toting that female?

0:16:15.3

AE: Yes, sir.

0:16:17.1

HT: That's what happens; they pick them up to carry them. You know you ain't going to fool him; he knows she's going to shed so he'll tote her. If he's toting her you know she's going to shed. So you could go ahead and bring her in.

0:16:33.4

AE: So do you have a certain ratio of male to female in this—?

0:16:36.2

HT: No; usually what happens—those male crabs was going to shed I thought when I brought them in. They'd have a little bit of line on them but when you bring them in this house you don't

feed them. And if—if a male crab for some reason—I don't know why—if they're not pretty close to shedding they'll go back to what we call—go back the other way. They—they won't continue on through the molt; they'll stop and go back until you throw him back out in the water and let him run in the wild. He won't—he won't molt again but he—once he starts feeding and everything he'll go through the cycle again see because molting is the only way the grow. That's actually the way they grow. So if it—if you catch him—what we call too green—not close enough to shedding, he's going to have to keep continuing eating to go on through his molt. You can catch him and bring him in here where he don't get anymore food and then he won't go on through the molt. He'll stop and go back the other—what we call the other way. I mean he'll you know just stop. But if you put him back out in the wild, I put them in my traps because you put bait in your traps where the male crabs can feed because you've got them shut up and then they'll—they'll reverse and start back the other way and then go through a molt.

0:18:14.4

AE: That's amazing.

0:18:14.5

HT: You can bring him back in later and put him back in the vat. It's the same crab but you stopped its food. Of course a female crab, if you catch them too green they will do the same thing but usually if the male crab is picking her up to carry her she is far enough along in the

cycle of molting that she won't revert back. She'll continue on through it whether you feed or her not, she'll—she'll continue on.

0:18:44.3

AE: So what are you doing today or right now at four o'clock? Are you coming to find—?

0:18:49.1

HT: Well what I'll do—I'll come here—this vat here is the next one to my—I go through and see which one of these is busted that I think is going to shed tonight. I'll move him up into the front vat—the buster vat and I will come down here and I'll go through all of these and I'll pick everyone of them up and I'll check them and see whether they need to go in that vat or go on up yonder in that one. Then I'll move over to this vat. I'll go—I'll pick up all these and I'll check them.

0:19:21.6

AE: So you have—you have—?

0:19:21.3

HT: What I do—you work them in stages just around. The last ones I caught I didn't go out yesterday because the day before yesterday they—they in that far vat at yonder. I probably won't touch them or this one here, this vat here I went through yesterday.

0:19:42.0

AE: So you have eight vats here, so are they—are they really in eight stages of molting?

0:19:49.5

HT: No, not really; what I do I bring them in and when you're on the boat it's hard to look at them real close because you're running but I dump in a cull box where I can pick them up. If I see one that looks like he's real—shows real pink color and all I put him separate from the others. I bring him in and I put him over here in one of these vats that's close to shedding. The others I know it's going to be two to three days before they'll molt, so I'll put him in a vat and just let them sit there for a couple days—three days before I go through them. And I'll do that; I'll have sometimes three or four vats that I hadn't touched you know within two or three days but then after they sit there for a couple—three days I'll go through them. Well some of them will be moved on close to shedding because of—they in different stages you know in that vat. I'll take them out and bring them on over; a lot of times I leave the others in the vat and I just put them back in the vat. And it's just to go through—you know like that and—and it—that's where you get a lot of your time. See like this crab right here, now see that's a different vat and she's fixing to shed, and she should have been up yonder. If you leave her in there they're going to eat her

because they will eat if they got something to eat. They'll even eat in this vat. So they'll eat—
they'll eat one fixing to shed.

0:21:23.4

AE: But if they're all shedding then they're all safe?

0:21:25.5

HT: If they all cracked—or real close to shedding they won't. They'll stop completely eating; they won't—they won't nibble on one or something. Now like in that vat over there, they're close enough that they won't really—really eat but for some reason they'll still catch a hold with the pinchers and they'll hold on when one is trying to shed out or something. Well if that crab is trying to come out of that hull I guess it's taking all the effort it's got trying to come out. If something hangs it up where it come off free it will come it—because once it starts—stops it'll—it'll get—it'll stop just where it won't even move. I don't see one right here now but they'll just all at once get to where they're not moving. When they crack like that one I threw over here, once they stop moving they're in the process of shedding then. They start working their-selves out of that shell—backing out. Well if—if even one of the—one of the—see that back fin back there has been rubbed or something and hangs to where she can't pull it out she'll die because she'll—she'll get out so far but she can't get on out. Now you could catch a hold of that fin and pull it tight and she'll turn it loose and drop that fin and grow another. But they won't do it while they're shedding—for some reason.

0:23:04.3

AE: Is this grate here—does that tell you those are the ones farthest along?

0:23:07.2

HT: These right here are soft.

0:23:10.9

AE: Oh.

0:23:12.9

HT: They've shedded, see—all of them and that's what I was talking about the round flap. See how the v-flap—see the difference in the flap? And that's a female that's shedded that's grown.

0:23:23.8

AE: That's dramatic. Okay.

0:23:24.9

HT: This one right here—the flap will look like that as quick as it sheds.

0:23:29.4

AE: So how long are you going to leave them in here?

0:23:31.9

HT: These—these I'll take back to the house. I got a cooler up there at the house and all I pack them out over night and put them in trays with grass in the bottom and you put grass over the top of them and ship them live, and I sell to Water Street Seafood over in Apalachicola. They come to the house every morning and pick them up. And I take them to the house and you have to weigh each one of them to grade them—what grade they go in. And I weigh them out, pack them in them boxes, and put them in the cooler and they send a truck there every morning to pick them up.

0:24:12.9

AE: Huh; well so I'm wondering when you picked that one that was really cracked open shedding out of this vat over here there are a lot of crabs in there. Your eye just went straight to it. You just—

0:24:23.0

HT: Well you get—*[Laughs]* it's all in like doing anything. If you do it long enough there's just something about the—the color and all—it will just catch your eye. It's hard to explain to anybody; it's just all in doing it for a long time. There's nothing—like I told some of the boys I said about crabbing. They said, “Oh, it takes so much to know how to crab.” I said, “It don't take nothing to know how to crab. It's just wanting to; you're going to learn yourself. Nobody can learn you.” Because the first time I ever went crabbing in my life I had never been on a crab boat but one time and that was in Panacea [Florida] and rode out in the Gulf. But years ago, when I was young and we all loved to do—boys loved to get out after work and get together and we had softball teams and we had this kind of team and that kind of team. Well I played on a softball team around here but I was one that would never knock off from work to go play ball. If I was—*[Walks Away]*. The boys wanted me to come in and play softball with them and I would not knock off and come in, so one of them—one of them was a crabber. So hard crabbing you can usually—you get out before daylight but you're usually home by lunchtime—at least one o'clock. So he says we're going to have to learn you how to crab where you'll be home. So I went crabbing with him one day and he showed me how he pulled traps and he come back to my house and cut a crab trap out for me. He had a roll of wire at his house he brought down there and he cut a crab trap out for me and then he showed me how to build a crab trap and said, “Now order you some wire and build you some traps.” Well in those days summer—here in the summer oystering was closed and you had to do something anyway. And I was always having to find a job in the summertime so I built me up I think it was 127 traps, didn't know nothing about it, never been in this bay crabbing. I had been oystering on the oyster bars and knew nothing

about crabbing. But I loaded them up and I went out there and I put them out. If they didn't catch something I'd get a pole and I'd sound the bottom and try to figure out how come. Why these was catching them and over there wasn't? And that's all the art to it. I mean I started and had never been on a boat and I've been doing it for years and years; so there's nothing anybody can't learn. I mean it—it's not complicated. It's just wanting to.

0:27:42.1

AE: But is this—is this soft-shell crab business—in particular is it something that you're passionate about because it's so labor intensive that—?

0:27:51.2

HT: Well—

0:27:51.5

AE: What is that exactly?

0:27:51.9

HT: Well once you get the age I am—I'm sixty years old and I got—I got a little bit of sense of reality. I've got a high school education but I've done this all of my life. So I'm not a real

educated person other than just high school. If I was to quit what I'm doing today and I went out and started looking for a job how many people wants to hire somebody that's fixing to be 61 years old on a job to make a living? Hard crabbing imports has killed seafood; the only reason you can survive with this right here—it's going to kill one part of it, but one part it will not—because we ship these live. They can't ship them from South America live and keep them alive long enough. They can ship them froze and they're going to kill the frozen market. They've killed the hard crabbing; that's the reason you don't see any crab houses up and down the coast. They've destroyed the shrimpers and that is the only part and I got sense enough to know that that's the only thing I can do to survive on food. That's the reason any young person that walks in here that asks about my opinion I say get out of the bay son because you ain't going to make it. I did; I come along in a time when I could. But those times is gone. And when the President done us a great favor—free trade and turned it loose and you go to competing against people—he said we can compete with anybody—maybe your high-tech people can but you know that if everybody was a doctor wouldn't there be a problem in this country? So they—they got to be all stages of workers; they said well we could bring in that and we can bring this or that and do those kinds of work. They're always going to be a big percentage of Americans that does labor jobs out there. And just like in this bay and—and other things, and you got the price things is in this country and you're competing with people that's making five dollars a day, 5 fifty-cent[s] an hour; I mean I ain't no rocket scientist, but I got sense enough to know you don't do that. So you know—

0:30:44.8

AE: Are there many other people soft-shell crabbing around here?

0:30:48.2

HT: Well, here in Eastpoint right now, I don't think there are but—well, he hadn't even started up. My brother-in-law. But he's going to soft-shell. Chris Chason. I think there are three or four of us that soft-shells here in Eastpoint, which there ain't three or four of us that even crab. In Apalach [Apalachicola] there are a few more; I don't think over in Carrabelle—not in Carrabelle anybody; Dino Millender lived back this side of Carrabelle [Florida], and he fooled with it a little bit. He hard crabs but they just—crabbing is on its way out. I mean there's no place to sell them if you caught them. The price—I caught crabs this winter for a nickel a pound more than I got paid in 1985 for crabs in the wintertime, so that's what happened. The meat price is nothing. The crab houses can't pick the meat and they can't pay you because they get the imported meat in on the market and I mean you can't blame somebody if they can't afford to pay it. But you figure out—I was buying bait; Florida helped us out with the net ban, you know. They—they banned the nets for the workers out here, so the bait we used to bait crab traps and all it doubled within—from the time it went in effect it doubled in thirty days. And it just kept climbing. So today I'm paying twenty-eight-cent[s] a pound for bait to put in the crab trap; in [nineteen] eighty-five I was paying six-cent[s] a pound. In [nineteen] eighty-five I was getting forty-cent[s] a pound for hard crabs; today I was getting forty-five [cents]. In [nineteen] eighty-five, what was the gas price—maybe less than fifty-cent[s]? Today it's two [dollars and] fifty [cents]; so I mean that—that tells you something.

0:32:59.4

AE: What's the price on soft shell crabs these days?

0:33:02.2

HT: Soft shell crabs—now live—they a good price on them—twenty-eight dollars a dozen for the large and twenty-four dollars for the next size, sixteen [dollars], and it goes down. Frozen they're less; and I look for that to be even less because they can ship in. Right now frozen is selling—the large for twenty-two dollars, the next size twenty dollars and on down. That's the reason I'm still in here because it's survival; it's what it really means. I mean, I don't think anybody enjoys getting up one o'clock at night, four o'clock in the morning—well I'll start—I'll cull these crabs and I'll leave here and I'll come back down here at eight o'clock at night. I'll come back at ten and then I'll go home and lay down. I'll be back down here at one o'clock; I'll be back down here at four o'clock, and I'll cull everything and get everything ready and then I'll go crabbing. I'll come in at dinnertime and I'm back down here at two, back down here at four, back down here at eight, back down here at ten, back down here at one, back down here at four, and that's seven days a week and no break. I don't think anybody feels like it's somebody enjoys that. But it's survival; I'm sixty—I'm fit to be sixty-one years old. You know, what choice do I have?

0:34:27.8

AE: Do you ever have any help out here? Does your wife come and check on them?

0:34:29.5

HT: My wife comes down and checks while I'm on the bay and all.

0:34:34.4

AE: What's your wife's name?

0:34:36.7

HT: Janice [Tindell]. She's got rheumatoid arthritis real bad and she can't—she can't do a whole lot. She's helping you know what she can and I mean there's not a whole lot to do. When you come down and check them like I say during the night all you got to do is pick out the ones that's shedded and take them to the house and pack them out. It's a fifteen- or twenty-minute job, but you never get over two hours sleep in no one period; that's what wears on you. It's not the work. It's just you got to be here.

0:35:10.0

AE: So you'll be doing this for the next three months straight or so?

0:35:14.1

HT: Yeah; well I usually—I usually do it right on through the year because like I say the price here—I mean, as far as the amount I catch will drop to where you're not really making anything much but I'll do this with hard crabbing. I'll go to hard crabbing, and I figure well, if I can pay for my bait and gas out of this and keep up my current bills and all, then what little bit I can make hard crabbing, you know, I can live on. But if I got to take the bait and gas out of what I make hard crabbing—because I mean, I go down there to the—go to—I usually put my ticket down at Carl Ard's down at the [gas] station, and I don't buy anything but gas and oil down there. I put it on a ticket and go in Friday and pay it every week. Well it's going to run me 125 dollars to 150 a week just in fuel. Well my bait is going to run me 200 dollars and better. So about the first 300—300 or 400 dollars I make goes in fuel and bait. **[Laughs]** So if you can make that besides your hard crabbing I mean you stand a chance to survive. If you start taking that out of your hard crabbing people say well you caught 100 dollars worth of crabs today. Well if you caught 100 dollars worth of crabs your crab pots costs about twenty—twenty-something, about twenty-one dollars to rig one up and put it overboard. Somebody goes out and runs over one, that's twenty-one dollars; I mean it—so if you sit down and go to figuring it up if you put—if you made 100 dollars a day and had to take bait and gas out of it, there's no way you'd last over a year crabbing—because if you can't make 100 dollars above your daily expense, you can't keep your equipment up; so—.

0:37:34.3

AE: And what—I feel like somebody just told me that they're about to start instituting a fine—a big multi-thousand dollar fine for errant traps out in the bay that will get caught in boats and—?

0:37:46.8

HT: Well I don't know what's going to happen with that. They—they come down, a group, and we all discussed it and it's pending legislation with Florida that they change and put some new rules on. We got to buy tags now and used to we didn't have to pay for a license. If you was in it you filed and they sent you a license you know. But now it's going to cost 150 dollars a year for a hard crab pot license—that's extra; for a soft-shell crab license it's going to cost you 250 dollars—that's extra; plus for every trap you got you got to buy a tag from the State; it's going to cost you fifty-cent[s] a piece to go on your traps. So you're talking about another—I usually don't never run over 200 traps, so you're talking about another 100 dolalrs for hard shell and 100 for soft-shell; 200 dollars for soft-shell; that's 450 and another 150 is 500—600 dollars extra it's going to cost each year just for me to operate. I mean that's just extra.

0:39:08.7

AE: So what are they looking to—to get by knowing exactly who owns what trap?

0:39:15.3

HT: Don't ask me why the State does what they do because I've—as I have told a lot of them and I've told some of the State workers, I guess they have good intentions. I don't feel like they just—the State had decided hey we're going to come down and put you out of business. I guess

they have good intentions but I've never seen them mess with nothing they didn't mess up. I mean that's just a fact. They'll come down and everything will be going fine and they're going to help you out; they're going to get these laws you know and they're going to really you know—and they're going to make studies and they're going to get all this better. Well when you see that happens and everything I've ever seen them involved in—look out. It's fixing to be gone. And I just don't have—I won't say that—that they just want everybody out of the bay because I don't really feel like that they're setting up there in Tallahassee plotting hey we're going to put that bunch out of work. I don't feel that way about it. But I feel like a lot of people coming out of college has got to have a job doing something and they've read a lot in books and books don't tell you too much about a lot of things. And when the put law in on this bay or start fooling with the bay they ask them; well make a study and tell us what to do. Well they can study up there in Tallahassee and come down here and piddle around out there for a few minutes the rest of their lives and they ain't going to know nothing. As I told them a long time before, there was an older guy that lived beside of me, he's dead now, but he worked this bay for—all of his life; there are a lot of older guys that's worked this bay—I said, “I you want to know about the bay, go talk to him.” Well they said, “If he's shrimping, he's going to just you know—he's going say things to help him shrimp.” I said, “Look, that's our livelihood out there. The last person that wants to destroy it is us that depends on it.” I said, “If there ain't a fish out there or anything, you can go boat riding. You can go sightseeing. The last thing we want to do is destroy it.” And they would find out a whole lot more, you know, but that's all that—that ain't never going to change. I mean and like I say it ain't going to last that many more years. It's beginning to build up around here and it—it's on its way out; it ain't going to last. I said if I—I'm sixty—fixing to be sixty-one, and I said if I get five more years in and my health will hold up that I can last five more—you know

that's—that's the end of the line. I mean I hate it; but I got—well I've got two girls. They're grown; they ain't never worked on the bay you know but I've got grandkids. I don't want them out there but I wish they had the opportunity if that's what they wanted to do you know. But they're not going to have. So you know that's the way things go; you ain't going to change it. You just going to live with it.

0:43:07.1

AE: Well you got some crabs to go through I believe.

0:43:08.9

HT: Yeah.

0:43:10.8

AE: Do you mind if I watch you work a little while and take some pictures and—?

0:43:15.8

HT: No.

0:43:18.7

AE: You got this water coming straight from the bay?

0:43:21.9

HT: Yeah.

0:43:47.6

AE: How do you on those full vats when you have to look at every single one of them how do you separate the ones you looked at from the ones that you haven't? Just put them on one side of the vat—try to?

0:43:58.5

HT: Yeah, I use—just like I got wire right there. I just take that wire there, and I'll shove them all up to one end. And I will throw the ones I'm going to leave in that vat back over and the others I'll move out. This, I just looked in this vat here and to see if anything really has shedded. That I might throw down in there.

0:44:33.8

AE: Is this one dead?

0:44:35.5

HT: That's one that's shedded. There's the crab [shell] it come out from. There's—there's the one that come out of there.

0:44:46.4

AE: Oh. What are the ones that you're throwing in that blue bucket down at the end?

0:44:50.0

HT: Huh?

0:44:51.8

AE: The ones that you're throwing in that bucket?

0:44:53.6

HT: Oh that's—that's hulls. Like that right there.

0:44:56.5

AE: Oh, okay. I see.

0:44:57.9

HT: That's one that's already shedded.

0:45:01.0

AE: I got it.

0:45:02.3

HT: That blue bucket is just—if one happens to die I throw it—it's usually hulled—come out.

0:45:19.0

AE: What are you feeling for?

0:45:21.5

HT: See that crack right—well you probably can't see it but they'll crack right up under there.

0:45:26.9

AE: Yes, sir.

0:45:27.6

HT: And if he's cracked like that, you know he's fixing to shed pretty quick. I—I just feel under there to see whether they've started cracking. A lot of times you can see across the back there will be enough showing there but if not, this one here shows you better—you see how it's beginning to crack?

0:45:42.7

AE: Oh, yeah.

0:45:43.5

HT: Right around that edge.

0:45:49.4

AE: Huh.

0:45:49.7

HT: That's what you feel for you know. That's actually what I—I do more feeling than I do looking. I'm about blind in one eye; I got a cataract on it and I can't see like I used to could. I've learned to do a lot of feeling to—to tell on a lot of things and I can—and you can do it a whole lot faster than you can getting down looking at some things.

0:46:56.5

AE: What are the ones that go in the laundry basket?

0:46:58.9

HT: I just keep from having to throw them that far; I just throw them over there and I take them up there and just chunk them.

0:47:14.2

AE: Could I get you to show me one of them's belly—that pointy part, the—?

0:47:20.4

HT: You mean the color?

0:47:21.3

AE: Yeah; that's—.

0:47:31.7

HT: They do this out in Mississippi and you didn't know it?

0:47:35.4

AE: Not that I know of; I'm sure they must but I live in the North Mississippi, so I don't know much about what goes on at the coast—except for a bunch of cleaning up right about now.

0:47:44.1

HT: I know some of them—I got a nephew that hauls seafood from out New Orleans and all, through Mississippi and all; I don't think they'll allow them soft-shell in New Orleans I don't believe after—you know right now. I don't know how come or what—what their thinking is.

0:48:31.4

AE: So how many crabs would you say or soft-shells would you pack a night, do you think?

0:48:36.1

HT: Well, it all varies. It—last night I think I had about ten dozen. I've—I have—of course, I've shedded—that's probably the best night I've ever shedded—I shedded as high as fifty dozen.

0:48:53.8

AE: Wow.

0:48:55.4

HT: But I've never done that—I've done this a lot of times, and I've never done that but one time and, you know, and that just happened to be—. As far as that's concerned—other times—it all depends. This year it's been really slow to get started. I hope that's what it is; I hope we ain't starting with this low amount.

0:49:44.4

AE: So how does it work out on the bay? You said on the phone that you have pots out at the bridge and on the island and all over.

0:49:50.4

HT: Uh-hm.

0:49:51.0

AE: How does it work with the other crabbers in the area that you kind of have a layout of the bay of where you're going to set your pots?

0:49:58.8

HT: Well we—we all just crab together and we try you know to be courteous enough not to be right on top of one another you know but I mean peeler crabs and hard crabbing is a little bit different. Peeler crabbing, if the peeler shows up, these type crabs, it don't hurt the traps to be you know pretty close together pretty thick. You'll catch about the same. But hard crabbing if—if you're too close to somebody else you're going to cut down on his catch and it's going to cost you too you know. But—in this bay it's all—we've always had problems in this bay because the bay is not that big and shrimp boats—there's just enough shrimp boats—they shrimped just long enough to destroy your traps when you've got them out there and you never know when that is going to happen. You may have them out there for a month in one area; nobody shrimps and then go in one night and somebody hit a few shrimp and they go in there and you go out the next morning and your traps is all gone. Of course they—they have a big fine and all this, the State does; if they catch the shrimper catching the trap—well they ain't going to catch them out in the middle of that. And then they say well it's against the law and they'll fine if they catch a trap on

their shrimp boat. Well that's just make them throw them over somewhere you know. If they'd leave them alone and if they happen to catch one let them just put it up on their boat and you stand a chance to get it back. But if that—if they stand the chance of Conservation going to run—run by and find them they're going to get rid of them; they ain't going to ride around with it on their boat you know. **[Laughs]** So we pretty much ride on the hill close enough in that they can't get in or above the Apalachicola Bridge, you know; they can't shrimp up in that area. That's a closed area for shrimping. It's supposed to be a raising ground for shrimp and all, and so far they ain't decided it was a raising ground for crabs and stopped you from crabbing up there but—

0:52:26.0

AE: **[Laughs]** So how do you mark your pots? Do you have a buoy that you use?

0:52:29.8

HT: Yeah, you have a state—you have a color and a number. It's issued—you can pick the color when you're filing for your—but the number the State issues. And you keep that number and— and color on your traps, and that's what the tags is going to be. They claim in case the cord gets cut off you know you'll know it's a trap. But if the cord gets off you ain't never going to see anything **[Walks Away]** That's the purpose of it; that's that fifty-cent[s] one—the tag you're going to have buy.

0:53:15.6

AE: So what color are your buoys?

0:53:17.0

HT: Mine is—actually over the years it's changed. When I started it—safety orange; it's still an orange red looking but I used oil based paint; you can get it in safety orange and then I eventually found out latex works as good and not so bad to work with. I never could get the color to exactly match up but it's close to the safety orange. I've had it for years.

0:53:46.3

AE: So people out in the bay know they're your pots, if they see that orange?

0:53:51.0

HT: Yeah, uh-hmm. And like here you know, they're not—then we still ain't got a whole lot of people so everybody pretty much knows when they see it because out here in the bay other than the people that comes down fishing or something like that—whose traps, you know—whose pots is whose.

0:54:12.3

AE: Have there ever been any problems with anybody vandalizing or stealing traps or are there—?

0:54:17.4

HT: Well not that much; now this year they done it and they do it every year it seems like. I had some traps right out of the field—right over the bridge, you start towards Apalachicola—well it's past it. I didn't run on Sunday. When I went out Monday about—because usually two o'clock I get them big males and big dark colored male crabs and bait them female crabs with and they're hard to come by and I break the claws off because they'll grow them back. I break them off where you can handle them in the cull box. Somebody had run about ten traps from the foot of the bridge there going offshore and got all my male crabs. They done that the year before last; they didn't last year because I didn't put none right there, but I know it's fishermen. Probably— they probably went back to Georgia.

0:55:19.8

AE: So they're getting your male crabs for what? What do they want them for?

0:55:23.4

HT: To eat.

0:55:24.2

AE: To eat, okay.

0:55:27.1

HT: [*Laughs*] Yeah; you know that's easy; when they ain't got no pinchers they can dump them or handle them themselves. When I run a hard crab pot they'll look—you know get them out of the hard-crab that have pinchers on them and all and they stand the chance of might get bit or pinched a little bit.

0:55:50.7

AE: Huh.

0:55:53.5

HT: If they want a mess of crabs they can just let me know—I can give them a mess of crabs—just leave my male crabs alone but they ain't going to let you know that to start with. [*Laughs*]

0:56:03.3

AE: Right; so when I was talking to Mr. Pennycuff and he gave me your name and we were talking about crabbing a little bit he was saying that there are like names of the stages of the crab—the molting process—rank is one of them and—?

0:56:21.8

HT: Yeah, well we call them—he probably—he's probably talking about what—some people calls the male crab—the bait trap crabs—the male crab—call them jimmies. We call a crab that's getting real close to shedding a rank crab. We call the ones not close to shedding the green crabs, you know. It's just—just the name that, you know, I guess locals—well I don't guess—or I don't know who—where it come from to tell you the truth. I remember when the locals didn't even do this. As a matter of fact, them people from Virginia, well Mr. Elridge Massey back in the early '60s, when I worked with him, he was the first one that I had ever seen do anything like this. The only way you got a soft-shell—well, if you happened to go floundering and walking the beach out there at night and walk up on one you know and find one. But he got some tanks like this that he built with wings like on them, little old flat wings that come off the side about twelve inches wide. And we put them out there across the channel, put some poles down, and they floated in the water. And he run that crab house down there, and he showed me—I was—well, I guess just out of high school and all, and he showed me how to tell the sign on a crab. And what he done, he wanted me to go through the crabs that come here in the bay because back then they didn't have these rings and all that you put in traps; you caught all different sizes. When he come in and he was dumping them over in the tanks to cook them, if I happened to see any that looked like they were going to shed, I picked them out. And I'd take them on a little old boat and go across

the channel and put them in that tank. And they would shed out. I would go out there every morning and pick out the ones that had shedded, you know, and the ones that had already got too hard throw them overboard for him to eat because he loved soft-shell crabs. He loved the soft-shell crabs. He said in Virginia it was a big business; nobody here had done it. And there used to be a County Commissioner here named Ike Wade—him and some other guy from Virginia that was down here got together and set up the first soft-shell that I—business—that I ever seen and it was right down there in that vacant lot just below that building there one year which neither one of them—both of them were more politicians than they were workers so it lasted about a year. They couldn't hire somebody—they—they wanted somebody to do the work for them and they couldn't hire somebody to do it. They couldn't afford to pay somebody you know and they didn't do anymore of it for a few years—any more that I knew of. Now there might have been somebody somewhere—but I didn't do it.

Then another one of our—well he wasn't a County Commissioner—seafood dealers died—Donnie Wilson from Apalachicola—got in with some guys from Virginia and they done it up there. And they come down; there wasn't no what we called peeler pots—small meshed wire we used to catch these; there wasn't any of that being used in the bay. But those guys brought some traps down with that small meshed wire and all and started soft-shell crabbing. They set up over in Apalachicola. Donnie Wilson was going to buy them from them and all. And I guess that was the start of it. Nobody—nobody wanted that small wire in the bay. I didn't but there was no law against it. There was no way of stopping it. And if you couldn't stop it, you joined them. So that's—that's what happened. That's the way soft-shell crabs around here really got started. Which we didn't realize. Like everything else, this little old place back off the corner somewhere you know—didn't know what was going on. Big markets—I mean up around Baltimore and all

up there; I mean that was across the world to us. We didn't know what was going on up there.

Didn't realize that we was throwing over crabs that was worth more than what we'd bring in, you know. The same way—it was that way with fish and probably other things.

Mr. Massey, he was from up there and he—he was down here, and he'd tell me about the way they done things up there, you know, and as a matter of fact he had shipped them stuff right; he was the one that started a lot of the fish around here that people used to throw over as trash fish. He said, “Man, they're worth more than the fish y'all are saving,” you know. Up there I can get a good price for them and he'd ship them up there. And he—he got a lot of that started, stuff that we didn't realize it. Here, like a mullet or a speckled trout or a flounder and up there it wasn't any good; it was trash fish—throw them overboard or put them in for crab bait or something like that; that's what—and I sure didn't know because I was raised up there in farming country. I didn't really know what was going on to start with. I was learning. I didn't—I had never even—that was probably the first outboard motor I had ever cranked up in my life. You know what? I was probably 17—18 years old and never even had an outboard motor; we never had—they never even had a sport boat to go fishing on. If you did it was one with the paddle—it wasn't one with a motor.

1:03:30.1

AE: So with these shells that come off, the hard shells, can you recycle those tops for deviled crab or anything like that?

1:03:36.3

HT: I guess you could; they don't because soft-shells are not—now they do steam crabs over in Panacea [Florida] over there; there's a guy that he does that. He's got—he's got a place that they—that they used to go around to the crab houses and pick them up and they'd put them in a drum and top hull and all and he would pick them up and take them over there and they'd run them through this acid vats and all and clean that—clean that shell and all and he'd package them and ship them out for deviled crabs and all. Nobody not here in Eastpoint has ever done that; now some of them—the crab houses here have saved them for him before.

1:04:45.4

AE: Am I imagining that this water is a different color than the others—is something going on in there?

1:04:51.4

HT: No; it should be all the same. It probably is not as many crabs and the bottom is probably darker. It's probably a little more mud settling on the bottom and they're not moving around quite as—it's all the same. It's all coming in on one line.

1:05:05.4

AE: No; I thought maybe something chemically was happening within the crab or something to make it darker.

1:05:10.7

HT: No.

1:05:13.6

AE: All right; so do you own this property here?

1:05:19.5

HT: Yeah.

1:05:20.3

AE: How long have you had it?

1:05:24.6

HT: Well I've had it for probably I don't know—six or seven years of it being in my name. It's been—it was—the property right here was my wife's father's property and I soft-shelled on it and he's dead now. He left it to us—this property but he had it for years.

1:05:58.3

AE: What was his name?

1:05:58.3

HT: Ernest Millender.

1:06:01.3

AE: Oh okay; so I would imagine he's kin to Mr. Fred Millender up the way somehow.

1:06:08.4

HT: Brother.

1:06:10.5

AE: Brothers, okay.

1:06:11.0

HT: Mike Millender has got that—the—what is that?

1:06:14.9

AE: Island View [Seafood]?

1:06:17.8

HT: My wife's first cousin. That's Marion Millender's son.

1:06:26.3

AE: Okay. Well, what you like for people to know the most about what it is that you do here?

1:06:32.3

HT: Well I—**[Laughs]**—I really don't know. I just know it's a thing on the way out. You know if they want—if they want to see how it's done they better come on and see because it ain't going to be here forever. **[Laughs]** It—it's something that's—like a lot of other things it's going to be a thing of the past before long—it is. I realize that; I—I wish it was something I could do to

change it but there's nothing I can do to change it. Not that I want to do it that more many years; my—my time is about run out but I would like for you know anybody that wanted to—to have the opportunity you know. This—whether it be my kids or if you was to move down here and have kids and they wanted to do it you know or anybody.

1:07:31.3

AE: Pass it on, huh?

1:07:33.1

HT: Yeah; if that's what they want to do. I just left—I feel like anybody you know if—be able to do what they—they want to do if they can make a living at it you know and it's not going to hurt anybody else, you know. I mean I—that's the way I've always been about anything. I—I don't want to try to keep somebody else from doing something because I'm doing it or you know try to—except I ain't never done a whole lot that anybody else would want to do I don't guess.

[Laughs] I enjoyed it as well as anything I could have done; I mean it's all work. I don't think you're going to go through life and make a living without working; so you're going to have to do something. If you can find something that's—that you can make a living at and feel reasonable about going to work every morning I think that's the thing you need to do and I've always knowed I had to do something so this happened to be it. You never know growing up what you're going to do. I know if somebody had asked me when I was fifteen or sixteen years old—said,

“Son, you're going—you're going to make a living on the water.” I said, “You need to go see somebody to examine you fellow; there's something wrong with you.” I never had an idea.

1:09:38.3

AE: Never had what?

1:09:39.7

HT: Never had any kind of idea that—that this might be—as a matter of fact, I had never been down here. Mike lived down here; maybe he had gone to the house but I had never been down here probably but two or three times in my life. This has been one of the—if somebody had asked me when I was in the ninth or tenth grade in school what you going to do? This would have been one of the last things I'd ever thought about you know. You just never know.

1:10:20.8

AE: Is there anything that I haven't asked you or wouldn't know to ask you that is worthwhile to add to the recording here?

1:10:26.8

HT: Not that I know of. You know it's pretty much covered everything that I know anything about with it. Like I said, there's not a whole lot to know, you know.

1:10:45.2

AE: Have you had many days where you're laid up sick or anything, and it's been trouble to come down here?

1:10:51.5

HT: No; luckily I haven't. I've had a lot of days I didn't want to come [*Laughs*] you know. A lot at one o'clock when that alarm clock alarms and I don't want to come but—

1:11:16.4

AE: Well you've got to live close if you live in Eastpoint but how—how many blocks away do you live?

1:11:21.8

HT: Well I live the next street—well not the next street from here; it's on Avenue A back there right in front of Bull Street. Bull Street comes out and hits Avenue A right in front of my house.

1:11:40.7

AE: Well I sure thank you for all the information and letting me talk to you while you work here. This has been quite an education for me.

1:11:48.3

HT: Yeah; somebody that's never been around it—I'm sure. You know because I know whenever I came down here I didn't know anything about it. I was blank about anything to do with working on the water as any—anybody could be, you know. Everything was new to me and—like I said, I had never been on the bay.

1:12:21.5

AE: Yeah.

1:12:24.0

HT: I started oystering the first year I ever worked on the bay with my father-in-law. That's what he had done all of his life.

1:12:36.1

AE: The Millender—because the Millender family had all kind of crab and oyster houses up here didn't they?

1:12:40.8

HT: Yeah; well that was a lot of the Millender's—Carrabelle, they were all—all kin folk. The—the family over here, Fred and all them's father, he was actually from Carrabelle; that's where the family—is brother and all lived in Carrabelle. He moved over here; he run an oyster house for years and years. Then the boys run the oyster house; well as a matter of fact they got that market down there; Mike [Millender] is running it now. That was—they built that oyster house probably in the late '60s and they had another oyster house right beside it—an old oyster house and they tore it down and built that building and they run it for years. All of them—all of the older ones are too old to work out you know on the bay anymore. Some of their kids and all still work; a couple of them shrimp I think. But they see it just like I see it. It's drawing to a close. Anybody that has seen how it used to be and how it is today knows—it's on its way out. It happens; so they tell me. I'm—I'm just going by what I've heard other small fishing communities—it's happened all over. They're beginning to make the playgrounds for people. They come down on like St. George Island over there; they—they holler a lot about oh they don't want it to change but the ones that don't want it to change is the ones that changed it to start with you know—because they want to leave it like it was when they got it. They don't realize when they got it they changed it. You know so—the more people—just means that much faster it's going to go; the population and seafood don't—I mean pollution and one thing and another it just—it don't—it don't work.

1:15:26.1

AE: What do you really like about what you do?

1:15:27.8

HT: Well one thing is if I want to come down here like—like this evening—it was all up to me and what I had to do. If I needed to run to Apalach for an hour I can run back there. If I get up in the morning, usually I leave the house by six, six-thirty, going crabbing but if it's necessary and I need to, I need to stay in 'til nine o'clock to go take care of something, I don't have to ask nobody's permission. I can go take care of it and I come on back and do my work. They—the two of us kids—my sister, she's older than I am; she still lives in Alabama. If she gets sick and I decide to go up there and see her, I don't have to go to no boss man and say hey can I get tomorrow off? Is there any way that I can go? Or just—just anything—it's the freedom. That's what I like about it. I mean I don't have to get permission to do it. I've got sense enough to know I've got to work. And I always have. But yet I don't have to go ask somebody's permission, you know. I mean, I've always been a person that—well just—I tell you when my first daughter was born I was working in a crab—in an oyster house, crab house and as a matter of fact, old man Elridge Massey, and we had a load of Louisiana oysters coming in. And I know the next day was going to be a tough day. But I had to take my wife to the hospital about four o'clock in the morning. The baby wasn't born until four o'clock the next evening. So I took her to the hospital, and I stayed with her. I didn't leave 'til after I seen she was all right and the baby was all right. But before I left that morning, I called the guy that worked with me down at Mr. Massey's. I said,

“Tell—tell Mr. Massey what happened, you know—the reason I’m not there.” So I go to work the next day. My wife is still in the hospital. I mean, they were doing all right. I go to work the next morning and walk up on the dock, and said, “Well I’m able to come in today.” “I don’t really need you today; I needed you yesterday.” Of course that was the Yankee in him. But I mean, that burnt me up and I was—like I told him, I said, “Look, I don’t care what you needed yesterday.” I was going. And I said, “Now if you need me tomorrow or you need me today, okay.” [Then he said] “Oh, yeah, go on in there and go to work.” I mean it was just his way of doing it, but I don’t like to be in that position because there’s certain things I’m going to be. I’m not going to do it just—just to have a good time. If it’s necessary I’m going to do it whether I get permission or not and I don’t want my job hinging on it—because if I had been working and he said, “Well you just lost your job,” I’d have just lost my job. I mean that—that’s the way I am, you know. I wouldn’t have missed a day unless it had been necessary. And I felt like that was necessary. And maybe he didn’t or whatever, you know but I mean—and that—that’s what I like about the kind of work I do. I know I’ve got to go to work; I know I don’t get paid a dime unless I make it. It all depends on what I do. But yet I—I don’t have to—I don’t have to go get permission from somebody whenever I think something is necessary to do and all and that—that’s really the freedom right there. You call it freedom. You really don’t have freedom. There ain’t nobody working a forty-hour job that even comes close to putting in the hours that I do. I mean, I could put in forty hours and think I was on vacation, you know. I’ve never worked forty hours in my life even when—in the summertime whenever I used to pick up jobs in the summertime. The closest I ever come to forty hours, I worked on St. Joe’s Schoolhouse when they were building it over there, and we put in ten hours a day. That meant I worked fifty hours a week. That’s the least amount of hours I’ve ever put in in my life—in a week. So I mean I’m used to working in the oyster house and went to

work at six o'clock, and you never got off before eight. You could put in fourteen hours to start with, and then you're liable to have to come back about—after you go home and get supper, come back and load trucks. So you know, [working] a bunch of hours has never been nothing because that's what I've always done.

1:21:01.5

AE: Have you ever taken a vacation?

1:21:03.9

HT: Well I guess you'd call it a vacation. We went to the mountains one time for a couple three days. And back when the kids was little I took them to Disney World. We went down there; well we went on out there and stayed a couple days down there. I had a friend that lived right down—well Haines City right close to Orlando and all that—went by and see them over at Disney World and going to stay down there a couple days and do around and got there at Disney World, and all you could do was stand in line for hours and hours. And we got to see a few things—a very few things—we got—we could even see. And we got out of there. And we were going to go get us a room for the night, you know, and stay the next day. And we got out of there, and the kids, they said, “We're ready to go home, if you are.” I said, “Shoot, that sounds good to me.” We didn't slow down 'til we was home. We spent one day.

But no, I never vacationed. I've always had to work. You know, I've never been one—I didn't do things I wasn't finding I was able to do. I had sense of that and as far as going and

borrowing money or go and putting myself in debt to go to somewhere for a week to enjoy—that don't make horse sense to me. And, you know, I just—if I wasn't financially able to do it, I didn't do it. And I guess probably, I've been financially able to do some things I *hadn't* done, you know but I mean I just—it was always—it felt like hey you've got to have sense enough to live within the means of what you could do. And I really didn't care nothing about it. Now my wife loves to travel; boy she was—like I told her; I said, “The best thing we could do if I'm ever able to retire and have the money, is just to get us a big camper and we probably—we'll probably—both of us probably be so old we couldn't drive and have to hire somebody to drive it.” And we'd never stay at one spot—just hit the road and go because she loves to go to go see stuff. Just like in your state, Mississippi, we—we'd go there. The thing on the TV there, I think it showed that coming down the Mississippi River, I believe it was Natchez or something in Mississippi that's got all of those old homes and all, she seen that and she said, “We're going—we're going to see that.” I ain't never been, but we'll probably make it one day if we live long enough. But she enjoys doing stuff like that. I—it's just never—I can do it but I mean, saying I care anything about it—I've never been one to care what was across the street. You know as long as I'm faring all right, here I'm not bothering anybody and I'm taking care of myself, what's going on across the road over yonder or across the country or in the next state—that makes no difference to me. But she's not like that; she'd love to, you know—she'd love to go to see it. A lot of people like that. I've just never been [like that], you know I—well I guess I—I told her, I said, “I was raised up there in farm country. Never went no place much.” I said, “When I come down here it was 100-some miles, and it was the farthest I've ever been in my life,” you know. So nothing—you know crabbing, and we just had no means, you know. I was raised just—cousins and all in a little area, you know. And I told her; I said, “Teenagers goes off, you know, and they send them out with

their friends and all.” I said, “I probably grew up never spending time with somebody that wasn't my cousin.” We were just a closed little community—farm community like and you didn't know nothing about what went on nowhere else. You—you were isolated, you know. You'd go to school or go—go to school with your classmates at a little old small school. Go home and get out in the summertime, go home, and they lived in the same, you know—within a pretty close community. You wouldn't see them 'til you went back to school next year. I told her—I said, “I went to school up there with kids for years. I know they live over yonder on that side of town somewhere.” But I couldn't never went and showed—showed you where they lived. I had no idea. You just—you didn't go anyplace; you just stayed in your own little area. I guess that's one reason I've never—I've never been one to get out—just get out and go—she says I am one day though when I ever quit work. Then we're going.

1:26:52.1

AE: Do you like eating soft-shell crabs?

1:26:55.0

HT: Oh, yeah.

1:26:56.4

AE: Yeah?

1:26:56.5

HT: I like soft-shells.

1:26:56.8

AE: Do you fry them up?

1:27:01.7

HT: Yeah, but I don't really eat as many, you know, as you would think doing it. I mean a lot of people has asked me, you know, "Boy don't you eat soft-shell crabs?" It's very seldom you know. Asking, "They said don't you like them?" Oh yes, I like them but I, you know—it's something you work in—I don't know what it is—you just—you don't never really—really fool with it. Every now and then I'll—we'll have a soft-shell crab but not that—not that often, probably—probably had them often(er) before I started working in it. When we were just going floundering and picking up something on the beach, you know, like that.

1:27:51.5

AE: Do you ever go out and get your own oysters still from time to time?

1:27:53.9

HT: Yeah, I—I still got my—I still keep my oyster permit and the tongs, and all that is still hanged up in the shed at the house. I haven't done any of it in about—well I don't guess I've been on an oyster bar in about five years. But used to; I crabbed up until you know it got real cold and then I'd take my traps up and I'd oyster during the winter. But the last few years I haven't—I've stuck with crabbing. I know one thing; it's got—oystering is harder on me than crabbing is—worse.

1:28:38.8

AE: Physically, you mean?

1:28:39.0

HT: Yeah.

1:28:41.2

AE: Yeah.

1:28:43.3

HT: And I've got arthritis in my fingers on both hands now and in the joints and oystering is something you have to do enough to physically get adapted to it working—because you work different muscles and all. I could still do it but I'll go through some pain getting used to it again. The last few years I just haven't—used to do it with—where it would make me so where I didn't stay away from it long enough; you know I could go right back to it and it didn't bother me but a lot of things when you get my age bother me. I just haven't really done it. I haven't even went out and caught—that was the last time I went; that was I went for was just to catch them oysters. Threw the tongs on my boat and I was coming back around here and just stopped down there at the bar and caught them there and come back around.

1:29:43.3

AE: You took your tongs out on your crabbing boat?

1:29:46.7

HT: Uh-hm.

1:29:47.6

AE: *[Laughs]*

1:29:48.8

HT: Well my boat is regularly the one; it's got decks and all on it you can tong off of or crab. I use the same boat if I'm oystering or if I'm crabbing. I can do either one off there.

1:30:10.9

AE: All right; well I believe I'll cut this thing off and take a few more pictures. How does that sound? Thank you, again.

1:30:17.8

HT: You're welcome.

1:30:18.2

[End Henry Tindell]